THE ROLES OF POWER AND GENDER
AS DETERMINANTS OF AFFECTIVE
RESPONSES TO INTIMATE CONFLICT

By

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ABSTRACT

There is a paucity of research studying variables which influence emotional reactions in response to conflict between intimates. The present study examined the roles of power and gender as determinants of affective response to audiotaped scenarios of intimate conflict. Sixty male and 60 female subjects were randomly assigned as either a group leader (high power condition) or group member (low power condition) for the performance of a group task. After receiving their group assignments, subjects completed an affect check list and then listened to an audiotape of a heated conflict between a man and a woman concerning sexual jealousy. Two tapes were presented to control for gender of initiator (i.e., who started the conflict) so that subjects heard either a male-initiated or a female-initiated conflict. After exposure to the conflict stimulus, subjects again completed an affect check list. It was hypothesized that subjects in the high power condition would report more anger than those in the low power condition. In addition, participants in the low power condition would report more anxiety than participants in the high power condition. Also, men were predicted to report more anger than women and women more anxiety than men.

The highest anger ratings were found for participants in the low power condition listening to a person of the opposite gender initiate the conflict. This difference was
significant for females, although a similar pattern for males was not. Furthermore, an interaction effect was found, with females who had listened to a female-initiated conflict in the high power condition reporting more anger than those in the low power condition, a response pattern that was in the opposite direction to the other three groups. A main effect was found for power, with participants in the low power condition reporting more anger than their high power counterparts. In addition, the results partially supported the hypothesis regarding anxiety, with subjects in the low power condition reporting significantly more anxiety than those in the high power condition. These results, however, were limited to the male-initiated conflict. A significant gender difference was found for both the anger and anxiety ratings with women reporting more of both affect clusters than men. The results support the basic contention that power and gender are important determinants of affective responses to intimate conflict. The results are discussed in terms of the expectations and cognitions created by power and gender stereotypes and their influence on the process of labelling emotions within the context of intimate conflict.
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Conflict is a pervasive aspect of human interaction (Holmes & Miller, 1976). This appears especially true for intimate relationships, which are recognized as more volatile and prone to conflict (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). Although a common observation, the conflictive nature of intimate relationships has only recently received empirical validation (Holmes & Miller, 1976; Petersen, 1983). In a recent study of married couples, Argyle and Furnham (1983) found that subjects rated their intimate relationships as simultaneously the most satisfying and the most conflicted. Additional evidence is found in crime statistics on domestic assault and homicide which attest to the frequency of severe conflict between intimate partners and the sometimes tragic consequences (Daly, Weghorst, & Wilson, 1980). Theorists explain this paradoxical behaviour between intimates as a product of the intense emotional investment and dependency which is characteristic of close relationships. Thus, the prevalence of conflict in intimate relationships is attributed to their highly emotional and interdependent nature (Berscheid, 1983; Petersen, 1983). Two issues in particular appear to constitute the majority of intimate conflict, that of financial matters and sexual jealousy. Research in the area of interpersonal conflict (Holmes & Miller, 1976) and wife assault (Straus et al, 1980) reports that these two issues are the most commonly
cited sources of conflict between intimates. Consequently, sexual jealousy is the issue of conflict examined in this study as representative of a common issue of intimate conflict.

Despite the importance of emotion in theories of intimate conflict, little empirical attention has been given to the study of affect within this context. Its potential centrality to conflict generation and escalation suggests that an examination of affective variables would further our understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Of particular interest is the potential for individual differences in emotional reactions to intimate conflict, one source of which may be gender. Gender appears to be a plausible source of variation resulting from a history of differential socialization of males and females (Greenglass, 1982). Men learn to value independence and achievement, whereas women value emotional expressiveness and social affiliation (Pollack & Gilligan, 1982). Thus, an important variable in the study of intimate conflict may be differences in affective responses as a possible consequence of a gender-based differential socialization.

Cognition and Emotion

The introduction of cognition into theories of emotion has prompted the notion of individual differences in affective responding as a viable consequence of the cognitive process. The arousal-cognition theory of emotion was first popularized in social psychology by Schachter...
and his studies of the affective labelling of epinephrine-induced arousal (Schachter & Singer, 1962). Schachter contended that for affect to be fully realized, both physiological arousal and a cognitive evaluation of the situation were necessary. Schachter maintained that emotion is a result of this two-stage process. The first event is the onset of a generalized state of physical arousal followed by a cognitive process in which the situational cues are cognitively evaluated and an appropriate emotional label is attached to the arousal.

The role of cognition has since achieved a greater importance in contemporary conceptualizations of emotion. Current theories of emotion differ only in the emphasis they place on cognition rather than its relevancy (Dienstbier, 1978; Izard, 1977; Leventhal, 1977). While the relationship between cognition and affect varies according to the particular theory, cognition is consistently recognized by contemporary theories as a necessary component.

The specific structural components of cognition depend on the theoretical orientation. Mandler (1975) elaborates on the cognitive processes described by Schachter postulating that the cognitive decision-making process is based not only on present situational cues but on historically relevant data as well. An individual's cognitive structure is a result of his or her past experiences forming the context within which current events are integrated and interpreted. Dienstbier (1978) further
contends that in addition to an individual's developmental history, cultural norms and roles also constitute part of the cognitive structure and determine the appropriate situations for the experience and expression of affect. According to Dienstbier, cultural roles limit the range of emotional responses and, therefore, differentially influence the experience of emotion. Leventhal (1977) concurs that the integration of social norms and values into the cognitive system has a differential effect on an individual's affective responses. Affective labelling, therefore, may be a far more complex and idiosyncratic process than Schachter's theory implies.

The importance of cognitive factors in determining affect has received growing recognition in the clinical area where the change in an individual's affective state is often the major objective of treatment. A variety of clinical therapies are based on cognitively oriented treatment models (see Dobson & Block, 1985). Perhaps the most popular clinical model of cognitive structure and its relationship to emotion is that proposed by Aaron Beck (Beck, Rush, & Shaw, 1981) for the treatment of depression. Beck's model of cognition is defined in terms of three components: past experiences, the beliefs and values of the individual, and current events. Beck sees these beliefs and values as the individual's unique theories of life and the basis for the automatic maladaptive thoughts that are central to the occurrence of depression. In addition, these beliefs or
theories of life are the product of the individual's developmental history. These components comprise the cognitive framework for the interpretation of current events and the choice of affect associated with that event. According to Beck, therefore, cognitions determine affect. Consequently, the main objective of therapy is to alter the client's cognitions so as to cause an ultimate change in affect. Numerous outcome studies have demonstrated the efficacy of this model in the treatment of unipolar depression (Sacco & Beck, 1985). The successful application of this model in the treatment of an affective disorder is strong support for the importance of cognition in the experience of affect.

Cognitive mediation in emotion provides a conceptual basis for gender differences in affect. The inclusion of past experiences, beliefs, and values as fundamental components of the cognitive framework support the contention of Dienstbier (1978) and Leventhal (1977) that the edicts of socialization are represented within the cognitive structure. The process of sex role socialization may instill within the individual certain beliefs regarding differential sex roles which, in turn, influence his or her affective responses. Similarly, past experiences observing and enacting sex role consonant behaviours, especially those which have received positive social reinforcement, may also influence future cognitive appraisals and the resulting affective labels. In addition, factor analytic studies of
emotion have isolated a dimension which corresponds to sex role socialization. Svensson (cited in Russell, 1980) identified a dimension he described as social orientation which accounted for a small but significant proportion of the variance of affect. Similarly, Russell and Mehrabian's (1974) circumplex model of affect includes a dimension of dominance-submissiveness, a distinction which is traditionally associated with male and female sex roles, respectively (Doyle, 1985; Greenglass, 1982; Huston, 1983).

The inclusion of sex role socialization into the framework of cognition generates an hypothesis of gender-based differences in affective responses. In view of learned beliefs and values regarding appropriate sex role behaviours combined with repeated experience of such behaviours, men may label their affect according to the appraisal of a "masculinized" cognitive structure. Conversely, women who have internalized the female sex role may respond to a similar situation with a different affective label as a result of a "feminized" cognitive appraisal. The effects of socialization on affective labelling are of particular interest in reference to the emotions of anxiety and anger, as these two affective responses are commonly associated with conflict generated arousal (Holmes & Miller, 1976).

**Anxiety and Anger**

Anxiety is uniformly recognized as a fear-related emotion, an expression of apprehension, or the expectation
of fear without a specifically attributed cause (Dienstbier, 1978). The various theoretical orientations are consistent in proposing that the experience of anxiety requires some form of cognitive interplay, whether through an interactive feedback modification process or a direct dependency on cognitive appraisal. Differentiated emotions theory postulates that the primary emotion of fear must first be aroused. Anxiety is then created by the cognitive pairing of fear with another primary emotion such as anger. The choice of the second affect depends on a cognitive evaluation of the situation and determines the type or quality of the anxiety experienced (Izard, 1978). The arousal-cognition theories contend that an undifferentiated arousal occurs which requires the cognitive-interpretive system to appraise and label the arousal as anxiety (Mandler, 1975). In short, regardless of theoretical preference, the experience of anxiety is hypothesized to be in some way influenced by cognitions and, thus, by the effects of socialization.

Similarly, anger is commonly conceived as a product of cognitive events. (See, for example, Novaco, 1976 and Averill, 1978). Averill is among the strongest proponents of this position, stating that anger, like all emotions, is a "social construction...whose meaning can only be fully understood by including a social level of analysis" (p. 8). While Averill concedes that physiological arousal may be present, it plays a small and unimportant role as a
precipitating factor. According to Averill, acute anger, as opposed to chronic anger, performs a social function by regulating interpersonal interactions through the threat of retaliation for perceived wrongs. The prohibited behaviours or wrongdoings, which justify anger are a reflection of social values and norms concerning appropriate interpersonal behaviour. The expression of anger in response to socially recognized violations is hypothesized to inhibit future violations and is, therefore, viewed as a positive adaptive response for the preservation of the social structure. Consequently, the provocation of anger arousal is dependent upon a cognitive process of evaluation that has integrated cultural norms and values.

In a survey conducted by Averill (1978), respondents were asked to identify situational factors which were most commonly associated with their experience of anger. It is interesting to note that the variables that were most frequently associated with anger arousal are relevant to intimate conflict. For instance, Averill found that 50% of the respondents' anger was directed at a loved one or friend and 28% at an acquaintance, as opposed to 22% at a stranger or someone who is known well and disliked. From this Averill concludes that while anger is usually associated with hate, "...the data suggest that anger is more often associated with love" (p. 44). In addition, half of the subjects reported that the instigation was of a voluntary and unjustified nature suggesting an element of moral fault
or blame, a perception which implies the right to judge the other’s moral behaviour and intentions. Although frustration was the most frequently mentioned instigator, it did not appear sufficient in itself to generate anger. The cause of the frustration appeared to be the necessary factor. Seventy-three percent of subjects reported the cause of frustration as the violation of important personal wishes and expectations. The second most common cause of frustration was the violation of socially accepted ways of behaving, while the third-ranked cause was the loss of personal pride or self-esteem. Overall, Averill’s results suggest that intimate relationships are the most prevalent cause of anger arousal which is consistent with the notion that intimate pairings are also the most conflicted.

The motivation for anger, which has typically been considered as destructive and antagonistic, may be less malevolent than previously thought (Tavris, 1982). Averill’s subjects reported that the most frequent motive for anger was to assert their authority or independence or to improve their image and, secondly, to strengthen their relationship with the instigator. Novaco (1976) concurs that image management and improved relations are two of several positive functions of anger. In his work on the regulation and control of anger, Novaco describes anger as an energizing experience that invigorates individuals’ actions and behaviours and strengthens their resolve to act. In addition, Novaco states that healthy relationships
require the appropriate expression of anger between partners rather than suppressing these feelings, allowing them to accumulate and possibly erupt at a later time.

As reported by Averill’s subjects, anger may also have an image-enhancing or self-promotional function. Individuals who are angry present an image of potency, assertiveness, and a willingness to act. These attributes of authority and strength are socially valued responses to provocation compared to the response of anxiety manifested by withdrawal or apathy. Hence, angry persons convey a desirable social image especially when their anger produces constructive solutions to the problem. Novaco further argues that anger increases a person’s sense of potency and personal control. When an individual experiences feelings of powerlessness or lack of self-esteem, the arousal of anger may help to reduce these feelings and promote a sense of agency and control which, in turn, facilitates attempts to master the situation. Thus, anger may also serve a defensive function by overriding feelings of anxiety and vulnerability. According to Novaco, anger and anxiety are related emotions, in that an anxious response to a fear stimulus or threat can be cognitively relabelled as anger. Consequently, these two emotions would be expected to be positively correlated in self-reports of affective responses. Novaco contends that the experience of anger is preferable to anxiety as it is the less distressing of the two emotions. By projecting the conflict onto an external
source, anger can supplant feelings of insecurity and helplessness with more socially valued feelings of potency and control while simultaneously lessening the individual's subjective distress.

Sex Role Consonance

The positive attributes associated with anger are also those qualities associated with masculinity or the male sex role. The traditional male stereotype portrays men as dominant, aggressive, agentic, and nonexpressive (Doyle, 1985; Greenglass, 1980; Hoyenga & Hoyenga, 1979; Stock, 1984). To remain consistent with society's expectation of inexpressiveness, men are limited in their emotional range, excluding emotions which would show vulnerability or express interpersonal needs (Stock, 1984). Anger, however, is consonant with the male sex role as it conveys many of the qualities, such as dominance and agency, that are socially desirable in men. Predictably, anxiety or any expression of fear of vulnerability is not considered appropriate male behaviour as it indicates a weakness or a lack of control.

Holmes and Miller (1976) point out that people often respond to threats with anxiety. Similarly, Novaco (1976) notes that people who witness anger often respond with fear. Given a feminine stereotype of passive submission, women would be more likely to experience anxiety in response to threat or anger than men. Studies cited by Greenglass (1982) consistently found that girls and young women self-report more anxiety than boys and young men. These results,
however, could be a reflection of the greater willingness of women to report anxiety as it is consonant with their sex role expectations of passivity, obedience, dependence, and expressiveness (Doyle, 1985; Greenglass, 1982; Hoyenga & Hoyenga, 1977). Women are permitted to express fear and vulnerability as their sex role does not require agency or control but rather the contrary behaviours of powerlessness and dependence. In a correlational study between value priorities and gender roles, Feather (1984) demonstrated a significant positive correlation between masculinity scores and a greater importance assigned to values classified as agentic/instrumental. Conversely, femininity scores were positively correlated with a greater importance assigned to values of a communal/expressive classification. Thus, women may not only value their emotional expressiveness but may be able to express a greater range of emotions without fear of compromising sex role expectations.

In a review of gender differences in aggressive behaviour, Frodi, Macaulay, and Thome (1977) conclude that there is evidence to suggest that affective responses to aggressive cues or provocation may differ in men and women, with men experiencing more anger and women more anxiety. In addition, women also appear to experience more anxiety in association with aggressive behaviours than men, which may act as an inhibitor of female aggression. In a more recent review, White (1983) supports these conclusions, adding that studies that have found gender differences in anger arousal
and aggression suggest that sex role expectations may be the greatest differentiating variable.

Further evidence for gender differences in affect was found in a recent study by Dutton and Aron (1984). Subjects responded to conflict scenarios which depicted same-sex dyads in a Milgram obedience paradigm. Although the study was not designed to test for gender differences in affective responding, the authors found that in the high arousal condition, males exhibited a high positive correlation (.62) between self-reports of arousal and anger but no significant correlation between arousal and anxiety (.24). Conversely, women exhibited a high positive correlation between arousal and anxiety (.71) and no significant correlation between arousal and anger (.19). These preliminary data suggest the probability of a gender-based difference in affective response in the experience of anger and anxiety, and the utility of further research to clarify the effects of sex role socialization as well as relevant situational factors.

**Power**

One situational variable which may influence the labelling of conflict-generated arousal is power. In reference to interpersonal relationships, Huston (1983) defines power "...as the ability to achieve ends through influence" (p. 170). Power may be the differentiating variable between anger and anxiety (Leventhal, 1977), in that the possession of power may promote anger arousal while the predominant emotion associated with a lack of power may
be anxiety. Novaco (1976) postulates that anger and anxiety are a function of the individual’s perception of his or her coercive power relative to the source of provocation. As the perception of power decreases relative to the other, the experience of vulnerability and insecurity will increase. Similarly, Berkowitz (cited in Russell & Mehrabian, 1974) contends that the affect of fear will predominate over anger as a person’s feeling of power over the frustrating agent lessens.

In their circumplex model of emotion, Russell and Mehrabian (1974) have defined three primary dimensions of emotion: pleasure, arousal, and dominance. While power is the ability to influence another for particular ends, dominance refers to a continuous imbalance of power whereby one individual maintains a power advantage over another across time and events (Huston, 1983). In terms of the three dimensions, anger is defined as high in arousal, low in pleasure, and high in dominance. Anxiety is defined as high in arousal, low in pleasure, and low in dominance. Thus, according to this model, anger and anxiety differ only along the dimension of dominance, being bipolar opposites.

Similar findings were reported in a study of group hierarchy position and emotions. Plutchik and Landau (1973) found that positions of high dominance within the group were significantly correlated with feelings of anger and joy, while feelings of fear and cautiousness were significantly correlated with positions of low dominance. These data
suggest the role of power as a distinguishing factor between the labelling of arousal as anger or anxiety. However, Plutchik and Landau leave several methodological issues unspecified, weakening their conclusions. The measure of dominance employed was simply the subjects' self-report of their position on a 10-step ladder in relation to the other group members. However, each of the four groups was relatively homogeneous in terms of status (e.g., two professional and two non-professional groups) and the authors did not attempt to manipulate dominance within any of the groups. Furthermore, the purpose of the group and the nature of its interactions were not specified.

Self-reports of affect were obtained by administering an eight emotion index to participants during the third session of each group meeting. However, the subjects were not responding to any particular stimulus, but rather just reporting their feelings at the time. Unfortunately, the authors do not distinguish between the chronicity or acuteness of the affect reported. Therefore, it is unclear if these scores on anger or fear indicate a chronic state or a situation-specific response. In addition, while the self-reports of affect were obtained in the third week of group meetings, participants did not report their self-perceived dominance positions until the twentieth week of meetings, rendering the connection between the two measures questionable. Therefore, any relationship the authors may have found between power and the self-report of anger or
fear remains ambiguous in light of these methodological issues.

Power may bias the affective labelling process in favour of those emotions which are consonant with the expectations associated with positions of power. High power social roles may carry with them the expectation that the individual in the role behave in an agentic and assertive manner. Thus, being in a position of power may prime an individual to use emotional labels that are consistent with the expectations of taking action and being in control. Anger expresses these agentic and assertive qualities and may be the preferred emotional response for individuals of high power. Anxiety, however, is manifested by withdrawal and apathy, behaviours which are inconsistent and inappropriate with expectations of agency. Individuals in high power roles may be unlikely to express anxiety due to its inappropriate implications of fear and indecisiveness. Therefore, power and anger may be positively correlated due to the consonance in their behavioural and affective attributes.

The ubiquity of power in intimate conflict constitutes a further basis for gender differences in conflict-generated affect. Women have been consistently relegated to positions of less power relative to men (Doyle, 1985; Greenglass, 1982; Lips & Colwill, 1978). Although there have been some changes in recent years, power resources such as legitimate, expert, coercive, and reward power (French & Raven, 1959)
are still more readily accessible to men than to women. The remaining resource which has traditionally been within the feminine domain, referent power, is that which bases a woman’s power on her sexuality and interpersonal qualities. Although women are not without the ability to influence others, the inequitable distribution of power resources between men and women has created a power imbalance which has long favoured men. In fact, male dominated societies are so prevalent that patriarchy is considered a cultural universal (Doyle, 1985). Furthermore, while men possess greater power, they also value power in relationships more than women (Elizabeth & Stock, 1982, cited in Wodom, 1984). Women place greater value on emotional expressiveness, revealing their feelings and needs, and thereby increasing their vulnerability. Consequently, women place themselves in a less powerful position due to their expressiveness, while men retain a power advantage in remaining inexpressive in their interpersonal relationships.

If the labelling of arousal as anger is a function of the degree of power relative to the other, men may be more likely than women to label arousal as anger. Women, on the other hand, who are usually in a position of less power, may be more likely to label arousal as anxiety. Therefore, an imbalance of power, as a result of differential socialization practices, may promote gender differences in affective responses to intimate conflict.
Hypotheses

This study examines power and gender differences in affect as a function of 1) sex role stereotyping and 2) inequitable power distribution. Five hypotheses concerning these issues are addressed.

Hypothesis Ia: Based on the male sex role as defined in the literature, anger appears to be a sex role consonant affective response for men. The female sex role is, conversely, defined as less conducive to anger arousal. Accordingly, it is predicted that men will self-report more anger in response to an intimate conflict scenario than will women.

Hypothesis Ib: The female sex role implies that anxiety is a sex role consonant response for women. However, anxiety is not compatible with the agentic aspects of the male sex role. Therefore, it is predicted that women will self-report more anxiety in response to an intimate conflict scenario than will men.

Hypothesis IIa: Theoretical speculation indicates that the balance of power may determine the experience of conflict-generated arousal as anger or anxiety. Consequently, it is predicted that subjects in the high power condition will self-report more anger than those in the low power condition.

Hypothesis IIb: For subjects in the low power condition the opposite affective response is predicted. That is,
subjects in the low power condition will self-report more anxiety than those in the high power condition.

Hypothesis III: The interaction of gender and power is difficult to predict since the predominance of one variable over the other is not known. Socialization may have an overriding effect due to its chronic and pervasive nature which a group situation may exacerbate by increasing the salience of sex role appropriate behaviours. Moreover, changing a subject’s self-perception of power may not be successfully manipulated through a simple short term procedure. Overcoming the effects of socialization may require more sophisticated manipulations of power resources. However, studies of leadership behaviour in mixed sex groups (Lockheed & Hall, cited in Lips & Colwill, 1978) have shown that women whose power or group status has been increased through prior experience with the group task, show an increase in leadership and assertive behaviours. Although these studies looked at changes in behaviour, they suggest that a similar power manipulation may also cause changes in affect. Thus, it is predicted that a strong power manipulation may override socialization effects and result in similar anger and anxiety scores in both the low and high power conditions for men and women.

In addition, gender is conceptualized not only as a biological distinction, but, as well, as a reflection of the strength of sex role orientation. The Interpersonal Adjective Scale (Wiggins & Holzmuller, 1978) provides a
measure of two styles of interpersonal interaction, dominance and nurturance, which correspond to the sex role stereotypes of masculinity and femininity respectively (Spence, 1985). Since individuals vary within gender in terms of their sex role orientations, it may be the case that participants' scores on these two subscales correlate highly with reactions of anger and anxiety despite their biological gender. Thus, this scale is included as an additional control measure with the subsequent predictions that self-ratings on the dominance subscale will correlate with those of anger and self-ratings on the nurturance subscale will correlate with those of anxiety.

The power variable in this study was manipulated by assigning subjects at random to either a group leader (high power) or group member (low power) condition. The group leader was given legitimate power by being held responsible for the completion of a group report. In addition, the leader had coercive power by having the final say as to the content of the report and the right to reject the contribution of a group member if he or she judged it to be extraneous. The manipulation of coercive power is a necessary addition as Novaco claims that coercion is the specific type of power that distinguishes between the experience of anger or anxiety. However, at this stage of the research, disentangling the various types of power bases and their potential effects remains a secondary concern.
until the relationship between power and affect has been more closely examined.

The stimulus materials were presented on audiotape rather than videotape to increase the subject's involvement, as they require the subject to imagine the conflict being portrayed. In addition, participants were told that the conflicts were not a dramatization, but actual arguments taped in the home of a conflicted couple. These procedures were intended to heighten the subjects' arousal. Although subjects would be listening to the conflicts as a non-involved third party, previous studies using this format (Browning & Dutton, 1983; Dutton & Aron, 1984) have successfully generated arousal as well as gender differences in the affective labels attached to the arousal. A third party observation format allows for the creation of a power-based cognitive set which is free from the confounds of interaction with another party. Thus, the influence of this cognitive set on affective self-reports can be measured independent of the subject's direct involvement in a conflicted interaction.
METHOD

SUBJECTS

The participants were 60 male and 60 female undergraduate students recruited from undergraduate psychology courses who received course credit for their participation. The mean age of the subjects was 20.0 with a range of 17 to 38 years, with the mean age equal to 20.00 for males and 19.86 for females.

MEASURES

Subjects were administered the following tests either individually or in groups during a single session lasting approximately one hour. (All test materials are presented in Appendices A - F).

1. Affect Checklist. Prior to and following exposure to the conflict stimulus, subjects were administered an affect checklist comprised of 16 bipolar adjective pairs on a nine point continuum (Mehrabian & Russell, cited in Russell & Mehrabian, 1974). In order to obtain more stable measures of anger and anxiety, ratings on specific combinations of bipolar pairs were averaged to give single, global measures for anger and anxiety. For example, anger was scored by averaging the ratings of hostile, annoyed, irritated, and angry. (For a discussion of the psychometric properties of the scale, refer to Russell and Mehrabian, 1974).

2). Interpersonal Adjective Scale. All subjects were administered the short form of the Interpersonal Adjective
Scale. This questionnaire consists of eight scales that measure dimensions of interpersonal behaviour such as dominance and nurturance. These two dimensions have traditionally been considered as masculine and feminine behaviours respectively. Subjects' scores on these two subscales measured their use of these sex role stereotyped behaviours in an interpersonal domain and, thus, were used as an indication of adherence to stereotypic sex roles. Participants were asked to rate the applicability of 64 self-descriptive adjectives on an eight-point Likert-type scale ranging from "extremely inaccurate" to "extremely accurate". All of the eight subscales have reliability coefficients of >.80. (For validity coefficients and a further discussion of the psychometric properties, refer to Wiggins and Broughton, 1985).

3. **Manipulation Check Questionnaire.** The Manipulation Check Questionnaire consisted of seven questions. In order to check the power manipulation, the first two questions asked subjects to identify their group assignment as either leader or group member and, as such, to rate on a nine point scale how responsible they were for the outcome of the final group report. Verbal feedback from participants in a pilot study suggested that the term "power" had a socially undesirable connotation. Participants felt reluctant to use the term "power"; apparently they preferred an egalitarian posture when thinking about group leadership. Although their thoughts as
reported in their verbal feedback were consistent with their anticipated role of group leader, they felt awkward reporting that they had "power over" the other group members. Therefore, the term responsibility was chosen instead of power in order to avoid this social desirability effect. The next two questions asked subjects to rate on a nine point scale how much power the woman had and how much power the man had. Although the initiator provoked the conflict with angry accusations of infidelity, the tapes were scripted so that neither party appeared more powerful or dominant in terms of verbal aggression or moral stance. Thus, these questions were included to check for equality in aggressive behaviour and moral position. In addition, familiarity with the conflict was considered a potentially significant variable in that greater familiarity may cause a stronger or divergent affective response. In order to check for the effect of this individual difference variable, ratings on participant's familiarity were also obtained.

The last two questions required subjects to rate the realism of the tape and to identify the conflict issue from a list of four alternatives.

**APPARATUS AND FILM SELECTION**

Four audiotapes depicting conflict scenarios between heterosexual intimates were developed in which the couples were portrayed by a professional actor and actress. The scenarios were scripted allowing the experimenter control
over all aspects of the conflict such as the expression of the power dynamics between the dyad, the level of verbal aggression expressed, and the issue of conflict. This was accomplished by monitoring three aspects of the interaction: 1) voice level, 2) amount of time talking, and 3) one party interrupting the other. Both parties were approximately equal in the number of their interruptions, amount of time talking, and in the level of their voices so that neither member would appear dominant by virtue of greater verbal aggression. At first, the two conflict issues of money and sexual jealousy were chosen based on the finding that these topics constitute the majority of conflicts between intimates (Holmes & Miller, 1976; Straus et al, 1980). A pilot study was conducted in order to see if patterns of affective responses varied depending on whether money or sexual jealousy was presented as the conflict stimulus. Four preliminary, experimental quality audiotapes were produced which varied in terms of which conflict (money or sexual jealousy) was portrayed and the gender of who initiated the conflict. Thus, two of the four tapes depicted a conflict concerning money matters while the other two were concerned with the issue of sexual jealousy. Within each conflict issue, the tapes varied as to the gender of the initiator; in one scene the man started the argument, in the other the woman did. Participants were asked to provide their reactions to listening to one of the tapes chosen at random by completing the affect check list,
realism ratings (i.e., how realistic the scenario was) on a nine point scale (see Appendix F), and content recognition for which subjects identified the conflict issue by indicating their choice from four alternatives. The results were that all subjects clearly recognized whether the conflict was about money or sexual jealousy. In order to determine if type of conflict influenced affective reports, a 2(gender) X 2(tape) between-subjects univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. No differences on affective responses or ratings of realism were found between conflict issues. There were no main effects or interactions related to the type of conflict issue. Since these pilot study results revealed that affective reports were similar for conflicts about money and sexual jealousy, and in order to economize on experimental resources, one topic of conflict, sexual jealousy, was chosen to be presented to participants.

The audiotapes were presented using a Sony Stereo Cassette Recorder and four sets of individual headphones. Both tapes were between two and a half and three minutes in duration. Sexual jealousy was depicted in tape 1 in which the male initiates the conflict by expressing concern and mistrust over his partner's flirtatious behaviour at a party the night before. Conversely, tape 2 portrays the woman as the jealous partner who initiates the same confrontation. After a gradual escalation of verbal aggression, the scene ends with the jealous partner leaving the room. The
scenarios were scripted by the experimenter specifically so that neither partner in the scene was portrayed as dominant; both the male and the female were approximately equal in terms of their verbal aggression, length of time talking, and voice level. In addition, neither the initiator nor the recipient was portrayed as morally superior or without fault. Pretesting found ratings of realism (M = 7.50) and arousal (M = 5.58) on a nine point scale that were sufficiently high to warrant their use as appropriate stimulus materials.

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

The design was a 2 X 2 X 2 factorial with power (high, low), gender (male, female), and tape (male-initiated, female-initiated) as factors (see Figure 3). All sessions were conducted by a female experimenter with subjects randomly assigned to one of the four possible power and tape conditions.

Subjects participated in mixed gender groups of three or four. Upon arriving at the laboratory, subjects were seated as a group in a large common room from which extended four smaller rooms extended. The experimenter explained that the study was concerned with people’s perceptions of intimate conflict and that they would be required to perform three tasks: 1) to listen to a conflict between a man and a woman 2) to answer a series of questionnaires one of which would ask them to describe themselves and the other to state
their reactions to the conflict and 3) to write a group report about the conflict which would consist of answering four questions.

**Power Manipulation**

The experimenter informed the subjects that one person out of the group would be assigned at random to be the group leader (high power condition, see Appendix C). The leader would have veto control over the contents of the final report. He or she would decide the order of topics to be discussed as well as the length of the discussion. In addition, the leader could assign a group member to act as the secretary and write out the final report. If subjects were not assigned as the leader but rather as group members (low power condition, see Appendix D), they were encouraged to express their opinions on all topics discussed but to comply with the decisions of the leader. The subjects' attention was then drawn to the four small rooms which extended off the common room. The experimenter explained that each subject would choose an individual room in which he or she would listen to the conflict. On the desk in each room, subjects would find a set of headphones and several questionnaires. The first sheet of paper would tell them their group assignment as either leader or group member and review their role as such in the group discussion. In this way it was made apparent to the subject that the assignment of leader was a random process, determined by the subject’s own room selection.
The power assignment was, in fact, determined by group rather than by subject. That is, all subjects within each group were given the same power assignment so that a group consisted of either four leaders (high power) or four group members (low power). Subjects were not aware of this, however, as they received their group assignment when seated alone in individual rooms.

The experimenter explained to the group that after listening to the conflict and answering the questionnaires on the desk, they were to regroup in the common room and begin their group report. At this time, the participants' questions, if any, were answered and they were given a consent form to sign.

The Interpersonal Adjective Scale (IAS) was first administered to subjects while they were still seated as a group in the common room. Subjects were told that this questionnaire would ask them to generally describe themselves. After completing the IAS, subjects were asked to select a room and seat themselves at the desk. They were instructed to first read through their group assignment sheet carefully after which subjects were asked individually if they clearly understood their role within the group. Subjects were then administered an Affect Checklist.

**Audiotape Exposure**

When all subjects had completed the checklist, the experimenter explained that they were going to hear an
actual conflict between intimates that had been taped in their home as part of the marital counselling that they were receiving at that time. The subjects were further instructed that, after they had listened to the conflict, they were to complete the remaining two questionnaires which were turned face down on the desk (the first of which was a second Affect Checklist followed by a Manipulation Check Questionnaire). The experimenter then closed the doors to the individual rooms and participants listened to the taped conflict. After they had completed the two questionnaires, subjects re-entered the common room and seated themselves again at the table anticipating a group discussion and the writing of a report. When all subjects had reconvened in the common room, they were informed that the study was now over and that they would not be required to write a group report. The experimenter provided a complete written and oral debriefing explaining the nature of the experiment and the minor deceptions involved, and any questions were answered.
RESULTS

POWER MANIPULATION. As a check of the power manipulation, subjects were asked to rate on a nine point scale how responsible they were for the outcome of the final report (see Appendix F). A comparison of the leader (high power) condition with the group member (low power) condition showed a significant effect, $F(1,118) = 1.95, p< .006$. Subjects in the high power condition reported a significantly higher degree of responsibility than did subjects in the low power condition with means of 7.05 (SD = 1.70) and 5.95 (SD = 1.22) respectively.

AUDIOTAPE RATINGS. All subjects correctly identified the topic of conflict as sexual jealousy for both the male-initiated (tape 1) and the female-initiated (tape 2) scenarios. Ratings of realism on a nine point scale did not show a significant difference between tapes, $F(1,118) = 1.27, p=.362$, with means of 6.55 for the male-initiated conflict and 7.03 for the female-initiated conflict. Subjects’ ratings of interest on a nine point scale were consistently high on both the preconflict ($M = 7.24$) as well as the postconflict ($M = 7.23$) measures. Although there were no gender differences in interest ratings for both pre and postconflict measures (preconflict; $F(1,118) = 1.34, p=.267$ and postconflict; $F(1,118) = 1.01, p=.979$), the female-initiated conflict was rated as more interesting,
F(1,118) = 1.78, p=.029, than its male counterpart. In addition, a main effect for tape, F(1,112) = 35.21, p=.001, was found for ratings of the initiator's power. When the male-initiated the conflict expressing jealousy, the woman was seen as more powerful with means on a nine point scale of 5.08 and 4.00 for the male-initiated and female-initiated conflicts respectively. Similarly, ratings of the man's power showed a main effect for tape, F(1,112) = 57.41, p=.001, with higher ratings of the man's power for the female-initiated conflict (M = 6.32,) than for the male-initiated conflict (M = 4.93).

Both tapes generated a significant and equivalent increase in arousal, F(1,59) = 8.53, p<.005 for tape 1 and F(1,59) = 8.58, p<.005 for tape 2. Although subjects who listened to the female-initiated conflict reported significantly higher arousal prior to exposure to the tape, the mean difference scores for pre and postconflict arousal did not vary significantly between the male-initiated conflict (M = 1.10) and the female-initiated conflict (M = .89).

To summarize, both tapes were rated as comparatively realistic and arousing, clearly depicting a conflict about sexual jealousy. Subjects were asked to rate the relative power of the man and the woman in order to confirm that one was not perceived as more powerful than the other simply because they initiated and/or escalated the argument. The tapes were scripted so that both parties would appear equal
in terms of verbal aggression and neither party would appear fearful of the other. However, subjects' responses to this question revealed a more sophisticated interpretation of the power question than expected. The initiator of the conflict who expressed concern about the fidelity of the partner was seen as less powerful than the spouse. This was true for both tapes regardless of gender of initiator. These results suggest that subjects were responding more to the psychological power dynamics of the conflict rather than to overt verbal aggression, indicating that the latter dynamics were not salient and, thus, relatively equal. In addition, subjects' interest ratings were high on both pre and postconflict measures for the male-initiated and female-initiated conflict, although the female-initiated conflict was rated as more interesting.

PRECONFLICT AFFECT RATINGS. Subjects' affective ratings prior to exposure to the conflict stimuli were analyzed for preconflict differences. A 2 X 2 between Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with power and gender as factors was conducted on the 16 affect items. No significant effects were found for gender or for the power X gender interaction. A significant effect was found, however, for power condition, \( F(16, 101) = 2.13, p=.012 \). A series of 16 t-tests on the affect check list items found that one item, hostility, was significantly different, \( F(1,118) = 1.90, p=.015 \). Subjects in the low power
condition reported higher ratings on a nine point scale (M = 2.68) of hostility than did those in the high power condition (M = 1.95). No significant differences were found on other related items such as angry, aggressive, irritated or annoyed. These results suggest that being placed in a low power position generated some negative affect of hostility but of a minimal amount so as to influence the ratings of only one item and not other items which conveyed a similar affect. These findings also provide further support for the effectiveness of the power manipulation. Thus, affect check list ratings prior to exposure to the conflict stimulus did not differ by gender x power or by gender alone. In fact, the rank order of mean ratings of affect as well as the mean ratings themselves were very similar between gender (see Table 1): men reported means of 1.83 and 5.32 for anger and anxiety respectively and women reported similar means of 2.02 and 4.88. In addition, preconflict ratings on the anger and anxiety clusters (as described below) did not differ by gender. Thus, subjects differed only between power conditions and, again, only on the one item of hostility.

ANGER CLUSTER RATINGS. There was concern about the possibility that the reliance on the one anger item in the check list as the sole measure of anger could be more a reflection of a participants' idiosyncratic use of the "anger" mood label rather than the participants' general
feeling of anger. To correct for idiosyncratic or biased use, it was decided to follow the procedure used by Russell & Mehrabian (1974) to cluster items in order to obtain more global, stable, and conceptually useful items. An anger cluster was obtained by computing the average ratings of four items from the affect check list: angry, hostile, annoyed and irritated. These items were chosen using two criteria: 1) the cluster items must be conceptually compatible with anger (e.g., the items elated and sad were not appropriate) and 2) of those conceptually related items, the three which demonstrated the highest significant Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients with anger were included in the cluster. Consequently, hostile, irritated, and annoyed were seen as conceptually relevant and demonstrated significant correlations of $r=.67$, $p=.0001$; $r=.57$, $p=.0001$; and $r=.55$, $p=.0001$, respectively, and, with the anger item, constituted the anger cluster.

Anger measures were obtained on both the pre and postconflict affect questionnaires. To analyze for an increase in anger after exposure to the conflict stimulus, a 2 X 2 X 2 between-subjects Univariate Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) with power, gender, and tape as factors was performed on the postconflict anger scores (anger2x) with the preconflict anger scores (anger1x) as a covariate. Since the anger cluster included a host item that showed a preconflict difference, the ANCOVA design was employed to control for the possible influence of preconflict
differences on the postconflict anger cluster reports. The resultant ANCOVA summary table is presented in Table 2.

A significant effect was found for the covariate angerlx, \( F(1,110) = 10.17, p=.002 \), indicating the influence of the elevated preconflict hostility scores. Significant main effects were obtained for power, \( F(1,110) = 4.13, p=.045 \), with low power \( D(M = 4.91) \) being greater than high power \( M = 4.15 \) in anger ratings, and for gender as well, \( F(1,110) = 8.53, p=.004 \), with female participants' anger ratings \( M = 5.00 \) being greater than male participants' \( M = 4.06 \). There was no significant main effect for tape. A significant three way interaction effect was also obtained for power x gender x tape, \( F(1,110) = 7.96, p=.006 \). This interaction effect was further analyzed using a simple main effects procedure. Analyses of the simple main effects of power x tape for both male and female subjects indicated no significant effects for males but a significant power x tape interaction for females, \( F(1,110) = 5.81, p=.025 \). Further analyses of tape in both the high and low power conditions revealed a significant effect for tape, \( F(1,110) = 8.61, p=.005 \), in the low power condition only. Thus, the locus of interaction occurred in the low power condition for female subjects who were exposed to a male-initiated conflict. These results are presented in Figure 1.

ANXIETY CLUSTER RATINGS. A measure of anxiety was calculated by creating an anxiety cluster which averaged the
ratings of four items from the affect check list: anxious, tense, nervous, and fearful. The criteria for selection of items were the same as those for the anger measure; 1) conceptual compatibility with anxiety and 2) significant Pearson product-moment correlations with anxiety. Tense, nervous and fearful yielded significant coefficients of \( r = .54, p = .0001 \), \( r = .41, p = .0001 \) and \( r = .41, p = .0001 \), respectively and, thus, together with the anxiety item, composed the cluster for the anxiety measure. Again, anxiety measures were obtained for both the pre and postconflict affect check list. Changes in anxiety ratings were analyzed using a \( 2 \times 2 \times 2 \) between-subjects Univariate Analysis of Covariance on postconflict anxiety ratings (anxious2x) with preconflict ratings (anxious1x) as a covariate. The resultant ANCOVA summary table is presented in Table 3.

A significant main effect was found for gender, \( F(1,110) = 6.77, p = .011 \). Females (\( M = 5.32 \)) reported more anxiety than males (\( M = 4.52 \)). In addition, a significant power x tape interaction was obtained, \( F(1,110) = 5.50, p = .021 \). Simple main effects analyses revealed a significant effect for power, \( F(1,110) = 8.05, p = .01 \). Subjects in the high power condition reported significantly less anxiety (\( M = 4.44 \)) than did those in the low power condition (\( M = 5.41 \)) when exposed to the male-initiated conflict. However, a similar effect for power was not found for subjects who
listened to the female-initiated conflict. These results are presented in Figure 2.

In addition, no significant correlations were found between participants' ratings of familiarity with the conflict and their scores on the anger and anxiety clusters.

IAS data

In order to check for a relationship between dominance and anger and nurturance and anxiety, partial correlations were conducted with the preconflict anger and anxiety clusters partialled out. A significant but low correlation was found between dominance and anger for females ($r = .26$, $p = .048$) but not for males. Further analyses by gender and power found, again, a significant but low correlation between dominance and anger, but only for males in the high power condition. None of the correlations between nurturance and anxiety was significant.
DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to determine the roles of power and gender in influencing emotional or affective responses to scenes of intimate conflict. The results of this study provide partial support for the hypotheses that the variables of power and gender generate a set of cognitions unique to that role of high or low power, or of being male or female and, in so doing, influence the process by which we determine or label our emotions.

EFFECTS OF POWER

The present results, while contradicting the hypothesis that subjects in the high power condition, would report more anger than those in the low power condition support the basic contention that variations in the amount of power do influence anger. Specifically, the opposite effect to that hypothesized was found with the low power position reporting significantly more anger. These results may be explained in terms of the participant's lack of involvement in the conflict and the subsequent degree of threat associated with the expression of anger.

The original hypothesis was developed from a literature that assumed that the person of either high or low power was one member of the dyad in conflict, (i.e., had a direct or personal involvement in the conflict itself.) A position of high power generates a cognitive set of dominance, agency, and control which is consonant with
the productive and agentic aspects of the experience and expression of anger. Thus, when directly involved in a conflict, those in a high power position are more likely to experience their arousal as anger and, given their higher status relative to their opponent, feel in a safe position to express this. Conversely, those in a low power position assume the cognitions of less control, ineffectiveness, and subordination, cognitions which are consonant with the experience of anxiety. Although anger may be an appropriate response to a conflict situation, the threat of negative consequences from a high power opponent may inhibit the labelling and expression of anger and, instead, reconfirm an anxiety response as prompted by cognitions of low power.

In the present study, however, subjects were not directly involved in the conflict but, rather, were uninvolved third party observers who listened to a conflict between an unidentified couple. The indirect involvement feature of the design allowed participants the opportunity to express feelings of anger in a safe environment, even when they were in a low power condition. Thus, the low power participants may have felt safe in labelling and expressing their arousal as anger as well as anxiety: an arousal caused in part by their feelings of ineffectiveness and lack of control when faced with a conflict situation. In addition, low power participants were slightly angered by receiving a less preferred group assignment as indicated by their elevated preconflict hostility scores which may have
contributed to their higher ratings of anger. These findings are consistent with Novaco’s (1976) and Dienstbier’s (1978) contention that the labelling of arousal as anger or anxiety depends on the perception of power relative to the source of conflict. As the perception of power lessens, the experience of anxiety increases. Thus, due to their lack of direct involvement in the conflict, low power subjects felt safe in labelling their arousal as and expressing feelings of, not only anxiety, but anger as well. Had they been directly involved in the conflict, ratings of anger, but not for anxiety, for this group may have diminished significantly, reflecting the perception of the situation as unsafe. In contrast, high power subjects who were neither angered by their group assignment nor personally involved in the conflict responded overall with less anger.

An analysis of the anxiety ratings found a power x tape interaction effect with the locus of interaction occurring in response to the male-initiated conflict. Subjects who listened to this particular conflict demonstrated a significant power difference with the high power participants reporting less anxiety than low power participants as was predicted. Cognitions of control, agency, and dominance as a result of a high power group assignment may have been sufficient to offset feelings of anxiety, an affective response incongruent with fulfilling the expectations of group leader. Conversely, low power
subjects with an opposing set of cognitions (i.e. loss of control, ineffectiveness, and subordination) who were assigned a position consonant with the experience and expression of anxiety reported more of this affect. While these results support the hypothesized effect of power on reports of anxiety, this pattern did not hold for the female-initiated conflict. Men reported somewhat less anxiety in the high power condition but women did not show any appreciable change in their anxiety ratings across power conditions.

It is not clear why the power condition would affect anxiety ratings for the male-initiated but not the female-initiated conflict. One could speculate that the source of anxiety differed between conflict scenarios, one of which generated an anxiety which was amenable to a power manipulation and one which did not. The male-initiated conflict may have generated anxiety due to the perception of a male aggressing, a fear which may be alleviated by the high power cognition of control and dominance. In contrast, the anxiety generated by the female-initiated conflict may have been less a fear response to a female aggressing than a fear for the safety of the woman, the stability of the relationship, or the stereotypic perception of the female as overemotional or hysterical, perceptions which may be less influenced by feelings of high or low power on the part of an observer. This issue of differential perceptions of conflict by gender of initiator or aggressor has also become
a concern in the study of wife assault. National surveys in both Canada and the United States (Kennedy & Dutton, 1987; Straus, 1980) have found that women perform an equal number of violent acts toward their spouses in comparison to men. The physical consequences of female violence, however, are negligible in comparison to male violence raising the question as to whether or not female violence is perceived differently than male violence. If differences in the perception of violence as a function of the gender of the initiator do exist, this may help to explain the differences in anxiety reactions in response to a female versus a male-initiated conflict reported here. In any event, these data suggest that anxiety-producing perceptions of conflict may differ depending on the gender of the initiator and emphasize the importance of this issue for future research.

In summary, anger responses to conflict stimuli as a function of power may depend, in part, on the safety of the situation for anger expression as determined by a direct or indirect involvement in the conflict. Furthermore, the experience of anxiety appears to be lessened by the cognitions of a high power position but only in response to a male-initiated conflict, suggesting differential perceptions of conflict as a function of the gender of the initiator as a topic for further research.
EFFECTS OF GENDER

It was hypothesized that men would report more anger than women since anger is a consonant affect with the male sex role of dominance, aggression, and agency. However, the opposite effect for gender was found with women reporting more anger than men. Similarly, women also reported significantly more anxiety than did men. Although this finding was hypothesized, it was based on the rationale that anxiety is an affect consonant with the female sex role. However, it appears that women reported higher ratings of both anger and anxiety suggesting that, while the original hypothesis may still hold, an alternative explanation may better account for these results.

There are several possible explanations which may account for these results. This effect may be the result of a female response bias to express more emotion than men, a pattern that has been reported in the literature (Feather, 1984; Hoyenga & Hoyenga, 1977). Studies have found that women tend to express more emotion and to place a greater value on the expression of emotion than men. The preconflict data, however, argue against this interpretation, in that this response bias was not evident in either subjects' preconflict ratings of affect or in their preconflict anger and anxiety cluster scores. Nor did women exhibit an overall bias in scale usage in the postconflict ratings, demonstrating higher ratings of affect only on two out of a possible sixteen items. Thus, women's
higher anger and anxiety ratings appear to be a valid finding rather than an artifact due to a bias in response style.

A more plausible explanation may lie in the differential socialization of men and women in interest in or concern for interpersonal relationships. Women's elevated anger and anxiety scores may, therefore, be a reflection of their greater interest in these issues of intimate conflict. However, the data are not supportive of this interpretation in that participants' ratings of interest, both pre and postconflict, are equally high and do not show a difference between gender. What may account for these results is a gender difference in sensitization to issues of close relationships. Traditionally, women have been assigned responsibility for interpersonal relationships and, as a consequence, may be more sensitive to and attach greater importance to these issues. In this sense, it is understandable that women would react more strongly than men to an issue which, by virtue of their gender, is given considerable importance. While men may show an interest in intimate conflict, women may attach more value and importance to these issues and, therefore, show a stronger reaction in terms of their anger and anxiety. Further research is necessary to ascertain whether or not women's elevated anger and anxiety responses are specific to the issue of sexual jealousy, intimate conflict, or conflict in general.
The results of the Interpersonal Adjective Scale (IAS) show only minimal correlations at best between dominance and anger suggesting that sex role orientation is not an important variable of affective responses to intimate conflict. However, one important consideration in interpreting these results is the nature of the measure itself. The intent was to obtain a measure of sex role orientation as indicated by participants' scores on the interpersonal behaviours of dominance and nurturance. However, the construct of sex role orientation may not be fully reflected in measures of dominance and nurturance. It may not be possible to measure sex role orientation at this time. More current analyses of other scales which intended to measure this and similar constructs such as the Bem SRI, (1974) and the Spence and Helmreich EPAQ, (cited in Spence, 1985) have found that, in fact, these scales are actually measuring dominance and nurturance instead. Thus, it may be premature at this time to speak of measuring sex role orientation until further research can clarify these conceptual issues and provide an accurate assessment of this construct.

THE INTERACTION OF POWER AND GENDER

There were no power x gender interactions found for anxiety. However, the pattern of anger responses demonstrated interaction between the power condition and gender of initiator for women, but not for men. Male
participants demonstrated a consistent pattern of higher anger ratings in the low power condition regardless of the gender of the initiator. The same pattern held for female participants but only when listening to a male-initiated conflict. When women listened to a female-initiated conflict the reverse pattern was found with higher anger ratings in the high power condition. Although it is not clear why this particular group would demonstrate a divergent response pattern, the combination of variables suggests several possible explanations: 1) participant’s perceptions of a female-initiated conflict may differ according to gender, 2) participants’ degree of identification with the initiator may differ according to gender and/or perceived power of the initiator (since a female initiator was perceived as having less power than her spouse, women may be responding differently to a low power versus a high power female) and 3) women may respond with greater empathy toward a female initiator than men respond toward an initiator of their own gender. Until further research is conducted into any of these alternative hypotheses, it is difficult to determine the differential perceptions or responses of empathy that may have caused this unique response pattern.

In addition, it was found that women in a low power position who listened to the opposite gender initiate the conflict (i.e. the male-initiated conflict) reported the highest anger ratings. This pattern, although not
significant, was also found for men. That is, of the male participants, the highest anger ratings were reported by those men in a low power position who listened to the opposite gender initiate the conflict (i.e. the female-initiated conflict). A position of low power plus an initiator of the opposite gender appears to constitute the most anger provoking combination of variables, a finding of considerable interest to the study of intimate conflict. Perceiving oneself in a position of low power may not only include cognitions of a lack of control and ineffectiveness but, within the context of an intimate conflict, feelings of vulnerability and the threat of loss as well. The anger reported by these groups may have been a reflection of these thoughts and feelings which were further exacerbated by their differential perceptions of an initiator of the opposite gender.

The gender of the initiator appears to be a critical variable. The data suggest that an opposite gender initiator is perceived to be more anger provoking or perhaps threatening than an initiator of the same gender. It may be that participants were less able to empathize with an opposite gender initiator and, thus, were more angered. However, an alternative explanation suggests that, within the context of intimate conflicts, our perceptions of threat may differ according to the gender of our opponent. We may simply feel more threatened by an opposite gender opponent. Why this might occur is not clear but one could speculate
that more aspects of ourselves may be threatened with a mixed gender dynamic such as our sexuality and our adequacy as a mate. The exaggerated anger responses to opposite gender initiators may reflect this perception of greater threat combined with feelings of vulnerability and a lack of control prompted by cognitions of low power. Although the nature of potential differential perceptions of opposite gender initiators is not known, these findings may contribute some insight as to why intimate conflicts are often the most intense, suggesting that, in addition to theories of emotional investment, the greater intensity may be due, in part, to the increased threat posed by an opponent of the opposite gender.

In summary, the present results suggest that being in a position of lesser power while listening to an opposite gender initiated conflict may generate strong feelings of anger as a result of perceptions of greater threat and vulnerability. These findings may contribute to our understanding of the dynamics of intimate conflict and appear particularly relevant to those of wife assault where assaultive men often report feelings of powerlessness in their relationships (Dutton & Strachan, 1987) yet respond to intimate conflicts with exaggerated anger. When in conflict with their spouses, these men may perceive the situation as safe for labelling their arousal as anger and ultimately resort to physical violence to alleviate their feelings of powerlessness. Similarly, current theories as to the
cessation of domestic violence have concentrated on empowering the victim (Fagan, 1987), thus, altering the power dynamics such that it is no longer "safe" to be physically violent. What effect this power shift may have on men's patterns of emotional labelling, if any, is not known. Further research in this direction, however, may help to elucidate the effects of power on the process of emotional labelling to the point where practical applications in areas such as this may be possible.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Although the data support the validity of the issues being investigated, the specific hypotheses were too simplistic in their predictions and, thus, on the whole, were not supported. One limitation of this study was the indirect involvement of the participants in the conflict. While the proposed hypothesis concerning anger responses may hold true for participants directly involved in an intimate conflict, a study of this design presents obvious ethical and methodological problems. Procedures used by Gottman (1979) where married couples recreated past arguments in the laboratory approximates a solution to this problem but still presents the methodological concerns of realism and the effects of being observed. In addition, manipulating subjects' perceptions of their spouse's power may be difficult within long term relationships where the power dynamics may be well established.
The results of this study may be further limited to the conflict issue of sexual jealousy. Exaggerated anger responses to opposite gender initiators may partly reflect this content issue which made issues of sexuality more salient. Conflicts concerning money matters or child rearing practices may elicit differential response patterns, particularly for anger.

The results of this study also suggest several avenues of research. The gender of the initiator appears to be a crucial variable resulting in differential response patterns depending on the gender of the subject and his or her power condition. Without further research, it is difficult to interpret why this would occur yet it is an important variable in the study of intimate relationships. In addition, future research should examine potential differences in perceptions of a female-initiated as opposed to a male-initiated conflict. Finally, the variable of power is clearly an important determinant in emotional responding and requires additional effort to explore possible mediating factors such as the perception of threat as determined by a direct versus an indirect involvement.
References


Table 1

Rank Order of Preconflict Mean Ratings for Affect Items by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
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<td>5.32</td>
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</tr>
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<td>excited</td>
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<tr>
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<td>aroused</td>
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<td>tense</td>
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</tr>
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<td>elated</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10)</td>
<td>sad</td>
<td>2.55</td>
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<td>sad</td>
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Total N = 120
Table 2

**Rank Order of Postconflict Mean Ratings For Affect Items by Gender**

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<tr>
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<td>15)</td>
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Total N = 120
Table 3

**Analysis of Covariance Results for Anger Cluster Ratings**

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<th>DF</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>.079</td>
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<tr>
<td>power x gender x tape</td>
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Table 4

**Analysis of Covariance Results for Anxiety Cluster Ratings**

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<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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</table>
Figure 1

Anger cluster ratings as a function of power condition, tape and gender.
Figure 2

Anxiety cluster ratings as a function of power condition and tape.
ANXIETY

ANXIETY CLUSTER RATINGS

POWER CONDITION

Legend

FIC
MIC
**Figure 3**

Design summary.
**Design Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Male</th>
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<td><strong>Male-initiated conflict</strong></td>
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<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High power</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Female-initiated conflict</td>
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<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Female-initiated conflict</td>
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<td>15</td>
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</table>
Appendix A
INTERPERSONAL ADJECTIVE SCALES (revised)

On the page that follows, you will find a list of words that are used to describe people's personal characteristics. For each word in the list, indicate how accurately the word describes you. The accuracy with which a word describes you is to be judged on the following scale:

1       2       3       4       5       6       7       8
Extremely  Very  Quite  Slightly  Slightly  Quite  Very  Extremely
inaccurate  inaccurate  inaccurate  inaccurate  inaccurate  accurate  accurate  accurate

Consider the word BOLD. How accurately does that word describe you as a person? If you think that this word is a quite accurate description of you, write the number "6" to the left of the item:

6 BOLD

If you think that this word is a slightly inaccurate description of you, write the number "4" next to it, if it is very inaccurate write the number "2", etc.

If you are uncertain of the meaning of a word, consult the definitions provided on the opposite page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely inaccurate</td>
<td>Very inaccurate</td>
<td>Quite inaccurate</td>
<td>Slightly inaccurate</td>
<td>Slightly accurate</td>
<td>Quite accurate</td>
<td>Very accurate</td>
<td>Extremely accurate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ (001) introverted</td>
<td>____ (003) unargumentative</td>
<td>____ (004) unauthoritative</td>
<td>____ (005) uncalculating</td>
<td>____ (006) accommodating</td>
<td>____ (007) kind</td>
<td>____ (008) charitable</td>
<td>____ (009) shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ (010) uncunning</td>
<td>____ (011) cold-hearted</td>
<td>____ (012) ruthless</td>
<td>____ (013) dissocial</td>
<td>____ (014) tender-hearted</td>
<td>____ (015) soft-hearted</td>
<td>____ (016) cheerful</td>
<td>____ (017) dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ (018) antisocial</td>
<td>____ (019) iron-hearted</td>
<td>____ (020) enthusiastic</td>
<td>____ (021) self-assured</td>
<td>____ (022) cruel</td>
<td>____ (023) unsparkling</td>
<td>____ (024) cunning</td>
<td>____ (025) meek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ (026) uncharitable</td>
<td>____ (027) unsly</td>
<td>____ (028) unaggressive</td>
<td>____ (029) jovial</td>
<td>____ (030) crafty</td>
<td>____ (031) boastless</td>
<td>____ (032) domineering</td>
<td>____ (033) tender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ (034) timid</td>
<td>____ (035) unsympathetic</td>
<td>____ (036) uncanny</td>
<td>____ (037) unbold</td>
<td>____ (038) fortful</td>
<td>____ (039) unwily</td>
<td>____ (040) extraverted</td>
<td>____ (041) gentle-hearted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ (042) persistent</td>
<td>____ (043) perky</td>
<td>____ (044) friendly</td>
<td>____ (045) unneighbourly</td>
<td>____ (046) self-confident</td>
<td>____ (047) outgoing</td>
<td>____ (048) boastful</td>
<td>____ (049) bashful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ (050) firm</td>
<td>____ (051) uncanny</td>
<td>____ (052) unsociable</td>
<td>____ (053) hard-hearted</td>
<td>____ (054) wily</td>
<td>____ (055) calculating</td>
<td>____ (056) uncheery</td>
<td>____ (057) sly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>____ (058) neighbourly</td>
<td>____ (059) warmthless</td>
<td>____ (060) distant</td>
<td>____ (061) cocky</td>
<td>____ (062) sympathetic</td>
<td>____ (063) forceless</td>
<td>____ (064) tricky</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary of Interpersonal Adjectives

001 INTROVERTED introspective, inward
002 UNDEMANDING not insistent or expectant of others
005 UNCALCULATING not shrewd or cunning
006 ACCOMMODATING obliging, doing favours for others
010 UNCUNNING not sly or wily
013 DISSOCIAL anti-social, not sociable
018 ANTI-SOCIAL not sociable
019 IRON-HEARTED cruel, hard-hearted
023 UNSPARKLING not lively or vivacious
025 MEEK timid, submissive
027 UNSLY not crafty or underhanded
029 JOVIAL good-natured, merry
031 BOASTLESS not given to bragging
033 UNARGUMENTATIVE not given to arguing
037 UNBOLD not daring
039 UNWILY not crafty or sly
040 EXTRAVERTED outgoing, sociable
043 PERKY lively
048 BOASTFUL given to bragging, conceited
051 UNCRAFTY not subtly deceitful or sly
053 HARD-HEARTED lacking in sympathy, unfeeling
054 WILY crafty, sly
055 CALCULATING shrewd or cunning
056 UNCHEERY not cheerful
059 WARMTHLESS not warm or tender
061 COCKY pert, arrogant
063 FORCELESS weak
Appendix B
Please indicate how you feel at the present time by making a check somewhere on the line between each pair of terms.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>term</th>
<th>check marks</th>
<th>inverse term</th>
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<td></td>
<td>not angry</td>
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<td>elated</td>
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<td>not elated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not aggressive</td>
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<td>aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not anxious</td>
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<td>anxious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hostile</td>
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<td>not hostile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>nervous</td>
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<td>not frustrated</td>
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<tr>
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<td>not annoyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interested</td>
<td></td>
<td>not interested</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix C
Group Assignment

You have been chosen at random to be the group leader. You are responsible for the completion of the group report. There will be a time limit of one hour in which to complete the report. In order to keep within this time limit:

1) you have veto control over the content of the report. In the event that the group cannot come to an agreement, you will have the final say as to which opinion will be included in the report.

2) you may end a discussion if sufficient time has past in which to reach a conclusion and move the group on to the next topic.

3) you may assign a group member to act as secretary to record the group's conclusions.

You are responsible to hand in the finished report. Other group members will be informed of your status as group leader and asked to comply with this format. If you have any questions, they will be answered once you rejoin as a group.
Appendix D
A group member other than yourself has been assigned at random to be the group leader. During the preparation of your group report, you are asked to contribute your opinion on all topics of discussion. However, in order to keep within a one hour time limit, the group leader may exercise the following control over the other group members including yourself:

1) the leader has veto control over the content of the report. In the event that the group cannot come to an agreement, the leader will have the final say as to which opinion will be included in the report.

2) the leader may end a discussion if sufficient time has past in which to reach a conclusion and move the group on to the next topic.

3) the leader may assign a group member to act as secretary to record the group's conclusions.

The group leader is also responsible for handing in the finished report. While you are encouraged to contribute your opinions to the group discussion and to help in the completion of the report, you are also requested to comply with the group format as outlined above. If you have any questions, they will be answered once you rejoin as a group.
Appendix E
Please indicate how you felt while you were listening to the conflict by making a check somewhere on the line between each pair of terms.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Checklist</th>
<th>Not Term</th>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Not elated</td>
</tr>
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<td>Aggressive</td>
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<td>Frustrated</td>
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<td>Irritated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interested</td>
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<td>Not interested</td>
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</table>
Appendix F
Please indicate by making a check mark somewhere on the line:

1. What status have you been assigned for the group discussion?
   - group leader
   - group member

2. Relative to the others, how responsible are you for the final group report?
   - no responsibility
   - complete responsibility

3. How familiar you are with the conflict
   - not at all
   - very familiar

4. How much power the woman had
   - no power
   - complete power

5. How much power the man had
   - no power
   - complete power

6. How realistic the conflict was to you
   - not realistic
   - very realistic

7. What was the conflict about?
   - child rearing
   - money matters
   - sexual jealousy
   - vacations