

WOMEN, POWER, AND ANGER:  
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
INVESTIGATION  
OF FEMALE  
MAYORS

By

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of Problem.....	8
Definition of Terms .....	9
Anger.....	9
Aggression.....	11
Emotion.....	11
Gender.....	12
Sex Roles.....	12
Power.....	12
Significance of the Study.....	13
Overview.....	14
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	15
Biological Underpinnings of Anger.....	16
Appraisal Theory.....	18
Relational Cultural Theory.....	21
Cultural Theory.....	27
Integrationist Theory.....	28
Anger Diversions.....	28
Adaptive Anger Skills.....	30
Sex and Anger.....	31
Power.....	37
Anger and Power.....	38
Conclusions.....	42
III. METHODOLOGY.....	44
Participants.....	45
Methodology.....	50
Bracketing.....	51
Interviews.....	54
Analysis.....	55

Chapter	Page
IV. RESULTS .....	57
Power in Community .....	58
Anger Control.....	61
Public v. Private Anger Expression .....	68
V. DISCUSSION.....	72
Limitations .....	78
Area for further Study.....	80
REFERENCES.....	83
APPENDICES.....	99
APPENDIX A: Script for Recruitment.....	99
APPENDIX B: Informed Consent.....	102
APPENDIX C: Demographic Form .....	105
APPENDIX D: Script for Initial Interview .....	107
APPENDIX E: Institutional Review Board Approval.....	109

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants .....	49

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Anger is a difficult emotion for many, but especially so for women. Research on anger and gender suggests that women and men both experience and express anger, but women are socialized to view this anger expression as unfeminine or somehow undesirable (Jack, 1999; Lerner, 1997; Miller, 1991a & 1991b; Sharkin, 1993; Shields, 1987 & Tavis, 1988). Lerner (1997) said that women have social and internal prohibitions against expression of anger, especially expression of anger toward men. She also suggests that women feel this prohibition so strongly that they may not even acknowledge their anger. Women question the legitimacy of their anger. Jack (1999) suggested that women may view anger as destructive and, as a result, will sometimes self-silence this emotion. The need to form connections with others contributes to anger inhibition in women (Jack, 1999; Miller, 1991; & Tavis, 1988). Women fear that if they express anger towards another, they will irreparably harm their relationship with that person. This fear of damage to relationship causes women to shut down their anger and either divert it inward or suppress it outright. Women strive to be 'nice' rather than threaten relationship (Lerner, 1997).

Overall, the emotion literature suggests that women tend to be more emotionally expressive than are men, except when it comes to the emotion of anger (Sharkin, 1993).

Men appear to be more comfortable with anger and its expression, and norms exist endorsing male expression of anger (Lewis, 2000 & Shields, 1987).

Relatively few studies explore the positive aspects of anger and its expression in modern life (Cox, Bruchner, & Stabb, 2003; Harmon-Jones & Allen, 1998; Jack 1999). Most research on this topic focuses on the clinical aspects of anger (Sharkin, 1993). Unless a woman uses anger to defend her children or in the interest of someone else, society views women's anger as dysfunctional (Miller, 1991a). Women's emotional research instead focuses more on depression and anxiety rather than anger, unless the research examines pathological uses of emotion (for example Suter, Byrne, Byrne, Howells, & Day, 2002).

Research suggesting that anger can have a constructive role in our lives comes from the authors of brain lateralization research (Harmon-Jones & Allen, 1993) who indicate that anger motivates behavior to cope with blocked goals or perceived social injustice. Anger provides us with energy to mobilize for action or to counteract fear. This motivational view of anger promotes the view that anger is a potentially helpful emotion, not one to be controlled and suppressed.

Research in organizational behavior suggests that emotional expression has an impact on perception of competence (Lewis, 2000) and status (Tiedens, 2001). The changing role of women puts them in leadership roles more frequently than in the past, and the norms for emotional expression implicit in this role (Sachs & Blackmore, 1998) may differ from that of their male counterparts. Women lose status when they express anger, though this does not appear to be the case for men who actually gain status when expressing the same emotion (Tiedens, 2001). Subordinates rate a female leader's effectiveness as lower when she

expresses anger while subordinates see men as less effective leaders if they express sadness (Lewis, 2000).

Women increasingly hold positions of power as elected officials, administrators, and CEOs – positions that presumably have high status. How, if anger is a means to unblock a goal or undo a perceived injustice, do these powerful women express their anger without losing status? How do they perceive their own anger when others view anger as a negative trait in a woman? The following exploratory study attempts to open the door to the study of the experience and expression of anger in women who hold public positions of power in their community from the perspective of the women holding office.

Women play an important role in leadership roles in the United States today. Though lagging behind their male counterparts in politics, women occupy some of the highest offices in the land. The 2008 presidential race marked a first for American politics. Though women had run for the President of the United States in the past, for the first time a woman, Hillary Clinton, was widely considered a competitive candidate for the office before being defeated by Barack Obama. Clinton's presidential run marked a change in our perceptions of who we see as presidential. Clinton's anger was the topic of some discussions of the campaign, however. The Chair of the Republican National Committee, Mike Duncan, during a national news program, implied that Clinton was too angry to be president saying she was "brimming with anger" and that the American people would not elect an angry president (Nagourney, 2006). Analysts examined her ability to lead as well as instances in which her emotions became evident. The Clinton campaign claimed double standards were present and there were numerous discussions of this in the mainstream media concerning her use of emotion (for example ABCNews, 2008; Healy & Santora, 2008; and McAuliff, 2008).



Evidence for this double standard in emotional expression exists in the research (Tiedens, 2001 and Brescholl & Uhlmann, 2008). Tiedens (2001) found that when President Bill Clinton showed anger, participants in a study viewed him more favorably. This appeared not to be the case for his wife, however. Women's outward expression of anger appears to lower their status in the eyes of others (Brescholl & Uhlmann, 2008). The expression of emotion by women is not a new discussion, however (for example Cox, Bruchner, & Stabb, 2003; Jack, 1999; Tavis, 1989; and Thomas, Smucker & Droppelman, 2005). Women's emotional expression has been the topic of discussion both in the mainstream media and in the professional literature for decades. Missing from the majority of the professional literature has been the convergence of emotional experience/expression and power. In particular, little research exists on the topic of women's anger and power. This study attempts to fill this gap by examining the lived experience of anger in women who are in positions of power in their communities. Though touching on power and politics, this study primarily examines the experiences of women and how they adapt their anger expression to a world in which double standards for power and gender exist.

The inception of this project began several years ago with my participation in a group of women reading the book *Behind the Mask: Destruction and Creativity in Women's Aggression* (Jack, 1999). Based on the self-in-representation theory (Gilligan, 1982/1994; Jordan, 1997; Kaplan, 1991; Miller, 1976; and Surrey, 1991), Jack (1999) proposed that women used different ways of expressing their anger than men. She interviewed 60 women, from various social contexts, and concluded that socialization and power shape the expression of anger in women. Her findings indicated that because of power differences between the sexes in our culture, a double standard for the expression of anger is present

between men and women. Aggression, a form of anger expression, is a masculine trait, and people expect men to be aggressive in certain circumstances (Hess, Adams, & Kleck, 2004, and 2005). Research suggests that anger can heighten the status of a man (Tiedens, 2001) while angry women have lower status (Brescholl & Uhlmann, 2008).

My first reaction to Jack's book was that it must be out of date, that women did not really silence their emotions in the way that these women claimed. It wasn't until I looked at my own relationship with anger and the difficulty I had expressing my own angry/aggressive side that I realized that I needed to learn more. I found that I did not like to express anger to and certainly not at others or even admit to anger when I did feel it. I remembered explicit messages from both my parents not to get angry. This apparent dissonance between being strong and not expressing oneself compelled me to look more closely at the literature and to ask those around me about their experiences with anger.

After discussing this with a number of my colleagues, female and male friends, and family members, I realized that the experiences of the women in Jack's book were not confined to the women she interviewed for her study. Each of the women I talked with reported similarities with the women interviewed for the book. Those I spoke with felt "unfeminine" or "bitchy" when they showed their anger. They ostracized other women who were decidedly aggressive. They indicated they could never "get away with" their anger as their male counterparts could. Questions such as, "Is there ever a reason one should show anger?" arose. They also expressed confusion over the role of anger in their lives, and said there were no good role models for anger expression for either men or women. My own reactions, as well as those of the other women I spoke to, caused me to go back to Jack's book as well as to other sources concerning women's anger and anger expression. The

majority of the literature focuses on men's ability to express anger openly and women's difficulty with the open expression of anger.

Though aggression and anger are not always synonymous, they are often intertwined. White and Kowalski (1994) argue that forms of aggression in relationships differ by the sex of the individual. These authors suggest that men are more likely to show anger physically and publicly, whereas women are more likely to show anger indirectly and in private. Similarly, Jack (1999) said women express anger indirectly and focus their attention on maintaining relationship. Others (Lerner, 1997; Miller, 1991; and Simmons, 2002) have echoed this view of women's anger and have said that women's anger has become indirect and confused because of power differentials.

About the time I was having thoughts about the intersection of anger and power, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher came to give separate talks on campuses at a local university. Women such as these, as well as women like former Attorney General Janet Reno and Hillary Rodham Clinton, also came to mind. These powerful women appeared unafraid to show their anger when necessary (O'Connor, 1998; and Walsh & Leiby, 1999). They were not always popular for their expression of anger, however. Some people I talked with indicated they were "bitchy" because they asserted themselves. I wondered how these powerful women experienced their anger.

The idea that power shapes the expression of emotion intrigued me. I began to explore the literature concerning power and emotion as well. Though women are gaining in power in many areas of life, power differences still exist between the sexes (Diekman, Goodfriend, & Goodwin, 2004). Jack (1999) said that women, because of their position of

relatively low power historically as compared to men, have developed “women’s ways” of expressing anger and aggression that are either creative or destructive to the woman. By stepping out of long-established subordinate roles, women must balance the sex roles traditionally ascribed to them and their newfound public roles. These sex roles have included rules concerning anger expression.

Sex roles also include rules for power. Men exhibit a type of power that is more closely associated with public power (Diekman, Goodfriend, and Goodwin, 2004). This form of power, referred to as structural power, exists in government, business, and the military. Traditionally women are said to have high dyadic power, which is power found in relationships. This type of power exists in the homes and in close personal relationships with others. However, as sex roles change, women are finding themselves more and more in the realm of public influence and, one could assume, structural power. This can be seen in the growing number of women in the higher levels of politics, such as former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Germany’s election of Chancellor Angela Merkel, Liberia’s election of president Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, as well as increasing numbers of women elected to state and local office in the United States (International Women’s Democracy Center, 2006). Women, though gaining in power, are still underrepresented in business, military, and political arenas (Diekman, Goodfriend & Goodwin, 2004). Reasons for this are not clear in the literature. This may indicate that though traditional sex roles are weakening and women are gaining in structural power, double standards still exist.

The intersection of the literature concerning emotion and political power is also of interest for this project. Holmes (2004a) said, “Anger matters politically because it both motivates and continues to fuel activity and conflict (p. 123).” She argued that without anger,

those trying to gain power would have a difficult time motivating the electorate to support them. Without overt anger, could women gain and hold political power? It seemed that the double standard for anger expression would deny the political aspirations of some women. Again, I wondered how women experience their emotions while holding positions of power. Do they express their anger in a way that is helpful to them and to those around them (possibly) at the cost of violating social norms for their sex? Questions such as these led me to the question at the heart of this research.

The question posed in this study is: How do women who have positions of structural power experience and express their anger? What follows is a phenomenological study of anger in the lived experiences of women who hold positions of public, or structural, power. In the remainder of this chapter I will outline the research questions, define terms of importance to this study, and discuss the significance of this topic in terms of relevance to the psychological literature.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Women have stepped out of traditional gender roles in greater numbers and are achieving positions of higher structural power. Though still not achieving positions of power equivalent to men in politics, business, or the military; women are making strides in these areas. Traditional rules for anger expression may be changing to accommodate the change in traditional sex roles of women in positions of power. Cultural norms have prohibited the use of anger among women in the past. The literature suggests that a certain amount of outward expression of anger is important in leadership positions (Holmes, 2004a). The double standard for the expression of anger has allowed men to be more outwardly expressive, whereas people judge outwardly angry women more harshly when expressing their anger.

Though a number of studies have explored the role of observers' perceptions of women in leadership positions, there have been no studies that explore the intersection of power and anger from the perspective of the female holding a position of public power. This research is an attempt to understand more fully the role that anger plays in the lives of women who are in positions of power. Through a phenomenological design, the questions asked in this research are as follows:

1. What is the experience of anger in the everyday lives of women who hold positions of structural power in their communities?
2. What beliefs do women with high structural power have about anger?
3. What styles of anger expression characterize women who hold positions of structural power in their communities?

### **Definitions of Terms**

Before beginning a study of anger, women, and power, it is important to have a clear idea of the potential constructs and definitions that may arise from such a discussion. Anger and aggression are terms that are frequently interchanged within the popular and scholarly literature and as such warrant a discussion in terms of their definition. Though definitions vary among researchers and disciplines, the following is a good beginning point for this research. Further refinement of various definitions may emerge from the data collected in this research, and as such, these definitions are discussed in the analysis and discussion portions of this work. In addition to the discussion of anger, and aggression the definitions of emotion, gender, sex roles, and power are also pertinent to this discussion.

**Anger.** Because this research will utilize existential phenomenology, it is important that the participants in this research study be allowed to define anger in their own terms.

Because of this, the definition continued to develop over the course of the research. As this research progressed, further nuance became apparent based on the participants' of this study's stated definitions of anger.

The word anger comes from a Norse word meaning 'troubled' or 'afflicted' (Plutchik, 2003). There are many different definitions of the emotion, some positive and others negative. It may indicate physical affliction or pain, or it can be a feeling of "hot displeasure provoked against an agent (Plutchik, 2003)." Anger can be defined as "a socially constituted syndrome, or a transitory social role (p. 33, Averill, 1982)." Anger has also been discussed at length as either a state or a trait (for example Spielberger & Sydeman, 1994; and Forgays, Spielberger, Ottaway, & Forgays, 1998) suggesting that personality factors as well as temporary states are factors in anger.

Anger is a construct that most commonly is viewed as an emotion. Many see it as a negative emotion (Kristjansson, 2003, and Sirios & Burg, 2003) because of the undesirable feelings associated with it. Other emotions some considered negatively are anxiety and depression. As a negative emotion much, though not all, of the research in the field of psychology has focused on lessening the impact of anger. Despite the common view that anger is a negative emotion, some have put it in the positive emotion category because anger can be an approach emotion, rather than a retreat emotion (Harmon-Jones & Sigelman, 2001, and Harmon-Jones, Sigelman, Bohlig, & Harmon-Jones 2003). This means that rather than withdrawing from the situation eliciting the emotion, one actually approaches the situation with the idea of changing it. Relational-cultural theorists (Miller & Surrey, 1997) suggest that anger is necessary for growth and development of relationships. This would indicate that the Relational-cultural theorists would categorize anger as a positive emotion.

Many pair anger with aggression and/or violence. Though, anger and aggression have become intertwined within the national consciousness (Cox, Bruchner, & Stabb, 2003), anger is distinct from other constructs such as aggression. Anger does not necessarily lead to aggression, but its paired association with the behavior lead many to believe that it does. Violence is also linked to anger by some. Again, one can be angry without being violent and can be violent without being angry. Anger is an emotion; aggression and violence are behaviors. Separation of these terms is important in order to understand them more fully.

**Aggression.** Aggression is widely viewed as a behavior. Broadly, aggression may be defined as the behavior that is associated with the expression of anger (Jack, 1999). It is a goal directed behavior (Berkowitz, 1993). Aggression may take many forms. It may be physical and may resemble violence. It may be verbal and result in an argument or debate with others. It may be non-verbal and its outcome may be some form of covert or internalized reaction. Aggression can be a functional reaction to a perceived injustice, as was the case for many involved in the civil rights and women's movements. Aggression, in some cases may also be what some dub 'assertiveness,' and may be used to get the needs of the individual met in a way that is acceptable within the norms of society. As with anger, the definition of aggression continued to evolve over the course of this research according to the participants being interviewed.

**Emotion.** Emotions, by definition, are short-term states with both neurological and cognitive elements (Schachter & Singer, 1962). Emotions involve four key concepts: a) appraisals of situational stimulus, b) changes in physiological sensation, c) free display of expressive gestures, and d) a cultural label applied to specific constellations of the previous three (Thoits, 1989). Thus, emotions are a product of social influences.



**Gender.** Gender is a term often confused in the popular culture with that of sex. Gender is thought incorrectly to be a male or female distinction. Gender is a psychological and cultural construct (Shields, 1991). “Gender is manifested in the public social world (as in culturally defined standards of sex-appropriate behavior) and within the individual’s consciousness (as in one’s identification of oneself as male or female) (Shields, p. 228, 1991).” In this study, as in many others, gender will be defined as the degree to which one conforms to the stereotypic sex roles of traditional male or females within our society. Examples of identification with traditional sex roles may be a woman acting in a gentle, compassionate manner or a male being forceful or individualistic.

**Sex roles.** Sex roles are the normative expectations of the individual by society, and may include the behaviors, personality, abilities, and preferences of the individual as well as the process of role taking (Spence & Helmreich, 1978). Sex role stereotypes appear to be fairly stable in modern American society, though Holt and Ellis (1998) suggest that the differences between masculine and feminine sex roles are beginning to become less distinct.

**Power.** The range of possible definitions for power is perhaps even greater than the possible definitions for anger. For this study, power will refer to the possession of the qualities required to do something or get something done (Huston, 1983). This definition implies that the individual will have the power to affect change in her community/environment.

Two forms of power are relevant to this discussion: dyadic and structural power. Dyadic power is power that influences close relationships. This form of power is seen in the private sphere of home and family. Diekman, et al (2004) propose that this is the type of power traditionally ascribed to women’s power as women are perceived to be more

communal and relationally oriented. Structural power is power that is derived from roles in the public sphere and is linked to competitive situations and thus is more agentic or independent. These competitive situations involving structural power can be seen in business, politics, and the military as examples. Diekmann et al (2004) suggest that structural power has been more closely associated with patterns of male power.

### **Significance of the study**

Previous studies have examined the role of anger in the lived experience of women (Garrison, 1995; Munhall, 1993; Thomas, Smucker, & Droppleman, 1998). Through these studies we have begun to hear the voices of women's anger in a variety of settings. This has led to greater understanding not only of the emotion, but of the role that sex roles play in the experience and expression of anger. For the most part these studies assume that the experience of all women is heterogeneous. Missing from the voices of the women in these studies is an examination of power in the lives of the women interviewed. This study will focus on the intersection of power and anger in the everyday experience of a subset of women, those who hold positions of structural power in their communities. The examination of this subset of the population will contribute to the understanding of the heterogeneity of women's experience of anger. In addition, there has been a growing body of academic literature concerning the perception of women in positions of structural power (Diekmann, Goodfriend, & Goodwin, 2004; Eagly & Karau, 2002; and Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004). What appears to be missing in the literature is the description of the experience of anger of these powerful women from their personal viewpoint. Through such a study we will begin to understand the emotional experience of women who have stepped to the forefront of our communities.

## **Overview**

The research questions driving this study developed from a curiosity about the intersection of female power and anger. Building on the relational cultural theory put forth by Gilligan (1982) and others (Jack, 1999; Jordan, 1997; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, and Surrey, 1991; Miller & Surrey, 1997), and appraisal theory (Folkman and Lazarus, 1988, Lazarus, 1991a, and 1991b), as well as research in the area of power, I seek to explore the lived experience of powerful women's anger.

In this chapter, I have included an overview of the current research. Included is an explanation of the researcher's interest in the project as well as the path that the researcher took to refine the research question. The focus of the research was defined in the research questions, and I have outlined what I believe is the significance of this study. Terms of importance to this study were also operationalized where appropriate. In Chapter II of this work, I explore the important scholarly literature concerning anger, women, and power. Chapter III includes the methodology I used in the collection and analysis of data. Phenomenological theory and methodology is discussed in relation to this project, including a discussion of rigor. Sampling and data collection methods are discussed, as are the method of data analysis, and assumptions and limitations to this type of research. Chapters IV includes a summary of the data collected as well as the results of the interviews with the female mayors. A brief discussion of the analysis of the data is included in this chapter. Chapter V focuses on a discussion of the results including limitations and areas for further study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

What follows is a targeted review of the major lines of research and relevant studies concerning anger, women's anger and power. The review of the literature begins with an examination of the biological underpinnings of anger. Next, follows a discussion of appraisal theories as they relate to anger. Special attention to relational literature as it pertains to this topic follows. Major theories on emotion are discussed in some detail followed by a review of the literature concerning women's anger. Critiques of general theories and their application to women's anger will be included in this review. Other current literature includes the work of Cox, Stabb, and Bruckner (2003) which proposes both positive and negative ways of using anger. The review of the literature concerning power will then be reviewed. Though little has been written about the combination of women's experience with power and anger, there is a growing body of literature in the field of organizational psychology that addresses, at least in part, the role that power and anger play in the perception of leadership style. A brief description of this line of work will be discussed.

No single emotion theory exists. In a text on emotion it was noted that there are over 30 theories of emotion (Plutchik, 2003). Each is unique in its treatment of emotion,

especially in terms of the specific function of emotions. Definitional controversies arise about specific emotions, notably anger. The focus of various theories may be on cognitive aspects of emotion, socio-cultural aspects of emotion, or even biological aspects of emotion. Out of the differences, however, several themes have emerged. Most posit that emotions serve an adaptive function (Averill, 1983; and Cox, Stabb, Bruchner, 1999), that they are about significant events in the life of the individual, and that they regulate social interaction (Cox, Stabb, Bruchner, 1999; and Plutchik, 2003).

### **Biological Underpinnings of Anger**

Though a great deal of research exists concerning anger, we are still trying to understand its exact biological nature. Technology allows us to understand better the experience of anger through high tech scans and more sophisticated biological sampling studies. Biological research concerning anger primarily focuses on hormonal, physiological, and neuroanatomical studies. Studies link hormones such as testosterone with anger and aggression (McDermott, Cowden, Johnson, & Rosen, 2009). Because of the increased levels of testosterone in males, the research in this area more frequently focuses on male aggressive behavior or anger.

Another area of research focuses on the physiological impact of anger on the human body. Angered individuals often have surges of Epinephrine and Norepinephrine in the nervous system. Epinephrine and Norepinephrine, also known as adrenaline and noradrenalin in the limbic system, are implicated in the fight-or-flight response. When presented with an anger provoking situation, individuals see an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, and even differences in blood sugar levels in the pancreas. Studies of

individuals with Type A personalities have shown that hostility, related to anger, is a predictor of heart related problem (Friedman & Rosenman, 1974; Kendell-Tackett, 2010; Smith & Gallo, 2001). Chronic anger problems are associated with chronic stress and may lead to coronary heart disease as well as other medical illnesses (Kendall-Tackett, 2010).

The research on anger has not definitively shown where in the brain anger exists. Historically, the area of the brain associated with the limbic system was most commonly associated with emotion in humans (MacLean, 1970). These structures include the thalamus, hypothalamus, hippocampus, cingulate cortex, amygdala, and prefrontal cortex. In addition, MacLean also implicated the brainstem and the cerebellum in emotion. Attention to the prefrontal cortex's role in anger is also under study (Herrero, Gadea, Rodriguez-Alarcon, Espert, & Salvador, 2010). Evidence supports specialization of the cerebral hemispheres for affective processes (Ahern & Schwartz, 1985). Recent research on men (Herrero, Gada, Rodriguez-Alarcon, Espert, & Salvador, 2010) indicates that when angered the right hemisphere of the prefrontal cortical region of the brain activates. Researchers have yet to replicate this research with women, but there is little evidence to suggest there would be differences for women.

Along with other studies (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009), the research on the prefrontal cortex indicates that anger is an approach-related emotion distinguishing it from fear, which is an avoidance-related emotion activated in the left prefrontal cortical region. This would imply that anger occurs when a person is blocked from goal attainment, or forward movement. This line of research also suggests the close relationship between anger and fear.

## **Appraisal Theory**

Another prominent theory associated with emotional expression and experience is cognitive-mediational theory, proposed by Richard Lazarus (Lazarus, 1991a, 1991b; Lazarus, Averill, & Opton, 1970; and Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). Throughout his career, Lazarus was concerned with the relations between stress and coping. Eventually, he came to realize that stress and coping are a part of the larger study of emotion.

Central to the idea of Lazarus' emotion theory is that emotions involve the appraisals of the environment, relationships with others/environment, and attempts at coping with the relationships. Appraisals refer to the decision-making processes, or cognitions, that a person uses to determine whether personal harms and/or benefits exist in interactions with the environment (Lazarus, Averill, & Opton, 1970). Appraisals determine the emotional states by means of coping mechanisms. The relationship between coping and emotion is bi-directional (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). The behavioral flow begins with a transaction that one appraises as harmful, beneficial, threatening, or challenging. The appraisal generates the emotion. The appraisal and the emotions accompanying it change the person-environment relationship. The result is that the new person-environment relationship is then reappraised leading to new emotion quality or emotional intensity with coping thought to be the mediator in the process.

Lazarus did not favor the distinction between positive and negative emotions, unlike many theorists in the field. He said that anger has its own distinctive dramatic story or narrative, and as such, reveals information about the way that an individual copes

with problems. To place it in the context of either positive or negative was to negate its importance. The dichotomy of placing an emotion at one end of a pole also negates that emotions are often experienced in conjunction with each other. As an example, we frequently pair love and hate in the experience of human beings.

Lazarus and Folkman (1988) made an important distinction between two types of coping. In the first, the individual tried to directly deal with the problem that he or she is facing; in the second, the person tries to dampen or minimize the emotional state itself, without addressing the problem that elicited the state. Both types of coping are significant, and if used properly, can have beneficial consequences for the individual. This model can be applied to the understanding of anger by suggesting that anger can either be dealt with directly or by some other reaction such as being snuffed out (Cox, Stabb, & Bruchner, 1999). These appraisals determine the harms and benefits from these actions and result in the emotional response.

To Lazarus, emotions are about person-environment relationships that involve harms and benefits. Emotions are not caused by the individual or the environment, but by the interaction between the two (Lazarus 1991b). This relationship changes over time and circumstance, and each emotion involves a core relational theme which is universal in human experience. For Lazarus (2000), the core relational theme of anger was “A demeaning offense against me and mine.”

A set of core assumptions form the basis of Lazarus’ theory. First, each emotion involves its one innate action tendency (Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989). “Attack” is an action tendency for anger. It should be noted that in this case the attack action



tendency makes anger a “positive” (approach) emotion rather than a “negative” (retreat) emotion. Though Lazarus did not favor the distinction between positive and negative emotion, recent research supports this approach concept (Carver, & Harmon-Jones, 2009; and Herrero, Gadea, Rodriguez-Alarcon, Expert, & Salvador, 2010). This “attack” can be transformed into something else entirely, however. An example of this would be emotional numbing, or as Jack (1991) would say self-silencing. If we perceive that we cannot effect change in our immediate circumstance (feelings of being powerless) we may reshape or snuff out the attack. Second, each model has its own pattern of physiological change. Evidence suggests that anger impacts heart rate, blood pressure, and peripheral blood flow (Levenson, 1992). Physiologically, we are able to distinguish between various emotions. Levinson (1992) cites 15 studies that show different physiological responses in the body to fear and anger. He also cites differences between sadness and anger that can be distinguished based on physiological responses. Third, these action tendencies during an emotional experience provoke a psychophysiological response pattern that prepares the individual to act upon the person-environment relationship for the purpose of bringing about change. Without an appraisal, no emotion occurs.

Secondary appraisals include an internal assessment of one’s coping potential and future expectation in the situation. Expecting that one cannot change an unhappy situation (powerlessness) can cause a decreased ability to cope with the emotion. Cox, et al (1999) suggests that under Lazarus’ theory, we alter our anger experience based on the likelihood that we can have some impact.

## **Relational Cultural Theory**

Relationship, and expanding the capacity for relationship, is the basic goal of development for relational cultural theorists. Because many confuse anger with either aggression or violence, some view anger as a threat to relationship. Because of this perceived potential for destruction in a relationship, the relational cultural theorists propose that anger is a difficult emotion for many women. Conversely, they also suggest that it may be necessary for the growth of relationship.

Relational cultural theory is a developmental theory that grew out of the work of Miller (1976) and others (Chodorow, 1978, 1999; Gilligan, 1982/1993; Jordan, 1991, Jordan, et al. 1997; Jack 1999; Miller, 1991a, Miller, 1991b; and Surrey, 1991). Formerly called “Self-in Relation” (Surrey, 1991), this theory is particularly applicable to women’s development and the expression of emotion. In the study of psychology of women, some assert that women have an orientation toward relationship and interdependence (Gilligan, 1993; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This arises out of the developmental pattern in which women are oriented toward nurturance and connection and men are oriented toward independence and agency. Empathy is the central organizing component around which we base relationships.

In contrast to relational cultural theory, many developmental and clinical theories have emphasized individuation and separation from the mother as milestones in the development of an individual. This view is a Western view of human development based on the cultural view of infants as helpless at birth and needing to learn independence and greater self-sufficiency. In contrast, the Japanese as well as other more collectivist

cultures view infants as needing socialization toward greater dependence (Jordan, 1991). The relational cultural theorists view the “self” as based on relationships and interdependence and do not pathologize the need for connection. Because research and clinical observation have shown that women have a greater capacity for connectedness and emotional flexibility than do many men (Surrey, 1991) relational cultural theory is particularly applicable to women’s developmental theory.

The idea of “self” is of interest to relational cultural theorists. Surrey (1991) argues that the idea of “self” has not been clearly defined. Her working definition of self is “a construct useful in describing the organization of a person’s experience and construction of a reality that illuminates the purpose and directionality of her or his behavior (Surrey, 1991, p. 52).” Within this theory the primary experience of self is relational, that is, the self is organized and developed in the context of important relationships.

Empathy may be the central organizing concept in women’s relational experience. Surrey (1997) even goes so far as defining relationship as “an experience of mutual empathy.” The relational self needs to foster the growth of empathy. This is not an innate tendency, but is at least in part learned. This theory assumes a developmental pathway toward connection rather than individuation. “The development of a positive sense of knowing how to perceive, respond, and relate to the needs and feelings of the other person is an important aspect of woman’s self-development (Surrey, 1991, p. 57).”

Anger has a place in relational cultural theory. It is through emotions such as anger that relationships change and thus growth occurs. Surrey defines relationship

authenticity as the ongoing challenge to feel emotionally real, connected, vital, clear, and purposeful in a relationship. She said that risk and conflict are necessary for this to be achieved and may include the experience of anger and other difficult emotions. It is this experience of anger that has caused so many women difficulty. For women anger may threaten to disrupt a relationship. Miller (1991) said of women's anger, "we suffer from constraints that prevent us from expressing anger and even from knowing when we are experiencing anger- constraints that are different for members of each sex. (p. 181)." She also argued that the expression of anger has been encouraged differentially – predominantly for one sex only. Anger therefore feels like a threat to a woman's central sense of identity. Ironically, it is through working through this threat and experiencing mutuality that growth in relationship occurs (Miller & Surrey, 1997). Shared anger can therefore be a resource for positive action.

Women are frequently in a position of unequal power (Jack, 1999; and Miller, 1976). Subordinates are in a position that frequently generates anger, yet no dominant group ever wants to allow anger in its subordinates (Miller, 1991). Women's anger has been viewed as pathological by the general public (Miller, 1991). Women are raised with the belief that they are people who "should be" without anger and without the need for anger. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy – if anger is finally expressed, it often is in an exaggerated form, or in an ineffective form, with simultaneous negations and apologies. Women's anger becomes indirect and confused. Jack (1999) calls this a puzzle of aggression. She argues that if conflict is necessary for growth, then healthy expressions of anger may be necessary for the development of self and positive connections with others. Conflict between the self and other is a central moral conflict for

women (Gilligan, 1982/1993). Women frequently silence negative emotions such as anger in an attempt to maintain relationship. Ironically, this loss of voice threatens the intimacy of the relationship (Jack, 1991).

In contrast men's anger is socially sanctioned anger according to Miller (1991). "Young boys are encouraged to be "aggressive," that is, to act aggressively. Boys are made to fear not being aggressive, lest they be found to be wanting, be beaten out by another, or (worst of all) be like a girl (p. 189)." Baker argues that in both men and women, however, there is little real experience with anger and insufficient allowance for its direct expression at the time it could be appropriately used. Anger is seen as being isolating in our society. Both men and women view anger as destructive and we are therefore afraid of ourselves when we do express this emotion. Studies that have utilized relational theory have focused on women's use of emotion (Jack, 1991, 1999, 2001; Jack and Dill 1992; Simmons (2002); and Owens, Shute, & Slee 2002). The role of self silencing or diverted anger have been prevalent in the work in this area. A synopsis of these studies follows.

Jack (1999; and Jack & Dill, 1992) linked anger and depression by supposing that women silence part of themselves rather than express anger to others. This self-silencing is hypothesized to lead to depression in women. To test this theory, Jack and Dill (1992) developed the Silencing the Self Scale (STSS). The STSS has four cognitive schemas, Care as Self Sacrifice, Silencing the Self, Externalization, and the Divided Self. Jack and Dill (1992) found that the instrument was valid when used with women who were previously diagnosed as depressed. Jack and Dill thought that instead of expressing anger, it was more socially appropriate for women to admit to feelings of depression.

Other researchers have used the STSS in their research with mixed results. Brody, Haaga, Kirk, and Solomon (1999) found links between history of anger attacks, self-silencing behavior, and fear of anger expression. Self-silencing was related to the perception of intolerance and anger among husbands and fathers (Thompson, Whiffe, and Aube, 2001). This finding may provide support for the idea that power differentials may impact the willingness to voice dissent in relationships. Jack originally posited that men do not silence their anger, but several studies found that men either self-silence more (Gratch, Bassett, & Attra, 1995; Haemmerlie, Montgomery, Williams, & Winborn, 2001; and Page, Stevens, and Galvin, 1996) or at levels equal to women (Cramer & Thoms, 2003; Spratt, Sherman, & Gilroy, 1998; and Thompson, 1995).

Another qualitative study by Jack (2001) focused on anger in relationships. Following interviews with 60 women, Jack described six ways that women bring anger into relationships or keep it out. She said that women bring anger into relationships 1) positively and directly, 2) aggressively, with the goal of hurting others, or 3) indirectly. She described ways women keep anger out of relationship as 1) consciously and constructively, 2) explosively expressing anger, and 3) through self-silencing. Her work in this area suggests ways that women use their anger both creatively and destructively. Support for the role of self-silencing of anger comes from Van Daalen (2004) who interviewed 65 diverse college aged women through eight focus groups and nine one-to-one interviews. She found self-silencing of anger and argued that women were forced to live an inauthentic existence because of the expectation of women to not show anger. Van Daalen argued that these gender roles came from society's fears of women's power

and strength. She labeled these women as ultra “adaptive chameleons” with regard to their expression of anger in order to maintain relationship.

Two studies of adolescent girls’ anger expression have utilized relational cultural theory and have found seemingly destructive methods of utilizing anger. Simmons (2002) interviewed girls about nonphysical conflict. She found that bullying that goes on with girls is perceived as qualitatively different than bullying done by boys. Girls, she found, use indirect ways of expressing their anger to other girls. These methods may be a look, a rumor started about another girl, or a sabotaging of relationship. Simmons (2002) found that girls maintain a “sweet” or outwardly acceptable appearance while using their anger to harm another girl. Because of this outward appearance, teachers, parents, and other adults do not perceive the damage that the loss of relationship has on the impacted girl. Like Jack (1999), Simmons asserts that girls have not developed healthy methods of expressing their anger. Owens, Shute, and Slee, (2002) discovered similarly that adolescent girls covertly attack other girls often under the radar screen of adults. Examples of such attacks included internet rumors being spread or relationships being severed rather than girls confronting their interpersonal problems constructively. Both studies indicate destructive methods of using anger amongst adolescent girls.

Each of the above mentioned studies explored the role of anger expression in women. Each supposed that women silence the emotion of anger to maintain relationships with others. The research does not argue that women lack anger. Instead, these studies focus on the outward expression of anger. They found that because of self-silencing, anger sometimes becomes confused and maladaptive, especially among the young women studied. The studies of self-silencing based on the STSS indicated that

self-silencing of anger is not unique to women, however. Studies including male participants concluded that men also self-silence their emotions, though it was suggested that there may be differing reasons for this phenomenon. One researcher went as far as to argue that men self-silence to avoid relationship (Remen, Chambless, & Rodbaugh, 2002). Applied to women, the relational cultural theory suggests that women's need for connection makes anger difficult.

### **Cultural theories.**

Culture also affects the emotional experience of individuals. Mesquita and Walker (2003) put forth the idea that certain emotions are prevalent and others rare partially because of cultural expectations. They say that cultural models foster "culture specific appraisal tendencies" and these are then reflected in patterns of emotional experience. Mesquita and Walker (2003) noted that in some cultures specific emotions, including anger, may seem excessive, and therefore pathological, whereas in another culture, these emotional expressions may be normative. In the United States and other Western nations, anger is more prevalent, than in Eastern cultures.

This is consistent with the work of Markus and Kitayama (1994) who said that core cultural ideas constrain and support particular culture specific ways of thinking, acting, and feeling. They said that one's local world influences the expression of the emotions they feel. A study of anger among students from northern and southern Illinois (Cohen, Vandello, Puente, & Rantilla, 1999) confirmed this. Cohen et al found that individuals from the southern part of the state were more likely, when provoked, to hold their anger until they reached a breaking point, at which point they would become



explosive. Students from the northern part of the state were found to express their anger at a lower intensity, but sooner, and over a longer period of time when provoked in a similar manner. The cultural of origin appears to shape the expression of anger.

### **Integrationist theory**

Cox, Stabb, and Bruchner (1999, 2003) integrated relational theory, appraisal theory, and other theories (see also Markus and Kitayama, 1991; and Averill, 1982) to create their Anger Advantage model. The authors posit that there are anger diversions and adaptive anger skills used by women in anger provoking situations. Anger diversions often work against the individual and adaptive anger skills work in her favor.

**Anger Diversions.** Central to the model put forth by Cox et al (2003) are anger diversions. These diversion are viewed as negative messages, models, and choices of anger expression. Diversions are ways that individuals bypass their oppositional feelings. Diversions may protect women from the hurt of being angry, but they may also prevent women from using their anger to affect change. These diversions (externalization, segmentation, internalization, and containment) are outlined below.

**Externalization.** The first anger diversion, externalization, allows a person to project their anger outwards towards a third party. The authors suggest that these externalizations may cause one to blame others for their anger. Examples include statements such as, “My anger is your fault.” The woman loses touch with the fact that she had a relationship with the other, even if it was one of pain. This form of diversion shuts off awareness of the relationships between oneself and others. The diversion can cause a woman to cut a relationship out of her life rather than be aware of the reasons she

is angry with another. Apologizing becomes difficult when a person externalizes because of this lack of self-awareness.

***Segmentation.*** Segmentation occurs when women sever their angry selves from their conscious identity. People who segment unconsciously see anger as a trait as a character flaw. They experience the anger response and related thoughts with minimal awareness. “I can’t ever let myself feel angry,” and “I don’t have anger,” are examples of segmentation. When segmentation occurs, the individual finds it necessary to be positive about things, yet speaks disapprovingly about people who express opposition or are argumentative. Perhaps most importantly, segmentation is used when a person is in a position of low power, traditionally called passive aggressive. Cox et al (2003) agree with Jack (1999), Simmons (2002), Pipher (1994), and White & Kowalski (1994) that women tend to use this indirect expression of anger more often than men.

***Internalization.*** The third anger diversion, internalization, is the process of gradually absorbing anger meant for others. “Conflict is all my fault,” and “I have to disown part of me to be liked by you,” are examples of internalization. Internalization can be immediate or long-term. Internalization can be compared to Jack’s (1999) silencing-the-self, in which women gradually become more agreeable and not angry. Cox et al (2003) found that girls learn that anger makes them unattractive to others. They found that girls will police themselves to make sure that no one gets too uppity and harshly criticize open displays of anger among other girls. Telling oneself that she is less competent rather than angry is a way of internalizing anger. The irony is that internalization often keeps others at arm’s length rather than pulling another person closer.

**Containment.** The last of the anger diversions, containment, involves psychologically storing anger. Containment is holding anger in a temporary pattern until the woman can express it in a safe environment where the woman will not lose status. Containment differs from suppression in that the individuals hold the emotion with the expectation that they will have an outlet later. “If I hold it in, it will blow over,” and “I can’t show my anger when I feel it,” are examples of containment. Containment can happen for a number of reasons, but frequently it happens because the woman fears something, either a threat or retaliation. This stuffing down of emotions is conscious and is accomplished by fighting off anger and keeping it hidden from public view. The cost of containment may be a decline in the physical health of the woman (Cox, Stabb, & Bruchner, 2003).

**Adaptive anger skills.** Adaptive anger skills are uses of anger that serve an advantageous function to the individual. Four adaptive anger skills outlined by Cox et al (2003) include anger consciousness, constructive anger talk, listening, and think tank. These positive uses of anger are endorsed by Cox et al (2003) as ways that individuals can be aware of and use their anger to their advantage. One should note that these adaptive anger skills differ from anger diversions in that they are distinct skills and may be used in conjunction with one another. Each is a part of a positive expression of anger.

The first adaptive anger skill, anger consciousness, involves becoming aware of anger as it occurs. Anger consciousness means moving past the fear of anger or the idea of becoming overwhelmed by anger. Examples include “I know what my anger feels like.” “My anger helps me know who I am.” The authors suggest that this is the first step in understanding one’s anger. Anger consciousness includes awareness of one’s physical

as well as psychological anger. Anger in one's voice, facial expression, and posture are all included in anger consciousness. A greater understanding of the connection between the mind, the body, and anger are encouraged.

Cox et al (2003) suggest that practitioners can assist their clients in using anger positively in therapeutic situations. Van Velsor and Cox (2001) said that anger can be utilized for treatment of sexual abuse survivors. They said by reframing anger as a vehicle for recovery rather than a symptom, therapists can learn to incorporate anger work into the treatment of survivors.

Though Cox et al's (2003) later work was written for a lay audience, the basis for the recommendations came out of several large studies of women's anger (Cox, Stabb, & Bruchner, 1999; Cox, Stabb, & Hulgus, 2000; and Cox, Van Velsor, & Hulgus, 2002). The model contains both anger diversions and adaptive anger skills. Less explanation is given of their adaptive anger skills than anger diversions by the authors. This may be indicative of the trend in the literature to explore the negative aspects of this emotion, rather than those aspects that are advantageous to the individual. Hopefully, future works by the authors will delve more deeply into the adaptive anger skills so that we might have a better understanding of their uses.

### **Sex and Anger**

A great deal of attention has been paid to the link between anger and sex differences. As is outlined below, many studies suggest that though men and women experience anger in similar ways, they express their anger differently. Stereotypes depict men as more outwardly expressive of anger and women as more outwardly expressive of

all emotions except anger (Sharkin, 1993). This generalization has been the focus of much attention in the literature and is not without its critics. Others argue that women and men experience and express anger in about the same way (Bartz, Blume, & Rose, 1996; Fisher, Smith, Leonard, Fuqua, Campbell, & Masters, 1993; and Kopper, 1993). No definitive conclusions have emerged in the literature concerning the comparison between men's and women's anger experience and expression, however. Included below is a sampling of the work examining the comparison of men's and women's anger.

Several studies indicate that differences in the experience of anger do not exist between the sexes. In one such study, Bartz, Blume and Rose (1996) found sex differences were not a significant factor in self-reported anger on the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI), an instrument used to measure state-trait anger. Kopper (1993) found no significant differences between men and women in levels of anger or depression. Follow-up work also failed to find sex differences in the expression of anger, but found instead that the levels of masculinity contributed to anger (Kopper & Epperson, 1996).

Women and men express similar levels of discomfort with anger (Sharkin & Gelso, 1991) as measured by the Anger Discomfort Scale. Another study indicated that men and women in non-clinical settings experience anger at reportedly similar levels (Fisher, Smith, Leonard, Fuqua, Campbell, & Masters, 1993) but women's anger appears to be more closely related to depression than men's (Newman, Gray, & Fuqua, 1999). This is consistent with those who believe women find it more acceptable to express depression than anger (Jack, 1999), and might lead one to believe that anger expression may be guided by social norms or some other factor. One study (Iqbal, Ahmad, Shukla,

& Akhtar, 1993) found that men scored significantly higher on measures of outward anger expression, while females scored significantly higher on measures of internalized anger.

Haines (2000) studied gender role differences (as opposed to sex differences) and found that individuals with high masculine traits were more likely to have angry temperaments and negative outward expressions of anger. Individuals with high feminine traits were more likely to control their expression of anger. Unlike Sharkin & Gelso (1994), Haines found no difference in anger discomfort between genders.

Some studies show that women and men express anger emotion in different ways (Hess, Adams, & Kleck, 2005; Thomas, 2003). As an example, women sometimes cry when they are angered (Domagalski, 1999), but males seldom admit to this expressive style. Research shows that young women sometimes operate “under the radar screen of others” when expressing their anger, using their anger in a covert manner (Simmons, 2002, Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000), whereas young men are socialized to express their anger in an overt manner (Thomas, 2003). Alford (1983) examined facial expression of emotion and suggested that there are neuroanatomical sex differences in the control of facial expression implying that there are differences in the way the expression of anger looks amongst the sexes. Linden, Hogan, Rutledge, Chawia, Lenz, and Leung (2003) found that women rely more heavily on social-support seeking as a response to anger than do men. These authors did not find sex differences in anger suppression, however.

White and Kowalski (1994) said that women have as much potential as men to be aggressive, or outwardly expressive of their anger. MacCaulay (1985 cited in White and

Kowalski, 1994) recognized seven beliefs associated with aggression in women. These beliefs included (a) beliefs exist that women are non-aggressive; (b) women are “sneaky” in their expression of aggression; (c) women are unable to express anger; (d) women are prone to outbursts of fury; (e) women are psychologically distressed if they are aggressive; (f) women are aggressive in defense of their children; and finally (g) women are motivated to aggress by jealousy. Because of the belief that aggression is a male attribute, White and Kowalski (1994) argue that researchers have sought out male participation in research studies in this area whilst not adequately addressing women’s anger. When anger is studied in women, it is often viewed from a male perspective (Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, & Benton, 1992; and White & Kowalski, 1994).

Another theme in the popular press is that aggressive women are more deviant than aggressive men (White & Kowalski, 1994; Anderson, 1993). News reports of a mother who kills her children receives national news coverage, whereas a father who commits an equal crime is worthy of local coverage only. We are shaken by the idea that women can be violent, aggressive, or even angry.

A phenomenological study of men’s anger was undertaken by Thomas (2003). Though the focus of this study was on men, the author compared the findings of this study with those of a larger women’s anger project she has conducted (Thomas, Smucker, & Droppelman, 1998). She argued that men’s anger is also misunderstood, partially because there have been relatively few attempts to allow men to share their experiences with anger. Thomas discovered that anger was connected to men’s sense of right and wrong, and men use control of situations and events and control of their own emotionality. Counter to Lazarus’ assertion that attack is the main action tendency and is

used to preserve or enhance self-esteem, Thomas found that most men who engaged in aggressive behaviors while angry were ashamed of their behavior.

Thomas' work is part of a larger examination of anger, which is inclusive of both sexes. As such she has found several commonalities and several differences in the experience of anger among the sexes. In contrast to the studies that say men and women experience different reactions to anger, Thomas found that men were often as uncomfortable with and conflicted about anger as women. Both men and women were cognizant of the constructive uses of anger, but they agreed that the negative uses far outweighed the positive uses of anger. Finally, both sexes agreed that they lacked effective anger management skills.

Thomas also found differences between the responses of the men and women in her studies. Women's anger was provoked mainly by lack of relationship reciprocity; men's anger was provoked by strangers, faulty mechanical objects, or global societal issues in which an injustice was perceived. Men directed their anger at external objects, whereas women's anger was related to powerlessness in intimate relationship. Discussion of anger was distressful to women because it threatened intimate relationship.

Thomas went on to say that the style of anger provocateurs also differ between the sexes. Men speak about "this guy" or "another employee" (both distancing terms linguistically), while women use proper names to indicate the provocateur. Women have a difficult time separating their feelings of "hurt" from their feelings of anger. Women report that crying is a common response to anger; men do not. Men described anger as "a



flood,” “a vortex,” “a fire” that swept them along with its force; women used cooking metaphors such as “simmering,” “slow boil,” and “stewing.”

Thomas said that men have not developed healthy anger management strategies either. Hitting or throwing an object did not provide for the catharsis they sought. Walking away from a situation and isolating oneself, though beneficial for avoiding embarrassment did not allow the men to receive support that women often receive. Thomas advocated the use of early intervention and emotion management training focusing on constructive anger. Warneka’s (1997) dissertation on anger expression involved both men and women. Warneka found four themes among participants: the desire to avoid the emotion of anger, early socialization that anger should not be expressed, confusion as to how to cope with anger, and negative consequences when they suppressed their anger.

Cox, Bruchner and Stabb (2003) also interviewed women about anger. In the final chapter of their *Anger Advantage*, they highlighted women who had successfully used their anger. Consistent with their model and its inclusion of adaptive anger skills, they found that some women are able to channel their anger to use the emotion in a way that benefits themselves and others. They did note that the proportion of women they interviewed who were able to use anger in this way was small in comparison to those who used it as a diversion. This may be indicative of the general confusion about positive uses of anger by the general population.

Garrison (1995) studied the relationship between physical illness and emotion and found that women with cardiovascular disease did not express their anger directly, but

when they did, they had an almost explosive and unsatisfying experience of anger. The women with breast cancer tried to ignore their anger, but if they did acknowledge it some reported outward expression by yelling or screaming. Women with both cancer and cardiovascular disease experienced a sense of helplessness. It is unclear how much these women would equate helplessness with powerlessness. Disease appeared to be the target for these women's anger. Their powerlessness/helplessness over the disease may have mediated their anger response style.

In conclusion, in each of the studies, there has been a decided discomfort with anger. In the case of the women with medical conditions, helplessness against a target they could not control was a theme related to anger. In Van Daalen's (2005) study, she saw ways that women adapted their emotional expression in what she termed chameleon-like ways, but she also noted self-silencing. Thomas discovered the discomfort men also feel with anger, but found that they viewed anger expression skills that developed over time. Cox, Bruchner and Stabb (2003) offered a positive view of anger that involves facing the anger and using it to advantage for a small number of women. Researcher does not support the idea that only men experience anger, or that men and women experience anger differently, yet there may be differences in expression of this emotion. The expression of this emotion may be tied to power differentials, perceived or real, in the individual expressing the emotion.

## **Power**

Power can be defined generally as a sense of control, that one's actions will produce the intended results (Huston, 1983). As noted previously, there are many definitions of power. Of primary concern in this section is the role that power differences

between people (as opposed to economic power) are perceived and how those differences impact the experience and expression of anger.

### **Anger and Power**

The intersection of research on anger and power is growing. Averill (1997) said that power is the entrance requirement for anger. Without power, he suggests that anger expression is unlikely. A growing body of work suggests that power is a necessary prerequisite for anger expression, if not for anger experience. What follows is a review of the relevant literature concerning anger and power.

Smith and Ellsworth (1985) identified control as one cognitive factor contributing to emotional arousal. Endorsements of external control were found to be associated with both anger and depression. Thus, in the experience of either emotion, situational control was generally attributed to external factors, such as another person. For anger, a particular individual is perceived as the cause; sadness or depression may result from the feeling that one is the victim of circumstance.

Russell and Mehrabian (1974) proposed that power differentially influences anger and depression. They thought all emotions vary along three dimensions: pleasure, arousal, and dominance. The dimension of dominance, defined as “the degree to which a person feels powerful or in control of a situation (p. 79)”, differentiated anger and depression. High ratings of dominance were associated with anger, and low ratings of dominance with depression. Strachan and Dutton (1992) examined the influence of power on anger responses. Following an experimental manipulation, participants in a low-power condition reported higher levels of anger than did high-power participants.

The highest anger ratings were found in low-power participants in a condition in which an antagonist was of the opposite sex. These findings suggest that an interaction of power and gender may contribute to one's level of anger. Strachan's and Dutton's findings contradicted those of Russell and Mehrabian (1974), while offering support for Novaco's (1976) conceptualization of anger arising from feelings of powerlessness. Strachan and Dutton (1992) argued that the perception of threat was a key contributor to the development of anger for individuals in low-power situations.

Dagan (2000) found that individuals who are high in power are "allowed" by those around them to get angry, whereas individuals who are low in power are not "allowed" to express their anger. Pierce (1995) found that there were differences in the way lawyers and paralegals expressed anger. Lawyers were more likely to take on an adversarial manner both in and out of the courtroom; on the other hand, paralegals were not allowed to challenge the lawyers as an equal and were thus not "allowed" to use anger in confrontations. The difference in power and prestige between lawyers and paralegals is thought to be a contributing factor in these differences according to Pierce (1995). Dagan (2000) noted that occupations with higher prestige were more likely to be occupied by men and thus those individuals (males) were less likely to be expressive of their emotions other than anger. He argued that sex rather than occupation was more likely to influence emotional expression.

A number of variables were found to impact emotional expression. Interestingly, education was also found to impact emotional expression. Dagan (2000) found that more education correlated with more frequent emotional expression. Women were found to be more frequently expressive of their emotions than men in Dagan's study. Dagan (2000)

did not differentiate between emotions on this point. Older individuals were found to express anger less frequently than younger participants in Dagan's (2000) study. Dagan (2000) found that people who both give and take orders from others were more likely to suppress their anger than if they gave orders only. Dagan suggests that anger may be the emotion of power and management of anger may indicate power. Research suggests that anger can heighten the status of a man (Tiedens, 2001) while angry women have lower status (Brescholl & Uhlmann, 2008). Brody (2000) said because of the expectation that men express emotions such as anger in the form of aggression with the emphasis on individual achievement, they achieve higher power and status than women.

La France & Hecht (1999, 2000) found that higher power individuals are given more leeway, by others, to show their emotions than lower power individuals. Lower power/lower status individuals were more tightly bound by social rules and expectations. It is not surprising then to learn that women were expected to smile more because that is the social rule, and men were allowed to be more outwardly angry because they had the power to do so. Hess, Adams, and Kleck (2005) suggested that this meant that high status women would be more likely to display anger because they were high status. High status men could show anger because of their status and their ability to redress the situation causing the anger.

Hess, et al (2005) examined the role of dominance and affiliation on the displays of happiness and anger in men and women. They found that participants in the study expected women to be more affiliative, showing more fear, sadness, surprise, and happiness. Women were also viewed in the study as less dominant. Happiness was only linked to affiliation and not to dominance in this study, however. This ran counter to La

France and Hecht's work (1999, 2000) that indicated that smiling was more common in women as a way to appease rather than being due to their lack of social dominance. Men were expected to show more dominant emotions: anger, contempt, and disgust. Men were less affiliative and more dominant. The findings also indicated that gender and affiliation had a weaker association than gender and dominance. Both high dominant men and high dominant women were expected to react with anger in this study. This finding was in agreement with Averill (1997) and LaFrance and Hecht (1999, 2000). Low dominant women were not expected to feel less anger and sadness, but were expected to show less sadness and anger. Women who appeared affiliative were likely to encounter social disapproval, whereas women who appeared dominant could show "rightful" anger.

Carmony and DiGiuseppe (2003) found that individuals in low power situations experienced greater levels of anger than when in high power situations. The authors suggest that limited control of a situation is a key contributor to anger experience.

Each of these studies confirms a relationship between high power and anger expression. Those with high levels of power, or dominance, could show display anger outwardly. Hess, et al (2005) suggest that high power women are expected to express their anger, but the authors did not discuss what a woman's anger should look like when it is allowed to be expressed.

Women have begun to achieve positions of structural power in greater numbers in recent decades. The United States has seen an increase in cabinet posts filled by women, indicating a possible increase in influence. Politically, more women are finding

themselves in elected positions. As an example, 25% of the legislators in the state studied at the time of this study were women ([www.house.ia.state.us.gov](http://www.house.ia.state.us.gov)). This is only slightly above the national average of 23 per cent (Center for American Women and Politics, 2002). This percentage, though encouraging in its growth from 10% in 1979, is still disappointing, given that women comprise more than half the U.S. population (United States Census Bureau, 2000). Diekman, Goodfriend, and Goodwin (2005) link political power to economic power, given the large amount of money necessary to run a campaign.

## **Conclusions**

The literature on sex, anger, and power demonstrates the complexity of the topic. In this section, I have attempted to outline some of the pertinent lines of research concerning women, anger, and power. We have seen that though no one line of research definitively stands out to explain the intersection of these constructs there are a great number of sources that contribute to the discussion.

Self-in-representation theorists suggest that women concern themselves with relationships and maintaining relationships while men tend toward more independence. This affiliative style, involving interactions with others, is how many women experience and express anger. Self-in-representation theorists propose that women suppressed or muted anger because of fears of harm to relationships.

Multitudes of theories explore anger. Cited above were several that appear pertinent to the current study. Appraisal theory has largely ignored sex in its study of anger, but suggest that appraisals of the environment, relationships to others, and attempts at coping with relationships play a role in anger. Appraisal theorists suggest

power differentials may influence appraisals of situations and thus may affect the way individuals experience and express anger. In addition, few would dispute that culture plays a role in the expression of emotion as was suggested by the research cited above. Even local context plays a role in the expression of anger. Research indicates that we learn our emotional responses according to the norms of our culture.

Some implicate power in the expression of anger. In the literature mentioned above, we see that power may dictate some of the situations in which an individual can and cannot express their emotions. High power individuals express their anger, and in some instances we expect them to do so, yet women sometimes lose stature when expressing anger. This double standard is illustrated by real life experiences of prominent politicians such as Hillary Clinton and Madeline Albright. These prohibitions against anger expression are in place even for the most powerful women in the world.

We also see that women are gaining greater prominence in roles of structural, or public, power. In the past, women maintained positions of dyadic power and focused more on relationship. Women's roles are changing in our society however, and with these changes may come changes in the way that women express themselves. Missing from the research is the 'voice' that these powerful women give to their anger. The perception of women in leadership has been explored in several studies, but the women's experience with this emotion while in a place of power is an omission in the research that needs to be explored. The focus of this research is on how women experience and express their anger. In the next chapter the methodology for exploration of this topic will be outlined.



## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of anger and anger expression used by women who hold positions of public power in their communities and the meaning these women give to their anger. Thus far, women's anger has been poorly understood (Thomas, Smucker, and Droppleman, 1998). Previous research into women's anger focused on differences between men and women in terms of style of expression, intensity, and frequency of anger expression or on the dysfunctional aspects of anger expression. Psychological researchers seldom focused on the experience of anger and power together in the lived experiences of women, especially in women who hold power as elected officials. This research is an attempt to shed light on the experiences of a sample of Midwestern women who hold public office in their rural communities.

A qualitative analysis is appropriate for creating a more in-depth understanding of powerful women's anger and anger expression because previous work in the area of anger has not adequately explored the complexity of this topic. Qualitative research stresses the socially constructed nature of reality and seeks to explain how we create and give meaning to social experience (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Women's anger has been

studied using a variety of methods both qualitative (Denham, 2002; Stevick, 1984; Munhall, 1993; Garrison, 1995; Thomas, 1998; Jack, 1999; and Cox, Stabb, & Bruchner, 2003) and quantitative (for example Kopper & Epperson, 1996; and Linden et al, 2003). However, by highlighting the variable of power in conjunction with women's anger, the discussion becomes more complex. The rich description of the 'lived experiences' of the women studied is sought with this dissertation.

A phenomenological design is an appropriate method of exploring the lived experiences of the anger in women in positions of power. Phenomenological analysis is principally concerned with understanding how the everyday, intersubjective world is constituted (Schwandt, 2000). Phenomenological investigation allows for the exploration of the lived experience of the individual (Spinelli, 2005; deMarrais, & Tisdale, 2002). Thomas (1983) used an existential phenomenological approach as part of her larger mixed method study of anger and women. In this type of study, the experience and the meanings of emotion are central to human existence (Heidegger, 1927/1962 cited in Thomas, Smucker, & Droppleman, 1998). The aim of this phenomenological study is to provide a faithful description of the experiences of anger and power for the individuals interviewed. The unit of study in phenomenological research is "the person in the world" (Thomas, 2003), thus the phenomenon (anger) was examined in the context of structural power among women. This allowed the researcher to see both the person and the world in which they live.

### **Participants**

I selected participants in this study using a purposeful sampling technique. Participants were women over 18 years of age, who currently reside in the Midwestern

state chosen for the study and who have held the office of mayor of their community either presently or in the recent past. The researcher chose the state for the convenience of the researcher as well as for the ease of access for the researcher.

The depth of the interviews sought determines the number of participants, though sometimes debated in qualitative research. The sample size sought for this research was between six and ten participants. Support for this size of sample comes from Smith (2003), who recommends that for a study that aims to explore subjective experience, a small sample size made up of five or six participants is appropriate. Shaw (2004) also supports this assertion by suggesting that for studies aimed at revealing the nuances of participant's experience rather than making representative claims, as in a phenomenological study, six participants is appropriate. There are just over 110 women in the state selected who hold the elected position as mayor of their communities. The researcher randomly selected ten communities with female mayors. Of those contacted, six responded that they would participate in the study. This represents approximately 5.4 percent of the total population targeted. In the state selected, most communities with female mayor were from the eastern portion of the state. As a result, all the women in this study were from the central or eastern portion of the state creating a smaller geographic area of study.

Each mayor was from a small town in the Midwestern state selected. Each community had a mayor-council form of government, though one was moving towards a city manager form of governance. State statutes dictate that there are five council members in each city with the mayor-council form of government. The community moving towards a change in type of government would still maintain a council, but day-

to-day duties would transfer to the manager. Three of the mayors said they supervised the police and/or fire departments. Three communities did not have their own police force or their own fire department. In these cases, the communities had to rely on county officials for law enforcement and volunteers for fire safety. Each participant had to work with regional or county agencies to get the needs of their communities met. All participants reporting working closely with a city clerk on day-to-day tasks. Several participants reported supervising other city staff such as water department staff or maintenance/lawn care staff.

An examination of the population and demographic information of each of the communities indicated that all participants came from predominantly Caucasian communities. Communities ranged from 95.7% white to 99% white non-Hispanic according to U.S. Census information. Populations of communities in which the participants resided were between 200 and 3800 people. Women slightly outnumbered males in each community. Figures ranged from 51% to 53% female. This is consistent with the U.S. Census information indicating slightly more females than males in the U.S. population. Household income varied from \$36,000 to \$79,000 per household in the communities surveyed (United States Census, 2000).

Each participant was an elected municipal official who either is currently in office or has recently left office. Each participant in the study has been re-elected to office at least one time. This is important for two reasons. First, the completion of at least one term in office gives these women more time to have discovered how they use anger in their positions within their communities. More opportunities for conflict will most likely have arisen allowing for a richer understanding of their own anger expression. A single

term may be a relatively short time in office and may not have allowed these women to develop fully as leaders. Second, the researcher assumed that re-elected status increases the likelihood that these individuals have the sanction of the communities in which they reside. For that reason, they may be better barometers for what emotional expression is expected of elected officials in Midwestern communities. Several said that after their first election, they ran unopposed. All but one participant had served on the city council prior to her election as mayor. Two of the women had finished out the term of a mayor who had resigned, but were then re-elected to the position in the regular elections held in their community. The participants' history of public service made them good candidates for this type of study.

The women gave varying reasons for running for mayor. Members of the communities approached several of the participants to run for mayor. Most cited their belief that they could improve the community in which they lived as a reason for seeking public office. Nadine (pseudonym) , who was about to retire from her full time job at the time she ran for council, indicated that she saw this as a way to continue her public service within her community, and said she did not want to be a volunteer at a local hospital like many of her peers. When the former mayor decided not to run for public office Nadine decided to run. She saw this as a way to contribute to her community. Jean said a group of people in the community asked her to run for office. Angela had been in disagreement with the previous mayor over how he conducted the meetings, and she said she did not want him to continue in his current position. She also had the backing of several community members who acted as her campaign committee. Though

the researcher did not choose participants based on their reason for seeking public office, the researcher noted information when pertinent about their decisions to seek office.

Though the researcher did not seek out participants from a particular racial or ethnic group, prior to the beginning of the study, the researcher believed that there was a high likelihood that the participants would all be Caucasian based on the demographics of the state sampled. This proved to be true. Through racial demographic information solicited on the demographic form, all those sampled identified themselves as Caucasian. Though ethnicity was not specifically asked in either the interview or the demographic form, most participants volunteered that they were either German American or Norwegian American descent. See table 1 for more detail.

**Table 1**

**Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

(N=6)

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Race/ Ethnicity</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Terms as Mayor</b>	<b>Previous Elected Position</b>
<b>Allyson</b>	51-55	Married	Caucasian/ German American	High School	Activity Coordinator	2	Yes
<b>Angela</b>	45-50	Married	Caucasian/ German & other European American mix	Some college	Information Services Manager and Business Owner	2	Yes
<b>Helen</b>	51-55	Married	Caucasian/ unknown	Some college	Registered Nurse/ Teacher	2	Yes
<b>Jean</b>	51-55	Divorced/ Re- married	Caucasian/ Norwegian American	Some college	Business Owner and Pharmacy Technician	2	No
<b>Mary</b>	45-50	Married	Caucasian/ unknown	Some college	Bookkeeper	4	Yes

<b>Nadine</b>	65+	Widow	Caucasian/ Norwegian American	College graduate	Retired Administrator	3	Yes
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Participants were located through public record and were contacted via telephone to ascertain willingness to participate in the study (see script, Appendix A). The ages of the women ranged from their mid forties to mid seventies (See Table 1). There is a diversity of occupations among the participants who participated in the study. Their professions vary from seemingly more traditional occupations for women (nurse/teacher) to less traditional occupations (administrator). Two of the women are business owners as well as working at full time jobs. One participant works two part time jobs, both as a bookkeeper in addition to her role as mayor. With the exception of the retired administrator, all worked outside the home at the time of the interviews. Though not asked on the demographic questionnaire, all the women volunteered that they were mothers and/or grandmothers. One of the participants is widowed, one divorced and remarried, and the rest were married one time each.

### **Methodology**

The methodology used in this study was similar to that of Colaizzi (1978) and endorsed by Spinelli (2005). This method involves a series of ten steps. First, the researcher forms a brief unbiased research question and participates in bracketing activities to address issues of bias. Next, the researcher selects what Spinelli calls ‘co-researchers’ for the study. It should be noted that though the language used by Spinelli uses the term ‘co-researcher’ for ‘participant’ in any phenomenological study, this study

utilizes terminology that is more traditional. The next step involves structured one-to-one interviews of the participants. The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim. I then read the transcripts multiple times, and extracted significant statements from each. The next step was attempting to find meaning in the statements followed by arranging them in clusters of themes. I then fit the thematic elements into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon, returned it to the participants for feedback, and developed a final description of the phenomenon of women's anger and power. Though Spinelli asserts that this type of research is never finished, the researcher makes the determination as to when the analysis is complete. What follows is a more detailed description of the method proposed by Colaizzi (1978) as applied to the topic at hand.

### **Bracketing**

I defined the focus of investigation and performed a self-investigation to expose my presuppositions regarding the women's anger and power. The basic tenets of phenomenological approach include putting presuppositions aside, obtaining data through descriptions of experience, and analyzing experience in such a way that the essential meanings and structure of experience can emerge (Garrison, 1995). Qualitative research acknowledges the researcher as instrument (Morrow & Smith, 2000). Spinelli (2005) argues that phenomenological research denies the possibility of truly objective observation and research. Rather it "assumes an indissoluble inter-relationship between the investigator and his or her focus of investigation (p. 133)." By laying aside, as best I can, anger as is understood in the scientific literature, I can revisit my immediate experience of it.



Through this exercise I learned about my own cultural heritage and how my being from mixed Northern European descent may have influenced my own restricted view of emotional expression. My tradition of emotional expression was relatively muted. This muting of emotion was not restricted to just anger, however. Emotions were not to be imposed on others within my family tradition. Some of the views of anger expressed by the participants – that it was dangerous or out of control – were some of my own views as well. My view of anger as a woman was that rationally I knew that expressing my anger was normal and even healthy at times, yet I was reluctant to do so with others. Over the course of this project, I relocated several times throughout the country. The cultural variation in expression of emotion, especially anger, became evident with the moves. The role of anger in the Mexican-American community in which I now live is very different from my community of origin. The women in my current community are more expressive of anger, though not as expressive of other emotions such as sadness or fear. They express confusion, and more than a little distrust, over people who will not show their anger. These women are typically younger than those interviewed for this study, however, and are of lower socioeconomic status than the mayors interviewed. This contrast helped me to see the demographic differences and how these differences relate to anger expression.

Through the bracketing activities, I believe, at least in part, I accounted for some of my own biases concerning anger and power and can add to the rigor of the findings. To this end, I met with professionals in the field of psychology to examine my own biases and I kept an anger journal to help explore the role of anger in my own life. Phenomenological methodology begins with intentionality. Intentionality indicates a

relationship between human beings and our world, between conscious subjects and their objects. This means that it is important for the researcher to examine what she directly experiences before she interprets or attributes meaning to the object itself. For this study bracketing involved my being interviewed about the topic at hand by a psychologist who volunteered her time. I recorded and transcribed the interview. Throughout the study, I used this information along with my journal of anger experience and expression to expose my biases concerning anger experience and anger expression. Bracketing is a way to allow the interviewer to become aware of personal biases so they do not exert an unknown influence on the participant's description of her experience. This allowed me to prepare for the interviews at the level of the respondent's lived experience and to grasp, rather than to impose, meanings as they emerged in the course of the interactions. I attempted to examine personal biases continually throughout the research as well. I kept a critical reflective journal in order to maintain a record of events, cognitions, and feelings experienced over the course of this research. Events included personal experiences in which the researcher felt angry, reflected general thoughts about anger, reactions to the interviews, as well as reactions to the interview process. The information collected from the research may also be part of the interpretation of the data. This was separate from field notes written immediately following each contact with the participants in the study.

Prior to the beginning of the study, the researcher conducted a small pilot study, using two adult women, in which the researcher asked the women to answer questions similar to those of the proposed research protocol. The women used for the pilot study were school administrators in nearby Midwestern state, but not from the state used for

sampling. They were similar to the participants in that they were Caucasian and of Norwegian American descent; in addition, they were within the same age range as the participants. Each held positions of power in her school or educational agency. The purpose of the pilot study was to refine the researcher's skills using the phenomenological method of data collection as well as to refine the opening questions that used with the participants. Preceding the initiation of this research, the primary researcher sought and gained approval from the Institutional Review Board to conduct this study.

Prior to participation in this study each participant was asked to read and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix B) outlining the participant's rights as well as the risks and benefits of participating in this type of research. Each participant had the opportunity to discuss the expectations of this type of research and discuss questions pertaining to this research. The researcher asked the participant to complete the demographic form (Appendix C). Completion of the informed consent and the demographic form took the participants approximately 5-10 minutes each.

## **Interviews**

Following the completion of these forms the researcher conducted a focused one-to-one interview with each participant. Each participant participated in a face-to-face interview in which they were asked open-ended questions pertaining to their experiences with and expression of anger. Participants were encouraged to speak freely about their experiences with anger and power. I developed questions for use in the interviews. The initial script for this interview is located in Appendix D. Interviews took place either in

the home of the participant or in a place of their choosing where the confidentiality of the interview could be reasonably assured. Interviews took approximately between 60 and 150 minutes. The primary researcher conducted all interviews.

Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim by the primary researcher. Participants were offered the opportunity to check the transcription for accuracy should they choose to do so. All responded that the transcriptions were accurate. One participant requested a minor edit because the participant felt she said something about another individual she did not wish to have said. The researcher maintained confidentiality of the tape recordings by coding the tapes with pseudonyms and keeping the contact information as well as the informed consent forms with signatures in a separate locked location from the actual tapes and transcripts. All tapes and transcripts are maintained at the home of the researcher in a locked file cabinet to ensure the confidentiality of the information gathered. The researcher will maintain these files for five years after the completion of the project, at which time she will dispose of the audio tapes by first demagnetizing, then then physically destroying the tape. Transcripts will be shredded and disposed of after five years after the completion of the project.

## **Analysis**

Formal analysis of the interviews began when the researcher read each of the transcribed interviews (protocols) several times to ‘get a feel’ for the content. The researcher then extracted those phrases or sentences from the protocols that directly pertain to power and women’s anger. These are significant statements. The researcher

developed a list of these significant statements when she examined the protocols. The researcher then sought out meanings contained in each significant statement. Implicit as well as explicit meanings were sought. The researcher then organized the formulated meanings from all the significant statements into clusters of themes that were shared with the participants. The list of thematic elements was integrated into an exhaustive description of the investigated phenomenon. The researcher returned to each participant with the exhaustive description so the participant could respond to it in terms of its verifiability as a statement that captures the experiential structure under investigation. All participants received the analysis and were given opportunity to respond to it. I contacted each by telephone to ascertain their responses to my analysis. All the participants expressed a willingness to participate in this portion of the research. The final step involved a final, exhaustive description of the phenomenon. This is based on the original formulation as well as any amendments or additions made by the participants. At any time during the study, participants could delete their previous statements from the record by notifying the researcher. As noted above, one participant asked to redact a small portion of the interview for personal reasons. The researcher shared the final analysis with the participants and feedback was incorporated into the final report. When presented with the conclusions of the report, the participants concluded that this was an accurate reflection of their anger experience and expression.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESULTS**

Formal analysis of the interviews began when the researcher read each of the transcribed interviews (protocols) several times to ‘get a feel’ for the content. The researcher then extracted those phrases or sentences from the protocols that directly pertain to power and women’s anger. These are referred to as significant statements. The researcher developed a list of these significant statements when she examined the protocols. The researcher then sought out meanings contained in each significant statement. Implicit as well as explicit meanings were sought. The researcher then organized the formulated meanings from all the significant statements into clusters of themes that were shared with the participants. The list of thematic elements was integrated into an exhaustive description of the investigated phenomenon. The researcher returned to each participant with the exhaustive description so the participant could respond to it in terms of its verifiability as a statement that captures the experiential structure under investigation. The final step involved a final, exhaustive description of the phenomenon. This is based on the original formulation as well as any amendments or additions made by the participants. At any time during the study, participants could delete their previous statements from the record by notifying the researcher. A final analysis

was then shared with the participants and feedback was incorporated into the final report. During the analysis, several themes emerged from the interviews. The first theme to emerge was that all the participants downplayed the power of their positions within their communities. They suggested that the perception of the mayor as a powerful figure was overblown. Next, the women indicated a distinct discomfort with anger and anger expression especially in public. The participants in the study failed to express their anger directly when they were in their roles as mayor, but they would express anger in private settings, especially with family and friends. The participants, in most cases used containment (Cox, Bruchner, & Stabb, 2003) to hold their anger in check until a time when they could safely express it to avoid showing their anger and thus maintaining their public, or structural, power. Containment was less evident in private situations. None of the participants indicated having good role models for anger expression. Each attributed her anger expression style to family of origin and cultural prohibitions on anger expression. All the participants equated anger with frustrations and feelings of being “out of control”. The participants in the study equated this out of control feeling with loss of power. Perhaps the most striking theme was that public anger and private anger differed in its expression in that the participants in this study were more likely to express their anger in small groups or in private than in public.

### **Power in community**

During the course of the interviews, it was assumed that the participants would perceive that they were powerful within their community. Overall, this did not appear to be the case. The laws of the state required that each council consist of five council members and the mayor preside over the council. The mayor does not vote unless there is

a tie. The mayor does set the agenda and presides over the meetings. All six women in the study downplayed the amount of power they had in the city council meetings and in the interactions with city staff. As one participant put it, “a mayor doesn’t have as much power as you might think... A lot of it is administrative.” One participant, Mary, told of struggles for power with the city clerk. When asked about her authority she said, “It’s kinda, sorta, in a way, an overstatement, ‘cause we’re so small that everyone pretty much knows what everyone else is doing.” She argued that those on the council and on the city staff equally shared the power. This theme of shared authority, or power, was consistent with all the participants in the study. Another said, “I really think it’s important that the council make those decisions.” Even when two of the mayors said they were in charge of the police and fire department, they attempted to downplay this power by talking about the committees who help them. As one mayor put it:

I don’t make a lot of decisions by myself, and I don’t intend to. Between my (staff), with their input...I don’t feel like I make a lot of decisions unilaterally by myself. It’s more a team approach....If there are policy issues, we have departments that we are responsible for. I have police, fire, and EMS... and city hall.

In this last example, though the participant oversees several major functions of the city, she perceives her power to be shared between herself and the members of the council. She defers to the collective rather than claim sole authority.

Three of the women acknowledged their role as the public face for the community. “Jean” said she is always in the paper for something she had done as mayor, whether it



was attending an event at the local school or for meetings on economic development.

Nadine said she represented her community in many regional meetings as well as helping to foster sharing agreements for city services between her community and other nearby communities.

The women did find ways to assert power – through information. All the women said they liked to prepare for the meetings and have a good grasp on what the council would be discussing during the meeting. Nadine described this control of information:

I also did a lot of research on the subjects that we were discussing.... I always did a lot of preparation, and then I would lead the discussion by giving all the information I had and then opening it up to the floor. Whether they agreed with me or not, I gave them the whole story and then I gave them my feelings.... Well, I made it a point that I was well informed and I would pass that information forward.

Jean said:

If there are projects I feel are important, I'm not afraid to talk to the council. And to help direct the... to make sure we are looking at all the facts and making sure we are reacting to the facts and not to emotion.

These are two examples of the ways that the women used information to gain power over their situation. Others echoed these remarks, saying they liked to know what was happening to effectively lead the council.

The power they perceived was not from themselves, but from those around them or from the information they could present to the council. During the interviews, the

participants consistently downplayed their own personal power. They took a collective approach to governing and relied on outside sources of information to bolster arguments for issues they felt were important. All participants reported this method of using information as power in the public meetings and in interactions with constituents.

### **Anger Control**

Discomfort with anger was a theme found in the interviews of all six participants. All said they preferred not to get directly angry with others. Several sub-themes emerged in the interviews. This discomfort with anger appeared to originate with their families – otherwise the lack of anger expression and ideas about anger were a learned part of their cultural heritage. All the participants in the study were of Northern European descent, and suggested that this influenced their relationship with anger expression. The women used other emotions and the expression of those emotions to cover their anger both in their descriptions of anger and with the interviewer. When discussing anger, the women often covered for their emotion by laughing or describing tears in place of anger expression. The women also used language to refer to anger that indicated a certain amount of danger associated with the emotion.

The family of origin provided a key role in shaping the views about anger expression of all six women in the study. The participants all said that anger was rare in their childhood homes. Allyson reported, “I grew up never thinking anyone close to me ever fought. I never heard my parents fight. I never saw them seemingly angry.”

Another woman said:

You didn't get angry. You didn't do that because it wasn't nice...I still get angry (laughs). It's not to the point where you don't have anger. It's just that as a Christian, you didn't express it. You didn't lose your temper. You might get angry, but you didn't lose your temper.

Mothers were the primary role model for emotional expression for five of six participants. These participants reported their mothers not outwardly showing their anger. Though not being told overtly to withhold their anger, each woman talked about implicit rules governing their anger expression. As one participant put it:

There's a risk to getting angry. That it will harm the relationship and it will be more difficult to work with someone. There's a risk to getting angry. That's why you don't get angry every minute of the day.

Each of these five participants said they knew their mother was angry at times, but did not see her express her anger. Five of six said they never saw their mother and father fight. Two participants acknowledged their parents becoming angry with the children when they were young, but only over minor infractions related to discipline. They knew intuitively that there should be occasion to be angry at each other, but they said the parents either did not fight or at least did not fight in front of the children. Only one woman said her father became outwardly angry, but she said her mother did not. As one participant explained:

My parents never fought. They just went in separate rooms. And I would guess that was the message I picked up because I would rather flee than stay...It was not OK to let your kids see you fight, so they just never ever fought in front of us kids.

Messages from their mothers included keep your emotions under control and don't show anger. One participant, Nadine, differed from the others. She was a participant who reported using her father as her role model. Nadine's mother was present in the home, but because Nadine worked with her father in his store in place of her brothers who were actively serving in the military, she viewed her father as her primary role model. She said she observed her father when he was angry, but as with the mothers of the other participants, he never yelled at anyone or became aggressive with others. Nadine said she saw her father use his intellect to deal with situations that angered him. As a result, she learned to use logic to control a situation and prevent her from showing the anger she said she felt as a result.

The participants all reported ethnicity playing a part in their anger expression. Though never asked by the researcher, all the participants reported being of Northern European decent. As was noted in the demographics section earlier, they reported Norwegian, German, and Dutch heritage. Four women directly related their anger expression style to their heritage. They referred to beliefs that people of different ethnicities express anger according to culture. Nadine reported it was her "staid Norwegian upbringing" that did not allow her to become outwardly angry with others. Another participant said her German grandparents "wouldn't yell or hit" anyone, but they would give their grandchildren a look that was enough to express their anger. Two mentioned their heritage while telling anger stories, but did not directly relate it to the rules for anger expression.

When the women reported on times they were angry, they frequently laughed or whispered. These behaviors indicated discomfort with the emotion. Laughter occurred

during the interviews when the women were recounting the experience of anger. Four of six women used laughter during the interview when speaking of their own anger. Some of the women used laughter throughout the telling of their anger stories. The following is a sampling of laughter from Angela's discussion of events that made her angry.

“I just wanted to say ‘Grow up!’ (laughs).”

“His mannerisms toward me were very irritating (laughs).”

“I'm not going to take that very well (laughs).”

Whispers were also part of the telling of anger stories. Nadine insisted on her ability to remain in control, and she used whispers to tell her private narrative of anger. In a situation in which a constituent demanded to know what the city was paying her for, Nadine whispered to the interviewer, “Well, you're not paying me enough,” then she laughed and said in her regular voice, “but I didn't say that (laughs).” Her private admission of anger was in whispers followed by a negation of the anger by laughter. Nadine used whispers to indicate her private anger on at least four occasions during the interviews.

The language used to define anger involved images that project danger and situations out of control. They referred to anger with words such as an explosion, explosive, to blow up, or fired up. These words indicated anger is a dangerous emotion – one that is difficult to control. One participant said,

You know when I think about somebody as being angry, I think about someone who is exploding. You know, like explosive anger. I don't do that. I mean, I might do it

at home every once in a while...I don't have explosive incidents. For one thing, I don't think it would be very....I mean it's not very professional.

Another woman said "things were fired back and forth" to relate a discussion involving anger amongst several people during a council meeting. Allyson referred to her "cork blowing off". Another participant referred to "fuming" to describe anger. When describing a time she had become angry, one participant called it her "snapping moment." None of the participants talked about anger using positive terms.

All six participant in the study mentioned frustration when speaking of anger. Sometimes they used frustration as a mask for their anger. One participant said, "I'm not sure if I think that I'm angry versus just frustrated." She indicated the confusion over these two feelings. Frustration appeared to be an acceptable explanation for the times when they said they were angry. Another participant said, "I can be frustrated and can be frustrated all day, and I wouldn't necessarily say that I'm angry." Frustration stemmed from the participants' inability to change certain situations and frequently lead to anger. As Jean said, "it's probably that anger comes from frustration." Jean said, "I can be frustrated with something, but it hits a certain point and that frustration turns to anger." Allyson defined anger as frustration, "a feeling of not knowing what to do next or what direction to go." Mary said, "I get frustrated with people."

Frustration over the perception that they could not effectively communicate with others was one thing that angered the women. One woman said she was angry with a citizen who hung up the phone on her. Another said she tried to reason with a citizen

who would not listen to her. She said she was trying to help the woman in a situation when the woman cut off communication.

All six women who participated in the study indicated that anger was an “out of control” emotion. Being in control was of the utmost importance to the women, thus being angry was perceived as eroding their power. Each indicated a desire to appear in control during council meetings. They used language such as *pull myself together* and *collect myself* to describe their struggle to maintain control. As one participant put it:

I was angry, but I didn't engage in the dialogue. You lose when you do that. You lose when you start engaging in a dialogue when you are angry. I think it's sort of just pulling myself together, taking a deep breath, thinking 'I can handle this. I'm strong. I can take this.' And then usually I respond by talking very slow and deliberately and getting my point across.

Another participant, Allyson, said, “I didn't want to show any emotion.” She went on to say, “I had to stop and collect myself.” Helen said, “I can't ever remember a circumstance when I've ever lost my composure in the work setting.” Jean said, “I don't want to lose my composure during a meeting...I fear losing control.” She went on to explain that she thinks showing anger is a form of weakness. “I think women are looked at as people who can't control their emotions.” Her fear of others viewing her as emotional and thus weak caused her to hold her emotions in while in public.

These women illustrate the belief that control appeared to be central to the women's concept of power and loss of control was to be avoided. They said they needed to maintain control of themselves and the situation. Evidence of this was not only in the

emotional control reported by the women, but in the research they did prior to meetings so as to control the content of the meetings. By controlling the content of the meetings they also controlled the meeting and they avoided anger.

A way women gained control in the situation was through containment. Containment, the conscious pushing down of anger so as to not express it until a safer time (Cox, Bruchner, & Stabb, 2003) was a common theme amongst the anger stories. One woman said, "I didn't want to show any emotion," when she was angry. She indicated that in the public venue it would have been inappropriate for her to show her anger. As her anger peaked she said, "I had to stop and collect myself." Collecting or containing herself was important rather than expressing her emotion to the public. Women said that to be angry was to lose control, so they found ways to contain their anger until later when they could express it in a private venue. Spouses or other trusted individuals often provided a safe venue for venting anger later. Five out of six women said they used others when they were angry but could not express this emotion in the moment. As one woman put it:

I probably go home and scream at my...not scream *at* my husband, but tell him the whole story. You know...to get it off my chest. Or I'll tell someone else that I trust. I have a really good network of girlfriends that don't live in my town. You know... to get it off my chest.

Another woman said:

It was a situation where I got mad. I didn't lose my temper, but afterwards I was just fuming. You know... when it's like (sighs heavily). Why do I have to take all this?



Social support appeared to be a common theme. When the women felt they could not express their anger in public in the immediate situation, they would contain the anger and express it to others. As another woman put it, “most of the women who I’ve worked with will hold it in and we’ll have a bitch session afterwards.” The reference in this statement to expression of anger as a “bitch session” indicates the negative connotation of the emotion, yet there appears to be a communal connotation to the phrase bitch session in this context. The containment of emotion until social support was available was important to these women.

The role of mayor was not the only public venue that the women said they contained their anger. One incident involved a woman who reported being at her job and having an angry customer. This situation was public, but it was not in her role as mayor. In this case she also employed containment until she could vent to her co-workers.

Two women said they also contained their anger until they could release it in private – usually while doing gardening or yard work. One woman told of being so angry she said, “I could feel myself shake inside.” She later went to her garden to pull weeds. She used this time to think about the situation and to work off some of the feeling she had about the anger provoking incident. This cathartic release of anger was reported to be helpful to them.

### **Public v. Private Anger Expression**

Perhaps most striking was the difference between the anger expression in public and in private, or dyadic, situations. None of the women reported liking their anger and none reported expressing it in public. All reported private expressions of anger. Each

participant indicated that they pushed the feelings of anger aside when in public rather than express the emotion, but private, or dyadic, expression of anger was, if not common, at least less rare. Without exception, the women reported incidents in which they were angry, but did not express it in their public lives. As one participant put it:

I guess I can tell you that I can't ever remember a circumstance when I've ever lost my composure in the work setting. It may be everything I can do. I can keep my voice calm. Same thing when I'm in public you know.

Another said:

I'm pretty much in control of my emotions. And for me to step out of that is like losing my cool. I try to stay on a pretty level...talk about things on a pretty even keel, or if it's something that is irritating me, or to just sit down and talk.

One participant said she did not want, "...to come off as the bitchy witch of the west, you know, or that I don't really, don't want to come across as if I'm angry necessarily," while in a public meeting. Another said, "I don't like disharmony... I can't go to a council meeting twice per month where we do nothing but fight." Often times in their public life, the women used containment to control the situation and themselves. This was not always the case in their private lives.

In their private lives, however, the participants in this study expressed anger more readily. Private expression of anger was often with children, siblings, parents, or spouses. Anger with family members was common and more likely to be expressed openly. One participant spoke of being angry with her son for not completing his

homework. Another participant spoke of fighting with her teenage daughter over expectations of behavior. Four out of six participants reported anger with their children.

One woman reported being so angry at her mother and her daughter that she slammed a door and broke it. She also reported yelling and swearing at her teenage daughter while in a verbal argument. This expression of anger differed greatly from her role as mayor where she reported using containment, then reason, with a man with whom she was angry. Another participant, Helen, when talking about her son, said, “The difference is probably comfort level and responsibility.” She said she thought it would be irresponsible if she did not show her son anger when he did something wrong. She viewed this as teaching him her values and the rules of the house.

In some cases the anger these women expressed was in work situations. Anger while at work seemed to be in one-on-one situations, not in front of others. Angela talked about confronting a supervisor who gave her a poor review. She said this was atypical for her, but she felt strongly about her work and felt the review was in error. Jean confronted the city council about their behavior, but waited until they were in closed session. At this time, she took on a mothering role and told them firmly, “We don’t behave like that around here!” The council, composed of all men, responded to her as a parental figure in this situation. Nadine confronted a person working under her about her behavior and ended by terminating the employee. Allyson expressed anger to police department employees who were not following policies. In all cases, these expressions of anger were in settings where the general public could not see the emotion.

Other private expressions of anger were when the women expressed anger to others, usually their spouses. The anger was contained and then expressed in a less public setting as mentioned above as containment. Contained anger was frequently expressed to spouses or female friends.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION**

A mosaic is a surface design made by inlaying small pieces to form figures or patterns. The purpose of this research was to explore the anger experience and expression of women in positions of structural power. Throughout the investigation small pieces of information have been collected concerning women's anger and power through the methods outlined in previous chapters. This chapter will present the discussion of my research findings, the bigger picture, or total mosaic if one will. Though there are still spaces in between the pieces as with any mosaic, the analysis that follows paints a picture, or an interpretation, of the responses. The spaces in this mosaic are filled with many things. Some spaces are filled with the reader's experience with their own emotional life. The research finding of those who have gone before fills other spaces. Yet other spaces are filled by the thoughts and experiences of the researcher herself. This section of the work outlines the themes or elements of the mosaic and fits them into a broader picture of the experience and expression of women's anger. One should note that this mosaic is not complete, for we can never completely understand all aspects of women's anger through the interviews of a small number of individuals. Therefore, this chapter also outlines the limitations of this study and provides recommendations for further research to help fill in more of the mosaic. As well, I

discuss the place in which this mosaic fits within the context of women's lives, particularly as it applies to the field of psychology.

Women in this study did not endorse outward display of anger in the public setting. This is inconsistent with Holmes (2004a) who said that anger expression is necessary in politics. This discrepancy may be because of the participant's perception of power and status in their role as mayors of their communities. The women in this study perceived their structural power to be low and thus did not express their anger publicly. In contrast, they perceived their dyadic power as high allowing them to express their anger within the confines of their homes or with their friends. The results of this study suggest that differences exist in the setting in which women express anger, especially when women feel they need to maintain power and status.

Women in this study consistently downplayed their structural power in their communities, and that may have contributed to their style of emotional expression – or in this case – lack of emotional expression in public. The women in the study consistently stated that they perceived their power as the mayor to be low. They cited statute that only allowed them to vote in the case of a tie and referred to their councils as being more powerful. Their appraisal of their power was that it was less than that of their largely male city councils. It was only in private situations, such as closed sessions, that the women were able to assert themselves – in one case as a mother would with her errant children. Though women are gaining in numbers of those holding public office, men still outnumber them. They struggle to find role models for how to lead in this capacity. This leads to insecurity in some and in questioning some of their strength as leaders. This perception of lower power, coupled with

cultural prohibitions for anger expression, may have contributed to the lack of anger expression in public for the women participating in this study.

Female leaders fear losing status if they violated norms for anger expression by becoming angry in public. This is consistent with Brescoll and Uhlmann's study (2008) that found that people conferred lower status on angry female professionals than on angry male professionals. Brescoll and Uhlmann attributed this double standard to the perception that external factors, such as situational influences, motivate men's anger and internal factors motivate women's anger. In other words, if a man becomes angry, it is because of the situation. If a woman becomes angry, it represents a flaw in her character. The perception of angry women is that they are "out of control." The perception of women's anger is as a defect rather than a reaction to environmental cues – as is the view of men's anger. Women's anger expression in public violates the norms for being a "nice" woman, and the women in the current study avoided appearing angry in public. They viewed anger as a threat to their competence and their status.

Anger as "out of control" was consistent with the participant's definition of the emotion. Language used to describe anger included imagery of explosions and fire, indicating that anger is not only out of control, but dangerous. This view of anger as dangerous coupled with the perception that "nice" women do not get angry (Worcel, Shields, & Paterson, 1999) shaped the women's aversion to anger. When asked about anger provoking situations, the participants avoided the use of anger as an adjective to describe themselves, instead preferring frustration as a descriptor.

Anger threatens women's perception of competence. Some view angry women as less competent than are angry men (Plant, Hyde, Keltner, & Devine, 2000), and even former Secretary of State Madeline Albright indicates that women are expected to behave "unemotionally" to appear rational (Albright, 2003). The participants of this study felt that their competence came from control at the council meetings. They controlled information, the situation, and themselves. To maintain this control, instead of becoming publicly angry, women used the technique of containment (Cox, Bruchner & Stabb, 2003), controlling their emotions until they could express their emotions in private with trusted allies. This control, through containment of emotion, allowed the participants in the study to maintain feelings of competence and still have an avenue for expression of anger.

This outlet may be to vent to friends or family or through manual labor, such as working in the garden where they perceive a cathartic release. Containment also differs from internalization in that the anger has an outlet. This is consistent with a study (Linden, et al, 2003) that concluded that women show greater reliance on support-seeking as a way to cope with anger. Internalization indicates a more permanent holding pattern for the anger. The anger turns inward, resulting in depression in some. This technique represents a more collective approach to anger expression. By using containment, the women utilize social supports to lessen the stress of the anger. They are able to talk about their feelings with trusted others. Containment also differs from externalization in that the women who use it do not cast their problems at another target, but instead share the emotion with another individual. The women in the study said they held their anger until an appropriate time. However, this did not allow them to address the problems they faced in the moment.



Women are more likely to express anger in the private spheres of their lives. As mothers and wives and with friends, the women were more likely to express their anger than in public. This higher level of dyadic power helped the women to be more secure in their expression of anger. With increased affiliation comes the trust that one will not be rejected for a display of anger (Cox, Stabb, & Bruchner, 1999). The participants did not fear losing power in their relationships with family and friends should they express their anger. Even in the one incident in which the participant said she openly expressed her anger in public, her anger was with someone she considered a friend. This anger was safer than expressing anger at others with whom she did not have a close relationship. The women mentioned anger with children on numerous occasions. The participants felt they needed to express anger with their children to maintain order. In this instance, the women were in a dominant position in the family structure with high levels of affiliation. They did not fear that an anger outburst would impair their status. In fact, they viewed anger as essential to their relationships with their children.

Culture also contributed to the reserve that these women showed in emotional expression in public. Either implicitly or explicitly, women learned from their parents and grandparents that they should not express their anger. The lessons learned were to suppress anger rather than showing it to others. This prohibition continues in public, but in private, the participants in this study were able to express their anger, something not always endorsed by the previous generations. All women in this study were of Northern European descent. Other studies (Cox, Stabb, & Bruchner, 1999) suggest that society expects women of color, especially Latina and African American women, to express their emotions, and thus they have fewer injunctions on emotional expression than do Caucasian women.

That women lack sufficient role models for leadership in executive positions is a possible explanation for this perception of lower structural power and thus they seek out the role models for dyadic power, such as that of a parent. Because of the changing norms in our society women have difficulty reconciling their expression of emotion with their perception of the perfect “in control” woman. Women see themselves as straddling different worlds – that of the public professional who remains in control at all times, and that of the wife, mother, and friend who is at liberty to express her emotions more authentically – which at times may mean “losing control” and becoming angry. That more women are in positions of public power will most likely increase the potential for female role models of structural power and thus of emotional expression.

The implications of this study are that women still see anger as a dangerous emotion in certain venues. They may be reluctant to express this emotion if they perceive they will lose status or power. Women have ways of expressing their anger in a way that not only preserves their power but also allows relationships to enter into the equation. The women in this study had relationships that allowed them to “lose control” and still maintain their status. They did not use their anger at the expense of others, however. They did not turn their anger inward on themselves either. Anger was not destructive to these women.

They also perceived that anger has a place, and these women were more likely to express their anger within their homes with children and spouses. In these private settings, their dyadic power was high and they felt comfortable expressing their emotions even directly at the target of their anger. Women feel that if they do not express anger, especially when children violate rules, they are being irresponsible. Therefore, women will express anger openly in certain situations.

Overall, the participants of this study indicated that anger is not a welcome emotion, yet they did not totally avoid it. They contained the emotion in public and expressed it openly in private or with small groups. Power and perceptions of status shaped the expression of anger in the women who participated in this study. The findings of this study are based on the perceptions and reactions of a small subset of the larger population. Some within the feminist community may take issue with the perceptions that the women felt less powerful as their male counterparts. The findings in the current study represent the women who participated in the research. They expressed honest sentiment, and though this may not be the sentiment of all women who hold public office, I believe this was an honest assessment of these women and their role in their communities. This perception of power may change over time, especially as more women gain positions in government, business, and the military.

### **Limitations**

As with any study, limitations exist that must be acknowledged and addressed. A limitation of this study is that the women selected for this research were not selected randomly and thus may not be representative of all women in positions of structural power. Because there are a limited number of women who meet the criteria for participation in the study, random selection was not possible. As was stated earlier, the goal of this study is not to generalize among all women, but to highlight the experience of a subset of the population. Because the population of the state surveyed was of limited size, the possible participant pool was limited. Though I used random selection when choosing the participants, the total pool of qualified participants was small. This calls into question whether this was truly random selection.

A second limitation of the study is that the data collected was based on self-report. The desire to portray oneself (or others) in a positive light may taint self-report studies. This may be particularly true when asking about situations involving conflict that may be more difficult for the participants to portray accurately. It is therefore important for the researcher to foster a relationship of trust with the participants, so they may be more open to talking about their experience with anger and power.

A third limitation lies in the use of the researcher as a tool. I am limited by my ability to accurately gather, analyze and interpret the information given by the participants. Becker (1998) wrote that there is no such thing as pure description, and that all description requires acts of selection and thus points of view that may color the analysis of the data. In addition, according to Spinelli (2005), research of this type can never truly be finished. The decision of when to end the analysis was mine. Others may take issue with this decision. While acknowledging this limitation, efforts were made to provide a thorough analysis of the data using current qualitative methodologies.

Though there may be individual differences in the role that power and anger play in the lives of these women, I assumed that there were similarities in the participants' demographic background. First, because the state chosen for this study is largely homogeneous in terms of race, I assumed that most, if not all the participants will be of European American descent. This proved to be true. Racial diversity representing the demographics of the United States as a whole was not possible given this pool of possible participants. The racial make-up of the Midwestern state used for this study was primarily Caucasian Non-Hispanic and I was able to identify only one possible African American female mayor in the state selected for this study. She did not respond to my attempts to

contact her. There were no Asian American or Latina women identified by examining the list of surnames of female mayors found in this state at the time of the study. Other studies of women's anger have also suffered from this limitation, and researchers (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008) have suggested that further research with women of color may shed further light on the questions concerning women's anger and power. Indeed, my own work with young Hispanic women in a southern state provides anecdotal evidence that this may be a demographic group ripe for further examination. Women participating in this study were from only one geographic region. As noted earlier in this work, culture plays a role in the way that individuals experience their emotions (Mesquita & Walker, 2004), and even small variations in geographic location may suggest variations in anger expression (Cohen & Vandello, 2003). The results of this study may not generalize to Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or African American women. They may also be limited to the local geographic region in which the study took place.

### **Areas for further study**

The current study is a restricted look at a small group of women in a particular geographic region at a particular time in history. This suggests that by examining this same topic using a different sample of women from diverse backgrounds, people different racial and ethnic backgrounds, in a different geographic region, at a different time in history we would have different results. Replications of this type of research with other powerful women, perhaps politicians at higher levels of state or national government, CEO's of companies, college or school administrators, or school board members would provide a broader picture of power coupled with women's anger.

Broadening the geographic context of this study would also allow us to add to the mosaic that is women's anger. By using a small geographic region, I was able to focus the study. However, I omitted people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds in the process. Anger appears to be different in context for people of different cultures. Anger as a tool of control is more common amongst some groups while others avoid anger if possible. This limited data pool is a limitation to this study.

Another area of interest to some may be the role of anger in the lived experiences of men who hold similar roles in their communities. Though various studies (e.g. Thomas, 2003) have explored the role of anger in men's lives, the pairing of men and power with anger may be another area for further research. An examination of men who hold public office and their anger experience and expression could further the study of this emotion coupled with power.

Perhaps one element missing from this research is the role of time in the perception of sex role and emotion. By this, I mean that the point we stand in history plays a role in the normative expression of emotion. As an example, in the Victorian era attitudes about emotional expression were restrictive. As time went on, some of the ideas about emotion changed and people have for the most part been more likely to express their emotions than in the past. We cannot predict how the influences of our culture will impact our ability or willingness to express our anger. "Reality TV" portrays people behaving poorly and encourages anger expression. The role that this media has on future generations and their anger expression is an area of interest in the study of anger. We need to consider the normative changes in emotional expression within the context of the times in which we live.

It may also be of some interest to look at other emotions with regard to women's power. Depression as related to women's anger may be of interest when examining women's power as well. Also of interest may be how happiness, sometimes thought to be the opposite of anger, relates to women and power. This may help to contrast the role of anger in women's lives as well as to further understand the role of emotion in the lives of powerful women.

Through the shared experiences of the women who participated in this study, we have a greater understanding of the role of anger in women's lives. Anger, coupled with power, is only a tiny portion of the mosaic that is women's emotional expression. To further this research we need to explore a greater diversity of women and their experience with this emotion. It is through this type of research that we will fill in the cracks and gain greater understanding of women's anger.

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APPENDIX A

SCRIPT FOR RECRUITMENT



## SCRIPT FOR RECRUITMENT - TELEPHONE

Hello. My name is Teresa Klein, and I am a doctoral student from Oklahoma State University. I currently working on my dissertation on women's anger and power and am focusing my research on women from this state who hold elected office as mayors of their communities. I found your name on the [state name] League of Cities website listed as a mayor of (town name), and would like to I would like to talk with you about the possibility in your participating in my study. I believe (contact name here), contacted you about my study earlier in the week.

The study would entail us sitting down for a one-on-one interview of approximately 60 to 90 minutes, and I would tape record the interview. The interview would be about your experience of anger as mayor of your community. Through this research I am hoping to gain a greater understanding of anger in women's lives. I am seeking to interview female mayors who have been re-elected at least once, such as yourself, because of the positions of public power you hold in your community. This research is being conducted from a psychological perspective and will not focus on policy or politics. Because some questions do come up in the analysis of the study, some follow-up questions, mainly for clarification, may occur. Follow-up interviews can either be done in person or by telephone and would only last about 15 minutes each. At any time during the study, you have the right to amend the record, otherwise to delete information you do not wish to be reported.

Your name and the name of your community would be kept separate from the audiotapes and the transcript developed from the interview. Pseudonyms of both your name

and the name of the community would be developed. Your participation in this project is voluntary.

Do you have any questions about the study?

Would you like to participate in this study?

(Schedule a time and a place to interview the participant.)

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY  
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE: Women, power, and anger: a phenomenological investigation of female mayors.

INVESTIGATORS: Teresa Klein, M.S.

PURPOSE:

This study, which is research conducted for a doctoral dissertation, is being conducted through Oklahoma State University. The purpose is to examine the lived experience of anger and anger expression in women who have structural power in their communities.

PROCEDURES:

The project will involve completion of a demographic questionnaire and a face to face interview. The demographic questionnaire will ask information such as your age, sex, race or ethnicity, occupation, education, the type of public office you hold, how many years in that office, and how many terms you have held public office. The interview will consist of questions about your experience with the emotion anger.

The study is designed to last approximately 60-90 minutes. Some follow-up interviews may be helpful. Follow-up questions would be asked by telephone and I anticipate they would last for about 15 minutes each.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:

There are no risks associated with this project, including stress, psychological, social, physical, or legal risk which are greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. If, however, you begin to experience discomfort or stress in this project, you may end your participation at any time. In addition, because we will be talking about emotions, if you should wish to have a referral to mental health professional in your area to talk further about this topic, a list of possible professionals that you may access at your own cost will be provided.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:

By participating in this study you would gain a greater understanding of your experience and expression of anger. In addition, you will be contributing to the literature on anger and anger expression in women who hold elected positions in their communities. By participating in this study you will be adding your voice to the literature on this topic.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

All information about you will be kept confidential and will not be released. Demographic forms, audio tapes and transcripts of interviews will have pseudonyms, rather than names, on them. All information will be kept in file cabinets that are accessible only to the researcher.

This information will be saved as long as it is scientifically useful; typically, such information is kept for five years after publication of the results. Results from this study may be presented at professional meetings or in publications.

Confidentiality will be maintained except under specified conditions required by law. For example, current law requires that any ongoing child abuse (including sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect) of a minor must be reported to state officials. In addition, if an individual reports that he/she intends to harm him/herself or others, legal and professional standards require that the individual must be kept from harm, even if confidentiality must be broken. Finally, confidentiality could be broken if materials from this study were subpoenaed by a court of law.

**COMPENSATION:**

No compensation is available for participation in this study. Participation is voluntary.

**CONTACTS:**

I understand that I may contact any of the researchers at the following addresses and phone numbers, should I desire to discuss my participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study: Teresa Klein, M.S., 4223 Chickasaw Trail, Douglasville, GA 30135, (405) 269-6472, terklein@yahoo.com. I may also contact Sue Jacobs, Ph.D., Institutional Review Board, 415 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-1676 with any questions concerning participant's rights.

**PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:**

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty. I also understand that I have the right to strike specific portions of the interview from the record, should I choose.

**CONSENT DOCUMENTATION:**

I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements:

I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

Demographic Form

Pseudonym chosen: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Race/ethnicity (Check all that apply):

\_\_\_\_ Caucasian

\_\_\_\_ Latina/Hispanic

\_\_\_\_ African American

\_\_\_\_ Asian American

\_\_\_\_ Native American/Alaskan Native

\_\_\_\_ Mixed (Please list: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Years as a mayor: \_\_\_\_\_

Terms as a mayor: \_\_\_\_\_

Other elected offices held:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status:

Education:

\_\_\_\_ Single

\_\_\_\_ Married

\_\_\_\_ Partnered

\_\_\_\_ Divorced

\_\_\_\_ Widowed

APPENDIX D

SCRIPT FOR INITIAL INTERVIEW



## Script for interview

First of all, I'd like to thank you for agreeing to this interview and as you have read in the informed consent, the responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Your name will not be kept as part of the record. In the final dissertation you will be referred to using a pseudonym and I would like to give you the opportunity to choose that pseudonym if you would like. Is there a name you would like to be referred to in the record?

---

1. First I'd like to ask you a little about your city government and your role as mayor.
  - a. Does your community employ a city manager?
  - b. Is the position of mayor a paid position?
  - c. Would you consider the job as mayor to be a full time or part time position?
  - d. What type of decisions can you make as mayor?

NOTE: The purpose of these questions is to ascertain the level of involvement of the mayor in the decision making process within her community.

2. Next I would like to change gears and talk about a time when, as the mayor of your community, you were angry.

NOTE: The flow of the interview will proceed according to the content given by the participant. The focus of follow-up questions will be on the experience of anger and the expression of anger within her role as mayor.

3. Tell me about a time when you were not in your role as mayor in which you were angry.
4. Tell me about the messages you received growing up about women and anger.
5. What would your definition of anger be?
6. I'd like to discuss your reaction to talking about women, anger, and your role as mayor today. What things were salient to you about our discussion?
7. Finally, if you have any other comments, I'd like to give you the opportunity to discuss them at this time.

Appendix E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

## Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Tuesday, February 14, 2006  
IRB Application No ED0680  
Proposal Title: Women, Power, and Anger: A Phenomenological Investigation of Female Mayors  
Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

**Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 2/13/2007**

Principal Investigator(s)

Teresa L. Klein  
4223 Chickasaw Trail  
Douglasville, GA 30135

Barbara Carlozzi  
434 Willard  
Stillwater, OK 74078

---

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

## VITA

Teresa Lee Klein

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis:           WOMEN, POWER, AND ANGER: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
INVESTIGATION OF FEMALE MAYORS

Major Field: Counseling Psychology

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2011.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in your Counseling and Student Personnel at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK in 2011.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in your Psychology at University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa in 1989.

Experience:

- Predoctoral Internship, Counseling and Psychology Services, Purdue, University, West Lafayette, IN, 2004-2005.
- Instructor of Psychology, Del Mar College, Corpus Christi, TX

Professional Memberships:

- American Psychological Association, Division 2 Teaching of Psychology
- American Association of University Professors

Name: Teresa L. Klein

Date of Degree: December 2011

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: WOMEN, POWER, AND ANGER: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
INVESTIGATION OF FEMALE MAYORS

Pages in Study: 109

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: Counseling Psychology

Scope and Method of Study: The following is a phenomenological study of the role anger in women's lives. Though much research on women's anger explores the pathological side of anger and attempts to control the emotion, this research takes a positive approach to the emotion seeing it as a motivator for change and status enhancement. The researcher interviewed six female mayors from a Midwestern state about their experience and expression of anger while in public and private settings.

Findings and Conclusions: The study participants expressed discomfort with anger and its expression. Because the women perceived that they did not have as much power as their councils, women in this study rarely expressed their anger in public while in their role as mayors. The women described containment of anger while in public, holding their anger until later when they could utilize social supports or cathartic release. In private, the participants in the study indicated use of anger with family or co-workers. The current research contributes to the growing literature concerning women's anger experience and expression by examining the role of anger in women who have power and status in their communities.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Barbara Carlozzi

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