



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Sex differences in emotion expression

Timmers, M.

Publication date
2000

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Timmers, M. (2000). *Sex differences in emotion expression*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, P.O. Box 19185, 1000 GD Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

Chapter 3

A diary study of sex differences in the social consequences of emotion expression

Apart from reporting that emotion expressions occur spontaneously, people endorse several quite specific social motives for expressing emotions, such as improving one's relationship with a friend, changing the behavior of a friend, or seeking comfort (Clark, Pataki & Carver, 1995; Frijda & Mesquita, 1994; Tavris, 1984; Thompson, 1994). Men and women have somewhat different motives concerning the effects of their emotion expressions. In the case of powerful emotions like anger and disappointment, men are more concerned with control-based motives and with self-presentation than are women, while women are more concerned with relational motives. In the case of powerless emotions, like sadness and disappointment, women expect to receive more comfort than men do (Chapter 2; Timmers, Fischer & Manstead, 1998).

In the present diary study we investigated whether gender-specific expectations of expressing powerful and powerless emotions are reinforced by social reality; that is, we examined the extent to which people react differently to women's and men's expressions of powerful or powerless emotions. Anger and disappointment are only considered to be powerful emotions if they are expressed towards the person who elicits the anger or disappointment (i.e., if the object and target of the emotion are the same). The target is the person to whom the emotion is addressed, whereas the object of the emotion is the thing about which, or the person about whom, the emotion is expressed. If anger and disappointment are expressed toward someone other than the object of the emotion, they are not regarded as powerful emotions, and for the present purpose are categorized as powerless emotions. Sadness and fear are considered to be powerless emotions.

Some researchers have investigated the consequences encountered by men and women after having expressed powerful or powerless emotions (Averill, 1982; Deffenbacher, Oetting, Lynch et. al, 1996; Fehr, Baldwin, Collins, Patterson & Bendit, 1999). Most studies focused on *powerful* expressions, demonstrating that the consequences men and women experience are in agreement with the social motives of men and women as found in our vignette study (Timmers et al., 1998). For example, after having expressed anger, women report feeling guilty, crying, being mocked by their

partner, being afraid of being perceived as hysterical; or expecting outcomes such as having hurt another person's feelings, or the loss of the relationship. Men, on the other hand, report expecting admiration or being perceived as self-confident after engaging in powerful displays. Also, men expect their partner to feel hurt after having expressed powerful emotions.

To our knowledge, there are few studies in which sex differences in the consequences of *powerless* expressions have been investigated, and therefore we can only speculate about the relationship between social motives thought to underlie the expression of emotions and the consequences of expressing these emotions. However, some studies have shown that powerless expressions do serve certain goals. For example, Saarni (1989) showed that young children intentionally express powerlessness in order to get other people to help them: They display more tears following a minor bump or scratch when they notice that there is an audience than when they do not. Clark et al. (1995) studied how people who express sadness are perceived. Their study showed that people seem to know that expressing sadness is inappropriate in certain situations and in certain relationships, for example in exchange relationships. Further, they showed that expressing sadness increases the perceived neediness and perceived dependency of the expresser. As a result, this expression elicited help from others. The question is whether these perceptions create sex differences in the consequences people encounter when expressing powerless emotions. For example, there is some support for the fact that men who display their vulnerability make a different impression than do women who display their vulnerability: Men who cry are sometimes seen as more sympathetic than are crying women (Labott, Martin, Eason & Berkey, 1991). Because of the exceptional character of powerless displays by men (Brody & Hall, 1993), it is also possible that men who show their neediness and dependency feel more embarrassed or ashamed than women do, which in turn may lead to particular consequences. In general, there is evidence that leads us to expect different consequences for men and women who express powerful and powerless emotions.

A structured diary method seems to be an appropriate way of investigating the actual consequences of emotion expression in daily life. Although relatively neglected, this method has been used with success for studying emotions. In his large study on anger,

Averill (1982) relied on a diary method to investigate 11 experiences and expressions of anger. Oatley and Duncan (1994) also asked adults to record the causes and characteristics of happiness, sadness, anger, fear and disgust in a structured diary. The prime advantage of a diary study is that people need not base their reports on recollections of what happened days, weeks, months or years ago, but that they can write down their experiences immediately after it has happened.

Few sex differences were observed in either of the above-mentioned studies. With respect to Oatley and Duncan's (1994) study this may be explained by the fact that the focus was on emotional *experiences*: In general, fewer differences are found when studying emotional experiences in contrast with emotion expressions (Brody & Hall, 1993; Kring, 2000; Timmers et al., 1998). However, the general absence of sex differences in both studies might also be due to the fact that diary studies use "momentary" ratings. Usually, sex differences are greater in self-reports where respondents have to rely on episodic memory, rather than momentary ratings, like event-contingent diaries (Feldman Barrett, Robin, Pietromonaco & Eyssele, 1998; LaFrance & Banaji, 1992). When using an event-contingent method, respondents have to describe what has happened as soon as possible after an incident (Wheeler & Reis, 1991). Thus, compared with other methods, a diary method produces least bias based on gendered beliefs about one's emotions.

In the diary studies of Averill (1982) and Oatley and Duncan (1994) the consequences of male and female expressions were not systematically studied. The aim of the present diary study was to investigate the consequences of expressing powerful and powerless emotions, as reported by male and female expressers. We assume that the social motives men and women anticipate their emotional expressions to serve are based on the consequences men and women actually encounter when expressing emotions. We expect that men, in comparison with women, have more instrumental motives when expressing powerful expressions and that these motives are based on the fact that they encounter more instrumental consequences of such powerful expressions, i.e., changes in the situation or behavior of the target person. We expect that women, in comparison with men, have relational motives when expressing powerless emotions and that these motives are based on the fact that they encounter more relational consequences of such powerless

expressions, that is receiving comfort and help. Further, we expect that men, in comparison with women, will report experiencing more negative thoughts and feelings after expressing powerless emotions. We expect that women, in comparison with men, will report experiencing more negative thoughts and feelings after expressing powerful emotions, and more positive thoughts and feelings after expressing powerless emotions.

Method

Participants and procedure

Over a period of three months, 23 Dutch participants (11 males, average age 36 years; and 12 females, average age 40 years), all teachers at a tertiary college for social work, completed four structured diaries relating to the emotions anger, fear, sadness and disappointment (one diary per emotion). In order to prevent respondents refusing to participate because they had hesitations about keeping a diary, we recruited respondents by asking if they would be willing to complete 'personal registration forms' concerning emotional incidents. We used an event-contingent diary method (Wheeler & Reis, 1991): Participants completed a personal registration form as soon as possible after they had expressed anger, fear, sadness or disappointment towards someone. Over the three months each respondent received two phone calls from the experimenter. The main purpose of the phone calls was to motivate respondents to complete all four forms, but (where necessary) questions about the personal registration forms were also answered.

Dependent measures

Antecedents of powerful and powerless emotions. Respondents were asked to give an answer to the open question: "Why did you feel angry (afraid, sad or disappointed)? (Describe the situation that made you feel angry (afraid, sad or disappointed))."

Target persons. The question respondents were asked was "What kind of relationship do you have with the person towards whom you expressed your emotion?" A number of options followed: partner, friend, family-member, acquaintance, colleague, unfamiliar person, or 'different'. Then respondents were asked, "Was the person towards whom you expressed your emotion a man or a woman?" The third question was "Was the person towards whom you expressed your emotion also the person who elicited your

emotion?" Answers on the questions could be made by checking "no" coded as 1, or "yes" coded as 2.

Emotional behavior. Respondents were asked to answer the question: "In which way did you express your emotion?" A number of options followed: 'I said to the other person I was angry (afraid, disappointed, sad)', 'I hit the other person/called names', 'I couldn't do anything/I froze', 'I walked away', 'I criticized the other person', 'I cried', 'I panicked' and 'I kept silent'. Respondents had to indicate whether these options were applicable to them (no coded as 1, yes coded as 2).

Social motives. Respondents were asked to answer the question: "Why did you express anger (fear, sadness, disappointment)?" In addition to this open-ended question, a number of items referring to social motives followed. Motives referring to power were the following: 'I wanted to change the situation', 'I wanted to change the behavior of the target person' and 'I wanted the other person to help me'. Relational motives were measured by the following items: 'I wanted the other person to support me', and 'I expressed my emotion because it is honest to show how I feel'. Cathartic motives were: 'I expressed my emotion because it just happened' and 'I expressed my emotion because it was a relief to express it'. A self-presentational motive was measured by the item 'I wanted to make a good impression'. Respondents had to indicate whether these options were applicable to them ('no' coded as 1, 'yes' coded as 2).

Consequences. The first open question respondents were asked was "What happened after you expressed your anger (fear, sadness, disappointment)? (In relation to yourself, the other person, the relationship with the other person, and the situation)." The second open question was "What did you think and/or feel (about yourself, the target person, the relationship with the target person and the situation) after having expressed your emotion?"

Content analysis of open-ended questions

A category system was constructed in order to code the answers to the open questions. For each dependent measure a separate category system was developed. The categories were first developed on theoretical grounds and refined following an inspection of a randomly selected 30% of the personal registration forms. A second coder

independently coded one-third of the personal registration forms. The percentage of inter-coder agreement (76%) was considered satisfactory.

Antecedents. The question was "Why did you feel angry (afraid, sad or disappointed)? Describe the situation that made you feel angry/afraid/sad or disappointed." The coding categories varied across emotions. For *anger* they were: (1) unfair, annoying, unreasonable or immoral behavior of someone else; (2) own behavior (having failed). For *fear* the categories were: (1) aggressive/unpredictable behavior of others; (2) medical condition of others; (3) own medical condition; (4) not being able to fulfil expectations; (5) concern about consequences of own behavior. For *sadness* the categories were: (1) someone else's death; (2) severe medical condition of someone else; (3) loss of relationship. And for *disappointment* the categories were: (1) disappointed in someone else: another person did not behave as expected; (2) something on which the respondents was counting or for which he/she had made an effort did not develop as expected. Answers were coded as (1) no, or (2) yes.

Social motives. The question was "Why did you express anger (fear, sadness or disappointment)?" Descriptions were coded as (1) *Instrumental* when respondents said that they wanted to change the situation, change the behavior of the target person and/or said that they want the other person regret his/her behavior; (2) *Relational* when respondents said that they wanted the other person to support/comfort them, that they thought that it was beneficial for the relationship to express the emotion, or that they thought that it was honest to show how they felt; (3) *Cathartic* when respondents reported that the expression of the emotion just happened, or that it was a relief to express their emotion; or (4) *Self-presentational* when respondents mentioned reasons referring to impression-management. Answers were coded as (1) no, or (2) yes.

Consequences. Answers to the question "What happened after you expressed your anger (fear, sadness, disappointment)?" were scored in the following categories: (1) positive instrumental, (2) negative instrumental, (3) positive self-presentational, (4) negative self-presentational, (5) positive relational, (6) negative relational, (7) positive cathartic, (8) nothing happened, or (9) 'different'. Thus the categories used were similar to the ones used for coding answers to the question about social motives; however, this time a distinction was made between positive and negative consequences. For example, with

respect to relational consequences a distinction was made between 'the relationship changed positively' and 'the relationship changed negatively'.

The last question was "What did you think and/or feel (about yourself, the target person, the relationship with the target person and the situation) after having expressed your emotion?" Answers to this question were categorized as (1) positive feelings and/or thoughts or (2) negative feelings and/or thoughts. Answers to both questions were coded as (1) no or (2) yes.

Results

Due to the small sample size, no formal statistical tests will be reported. The results referring to sex of target, emotional behavior, social motives and consequences are reported in percentages. The responses coded in each of the categories of these dependent measures were first counted for men and women separately. Then the scores of male respondents on each category of the dependent variable were divided by the total responses made by men on all categories of the dependent variable. This number was multiplied by hundred. The same procedure was applied to women's ratings. Each answer could be coded as falling into more than one category. For example, descriptions of the consequences of the expression of anger by a respondent could be coded as 'positive instrumental', but also as 'negative relational'.

Target persons for men and women. Both men and women expressed their anger, fear and disappointment to a range of others: spouses, friends, family members and colleagues. Sadness was the exception: Both men and women predominantly reported expressing sadness towards people with whom they had a close relationship (spouse or a family member).

Powerful emotions

Eighteen anger and eight disappointment descriptions were considered to be powerful expressions, because the anger and disappointment was expressed toward the object of the anger and disappointment. Nine of these anger descriptions were made by male respondents, and the other nine by female respondents. Three disappointment

descriptions were made by male respondents, and the remaining five by female respondents.

Antecedents. For both men and women anger was always elicited by the unfair, annoying, unreasonable or immoral behavior of someone else. In the case of disappointment, men always reported being disappointed in someone else, whereas women reported being disappointed in someone else on three occasions, and twice being disappointed because something on which they were counting/they had made an effort did not develop as expected.

Sex of target. For men the target was male in 54% of the cases and female in 46% of the cases; for women the target was male in 43% of the cases and female in 57% of the cases.

Emotional behavior. Most of the time, both men and women displayed their anger verbally, by criticizing the other or telling the other that one was angry or disappointed, although women did this somewhat more than men. Men and women also expressed their anger in an aggressive way, that is by means of hitting or calling names, although men did this somewhat more than women. Men also kept silent more often than women did. Table 3.1 shows the distribution of type of powerful emotional behavior of men and women.

TABLE 3.1 Percentages of Powerful Emotional Behavior of Men and Women

Type of behavior	Men <i>n</i> = 11	Women <i>n</i> = 12
Criticizing	24	24
Saying that one is angry/disappointed	12	24
Hitting/ calling names	20	12
Kept silent	16	4
Crying	8	8
Walking away	4	8
Panicking	4	8
Unable to act/paralyzed	4	0
Remaining	8	12

Motives. The motives men described were instrumental, cathartic, relational and self-presentational. An instrumental motive, for example, was described as follows: "I wanted the director of the school to know that his accusation was unjust. I invested a lot of

time with the students in discussing how things happened but he (i.e., the director) was assuming that I did not do anything". Another man was angry because his wife made an appointment with his parents-in-law for the weekend, without informing him: "I wanted to let her know that such things are not acceptable, and I want to prevent it happening again". An example of a cathartic motive was described as follows: "It was on my mind for weeks and it bothered me".

The biggest single category of motives described by *women* was cathartic. For example, one woman wrote: "I wanted to get my anger off my chest". However, women also reported instrumental motives for expressing anger. One woman, for example, described the unjust behavior of her students with respect to the treatment of class-materials. She expressed her anger because "I wanted to prevent materials being wasted and I wanted the students to take care of the materials". Table 3.2 shows the distribution of type of motives described by men and women.

TABLE 3.2 Motives Described by Men and Women Expressing Powerful Emotions: Percentages

Type of Motive	Men <i>n</i> = 11	Women <i>n</i> = 13
Cathartic	28	36
Instrumental	28	28
Relational	24	20
Self-presentational	20	16

Consequences. For men, the majority of answers were coded as negative instrumental, but there were also a fair number of answers that were coded as 'negative relational' or as 'nothing happened'. For example, men reported that the behavior of the other person, or the situation, changed in a negative way: "The other person got mad" or "We ended up in a discussion".

Relatively speaking, compared with the other categories, the consequences *women* described fell mainly into the relational categories, both positive and negative. Women described what the target person thought or felt with regard to themselves or their relationship. To give an example, "The other person did not understand me and I therefore felt miserable", or "I noticed she could appreciate my honesty". However, the consequences were sometimes also negative instrumental. As with men, women reported

several times that the target person became angry. (see Table 3.3 for the distribution of type of consequences described by men and women).

TABLE 3.3 Consequences of Powerful Expressions Described by Men and Women: Percentages

Type of consequences	Men <i>n</i> = 11	Women <i>n</i> = 13
Negative Instrumental	55	20
Negative Relational	15	20
Positive Relational	0	20
Nothing Happened	15	10
Negative Self-presentational	5	10
Positive Instrumental	5	10
Positive Cathartic	5	10

The proportions of positive and negative feelings and thoughts were exactly the same for men and women: 72% of the feelings and thoughts reported were positive and 28% of the feelings and thoughts were negative. An example of a positive feeling was "I felt relieved". Positive thoughts were, for example, "I was very happy that I reacted immediately", or, "He was really scared, good!" A negative feeling was, for example, "I felt insecure about what was happened." A negative thought was "I did not do the right thing with expressing my anger in that way".

Relations between emotion components: Some illustrations. With respect to emotional behavior, target persons, motives and consequences, few sex differences were found. We will first summarize the results. In order to give a more comprehensive impression of the connection between antecedents, behavior, motives and consequences, some detailed examples will be given. To preserve the anonymity of the respondents, some details of the descriptions have been changed, but the essence is retained.

Sex differences were found with respect to the consequences of these expressions: For men these were mainly instrumental, whereas for women they were mainly relational. Further, it was found that men reported more negative consequences (75%) than women did (50%), but both sexes reported predominantly positive thoughts and feelings after having expressed powerful emotions. In order to get more insight in the responses of the respondents, we will present three examples in more detail.

The first example is from a male respondent. He wrote, "When I come home from work, my wife always is busy cleaning the house, or she starts to talk just at that particular moment that I want to read my newspaper. Well, she did it again, she started vacuum cleaning. So I said to her, please stop it, but it did not help. I stopped talking to her and walked away out of the room. I stayed angry until the following day. I wanted her to regret what had happened and that she would stop this kind of behavior (*instrumental motive*). However, she did not react at all; moreover, she pointedly ignored me (*negative instrumental consequences*). So, I remained angry, thinking of leaving her and looking for another woman. By the way, I know that these kinds of thoughts only remain for one day".

The second example is from a man who reported cathartic, relational and instrumental motives for expressing anger. He wrote, "For a couple of months, my brother has owed me three thousand guilders. I think that he hopes I will somehow forget about the money. I felt deceived and not taken seriously. While we were in the bus together and I was sitting behind him, I thought: 'I have to take issue with him now, because it is easier to confront him while I am not looking at him.' So I did that, I criticized my brother. I just had to say how I felt because it was on my mind for weeks and it bothered me (*cathartic motive*). My brother is very important to me, we have a good relationship and I wanted it to stay that way (*relational motive*). And, I also wanted my money back (*instrumental motive*). He did not react immediately with words. But after a while he gave me an avoiding, half-baked, answer. He did not promise me to return the money. He made an arrogant impression (*negative instrumental consequences*). I felt deceived and thought that he is a weak person. On the other hand, it gave me a good feeling about myself. I recognized his behavior, because I used to be that way. However, I am over it. That gives me a good feeling".

The third example is from a woman. She had cathartic and instrumental motives for expressing anger and encountered positive instrumental and positive relational consequences. She wrote; "I had some problems with my job. I did not know exactly what my job-specifications were. I had asked my supervisor several times. He did not react at all, until the day he wrote me a little note in which he reproached me not doing my job very well. I was furious! It was entirely unjust. I had asked him about my job specifications and he had not answered it! I went to him immediately and told him

everything. I cried. It had to be vented (*cathartic motive*). I did not want to feel that way for any second longer (*cathartic motive*). He had to know that his reproaches were totally unjust (*instrumental motive*). He was frightened and he apologized (*positive instrumental consequence*). The air was cleared and our relationship became better immediately (*positive relational consequence*). We made some good arrangements. I was overjoyed that I had reacted immediately, otherwise I would have felt that way for days. I thought ‘Well done, girl!’”

In these examples, men did not express their anger in constructive ways, which may have contributed to the negative consequences they encountered. This is quite representative for the other situations. As shown in Table 3.1, in 40% of the cases men displayed unconstructive, intentional behaviors such as hitting, calling names, keeping silent, or walking away in order to express powerful emotions, while women did so in just 24% of the cases. Women also received more positive consequences of expressing powerful emotions than men did. The possible connection between constructive anger displays and positive consequences is illustrated in the example of the woman and her boss.

These examples further show that the feelings and thoughts described by respondents are not always about the emotion expressed, but are also about other aspects of the situation. This may explain why the feelings and thoughts of men were predominantly positive, despite the fact that the consequences they encountered were predominantly negative. We will return to these issues later, in the discussion.

Powerless emotions

We obtained 22 personal registration forms describing fear (11 from male and 11 from female respondents); 23 forms describing sadness (11 from men and 12 from women); 2 powerless anger descriptions (one from a male respondent and one from a female respondent); and 12 powerless disappointment descriptions (8 from men and 5 from women). The anger and disappointment expressions were considered powerless because the target of the expression was not the object of the emotion.

Antecedents. When describing the antecedents of *fear*, men and women tended to report different situations. Men described the behavior or circumstances of others:

aggressive or unpredictable behavior, or other people's serious medical condition. Women, on the other hand, described their own behavior or circumstances: not being able to fulfil expectations, concern about the consequences of their own behavior, or their own medical condition.

Both men and women reported someone else's death or serious medical condition as the main reason for *sadness*. A further antecedent of sadness mentioned by both men and women was the ending of a relationship.

Men reported being disappointed in someone else four times, and four instances of being *disappointed* because something on which they had counted did not develop as expected. Women reported being disappointed in someone else three times; and two instances of being disappointed because of failed expectations. The powerless *anger* incidents were both because of the annoying behavior of someone else.

Sex of target. For men, the target was male in 41% of the cases and female in 59% of the cases. For women, the target was male in 58% of the cases and female in 42% of the cases.

Emotional behavior. Table 3.4 shows the distribution of type of emotional behavior in cases of feeling afraid, sad, or powerlessly angry or disappointed.

TABLE 3.4 Powerless Emotional Behavior of Men and Women: Percentages

Type of behavior	Men n = 11	Women n = 13
Saying that one is afraid (sad...)	24	25
Falling Silent	18	15
Panicking	12	15
Unable to act/paralyzed	11	5
Crying	11	15
Criticizing	8	20
Walking away	8	5
Hitting/ calling names	8	0

Motives. The motives reported by both men and women were mainly cathartic. For example, one respondent phrased it as follows: "Verbalizing my fear helps me to chase it away". Another respondent wrote, "I must express my disappointment, because only then I can continue with my work". Respondents also reported self-presentational motives (in

particular in cases of worrying about someone else) like “I wanted to make a sympathetic impression”. Table 3.5 shows the distribution of type of motives reported by men and women.

TABLE 3.5 Motives Described by Men and Women to Express Powerless Emotions: Percentages

Type of Motive	Men <i>n</i> = 11	Women <i>n</i> = 13
Relational	36	24
Cathartic	32	28
Self-presentational	16	32
Instrumental	16	16

Consequences. For both men and women the consequences were mainly positive relational. For example, several respondents described consequences like “the other person was compassionate and understanding”, or, “the other person felt sorry for me”. Another respondent phrased the relational consequences he experienced as “we became companions in misfortune”. Both men and women also described positive cathartic consequences. Several respondents felt relieved after expressing the emotion: “It was a relief to notice that I was not the only one feeling like that”.

Seventy-nine percent of the feelings and thoughts reported by men were positive, and 21% were negative. For women, 72% of the feelings and thoughts were positive and 28% were negative. Positive feelings were mainly feelings like “relieved”. A positive thought was, for example, “This was a first step in the right direction”. An example of a negative feeling was “I felt powerless”. A negative thought was, for example, “I realized the situation had not changed at all”. Table 3.6 shows the distribution of type of motives reported by men and women.

TABLE 3.6 Consequences of Powerless Expressions Described by Men and Women: Percentages

Type of consequences	Men <i>n</i> = 11	Women <i>n</i> = 13
Positive Relational	45	45
Positive Cathartic	20	20
Nothing Happened	10	15
Positive Instrumental	15	5
Negative Instrumental	5	5
Negative Relational	5	5
Remaining	0	5

Relations between components: Some Illustrations. We will first summarize the results for the powerless emotions. In order to give a more comprehensive impression of the connection between antecedents, behavior, motives and consequences, some detailed examples will also be given. To preserve the anonymity of the respondents, Again, some details of the descriptions have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the respondents.

With respect to the antecedents, it was found that the types of fear situations men and women described clearly differed on one key dimension: The fear situations described by men tended to be ones in which they were afraid for other people (i.e., concerned for the well-being of others), whereas women tended to report situations in which they were afraid on their own behalf.

The motives for and consequences of expressing powerless emotions were approximately the same for men and women. The motives described were mainly relational and cathartic; however, unexpectedly, one-third of the female motives reported by women was self-presentational. The consequences of expressing powerless emotions were both positive and relational. Two detailed examples will be given.

The first example is written by a man. He had cathartic motives for expressing his fear. The consequences he encountered were cathartic and relational, that is, he got help. He wrote, "I was afraid because my child was ill. During the whole day, I had feelings of unease. I told my wife I was feeling concerned, because I know that talking works as a relief (*cathartic motive*). She told me she felt the same way. That helped (*relational consequence*). After talking things over I felt better, less anxious (*cathartic consequence*)".

The second example is from a woman. She had cathartic and relational motives for expressing her fear. She encountered positive relational consequences. She wrote: "I was afraid because I had to give lessons to twenty adults. I was worrying whether I was capable of doing it. I told a friend about it. I said to her that I found it scary. I hoped that the feeling would become less intense if I told someone about it (*cathartic motive*). Also, I hoped that she would give me some support and could calm me down (*relational motive*). She reacted with understanding (*relational consequence*). She said that she could imagine

that it was exciting. I felt better and I thought, "If I am so afraid in advance, it can only be less hard than I expect."

As shown in these examples, men and women describe the same type of emotional behavior, the same type of motives and encounter the same type of consequences, although the antecedents of the fear differ. We will return to this issue in the discussion.

Discussion

In general this study reveals only a few of the predicted sex differences in social motives for and consequences of expressing powerful and powerless emotions. An important difference between this diary study and the vignette-study described in Chapter 2 is that in this diary study male and female respondents were asked to describe situations in which they had expressed anger, fear, sadness and disappointment. In Chapter 2 we asked male and female respondent if they would express anger, fear, sadness and disappointment and why they would do that (or not). The diary study shows that when men and women express the same emotions they do have the same social motives for doing this. The descriptions in this study also reveal that when men display powerless behavior, they encounter the same type of reactions as those encountered by women.

Several studies (e.g., Campbell & Muncer, 1987; Kring, 2000) have shown that women experience more negative thoughts and feelings than men do after expressing anger, however, in the present study we found that the thoughts and feelings of both men and women after expressing powerful emotions were mainly positive. We will return to this issue below.

As already mentioned, the sample of respondents in this study was very small. No formal statistical tests could be used and, as a result, no firm conclusions could be drawn. We will nevertheless discuss the results and first focus on the sex differences that were found and then consider some explanations for the absence of differences. The first difference is the types of fear situation described by men and women. Several studies have shown that men experience fear about as frequently as women do; however, they do not display it as frequently or as intensely as women do (i.e., Brody & Hall, 1993; Timmers et al., 1998). In the present study we asked men to do something out of the ordinary, namely to be sufficiently self-disclosing that they fully reported their experiences and expressions

concerning fear. Women described situations in which they were afraid of not being able to fulfil expectations, or in which they were anxious about the consequences of their own behavior. The fact that men mainly described situations about others can be interpreted as reflecting the attempts of males to regulate their emotional self-reports: They did not describe situations in which their own self was at stake, because this type of fear would reflect personal insecurity. Also, fear about the health of close others implicates the role of protecting the other person, which fits with the traditional gender role of men as protectors. These reasons may also explain why men's expressions of fear implied compassion for others, further resulting in the fact that the consequences, feelings and thoughts after expressing fear were mainly positive for men. In addition, the absence of powerlessness in men's fear expressions may also have served to constrain the extent to which differences in fear reactions of men and women were found. Because the emotion fear captures a great variety of experience (for example, fear of spiders, insecurity about oneself, worrying about someone else's medical condition), future research should instruct respondents more specifically.

The sex differences in the reported consequences of expressing powerful emotions were in line with our expectations. We found that men were more likely than women to report instrumental consequences after engaging in powerful expressions. However, these consequences were mainly negative, probably because the targets of men's anger often reacted with anger themselves. It has also been shown that anger is more easily expressed to men than to women, even on an early age (Averill, 1982; Brody, 2000; Allen & Haccoun, 1976; Kring 2000). This could probably be explained by the fact that men make a less vulnerable expression and express more anger than women.

We found that the consequences of powerful expressions by women focused mainly on what the target person felt or thought with respect to themselves or their relationship with the target person. These descriptions were both positive and negative. For example, one woman reported that she thought that it was good that she had expressed how she felt, because the other person appreciated her honesty. However, women also described negative relational consequences, such as not feeling understood by the other person, or feeling guilty or insecure about expressing anger towards the other person. This relational orientation of women is consistent with the findings from previous studies. For

example, in earlier studies it was shown that women suppress their anger more than men do, because they are afraid of hurting the other person's feelings, are afraid of making a negative impression and concerned that the expression of anger will disrupt their relationships (Averill, 1982; Brody, 2000; Fehr et al., 1999; Shields, 1987; Timmers et al., 1998). Thus, these results may reflect differences in what women actually experience in daily life when displaying powerful emotions.

In the present study, self-presentation was a more important motive for women to express powerless emotions than it was for men to express these emotions. No explanation for this latter finding can be given; further research is necessary to obtain insight into the motives for expressing powerless emotions

No other sex differences were observed. Before giving explanations for the absence of sex differences, we will first discuss the remaining findings.

In general, the motives men and women gave for expressing both powerful and powerless emotions are comparable with those found in the vignette study, described in Chapter 2. Cathartic motives appear to be important for expressing both powerful and powerless emotions. Instrumental motives are reported more often in relation to the expression of powerful emotions than to the expression of powerless emotions. This means that when men and women express the same emotions, they have the same social motives for doing that.

We had not expected to find mainly positive thoughts and feelings after having expressed these negative emotions, whether the emotions in question were powerful or powerless. Maybe this was due to the fact that it was the last question of each personal registration form that was concerned with feelings and thoughts about the event. Because respondents first had to describe in detail the circumstances and consequences of their emotional behavior, they may have experienced some degree of cognitive dissonance if the event had not resulted in any positive consequences (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). To reduce the tension, respondents may have made the event more positive and described some positive aspects of the event, not necessarily related to the emotion expressed, for example that they at least have learned something from the event.

A final issue that needs to be discussed is the general absence of sex differences in this study, which is not so contradictory with other diary studies. We offer two

explanations. First, one factor that might have influenced the results is the types of men who participated in the study. The male respondents were all teachers at a school for social work who volunteered to participate in this study. Male teachers working at a school for social work who are interested in participating in a (time-consuming) diary study concerning emotional behavior might not be typical of the (Western) male: Keeping a diary and reflecting on one's emotions are traditionally seen as female concerns (Fischer, 1993). Presumably because of this reason it was proved to be impossible to recruit men with other (less stereotypical feminine) occupations.

Secondly, the results of this diary study are consistent with the results of other studies that used momentary ratings about specific emotions. As noted earlier, these kinds of ratings usually show fewer sex differences than do studies using general self-reports or retrospective, memory-based reports about emotional incidents (Feldman Barrett, Robin, Pietromonaco & Eyssel, 1998; LaFrance & Banaji, 1992). Feldman Barrett (1997) also showed that differences between momentary and retrospective ratings might be caused by the beliefs respondents have about their emotional lives: When responding to global memory-based measures, women describe their reactions as more affectively intense than do men. In addition, women report experiencing and expressing more emotions than do men, whereas no sex differences occur when rating specific emotions measured immediately after social interactions. The present study asked respondents to report on expressions of anger, fear, sadness and disappointment immediately after they were expressed, which might have reduced the possible influence of emotion beliefs.

In conclusion, the present research provides some support for our findings concerning powerful emotions in our previous study (Timmers et al., 1998). The social motives men and women reported in the earlier study reflect differences in what men and women report encountering in everyday life. However, more knowledge of the beliefs of men and women about emotions is needed in order to get more insight into the sex differences obtained in our vignette study. Therefore, we need to study the content of emotion beliefs of men and women. In the next chapter a study of these beliefs will be described.

