

10. Gender and anger

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Anger is momentary madness

Horace

Like women's anger, impotent and loud

Dryden

What happens when we approach a lane closure while driving on the freeway, and a car cuts rapidly in front of us just before the lane closes, forcing us to brake abruptly? What happens when a romantic partner accuses us of flirting when we have done no such thing? What happens when we hear a news report telling us that 4 million children in the United States go hungry every day? Perhaps the most common response to these scenarios is anger. Anger is a commonly experienced and expressed emotion, and contrary to persistent myths and stereotypes, women and men both get angry in response to these types of situations. Indeed, conventional wisdom suggests that anger is a "male" emotion: women don't get angry, and if they do, they certainly don't show it. Yet, as this chapter will show, the bulk of the empirical evidence does not support these contentions. The literature on anger clearly demonstrates the need to modify questions about gender differences in emotion from the more global (e.g., do men and women differ?) to the more specific (e.g., under what conditions and in the presence of whom might men and women differ?). Differences in the experience and expression of anger have as much to do with other variables such as social context, status, and gender role as they do with gender.

Although a number of excellent reviews of gender differences in emotion more generally have recently been published (e.g., Brody & Hall, 1993; Fischer, 1993; Shields, 1991), few reviews have specifically considered gender differences in anger. In this chapter, I will first consider definitions of anger, and then I will review the empirical literature on gender differences in anger in adults, including an explication of the rules, norms, and stereotypes for the expression and experience of anger. I will then consider how theories of anger address gender. Finally, I will conclude with directions for research and suggestions for dispelling the persistent myths about women's anger.

Emotions are multichannel (e.g., facial, vocal, verbal) response systems that have developed through the course of human evolutionary history to help us deal with challenges and problems in our environment (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Keltner & Kring, 1998; Kring & Bachorowski, 1999; Levenson, 1992; Scherer, 1986). An emotion response consists of multiple components, including a cognitive or appraisal component, an expressive or behavioral component, an experiential component, and a physiological component. The coordinated engagement of these emotion components subserves a number of intra- and interpersonal functions (e.g., Averill, 1982; Campos, Campos, & Barrett, 1989; Ekman, 1992; Levenson, 1992; Keltner & Kring, 1998). To be complete, assessments of anger should consider multiple components of emotional responding.

By most accounts, anger is an unpleasant or negative emotion. It typically occurs in response to an actual or perceived threat, a disruption in ongoing behavior, or in response to the perception of deliberate or unjustifiable harm or negligence (Averill, 1982; de Rivera, 1977; Thomas, 1993). Anger is also a social emotion: it is often elicited in response to the actions or words of others; it is often directed toward others; and the consequences of the experience and expression of anger are often interpersonal (Averill, 1982; Scherer, Matsumoto, Wallbott, & Kudoh, 1988; Wallbott & Scherer, 1989). Moreover, the motivation for anger often involves revenge or punishment, typically directed towards another individual. Averill (1982) argues that anger is a socially constructed syndrome, consisting of expressive displays, physiological responses, and subjective experience, but that is largely determined by social rules and functions that are embedded within a given culture. Anger is believed to have a universally recognized facial display (e.g., Ekman, 1992, 1994; Izard, 1971; but see Russell, 1994, 1995), and a distinct psychophysiological signature (Ekman, Levenson, & Friesen, 1983; Levenson, Ekman, & Friesen, 1990). In cross-cultural studies of facial expression recognition, the anger facial expression is among the most difficult to label or recognize, although it is recognized above chance levels (Ekman, 1994; Russell, 1994).

Anger is similar in many respects to a number of other emotions, such as frustration, distress, upset, hostility, and rage (Russell & Fehr, 1994). Ortony and colleagues (Clore, Ortony, Dienes, & Fujita, 1993; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988) have argued that there are four "anger-like" emotions, including anger, reproach, frustration, and resentment. These 4 emotions differ with respect to the conditions under which they are likely to be experienced and the types of situations that elicit them. Although these other emotions and traits are similar to anger, my focus in this chapter will be on anger.

Literature review on gender and anger

A number of studies have either directly or indirectly examined whether men and women differ in their expression, experience, and perception of anger as well as in the antecedents, concomitants, and rules or norms for the experience and expression of anger. Several different methods have been used to measure anger, including self-reports, the coding of facial expressions, and psychophysiological indices, such as heart rate and skin conductance. Moreover, the contexts in which anger has been studied vary, from more naturalistic settings to the experimental manipulation of other persons present. Given the variety of methods used to study gender and anger, it is perhaps not surprising that there are a variety of divergent findings. Yet, it is precisely the variations in method and context that help us understand under what conditions and in what situations men and women might differ in their expression and experience of anger.

Causes and antecedents of anger

Theorists have long noted a number of reasons why people get angry. For example, Frijda (1992) notes that anger is caused almost universally by harm inflicted on kin, possessions, or social status (see also Mesquita & Frijda, 1992). Ekman and Friesen (1975) suggested 5 antecedents to anger: (1) frustration, most often due to some type of interference; (2) physical threat; (3) insult; (4) witnessing someone else being violated; and (5) being the recipient of another's anger. Wallbott and Scherer (1989) cite the most common elicitor of anger to be personal relationships, followed by being treated unfairly, interaction with strangers, and unnecessary inconvenience. Unfortunately, few theorists have addressed the extent to which these reasons for anger apply equally to men and women. A comprehensive study of anger among women that included interviews and several self-report measures, found the most common elicitors of anger among women to be interpersonal, intrapersonal, and societal (Denham & Bultemeier, 1993).

Some studies that have directly examined gender differences in anger antecedents failed to find differences between men and women (e.g., Frodi, 1977; Campbell & Muncer, 1987). For example, both men and women reported feeling angry after being provoked by the opposite sex (Frodi, 1977). However, other studies did find differences (e.g., Buss, 1989; Fehr & Baldwin, 1996; Harris, 1993), such as men reporting more anger following female aggression than male aggression, and women reporting greater anger following aggression from a male (Harris, 1993).

One important factor that distinguishes studies that do and do not

find gender differences is the context in which the reasons for anger are asked about. Specifically, in the context of close relationships or interactions between men and women, the reasons for anger appear to differ for men and women. For instance, Fehr and Baldwin (1996) found that although both men and women reported betrayal of trust to be the most anger-provoking elicitor, women reported more anger following betrayal of trust, rebuff, negligence, and unwarranted criticism than men. Similarly, Buss (1989) found that women reported greater anger and upset than men following condescending remarks, inconsiderate, neglecting, or rejecting behavior, alcohol abuse, and their partner's emotional constriction. By contrast, men reported more anger and upset in response to women's moodiness and self-absorption. Other studies have also found that women reported more anger than men following condescension from men (Frodi, 1977; Harris, 1993). Thus, in the context of close relationships, the reasons why men and women get angry appear to differ. Specifically, women tend to be angered by the negative behaviors of men, whereas men tend to be angered by women's negative emotional reactions and self-focused behavior.

Frequency and quality of experienced anger

The context within which individuals are asked to report about their experience of anger differs quite a bit from study to study. For example, some studies asked participants to complete questionnaires designed to assess the extent to which they generally feel anger; other studies asked participants to report on their anger following the presentation of an emotional stimulus, and still others asked individuals to report on how much anger they would feel if they were the active participants in different presented stories or vignettes.

General self-report measures. Self-report studies have used general measures of emotion that include items about anger (e.g., Emotionality Survey, Allen & Haccoun, 1976) or specific measures of anger experience (e.g., Trait and State Anger scales, Spielberger, 1988). State anger is defined as the momentary experience of anger that occurs in response to some event or person in the environment. By contrast, trait anger is construed as a stable, personality disposition that reflects an individual's propensity to experience anger across a variety of situations (Spielberger, 1988; Spielberger, Johnson, Russell, Crane, Jacobs, & Worden, 1985; Spielberger, Krasner, & Solomon, 1988). Individuals high in trait anger are hypothesized to experience more intense and frequent state anger. Studies comparing men and women on these state and trait anger scales have generally failed to

find gender differences (e.g., Deffenbacher, Oetting, Thwaites, Lynch, Baker, Stark, Thacker, & Eiswerth-Cox, 1996b; Kopper, 1991; Kopper & Epperson, 1991, 1996; but see Fischer, Smith, Leonard, Fuqua, Campbell, & Masters, 1993).

Similarly, studies employing more general scales of emotional experience did not find support for sex differences in the frequency or intensity of anger either (e.g., Allen & Haccoun, 1976; Averill, 1983). In one of the most comprehensive studies of anger, Averill (1982) collected daily reports of anger among college students and community residents. Although a few sex differences were noted, no sex differences in reported experience across both samples were found.

Experimental manipulations. A number of emotion induction techniques have been used in studies designed to assess gender differences in emotion and anger, including slides, films, pictures of facial expressions, audiotaped conversations, and vignettes. In vignette studies, participants are asked to report what they would do *if* they were in the depicted scenario. By contrast, in studies that directly manipulate emotional experience participants report on their actual responses to that particular stimulus.

Manstead and Fischer (1995) presented men and women a series of vignettes that were designed to elicit what they referred to as "powerless" emotions (sadness, despair, anxiety, disappointment) and "powerful" emotions (anger, rage, irritation, and disgust). Vignettes included stories about romantic rejection, academic failure, work rejection, romantic criticism, robbery, work criticism, being ignored, and being passed over. Across these scenarios, women did not significantly differ from men in their reports of how much anger they would feel in these situations. However, as predicted, women reported feeling more powerless in these situations and reported that they would experience more despair than men. Brody, Lovas, and Hay (1995) obtained slightly different results. They examined gender differences in experienced anger by presenting vignettes to adult men and women (also to children and adolescents) that varied in terms of the emotional nature of the story (anger, envy, warmth, fear) and the gender and sex-typed behavior of the participants (targets and instigators) in the story. Women tended to report that they would experience *more* anger than men, and in particular that they would experience more anger towards men than women. Harris (1994) also presented 4 vignettes designed to elicit anger to college men and women. These vignettes varied in terms of the familiarity and sex of the other people involved (e.g., being yelled at by another driver following a minor traffic accident, a professor gave you a failing grade and accused you of cheating). No sex differences in

reported anger were found, except for the dating scenario, in reaction to which women reported that they would feel more anger than men.

Studies that directly manipulate participants' anger by presenting emotional stimuli, showed few gender differences in the experience of anger. For example, Kring and Gordon (1998) found no gender differences in the experience of unpleasant emotions following an anger-eliciting film clip. Additional analyses indicated that men and women also did not differ in their reports of anger. Wagner, Buck, and Winterbotham (1993) presented emotional slides to men and women and found no gender differences in reports of experienced anger in response to any of the slides. However, Strachan and Dutton (1992) had participants listen to an audiotaped recording of a couple having a conflict related to sexual jealousy and they found that women reported feeling more anger-related emotions (angry, hostile, irritable, annoyed) than men. Thus, in studies where anger involves an interpersonal situation, women may report feeling more anger than men. By contrast, in studies where the anger stimulus reflects an injustice toward others, as in the case of the film study by Kring and Gordon (1998) or in various of the scenarios used in the vignette studies, men and women report feeling angry to a similar extent. These findings are consistent with the literature on anger elicitors: women report experiencing more anger than men in the context of close relationships.

Clinical literature. In both the lay and professional clinical and counseling literatures, some treatment professionals perpetuate stereotypes about women and anger that often are not supported by the research literature. For instance, various clinicians have suggested that women do not experience anger, do not know how to express anger, actively suppress their anger, and have difficulty expressing their anger (Tavris, 1989; for a review, see Sharkin, 1993). Consider the following quotes by treatment professionals:

"[Anger] is an emotion that women express far less frequently than do men." (Halas 1981)

"Many women find the idea of anger unthinkable, no matter how much justification there might seem to be." (Collier 1982)

The reasons for these assertions could be due, as Sharkin (1993) suggested, to clinicians' experiences with women in therapy who really have trouble with anger. Unfortunately, these literatures are often misinterpreted to suggest that all women have trouble with anger, not just those who are seeking treatment. Lest one think that men's anger is not also pathologized, Sharkin (1993) noted that since anger is argued to be one of the "acceptable" emotions for men, they are also considered likely

candidates for trouble with anger control and expression. Although many of the assertions of clinicians and counselors are quite consistent with the empirical findings on stereotypes (reviewed below), these writings also unintentionally serve to strengthen the stereotypes which are not, for the most part, supported by the majority of empirical studies.

Expression of anger

Similar to the studies that have examined the experience of anger, a number of different methods for measuring anger expression have been used, such as self-report, coding of facial and vocal expression, judges accuracy ratings of posed and spontaneous facial displays, and psychophysiological measures of facial muscle activity.

General self-report measures. Although women tend to score higher than men on self-report measures of general emotional expressivity (e.g., Gross & John, 1995; Kring, Smith, & Neale, 1994), differences between men and women in their reports of anger expression are not as widely found (e.g., Burrowes & Halberstadt, 1987; King & Emmons, 1990). For example, Allen and Haccoun (1976) asked men and women to report how frequently and intensely they expressed different emotions, including anger. While women reported expressing fear and sadness more often than men, they did not differ in their reports of anger or joy expression. Similarly, Balswick and Avertt (1977) found that women reported being more expressive of happiness, love, and sadness, but did not differ in their reports of hate/anger (see also Dossier, Balswick, & Halverson, 1983; Ganong & Coleman, 1985).

Using Spielberger's Anger Expression Inventory (AEI, Spielberger et al., 1985), a number of studies have examined whether men and women differ in their reports of anger suppression (termed "anger-in" on the AEI), anger expression towards others, often in an unhealthy manner (termed "anger-out"), or their anger control (controlling both the experience and expression of anger). Contrary to the clinical literature noted above, women do not report suppressing their anger more often than men nor do men report expressing their anger outwardly more often than women (e.g., Deffenbacher, Oetting, Lynch, & Morris, 1996a; Deffenbacher, et al., 1996b; Faber & Burns, 1996; Kopper, 1991; Kopper & Epperson, 1996; Stoner & Spencer, 1987; Thomas, 1989; Thomas & Williams, 1991; but see Fischer et al., 1993).

It is important to point out that some gender differences in the reports of anger expression have been found, but these differences typically have to do with the manner of expression and not with the frequency of expression. Specifically, men report that they physically assault objects

and people (e.g., hitting, throwing) and verbally assault people (e.g., name calling, sarcasm) more often than women (Deffenbacher, et al., 1996a), whereas women cry more often when angry (e.g., Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, & Benton, 1992; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Frost & Averill, 1982; Hoover-Dempsey, Plas, & Wallston, 1986; Lombardo, Cretser, Lombardo, & Mathis, 1983; Timmers, Fischer, & Manstead, 1997; Thomas, 1993; Zemen & Garber, 1996). Blier and Blier-Wilson (1989) also found that men reported more confidence in expressing their anger to other men than to women. Moreover, women were more confident expressing their anger to other women than men were.

Although there appear to be few gender differences in reports of anger expression, Kopper and colleagues have found gender role differences (Kopper, 1991; Kopper & Epperson, 1996). Specifically, men and women who endorse a number of masculine personality characteristics tend to score higher on Spielberg's Anger-Out scale than men and women who endorse a number of feminine personality characteristics. By contrast, men and women with more feminine characteristics score higher on the Anger-In Scale, suggesting that feminine sex role characteristics are associated with suppressing anger and masculine sex role characteristics are associated with outwardly expressing anger.

Experimental manipulations. Although self-report studies failed to find many significant gender differences in anger expression, vignette studies that asked men and women to report on what they would express and to whom they would express it across various scenarios yield some interesting gender differences. Contrary to conventional wisdom, however, these studies typically showed that women reported that they would express *more* anger than men, depending upon the situation. For example, Dosser et al. (1983) found that women reported that they would express more anger in situations requiring expression to both male and female friends. Brody (1993) in contrast found that women reported that they would express more anger if the target of their anger was male. Timmers et al. (1998) found that women reported being more likely to express anger when the object and target of the anger were different (e.g., expressing anger about vandalism to a friend), whereas men reported being more likely to express anger when the object and target of anger were the same (e.g., expressing anger at a friend who ruins your jacket). Timmers et al. also found that the manner in which anger was expressed differed: men reported that they would yell or name-call; women reported that they would cry. Interestingly, women also reported more often than men that they would not show any anger.

Findings on gender differences in posing anger expressions are equivocal. Some studies find no gender differences (e.g., Levenson et al., 1990); other studies find that women are better posers than men (e.g., Friedman, Riggio, & Segall, 1980; Zuckerman, Lipets, Hall Koivumaki, & Rosenthal, 1975), and still others find that men are better posers than women (e.g., Rotter & Rotter, 1988). Methodological differences might account for these variable findings. Findings from studies of spontaneous facial expression are more consistent: either women tend to be more expressive than men or no differences between men and women are found. For example, Schwartz, Brown, and Ahern (1980) found that women exhibited greater facial muscle activity (as assessed via electromyography) than men while imagining an angry situation. Kring and Gordon (1998) found that women displayed more negative expressions than men in response to an anger-eliciting film clip (unfortunately, specific anger expressions were not coded). Wagner et al. (1993) found that women's expressions of anger in response to emotional slides were more accurately rated than men's expressions; however, using a different set of slides and a different communication accuracy measure, Wagner, MacDonald, and Manstead (1986) in contrast, failed to find gender differences in anger expression accuracy. Similarly, Bonanno and Keltner (1997) found no gender differences in the frequency of anger expressions during a bereavement interview 6 months after the loss of a spouse or partner. Moreover, a higher frequency of anger expressions was associated with more grief symptoms at 14 and 25 months post-loss for both men and women.

Finally, it is important to consider gender differences in the target of anger expressions, however, only a few studies have directly examined this question. In general, men seem to be the targets of anger expression more often than women (Brody et al., 1995; Dosser et al., 1983; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Frost & Averill, 1982; Harris, 1994), particularly when they are strangers (Averill, 1982; Harris, 1994). Other evidence indicates that women are more likely to direct their anger toward a male relationship partner, whereas men are more likely to direct their anger toward male strangers (Allen & Haccoun, 1976; Blier & Blier-Wilson, 1989). In the context of close friendships, however, one study found that both men and women reported being more likely to express anger to female best friends (Dosser et al., 1983).

In sum, similar to the findings on experienced anger, men and women do not differ in their reports of the general extent to which they express anger. However, men and women do differ in their expression of anger in response to emotional films or slides. Moreover, the manner in which anger is expressed may differ between men and women (e.g., men hit and throw things more often, and women cry more often), and the

targets of men and women's anger expressions differ. Men are more likely to express anger towards other males or strangers, particularly if the object and target of their anger are the same. By contrast, women are more likely to express anger towards familiar or close others, whether they be male or female, particularly if the object and target of their anger are different.

Consequences of anger expression and experience

Psychophysiological components of anger: Linkage to health

The psychophysiological responses associated with either suppressing or expressing anger appear to be different for men and women. In response to an anger-eliciting film, Kring and Gordon (1998) found that men exhibited greater skin conductance reactivity than women, yet women displayed more facial expressions than men. Studies from the health psychology literature indicate that anger expression among women in response to stress or provocation is associated with lower heart rate reactivity and more rapid systolic blood pressure recovery (Faber & Burns, 1996; Shapiro, Goldstein, & Jamner, 1995; but see Lai & Linden, 1992). By contrast, anger expression among men and higher scores on trait measures of hostility are associated with heart rate increases and sustained blood pressure (Burns, 1995; Burns & Katkin, 1993; Faber & Burns, 1996; Lai & Linden, 1992; Shapiro, et al., 1995). In addition, women who express their anger, but do not score high on trait measures of hostility are better able to adjust to chronic pain (Burns, Johnson, Mahoney, Devine, & Pawl, 1996). Thus, the healthy expression of anger may have a protective benefit for women, at least with respect to psychophysiological indicators that have been linked with coronary heart disease and adjustment to chronic pain.

Perceived concomitants of anger episodes

Gender differences in perceived psychological consequences of anger have also been observed. For example Deffenbacher and colleagues have found that women report experiencing other negative emotions following anger episodes more often than men, whereas men reported more negative consequences of their anger, including physical assaults on others and property and hurting oneself more often than women (Deffenbacher et al., 1996a; Deffenbacher et al., 1996b). However, both men and women reported experiencing negative consequences following a particularly severe anger episode (Deffenbacher, 1996b). In the context of close relationships, men reported expecting that their partner

will display hurt feelings or reject them in response to their anger, whereas women expected that they would be mocked by their partner (Fehr & Baldwin, 1996).

Regulation, norms, and stereotypes about anger

Although recent studies of emotion regulation suggest that the expressive, experiential, and physiological effects of emotional suppression do not differ between men and women (e.g., Gross, 1998; Gross & Levenson, 1993, 1997), these and other studies have not directly considered the regulation of anger. However, research on stereotypes indicates that women are perceived to express less anger than men (Birnbaum & Croll, 1984; Fabes & Martin, 1991), yet they are perceived no differently than men with respect to the experience of anger (Fabes & Martin, 1991; Johnson & Shulman, 1988; Smith, Ulch, Cameron, Cumberland, Musgrave, & Tremblay, 1989). Men's and women's anger is also judged differently by men and women. For example, a vignette study by Smith et al. (1989) indicated that men rated anger from men and women as more appropriate than women did.

These differences in sex stereotypes and anger judgments may be directly linked to the different display rules for men and women. Display rules are conceptualized as the rules or standards for showing emotions and are specified by situation, target, and instigator. Most research on anger display rules has been conducted with children since it is through the course of development that most theorists believe display rules are acquired. In this developmental literature, results on adult stereotyping are replicated: children report thinking that anger displays are more acceptable from boys than girls (Birnbaum, 1983; Fuchs & Thelen, 1988). Very few studies, however, have examined the extent to which adults' expressive behavior is or is not governed by display rules. This is particularly unfortunate since researchers often interpret failures to confirm predictions about expressive behavior as an indication that display rules are operating. However, without an explicit theory about how and when display rules modify expressive behavior, these contentions are post hoc at best and circular at worst.

Conclusions: Explaining gender in relation to anger

Throughout the studies of gender and anger reviewed here, it seems apparent that both similarities and differences have been found. In cases where differences between men and women are found, these are restricted to specific contexts. Thus, the accumulated evidence does not allow us to conclude that men are more angry than women or that

women are more angry than men or that men and women do not differ. This same conclusion has been drawn by a number of other theorists and researchers (e.g., Averill, 1982; Brody, 1985; Fischer, 1993; Shields, 1991; Tavis, 1989). Yet, other predominantly feminist writers continue to suggest that women differ markedly and cross-situationally from men when it comes to anger (e.g., Halas, 1981; Lerner, 1977). For example, Lerner (1977) postulates that because women live in a patriarchal society, they have to suppress their anger. In a similar way, other feminists have suggested that a woman's expression of anger is inconsistent with her nurturant role as wife and mother (e.g., Friday, 1977). Yet, generally speaking, empirical studies do not support this claim that women are less expressive of anger or that they suppress their anger. So why the disparity? If stereotypes matched behavior, we would expect to see converging evidence that women rarely display their anger and men constantly display their anger, but this is not the case.

The data suggest that men and women's anger may differ *depending upon the situation*, and this may explain the divergence in findings. It is within the context of interpersonal relationships where gender differences in anger are most often found. Specifically, the reasons for anger differ between men and women in close relationships: women report more anger than men following betrayal, condescension, rebuff, unwarranted criticism, or negligence; whereas, men report more anger than women if their partner is moody or self-absorbed. Similarly, women report experiencing more anger than men in response to male aggression and conflict between couples, and women are more likely to express their anger to a familiar person rather than to a stranger or when the target and object of their anger are different. By contrast, men are more likely to express their anger when the target and object of their anger are similar or to male strangers. In general, men are more often the target of anger, but this too, depends on the nature of the relationship between instigator and target. Contrary to stereotypes that suggest men should experience and express more anger than women, these data suggest otherwise. These may not be startling revelations, yet they have failed to make much of an impact on changing stereotypes about gender and anger, nor have they led to systematic theorizing about the relation between anger and gender.

However, despite evidence that stereotypes are not confirmed by behavior, stereotypical beliefs nonetheless impact perceptions about anger among men and women. For example, it was shown that women believe that anger displays are less appropriate than men (Smith et al., 1989), and female anger expressions are rated as more hostile and angry than male expressions (Dimberg & Lundquist, 1990). Compared to men, women also report feeling more embarrassed, ashamed, and bad about

themselves after an anger episode (Deffenbacher et al., 1996a; Deffenbacher et al., 1996b); and they report feeling as if they will be mocked or denounced by their male romantic partners for their anger displays (Campbell & Muncer, 1987; Fehr & Baldwin, 1996). Moreover, these beliefs are reflected in the terms used to describe men and women's anger. For example, angry women are more likely to be called hostile or bitchy, whereas men who display anger may be referred to as strong (Shields, 1987; Tavis, 1989). Taken together, these findings suggest that although women readily experience and express anger, they may feel uncomfortable doing so.

Finally, an important caveat to consideration of theories about gender and anger is warranted. Specifically, findings that are not entirely consistent with theoretical predictions are often "explained" by invoking terms such as socialization differences. But as Deaux and Major (1990) candidly note, using socialization as an explanation for why men and women differ is not much more complete or any less circular than saying "people are different because they are different." To be sure, socialization must be considered, but simply referring to socialization as an explanation for gender differences without first articulating what is meant by socialization and the conditions under which one would predict that differential socialization would lead to different behaviors, we are left without an explanation. In order for research to progress, it seems that theoretically derived hypotheses about how and when women might differ in their anger response will ultimately answer tell us more about gender and anger than a post hoc application of socialization factors. A number of theories that make explicit statements about how socialization impacts emotion and thus hold promise for the study of gender and anger can be found in the developmental literature (e.g., Garber & Dodge, 1991; Fivush, 1989, 1991; Lewis & Saarni, 1985; Ratner & Stettner, 1991; Saarni, 1990; Walden & Ogan, 1988).

I would be remiss if I did not consider methodological differences and shortcomings of the empirical approaches discussed in this chapter. First, individual's self-reports of emotion may be influenced by stereotypes and are certainly dependent upon memory (Fischer, 1993). Feldman Barrett (1997) has shown that retrospective reports of emotions are influenced by an individual's perceptions of their personality. So, for example, individuals who describe themselves as neurotic are more likely to recall more negative emotions. Second, in most studies in which observable displays of anger were coded, the coders were not blind to the sex of subject. Thus, stereotypes about men and women's expressive behavior may have influenced these ratings (Brody, 1985; Brody & Hall, 1993). Third, studies that present emotionally evocative vignettes are "what-if" experiments. Participants are asked what they

would do in a given situation, but this may differ dramatically from what they would actually do in the same situation. That anger is a social emotion suggests that we ought to be studying anger in the context of social interactions and interpersonal relationships (Keltner & Kring, 1998). Finally, very few studies have assessed multiple components of emotional response in the same study (but see Kring & Gordon, 1998), thus it is difficult to make complete statements about how men and women may differ in anger.

Future directions

These critiques are not intended to paint a bleak picture of the research on gender and anger. Rather, they should serve as an impetus for future research. First, researchers need to study anger using multiple methods. Self-report measures are worthwhile, but we cannot rely solely on them to tell us about how men and women deal with anger. Rather, a combination of observational, self-report, and physiological measures should be used to assess anger. Second, anger should be studied in social situations. Although gender differences are far outnumbered by gender similarities in anger, differences that do exist are typically within the context of close relationships. Thus studying emotional behavior in ongoing interactions, as has been done in the marital literature (e.g., Gottman & Levenson, 1986, 1988) will likely tell us a great deal about the social nature of anger. New theoretical and empirical developments on the social functions of emotion have recently been articulated (e.g., Keltner & Kring, 1998) which can provide a framework for studying gender and anger within interpersonal relationships and interactions.

Shields (1991) has also argued that any consideration of gender differences must necessarily consider the context in which the observations were made. For example to conclude that women's reasons for getting angry differ from men's in the context of close relationships, it would be important to examine whether or not women's reasons for getting angry are similar in the context of lesbian relationships. Shields (1991) makes the important point that it is also important to consider how men and women use their knowledge of emotion (in our case, anger) in gender-salient interactions to better understand the discrepancy between beliefs and behaviors.

Third, research needs to consider how power, status, and gender role might moderate the relationship between gender and anger (Cupach & Canary, 1995; Kogut, Langley, & O'Neil, 1992; Manstead & Fischer, 1995; Strachan & Dutton, 1992; Tavris, 1989). Tavris (1989) argues that stereotypes about anger may say more about status differences than gender

differences, since women have historically occupied positions of lower status in society. Both men and women have trouble expressing anger to high status individuals (e.g., Keltner, Young, Oemig, Heerey, & Monarch, 1998; Kring, 1998; Strachan & Dutton, 1992), yet there is some evidence indicating that men and women report experiencing more anger when in a lower status position (Strachan & Dutton, 1992). Other research finds gender role differences in anger, with some studies showing that individuals who ascribe a number of masculine characteristics to themselves experience and express more anger (e.g., Kopper & Epperson, 1991; Kogut et al., 1992), and other studies demonstrating that individuals who ascribe both masculine and feminine characteristics to themselves (androgynous) are more expressive of many emotions, including anger (Ganong & Coleman, 1984; Kring & Gordon, 1998). These results say less about whether gender role identity is linked to anger and more about how certain personality characteristics are linked to anger. Nonetheless, there are theoretical frameworks about gender role identity and gender-typed characteristics that allow for testable predictions about how personality and identity might modify the relationship between gender and anger (e.g., Bem, 1993; Spence, 1993).

In conclusion, there are as many similarities as differences resulting from an analysis of gender and anger, yet it is noteworthy that the differences that are found are within the context of close relationships. A social functional account of emotion that stresses the interpersonal characteristics of anger, provides a theoretical framework from which predictions can be made and tested about the relationship between gender and anger. Moreover, developmental theories that articulate how emotions are socialized also hold promise for understanding the conditions under which anger may be more salient for men and women.

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