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The Impact of Gender and Organizational Status on Workplace Anger Expression

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The social rules for communicating anger in the workplace are multifaceted, and standards vary for different groups. Previous research addresses either gender differences in anger expression or organizational status differences, but not the combined impact of gender and status. The authors close this gap by investigating both the independent and joint influence of gender and relative organizational status on workplace anger expression. Their findings show that emotional restraint is the most frequent method of handling anger across all groups. Lower status males, however, directly express their anger around higher status members significantly more frequently than do lower status females. The authors conclude with observations regarding the relative strength of organizational norms as compared to gender-based norms.

Keywords: *anger expression; gender; organizational status; emotion norms*

Management theories have long underestimated the importance of **M**affect in organization life (Brief & Weiss, 2002). However, because of sociocultural and technological changes in the workplace, the role of emotion at work has received increased attention in recent years (Fineman, 1993). Management and organizational researchers have embraced the relevance of anger and anger expression (Domagalski & Steelman, 2005; Fitness, 2000; Gianakos, 2002) and the relationship between anger expression and gender (Gianakos, 2002) and organizational status characteristics (Fitness, 2000; Sloan, 2004). The findings from these and other studies have revealed several incongruous results. For instance, investigations of gender and anger have demonstrated differences between how males and females express anger (Averill, 1982; Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, & Benton, 1992). Yet researchers have also reported the absence of gender

differences in anger expression (Gianakos, 2002). Likewise, studies of status and anger have suggested that we both accept and expect that higher status individuals will express anger toward those of lower status (Sloan, 2004; Tiedens, 2000), whereas historical accounts of the social rules related to anger expression emphasize emotional restraint among supervisors and managers (Stearns & Stearns, 1986).

Although authors have provided a comprehensive, socially situated account of the evolution of workplace anger norms (Stearns & Stearns, 1986), they have yet to consider whether these norms are valid for both males and females. This same omission applies to those studies purporting that higher status members have greater latitude to express anger directly (Sloan, 2004; Tiedens, 2000). Thus, we seek to address this gap in the research by examining the impact of gender and hierarchical status on forms of anger expression in the workplace. We suggest that the rules of anger expression are socially situated and that these rules may be at odds in different contexts. For example, occupational norms may encourage emotional restraint by those in management and supervisory positions, whereas societal norms may tolerate the direct expression of anger by males but not females. We assert that by examining the manner in which males and females in positions of relatively higher and lower organizational status communicate their anger in the presence of others at different levels of the organizational hierarchy, we can better understand the interplay between gender-related societal norms and organizational emotion norms. Thus, we examine the following research question: Do gender and status affect anger expression when in the presence of those with differing organizational status?

Anger Expression in the Workplace

We normally consider anger to be a negative, conflictual emotion, in part because of the discomfort it generates, even when we believe the emotion is morally justified (Averill, 1982; Crawford et al., 1992). Anger is a social emotion in the sense that it emerges in response to the actions of others or is directed toward others (Averill, 1982; Crawford et al., 1992; Frijda, 1993). The way we express anger depends on the intensity with which we feel it (Domagalski & Steelman, 2005; Waldron & Krone, 1991) or on the desired objective. Such desired objectives include to correct a perceived injustice (Averill, 1982; Crawford et al., 1992; Tavis, 1989), to assert one's social status (Clark, 1990; Conway, DiFazio, & Mayman, 1999; Sloan, 2004; Tiedens, 2000), or to exact revenge (Bies, Tripp, & Kramer, 1997). We may

also disguise or suppress anger, particularly when we fear retribution or want to avoid damaging an interpersonal relationship (Fiebig & Kramer, 1998). Thus, we can consider anger as a socially constituted emotion that carries certain communicative properties (Averill, 1982). Furthermore, the expression of anger in the workplace is likely constrained by socially prescribed expectations.

Understanding workplace anger is important for several reasons. In a general sense, there are personal and organizational ramifications associated with the experience and expression of anger. For example, anger has been linked to individual consequences, such as coronary disease (Spielberger, Krasner, & Solomon, 1988), disrupted sleep patterns, tension (Begley, 1994), low self-esteem (Thomas, 1993), and diminished relationship quality (Averill, 1982). Organizational effects include counterproductive work behavior (Spector, Fox, & Domagalski, 2006), a decline in work productivity (Fitness, 2000), and, in the extreme case, workplace violence (Dupre & Barling, 2003; Greenberg & Barling, 1999). Employees in subordinate positions have reported ongoing feelings of anger long after an incident involving a supervisor has occurred (Fitness, 2000). In rare instances, employees have also reported quitting their jobs because of feelings of anger toward a supervisor or someone else at work. Others have found gender effects associated with anger in that the direct expression of anger by females, but not males, is associated with less positive organizational outcomes (Gibson, Schweitzer, Callister, & Gray, 2004).

The social rules attached to the communication of anger, however, are complex. The seminal work of Hochschild (1983) on the corporate regulation of flight attendants' felt and expressed emotions is credited with creating widespread interest in research on organizational and occupational emotion norms. The work on emotional norms, also referred to as emotional labor, spans occupations as varied as bill collectors (Sutton, 1991), convenience store clerks (Rafaeli, 1989), theme park operators (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989), nurses (James, 1993), firefighters (Scott & Myers, 2005), and emergency 911 dispatchers (Schuler & Sypher, 2000), among others. The common thread that is shared across these studies is that the occupations in question interface with the public and require employees to manage their emotions to effectively meet organizational goals.

The display of organizationally prescribed emotions may constitute a job requirement for employees who interact with customers or the public; however, the concept of emotional labor does not extend to the social rules of emotional engagement between and among organizational members during the course of their day-to-day work routines. Although some of the

emotional labor literature discusses emotion display among colleagues (e.g., Schuler & Sypher, 2000; Tracy, 2000) and the dissonance between felt emotions and organizational expectations (Hochschild, 1983; Miller, 2002), the operational definition of emotional labor is limited to employees' emotion display when interacting with outsiders to perform some type of service (Hochschild, 1983; Morris & Feldman, 1996). Although efforts have been made to refine the definition of emotional labor by distinguishing it from the concept of "emotion work," both concepts pertain to the display of emotions by organizational members as they interface with the public (Callahan & McCollum, 2002).¹ Consequently, organizational expectations concerning the expression of emotion in the presence of coworkers are generally less well defined as these display norms may be embedded in the symbolic aspects of an organization's culture yet remain obscured and contingent on an individual's interpretive acuity (Fiebig & Kramer, 1998; Shields, 2002; Thoits, 2004). Moreover, the communication of emotions among coworkers requires members to navigate across several levels of normative influence, including organizational features such as status markers (Clark, 1990; Tiedens, 2000), gendered expectations emanating from early socialization experiences (Brody, 1997, 2000; Brody & Hall, 2000), and occupational role identities (Fiebig & Kramer, 1998; Simpson & Stroh, 2004; Tiedens, 2000).

In addition to their complexity, the social rules that govern the expression of emotions are also historically and socially contingent (Stearns & Stearns, 1986; Tracy, 2000). Display rules vary over time (Stearns & Stearns, 1986) and according to distinct characteristics of the interactants such as gender, age, ethnicity, and status (Brody, 1997, 2000; Brody & Hall, 2000; Domagalski, 2006; Shields, 2002; Tiedens, 2000). Display rules also vary according to social context, whether in the private domain of the home or the public domain of the workplace (Putnam & Mumby, 1993; Stearns & Stearns, 1986). This fluidity has the potential to create a polarization among social rules such that what may be acceptable and appropriate based on a particular characteristic, such as status distinctions, does not align with expression norms on the basis of gender or gender identity. Moreover, the social context in which an emotion is expressed may elevate the importance of one set of emotion norms over another. For instance, in the private domain of family relationships, the acceptance of gender norms related to the expression of anger may be most acceptable, whereas in the public sphere of the work environment, compliance with occupationally derived emotion norms may be privileged. In support of this latter point, Tavis (1989) suggests, "Neither sex yet feels free to tell its boss to go to hell,

however nicely. Conversely, the most popular location for screaming arguments and physical violence is—as you might expect—the home” (p. 204). Hence, it is important to consider the relative influence of societal display rules as compared to organizational display rules when members of organizations express their anger. One means by which to discern the relative influence of these different sources of normative influence is to examine the type of anger expression reported by organizational members during their daily work routines.

Organizational Status and Anger Expression

Several studies have reported that individuals of higher status and power are given the latitude to express anger toward those of lower status (Conway et al., 1999; Gibson & Schroeder, 2002; Hochschild, 1975; Sloan, 2004; Tiedens, 2000). Those of higher status may be insulated from the anger of others by social inferiors who occupy boundary positions at the lower rungs of the organization and who function as “human barriers” by absorbing the anger of others (Hochschild, 1975). “Powerful people not only get a disproportionate amount of other resources such as money and prestige, but also enjoy more affective rewards. . . . Powerful and powerless people live in different emotional as well as social and physical worlds” (Hochschild, 1975, p. 296). Anger expression by higher status members is a means of asserting and reinforcing one’s location within the organizational hierarchy (Clark, 1990; Gibson & Schroeder, 2002). Anger may be used strategically to intimidate others in the pursuit of goal attainment (Gibson & Schroeder, 2002; Sloan, 2004).

A self-reinforcing relationship may exist between emotion and social status. Social status is believed to influence not only which emotions are felt but also the intensity with which they are experienced (Tiedens, 2000). The ways in which emotions are communicated or expressed can lead to others’ inferences regarding the social status of expresser. Anger expression is often seen as the domain of those with higher status and is associated with perceptions of competence (Clark, 1990; Tiedens, 2000). Similarly, normative expectations concerning the display of anger are based on the perceived dominance of the expresser, but dominance has been shown to be related to the gender of the expresser (Hess et al., 2000).

In one investigation of organizational power asymmetries, the display of anger by supervisors was tested to determine whether the degree of provocation by a subordinate would influence perceived relational and personal

costs for the supervisor (Davis, LaRosa, & Foshee, 1992). Female supervisors were more likely than male supervisors to report higher relational and personal costs even when the display of anger was justified by high subordinate provocation. The sex of the subordinate had no effect on perceived normative cost judgments. Other studies have found that the character of the provocation leading to anger differs on the basis of one's hierarchical status such that lower status members are angered by unfair treatment, whereas higher status members experience anger when others display incompetence (Fitness, 2000). The manner in which anger is expressed also differs. Those in positions of relatively higher organizational status are likely to be more direct in the expression of anger (Fitness, 2000; Sloan, 2004), whereas lower status members are more likely to experience greater amounts of anger relative to higher status members and to experience it with greater intensity, but they tend to inhibit their anger expression more frequently than those of higher status (Conway et al., 1999; Sloan, 2004). Taken as a whole, these studies imply that the outward display of anger by a supervisor toward a subordinate is acceptable, if not expected, and that relative differences in status may account for the differences in workplace anger display norms.

The relationship between status and anger expression in an organizational context as it is described above, however, is somewhat problematic. Inconsistent normative influences appear to be operating, such as the juxtaposition of organizational norms related to anger expression with occupational norms for management and supervisory positions. Management as an occupation may be regarded as a position of status relative to other occupations within organizations in that managers and supervisors possess legitimate authority and the power that accompanies that authority to influence rewards and sanctions received by others. Yet the dominant precept associated with the management profession is an expectation of self-control and emotional neutrality (Hearn, 1993; Kramer & Hess, 2002; Stearns & Stearns, 1986). Managers exercising emotional restraint may successfully maintain control over others and preserve their privileged position of influence and status (Hearn, 1993; Stearns & Stearns, 1986). The literature reflects some uncertainty as to whether those in managerial and supervisory occupations are expected to exhibit emotional control or if they enjoy special privileges to directly express their anger with those at the lower levels of the hierarchy.

The concept of status is also ambiguous. In a study of anger experience and expression by Sloan (2004), for example, a distinction was made between status as it pertains to the prestige associated with an occupational

category and status that is relative to one's position within an organizational hierarchy. Moreover, formal and informal social hierarchies exist within organizational arenas, and these also exacerbate the complexity of status as a construct (Tiedens, 2000). Here, we operationalize status as the organizational position that is occupied relative to others in the workplace.² Thus, when an individual has supervisory authority over others, that individual is said to have higher status relative to those whom the individual supervises.

Gender, Status, and Anger Expression

The normative expectations for anger expression elevate in complexity when gender is entered into the discourse alongside the notion of status. This is because societal norms appear to accept the presence of gender-specific dualities in anger expression. Societal norms simultaneously tolerate greater emotional expressiveness among females while also expecting indirectness, and, paradoxically, tolerate both aggressiveness and emotional restraint among males (Brody, 2000; Maccoby, 1998). One explanation that has been advanced for this seeming contradiction is that scholars have used different methodological approaches to study anger expression, and these different methodologies may account for the disparate findings (Kring, 2000). An alternative explanation is the failure to consider the relevance of social context on prevailing emotion stereotypes, be it in the workplace, in the home, or in other social settings (Shields, 2002).

In an investigation that specifically examined workplace anger, males and females expressed their anger in similar ways (Gianakos, 2002). Both sexes were equally likely to manage their anger using controlled responses and avoidance behavior. This study would appear to support the premise that organizational norms supersede gender norms by advocating emotional restraint in the expression of negative emotions at work regardless of employee gender (Kramer & Hess, 2002). Similarly, Johnson and Arneson (1991) reported that female supervisors perceived anger as counterproductive and preferred to use controlled anger resolution strategies such as calm discussion and to offer rational explanations for anger rather than overt anger expression. Female participants in this study reported being concerned about anger expression diminishing the quality of interpersonal relationships. In another study of supervisor and subordinate relationships, which involved the use of vignettes, female participants who were assigned the role of supervisors were more likely to judge the display of anger as incurring higher relationship and personal costs than were male participants

(Davis et al., 1992). Furthermore, Lewis (2000) demonstrated that female leaders were evaluated as less effective when they displayed anger than were male leaders who displayed anger.

In studies of gender and anger that did not control for social context, females have been found to cry when angry (Averill, 1982; Crawford et al., 1992) and to use avoidance, calm discussion, and suppression (Crawford et al., 1992; Thomas, 1993, 1995). Conversely, males have been shown to associate the outward and aggressive display of anger with feelings of power and control, and they exhibit a greater tendency to make external attributions of blame when angry (Kring, 2000; Thomas, 1995). These sex differences in anger expression are generally attributed to gender-specific socialization experiences (Brody, 1997, 2000; Brody & Hall, 2000) and to the cultural relativity of emotion norms (Thoits, 2004).

The tension between societal norms and organizational norms suggests that we need a better understanding of the relationship between gender and status in anger expression, which also highlights the need for a fuller understanding of the relative influence of gender norms for anger expression as compared to organizational norms. Our study examined the impact of both gender and organizational status on anger expression in the workplace. We studied three forms of anger expression, including: preventing one's outward expression and reducing one's anger (anger control), inwardly repressing one's anger (anger in), and freely manifesting feelings of anger (anger out). We examined supervisors' (individuals of relatively higher status) anger expression when in the presence of their subordinates (individual of relatively lower status) and anger expression of subordinates when in the presence of their supervisor. We also examined whether gender had an impact on anger expression among interactants at different hierarchical levels of the organization. Based on the preceding discussion, we hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 1: There will be no difference in the amount of anger control used by male and female supervisors when in the presence of subordinates, consistent with organizational norms for anger expression by supervisors.

Hypothesis 2: Male supervisors will outwardly express their anger in the presence of subordinates more frequently than will female supervisors, consistent with gender-specific emotion norms.

Hypothesis 3: Overall, supervisors will outwardly express their anger in the presence of subordinates more frequently than will subordinates in the presence of their supervisor.

Hypothesis 4: When in the presence of supervisors, subordinates will more frequently hold their anger in and control their anger than they will outwardly

express their anger, consistent with organizational norms for anger expression by lower status members.

Hypothesis 5: Male subordinates will outwardly express their anger more frequently when in the presence of their supervisors than will female subordinates, consistent with gender-specific emotion norms.

Method

Sample and Procedure

We gathered participants for our study in three ways. Approximately half of the sample consisted of full- and part-time employees enrolled in MBA, executive MBA, and upper division undergraduate management courses at a university in the southeastern United States. One of the authors entered several classrooms with permission of the faculty teaching the courses and solicited volunteers who were actively employed to complete a questionnaire. This procedure generated 270 participants, of whom more than 25% of respondents were employed in managerial positions, 17% in professional occupations, 17% in clerical occupations, 3% as business owners, and 10% as service workers. We generated an additional 238 respondents from the distribution of surveys to students in two sections of an upper-division management course. Those students then identified coworkers, supervisors, family members, and acquaintances who were employed and requested their cooperation in completing a questionnaire. These respondents completed the questionnaire, sealed it in an envelope, and delivered it to one of the authors. Finally, 52 participants employed at a university in the southeastern United States completed the same survey online.

Of the 560 participants who completed a survey, 46% (260) were male, 53% (297) were female, and 3 were gender unidentified. Approximately 56% of participants were between 20 and 29 years of age, 19% were between ages 30 and 39, and 15% were between 40 and 49 years old, and the remainder (10%) were between ages 50 and 69. The majority of respondents were Caucasian (78%); 17% identified themselves as either African American, Asian, or Hispanic, and 5% as other. Of the respondents, 196 or 35% reported having responsibility for supervising others in their workplace.

Measures

The data collected here were part of a larger study concerned with the antecedents and correlates of anger experience and expression in work

organizations (see Domagalski & Steelman, 2005). The portion of the survey specific to the present study included a section requesting demographic information along with an anger expression instrument (described below). We asked respondents to indicate how frequently they exhibited each form of anger expression when in the presence of (a) their supervisor and, if relevant, (b) their subordinates during the past 3 months at work. We then asked 196 (35%) of the 560 participants who identified themselves as having supervisory authority over others to complete the anger expression items two times, once to indicate the frequency they used each form of anger expression during the past 3 months when in the presence of their supervisors and a second time to indicate how frequently they used each form of anger expression when in the presence of their subordinates. Respondents without any reported supervisory responsibilities ($n = 364$) completed the anger expression items once to indicate how frequently they expressed their anger in the different ways reported below during the past 3 months at work when in the presence of their supervisors.³

The Spielberger et al. (1988) Anger Expression (AX) instrument was used to measure three forms of anger expression—anger in, anger out, and anger control. The AX scale is a psychometrically validated, 24-item instrument composed of three subscales, each with 8 items. Participants are asked to rate how they generally react or behave when they feel angry or furious using a 4-point response set from *almost never* to *almost always*. Anger In measures items that tap into anger that is felt by an individual but remains suppressed, such as pouting or withdrawing from others. A sample item from this subscale is, “I boiled inside but didn’t show it.” The Anger Out subscale is defined in terms of the frequency in which angry feelings are manifested by either verbally or physically aggressive behaviors. This scale includes items such as, “I made sarcastic remarks to others” and “I did things like slam doors.” The Anger Control subscale assesses differences in the tendency to control and prevent the experience of anger, indicated by statements related to maintaining control over one’s temper and calming down faster than others, for example, “I stopped myself from losing my temper.” Thus, anger out refers to the direct, outward expression of anger, whereas anger in is defined as the suppression of anger even though the individual recognizes his or her anger. Anger control is analogous to the use of emotional restraint in that the individual not only refrains from directly expressing anger but attempts to mitigate the angry feelings as well. The instructions to respondents were modified slightly from the original instrument to read, “When angry at work during the past 3 months and in the presence of my supervisor. . . .”⁴

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for the Types of Anger Expression

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
Overall anger expression					
Anger in	1.87	0.52	.92		
Anger out	1.64	0.46	.14**	.87	
Anger control	3.01	0.67	-.12**	-.46**	.95
Anger expression in the presence of one's subordinate or subordinates					
Anger in	1.73	0.56	.82		
Anger out	1.53	0.43	.13	.76	
Anger control	3.16	0.74	.05	-.18**	.93
Anger expression in the presence of one's supervisor					
Anger in	1.93	0.58	.81		
Anger out	1.59	0.49	.05	.80	
Anger control	2.00	0.70	-.08	-.46**	.92

Note: Internal consistency reliabilities are on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and internal consistency reliabilities for the various types of anger expression are presented in Table 1. In this sample, anger control had the highest mean score overall when in the presence of both one's supervisor and one's subordinates. Anger out had the lowest mean score across both targets. Furthermore, anger control was negatively correlated with anger in and anger out.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that male and female supervisors would be equally likely to utilize high levels of anger control when in the presence of subordinates. A *t* test indicated that there was no difference between male and female supervisors' use of anger control when in the presence of subordinates, supporting Hypothesis 1 ($t = .10$, *ns*). Furthermore, paired-sample *t* tests, run separately for men and women, revealed that anger control was used significantly more frequently than any other mode of expression by both men and women. Descriptive statistics and *t* test results for anger expression by gender are reported in Table 2.

Hypothesis 2, men will be more likely to use anger out in the presence of subordinates than women, was not supported. Although men reported

Table 2
Descriptive statistics for modes
of emotional expression by gender

	Men		Women		<i>t</i> -Value
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Overall anger expression					
Anger in	1.84	0.50	1.89	0.54	-0.80
Anger out	1.74	0.50	1.55	0.39	5.12**
Anger control	3.00	0.66	3.04	0.67	-1.21
Anger expression in the presence of one's subordinate or subordinates					
Anger in	1.68	0.52	1.79	0.59	-1.40
Anger out	1.58	0.46	1.49	0.40	1.50
Anger control	3.16	0.69	3.15	0.79	0.10
Anger expression in the presence of one's supervisor					
Anger in	1.91	0.56	1.94	0.60	-0.65
Anger out	1.68	0.54	1.50	0.41	4.06**
Anger control	2.97	0.71	3.02	0.70	-0.75

** $p < .01$.

expressing more anger out when in the presence of subordinates ($M = 1.58$) than did women ($M = 1.49$), this difference was not significant. Contrary to expectations, both men and women of lower status were more likely to use anger out when in the presence of their supervisor than when in the presence of their subordinates, although these differences were not significant. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4 stated that lower status members will have higher levels of anger in and anger control than anger out when in the presence of their supervisor. Paired-sample t tests were significant for anger in ($t = -10.64$, $p < .01$) and anger control ($t = -31.64$, $p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5, that males with lower status will be more likely to outwardly express anger in the presence of supervisors than will females with lower status, was supported ($t = 4.06$, $p < .01$).

Discussion

In our article, we examined the impact of organizational status and gender on the forms of anger expression when in the presence of others whose status

differed to discern the relative influence of these two constructs. We theorized that by learning how higher and lower status males and females recounted the forms of anger expression used with others at different levels of the organizational hierarchy, we might indirectly learn something about the comparative influence of gender-based societal norms and organizational norms for anger display in the workplace. The literature on gender socialization and gender stereotypes is unequivocal in its description of different emotion rules for males and females, particularly for anger (Brody, 1997, 2000; Brody & Hall, 2000; Maccoby, 1998). Females are socialized to approach and express their anger indirectly and passively and, at the same time, are labeled the more emotional sex. Males, conversely, are taught to keep a stiff upper lip and remain emotionally inexpressive, yet they are permitted, and perhaps expected, to display their anger directly, if not aggressively. By comparison, the literature on organizational and occupational norms related to the expression of anger is fraught with inconsistencies. Historical accounts that have chronicled the evolution of anger norms at all levels of the organizational hierarchy throughout the 20th century note that middle-level managers and supervisors tended to use more anger control and less outward anger expressions during this period, perhaps reflecting the assumptions of rationality prominent at that time (Stearns & Stearns, 1986). Nevertheless, researchers have identified status as a central determinant for demarcating those who are exempt from exercising restraint in anger expression by granting license to those of higher status to express their anger directly toward others below them (Gibson & Schroeder, 2002; Hochschild, 1975, 1979; Sloan, 2004; Tiedens, 2000). We investigated this ensuing confusion from this disparity in emotion rules—gender and organizational—by parsing out the forms of anger expression reported by males and females at different status levels.

We hypothesized that higher status males would invoke gender-stereotyped norms and use an outward, direct form of anger expression more than would higher status females when in the presence of those of relatively lower organizational status. The differences between males and females in the outward expression of anger were not significant, although males reported outwardly expressing their anger more frequently than did females. Lower status males, however, reported expressing their anger outwardly toward higher status superiors significantly more frequently than did their female counterparts. This is consistent with our premise that lower status employees will, at least in part, invoke gender-based emotion norms when angry at work. Quite unexpectedly, however, employees with lower status were more likely to outwardly and upwardly express their anger than were higher status members likely to outwardly direct their anger downward.

We also found that employees of both sexes and at both high and low levels of the hierarchy reported controlling their anger and holding their anger in when in the presence of those at a different status level. Anger control was the most frequently reported form of expression across all respondents.

How might these results be interpreted? Perhaps the management occupation (and, more generally, those in supervisory positions) socializes its members against losing emotional control around subordinates (Kramer & Hess, 2002; Stearns & Stearns, 1986), which would explain the low frequency of outward anger expression reported by both sexes in the presence of lower status members. However, we believe this assertion is overly simplistic in view of the finding that members at high and low status levels alike report the use of emotional restraint when angry. Alternatively, organizational members may be demonstrating a response bias in their reporting by offering socially desirable attributions that are indicative of emotional control at work. In either case, the reported use of strategies of anger control and restraint suggests that individuals acknowledge the importance of organizational norms associated with the expression of emotion among fellow members of the organization. Accordingly, whether the results portray an accurate reflection of how employees at different status levels express their anger around others or whether the results are tainted by the desire to present socially appropriate responses, the findings suggest that organizational norms hold sway over societal norms related to gender in the context of the work environment. Our results indicate that gender stereotypes do not fully attenuate, however, as exemplified by the differences in outward anger expression for lower status males and females.

Our findings raise certain questions about the literature related to status, which asserts that higher status members display anger more freely and directly than their lower status counterparts (Hochschild, 1975; Sloan, 2004; Tiedens, 2000; Tiedens, Ellsworth, & Mesquita, 2000). We did not find this to be the case. Rather, it was lower status employees who reported a higher frequency of outward anger expression than those of higher organizational status. Perhaps the reasoning for such a seeming anomaly can be located in the work of Stearns and Stearns (1986). The socialization of employees in the display rules of anger (what they refer to as emotionology) was differentiated on the basis of organizational status. Employees of midrange status, those occupying managerial and supervisory positions, received training that emphasized the necessity of emotional restraint with their subordinates. During the early part of the 20th century, this training was established to counteract labor unrest. Supervisory personnel were educated to reframe their thinking about the emotional outbursts displayed by their

subordinates and to exercise and model emotional control. By contrast, anger control strategies were not applied to corporate executives or those at the highest levels of the organization because traits such as aggression were believed to be aligned with corporate success. Thus, different standards of emotional accountability developed on the basis of hierarchical level.

The possibility of different standards for emotional expression based on organizational status is legitimated by insights from a recent study conducted by Sloan (2004) involving workplace anger experience and expression. Sloan measured status in two distinct ways, the esteem or prestige associated with a profession and the ability to influence others at work. Sloan found that it was the former definition, status related to the prestige of one's occupation, that proved more important in predicting direct anger expression toward others in organizations. This distinction may prove essential to furthering our understanding the impact of gender and status on anger expression. It may be that we grant high-status occupations such as chief executive officers or physicians or other high-prestige professions the latitude to deviate from accepted organizational norms of emotional expression, either because of their cachet or, as Stearns and Stearns (1986) suggest, because we may perceive traits such as aggression to be associated with success. Should this be the case, however, it remains uncertain whether males and females alike in high-prestige occupations are bound to the same standards of emotional expression or if there are different standards based on gender. Some of the literature suggests that the consequences for females who express their anger directly are far more damaging than they are for males (Davis et al., 1992; Gibson et al., 2004; Lewis, 2000). Conversely, one's relative location in the organizational hierarchy may be immaterial unless also accompanied by a high-prestige profession. Thus, according to our findings, one's relative status in the organization has no association with the direct expression of anger in the presence of those below. In addition, although males did report the use of outward anger expression more frequently than did females, these results were only significant for those at the lowest levels of the organization. In the context of the workplace, organizational norms that prescribe emotional control are more influential in guiding employee behavior than societal norms that address gender differences in emotional expressivity (Brody, 2000; Brody & Hall, 2000).

Our investigation has provided a better understanding of the relationship between gender and relative organizational status on workplace anger expression. To move forward, we suggest that additional research should further examine the two forms of status—occupational prestige and relative location in the organizational hierarchy—to explore the possible gender

consequences of direct anger expression by those in high-prestige occupations and also to better understand if anger expression serves as a status marker for one gender (i.e., males) but not the other. We see much merit, as well, in extending research related to the impact of gender and status on anger expression by examining the antecedents associated with the direct expression of anger and in determining whether particular provocations justify the expression of anger by females (or males).

Notes

1. Callahan and McCollum (2002) distinguish emotional labor from emotion work by conceptualizing the latter as the deliberate decision to manage one's emotions for some personal benefit rather than for the exchange value that characterizes the concept of emotional labor.

2. We nonetheless recognize that status ascribed by occupational designation and by other individual and organizational characteristics also merits investigation.

3. The terms *supervisor* and *subordinate* were used to represent organizational members of relatively higher status and lower status, respectively.

4. The instructions were the same for those who also completed the instrument a second time, except that the word *supervisor* was replaced with the word *subordinate*.

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