Young Women's Anger in Romantic Relationships

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Abstract

The present study investigated how young women "do" and "undo" gender in relation to their anger in romantic relationships. With this aim, I conducted in-depth interviews with 24 young women between the ages of 18 and 25. I interviewed participants about the characteristics of their current romantic relationships and their experiences of anger in this context. I used a constructivist grounded theory methodology involving open, axial, and theoretical coding to analyze the data collected through the interviews (Charmaz, 2006). My analysis suggested an emerging theory of young women's anger in romantic relationships involving 5 categories, 16 sub-categories, and 4 types. Overall, the findings suggest young women experience contradictions about their power in romantic relationships and variability across events in how they "do" and "undo" gender in relation to their anger in romantic relationships. The findings also confirm that for most young women, their power in romantic relationships is associated with how women relate to, understand and express their anger. The emerging theory of women's anger in romantic relationships provides a tool for further research on anger in the context of romantic relationships and a set of guidelines for clinicians to assess young women's anger in romantic relationships.

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Dedication

To Mauricio.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

In the last decade, gender theorists have argued for a greater emphasis on "undoing gender" through critical feminist scholarship (Deutsh, 2007; Lorber, 2005; Risman, 2004, 2009). A shift from "doing gender" to "undoing gender" means focusing less on the ways in which gender is socially constructed and maintained, and focusing more on the processes by which individuals become less gendered or reflexively adopt alternative gender rules to resist those naturalized through social institutions and culture (Risman, 2004). Focusing on "undoing gender" does not deny the predominance of gender as it continues to structure women and men as different and unequal, but recognizes the accomplishments made by feminist scholars and activists in creating progress towards greater gender equality (Deutsh, 2007; Risman, 2009).

The present research study fits this feminist interest of "undoing gender." From a family therapy perspective, "undoing gender" implies: (a) through research, understanding the processes by which gender is both constructed and resisted in couple and family relationships, and (b) in practice, promoting reflections on such gender construction and deconstruction processes in therapy, supervision, and teaching. In particular, the goal of the present study was to understand two processes: (a) How does gender influence young women's anger in romantic relationships? and (b) How do young women resist and transform gender as they relate to their anger in romantic relationships?

Studying the ways in which young women experience, express and make meaning of anger in romantic relationships is relevant from a public health perspective, as women's experiences and expressions of anger have implications for women's physical and emotional health. Women who suppress or neglect their anger have greater probabilities of developing

health problems such as cancer and high blood pressure (Harburg, Julius, Kaciroti, Gleiberman, & Schork, 2003; Thomas, Groer, Davis, Droppleman, Mozingo, & Pierce, 2000), and psychological problems such as depression and suicide attempts (Daniel, Goldston, Erkalin, Franklin, & Mayfield, 2009; Sperberg, & Stabb, 1998). Furthermore, women who suppress or neglect their anger have greater probabilities of getting involved in indirect aggression toward intimate partners (Johnson & Leone, 2005).

To date, most studies have examined women's anger in general terms. Only a few studies have considered women's anger in the context of the couple relationship. For example, Sperberg and Stabb (1998) showed that women's expression of anger varied according to level of mutuality in their adult couple relationships (marriages and cohabitating couples). In this study, women with less mutual couple relationships showed greater anger suppression and indirect expression of anger. Similarly, Fischer and Evers (2011) found an association between egalitarianism in couples and women's expression of anger. In their sample, women in less egalitarian relationships had greater levels of anger suppression. Although these findings have been important in establishing a link between power relations in couples and women's anger, more research is needed in order to strengthen the evidence on the association of these factors.

Furthermore, studies of women's anger in the developmental context of emerging adulthood are uncommon. Studies have either focused on girls' anger in adolescence (for example, Brown, 1998) or have used heterogeneous adult samples (for example, Sperberg & Stabb, 1998) where issues of development cannot be considered. However, the study of women's anger in couple relationships is especially significant in the stage of emerging adulthood. Considering emerging adulthood is a formative stage where relationship explorations become more serious, deep, and intimate in preparation for adult committed couple relationships

and family life (Arnett, 2004; Tanner, 2006), there are important opportunities to intervene in transforming processes related to the couple, and to the self.

Purpose of the Study

The present study expands previous knowledge on women's anger by examining the specifics of women's anger in the relational context of the couple and the developmental context of emerging adulthood. The findings of this study provide an additional understanding of how women's anger in romantic relationship are both influenced by gender, and how women resist and transform gender as they relate to anger in their romantic relationships. As a result, these findings can help couple and family therapists, and other professionals working with young couples, in promoting both an inter- and intra-personal space where women can become aware of how social constructions of gender limit their anger in romantic relationships. Through these reflections, therapists can mobilize alternative ways young women can relate to their anger. At the same time, understanding how young women resist and transform gender through their own ways of expressing, experiencing and meaning-making of anger can help therapists identify, strengthen, and reinforce these alternatives.

Core Concepts

In the following pages I introduce the definition of the core concepts used in this study: anger, gender, and romantic relationship. I provide a definition of each core concept and clarify which theoretical framework or author the definition comes from.

Anger

I used a psychological definition of anger as an emotion associated with specific physiological experiences, cognitions, and behavioral expressions. According to this definition anger experience is associated with (a) "increased blood pressure, total peripheral resistance, and

facial warming" (Potegal & Stemmler, 2010, p. 4), and (b) an appraisal of these physiological responses as associated with an event of "frustration; threats to autonomy, authority, or reputation; disrespect and insult; norm or rule violation; and a sense of injustice" (Potegal & Stemmler, 2010, p. 3). Meanwhile, authors agree that anger expression takes diverse shapes depending on the target of anger, what is the social circumstance, and what are the cultural norms for anger expression (Potegal & Stemmler, 2010).

To study anger expression most studies of anger within the field of psychology, counseling, and family therapy have used the distinction between anger-in and anger-out following Spielberger's (1999) State Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI). The variable anger-in groups behaviors that keep anger inside the individual, such as: hiding anger, feeling anger inside and not showing it, and withdrawing from other people (Del Barrio, Aluja, & Spielberger, 2004; Spielberger, 1999). Anger-out is characterized by behaviors that show anger outside the individual, including but not limited to: arguing with others, slamming doors, and attacking people who made one angry (Del Barrio et al., 2004; Spielberger, 1999).

Gender

I understand gender as a social structure and a social construction following Risman's (2004) integrative gender theory. Understanding gender as a social structure means putting it at a macro level as influencing social institutions (e.g., family, marriage, and school), social interactions, and individuals in a top-down fashion. Therefore, gender is predominantly viewed as establishing constraints to what institutions, relations, and individuals can do. However, the integrative approach shared by sociologists like Risman (2004), Lorber (1994, 2005) and Connell (2002) proposes that gender is also a social construction. This means considering individuals as

active and reflective, therefore continuously constructing and reconstructing gender inside themselves, their relationships, and their institutions.

Power

I used a feminist post-structuralist concept of power (Allen, 2011a). From this perspective, power is understood as shaping and setting constraints on individuals, but also providing individuals the means for "critical self-transformation" (Foucault, 1993). Power is considered to be present in all social relationships and institutions. Power is both power-over and power-to (Allen, 2011a). Power-over constitutes the condition in which subject A can influence subject B to act in X manner (Allen, 2011b). This dimension of power refers to domination of some individuals over others. Power-to is the potentiality of subject A to act in X manner to self-development (Allen, 2011b). This dimension of power refers to empowerment, or the capacity of individuals to be critical about power relations, transform themselves and be autonomous (Allen, 2013).

Romantic Relationship

In this study, I used the definition of romantic relationship by Collins (2003), who posits that a romantic relationship is one that is voluntary and recognized by both of the individuals involved in it. A romantic relationship is also close, intimate, and intense, and includes physical expressions of affection. It might include sexual relations in the present or the hope of sexual relations in the future. A romantic relationship might happen between individuals of the same or the opposite sex, however, considering the interest of this research study in male-female gender relations, only heterosexual romantic relationships were taken into account.

Emerging Adulthood

I used the definition of emerging adulthood developed by Arnett (2004) that is the result of a review of previous literature on the transition from adolescence to adulthood and Arnett's (1997, 2000) empirical studies with different samples of young individuals. According to Arnett's definition, emerging adulthood constitutes a distinct stage of development between the late teens and early twenties characterized by: (a) intensive identify explorations related to love and work, (b) heightened instability, (c) heightened self-focus, (d) feelings of not fitting into adolescence or full adulthood, and (e) heightened sense of possibilities (Arnett, 2005).

Overview of the Proposed Study

In the present study, I examined the question of how young women do and undo gender in relation to their anger in heterosexual romantic relationships. In order to answer the research question, I conducted in-depth interviews with young women involved in heterosexual romantic relationships. A total of 24 young women between 18 and 25 years of age participated in the study. I recruited participants through flyers posted at different universities in the New River Valley, and through list serves available to students in those institutions. I contacted those women interested in the study, conducted a brief screening on the phone, and scheduled an interview appointment, accordingly.

I interviewed each participant in a private office space. Each in-depth interview lasted between 45 and 95 minutes. The interview included questions regarding the romantic relationship and different experiences of anger within the context of this relationship. I audio recorded all interviews. With the help of a research assistant, I transcribed the 24 interviews. I coded and analyzed the interview transcriptions following a constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006). My analysis indicates an emerging theory of young women's anger in romantic relationships including 5 categories (power, relation to anger, anger triggers,

meaning making of anger, and anger expression) and 16 sub-categories. The emerging theory also points to the interaction of sub-categories into 4 different types of women: women undoing gender; women doing gender, but not completely; women struggling with undoing gender; and women mixing undoing and doing gender.

Research Question

The main research question in this study was: How do young women "do" and "undo" gender in relation to their anger in heterosexual romantic relationships? This question included two parts: (a) How does gender set constraints on young women's anger in romantic relationships? and (b) How do young women experience and express anger within romantic relationships in alternative ways as the ones mandated by gender?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Gender theory is an overarching perspective within the field of sociology that covers a diversity of feminist theoretical attempts to understand the interrelations between gender, society, and individuals. The version of gender theory that guided this study is the one proposed by Risman (2004, 2009) and shared by authors such as Connell (2002) and Lorber (1994, 2005).

Risman (2004) proposed an integrative framework to conceptualize and study gender. This integrative framework assumed both that social structures shape individuals, and that individuals shape social structures. Therefore, gender shapes individuals, while individuals produce and reproduce gender. This perspective was influenced by Gidden's (1984) structuration theory, which, according to Risman, argued, "Individuals are the products of their social worlds yet are not determined by them" (Risman, 2004, p. 83). Risman's integrative gender theory was also influenced by the feminist arguments of West and Zimmerman (1987) who conceptualized gender as constructed in the process of social interactions.

This integrative theoretical framework has two advantages. First, by calling gender a social structure, the theory puts gender at the same level of other macro social structures (e.g., political system, economic system), suggesting its overarching influence over social institutions, social relationships, and individuals in terms of setting constraints to what they are and what they can do. Second, by distancing itself from purist structuralist perspectives in sociology, this integrative framework recognizes the role of individuals as reflexive actors in the social context, instead of assuming a deterministic view of how macro social structures influence individuals. Among other advantages, this integrative framework allows for an understanding of how

individual, relational, and institutional processes interact to create power differences between women and men, and obstacles for women and men who do not adjust to the gender structure.

Consistent with this thinking, other authors have suggested that gender is both a social structure and a social construction. For example, Connell (1987, 2002) proposed understanding gender in terms of gender relations, distancing himself from earlier ideas of gender roles. In his perspective, there is a gender order that has been constructed through human history, but this gender order is not static, and it is permanently reconstructed by individuals and groups in social interaction (Connell, 2002). Connell emphasized individuals as reflective actors and agents within social constraints, and spoke of each person "claiming a place" within the gender order.

Connell (2002) suggested that the study of gender must include the study of gender relations, which he characterized as involving four dimensions. The first dimension of gender relations is power, which operates in both public (e.g., the state) and private (e.g., close relationships) domains. Such power is never total power, as power always comes with resistance to power. The second dimension of gender relations is production relations. Here, Connell referred to the way in which division of labor has been dichotomized, so that men are primarily responsible for production of goods and income, and women are primarily responsible for production in the home and socialization of children. The third dimension of gender relations is emotional relations, where men and women have traditionally occupied different positions, with women taking care of emotional work in both private and public domains (Hochschild, 1979). Finally, the fourth dimension of gender relations is symbolic, as it relates to the uses of discourse that both represent and create different positions for men and women.

Lorber (1994) added to this understanding of gender as a social structure and a social construction the ideas of gender as a process and gender as a stratification system. Lorber

argued that gender is a continuous process that individuals create and recreate (not just a performance) in every social interaction, following gender norms they have learned and which are reinforced by others around them. Following the idea that individuals are reflexive actors, Lorber assumed that some individuals, in some social interactions, also resist and rebel against gender norms and expectations. Apart from emphasizing process, Lorber (1994) put at the front the idea of different statuses and ranks through the concept of stratification. The author proposed that gender stratifies men and women in different ranks, putting men in a higher position in regards to women, within individuals of the same class and race. In this view, women and men in society are not constructed as different, but as unequal.

Apart from an understanding of bidirectional influences between society and individuals, this integrative framework of gender theory, in Risman's (2009) terms, invited the study of individuals and interactions as places where gender is produced, resisted, and transformed. In her theoretical framework, Risman (2004) emphasized the understanding of psychological processes (i.e., socialization, internalization, identity work, and construction of selves), as well as interactional processes (i.e., othering, trading power, and altercasting). In this view, a more detailed description of how gender operates at the individual and interactional level can help identify (a) how women and men are already undoing gender at the individual and relational level, and (b) how to enable processes of undoing gender at the individual and relational level where they are not already happening (Deutsch, 2007; Lorber, 2005; Risman, 2009).

Women and Anger

The study of women's anger within the behavioral and social sciences has taken two different directions. On one hand, a psychological approach to the study of women's anger has been evident in establishing whether there are differences or not between women's and men's

anger. From this perspective, the focus is on determining where the differences lie (expression or experience) and what are the factors associated with these differences (e.g., social roles, sex role identity). On the other hand, a relational and sociological approach to the study of women's anger has examined how women make sense of anger in their daily lives. In this second type of research, the focus has been on understanding anger in women's terms and taking into account a relational perspective. In the following two sections I offer a description of the main contributions from each of these lines of research.

Gender and Anger: Similarities or Differences?

From a psychological perspective, scholars have been interested in establishing whether there are differences in anger between women and men. This interest lies in a theoretical assumption that women and men are essentially different from each other, whether it is based on biological or socialization factors. Earlier studies of emotions emphasized considerable differences between women and men (e.g., Collier, 1982; Lerner, 1985). Predominantly, they portrayed women as experiencing and expressing anger less than men; and men, as experiencing and expressing anger more than women (e.g., Collier, 1982; Lerner, 1985). The studies conducted before the 1990s also portrayed men as been more prone to hostile actions and aggression when experiencing anger.

Recently, researchers in the field of social psychology have attempted to show that there are fewer differences in anger experience and expression between women and men, and that most of these differences are the result of contextual factors (such as the relationship with the person who is the target of anger and the presence or absence of the target person as the invidiual expresses anger) (Evers, Fischer, Rodriguez Mosquera, & Manstead, 2005; Fischer, 1993; Fischer & Evers, 2010; Fischer & Roseman, 2007; Kopper & Epperson, 1991, 1996; Kring,

2000). Although these studies attempted to break with rigid stereotypes about women's and

men's emotions by considering context, they still operated from theories that neglect the

overarching influence of gender as a social structure and as a social construction.

For example, Fischer and colleagues (Evers et al., 2005; Fischer, 1993; Fischer &

Roseman, 2007) used Social Role Theory as the theoretical framework for their work on anger.

Social Role Theory understands differences between women's and men's emotions as the result

of the different distribution of roles assigned to them in social interaction. It frames the

understanding of men's emotions within their role as family providers and of women's emotions

within their role of homemakers and caregivers (Fischer & Evers, 2010, 2011). This framework

is based on a gender difference paradigm that continues to conceptualize individuals as

categorically different based on whether they are women or men.

Similarly, the studies conducted by Kopper and Epperson (1991, 1996) attempted to

deconstruct stereotypes about women's and men's anger, but they continued to rely on theories

based on gender difference assumptions. Kopper and Epperson showed that biological assigned

sex (being a man or a woman) was not a significant predictor for the variability in the three

different dimensions of anger: anger-in, anger-out, and anger control. However, sex-role identity

(masculinity, femininity or androgyny) was a significant predictor of more than 10% of the

variance in the three dimensions of anger. Therefore, participants who identified with a

masculine identity were more likely to express their anger outwardly and to modulate less their

expressions of anger than participants with a feminine or androgynous identity. On the contrary,

those participants who identified with a feminine or androgynous identity were more likely to

suppress their anger and to attempt to control it.

The findings from Kopper and Epperson's (1991, 1996) research disregarded the importance of biological sex (being a man or a woman), but emphasized gender role identity as conceptualized by the Bem Gender Identity Scale (being feminine, masculine, or androgynous). Bem's (1974) gender identity theory emphasized characteristics related to each gender identity as categorically different from each other, and portrayed masculine and androgynous characteristics as superior to feminine ones. Consequently, Kopper and Epperson's research conceptualized gender as a dichotomy in which there was a stratification of characteristics individuals opt for, where masculine characteristics were superior to feminine ones.

According to the studies from the gender difference perspective, there is little evidence regarding differences between women and men in the subjective experience of anger, the intensity of anger, or the predisposition to anger (Fischer & Evers, 2010; Kopper & Epperson, 1991, 1996). However there is some evidence indicating qualitative differences in *how* women and men *express* their anger. According to this line of research, women tend to express their anger through powerless and indirect ways, while men tend to express anger in powerful and direct ways (Fischer & Evers, 2010). Women report much more frequently than men that they will cry when they are angry (Averill, 1983; Frost & Averill, 1982), while men report more than women that they will be overtly aggressive when they feel angry (Archer, 2004). In addition, the studies argued that women use indirect aggression more frequently than men to deal with their anger (Archer, 2004).

The studies previously cited seem to show a picture in which the social rules for the emotional *experience* of anger are the same for women and men, while the social rules for the emotional *expression* of anger are different (Averill, 1982). So, the potential difference by gender is not so much an internal matter of experiencing anger differently, nor is it a matter of

suppressing versus expressing anger at different levels, but rather the difference appears to be a matter of showing anger to others in ways that are more consonant with one's power position in a relational context or with one's identity as a woman or a man. Although, from a gender difference perspective, these findings are evidence of anger expression as a gendered process.

Women's Lived Experiences of Anger

A different line of research within the social and behavioral sciences has been interested in examining how women make meaning of their anger experiences and expressions. The researchers pursuing this question come from a variety of fields (including sociology, clinical psychology, and nursing), but share a methodological approach to the study of women's anger that includes in-depth interviewing and qualitative analyses. The findings from these studies portray two main ideas. First, these qualitative explorations show women talk about their experiences and expressions of anger in a variety of ways. Second, they evidence that women experience anger as a "political emotion," one that is related to power, justice, and morality.

Qualitative analyses demonstrate the variety of ways in which women relate to anger. Thomas, Smucker, and Droppleman (1998) identified five core themes that captured the experience of anger in a sample of 29 White American women, from 21 to 66 years of age, interviewed for their study. These themes included: (a) Anger experienced as a confusing mixture of feelings, (b) Anger experienced as a violation of core values (unfairness, lack of reciprocity), (c) Powerlessness: when anger is kept inside, (d) Powerlessness: when anger is put outside, and (e) Power: The use of anger as a means of restoring relationship reciprocity. Similarly, Eatough, Smith, and Shaw (2008), intensively interviewed five women between the ages of 28 and 32 from low socioeconomic status communities in the UK and found a variety of experiences of women's anger. Such anger experiences included diverse combinations of bodily

sensations (such as crying), social emotions (shame and guilt), and cognitive attributions for anger (anger as a response to an injustice and anger as a response to a rule violation).

Most importantly, both of these phenomenological studies of women's experiences of anger evidenced anger as a "political emotion." In the study by Thomas et al. (1998), four of the five core themes identified by the authors relate to power. Power is experienced as a violation of core values, as the result of experiencing an unfair situation, or a situation where there is not reciprocity. These findings were consistent with the cognitive attributions identified by Eatough et al. (2008) whereby anger was viewed as a reaction to an injustice or a rule violation. Therefore, both studies showed anger as a physiological, cognitive, and behavioral arousal related to the experience of one's values or one's self being violated (Averill, 1982).

On the other hand, two of the categories of experiences identified by Thomas at al. (1998) evidenced an additional feature of anger as experienced by women. In the second and third category (powerlessness: when anger is kept inside, and powerlessness: when anger is put outside), the authors described women feeling powerless as they experienced anger. In the second of these categories women felt powerless when they kept their anger inside, and were not able to express it. Their powerlessness was related to the fact that they could not place the responsibility for the violation of their values where they thought it belonged and supported the integrity of their selves through anger expression. In the third category described by the authors, women felt powerless also, from the opposite experience, putting anger out. The powerlessness in this case was derived from women feeling their anger was not efficacious, so that their expression of what had been violated was not heard.

Both women and men experience anger as a violation of values or the self. However, what seems to be unique about the experience of women is the powerlessness described both

when they keep their anger in and express it in indirect ways and when they put anger out and express it directly. In this lose-lose position, women both feel powerless for expressing their anger outwardly because of the reactions from others in relation, and women feel powerless for keeping their anger in and not been able to express what is wrong to the corresponding person. This lose-lose position is possibly derived from the way society and most relationships within it are structured around unequal power for women and men.

Jack (2001) provided a more contextual view of women's expressions of anger. After interviewing 60 women from diverse socioeconomic, ethnic, and occupational backgrounds, Jack proposed that women used different strategies to bring anger in their relationships and to keep anger outside of their relationships. Jack described three main ways in which women brought anger into couple relationships: (a) positively and directly, (b) aggressively, and (c) indirectly.

The author expanded on four ways women brought anger in their relationship indirectly. The first way is what Jack (2001) called "quiet sabotage" and included passive aggressive behaviors that allowed women to communicate something was wrong, without being explicit and therefore leaving room for multiple interpretations. This, according to the author's qualitative interviews, protected women involved in non-egalitarian relationships. The other three ways in which women brought their anger into the relationship indirectly was through: establishing a hostile distance, deflection, or showing themselves as out of control (Jack).

Jack (2001) also identified ways in which women kept anger out of their relationships. The three ways the author found women in her study did this were: (a) consciously and constructively, (b) explosively when they were alone, and (c) self-silencing. In the first strategy, women were aware of their anger, but also of the economic and physical risks that their expression of anger might have entailed. Therefore, they chose to look for alternatives to solve

their problems or found ways to express their anger in a different relational context (for example, they expressed their anger in the relationship with their children, or they talked about their anger with intimate friends). In the second strategy, women expressed their anger by throwing objects, pounding, yelling and crying, but out of everyone's sight. Women who used this strategy feared others' reactions to their anger and at the same time wished they could express their anger differently. Finally, in self-silencing women showed themselves externally as happy, compliant, and not angry, with varying degrees of self-awareness about suppressing their anger and keeping it out of the relationship.

The phenomenological studies described above provide some indications about women's relation to anger. It seems that women are both powerless and powerful in their relation to anger. They are powerless in their expressions of anger as they suffer both when they express anger outwardly and when they keep anger in (Thomas et. al., 1998). However, women are also powerful in their relation to anger as they keep anger in or out of relationships according to their perceptions of power imbalance, risks, and costs (Jack, 2001).

Anger in Couple Relationships

Anger in adult married and cohabiting couples has been studied mostly by psychologists. Therefore, most of the studies include explanatory factors at the individual (e.g. cognitions, behaviors) and relational level (e.g. attachment, marital interactions). Only a few studies have attempted to introduce gender as a significant factor influencing anger in couples, through the use of variables measuring power imbalance between women and men in heterosexual couples (mutuality and egalitarianism). Studies of anger in couple relationships have so far neglected gender as a structure that constraints individuals and couples, and gender as constructed in social interactions on a daily basis. In this section, I offer a review of the research on anger and couple

relationships differentiating between those studies that have not included gender in their conceptualization of the phenomenon, and those studies that have attempted to include gender through variables such as egalitarianism and mutuality.

Anger in the Couple: Cognitive Attributions, Attachment, and Contextual Factors

Anger in couple relationships has predominantly been studied from a perspective that does not take into account gender as a process that constraints and stratifies women and men at the individual and interactional levels. There are at least four lines of research that have examined anger in couple relationships without considering gender in this way.

First, from a cognitive perspective, psychologists have examined appraisals during marital conflict and their relation with anger in husbands and wives (Renshaw, Blais, & Smith, 2010; Sanford, 2005; Traupmann, Smith, Florsheim, Berg, & Uchino, 2011). Sanford's (2005) research with newlywed couples (3 years or less of marriage) of diverse ethnic backgrounds examined differences in type of appraisals made by husbands and wives. The findings suggest that wives' anger is the result of event-related appraisals, while husbands' anger results from general attributions about the marital relationship.

In a similar way, accounting for personality differences, the studies by Renshaw et al. (2010) and Traupmann et al. (2011) found links between negative affectivity and negative appraisals during marital interactions. In a study with middle aged and older couples, Traupmann et al. (2011) found that for both spouses, higher anxiety and depression as a personality trait was associated with viewing the spouse as less friendly or warm, than coded by external observers; furthermore, anger as a personality trait was associated with viewing the spouse as more controlling than observed. In a similar study, Renshaw et al. (2010) found that

depression and anger as personality traits had significant actor effects on marital satisfaction. Meanwhile, only anger had significant partner effects on marital satisfaction.

Therefore, while Sanford's research (2005) pointed to differences in husbands' and wives' appraisals explaining anger in marital conflict, the more recent studies by Renshaw et al. (2010) and Traupmann et al. (2011) pointed to individual differences based on personality affective traits. Although having different interests, the studies illustrate cognitive psychologists' interest in couples and anger, which is characterized by an emphasis on individual traits and processes.

A second line of research that has touched on the emotion of anger in the relational context of the couple is one interested in attachment, aggression, and emotionality. Lafontaine and Lussier (2005) explored the relationship between adult attachment, anger experience and expression, and aggression towards a romantic partner in a sample of 316 French-Canadian heterosexual couples (married or cohabiting). The average age of partners was 39 years, and couples cohabitated an average of 13 years. The findings from this study showed that anger was both a mediator and a moderator in the relationship between attachment and aggression. The first statistical model showed that anger mediated the relationship between insecure attachment and partner violence, while the second model showed that anger influenced the direction and strength of the relationship between attachment and partner aggression.

From the understanding that attachment type influences partner violence, Mehta, Cowan, and Cowan (2009) explored the relationship between sadness, happiness, and anger during marital conflict, and individual attachment (i.e., attachment style developed during infancy in relation to primary caregiver) and couple attachment (i.e., attachment style developed in adulthood within the couple relationship). In a representative sample of 176 couples in

California, the authors found that one's couple attachment influenced one's positive emotions

(e.g., happiness), and that partner's couple attachment influenced one's negative emotions (e.g.,

sadness and anger).

A third group of studies that have examined the relationship between anger and couple

processes have included the influence of contextual factors on spouses' emotions and marital

processes. An example of this literature are those studies that have examined the relationship

between job stress and unemployment on anger and couples (Howe, Levin, & Caplan, 2004;

Story & Repetti, 2006). Howe et al. (2004) found that a spouse's unemployment predicted higher

levels of depression and anger both in the unemployed spouse and the other spouse. The

findings of this study showed differences in the effects depending on whether it is the husband or

the wife who is unemployed. Stronger direct and indirect effects on depression and anger were

detected when the husband was unemployed, as compared to those couples where the wife was

in the same situation.

Story and Repetti (2006) studied the influence of daily work interactions and workload on

anger and withdrawal patterns in dual-earner couples. Their findings supported the spillover

theory. For both husbands and wives, negative work interactions on a particular day predicted

anger and withdrawal interactions within the couple. Only for wives, an increased workload

during a particular day increased the chances of an anger or withdrawal interaction with their

husbands on that same day.

Finally, a few studies have considered power in couples as influencing anger in partners.

An example of this literature is found in the study by Guerrero, LaValley, and Farinelli (2008).

This research examined the relationship between (a) a partner's power position in the couple, (b)

the emotions of guilt, anger, and sadness, and (c) marital satisfaction in a sample of 92 young

adult couples enrolled at a southwestern university from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Findings from this study indicated that being over-benefitted is related to guilt; while being under-benefitted is related to anger for both husbands and wives. In addition, wives who felt under-benefitted in their couple relationship experienced sadness. Both the perception of inequity in the couple relationship and the negative emotions associated with it were predictors of low marital satisfaction for the participants in this study.

The four lines of research reviewed so far point to some important factors explaining anger in couples. Studies from cognitive psychologists contribute to an understanding of the appraisals and personality traits that precede anger in couples. Studies from an attachment perspective are useful to understand the relationship between past and present attachment bonds, anger, and violence. Similarly, understanding the influence of contextual factors and power imbalances adds to a more complete comprehension of the emotion of anger in the couple.

However, what these different studies on anger and couples lack is the acknowledgement of gender as it imposes constraints on individuals and their relationships, as well as the possibilities created on a daily basis by men and women in creating diverse ways of relating to each other and their emotions. The differences between spouses and partners in anger, appraisals, attachment styles, aggression proneness, and spillover, among others, could be better understood if the authors acknowledged the fact that couples live within a gendered stratified context. Therefore, some expressions, behaviors, and ways of thinking are valued more or less, and are represented by women and men to a different extent. Furthermore, even individuals who resist established gender constructions face difficulties and struggles in feeling, thinking, and behaving in alternative ways.

Anger in the Couple: Mutuality and Egalitarianism

A few studies have examined the relations between anger and couple processes taking into account gendered power. Sperberg and Stabb (1998) found that women in couple relationships characterized by higher levels of mutuality (defined as a bidirectional sharing and appreciation of each other's feelings, thoughts, and needs without the intention to manipulate or gain a personal benefit) reported less anger in (i.e., anger suppression), more control of the experience of anger, and lower levels of depression than women in less mutual relationships. Similarly, Fischer and Evers (2011) found that the type of relational context predicted the variability of diffuse anger expression, explosive anger expression and anger control in married couples. Participants in egalitarian relationships, as measured by reported division of labor and relational power, showed significantly lower levels of diffusion of anger and indirect anger expression, and greater levels of direct anger expression. In addition, the authors found significant interaction effects for gender and type of relationship, so that women in traditional marriages were at higher risk of having high levels of diffusion and suppression of anger compared to other participants.

These studies suggest that mutuality and egalitarianism in adult committed couples provide women with a context to express anger in direct and non-explosive ways. According to the studies described above, this ability is probably associated with less depression and improved well-being. The two studies that explored anger expression in the relational context of the couple are theoretically strong and methodologically sound; however, they are limited. First, they are limited in number. More studies are needed to expand on the topic, replicate findings, and move the discussion forward. Second, both studies used a quantitative methodology guided by quantitative type research questions. Therefore, they both were able to speak about statistically estimated relationships between different constructs such as anger-in, anger-out,

anger-control, depression, mutuality, and egalitarianism. However, the methodology limited the possibilities of a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, as well as the ability to critically approach the data.

In addition, none of the studies considered specific developmental questions. Fischer and Evers (2011) used a sample of participants between 29 and 32 years of age, but did not mention how this particular age range could have influenced the results. Furthermore, demographics show a great variety of characteristics in terms of family development among participants. Twenty-seven percent of the sample was married, while 73% was not; and 41% of participants had children, while 59% did not. Similarly, in the Sperberg and Stabb (1998) study, the sample did not allow researchers to make conclusions regarding a particular stage of adult development. In this study, participants' mean age was 26 years, but the standard deviation was large (SD=8.46). Furthermore, participants were in very different stages of couple and family development. Forty-four percent of the participants were dating, 8% were engaged, 11% were living together, and 36% were married. The range of duration of relationships was between 4 months and 32 years.

Furthermore, none of these studies used a gender theory perspective to critically their research questions. Fischer and Evers (2011) used a psychological perspective based on role theory where traditional roles of men and women in the family are used to explain differences in rules for emotional expression. In Sperberg and Stabb (1998), the theory of self-in-relationship was used to understand women as essentially different from men as the theory argues women have special needs to be in mutual relationships, while men do not necessarily have these needs. The critical perspective I used in this study involves an understanding of gender that goes

beyond understanding fixed roles for women and men, or essential biological or socialization differences according to biological sex.

The approach that guided the present study is concerned with understanding how young women's anger in romantic relationships is shaped by shared predominant constructions of gender (in a top down fashion), and how young women resist and transform gender through their understanding, experiences and expressions of anger in romantic relationships. I assumed there are no categorical differences between women and men because of biological, socialization, or social role factors. Additionally, I conceived of young women as reflective agents, such that even within structures of power imbalance in their social context and their couple relationships women have, and they find, alternatives to resist.

Anger in Emerging Adulthood

Few studies have considered the emotion of anger in emerging adulthood. Most of these studies have examined the relationship between anger and depression in emerging adults, and have investigated additional variables of interest such as self-esteem, and career and life satisfaction (Galambos, Barker, & Krahn, 2006; Howard, Galambos, & Harvey, 2010). Although their main interest is in development through emerging adulthood, these studies included comparisons between young men and women in terms of the different variables of interest and change rates through time in those variables.

These few studies indicated that outward anger expression decreases from late adolescence to the mid-twenties among women and men, and that there are no quantitative differences in the frequency of expressed anger according to biological sex at the end of emerging adulthood (Galambos et al., 2006; Howard et al., 2010). Galambos et al. (2006) examined the relationship between depression, self-esteem, and anger in 384 Canadian

participants through five waves of school-based data (when participants were 18, 19, 20, 22, and 25). According to the curve growth model analysis in this study, young women had significantly higher levels of depression and expressed anger, and lower levels of self-esteem at 18 than young men. However, at 25, women and men showed comparable levels of expressed anger.

A study by Howard et al. (2010) used the same Canadian sample to examine the relation among depression, expressed anger, self-esteem, and life and career satisfaction in emerging adults. The findings of their growth curve model found some differences in the way these variables were related according to the biological sex of the participants. For women, lower levels of depression and lower initial levels of expressed anger were related to higher grades and academic success. For men, having parents with higher educational levels was associated with a greater decrease in expressed anger.

The studies by Galambos et al. (2006) and Howard et al. (2010) are relevant in evidencing the longitudinal trends for anger during emerging adulthood, and their relationships with other significant markers of psychological well-being. However, these studies are limited in their contribution toward a greater understanding of anger during this stage of development.

First, Galambos et al. (2006) and Howard et al. (2010) only took into account "expressed anger," and used a four-item survey that did not include the variety of ways in which anger is expressed. The items on anger included in their survey used one very general sentence on anger experience ("Felt angry"), and three statements that only captured anger as it is expressed outwardly towards others. As other authors have pointed out, anger can be expressed in different ways, such as: directly or indirectly, to others who were the cause of anger, to others who were not the cause of anger, towards self, towards objects in the presence of others, and towards objects in isolation (Averill, 1982; Fischer & Evers, 2010).

Second, the theoretical frameworks and type of analyses used in Galambos et al. (2006) and Howard et al. (2010) limit the understanding of anger in emerging adulthood from a contextual and relational perspective. From the data collected it is not possible to make conclusions about anger within specific relational contexts, because the measure used to collect data asked about anger expression in general. Most probably these studies did not include relational context because anger in their perspective is conceptualized as an individual trait, predisposition, experience, and behavior. In addition, from the data collected and the corresponding analyses by Galambos et al. (2006) and Howard et al. (2010), it is not possible to come to any conclusions regarding how gender, as a structure and a social construction, influences anger expression through emerging adulthood. As described above, the studies only contribute in terms of identifying differences in anger, where both gender and anger are understood as individual attributes.

The Gap

As previously indicated, there are important gaps in the research related to anger in romantic relationships during emerging adulthood. In adults, the examination of specific relational contexts in the experience and expression of anger has been limited (Fischer & Evers, 2010), and only a few studies have considered couple relationships as significant contexts for understanding anger experience and expression (Fischer & Evers, 2011; Sperberg & Stabb, 1998). Furthermore, the development of anger has been studied in emerging adulthood in a limited number of studies (Galambos et al., 2006; Howard et al., 2010); predominantly from a deficit perspective where anger is regarded as something to be changed. These studies on the development of anger in emerging adulthood have also been limited in that they use a theoretical

framework that considers both anger and gender as individual traits rather than contextual and relational factors.

From a feminist perspective, studies of women's anger have focused on anger in general (Eatough et al., 2008; Jack, 2001; Thomas et al., 1998) and those that have considered anger in development have gone as far as middle adolescence (Brown, 1998). Although emerging adulthood is a significant transitional stage where important explorations of identity and intimate relationships take place (Tanner, 2006), to my knowledge there are no studies that have examined emerging adults' anger in the context of their romantic relationships.

The present study elaborated and expanded the empirical literature on women's anger in the context of romantic relationships, which is a significant relational space for development of gender relations in later adulthood. The findings from this qualitative study add to the literature by considering the developmental context of emerging adulthood, providing clues for what happens to women's anger between adolescence (Brown, 1998) and full adulthood (Jack, 2001; Thomas et al, 1998). Finally, the study contributes to the understanding of women's anger in the context of gendered power inequalities and of women's resistance of such inequalities.

Chapter 3: Method

Overview of the Research Design

The present study used a constructivist grounded theory methodology to answer the research questions (Charmaz, 2006, 2007; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). A total of 24 young women between 18 and 25 years of age currently involved in a heterosexual romantic relationship participated in the study. Participants were recruited in the New River Valley through flyers, list serves, undergraduate courses, and networking. Women who agreed to participate in the study and signed the informed consent were interviewed regarding their experiences of anger in their current romantic relationships, and how these experiences relate to the characteristics of the relationship. Interview transcripts were analyzed following a constructivist grounded theory strategy including open, axial, and theoretical coding. The analysis process focused on how women do and undo gender in relation to their anger in their romantic relationships. The findings of the study indicate an emerging theory of young women's anger in romantic relationships including: 4 types of participants, 5 coding categories, and 16 coding sub-categories.

Description of the Sample

Demographic Characteristics

The sample of this study was constituted by 24 participants. All participants were women between the ages of 18 and 25 (M=22, SD= 2.2). Participants' partners ranged in age from 19 to 30 (M=23.6, SD=3.44). The difference between participants' and partners' age ranged between 0 and 8 years. Most participants were younger than their partners, but two participants were older than their partners by 1 and 2 years. The mean difference in age between participants and their partners was 1.7 years (SD=2.17).

In terms of race, the sample was constituted by 17 White women, 4 Asian or Pacific Islander, and 3 women of more than one race. Two participants identified themselves as Hispanic/Latina. Participants were not asked to report on their sexual orientation, but one woman expressed during the interview that she identified as bisexual. Although this participant was currently involved in a romantic relationship with a man, in the past she had been involved in romantic relationships with women.

Participants had a high school degree and most of them were enrolled in a university at the time of the interview. Nineteen participants were enrolled at the same land grant university in the Mid-Atlantic at the time the study was conducted and one participant was enrolled at a nearby public university. Three participants were in a transitional stage: one participant had just graduated high school and was enrolled to start college next term; one participant had just graduated college and was looking for a job; and one participant was attending summer school at the land grant university but was regularly enrolled as a student in a different university. Finally, one of the participants had just begun a new job after graduating from a master's program.

Undergraduate and graduate students participated in the study. Out of the 22 participants currently enrolled at a university, 10 were graduate students and 12 were undergraduate students. Among the 10 graduate students, 8 were working towards a master's degree and 2 were completing their doctoral degrees. Regarding the undergraduate students in the sample, 1 was a freshman, 2 were sophomores, 7 were juniors and 2 were seniors. Participants' areas of study included: engineering and computer science (6), social sciences and humanities (5), biology, physics and mathematics (5), accounting (3), animal science and veterinary medicine (2), other (2), and architecture (1).

In terms of socioeconomic status, participants presented diverse characteristics. Half of the sample (12) was comprised of participants whose fathers had a graduate degree, while the other half had fathers with varying levels of education including having a college degree (4), a technical/associate degree (2), a high school diploma or GED (4), and some high school education (1). Half of the young women in the study (12) reported their mothers had college degrees and one-fourth (6) reported their mother's had graduate degrees. The other fourth of the sample included participants whose mother's had a technical/associate degree (2) or a high school diploma or GED (4).

The annual family income of participants' family of origin varied. On the higher end of the spectrum, 9 out of 24 participants reported a family income of $100,000 or more and 4 participants reported a family income between $75,000 and $99,999. On the middle and lower end of the spectrum, 4 participants reported a family income between $50,000 and $74,999; 5 participants reported a family income between $25,000 and $49,999; and 1 participant reported a family income lower or equal to $24,999.

Romantic Relationship Characteristics

All participants in the sample were involved in a romantic relationship with a man for at least 4 months at the time of the interview. Participants had been involved in the romantic relationships between 4 months and 7 years. Seven young women cohabitated with their partners. Many of the participants narrated engaging in periods of long distance relationships with their current partners, but only four of them were living apart from their boyfriends at the time of the interview. Four participants were engaged to their boyfriends. None of the participants was married or had children, as these were exclusion criteria in the study.

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Sample Selection Process

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The sample selection for the present study included specific inclusion and exclusion

criteria in order to achieve a purposeful sample (Creswell, 2002). In the following pages I

describe the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study and the reasoning behind each of them.

Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for the sample were age and current involvement in a romantic

relationship. Considering the present study was focused on emerging adult women, the age of

participants was limited to those between 18 and 25. Studies with US samples have found that

most individuals in this age range present characteristics of extended exploration, which is a key

feature of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004). The second inclusion criterion was current

involvement in a romantic relationship with a man for at least four months. The literature on

romantic relationships supports a phase model development theory (Brown, 1999) where older

adolescents (17-20 years old) and emerging adults (21-25 years old) participate in romantic

relationships lasting 12 months or more (Seiffge-Krenke, 2003; Shulman, Tuval-Mashiach,

Levran, & Anbar, 2006). However, empirical studies on emerging adults' romantic relationships

have included participants in relationships lasting a minimum of two to four months (Jamison &

Ganong, 2011; Madsen & Collins, 2011; Shulman et al., 2006).

Exclusion Criteria

Exclusion criteria included marriage, children, current counseling/therapy or mental

health diagnosis, and violence in the current romantic relationship. First, married women were

excluded from the study. During emerging adulthood individuals engage in a variety of

relationship arrangements including: dating, partial cohabitation, and full cohabitation (Jamison

& Ganong, 2011; Manning, & Smock, 2005; Sassler, 2004). These arrangements take several

forms, where partial and full cohabitation are mainly based on pragmatic considerations (e.g.,

convenience, living arrangement, and financial matters) rather than qualitative differences in the relationship (Sassler, 2004). Therefore, participants in these diverse types of romantic relationships were included in the sample of the study. On the contrary, emerging adults view marriage as a qualitatively different type of relationship (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). Furthermore, the social context where emerging adults develop their relationships also positions marriage as different from cohabitation (Cherlin, 2009). According to Cherlin (2009), marriage continues to have a distinctive symbolic value for Americans, even for cohabitators, such that it is perceived as an accomplishment or a desired goal in an adult couple relationship.

Second, young women who were mothers were also excluded from the study. Including women with children would have included another system of relationship to account for in women's relations to anger in a romantic relationship, as well as to women's views of romantic relationships and their relational positioning in them. This makes sense from a family systems perspective; where family subsystems (e.g., couple subsystem, filial subsystem) are understood to bi-directionally influence each other (Minuchin, 1974). The idea that a child influences individual and relational processes in the couple is also supported by the research on the transition to parenthood. Findings from those studies evidence significant couple relationship transformations including: division of labor (Perry-Jenkins & Claxton, 2011); gender relations (Fox, 2001), dyadic adjustment (Bouchard & Doucet, 2011), relationship satisfaction (Mitnick, Heyman, & Smith Slep, 2009), and individual well-being (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004). Although looking at this other system of relationship could prove beneficial to the understanding of women's anger, the focus of this study was on unmarried women, without children, who were involved in a heterosexual romantic relationship at the time of the interview.

Third, young women who had a mental health diagnosis or were involved in counseling/therapeutic services at the time of the study were not included in the study. Affective and other mental health symptoms can significantly influence an individual's experience of their anger and their romantic relationship. For example, depressive symptoms have been found to correlate to elevated experiences of anger in emerging adults (Galambos et. al., 2006; Howard et. al., 2010). Views of the relationship and relational positioning can also be significantly distorted in depressed individuals because negative attributes of self, other, and the environment become very salient.

Finally, severe intimate partner violence in the current romantic relationship was also used as an exclusion criterion in the study. Including participants who were currently experiencing severe intimate partner violence would have added a greater range of issues regarding power and violence which were not the focuse of this study (Anderson, 2010; Johnson & Leone, 2005).

Data Collection Procedures

The process of collecting qualitative data in the current study included the following procedures: recruitment, screening, and conducting in-depth interviews. Below, I describe each of the data collection procedures used in the study.

Recruitment

Once the research project was IRB approved, I advertised the study through flyers posted on bulletin boards at the campuses of Virginia Tech (e.g. classroom buildings, gyms, coffee shops nearby), Radford University (e.g. classroom buildings, student services), and New River Community College. I also sent an electronic copy of the flyer through a number of list serves and email lists at the three target institutions. At Virginia Tech I sent electronic flyers to online

instructors in Human Development and Sociology, and to all representatives of honor societies and student groups on campus. At Radford University I contacted the Nursing and Social Work schools, without any luck in having faculty distribute the study's flyer among their student body. I also sent information to all representatives of honor societies and student groups at Radford University. Finally, I was successful at contacting two instructors at the New River Community College, but they could not distribute the information as there were no classes in session at the time.

Flyers advertising the project included the following information: (a) general purpose of the study, (b) eligibility criteria, (c) potential benefits for participants, (d) compensation for a completed interview, (e) contact information of the researcher, and (f) institution where the research project was conducted. Flyers used a simple and honest language, so that young women could easily understand the information and were able to make an informed decision on whether to participate or not. See Appendix A for the Recruitment Flyer and the Recruitment Email used.

I contacted by telephone those women who expressed interest in the study. During this phone call to potential participants, I read the inclusion and exclusion criteria and asked women to answer "yes" or "no" to the question: "After listening to these characteristics of participants in the study will you be able and willing to participate?" I thanked those women who did not meet the criteria for the study, and scheduled an interview appointment with those who did fulfill the inclusion criteria. See Appendix B for the Phone Conversation with Potential Participants Protocol.

In-depth Interviews

Before interviewing participants, I provided them with a copy of the Informed Consent (See Appendix C). I asked participants to read the Informed Consent and to sign the document if

they agreed with its content. In this consent form, participants were asked to agree for the interview to be audio recorded. I notified participants of their right to not answer some of the questions or to withdraw from the study at any point in time. I conducted interviews in a private office space. Interviews lasted between 45 and 95 minutes. After completing the interview, I asked participants to complete a Post-Interview Demographic Questionnaire (See Appendix D). Once participants finished completing the Post-Interview Demographic Questionnaire, I compensated them with a $20 gift card for their participation in the study.

I audio recorded 25 interviews, but only 24 were transcribed and later analyzed to be included in the study. The excluded interview was of a young woman who had been a victim and a perpetrator of partner violence in her romantic relationship within the last three months. Once transcribed, I kept 2 copies of the 24 interviews. I saved one copy of the interviews in a USB memory and a second copy in my computer's hard disk. I encrypted each Word document for the transcribed interviews such as to secure the information recorded. I will delete all audio for the interviews and Word documents for the corresponding transcriptions once the final manuscript is accepted for publication. In the process of transcription, I assigned pseudonyms to each participant. I used pseudonyms from then on in the study to guarantee anonymity of participants.

Out of the total 24 interviews included in the study, I transcribed 23 interviews and a research assistant transcribed one interview. The research assistant transcribed the interview from a participant attending a university different from the one she currently attended. Considering I was in a different town than the research assistant, the audio recorded interview was shared using Dropbox. In order to guarantee confidentiality of the participant, I placed the audio file of the interview as a single file in a folder in Dropbox that I only shared with the

research assistant. In this way, the research assistant was the only one who could download the audio file from Dropbox with her corresponding login and password. Once the research assistant completed the transcription process, I deleted the audio file containing the interview from Dropbox.

<div align="center">**Description of Instrumentation**</div>

Semi-structured Interview

I collected data for this study through semi-structured interviews with participants that lasted between 45 and 95 minutes (Charmaz, 2006). I used an interview guide covering the main issues of interest and specific probes to guarantee a degree of uniformity among data collected from participants (Seidman, 2006). However, considering the nature of qualitative research, I added questions according to participants' stories (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2006). In some cases, I needed to ask a number of extra questions when participants were very brief in their statements and descriptions. In other interviews I only needed to ask a few questions and participants provided a detailed account of their romantic relationships and their anger. The main questions I asked participants attempted to bring out participants' descriptions of their romantic relationships and of their anger in romantic relationships. Additional questions explored participants' perceptions of their anger in other close relationships and participants' awareness of factors influencing anger in their romantic relationships. See Appendix E for the Interview Guide.

Post-interview Demographic Questionnaire

At the end of the interview, I asked participants to complete a demographic questionnaire including 12 questions. The questionnaire asked participants about their age and their partner's age, their race and whether they were Latina or Hispanic, which university they attended, their major, and their year in college or graduate school. In order to collect socioeconomic status

information, the questionnaire included questions regarding mothers' and fathers' educational level, and the annual income of participants' family of origin. See Appendix D for the Post-Interview Demographic Questionnaire.

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study in order to test the questions included in the semi-structured interview. Two female graduate students involved in heterosexual romantic relationships helped me pilot test the questions included in the interview guide. I asked pilot participants to comment on the content of the questions, their level of comfort in answering the questions, and the usefulness of the questions in getting to the research question. I also asked pilot participants to provide any other feedback to improve the quality of the guiding questions.

I made a few adjustments to the questions in the interview guide considering the comments from participants in the pilot study. For example, one of the pilot participants indicated having a difficult time understanding and answering the question "How do you usually feel about feeling angry in this romantic relationship?" The pilot participant suggested I could, instead, ask participants what they liked and disliked about their anger in the romantic relationship. Although I decided to leave the open question in the interview guide ("How do you usually feel about feeling angry in this romantic relationship?"), I added two questions following the pilot participant's advice. The two questions I added were: "What do you dislike the most about your anger in this relationship?" and "What do you like the most about your anger in this relationship?"

Data Analysis Process

I analyzed the 24 transcribed interviews using a grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Below, I describe the processes of open, axial and theoretical coding conducted on the data (Charmaz, 2006; Holton, 2007; Kelle, 2007).

Open Coding

Open coding included three rounds of reading, reviewing, and reacting to the transcripts of the interviews based on the research questions, the theoretical framework, the literature, and my and my dissertation chair's subjectivities (Charmaz, 2006; Holton, 2007). First, I conducted an open coding round. Second, my dissertation chair conducted open coding on the transcripts already coded by me. My dissertation chair made comments on the data, but also raised questions about my codes based on the theoretical framework and the research questions of the study. Third, I conducted another round of open coding based on the two previous rounds of coding.

Axial Coding

After the three rounds of open coding, I started the process of identifying the main themes that emerged in the interviews in relation to the research questions and applied them to the data (Charmaz, 2006). This process included reviewing all the comments and initial codes that resulted from the rounds of open coding, determining which of them spoke to the research questions, and attempting different groupings that best answered how women do and undo gender in relation to their anger in romantic relationships. I developed three coding schemes that were reviewed and discussed in consultation with my dissertation chair, before agreeing on a fourth coding scheme which we agreed best captured participants' perspectives and the nature of this feminist research project.

I developed the first coding scheme through a series of questions derived from the research and interview questions and a list of the answers found in the codes resulting from the open coding process (See Appendix F). The first coding scheme included 11 categories, each containing 2 to 8 ways in which participants explicitly responded or provided descriptions to a particular topic. This first coding scheme was predominantly descriptive and kept very closely to the data itself. In consultation with my dissertation chair, I evaluated this coding scheme in terms of its capacity to answer questions about doing gender and undoing gender. Although this scheme summarized participants' perceptions of their relationships and their anger expressions, it said little about how these descriptions spoke to young women doing and undoing gender in relation to their anger in romantic relationships.

I generated the second coding scheme through the development of tables aimed at encouraging a higher level interpretation of the findings from the open coding process, such that the feminist perspective, essential to the research project, started to show up in the coding scheme. I completed a total of 10 tables. The tables captured the following themes: anger narrative, anger stories, anger process, anger change, anger in current romantic relationship, change in anger through different romantic relationships, anger expression, anger issues, and awareness of gender affecting anger. As a result of the completion of the tables and through evaluation with my chair, I developed a second coding scheme including fewer and more interpretative categories. The second coding scheme (Appendix G) included 5 categories each including 2 to 4 sub-categories.

In the third coding scheme I condensed the information collected from the analysis into a fewer number of meaningful categories centered on the main topics of interest to the research questions: young women's self in romantic relationships, young women's anger in romantic

relationships, and trajectories of change in narratives of self and anger throughout the interview. The third coding scheme (Appendix H) included 3 categories and a total of 8 sub-categories.

I reevaluated this third coding scheme as I started applying it to the data. For example, in the process of coding the data using the sub-categories ("I am the boss, but I wish he was", "We are pretty even, but I am dependent", and "He has a little more power, but she describes self as equal") in the 200 category, "Women's narratives of anger in romantic relationships", some cases fit one part of a sub-category, but did not fit the second part of the description corresponding to the same sub-category. Therefore, I decided to go back to the initial differentiation of codes into multiple smaller categories, although keeping in mind the main questions for the project, which referred to young women doing and undoing gender in relation to anger in romantic relationships.

The final coding scheme attends to the detailed differences between participants and to the ideas of doing and undoing gender. See Table 1 for the final coding scheme. This coding scheme contains 5 categories and 16 sub-categories. Out of the five categories, the first one refers to women's power in romantic relationships and the other four categories capture different components of women's anger (i.e., relation to anger, anger triggers, meaning making of anger, and anger expression). I constructed each of the sub-categories by a constant comparison process where common identified characteristics were confirmed through reviewing the raw data in the transcripts, and those common characteristics were refined as a result of this process. At the end, for each of the categories, I built a table including criteria for each sub-category and participants who fit such criteria.

Table 1

Final Coding Scheme

Dimension	Category	Sub-categories
Power	Women's Power	I share power, consistent
		I share power, inconsistent
		I have too much power, inconsistent
		I don't have enough power, inconsistent
Anger	Relation to anger	Accepting anger
		Distancing from anger
		Denying anger
	Triggers for anger	Mostly non-gendered triggers
		Gendered and non-gendered triggers
		Mostly gendered triggers
	Meaning making of anger	Shared responsibility
		Ambivalence
		His fault
		My fault
	Anger expression	Kept in or expressed indirectly
		Expressed outwardly and directly

Out of the four anger categories, the category "Triggers for women's anger in romantic relationships" was constructed following a multi-step process. First, I consolidated a list of all codes resulting from the process of open coding related to anger triggers. Second, I grouped codes from this list according to similarities among them. For example, I grouped as "Woman doing more household chores than boyfriend" a description of a woman picking up a towel for her boyfriend on repeated occasions and a description of a woman doing the dishes all the time. Once I grouped all codes for anger triggers, I classified the groups of triggers as gendered triggers or non-gendered triggers. I classified as gendered triggers those groups of codes that fit traditional gender roles or gendered norms of behavior in relationships. On the contrary, I classified as non-gendered triggers those that did not clearly fit traditional gendered behaviors of

young women or men in romantic relationships. With these classifications, I coded each of the

anger events described by participants in their interviews according to the coding group (for

example, "Woman doing more household chores than boyfriend") and whether the group was

considered a gendered or non-gendered anger trigger. Finally, I coded participants' narratives

according to whether most anger triggers in their interviews were non-gendered triggers (code

301), most anger triggers in their interviews were gendered triggers (code 303), or participants

described an equal number of gendered and non-gendered triggers (code 302).

I used a similar multi-step process in the construction of the categories "Women's

relation to their anger in romantic relationships" and "Women's anger expression in romantic

relationships". In each sub-category for these two categories I grouped participants who

predominantly (i.e., in the majority of the interview, or in most anger events described in the

interview) engaged in one type of relation to anger or one type of anger expression. In this way,

I took into account the different anger events described during the interview. The sub-category

assigned to a participant's narrative corresponded to the predominant way the participant related

to anger and the predominant way the participant expressed her anger.

Theoretical Coding

In order to further answer the research questions, I used theoretical coding to identify an

emerging theory explaining young women's anger in romantic relationships as a result of the

relation between different categories and sub-categories (Charmaz, 2006; Holton, 2007; Kelle,

2007). I compared participants' sub-categories for the five categories for similarities and

differences. As a result, four types of participants displaying similarities across sub-categories

were identified: Undoing gender; Doing gender, but not completely; Struggling with undoing

gender; and Mixing undoing and doing gender. The construction of these four types

corresponded also to a theoretical understanding of the data and the codes in terms of what

constitutes doing and undoing gender in terms of power and anger.

The processes of open, axial, and theoretical coding indicate an emerging theory of young

women's anger in romantic relationships from a feminist perspective. This emerging theory

proposes understanding young women do and undo anger in romantic relationships in four

distinct ways: Undoing gender; Doing gender, but not completely; Struggling with undoing

gender, and Mixing doing and undoing gender. See Table 2 for a summary of the groupings into

types. The theory also indicates young women's anger in romantic relationships can be better

understood taking into account two dimensions: women's power in romantic relationships and

women's anger in romantic relationships. Within these two dimensions, the emerging theory

suggests understanding women's power in romantic relationships considering both women's

perceptions of their power (i.e., first person narrative) and women's descriptions of their power

(i.e., third person observations). Regarding women's anger in romantic relationships, the

emerging theory proposes considering different elements of anger (relation to anger, triggers for

anger, meaning making of anger, and anger expression) and their variability within participants'

narratives. In the following chapter, I describe the emerging theory and provide examples from

participants' interviews that illustrate each type, category and sub-category constituting this

emerging theory.

Table 2

Emerging Theory of Young Women's Anger in Romantic Relationships

Type	*n*	Women's Power	Relation to Anger	Triggers for Anger	Meaning Making of Anger	Anger Expression
Undoing gender	5	I share power, consistent	Accepting anger	Mostly non-gendered triggers	Shared responsibility	Expressed outwardly and directly
Doing gender, but not completely	14	I share power, inconsistent *or* I don't have enough power, inconsistent	Distancing from anger *or* Denying anger	Mostly gendered triggers	Ambivalence	Kept in or expressed indirectly
Struggling with undoing gender	4	I have too much power, inconsistent	Varied	Varied	His fault	Varied
Mixing undoing and doing gender	1	I share power, consistent	Distancing from anger	Gendered and non-gendered triggers	Ambivalence	Kept in or expressed indirectly

Ensuring Research Quality

In order to guarantee the quality of the analysis and research findings in this study, I used

two main strategies: memo-writing and reflexivity. Memo-writing involves writing down ideas

that emerge in the process of analyzing the data, such that the researcher is engaged in a constant

analytic mode of comparing, contrasting, relating, and theorizing (Charmaz, 2006, 2007).

I wrote memos during open, axial, and theoretical coding to (a) make comparisons

between data, codes, and sub-categories, (b) define criteria for categories and sub-categories, and

(c) interrogate sub-categories, categories, coding schemes, and the emerging theory (Charmaz,

2006). For example, to check the sub-categories of power I made memos that allowed me to identify the two elements that defined the sub-categories (perceptions of women's power, and consistency), and the differences between those elements ("perceptions of women's power" as participants' first person perspectives, and "consistency" as consistency between "perceptions of women's power" and my interpretation of participants descriptions of their power in romantic relationships).

As in any other qualitative research process, reflexivity is key as the researcher is the main instrument of the research process (Creswell, 2002). Reflexivity refers to the process by which the researcher examines her positioning toward the subject of study, the research questions, the participants, the interviewing process, the coding, the analysis, and the writing (Mruck & Mey, 2007). This practice involves reflecting on how the subjectivity of the researcher influences her approach to the data.

To practice reflexivity, I wrote a reflexivity statement previous to data collection. The process of writing the reflexivity statement allowed me to connect more strongly with the theoretical framework of the study, as I identified my anger in my couple relationship as a place where I resist gender, as opposed to my anger in other close relationships where I predominantly do gender. I continued to practice reflexivity during the process of analyzing and reporting on the data. For example, I made sure to double check for cultural differences, prejudices, and stereotypes as a researcher from a different culture than that of most research participants. I also had to be critical of my coding and reporting on women who had more power in their romantic relationships, as I often identified with them.

Apart from memo-writing and reflexivity, I used a second coder and consultant (my dissertation chair) to further ensure the quality of the qualitative analyses. Written

communication and discussions with the second coder helped me challenge my interpretations

and consider different perspectives in the coding processes. For example, during the open

coding, I often found myself identifying more frequently excerpts of the interviews where

participants were doing gender in relation to anger in their romantic relationships. The second

coder provided a good contrast as she more frequently noticed places where participants were

undoing gender. Having both perspectives during the process of open coding assured I paid

attention to both doing and undoing gender, such that both processes are reflected in the

categories, sub-categories and the emerging theory.

Chapter 4: Findings

The analysis of the 24 in-depth interviews in this study resulted in a grounded theory of young women's anger in romantic relationships. The theory suggests the processes of doing and undoing gender influence young women's power and young women's anger in romantic relationships in particular ways. The combination of such influences of doing and undoing gender in women's power and women's anger results in four different ways in which young women do and undo gender in relation to their anger in romantic relationships.

In the following pages I describe the five different coding categories resulting from this qualitative analysis (women's power, women's relation to their anger, triggers for women's anger, women's meaning making of anger, and women's anger expression) and provide examples from the interviews to illustrate each of the 16 sub-categories. I begin with the description of the sub-categories related to women's power in romantic relationships and continue with the description of the sub-categories related to women's anger in romantic relationships. In the second part of this chapter, I provide an explanation of the types of participants in terms of how they relate to power and anger in romantic relationships, such that they undo, do, or struggle with gender.

Young Women's Power in Romantic Relationships

The grounded theory analysis yielded a category of young women's power in romantic relationships comprised of two dimensions: (a) perception of power and (b) consistency. The first dimension, perception of power, corresponds to participants' explicit statements about the distribution of power in their romantic relationships. This dimension captures a first-person perspective, that is, how women in the interview perceived themselves as having equal, more, or less power than their boyfriends. This dimension refers to power as a resource distributed between romantic partners which provides young women and men the possibility of influencing

each other in the processes of (a) decision making, (b) distribution of tasks, and (c) emotional work (Allen, 2011a). The second dimension, consistency, identifies the consistency or inconsistency between women's perceptions of power (the first dimension) and my interpretation, as the researcher, of women's power in romantic relationships from participants' descriptions of themselves, their boyfriends, and their relationships at different points during the interview. This second dimension identifies both power as a resource and power as the ability of young women to self-determine themselves and be autonomous (Allen, 2011a).

In my analysis, I found that there are six possible codes resulting from the interaction of these two dimensions: (a) I share power, consistent; (b) I share power, inconsistent; (c) I have too much power, consistent; (d) I have too much power, inconsistent; (e) I don't have enough power, consistent; and (f) I don't have enough power, inconsistent. However, only four codes were identified among the group of participants included in this study. See Table 3 for the six possible codes resulting from the interaction of the dimensions perception of power and consistency, and the frequency with which they appeared among the participants.

Table 3

Sub-categories for Young Women's Power in Romantic Relationships (N=24)

Perceptions of Power	Consistent	Inconsistent
I share power	6	12
I have too much power	0	4
I don't have enough power	0	2

I Share Power, Consistent

Young women in this group perceived themselves as having as much power as their romantic partners, and their descriptions during the interview were consistent with this perception. Out of the 24 participants, 6 women fit this sub-category.

These young women described an equal distribution of power in their romantic relationships. Some young women described sharing power as the absence of one partner overpowering the other. Rachel stated, "I really feel like we share power. I have never felt like he was overpowering me or anything like that. And I don't feel like I do that to him. It's kind of just mutual." In a similar way, Patricia expressed, "I don't think one person is in charge or has final say or anything like that." And Meredith explained equal power in her relationship as, "We are pretty, I'll say evenly matched, I guess. Like neither one of us would like bully the other one."

Kim and Layla described equal power in positive terms rather than the absence of one partner overpowering the other. Kim described sharing power as each partner having power in different areas, "In certain areas I'll have more power, in certain areas he'll have more power. But overall I think it's pretty even." Layla used a metaphor to explain how both partners were leaders, "Well, occasionally I am the *sous chef*. I feel like most of the times it's the two of us working together on things. But if someone is going to be *sous chef*, it's usually me."

The five young women in the sub-category "I Share Power, Consistent" not only talked about themselves sharing power with their boyfriends, but their descriptions throughout the interview were consistent with this perception. These women portrayed themselves as confident and independent; described decision-making in their romantic relationships as negotiation; and exhibited awareness about traditional gender roles.

Women under this sub-category displayed independence and confidence. For example, Kim narrated how she is the same in social situations regardless of her boyfriend's presence, "What I've noticed with myself and Matt is that we don't really change too much when we are either together in a situation or apart in a situation and I've had people tell me that too." A few minutes later Kim added, "I've changed over the years. In the last eight years, anyways, with or without him."

Others, like Patricia and Layla, described themselves as holding different beliefs and values than those of their boyfriends and defending their beliefs and values through arguments and discussion. Patricia spent some time in the interview expressing her concern for the "different philosophies" she and her boyfriend have. Nowhere in this narration did Patricia doubt her beliefs or expressed her boyfriend's beliefs as being superior. Evidence of Patricia's confidence in her "life philosophy" is the following statement, "I tend to be more like seeing from both sides kind of thing whereas he tends to be like 'oh, well, this is clearly wrong' and like 'what are you thinking? No, there's two sides to this news story'."

In a similar fashion, Layla described two instances in which she argued with her boyfriend because each of them had opposing views on a particular subject. As Layla said,

> He went online and he was researching Rainbow and he was "you know this is a cult?" and I was like "no, it's not." And so we got into this huge fight, him telling me that it was a cult and him being mad at me because I said it wasn't a cult. And I was mad at him for trying to tell me about a club I've been in for 10 years; I was like "I'm pretty sure I know better than you."

Although later in the interview Layla described how she looked up the definition of cult and understood her boyfriend's position, that did not stop her from continuing to be a member of

Rainbow. Even more, Layla narrated how she and her boyfriend traveled to a Rainbow

conference a few days after that argument.

In terms of decision-making, participants in this sub-category spoke about this process as

a negotiation where both partners had equal say. Rachel described decision-making in her

romantic relationship as a "process of elimination",

> Usually we would just ask each other what we were hungry for and we ask the other one
>
> where they want to go and if they say they didn't care we would come up with two or
>
> three ideas and eliminate from there.

Likewise, Kim used "persuasion" to explain the process of decision-making in her romantic

relationship. Kim said, "As far as big decisions go if we have disagreeing points I'll usually

persuade him to my side of the story or he will persuade me to his side of the story and it usually

works out." In a similar way, Meredith described how she and her boyfriend decide together

who would make decisions on different issues depending on their interests,

> We like to take things and kind of say this is yours, you make the decisions on it. Like
>
> dealing with the wedding, if there's something he's particularly interested in I would say
>
> to him "you deal with it," "do what you want." And he's done the same for me, which
>
> has been nice.

An additional way in which women in this sub-category exhibited consistency between

their perception and their descriptions of the distribution of power in their relationships was

through their discussions of traditional gender roles. Two of the three participants who

cohabitated with their partners at the time of the interview expressed a high level of awareness

about the division of labor in their relationships. Kim shared her temporary deal with her

boyfriend while she is in graduate school,

> We have a deal because I like it to be even. When we first moved in together it was
> really difficult because he will never do the dishes, he will never do his laundry on time
> and things like that. So he pays more utilities than I do, especially because he has a job,
> like I'm just a PhD student so I don't get too much money.

Similarly, Meredith talked about multiple arrangements with her partner as they have been in
different job/school situations through the years,

> When we both worked full time we pretty much split everything equally, we were very
> much like everything is down the middle. And he made more money. I was doing more
> housework a little bit and he was having to come home later. But now it's completely
> flip flopped because grad school, he doesn't make as much as a full time job. So like I'm
> trying that out too, see what it's like to kind of make the most money.

I Share Power, Inconsistent

Twelve out of 24 participants fit the criteria for the "I Share Power, Inconsistent" sub-
category. Women in this sub-category stated they share power with their boyfriends, but their
descriptions of self, other, and relational processes through the interview did not match their
perception of equal power. Young women in this group exhibited ambivalence regarding
dependence on their boyfriends, compromised more than their boyfriends in the relationship,
placed their boyfriends in a higher or more central position than themselves, and narrated
contradictory accounts of decision-making in their romantic relationships.

Brittany expressed her perception of sharing power by saying, "It's very balanced. I feel
like if I would say someone makes more decisions, it should be a little bit more…it's just very
balanced." Haley stated, "He doesn't look down at me because I am a female, at all. It's really

even for everything. I don't really think that there is even roles other than caring for each other, but we both do that." Likewise, Cindy spoke about equal power in her relationship,

> Overall I would say we have equal power, it's just in some ways he takes on that male role where like I am a woman I would like him to open the door. Kind of gentleman kind of things is more so than the male dominant thing. But overall I think we are both very equal in the relationship.

Participants in this sub-category displayed ambivalent accounts of independence and dependence on their boyfriends. Brittany spoke about "interdependence" as her favorite thing in the relationship, however, during the interview she verbalized, "It will be hard to imagine him not in my life at this point." Cindy also contradicted herself as she first expressed, "I'm a pretty independent person." A few minutes later she said, "I know that I can take care of myself but I want someone who wants to take care of me." In a similar fashion, Diane expressed, "It's just nice to have someone there to take care of some things for you so instead of being completely independent."

Participants in this group usually compromised more than did their boyfriends. For example, when describing situations where Sarah was angry at her boyfriend, Sarah spoke of a time where she experienced lack of reciprocity in the relationship. Sarah related,

> During graduation week, I guess what made me kind of upset was my family was here and I spent a lot of time hanging out with him and his family in the graduation type of party thing. And then the next day my family wanted to go downtown and he wasn't with his, his family had already left. And he didn't really want to. He wanted to go downtown with his friends, and he wouldn't stop by for a drink.

Haley also verbalized her boyfriend's lack of reciprocity as she spoke of his inability to

compromise when making plans for the week,

> He doesn't realize that his decisions for the next week impact me too because I want to
>
> spend time with him and maybe he has already planned to do something else for the rest
>
> of the week and I am like "oh, ok, I will see you later."

Another characteristic of young women in this sub-category was they placed their

boyfriends in a higher or more central position than themselves. Although this trait was common

to the 12 young women in this group, it was more explicit in the narratives of the three Asian

women than in the narratives of the non-Asian women. Alisha, Saliha, and Chen talked about

their romantic partners as if referring to a parent or a teacher in the position to correct, scold,

advise, and teach them.

Alisha provided the following response when asked about what she likes the most about

her romantic relationship,

> It's like having someone around always. Someone to respect you, to respect your
>
> decisions. To make you feel happy and to let you know what you're doing wrong so that
>
> you can improve. But not in a harsh way; in a sweet way.

Similarly, Saliha expressed her preference for this romantic relationship in comparison to

previous ones because although her boyfriend corrects her he does it in a "positive way." In

Saliha's words,

> He says that I'm very immature, like, because I'm a single child of my parents so I have
>
> been pampered a lot all these years. He says "you have very childish attitudes about a lot
>
> of things." So, he doesn't take it in a negative way. He considers it okay, like he always
>
> makes me understand things in a very positive way. It's not like some of my school

friends that used to just shout at me about "you are 24 and you are grown up now and you

never know how to react." But he is certainly not in that way. He handles me like very

well.

Chen also spoke of her boyfriend as one in a higher position as she referred to him as a teacher

and an advisor at different times during the interview. Chen talked about learning how to

manage money from her boyfriend, "But for Southern part of Chinese they are very careful about

budget, they are very cautious about details. So I become more and more careful about details

because I learn from him." Later in the interview, Chen introduced the idea of respect for her

boyfriend because of his age, "So I just listen to his advice some times because I sometimes

think he is older than me I should give respect to him."

Non-Asian women in this group also placed their boyfriends in a higher or more central

position than themselves. For example, Diane attributed most responsibility for her positive

personal change to her boyfriend's influence and neglected her own.

He's really helped me be able to be assertive, like respectfully assertive and realize that I

am, you know, competent and I can be a leader and I can do these huge things that I want

to do and that I shouldn't discourage myself to do them. And he's also helped me out

with my anxiety like I don't have it anymore. It's not even a problem. And I'm much

more relaxed, no matter how much stress I'm under I handle it a lot better because he's

helped me out with that a lot.

Young women in this group also exhibited inconsistency between perceptions and

descriptions of power in that they contradicted themselves as they illustrated decision-making

processes in their romantic relationships. Kathy exhibited such contradictions. When asked

about how she and her boyfriend make decisions, Kathy stated, "Normally, together. And then if

someone has a strong opinion on it we try to work from there. But we try to make our decisions together." However, later in the interview Kathy narrated a situation where she appeared to compromise much more than her boyfriend. First, Kathy expressed, "I like that our personalities are not completely the same but sometimes I would like it more if he liked it more to stay in more often, I guess." Then Kathy narrated,

> I think right now the most present [trigger] is my class schedule has been changing a lot. So he had set a night out. He usually goes out one night during the week and he used to come home at one time. And it was not something that we set, "okay, you'll be home at this time." But then recently, since he's made more friends at work, he sometimes stays out later.

From the way Kathy described the situation it seems like at first, she did not agree completely with the idea of her boyfriend spending as much time out on his own and then, once they came to an agreement on how many days and how long he would stay out, her boyfriend did not abide by the agreement.

Haley also demonstrated a contradictory description of the process of decision-making in her relationship. When asked about decision-making in her relationship, Haley started by saying, "Everything is shared pretty evenly. Most people think that the man is the masculine one and the girl is the emotional one, but I am never emotional." Then Haley went on to describe,

> Most of the time I would prefer him to pick, but he makes me pick some of the times…I would only say he has more power because I want him to pick things. I want him to be happy. I'm happy just sitting here talking, but him…I don't think most people are happy just sitting and talking. I much rather him pick what would make him happy.

I Have Too Much Power, Inconsistent

Four out of 24 participants in this study fit the criteria for "I Have Too Much Power, Inconsistent". These four participants perceived themselves as having more power than their boyfriends in the relationships, but expressed some level of discomfort with this distribution of power. In addition, young women in this group described themselves, their boyfriends, and the relationship in ways that were inconsistent with their perceptions of power.

Young women in this sub-category declared having more power in the relationship than their boyfriends, while at the same time expressed discomfort with this situation. Emily exhibited a minimal level of discomfort with having more power than her boyfriend, as she minimized the difference in power and strove to portray the relationship as egalitarian. In her narration, Emily stated, "I think I might be the person who makes more of the decisions." She later said,

> I feel like we share [power] pretty evenly. I don't want to do anything that would make him unhappy or he wouldn't want to for me. And I don't think that either of us are really controlling... May be I am a little more controlling, but not in a big way. Just kind of if I'm really opposed to something, then I'll say it.

Lily appeared to experience greater discomfort with having more power than her boyfriend in the relationship. Lily's choice of words during the interview exhibit her predominance in the relationship, while at the same time justify this type of distribution and Lily's desire to make it seem as equal. At one point in the interview Lily expressed,

> I would say prior to our breakup it was more so me making the decisions, just because, I guess, I have a more outgoing personality than even he does. He is just very easy to get along with and once we make a decision, or once I express I want to do something, then he is ok with whatever it is. But after we broke up, since I guess we had a little more

time to be independent, he was able to just build his own opinion and express it more.

Now …I let him make more of the decisions, more than just me, just because sometimes I

am pretty indecisive so he makes the decisions pretty well for us.

Francesca stated both her perception of having more power than her boyfriend and her

discomfort with this unequal distribution of power in a direct way. Regarding her power in the

relationship Francesca declared,

I think I'm kind of the boss. I make a lot of the decisions. And I'll do a lot of things to

make him happy and my mom always jokes that I'm like a people-pleaser because I

always want other people to be happy. So like I'd do a lot of things to make him happy

but if it comes down to it, you know, I'm the one who decides. I call the shots, I guess.

At another point in the interview, Francesca expressed her desire for her boyfriend to have more

power than her in the relationship. Francesca stated,

I don't like that he never corrects me. That should be something that I like, but I can

recognize when I'm doing something wrong but I wish he would say it sometimes. I wish

he would say like "don't do that" or "I don't like that".

Finally, Shelley displayed awareness of the contradiction in terms of power in her

romantic relationship. Shelley was aware she made more decisions and controlled financial

issues. She even expressed liking the control she had over her boyfriend's life,

Like am I very clearly being the parent and kind of managing his life for him and not

giving him enough responsibility or like I don't want him to be in a state of arrested

development just because genuinely, yes, I enjoy taking care of all the household

finances, so I do it.

However, when asked about power Shelley expressed feeling burdened, lacking freedom, and having more responsibility. When asked whether she perceived herself as having more power in the relationship than her boyfriend Shelley replied, "I feel I have more responsibility." And to a follow up question about whether more responsibility gives her more or less power Shelley expressed,

> Well, it gives me less freedom. So kind of going back to that overprotective dad is like many times I feel like the parent and he's like the child. Whereas I know that is not healthy for me to feel so guilty about not taking personal time, he feels no guilt what so ever about taking like all the personal time in the world.

> Young women in this group not only expressed having more power and disliking it, but their descriptions throughout the interview were inconsistent with their perception of having more power than their boyfriends in the relationship. These participants displayed one or more of the following characteristics: (a) described themselves as independent from their boyfriends, (b) described their boyfriends as incapable in one or more ways, and (c) narrated their relationships in terms of a struggle for power and control.

> Participants in the "I Have Too Much Power, Inconsistent" group displayed independence from their boyfriends. For example, Emily spoke of her disagreement with her boyfriend drinking when underage. Emily mentioned, "I guess him out drinking seemed not very…it just wasn't attractive that he wanted to do that." And later Emily explained how she thought of having a "relationship talk" with him because of this difference in values,

> He would just say "why is it such a big deal to you?" And finally he went and when he was actually there I was pretty mad and I was like if he does anything I am going to I

don't know what I will do, I was thinking I would have a relationship talk with him. But

then he came back and said he didn't do anything.

In a different way, Francesca displayed independence from her boyfriend as she talked about the

future of the relationship. In contrast to other participants who expressed they could not see

themselves without their boyfriend in their lives, Francesca stated,

I don't think that we are going to date for all of college or anything. Because I really

want to make sure I do it right and don't like end up regretting so I want to make sure that

we date other people and if we decide we want to get back together then I think that

would be good. But I think we need to try out other things.

Most women in this sub-category described their boyfriends as lacking confidence or the

capacity to be independent. For example, Lily explained how her boyfriend went from being

non-confident to gaining some confidence,

Since he was more of a shy person he was never really sure of what to do or what to say,

I guess. His confidence wasn't as high as it is now. So, after we broke up, it was

basically a time for him to just be on his own and build his confidence up. And then after

that, when we decided to get back together, I saw that he was more confident. That's

why he would make more decisions now and he would express his opinion more.

Likewise, Francesca shared her view about dependence in the relationship, "One difference now

is he's a little dependent on me, kind of, I think. Like emotionally or I don't know. Whereas I'm

not so much dependent on him."

Shelley described how her boyfriend depends on her for some tasks. For example, she

told the following story,

He's not comfortable making executive decisions about things, so I can say "hey, take the car for services and run diagnostics and see what needs to be done and we'll take care of it" and he'd be like "well, I rather you go with me so that we can talk about what to do" and I'm like "you know I trust, I absolutely trust you and you can go do it" and he'd be like "I'd feel more comfortable if you're with me. So you need to come with me" it's like "I have other things to do this afternoon, I cannot come out to Christiansburg to see the car, you know".

Finally, relational narratives of women in this sub-category focused on power and control struggles. These young women think they control many important tasks in the relationship, but they also indicated that their boyfriends exercise power and control by their resistance and inaction. In Shelley's interview the struggle for power and control came up repeatedly, such that at one point in the interview Shelley narrated,

I mean even on just a time to time basis where if I'm really swamped and if I have a big deadline like within two weeks and there are just a couple kind of miscellaneous house cleaning sort of tasks, it's like you need to call the bank and do this, you need to call renter's insurance and do this. It's just like little tasks that it will just take like 20 minutes to do each one and I want to be able…I want him to be able to do those instead of saying "but you're the one who does that, so you should still do it."

In Lily's story the struggle for power and control is evident as Lily spoke of "yelling to be heard" throughout the interview. Lily explained it in the following terms,

He just goes with the flow, but sometimes when I need to say something to him, just because of how he is, he doesn't seem to take it as seriously if I am having like troubles

with him. So, sometimes the only way that I get through to him is like if I actually show

that I am getting angry or upset over something that is going on.

I Don't Have Enough Power, Inconsistent

The final two women in the sample were identified as, inconsistently, perceiving

themselves without enough power. These two women talked about a traditional narrative of a

hierarchical gender structure for the couple and the family where the men should have more

power and the women should have less. However, they displayed some level of discomfort or

disagreement with such a hierarchical arrangement. Even more, the two participants in this

group described themselves in the relationship in ways that were inconsistent with their

perception of power. Regarding women's statements about their power in the relationship,

Olivia expressed,

> I would definitely say I'm not the leader. I would say he is the leader in the relationship.
>
> Even though I don't really like that because I don't really believe there should really be a
>
> leader in the relationship, but I think it just has to be because you can't have two people
>
> leading, I don't think. I definitely let him make the big calls, but I definitely if he does
>
> something that I don't agree with or if he makes me mad I don't hesitate in telling him
>
> how I feel or anything like that.

In this statement Olivia illustrated her belief that she has less power than her boyfriend and the

fact that "things should be that way." However, in this same excerpt Olivia mentioned her

disagreement and her doubts regarding this traditional distribution of power according to gender,

as well as her actions to not let him have all the power in the relationship.

In a similar fashion, Kelly spoke of her boyfriend as the leader in the romantic

relationship,

> He's very supportive and wants to kind of steer the ship in positive ways. And that was
>
> hard for me at first to let go and to trust him to do that just because I never wanted to trust
>
> anyone to do that. But he really has shown that he really can and he really wants to,
>
> genuinely, and so he has turned kind of into the leader of our little group.

Kelly's description includes both a statement of men as leaders, but also her ambivalence in

changing from a woman who was independent and self-sufficient to one who is adjusting to

religious and regional beliefs of women as having a secondary position as compared to men.

During the interview Olivia and Kelly contradicted their statements about their

boyfriends having more power in the relationship through their descriptions of specific events in

the relationship. Olivia started out the interview with statements where she put herself down and

placed her boyfriend in a higher position. For example, Olivia talked about herself in the

relationship as "impulsive and kind of impatient," and added, "I think that I am definitely the

more insecure one. He's very confident. He knows exactly what he wants. And I think I'm still

maturing and figuring what's it all about."

As the interview progressed Olivia related events within the relationship that portrayed

Olivia having a lot of power in the relationship. For example, Olivia seemed to have the power

to have her boyfriend change his emotion at once,

> He can be really harsh but as soon as he realizes like something is wrong like he might be
>
> doing something that's really mean or inconsiderate, when he realizes I'm upset about it
>
> then immediately he flip-flops. It's really weird and he'll be like really sorry and he'll be
>
> like 'I didn't mean that' and like 'I didn't mean to upset you', 'I won't do that again'.
>
> And it's really weird like my friends have commented on it because he'll do something

really stupid and I'll be like 'how can anyone think that that's okay?' and then as soon as

he figures out it upset you is like he really didn't know and he just gets very apologetic.

Olivia also appeared to have the power to make her boyfriend believe he was wrong when he

was not, such that, at one point in the interview she declared, "I guess the thing I like is I'm a

better arguer. So even if it's my fault I usually convince him that it was his."

Kelly also contradicted herself throughout the interview. First, Kelly talked about her

process of growing up as letting go of the control and power she had in the relationship, as it was

her new ideal to be the follower and let her boyfriend be the leader. Kelly expressed,

> As we have both grown up more out of high school and as we have figured out where we
>
> wanted to be and where we are going and as I kind of let go of my…I guess I would call
>
> it an insecurity that I developed, I definitely still have it and he has been there for me
>
> helping me and other people of course and also being away from home and being around
>
> other people, especially in the southern culture where men are in the lead, it really has
>
> helped me let go off control, I guess. So he's definitely become the leader.

However, Kelly's detailed stories of events in the relationship exhibit her as having a lot of

power. Kelly expressed feeling empowered to tell her boyfriend right away what bothers her.

For example, Kelly narrated,

> He does some things; he goes into his own world. He is working on building a computer
>
> right now. And so he's getting into all the different parts but like for three days he was
>
> like lost in it. He didn't want to talk about anything else. Which I mean, he would, but
>
> you could sense he was very disinterested; he was into putting the parts together. And so
>
> there came a point where I said 'you know I'm really excited for you. But lately you've
>
> been interrupting me and when I say something you won't even recognize that I said it.

So it's really starting to tick me off and it's making me feel like you don't care about

what I'm thinking.'

Similarly, Kelly related how she talked to her boyfriend about stopping putting her down while

playing a game of cards with her grandparents,

And so I said "you know, please don't do this. I know that you don't intend to but I

really, it does really upset me so please don't do it," beforehand, to try to be more

preventive about it but then during the moment he was still doing it. So finally during the

card game I just said "stop!" and I just said it out loud "you know, just stop" and so he

verbally apologized right then and there.

Women's Relation to Their Anger in Romantic Relationships

Young women's relation to their anger in romantic relationships was of three types. Nine

participants exhibited acceptance of anger in their romantic relationships, 13 participants

distanced themselves from their anger, and 2 participants denied feeling angry. In the following

pages I describe the three distinct ways in which young women related to their anger in the

interviews and provide examples for each of them.

Accepting Anger

Nine women in the sample displayed acceptance of anger in how they spoke about their

experience of this emotion in their current romantic relationship. When asked about their anger,

participants in this group were not afraid to use the words "anger" and "angry" in their answers.

For example, Olivia stated,

Most of the times when I get angry at him it's because I feel I have to kind of compete or

something…I feel a lot of times my anger stems from like he puts others, he thinks of

others before he thinks about me.

From this first time Olivia was asked about anger until the end of the interview she refrained from using labels that softened her experience of angry feelings.

Layla also spoke openly about her anger from the beginning to the end of the interview. To the first question about anger, "What can you tell me about your anger?" Layla responded,

Well, the couple of times I've gotten really angry at him once he realizes how angry at him I am then he gets really upset that he has made me angry at him and then I feel bad for making him upset like "no, don't worry, it's okay."

When describing specific incidents in which she felt angry at her boyfriend, Layla used the word "mad." Layla expressed, "I was so mad I threw my drink in his face," in explaining her emotion when her boyfriend told her secret when in a drinking game with friends. Layla also used the word mad, when narrating an argument with her partner in regards to a group she belongs to. Layla declared, "We were both mad at each other then."

Distancing from Anger

Thirteen participants distanced themselves from their anger. During the interview, some women changed the wording such that when asked about their anger, they stated their answer in terms of feeling upset, irritated, or frustrated at their partners. Lily, for example, softened the wording of the questions about anger by saying: "Sometimes I just get fed up to a point where I have to…it's not necessarily anger but, well, it's more like being upset." During the interview, Patricia asked if it was fine to talk about her frustration at her boyfriend by saying: "My anger. Hm…I do get a little bit frustrated. Does frustrated count as anger?" And a few minutes later when I persisted in asking about her anger, Patricia had difficulties in identifying a situation where she felt angry. Similarly, Sarah used feeling "irritated" and being "upset" predominantly in her description of events when asked about anger scenarios in her current relationship.

A second strategy used by young women to distance themselves from their anger was describing their anger as not frequent or not too intense. Saliha spoke about not getting angry very frequently, "I usually don't get angry." And Emily stated, "I don't usually get that angry. Only once or twice that I can really remember." Cindy distanced herself from her anger by expressing, "It takes a lot to make me angry."

Finally, women also distanced from their anger as their narratives focused on expressing anger in a calm way and keeping it under control. Haley is a good example of how "being calm" was the dominant element of some participants' narratives of anger in relationships. Haley's first sentence in response to the question about her anger was, "I try to stay as calm as possible." Within the same answer Haley repeated this sentence one more time, and in her next answer she reiterated, "I stay calm by trying to think it through and not being rash or getting out of hand right off the bat because there's sometimes that I don't like what he's doing." Later in the interview Haley went on to express, "I have never cried. I think I have yelled once. That was the worst. Other than that it is just pretty calmed conversations." Haley also described becoming calmer after being involved in different romantic relationships.

Carrie's narrative is an example of a narrative of anger where controlling the emotional expression was the dominant element. Carrie's first answer in regards to anger in her romantic relationship was: "I'm not the kind of person who would yell and scream about it. Normally I might not say anything or just be upset about it and not have a big discussion about it." When asked about exceptional times, "There have been a couple of times, but not many, when I got really upset when I actually had like yelling, screaming, and an argument." In this sentence, Carrie emphasized there are not "many times" when she is loud when expressing anger. In addition, once Carrie completed the description of an exceptional time she yelled when angry,

Carrie concluded with "And it just, it wasn't normal to be acting that way," such that Carrie reinforced the narrative of anger as something to be controlled, even when prompted to speak about exceptions.

Denying Anger

Two of 24 participants denied their anger. When asked about her anger in the romantic relationship, Alisha answered right away, "I've never felt angry at him." Alisha also denied ever feeling upset, frustrated, or annoyed at her boyfriend. Alisha not only denied feeling angry at her boyfriend, but talked about not ever feeling angry at her parents and siblings, and minimized her anger at friends. In a similar fashion, Diane verbalized, "I don't…it's weird like I was telling my mom that I was going to do this and she was like "you don't really get angry" and I don't really get angry."

Triggers for Women's Anger in Romantic Relationships

Triggers for young women's anger in romantic relationships were coded first into two main types: gendered anger triggers and non-gendered anger triggers. Later, a higher-level code was created to characterize different combinations of gendered and non-gendered triggers within each interview. The higher-level category called anger triggers included three sub-categories: mostly non-gendered anger triggers, gendered and non-gendered anger triggers, and mostly gendered anger triggers. Below, I provide examples from the interviews reflecting different gendered and non-gendered anger triggers.

Gendered Anger Triggers

Gendered anger triggers corresponded to issues related to gender norms and expectations within heterosexual couple relationships such as: traditional division of labor including distribution of household chores and emotional work, men's power-over women, and hegemonic

masculinity and femininity. I used a conservative criterion in differentiating gendered anger triggers from non-gendered anger triggers to avoid generalizing all triggers as related to gender. Anger triggers classified as gendered included: (a) men being self-centered, compromising less than women or exhibiting lack of reciprocity; (b) women doing more household chores than men; (c) men exhibiting controlling behaviors or belittling women; and (d) men being sad or in a negative mood.

Reciprocity. Eleven participants talked about feeling angry at their boyfriends because they were self-centered, compromised little, and exhibited lack of reciprocity. For example, Diane described her boyfriend feeling upset for her staying longer at her parents' home during vacation, after her boyfriend spent a while with his own parents that same summer. Diane explained,

> He got upset because I didn't really, like first of all I'm leaving him for a weekend and then I'm leaving him for like a week and a half…And that frustrates me because I told myself I wouldn't let having a boyfriend hold me back from anything that I want to do. So I was going to do it anyway. I just wish he wouldn't get upset about that because he got to be home for the first half of the summer and I've been home for like a weekend of this entire summer.

Household chores. Four participants mentioned feeling angry at their boyfriends because their boyfriends did less household chores than they did. Three out of these women cohabitated with their partners at the time of the interview and one of them stayed with her boyfriend occasionally. These women represented roughly half of the women in the sample who cohabitated with their boyfriends at the time of the interview (n=7). Patricia referred to getting upset at her boyfriend as little chores accumulated,

Well, if it's all the little things it like adds up so by the third time that I've had to pick up something like "ah, come on" or I would say "oh, I have to go pick up, my poor boyfriend won't do it for me" you know, sometimes I do it in a half joking, half serious manner in expressing my anger and sometimes I'm a little more direct.

Kim stated she was passive-aggressive when angry at her boyfriend for not doing the half of the chores he initially agreed to do when the couple first moved in together. Kim related,

So when we first moved in together we had the huge disagreement about chores in our relationship and we agreed that he will do more chores. But in reality, he didn't. But he would just say "just leave the dishes in the sink; I'll get to them when I get to them." But they will stay there for like three days, four days, and it's disgusting… he should get up and do the dishes instead of staying in the couch and watching TV or playing video games.

Controlling and belittling. Three young women spoke about becoming angry at their boyfriends as they behaved in controlling or belittling ways. In terms of attempts to control, Carrie described how her boyfriend accused her of cheating because she was working long hours and did not have time to meet him. Carrie said,

I was working a lot because I had a deadline for my advisor and then he was like calling me a lot and wanting to talk for a really long time. And so I was trying to tell him, like in a nice way, okay I have to get to work. But he got upset about that and I got upset …He was like "why don't you want to talk to me? Are you with somebody else? What's going on?"

Other participants were angry when their boyfriends belittled them. Kelly narrated feeling angry when her boyfriend made negative and sarcastic comments about her in social situations. Kelly

expressed, "I noticed that when we are with other people he can become very sarcastic or especially when we are playing a game and he's getting competitive he just says very sarcastic negative things towards me."

Men's sadness. Two participants talked about feeling angry at their boyfriends when they were sad or predominantly in a negative mood. Participants related becoming angry at their boyfriends for staying in a negative mood, but also at their inability to "fix" their boyfriends' emotions. Francesca first mentioned, "sometimes I get frustrated with his negative moods and stuff because I try really hard." Later, Francesca expanded on her feelings regarding her boyfriend's negative mood,

> I don't know it just sometimes feels like he's not trying that hard to be happy or not think those things or make it better. I know that's not true and I know he's really trying but I guess I cannot really understand it as much. So I just get really frustrated some times. I'm just like "stop thinking that."

Similarly, Cindy identified his boyfriend's negative mood as the main source of anger in her romantic relationship,

> I think the biggest thing that he'll do that really frustrates me is when on a Monday he'll have a bad day and all of a sudden the rest of his week is just bad. And it really almost makes me mad that he can't overcome like that one day and no matter what I do to try to make it better he still is kind of in a slump.

Non-gendered Anger Triggers

Anger triggers coded as non-gendered corresponded to issues associated with the nature of the couple relationship that did not directly reflect traditional gender roles, differences in power by sex, or stereotypical feminine or masculine traits. Non-gendered anger triggers

identified in this study were: (a) different perspectives on beliefs and daily life, (b) jealousy, (c) issues with own or partner's family of origin, (d) care of pets, and (e) personal privacy. I considered jealousy as a non-gendered anger trigger within the findings of this study, as the participants referred to jealousy more in the context of "doing" monogamy within romantic relationships more than in the context of "doing gender".

   Different perspectives on beliefs and daily life. Eleven participants narrated how their anger in the romantic relationship was the result of them and their boyfriends having different perspectives on beliefs and daily tasks. Five young women described differences in beliefs and values and six young women described differences in how each partner thought daily life activities should be done.

   Layla was among the five women who narrated feeling angry in the romantic relationship as a result of having different beliefs and values than those of their boyfriends. For example, Layla described being angry at her boyfriend and engaging in an argument over Mormonism,

> My two best friends are Mormon and I'm really close to both of them and their families.
> So I started talking about this one time and he started to talk about how Mormonism is
> based on like a lot of bullshit and that whoever would believe that has fallen for a stupid
> trick and stuff. And I got really upset because these are my best friends and my second
> families that he's talking about and so I felt insulted and angry that he was, I felt that he
> was insulting people who were close to me

Likewise, Emily expressed her anger at her boyfriend for planning to drink when underage,

> I just think it's unattractive in people when they go out. Like especially my boyfriend I
> really didn't want him to do that because it's kind of more immature than I would
> like…It was a couple of days. He told me about the party during the week and it was the

weekend. So during that whole time I was, I think I felt kind of betrayed, I guess?

Because I had thought that we were both of the same thought and I guess I feel pretty

strongly about that.

 Among the group of participants who expressed feeling angry at their boyfriends because

of differences in how to complete daily life activities, Saliha described feeling angry because her

boyfriend sent a package to her mail in a different way that she asked him to. Saliha related,

Today I was expecting a courier because he had sent something. And he didn't…I told

him that put an authorization over there that I should be there to receive the courier and

he didn't. And that courier was lost. So I was angry at him and I said "why didn't you

do this?"

In a similar way, Meredith described snapping at her boyfriend about setting up the tent during a

camping trip. Meredith explained,

We went camping this weekend and we were trying to get things set up and we were

going with his family. So when we get there he gets very distracted like all I wanted to

do was to get the tent set up so I kept yelling at him like get over here and get this done

and he was being stubborn about it. I think I snapped, but I didn't go beyond that.

Jealousy. Six young women related stories of anger in their romantic relationships where

the trigger was jealousy. Among all participants, Jena was one who identified jealousy as the

main source of anger towards her boyfriend. When asked to talk about anger in her relationship,

Jena immediately identified jealousy,

Definitely [anger] comes from the other relationship. It's like jealousy things. Like

when another girl that I don't know starts to text him or talking to him. Or like his ex-

girlfriend will try and get in contact with him. Those kinds of things really bother me and

those used to bother me a lot more but since we've been dating for a longer amount of

time, I've gotten better at handling it and so has he. Those things have become less of an

issue all together. It's just that, that's usually the thing that gets me angry.

Another good example of jealousy can be found in Olivia's narrative, which centered on her

constant competition to be better than her boyfriend's ex-girlfriend. Olivia identified the

following as one of the times she was very angry at her boyfriend,

> I think the time I was the most angry at him was when I told him I wanted to get married
>
> at that place and he told me his ex-girlfriend had her wedding reception there. I felt I
>
> couldn't get married there anymore because I would just be thinking about that she got
>
> married there and then I felt like why would he had to tell me that.

Issues with families of origin. Two out of 24 participants mentioned issues with families

of origin as a trigger for anger in their romantic relationships. On one hand, Kim identified her

boyfriend's relationship to her family of origin as the biggest source of anger and disagreement

in her romantic relationship at the moment. Kim expressed,

> I'm very family oriented and his family was never really supportive of him so he didn't
>
> have a good support system growing up. So my parents, I have taken him in and helped
>
> him and invited him to almost every single, actually to every single family event. But he
>
> is not used to that so he doesn't really…he feels uncomfortable around my family. And
>
> so that was a huge argument. And that's probably the biggest source of anger.

On the other hand, Julie talked about feeling angry at her boyfriend for his relationship with his

own family of origin, specifically regarding money issues. Julie stated,

> His family is a big thing that we fight over. I mean, they're so nice and they're so good to
>
> me but his dad is very like stingy when it comes to money. So I get frustrated because I

just grew up differently and I don't understand why…And of course it's his family so he gets defensive about it. That's like an ongoing tension between us.

Care of pets. Two young women related events where their anger in the romantic relationship was the result of arguments with their boyfriends regarding the care of pets. In both cases, young women had a significant investment in pets as their careers were related to Veterinary Medicine.

Olivia narrated her anger over her boyfriend's request to have her dogs sleep on the floor instead of on the bed with them. Olivia declared,

There was one [time] a couple of nights ago where I got really mad because we have this ongoing fight if dogs can stay in the bed. I'm a vet student and I have two dogs. I have always had dogs get in the couch and get on the bed. And his parents they are very, they like animals but not too much so his parents always had like an outdoor dog and stuff like that. The most recent fight was he got really mad because he went to kiss me in bed and the dog was there and he got really pissed off and he liked left.

Similarly, Julie identified the last time she had been angry at her boyfriend as one in which her boyfriend treated her dog differently from what she would like him to. Julie narrated,

It was about my dog. I got mad because she…I have a cat too and they chase each other around and I don't even know if I was in a bad mood in the first place but Sybil, that's my dog, my dog was chasing around my cat and Alan yelled at her and then put her…we have like a kitchen area and just kind of, he didn't throw her but just like picked her up and "arg, kitchen" and I think I was in a bad mood in the first place but I was like "don't you treat my dog like that."

Personal privacy. Two participants in the study told stories about events where they were angry at their boyfriends because their boyfriends violated their personal privacy. In both cases participants' boyfriends told very private information about participants' lives that participants had explicitly told their boyfriends not to share with anyone. Kelly spoke about one time she was angry at her boyfriend because he told his mother about a private part of her life. Kelly described her experience in the following way,

> I told him something personal about my family closer to about a year into dating and he
>
> was frustrated about something, not necessarily to do with me, but my relationship to my
>
> mother so he was talking to his mother about it and he told her about it when I didn't
>
> intend for him to tell anybody, it was something very personal so I didn't want him
>
> telling anybody. And I thought I made that clear and then when I see him again next he
>
> said "Hey, I had this conversation with my mother. She gave me some insight" and he
>
> mentioned that he had told her. And that really, really upset me.

Women's Meaning Making of Their Anger in Romantic Relationships

This category captures the different ways in which women in the study attributed responsibility to themselves, their boyfriends, or both partners for their anger in the romantic relationship. Furthermore, this category identifies the times women excused, justified, or neglected their own or their boyfriends' responsibility for their anger. The four distinct ways in which women made sense of their anger are: (a) shared responsibility, (b) ambivalence, (c) my fault, and (d) his fault.

Shared Responsibility

Six participants predominantly validated their anger and attributed responsibility for their anger to their boyfriends and themselves in a balanced way. For example, in her narration of the

time she was most angry at her boyfriend, Kim began with, "We both said things that we shouldn't have because we were both slightly intoxicated but the real issue was there." Kim went on to explain her boyfriend's perspective, "the real issue was that he didn't have the support system growing up and his mother always asks him for help in regards to money and things like that". Then Kim presented her own perspective,

> Over the next day or two I was still really angry and I still wanted to break up with him because that was a huge thing. That is a major game changer for me. I'm not going to marry someone that doesn't enjoy being with my family.

At the end, Kim ended the narration of this event with, "he's getting better in that regard and I'm getting better in understanding where he's coming from." Thus, Kim demonstrated an understanding of both her and her boyfriend's responsibility in the argument and the tension regarding their relationship with Kim's family of origin. Furthermore, Kim validated both her and her boyfriend's anger in this situation.

Rachael's narration also displayed an attribution of shared responsibility for her anger. Rachael started by taking responsibility for her anger,

> I think a lot of times it is blown out of proportion. I think a lot of times I have so much stuff going on; especially with grad school is very stressful. And then with not having him here and then I guess, I probably blow it up more, probably than it needs to be.

Later on, Rachel balanced this attribution,

> And then he'll say something and I will, I don't really lash out because I don't really yell or anything like that, but I'll just say something that I didn't want to say...Then he'd say something back to me and then, lately a lot lately, he's been yelling a lot more and I think it's the same thing with him, he's got a lot going on.

At the end what Rachel's narrative portrayed is how both of them get angry because of external factors that raise their stress levels, and how both of them are responsible for their anger and therefore need to work on it.

Ambivalence

Thirteen out of 24 women in the study displayed ambivalence regarding their own and their boyfriends' responsibility for their anger. During most of the interview, participants in this group excused or justified their boyfriends for what they did that made women angry. Thus, women invalidated their anger. However, there were exceptional points during the narratives where these women were able to attribute responsibility to their boyfriends for the actions that made them angry without doubting or holding back.

Brittany's narrative of anger in the romantic relationship displayed ambivalence. For most of the interview, she engaged in a monologue where she expressed her anger at her boyfriend, took responsibility for it, and then justified him in the next sentence. This is a sample of Brittany's ongoing monologue,

> I get angry when he makes this sort of decision. And I probably take it more personally than I should. For example, when he first told me that he was planning on joining the Air Force I took it like, he doesn't care about any of my ambitions and just wants to do what he wants to do. Which just isn't true. You know, he is doing this because, obviously because he wants to, but, I mean, to think that he decided totally disregarding me is just, it's just not really possible. I know that he factored me into it.

Although most of Brittany's interview moved in this zigzagging pattern between asserting her anger, doubting, and justifying her boyfriend, there was one time in the interview where Brittany

spoke about a time she was angry at her boyfriend and in her description she did not make any

attempt to excuse him. Brittany described this exceptional event in this way,

> Yeah, one time he said something that I just didn't agree with and I got really frustrated.
>
> It was silly. But he said something that just kind of struck a nerve and I was really upset
>
> about it. And I just got really mad. I think I hit him, not really hard, I was just very
>
> frustrated, or yelled at him and stormed out of the room.

Haley also displayed this pattern of ambivalence in attributing responsibility for what

makes her angry in the relationship. The following was Haley's reasoning for her anger for her

boyfriend's lack of compromise with his schedule,

> He is not at the same level because it's his first relationship, he is still trying to think of
>
> two people. So, I expect him to do the same for me and when he doesn't, I am setting
>
> myself up for failure because I am expecting too much too soon.

Therefore, Haley took responsibility for her boyfriend's inability to compromise and neglected

her boyfriend's responsibility. At one point in the interview, however, Haley spoke clearly about

her boyfriend's responsibility as she related an event where she was angry about chores. Haley

stated,

> So if he keeps leaving the towel on the floor and I keep "hang it up, hang it up, hang it
>
> up" and I keep hanging it up for the next six days, after that point I'm like "hey, I'm not
>
> here to be your maid. Pick it up."

In this case, there was no follow up from Haley including a justification or excuse about her

boyfriend's behavior.

My Fault

Amanda was the only participant in the study who took full responsibility for her anger and neglected his boyfriend's responsibility in the actions that triggered her anger. Amanda was taught as a child to shut down negative emotions, in particular, anger. Amanda started out her narrative about anger in the romantic relationship expressing, "Most of the time when I'm mad, I'm not actually mad at Ted. I'm mad at the things that have led to me having problems we have together." Then Amanda went into detail and described one time she felt "irritated" at her boyfriend for not keeping in touch with her during a trip. The following is Amanda's reasoning of the event and her emotion,

> I know maybe I'm a little more sensitive about things like that than maybe other girls are. But, I was really upset and I thought he didn't like me anymore. And then it just turned out that no, he'd just been busy and I was kind of irritated like "you can't just have five minutes to talk to me?" He didn't realize that it upset me that much which I didn't blame him for because I didn't tell him that it upset me so how was he supposed to know.

Here, Amanda took responsibility for the event by saying she is "more sensitive" and for not being able to tell her boyfriend she was upset. At the same time Amanda excused her boyfriend because he was "busy" and could not have known Amanda was upset if she did not tell him.

His Fault

Four young women in the study attributed full responsibility to their boyfriends for issues that made them angry. These women were angry about their boyfriends' passiveness and their boyfriends not doing things the way women would like them to. For example, Shelley related feeling angry at her boyfriend for his reluctance to help with chores and other responsibilities in the home and for her boyfriend's procrastination in completing tasks for long term plans (i.e., graduate school, health insurance). Shelley narrated,

I'm still pretty pissed about that because it was no secret. I mean, we were all excited

about healthcare reform and being on our parents' plan until 26 and big Obama

supporters, super excited about that, and then he just two days before his 26th birthday he

starts calling around for quotes. And I was just…like at that moment I was just

disgusted. "Seriously? You're doing that right now? It's too late."

Lily also spoke about feeling angry at her boyfriend for not doing and not listening to the

reminders she offers. Lily first described,

Sometimes he would ask me, why are you getting so mad over this or whatever, and I

would tell him that that's the only way that he actually listens to me some times, it's

when I am expressing to the extreme how I am feeling about something. But when I just

casually tell him or I casually remind him, hey, can you not do this, or, remember you

have to do this or that, if I just do it in that way, he doesn't take it as seriously.

Later on, Lily added a comment that seemed to convey her need to control what happens in the

relationship,

When I get angry at him it just upsets me even more sometimes. I feel like problems like

this, any kind of problem can be resolved, or can be avoided. But the fact that it is

happening or that it took a while for him to actually realize that we need to fix something

that's when I get upset over it because we are wasting, I feel like we are wasting time

when it could have been avoided or it could be shortened a lot more.

Women's Anger Expression in Romantic Relationships

Young women in this study described expressing their anger in different ways depending

on the situation. However, women could be classified depending on whether their predominant

way of expressing anger was internal and indirect or external and direct.

Internal and Indirect Anger Expression

Thirteen women in the sample revealed internal and indirect anger expression as the predominant way they express their anger towards their boyfriends. On the extreme of internalization of anger there were two participants: Alisha and Amanda. Alisha denied feeling angry, upset or frustrated at her boyfriend throughout the interview. However, when asked to provide specific descriptions, Alisha described one time she was frustrated about her boyfriend not driving to visit her. When asked about her expression of anger this time, Alisha mentioned, "I didn't say it to him. I just said 'okay, I understand'." Similarly, Amanda talked about her struggle to identify and express anger in all relationships as a consequence of growing up in a family that taught her to shut down her anger. Although Amanda displayed awareness of this process, she described her inability to express anger at her boyfriend. Amanda declared, "I'm not very good at expressing it at all." When I pursued the question, "So, it does not come out at all?" Amanda added, " Not really. I might talk to him about it like a couple days later, but I rarely say anything at the actual moment when I'm kind of irritated."

Most participants in this group described a pattern where they kept anger in, bottled up, and at some point exploded. Jena described,

> I know that, he's told me before, when I get angry, I don't talk. I don't explain why I'm angry necessarily. He can tell that I'm angry because I won't talk, like I just look angry I guess. But yeah, I just don't talk about it and I tend to keep it in and I don't do anything about it. And sometimes I'll bottle it up until something happens and I finally tell him.

Similarly, Haley declared,

I just don't talk. I keep to myself. I just worked it out in the inside because I don't want

to display it in the outside, although people can tell. I try to keep it just as controlled as

possible.

Olivia provided some detail on the process of keeping anger in,

I usually don't tell him right away. I usually…it takes me a while to want to talk about it.

I usually just say "I'm just tired" or "I don't feel like talking about it" and then after a

while if he keeps asking eventually I kind of tell him.

For some participants keeping anger in came with indirect ways of expressing anger.

Some participants in this group expressed passive-aggressiveness as one of the ways in which

they expressed their anger. For example, Carrie declared, "Sometimes I can be passive-

aggressive about things or just keep thinking about it for a while and then we might discuss it."

Another way of expressing anger indirectly was the use of humor. For example, Patricia used

humor to express her anger over her boyfriend not helping with picking up dirty dishes and cups

from the floor.

External and Direct Anger Expression

Eleven young women expressed their anger in their romantic relationships in

predominantly direct and external ways. Most participants related yelling, raising their voices, or

talking about the issues that bothered them. For example, Chen expressed, "if I am angry with

him I would just express what I thought." In a similar way, Lily stated, "when I am angry at him

sometimes I do end up getting frustrated and I have to yell to get it across." Kim described how

both she and her boyfriend expressed their anger outwardly,

I have a very short temper in regards to, I guess, arguments with him. And he also has a

short temper. So it usually gets out of hand pretty quickly as far as raising voices and

saying things we shouldn't have said.

Only two participants in the study described one situation in which they expressed their

anger through physical aggressive actions. As mentioned above, Layla threw a drink at her

boyfriend during a drinking game. Likewise, Brittany related one time she hit her boyfriend and

stormed out of the room.

Six participants in the study commented on the fact that their way of expressing anger

had changed during the time they had been involved in their current romantic relationship.

These six participants had been in the romantic relationship for at least 1.5 years and up to 7

years. According to their perception, at the beginning of the interview they tended to silence

their anger and through time they arrived at a place where they now express anger out and

directly. Meredith narrated,

When we first started together I wasn't very good about putting it out there, it was

usually I was sort of passive with it like just say something in passing or just act

differently, but not come out with it. Now it looks more like I come out with it and I'll

say what it is, and what I would like to be different, and then if it doesn't work out, I have

tried a few different things.

Rachel also spoke of change in her anger expression through time spent in the relationship,

It used to be more of the silent type of thing because it was a new relationship and as we

gradually started it was probably more silent but now it's not…Now I do more of the

verbal…You get more comfortable once you start dating for a long time and it's kind of

the same thing. If something bothers you, you tell them. And I also feel like since we've

talked about several things and we've told each other "just tell me, don't just stay silent, don't just walk away or something like that," we'd rather just know.

Women Undoing, Doing, and Struggling with Gender

With the purpose of identifying how women's power and women's anger in romantic relationships were related, interactions between power and anger sub-categories within participants and across the sample were identified. The interactions of the five coding categories yielded a grouping of participants into four types: (a) women undoing gender, (b) women doing gender, (c) women struggling with undoing gender, and (d) women mixing undoing and doing gender. In the following pages I describe each of the types that resulted from the theoretical coding. For each type I describe an exemplar case to illustrate the characteristics for women in this group.

Women Undoing Gender

Out of 24 young women in the sample, 5 were undoing gender in the ways they related to themselves, their boyfriends, and their anger in their romantic relationships. This first type of participants corresponded to the "I Share Power, Consistent" sub-category in terms of their power in their romantic relationships and they accepted their anger, became angry mostly for non-gendered triggers, attributed responsibility to their boyfriends and to themselves for anger, and expressed their anger outwardly and directly.

Meredith. Meredith exemplifies how young women are undoing gender. Meredith perceived herself as sharing power with her boyfriend and her descriptions during the interview were consistent with this perception. In talking about roles in her relationship, Meredith spoke about different arrangements through the years,

> We kind of split [roles] for a long time then he had longer work hours so I took over
>
> cooking and cleaning and now when there's no school or no classes, he does all the
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> cooking and cleaning and I work full time.

Meredith also described negotiating who makes decisions for different things in the relationship. For example, in planning their wedding, Meredith and her boyfriend agreed together on who would make the decision for each feature of the celebration.

Meredith demonstrated acceptance of her anger during the interview. Meredith referred to "anger", feeling "angry" and feeling "mad" when narrating her experiences with this emotion. Meredith did not attempt to use different words to refer to the emotion of anger, nor did she emphasize the need to be calm or under control when angry.

Meredith understood anger as a valid emotion for her and her boyfriend. For example, as previously described, during their camping trip, she was angry about her boyfriend not helping to put up the tent. But, she did not justify or excuse his boyfriend when talking about the things that made her angry in the relationship. However, Meredith was able to speak about her boyfriend's point of view.

Furthermore, Meredith predominantly expressed her anger directly and outwardly. Meredith spoke about experiencing a change through the development of the relationship,

> When we first started together I wasn't very good about putting it out there, it was
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> usually I was sort of passive with it like just say something in passing or just act
>
> differently, but not come out with it. Now it looks more like I come out with it and I'll
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> say what it is, and what I would like to be different, and then if it doesn't work out, I have
>
> tried a few different things.

Finally, the anger triggers described by Meredith in her narration through the interview

were non-gendered triggers. The first anger story related by Meredith involved her feelings of

jealousy for her boyfriend being out with friends while they were living in different towns.

Meredith's jealousy was about her inability to share social activities and have fun together, rather

than her thoughts of her boyfriend becoming close with other women. The second anger story

also included a non-gendered trigger, as Meredith explained becoming angry at her boyfriend for

not wanting to set up a tent right after they arrived to the camping site. The issue was primarily

the difference in perspective regarding the best time to set up the tent.

Women Doing Gender, But Not Completely

Fourteen out of 24 young women in the study were doing gender as they related to

themselves, their boyfriends, and their anger in their romantic relationships. This second type

included women who were classified as "I Share Power, Inconsistent" and "I Don't Have

Enough Power, Inconsistent", and who distanced from anger (or denied anger), identified mostly

gendered triggers for anger, were ambivalent about attributions for anger, and kept their anger in

or expressed it in indirect ways.

Women in this group were doing gender, although not completely, as they related to their

partners in the romantic relationship. Women classified as "I Share Power, Inconsistent" (11 of

the 14 women in this type) seemed to endorse a discourse of egalitarianism to a certain extent as

they spoke about being "equals" and "sharing power." However, doing gender was predominant

as these young women's descriptions of their and their boyfriends' actions in the relationship

portrayed women as dependent on men, men compromising less than women, men having a

higher or more central role in the relationship, and men making final decisions.

The two women included in this type classified as "I Don't Have Enough Power,

Inconsistent" were also doing gender, although not completely. These women spoke about their

boyfriends being the leaders in the romantic relationship and defended this hierarchical organization based on their religious beliefs. However, they explicitly expressed ambivalence about their boyfriends having more power than them in the relationship. Furthermore, at times these women demonstrated having a lot of power within the relationship through the stories they told during the interview. Below, I provide a description of Haley and Kelly who are exemplar cases of women doing gender in anger and the romantic relationship.

Haley. Haley was classified as "I Share Power, Inconsistent" in terms of her power in the romantic relationship. Haley stated,

> Everything is shared pretty evenly. Most people think that the man is the masculine one and the girl is the emotional one, but I am never emotional and then he, we spend a lot of time separate so that we are never nit picking at certain things. He doesn't look down at me because I am a female, at all. It's really even for everything. I don't really think that there is even roles other than caring for each other, but we both do that.

Later on, Haley contradicted herself as she talked about decision-making in her romantic relationship and talked about compromising more than her boyfriend when planning. Even more, Haley excused her boyfriend's inability to compromise based on this being his first romantic relationship.

Haley was also predominantly doing gender in how she related to, understood, and expressed her anger in the romantic relationship. Haley distanced from anger as her anger narrative centered on the idea of keeping herself "as calmed as possible". In terms of Haley's meaning making of her anger in the relationship, Haley displayed ambivalence in attributing responsibility and often excused her boyfriend for his actions. Haley described how she did her best in trying to keep anger in.

In addition, Haley related two stories about anger in her romantic relationship that included gendered anger triggers. The first story Haley related was her general story about her boyfriend compromising less than her in terms of planning their schedules for the week. The second story Haley referred to was one where she was repeatedly upset about her boyfriend leaving the towel on the floor. This was also coded as a gendered anger trigger as it relates to the unequal division of household chores between men and women.

Kelly. Kelly spoke about her boyfriend leading the couple and this being a positive change in the relationship. Kelly expressed she believes her self-sufficiency and independence in the past were "an insecurity that I developed." However, she also described herself as a follower, "but not a passive follower." Furthermore, Kelly described contradictory accounts of power in the relationship. For example, Kelly related how she speaks directly to her boyfriend about the things that bother her, even in social situations.

In terms of anger, Kelly demonstrated doing gender in similar ways to those displayed by others in the group. Kelly distanced from anger as she attempted a detailed differentiation between "anger, frustration, and being pissed off". Also, Kelly emphasized she was rarely angry, although she spoke with the same passion about things her boyfriend did that made her "frustrated" and "in the middle".

Apart from distancing from her anger, Kelly was ambivalent about attributing responsibility to herself and her boyfriend for the issues that made her angry. Kelly seemed to recognize her boyfriend's responsibility for being too involved in his work and not listening to what she had to say and for telling a family secret she explicitly said not to tell. However, when describing a situation in which her boyfriend repeatedly belittled her, Kelly excused his boyfriend and blamed her personality,

When we are with other people, I think he's not that much of a social butterfly, he's more

of a type B personality, and so when we are with other people I honestly think it just

makes him feel uncomfortable. Then me as a type A personality and I've always been

very concerned about what other people think of me…that causes some stress when we

are with other people because he feels like he has to meet a certain standard and so that

kind of stresses him out.

Finally, most stories about anger in the relationship narrated by Kelly included gendered

triggers. The first story Kelly narrated was about personal privacy and therefore, not one with a

gendered trigger. The other three stories included gendered triggers where (a) Kelly's boyfriend

was too involved in his studies to the point he did not acknowledge Kelly's emotional needs in a

conversation, (b) Kelly's boyfriend belittled Kelly in a social situation, and (c) Kelly's boyfriend

did not want to engage in chivalrous behaviors she expected of him.

Women Struggling with Undoing Gender

Four young women in this study appeared to be struggling with undoing gender as they

perceived to have more power than their boyfriends, but had contradictory and inconsistent

descriptions of themselves, their boyfriends and the relationship. These young women

demonstrated different relations to anger, different types of predominant anger expression, and a

different balance of gendered and non-gendered anger triggers. However, these women shared

the same understanding of anger where their boyfriends were fully responsible for their anger as

they were passive and reluctant to do things how women wanted them to.

Shelley. Shelley exemplifies this type of participant who appeared to be struggling with

undoing gender. Shelley described herself in the romantic relationship as "an overprotective

dad" and repeatedly spoke about the "parent-child relationship" between her and her boyfriend.

Shelley's perceptions portray a reversal in traditional power distribution according to gender. Whereas mandated by gender norms women would be in a less powerful position than men, Shelley is in a more powerful position than her boyfriend Brandon. However, this is not the whole story about power in Shelley and Brandon's relationship. Brandon also exerts a great amount of power as he refuses to complete a variety of tasks such as household chores and errands. Brandon also refuses to do things the way Shelley would like him to do them. For example, Brandon does not plan in advance and Shelley is "a planner".

Probably associated with this struggle for power and control, Shelley's anger in the romantic relationship was understood as Brandon's responsibility. All anger events described by Shelley throughout the interview had to do with Brandon "not doing" or not doing things the way Shelley would like them done. Shelley expressed feeling angry about Brandon "not doing" chores, not taking care of errands, not planning in advance for health insurance and not completing steps for his application for PhD studies.

Mixing Undoing and Doing Gender

Only one young woman in the sample presented a mixture of undoing and doing gender. Patricia was undoing gender overall in her romantic relationship and doing gender in her anger in the romantic relationship. Patricia perceived herself as sharing power with her romantic partner and her descriptions of the relationship during the interview were consistent with this perception. In terms of sharing power, Patricia described,

> I think he's mentioned before that at least in one of the major decisions he felt like he had
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> to back off. So I guess if you ask him he might say that I have the final say but I feel like
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> we both kind of talk it through and we don't really, I don't think there's any…I don't
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> think one person is in charge or final say or anything like that.

Also, Patricia demonstrated independence in her views and opinions about life issues. Most of Patricia's narrative of the romantic relationship focused on how she and her boyfriend have different "life philosophies".

Although Patricia appeared to be in an egalitarian relationship, her ways of relating, understanding, and expressing anger fit traditional gender scripts. Patricia distanced herself from her anger, was ambivalent about attribution of responsibility for her anger, and expressed her anger predominantly in indirect ways. At the beginning of the interview, Patricia distanced herself from her anger as she responded, "My anger. Hm…I do get a little bit frustrated. Does frustrated count as anger?" Throughout the interview Patricia had a difficult time talking about "anger", although her description of events could fit the characteristics of this emotion.

Patricia was ambivalent about the attribution of responsibility for her anger. Patricia predominantly excused her boyfriend for issues that made her angry. For example, when speaking about how she gets "frustrated" about her boyfriend not picking up after himself, Patricia explained how it was her problem,

> I tend to get frustrated with him around things like picking up things, leaving things on the floor. Like I can trip over any of these things as I think my pace is very low when I walk so I think I can just wop, trip, you know?

However, Patricia identified responsibility in both partners for her anger regarding their different point of views or calling her silly names.

Finally, Patricia's descriptions of her anger in the romantic relationship demonstrated she predominantly keeps anger in and at times expresses it in indirect ways. Patricia referred to an accumulation process, "I think it's more like it adds up. Little things tend to add up and if they

don't get resolved then I would get full angry." Later on, Patricia expressed her desire to express her anger more, but also her concerns about her boyfriend's reactions,

> I suppose more expressing would be better for me, but I don't know as of yet. I think 50% sounds right. Probably I think I would have to see how he reacts if I increase the communication level because you don't want to overwhelm somebody with like too much information that they would just get upset at all the things, right? So it depends on his tolerance level versus my communication level that they balance out.

Patricia also talked about humor as an indirect way to express her anger at her boyfriend.

In conclusion, the findings of the study indicate an emerging theory of women's anger in romantic relationships. The emerging theory includes the dimensions of women's power and women's anger, each with specific categories and sub-categories. For women's power in romantic relationships, one category summarizes women's perceptions of their power and the consistency between such perceptions and women's descriptions of their relationships. For women's anger, four categories display specific elements of anger as it relates to doing and undoing gender: relation to anger, anger triggers, meaning making of anger, and anger expression. Groupings of participants according to similarities among sub-categories provide a typology including four distinct ways in which women do and undo gender in relation to their anger in romantic relationship. The resulting four types are: undoing gender; doing gender, but not completely; struggling with undoing gender; and mixing undoing and doing gender. In the following chapter I discuss these findings based on theoretical and empirical literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The findings of this qualitative study indicate an emerging theory of young women's anger in romantic relationships where women can be located into four different types: women undoing gender; women doing gender, but not completely; women struggling with undoing gender; and women mixing undoing and doing gender. These four types are the result of the interaction of five categories: power, relation to anger, anger triggers, meaning making of anger, and anger expression. Below, I first discuss the findings related to young women's power and young women's anger in romantic relationships. Then, I move on to discussing the emerging theory of young women's anger in romantic relationships. I suggest a possible understanding of the different findings based on the theoretical and empirical literature. I end this chapter describing limitations of the study, clinical implications for couple and family therapists and similar professionals, and future research directions.

Power: Contradictions and Resistance

Regarding young women's power in romantic relationships, two main conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the study. First, young women are predominantly in contradiction about their power in romantic relationships. Second, all young women resist gender inequalities in romantic relationships to some extent.

Contradictions

Most women in the sample (18 out of 24) demonstrated contradictions between their perceptions of power in the romantic relationship (their first person perspective of how power was distributed in their relationships) and their descriptions of themselves, their romantic partners, and their relationships through the stories they told in the interviews. Twelve participants perceived themselves as sharing equal power with their boyfriends, but were actually

in a lower position of power; four women perceived themselves as having more power, but were uncomfortable with it; and two participants perceived themselves as having less power than their boyfriends, but in reality had a lot of power in the relationship.

The literature on gendered power in romantic relationships reflects similar contradictions among emerging adults. On one hand, studies using self-report measures to assess power distribution in romantic relationships (Neff & Harter, 2002; Neff & Suizzo, 2006) indicate most emerging adults perceive they share equal power with their partners. This is similar to my findings where 18 out of 24 participants (those in the "I share power, consistent" and "I share power, inconsistent") expressed they share equal power with their partners. On the other hand, studies using qualitative methodologies and looking at gender scripts have evidenced gendered power inequalities persist in contemporary romantic relationships among emerging adults (Eaton & Rose, 2011). Such findings also agree with the findings of this study as 18 out of 24 participants (those in the "I share power, inconsistent", "I have more power, inconsistent", and "I don't have enough power, inconsistent") showed gender continues to set power inequalities between partners, and generates discomfort in women when their relationship is not consonant with such gender standards.

The contradictions between women's perceptions (and self-reports) and women's descriptions (and gendered scripts) of their power in romantic relationships, might be explained in two ways. First, young women may want to present themselves as sharing equal power in relationships. Therefore, there might be a social desirability bias. Such social desirability bias might be specific to the context of the research studies (mostly public universities where students are exposed to more liberal ideas about gender). However, it is possible that this social desirability bias might be the result of participants believing gender equality is viewed more

positively by most people in society. In that case, this would be a sign that at the ideological level egalitarianism has gained an important position for younger generations of women.

A second explanation for contradictions between perceptions and descriptions of women's power might be that women are actually contradicted about their power. Such contradictions could be explained considering young women have grown up in a social context where different gender discourses are available. On one hand, young women are exposed to a sexist discourse that places men as superior to women not only in intimate relationships, but in the workplace, the school, the community, and society as a whole. On the other hand, since the gender revolution of the 1960s an egalitarian discourse is also available in alternative media, university courses, and the lives of individuals and institutions on the margins who do not adjust to gender parameters.

Resistance

The findings of this study evidence all women in the study resisting gender inequalities to a lesser or greater degree. Along a spectrum, the four participants in the "I Share Power, Consistent" sub-category were resisting gender inequalities the most as they identified themselves as sharing equal power with their boyfriends and seemed to be actually involved in egalitarian romantic relationships.

All other participants were partially resisting gender inequalities in their romantic relationships. Women in the sub-category "I Share Power, Inconsistent" partially resisted gender inequalities as they included a superficial discourse of gender equality when asked direct questions about their relationships. In the opposite way, women in the sub-category "I Don't Have Enough Power, Inconsistent" were also partially resisting gender inequalities. These women talked about a religious patriarchal discourse and attempted to describe their

relationships as fitting this ideal. However, they were ambivalent and spoke of disagreeing with gender inequality in couple relationships. Finally, women in the sub-category "I Have Too Much Power, Inconsistent" were also resisting gender inequalities as they identified themselves as having more power in the relationship.

Therefore, young women in this study demonstrated different strategies for resisting gender in romantic relationships. Strategies included (a) sharing equal power with romantic partners, (b) integrating an egalitarian discourse in their gendered narratives of the relationship, (c) questioning patriarchal discourses promoted by their religions, and (d) identifying themselves as having more or equal power than their boyfriends. These are strategies by which women are undoing gender, or in other words, resisting culturally mandated ways which assign more power to men than women in relationships (Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009). These strategies are both acts of resistance and indications of variations in the social discourse about gender in romantic relationships (Deutsh, 2007).

Anger: Variability within Participants and Non-Gendered Alternatives

This study illustrates two unique characteristics of young women's anger in romantic relationships: (a) variability within participants' anger narratives, and (b) non-gendered relations, understandings, triggers, and expressions of anger. Below, I discuss possible theoretical explanations and related empirical evidence for these two findings.

Variability within Participants

The findings of the study suggest significant variability within participants regarding doing and undoing gender in their relation to their anger in romantic relationships. As previously explained in Chapter 3, sub-categories for the four anger categories (relation to anger, meaning making of anger, anger triggers, and anger expression) were constructed in terms of

predominance or relations between different anger events described by participants in the interview. For example, the category "Anger triggers" was determined by whether the majority of anger triggers related by a participant were gendered or non-gender, or whether there was an equal number of gender and non-gender anger triggers.

The variability in doing and undoing gender in relation to anger observed within the narratives of participants in this study has not been identified as a significant finding in previous studies of women's anger. Thomas et al. (1998) and Eatough et al. (2008) described common elements of adult women's anger such as mixed feelings and powerlessness. Variability within participants was not a finding in those studies. Furthermore, Jack (2001) identified different patterns women used to keep anger in and out of intimate relationships. However, Jack's report of findings did not give clear indications of how different patterns of anger expression in relationships could be found within participants' narratives.

Variability found in this study in doing and undoing gender in the relation to, understanding and expression of anger in romantic relationships within participants' narratives might be an indication of a combination of processes. First, the social-constructionist theory of anger (Averill, 1982) might explain the within participant variability in doing and undoing gender in women's anger in the context of romantic relationships. Averill (1982) proposed that emotions are "socially constituted syndromes (transitory social roles) which include an individual's appraisal of the situation and which are interpreted as passions, rather than actions" (p. 6). Averill (1982) applied his social-constructionist theory of emotions to the study of anger and proposed that the appraisals responsible for an individual's anger in an event are influenced by what the individual has socially learned about the general meaning of a situation and the specific meaning of that situation in relation to the other persons involved. Findings by Averill

(1983) and Weber (2004) support this view as they evidenced specific social rules for events including individuals involved in different social relationships (i.e., strangers, friends) and events (i.e., traffic accident, disagreement between friends).

Averill's (1982, 1983) social-constructionist theory of anger could provide the means to further understand women's anger in the context of romantic and couple relationships from an integrative gender theory stance (Risman, 2004). This would require an analysis of women's relation to, understanding, and expression of anger differentiating by types of anger events. Those anger events would be classified according to the social situation, the persons involved in the situation, and the social meaning of each situation and persons involved according to gender norms. Such analyses would further help clarify gender as it influences women's anger in romantic relationships and women as they resist gender in relating to anger across different types of events.

A second factor that might help explain the variability within participants in doing and undoing gender in relation to their anger, is a cohort effect. Young women in this study might be evidencing greater variability in relating to their anger as they sometimes resist gender and other times do gender. Earlier studies (Jack, 2001; Thomas et al., 1998) included adult women of different ages (ages 17-75 and ages 21-66, respectively) and therefore could not illustrate the particular experience of a younger generation of women. On the contrary, the present study included a sample of emerging adult women (18-25) and could, therefore, be evidencing such a cohort change in women's relations to anger.

Third, developmental processes characteristic of emerging adulthood might also help explain the variability in doing and undoing gender within participants' anger narratives. Emerging adulthood, or the transition from late adolescence to adulthood, has been characterized

as a stage where individuals engage in explorations about identity, relationships, and occupation

(Arnett, 2004). Emerging adulthood has also been identified as a stage where most individuals

engage in the process of individuation from families of origin (Tanner, 2006). These two

processes –exploration and individuation-- might explain the variability within participants'

narratives of anger. Young women in this study might just be evidencing how they are trying on

and exploring different perspectives on anger, both gendered and non-gendered, from their

families of origin, media and peers.

Non-gendered Alternatives to Anger

Similarly to the ways in which women in the study resisted gendered power in romantic

relationships, women demonstrated non-gendered alternatives of relating to, understanding, and

expressing their anger. Nine women in the study accepted their anger in the romantic

relationship, 6 women expressed an understanding of shared responsibility for their anger, 16

women talked mostly about non-gender triggers for their anger or about an equal number of

gendered and non-gendered triggers, and 11 women predominantly expressed their anger in the

romantic relationship outwardly and directly. All of these non-gendered alternatives to anger

represent ways in which young women are undoing gender in relation to their anger in romantic

relationships.

Identifying how women and men undo gender at the individual, interactional and

institutional levels is a calling of contemporary gender theory to feminist researchers (Deutsh,

2007; Risman, 2009). However, most studies of women's anger (Cox, Van Velsor, & Hulgus,

2004; Eatough et al., 2008; Thomas et al., 1998) have focused on how women do gender in

relation to their anger. Cox et al. (2004) focused on women's difficulties in clearly identifying

and expressing their anger and as a result of their research these authors propose an Anger

Diversion Model. Eatough et al. (2008) described experiences of anger as confusing bodily

reactions and mixed feelings, and aggression as taking control over women's actions. Finally,

Thomas et al. (1998) provided a description of women as predominantly powerless in relation to

the expression of their anger, although they acknowledged a "less frequent theme" where women

talked of anger as giving them power to restore justice in relationships.

In addition to the current study, Jack (2001) described ways in which women undo

gender in relation to their anger. Jack identified two strategies women use to resist gendered

ways of relating to anger: bringing anger in the relationship positively and directly and keeping

anger out of the relationship consciously and constructively. The current study confirms findings

by Jack and expands on the understanding of women undoing gender in their anger as it

characterizes how women undo gender not only in their expressions of anger, but on their

understanding of and their relation to anger.

An Emerging Theory of Young Women's Anger in Romantic Relationships

The emerging theory of young women's anger in romantic relationships indicates for

most women their power in romantic relationships is associated with how they do and undo

gender in their relation to, understanding of, and expression of anger in this context. Of the four

types identified in the emerging theory, the types "Undoing Gender" ($n=5$) and "Doing Gender,

But Not Completely" ($n=14$) demonstrate consistency between doing and undoing gender in

relation to women's power and women's anger in romantic relationships. In contrast, the types

"Struggling with Undoing Gender" ($n=4$) and "Mixing Undoing and Doing Gender" ($n=1$) do not

demonstrate such consistency.

The close association between women's power and women's anger found in the types

"Doing Gender, But Not Completely" and "Undoing Gender" is similar to what Fischer and

Evers (2011) found in adult married women. According to Fischer and Evers (2011) women in egalitarian couples tended to express their anger out, while women in more traditional gender couple arrangements tended to keep their anger in and express it in indirect ways. Likewise, young women in this study involved in egalitarian romantic relationships predominantly expressed their anger directly and outwardly, while those involved in less egalitarian relationships ("I Share Power, Inconsistent" and "I Don't Have Power, Inconsistent") tended to accumulate anger and express it in indirect ways.

The present study adds to the previous literature on the relationship between power and anger in couple relationships. First, it evidences that early in the development of couple relationships during emerging adulthood the distribution of power among partners is related to ways of relating, understanding, and expressing anger. Second, this study adds to the characterization of women's anger in relationships with different power distributions. This study provides information not only about women's predominant ways of expressing anger, but women's relation to anger, women's understanding of responsibility for anger, and anger triggers for women in relationships. The study also adds to the discussion on the relationship between women's power and women's anger in couple relationships as it evidences that in a few cases there are incongruencies between these two dimensions.

Women Struggling with Power in a Gendered Context

Four women in this study seemed to be struggling with undoing gender in their romantic relationships and their anger seemed to be predominantly related with this struggle. However, women in this group exhibited variability in their relation to, their understanding of, and their expression of anger. Their struggle, incongruencies and variability might be explained through the theoretical underpinnings of integrative gender theory.

Gender theory (Risman, 2004) proposes that gender is a structure that influences institutions, relationships, and individuals in a top down fashion. It also proposes gender is constructed from the bottom up as individuals are agents who are capable of making choices and transforming their circumstances. Young women in the study who were struggling with undoing gender were located in a position where they had more power than their boyfriends, but were uncomfortable with it and desired to change this situation. Furthermore, these women were engaged in conflicts over control and power that were often the cause of their anger in the romantic relationship.

These women's struggles might be the logical consequence of living within a romantic relationship where women have more power than men, within a social context where men have been attributed more power than women. Or, in other words, the struggle for these women is one of attempting to undo gender in the couple, in a general context where the majority is doing gender in every level of society. These women might be experiencing similar situations to those experienced by women who earn more than their husbands (Atkinson, Greenstein, & Lang, 2005; Tichenor, 2005) or by men who are stay-at-home fathers (Doucet & Merla, 2007; Rochlen, Suizzo, McKelley, & Scaringi, 2008).

Mixing Undoing and Doing Gender: A Unique Case?

To understand the incongruencies in the one case in the sample where a young woman was undoing gender in her romantic relationship and doing gender in her anger, I propose to use the literature on changes in gender relations through immigration processes. Patricia, the one participant with an egalitarian relationship who related to anger in traditional gendered ways, was an US born Latina.

In terms of her anger, Patricia did not display any differences from the group of women "Doing Gender" which was predominantly constituted by young Caucasian women. Patricia distanced from anger, had an ambivalent understanding of who was responsible for her anger, kept her anger in and expressed it in indirect ways. This description points to Patricia adopting similar ways of relating to anger in romantic relationships dictated by traditional gender relations, as those adopted by other young women growing up in America. This finding is consistent with the empirical literature on US born Latinas which indicates they share more similarities with individuals in the majority culture in the US than with foreign-born Latinas (Villarruel, Carlo, Grau, Azmitia, Cabrera & Chahin, 2009).

The finding that Patricia was undoing gender in her romantic relationship might be more difficult to explain. However, it is possible to think that Patricia's more egalitarian gender relations in the romantic relationship might be influenced by her condition as a child of immigrants. It might be that Patricia's interest in preserving her own cultural heritage and culturally differentiate from her boyfriend pushed her towards greater confidence and independence, and towards having an equal voice in decision-making. This possibility is consistent with research on immigration and gender that has found immigrant women tend to prioritize culture over gender prescriptions in couple relationships (Kibria, 1993). Patricia's experience as a child of immigrants might also explain her apparent overall incongruencies. Children of immigrants often navigate two cultures, the one learned in their families of origin and the one learned as they interact with American culture. As a result children of immigrants often find themselves at unique intersecting points in terms of identity and relationships (Haller & Landolt, 2005; Portes & Rivas, 2011).

In summary, the findings of the current study suggest young women experience marked contradictions about their power in romantic relationships and variability in their relation to, understanding and expression of anger in romantic relationships. The current study also evidences most young women resist gendered ways of relating to partners and anger in romantic relationships through different strategies. In terms of the association of power and anger in romantic relationships, the findings evidence in most cases young women in more egalitarian relationships undo gender in their relation to anger in romantic relationships –that is, these young women accept their anger, attribute meaning for anger in a balanced way, and express anger outwardly and directly. However, some women display divergence between their relation to power and their relation to anger in romantic relationships. These cases raise questions about gender power and anger in young women with mixed cultural backgrounds and in young women who have more power (or more social capital) than their romantic partners.

Limitations of the Study

The present study makes significant contributions to the literature on women's anger, particularly as it adds to the understanding of how women do and undo gender in relation to their anger in romantic relationships. It also contributes to a greater understanding of how women's power and women's anger in romantic relationships are related. However, the study also has a number of limitations that should be taken into account when using its findings to conduct further research or to implement therapeutic or similar interventions with young women and young couples.

An important limitation of the study is the sample. Although I planned in advance and made important efforts to increase the diversity of participants in the sample (i.e., posting recruitment flyers and sending emails to different universities and colleges in the area, targeting

ethnic minority groups during the recruitment stage, and using personal contacts to recruit

diverse participants), at the end, the sample was predominantly made up of White, middle-class

young women attending college in the same mid-Atlantic public university. Out of the 24

women in the sample, no one identified as African American and two identified as

Latina/Hispanic. As a consequence, researchers and clinicians need to be particularly cautious in

using the findings of this study in their work with African American and Latina/Hispanic young

women.

On the positive side, the sample included three Asian women living in the United States

and one Asian American young woman. These women exhibited similar patterns of relating to

power and anger as compared to White, middle-class young women. Therefore, the findings also

suggest there is a level of comparability between young women from two different racial/ethnic

backgrounds: Asian and Caucasian. Furthermore, the commonalities in young women from

these two ethnic backgrounds might be an indication of gender as a powerful influence and of

women's relations to gender as changing throughout different societies.

Clinical Implications

As a feminist couple and family therapy scholar, I believe gender relations need to be a

central category of clinical assessment and intervention in working with individuals, couples, and

families. This position is supported by empirical evidence that demonstrates there are significant

associations between greater internalization of dominant femininity ideology in women and

masculinity ideology in men and poorer individual well-being (Courtenay, 2000; Tolman,

Impett, Tracy & Michael, 2006). Also, there is evidence of links between lack of egalitarianism

in couples and less authentic self-disclosure and less intimacy (Neff & Suizzo, 2006) and higher

risk of intimate partner violence (Bentley, Galliher, & Ferguson, 2007; Kaura & Allen, 2004).

The findings of the current study suggest three clinical implications for the therapeutic work with young women and young couples, for those clinicians who believe in the importance of empowering women and promoting egalitarianism in couples. The study suggests conceptualizing women's power in romantic relationships in terms of contradictions and women's anger in romantic relationships in terms of variability across events. In both cases, the study indicates openings where women are resisting gender. Furthermore, the emerging theory points to a predominant consistency in doing and undoing gender in terms of distribution of power and anger in the romantic relationship.

Intervening on Women's Contradictions about Their Power in Romantic Relationships

According to the findings of the study, most young women experience contradictions regarding their power in romantic relationships. Therefore, in working with young women and young couples therapists need, first, to identify if their female clients experience contradictions about their power in their romantic relationships or not. Second, therapists need to identify what type of contradictions young women face in terms of their power. This is a different approach to the one suggested by other feminist family therapists (for example, Dickerson, 2013; Haddock, Zimmerman, & MacPhee, 2000; Knudson-Martin, 2013) who seem to assume women either start from powerful or powerless positions; and egalitarian or non-egalitarian relationships.

In order to identify the contradictions experienced by young female clients, therapists can differentiate between women's perceptions of their power (first-person account) and clinician's interpretation of women's power based on women's descriptions of their romantic relationships (third-person interpretation). Women's perceptions of their power can be assessed by asking women direct questions regarding the distribution of power in their romantic relationships (for example, "Who has more power in the relationship?", "How do you make decisions in the

relationship?", "What roles does each partner play in the relationship?"). Women's descriptions of their power in romantic relationships can be assessed through questions that aim at detailed descriptions of events in the relationship (for example, "Tell me about your boyfriend's reactions when you became angry", "How would your boyfriend react if you had done the same?"). Once therapists identify women's perceptions and women's descriptions of their power in romantic relationships, therapists can determine which type of contradictions women are experiencing.

Among participants in the current study, I found three kinds of contradictions that correspond to three of the four sub-categories for the category "Women's power in romantic relationships" (I Share Power, Inconsistent; I Have Too Much Power, Inconsistent; and I Don't Have Enough Power, Inconsistent). However, it is possible that therapists could identify additional contradictions between women's perceptions and women's descriptions of their power in their clinical work with women and couples.

Once therapists identify the contradictions, therapists can intervene to empower women and promote a more egalitarian romantic relationship. Clinicians can choose among a variety of techniques according to their preferred therapeutic model or personal style to achieve these goals. I will briefly describe narrative techniques I would use from a feminist perspective. Although these techniques share constructionist assumptions with the Socio-emotional Relationship Therapy model (Knudson-Martin & Huenegardt, 2010) and similar feminist approaches (Dickerson, 2013), they emphasize the idea that most women are undoing, resisting, and transforming gender in some way.

To start the discussion about the contradictions regarding the client's power in her romantic relationship, I would first lead an externalizing conversation about the contradiction (White, 2007). This externalizing conversation would include characterizing the contradiction,

discussing the effects the contradiction has on the client and the relationship, and discussing the effects the client and the relationship have on the contradiction. I would be careful to examine both directions of influence between the contradiction and the client(s), such as to help the client(s) recognize the ways in which they do and undo gender in their relationship. The ways in which the contradiction influences the client and the relationship constitute doing gender as the contradiction emerges from gender norms influencing the relationship and the partners. On the contrary, the ways in which the client(s) influence the contradiction could be understood as the ways in which the client(s) resist, transform and undo gender.

After the externalizing conversation, I would then engage the client(s) in a re-authoring conversation. Re-authoring conversations promote the identification and expansion of "exceptional outcomes" –that is, those events in the life of the client that do not fit the dominant narrative (White, 2007). In this intervention, the dominant narrative would be the contradiction regarding women's power in the romantic relationship, and the "exceptional outcomes" would be the parts of the client or the elements of the relationship that display resistance to power inequalities. Therefore, in this re-authoring conversation I would first identify those elements in the life of the individual or the couple where clients are already thinking, speaking, or acting to promote egalitarianism in the romantic relationship. Then, I would work on expanding upon those elements and constructing a narrative that fits the particularities of the individual and the couple, but that strengthens those parts of the individual or the couple which are already undoing gender.

Intervening on Women's Variability in Anger in Their Romantic Relationships

Young women in this study evidenced variability in doing and undoing gender in relation to their anger in their romantic relationships. However, in all participants some ways of relating

to, understanding, and expressing anger were predominant. Therapists need to acknowledge both characteristics of women's anger in romantic relationships (variability and predominance). On one hand, acknowledging variability can allow clinicians to identify times when female clients are able to undo gender in relation to their anger, and expand and strengthen those parts of clients which accept anger, understand it in balanced ways (not internalizing, not blaming) and express it directly. On the other hand, acknowledging predominant ways in which female clients relate to, understand and express their anger in romantic relationships would guide clinicians regarding how they can intervene. For example, if a woman's tendency in making meaning of anger is taking responsibility for all anger issues and justifying her boyfriend, the clinician can work towards promoting a more balanced way of attributing responsibility for anger in the relationship.

In terms of young women's anger, the anger categories (relation to anger, meaning making of anger, anger triggers, and anger expression) and the sub-categories in the emerging theory can help clinicians characterize how young women do and undo gender in relation to their anger in the romantic relationship. In addition, specific mechanisms young women use under the different sub-categories (for example, using words such as "feeling upset" or "feeling irritated" to distance from anger) can guide clinicians in their identification of predominant ways women relate to, understand and express their anger.

From this initial assessment, clinicians can work to promote women's greater acceptance of anger, understanding of shared responsibility for anger issues, and direct, external and constructive expression of their anger in romantic relationships. I would use narrative therapy strategies to achieve these goals. First, I would use deconstruction questions (Epston & White, 1992) to challenge women clients when they display patterns of distancing and denying anger,

and when they justify and excuse their boyfriends from their responsibility for their actions.

Deconstruction questions are directed at questioning a client's dominant narrative as it complies

with social discourses that limit the individual's development (Monk & Gehart, 2003). Second, I

would identify and expand on those events narrated by clients or observed by me (as the

therapist) which evidence women's acceptance of their anger, understanding of anger as

happening in interactions between two people, and direct and open anger expression. Again, this

could be understood as identifying "exceptional outcomes" and co-constructing an alternative

narrative of anger (White, 2007).

Acknowledging the Association between Women's Power and Women's Anger

The current study also suggests, women's power and women's ways of relating to,

understanding, and expressing anger in romantic relationships are closely associated for most

women. Therefore, women with less power in romantic relationships tended to distance or deny

their anger, experienced ambivalence regarding responsibility for anger issues, and kept their

anger in and express anger indirectly. On the contrary, women in more egalitarian relationships

tended to accept their anger, displayed an understanding of shared responsibility for their anger,

and expressed their anger outwardly and directly. Therefore, the study suggests clients might

benefit if clinicians assess for issues of power when women display high levels of suppressed

anger in their romantic relationships, and for women's anger when there are marked gender

power inequalities in the relationship.

Finally, the study also suggests clinicians should pay closer attention to young women

who identify themselves as having more power than their boyfriends or romantic partners. The

findings of the present study evidenced women who perceive themselves as having more power

are usually engaged in struggles over power and control with their partners, which are an

important source of anger. Clinicians working with these women and/or couples could help decrease the struggles and the anger by providing validation to the couple's arrangement which is contrary to social gendered standards.

Future Research Directions

This study on young women's anger in romantic relationships poses a number of questions that could be examined in future research. First, a research study examining young men's perceptions and experiences of their power and anger in romantic relationships could provide complementary information about gender, power, and anger in romantic relationships. Second, a longitudinal study following women through adulthood could help understand changes in women's anger in romantic, cohabitating, and marriage relationships through different stages of adult development. Third, an examination of how different types of anger triggers and events account for young women's different approaches to anger would help clarify variability within participants' anger narratives and how gender plays a role in women's anger in different social situations. Finally, a similar study including a more diverse sample of young women might expand the understanding of how women in different socioeconomic statuses, from different ethnic backgrounds, and with different sexual orientations and gender identities understand, relate, and express anger in romantic relationships.

From a clinical perspective, future research should aim at identifying couple and family therapists' understandings of women's anger in the context of romantic and couple relationships. In addition, it would be useful to examine each of the categories of the emerging theory of young women's anger (for example, relation to anger) separately, observe how they come about in therapeutic conversations, and what therapists do in response during therapy sessions. These two studies would provide a baseline regarding couple and family therapists' conceptualizations and

interventions towards women's anger. This baseline could then serve as a starting point to promote greater awareness about women's anger, the association between women's anger and gendered power, and the significance of dealing with these issues in therapy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, young women display different patterns of doing, undoing, and struggling with gender in relation to anger in their romantic relationships, such that young women resist gender to a lesser or greater degree as they relate to themselves, their partners, and their anger. The emerging theory identified in the study provides a framework for feminist researchers interested in expanding the study of anger in couple relationships to women of different ages and diverse backgrounds. Similarly, the emerging theory can provide insights and practical suggestions for clinicians to guide their assessments when working with young women and young couples with issues of anger and power.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Flyer

Romantic Relationships & Anger

Participate in a research study about women's anger in romantic relationships currently being conducted at Virginia Tech.

Why participate in the study?

- You can share your anger story

- You can help others understand women's anger in romantic relationships

- As a token of appreciation, participants will receive a $20 gift card

Who can participate in the study?

- Women between 18 and 25 years old in the New River Valley

- Women currently involved in a romantic relationship for at least 4 months, but who are

  not married

- Women who do not have children and are not pregnant

- Women who have not been hospitalized for a mental health issue in the last 12 months

- Women who are not involved in romantic relationships involving partner violence

For more information, call (540) 598-1413 or send an email to

youngwomen.research@gmail.com

Researchers are willing to interview at different locations in the New River Valley

Recruitment Email

Dear Professor/Name of student organization representative_____,

I am enrolled as a doctoral student in the Human Development Department at Virginia Tech. I am in the process of recruiting young women between the ages of 18 and 25 to conduct semi-structured interviews for a research study about young women's anger in romantic relationships. As part of the recruiting process, I am asking instructors/representatives from student organizations in different departments at Virginia Tech, Radford University, and New River Community College to share the following information with students enrolled in their summer courses/students involved in their organization.

Thank you for your help in this process. If you are interested in learning more about the project I am happy to answer any questions by email or in person.

Sincerely,

Ana L. Jaramillo Sierra
Doctoral Candidate MFT
Department of Human Development
Virginia Tech

Research Participants Wanted
Young women are needed for participation in a research project currently being conducted at Virginia Tech. The study focuses on young women's anger in romantic relationships.

Who can participate in the study?
- Women between 18 and 25 years old in the New River Valley
- Women currently involved in a romantic relationship for at least 4 months, but who are not married
- Women who do not have children and are not pregnant
- Women who have not been hospitalized for a mental health issue in the last 12 months
- Women who are not involved in romantic relationships involving partner violence

Why participate in the study?
- You can share your anger story
- You can help others understand women's anger in romantic relationships
- As a token of appreciation, participants will receive a $20 gift card

For more information, call (540) 598-1413 or send **an email to
youngwomen.research@gmail.com**
Researchers are willing to interview participants at different locations in the New River Valley
This research project has been approved by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board.

Appendix B

Phone Conversation with Potential Participants Protocol

1. Thank individual for her interest in participating in the study
"Thank you for your interest in this research study. I appreciate that you are taking time to do this and I hope this is useful for you, the study, and other young women in the future."

2. Researcher's brief introduction
"My name is Ana Jaramillo. I am a family therapist and a PhD candidate at Virginia Tech. This research study is supported by the university and has been approved by the Institutional Review Board for ethical standards."

3. Brief description of the study
"This study is about young women's experiences and expressions of anger in current heterosexual romantic relationships. I will be meeting participants personally and interviewing them for about 45 minutes to an hour. Participants will also be asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire which will take between 5 and 10 minutes."

4. Introduce sample criteria
"In this study I am interested in a particular group of young women. You are probably familiar with the characteristics that I am looking for in women in this study from my recruitment flyer. I am going to read these characteristics again to you and at the end; I would like you to tell me if you will be able and willing to participate in this study."

5. Ask questions about basic inclusion and exclusion criteria
"These are the characteristics of women who I am interested in interviewing for this study. Please listen carefully:

- Women in the study are 18 to 25 years old
- Women are currently involved in a romantic relationship with a man and have been in this relationship for at least four months
- Women are not married
- Women do not have children and are not pregnant
- Women in this study have not been hospitalized for a mental health issue in the last 12 months
- Women have not been involved as victims or perpetrators of physical or sexual violence in their current romantic relationship

"After listening to these characteristics of participants in the study will you be able and willing to participate?"

If the woman's answer is "No":

6) Thank the woman for her interest in the study
"Thank you for your interest in this study. At this point I will erase all your contact information (phone number or email address)."

If the woman's answer is "Yes":

7) <u>Re-state brief description of the study and procedures</u>
"As I said at the beginning, this is a study about women's anger in romantic relationships. If you are interested in participating, I will be interviewing you personally for about 45 minutes to an hour. I will meet you at the campus of _____ "

8) <u>Schedule an appointment for an interview</u>

9) <u>Introduce follow up on interview appointment</u>
"I will be contacting you on _____ (two days prior to the interview) to confirm our appointment and let you know about the place where we will be meeting."

10) <u>Potential participant's questions</u>
"At this point, do you have any questions about the study? Do you have any questions about the interview? Do you have any other questions?"

Appendix C

Informed Consent

Research Study: Young Women's Anger in Romantic Relationships

Investigators: Ana Lucia Jaramilllo Sierra, M.S.

I. Purpose of this research project:
The purpose of this study is to examine how young women experience and express anger in romantic relationships.

II. Procedures:
Data for this research study will be collected through interviews like the one you will be participating in. In this interview you will be asked open-ended questions related to you, your anger, and your current romantic relationship. The interview will take between 45 and 60 minutes and will be audio recorded for research purposes. At the end of the interview you will be asked to fill out a demographic questionnaire. Completing the questionnaire should take you between 5 and 10 minutes.

III. Risks:
Risks for participating in this interview are minimal. It is possible that some of the questions heighten some negative emotions in you. In case you need additional help for yourself or your relationship a list of resources available in the New River Valley area will be provided at the end of the interview.

IV. Benefits:
You could benefit from participating in this research by becoming aware of some aspects of your personal life and your current romantic relationship. By participating in this interview, you could also help in the understanding of young women's individual and relational lives, which would contribute to develop interventions to improve young women's well-being.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality:
Confidentiality of information collected in this interview will be guaranteed by using arbitrary pseudonyms. In addition, only investigators working directly in the project will be able to assess the data collected in this survey (doctoral student conducting the research and dissertation committee members).

It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation:
You will be reimbursed with a $20 gift card for completing a 45 to 60 minute interview. The gift card will be given to you at the end of the interview by the researcher. You will receive the gift

card even if you decide to withdraw at some point during the interview, or if you choose to not provide answers for some of the questions.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw:
You are free to withdraw from the study at any point in time without any penalty. You are free to not answer some of the questions in the interview. You will not be penalized for not answering questions.

VIII. Subject's Permission
I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project.
I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____
Signature

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:

Ana Lucia Jaramillo Sierra   (540) 598-1413/analj79@vt.edu
Investigator   Telephone/e-mail

Dr. Katherine R. Allen   (540) 231-6526/kallen@vt.edu
Faculty Advisor   Telephone/e-mail

Dr. Christine Kaestle   (540) 231-3194/kaestle@vt.edu
Faculty Advisor   Telephone/e-mail

Dr. Anisa Zvonkovic   (540) 231-6110/anisaz@vt.edu
Department Head   Telephone/e-mail

David M. Moore   540-231-4991/moored@vt.edu
Chair, Virginia Tech Institutional Review   Telephone/e-mail
Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research Compliance
2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Appendix D

Post-Interview Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge.

1. How old are you? _____years

2. What is your race?
____ Black or African American
____ American Indian or Alaska Native
____ White
____ Native Hawaiian
____ Asian
____ Pacific Islander
____ More than one race
____ Other. Please specify:_____

3. Do you consider yourself Hispanic or Latino?
____ Yes
____ No

4. Which university or college do you attend?
____ Not a student at the moment (Please skip to question #7)
____ Virginia Tech
____ Radford University
____ New River Community College
____ Other. Please specify: _____

5. If you are a college student, what is your major? _____

6. If you are a college student, what is your year?
___Freshman
___Sophomore
___Junior
___Senior
___Graduate/Master
___Graduate Ph.D.

7. How old is your romantic partner? _____years

8. What is your father's highest educational level?
___Not applicable
___Some high school
___High school degree or GED
___Technical/Associate degree
___College degree
___Graduate degree

9. What is your mother's highest educational level?
___Not applicable
___Some high school
___High school degree or GED
___Technical/Associate degree
___College degree
___Graduate degree

10. If you grew up with another parental figure, or guardian, what is his/her highest educational level?
___Not applicable
___Some high school
___High school degree or GED
___Technical/Associate degree
___College degree
___Graduate degree

11. What is your family of origin yearly income?
___$25,000 or less
___$25,000 to $49,999
___$50,000 to $74,999
___$75,000 to $99,999
___$100,000 or more

12. If you have more than one family of origin (e.g., your parents remarried), indicate your second family of origin yearly income.
___Not applicable
___$25,000 or less
___$25,000 to $49,999
___$50,000 to $74,999
___$75,000 to $99,999
___$100,000 or more

Appendix E

Interview Guide

1. Current romantic relationship
1a) Tell me about your current romantic relationship.
Probes:
  - Where and how did you meet?
  - How would you describe your relationship?
  - How would you describe yourself in the relationship?
  - How would you describe your boyfriend in the relationship?
  - What are your and your boyfriend's roles in the relationship?
  - How do you and your boyfriend make decisions (e.g. where to go for dinner, how to spend the weekend, who pays for things)?
  - Who has more power in the relationship?
  - What do you like the most about this romantic relationship?
  - What do you dislike the most about this romantic relationship?

2. Anger in romantic relationships
2a) Tell me about your anger in your current romantic relationship.

Probes:
What things usually make you angry in this relationship?

Can you tell me about a recent time you felt angry in your romantic relationship?
  - What happened?
  - What were you thinking?
  - How did your partner react?
  - What happened after?

2b) How do you usually feel about feeling angry in this romantic relationship?

2c) What do you dislike the most about your anger in this relationship?
What do you like the most about your anger in this relationship?

2d) Are there exceptional times when you have experienced or expressed anger very differently in this romantic relationship? Tell me about one of those times.
Probes:
  - What happened?
  - What were you thinking?
  - How did your partner react?
  - What happened after?

2e) Do you wish you could express your anger differently in this relationship? If so, how would you like to express it?

3. <u>Anger and relationship-narratives</u>
3a) What does this way you experience and express anger tell about the relationship you have with your boyfriend?

3b) What does this way you experience and express anger tell about your partner?

3c) How is your experience and expression of anger in your current romantic relationship similar or different to your experience of anger in previous romantic relationships? How do you make sense of that?

3d) How is your experience of anger in your current romantic relationship similar or different to your experience of anger in other close relationships (for example, close friendships, family relationships)? How do you make sense of that?

4. <u>Anger and relational self-narratives</u>
4a) What do these experiences and reactions to anger tell about *you* in this romantic relationship?

4b) How do your experiences and reactions to anger in previous romantic relationships tell a different or similar story about who *you* are?

4c) How do your experiences and reactions to anger in other close relationships tell a different or similar story about who *you* are?

5. <u>Anger and gender</u>
5a) In what ways do you think gender influences how you feel and express your anger in your current romantic relationship?
Probes:
- What are some similarities or differences in how young women and men feel and express anger in romantic relationships?
- In what ways do you and your partner experience or express anger differently because you are a woman and he is a man?

5b) What other factors do you think influence the way young people experience and express their anger in romantic relationships?

6. <u>Closing</u>
6a) Is there anything else you think I should know to understand your experiences and expressions of anger in your current romantic relationship better?

Appendix F

Coding Scheme I

1. What are the issues that make women angry in romantic relationships
   - Lack of reciprocity
   - Jealousy
   - House chores
   - In-laws
   - Pets
   - Drinking
   - Money
   - Life styles/philosophies

2. How do women describe the issues that make them angry in romantic relationships
   - Assuming responsibility for issues
   - Minimizing boyfriend's responsibility for issues
   - Attributing responsibility to boyfriend
   - Attributing responsibility to external factors
   - Attributing responsibility to both members of the couple

3. How do women relate to their anger in romantic relationships
   - Distance self from anger
   - Deny anger as happening to self
   - Accept and express anger
   - Accept anger and moving towards expressing anger

4. How do women express their anger in romantic relationships
   - Suppress anger
   - Keep anger in
   - Express in passive-aggressive way
   - Express in direct way

5. Ambivalence/contradictions in describing anger expression
   - Ambivalence or contradictions within stories
   - Ambivalence or contradictions between stories
   - Ambivalence between what is explicitly said and what is described in stories

6. Women's diverse ways of expressing anger in romantic relationships
   - Single way of expressing anger
   - Predominant way of expressing anger, with exception
   - Multiple ways of expressing anger

7. Consistency between women's anger expression, relational context (boyfriend's reactions, comments), and outcome
   - Consistency

- Inconsistency

8. Change in women's anger expression through development of romantic relationship
   - Movement towards direct and immediate anger expression (7)
   - No mention of change (16)

9. Change in women's anger expression from adolescence to emerging adulthood
   - From less gendered to more gendered
   - From more gendered to less gendered
   - No change

10. Awareness of relationship influence on anger expression
    - Awareness
    - Lack of awareness

11. Awareness of gender influence on anger expression
    - Awareness
    - Lack of awareness

Appendix G

Coding Scheme II

100   Issues that make young women angry in romantic relationships
     101   Issues related to romantic relationship
     102   Issues related to sharing a living space
     103   Boyfriend's individual characteristics
     104   Boyfriend's abusive behaviors

200   Young women's attribution of responsibility for issues that make them angry
     201   Ambivalent: In the same story women attribute responsibility to self and to
         boyfriend; or attribute responsibility to boyfriend and excuse boyfriend at the
         same time
     202   He is responsible: Mature way of assigning responsibility where it belongs
     203   It is his fault: Childish or controlling way of assigning responsibility
     204   He is not responsible: Excusing boyfriend (external factors) or taking
         responsibility

300   Young women's descriptions of their anger expression in romantic relationships
     301   Keep anger in:
         Overtly describes as keeping anger in, tell stories of "anger in"
         Overtly distances from anger, tells stories of "anger in"
     302   Put anger out:
         Overtly describes as putting anger out, tells stories of "anger out"
     303   Ambivalent:
         Overtly describes as distancing from anger, tells stories of "anger out" and "anger
         in"; or
         Overtly denies feeling angry at boyfriend, tells stories of "anger in"; or
         Overtly describes as distancing from anger, tells stories of anger out

400   Relational context of women's anger expression in romantic relationships
     401   Anger expression matches relational context:
         External anger expression follows change in partner or
         Keeping anger in follows no change in partner or
         Ambivalence in anger expression follows ambivalence in change in partner
     402   Anger expression does not match relational context:
         External anger expression follows no change in partner or
         Keeping anger in follows change in partner
         Ambivalence in anger expression follows a particular reaction in partner

Appendix H

Coding Scheme III

100   <u>Women's relational narratives of self in romantic relationships</u>
      101   "I am the boss", but I wish he was
      102   "We are pretty even", but she describes self as dependent/submissive
      103   "He has a little more power", but she describes self as equal

200   <u>Women's narratives of anger in romantic relationships</u>
      201   "I never get angry"
      202   "I am not very angry", but describes self expressing anger in ways not mandated by gender
      202   We are angry at each other at times and get into heated arguments

300   <u>Trajectories of women's narratives</u>
      301   No change in narrative
      302   From doing to undoing gender