

The Relationship Between Anger and Sexual Behavior:

A Review of Theories and Research

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to explore the state of the art about the connection between anger and sexual behavior in heterosexual couples. After a description of anger in psychiatric and psychological literature, the Authors review the available studies about anger-sexuality relationship from theoretical, clinical and experimental point of view. They conclude that there is, till now, a significant confusion about the question. Therefore, Authors suggest a new approach to this problem, due to the possible relevance of the topic in clinical practice. Despite the complexity of this research area, there is a need of clarification regarding methodological trends and clinical perspectives. Authors suggest the relevance of such a research for the understanding of sexual behavior, sexual couples problems and the finding of treatment strategies for anger problems connected to sexual behavior.

Keywords: Sexual behavior, Sexual desire, Anger, Gender differences.

INTRODUCTION

Anger is a commonly experienced emotion that has received relatively little attention in research. Behavioral sciences describe anger as a biological reaction in animals and humans, with the aim to cope with threatening stimuli (Averill, 1982). In humans, anger is an individual's reaction to physical or verbal attacks; in such a situation an individual may get angry (Beck, 1999; Averill, 1983; Baumeister et al., 1996) and try to remove the source of threat (Towl and Crighton, 1996).

In other words, anger can be defined as a way in which a person cognitively senses a hostile situation and react to it. If a neutral situation is wrongly interpreted and the threat is not real, anger may show dysfunctional characteristics (Novaco, 1978; Wenzel and Lystad, 2005; Kassinove and Sukholdosky, 1995). A recurring anger or an overflow of it can constantly involve a negative aptitude towards others, leading to inappropriate and/or disproportionate reaction to events (Towl and Crighton, 1996; Mc Dougall, Venables and Roger, 1991; Novaco and Kemtob, 1998; Beck, 1999). Moreover, it seems to be associated with low agreeableness, social esteem (Kuppens, 2005) and antagonistic behavior (Frijda, Kuipers Schure, 1989). Recurring anger can also be connected to different kinds of relational problems such as aggressive behavior (Norlander and Eckhardt, 2005; Brondolo et al, 1998), reduced social support, occupational stress and burnout (Deffenbacher, 1993; Iescer et al. 1999; Muscatello et al., 2006), and social anxiety (Kashdan and Collins, 2009).

The experience of anger is a commonly noticed emotional phenomenon. According to Averill (1982) people become angry on an average of one to two times a week. Despite the relevance of anger in daily experience, we may agree with the fact that anger is, till now, a "misunderstood emotion" (Tavris, 1989).

It seems that a relation exists between anger appraisals and the occurrence and intensity of anger experiences in frustrating situations (Van Mechelen and Hennes, 2009). The presence or absence of the appraisals of frustration and hostile intention can influence anger occurrence, since the absence of these appraisals results in a smaller proportion of anger occurrence and in a lower intensity of it. So, anger experience would be a categorial phenomenon in which appraisal acts are a cognitive point of reference partially subjected to individual differences.

However, anger has been conceptualized also in terms of a state-trait paradigm, implying a distinction between trait and state anger (Spielberger,

1988). In humans, furthermore, anger is an emotional reaction with a strong interpersonal value (Siegel, 1986; Smith and Lazarus, 1993), related to temperament and personality constructs that condition personal reactions with regard to life events.

ANGER AND GENDER DIFFERENCES

There are gender differences in anger. Men are generally more used to express and perform anger than women (Brody, 1985). However, there is limited empirical evidence to support this view. (Sharkin, 1993). It has also been showed that, in women, internally directed impulsive behaviors are more closely associated with components of anger than externally directed impulsive behaviors (Milligan & Waller, 2001).

Studies that reported gender differences focused on anger control (Malatesta-Magai, Jonas, Shepard, & Culver, 1992), confidence in the expression of anger (Blier & Blier- Wilson, 1989), experience of anger (Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, & Benton, 1992), number of arousing anger experienced incidents, and on the nature of anger reactions to these incidents (Biaggio, 1989). In contrast, a series of studies by Deffenbacher et al. (1996) failed to identify differences in the experience or expression of anger between men and women. In essence, women were equally able to express anger as appropriately and effectively as men (Averill, 1983).

Another line of research examined the effect of gender role identification rather than sex on measures of trait anger. Gender role refers to internalised characteristics culturally regarded as appropriate behavior for males and females (Bem, 1984). Studies by Kopper (1993) and Kopper and Epperson (1991, 1996) reported differences in trait anger, anger expression and anger control among subjects classified as having a masculine, feminine, androgynous and undifferentiated gender role. Individuals with masculine gender role were found to be more prone to anger, more likely to express anger outwardly and less likely to control anger expression.

Researches about sex differences in anger have generally focused on the gender of the participants without considering the sex of the target to whom the anger is directed (Harris, 1994). Averill's (1982) study indicated that the majority of angry episodes involved friends or loved ones and that overall anger was directed to male targets. Brody, Lovas, and Hay (1995) similarly found that adult females were less likely to express anger toward a male than a female target. These studies indicate that the presence of a male target differentially influences male and female anger experience and expression.

Furthermore, previous research were lacking in conceptual clarity often using definitions of anger, aggression and hostility interchangeably (Deffenbacher, et al., 1996; Wallbott & Scherer, 1989), and likewise concepts of sex, gender and gender role (Ashmore, 1990) contributed to field confusion, methodological and measurement ambiguities, also including above all the utilization of students (Thomas, 1993) and clinical samples (Selby, 1994).

Sexual behavior - obviously influenced by biological, psychological and cultural variables - is one of the most important behavioral fields in human life. Therefore, it is possible to hypothesize a relationship between anger and sexuality. It is still under debate establishing which degree of the same behavioral "continuum" both terms belong to. However, little attention has been paid, until now, to the relationship between anger and sexual life, despite the fact that these two different dimensions seem to be connected.

From an historical point of view the main interest of psychiatry and behavioral sciences in the connection between anger and sexuality was centered on the problem of aggression (a possible consequence of anger) in sexual life. In fact, the purpose of aggressive behaviors associated with anger, is to warn aggressors (or perceived aggressors) to stop their threatening behavior. A wide literature about this topic has developed since the second half of twentieth century characterized by a different point of view. Barclay (1969) and Barclay & Haber (1965). (Barclay, 1970) asserted that a particular aggression-sexuality link exists, but Aron (1970) argued that it is only a specific case of a more general relationship between any emotional arousal and sexual attraction. Aron (1970) also hypothesized that strong emotions are redefined as sexual attraction whenever an acceptable object is present, and emotion-producing circumstances do not require the full attention of the individual.

The theoretical rationale of the relationship between anger and sexual behavior can be found in the framework of evolutionistic psychology. The ability to engage in steady sexual relationships is of basic importance for human reproductive success (Fisher, 1998; Hazan & Zeifinan, 1994). The evolution of the human species implies that natural selection pressures may have favoured psychological processes and behaviors able to promote the adaptive expression of sexuality. Our sexual behavior may have strengthened positive emotional ties between partners (such as joy and passion) (Gonzaga et al., 2001; Hazan & Zeifinan, 1999). On the other side, negative emotions (such as anxiety, anger, depression) interfere with

reproductive success since they hinder close relationships (Shaver, Hazan & Bradshaw, 1988; Birnbaum, & Laser-Brandt, 2002).

Kaplan, in particular, proposed a specific model to explain the relationship between negative emotions and sexual desire (Kaplan, 1979, 1984). The author postulated that sexual desire can be interrupted or "shut off" by negative emotions coming from conflicts. Kaplan considered the effects of anxiety and anger, hypothesizing that both of them could suppress sexual desire by shutting off emotional responding. With the aim of testing Kaplan's model, Bozman and Beck (1991, 1995) performed two studies using a naturalistic emotional manipulation. In the first study, the authors used three audiotapes containing descriptions of sexual activity with different self-statements aimed at evoking anger and anxiety (in addition to a control condition including appropriate statements). Penile tumescence and self-reported sexual desire were used as dependent variables. They found that anxiety diminished self-reported sexual desire but not tumescence, while anger decreased both measures of sexual response. The reason why anxiety did not influence tumescence may lie in the weakness of this variable as a measure of sexual desire; in fact, any emotional reaction (either positive or negative) may facilitate genital response indirectly through the activation of general autonomic arousal (Barlow, 1986).

About the effect of gender differences on the relationship between anger and sexual behavior, it seems that female sexuality tends to be strongly connected to the need of a close relationship; generally women strive for intimacy and committed relationships (Eisenberg et al, 2010); they usually long to feel and express love (although not always) for another person.

On the other side, men are more prone to give importance to physical pleasure and sexual intercourse (Regan & Lust, 1999; Arias-Castillo et al., 2009;); furthermore, male sexual self-concepts are characterized by a dimension of aggression, which concerns the extent to which they see themselves as being aggressive, powerful, dominant and experienced, whereas the equivalent tendency for female sexual self-concepts has been reported less (Anderson et al., 1999; Plant et al., 2000). Malamuth et al. (1977) found that under differing experimental conditions there are both facilitative and inverse relationships between sex and aggression. They suggest an alternative model, incorporating distinctions between hostile and assertive aggression and placing emphasis on the role of discriminative inhibitory and disinhibitory cues.

Actually, the relationship between aggression and sexual behavior is one of the main interests in sociobiological research. From a biological perspective,

Korpela and Sandnabba (1994, 1998) indicate the relationship between aggressive behavior and sexual one, with the aid of testosterone propionate (TP) and parachlorophenylalanine (PCPA) in male mice. Previous studies showed that both aggressive and sexual behavior are positively correlated, and it suggested that both behaviors are related to the level of general arousal. TP seems to have a greater influence on sexual behavior and PCPA on aggressive one. These findings support Brain and Poole's view (1976).

Zurbriggen and Megan (2004) examined sexual fantasies and self-report measures of rape myth acceptance, adversarial sexual beliefs, and attitudes toward women. They found that men were more accepting of rape myths, were more likely to believe that relations between men and women are adversarial, and were more conservative in their attitudes about female place in society. Male fantasies were more sexually explicit and were more likely to include multiple sexual partners; female fantasies, on the other side, were more emotional-romantic and more likely to include a single sexual partner. Men fantasize more about dominance, women more about submission. The authors showed that a belief in rape myths was positively correlated with the belief that relations between men and women are adversarial, and both of these variables were negatively correlated with egalitarian beliefs about female place in society. Men tended to focus more on the desire and pleasure of their partner. Desire and pleasure were more closely linked to the fantasies of men than to the fantasies of women.

Critelli and Bivona (2008) suggest that a high percentage of women have fantasies in which they are forced into making sex against their will; a low percentage reports that rape fantasies are either a frequent occurrence or a favorite fantasy. Fantasies are powerful emotional experiences in their own right, and the aspects of rape fantasy that apply to wish fulfillment may involve an aspect or component of fantasized rape rather than a desire for actual rape.

Research in animal behavior revealed the complexity of the social structures, communication, cognition and affect of animals, although we are unique in the animal realm; in fact humans create cultural innovations. Moreover cultural features in a society can, collectively, constitute the core idea of symbolic importance (Tomasello, 1997, 2000; Andrew & van Schaik, 2007).

Evidence exists for a transmission of an animal social culture, in terms of an implied behavioral plasticity, and these findings can have even more important implications for humans. Rhesus monkeys have long been recognized to have highly despotic dominance hierarchies. The harem as the

building block of hamadryas society is considered to have evolved under the selective pressure of desert life. And savanna baboons have been, for decades, the main example of a highly stratified and aggressive primate social system. Nowadays, life sciences are dominated by a highly reductive biological and genetic model that heavily influences our accepted models of human behavior.

In recent years, psychiatric journals are replete with papers dealing with genetic contributions to clinical depression, antisocial behavior and risk-taking behavior (Kendler, 2005). Due to the problem of sexual aggressive behavior, there has been however disagreement also over the intrinsic value of anger. Consequently, there is no unanimous agreement to the specific relationship between anger and sexual behavior although it may deserve a special attention because of its theoretical and practical consequences.

ANGER AND SEXUALITY: EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES

In an experiment of Zillmann and Sapolsky (1997), male subjects were provoked or not provoked, exposed to photographs without erotic valence, nude females, or couples engaged in sexual activities, and provided with an opportunity to express annoyance and to retaliate against their annoyer (in a measurable way). Provocation produced strong effects on all measures of annoyance and retaliatory behavior. In unprovoked subjects, erotic stimuli had no effect whatsoever on such behavior, while under conditions of provocation, reported annoyance in erotic conditions was significantly smaller than in non-erotic conditions.

Another experiment of White (1979) indicates that exposure to affectively positive erotic stimuli significantly reduced retaliatory behavior by angered males to a lower level than that exhibited by subjects exposed to neutral stimuli and by those in the no-exposure control group. In contrast, subjects exposed to erotic stimuli that were reported to be disgusting and unpleasant slightly enhanced subsequent aggressive behavior.

Kelley et al. (1983) affirm that neither provocation anger nor the possibility of engaging in aggressive acts affect the sexual arousal. There is consistent evidence, however, that portrays of dominance can influence perceptions of the individual sexual stimulus. Anger and aggression do not seem to facilitate sexual arousal, dominance cues and clearly elicit sexual perception.

Yates et al. (1984) examining the effects of an anger-producing insult by a female on sexual arousal to rape cues in 24 male university students (aged 21–33 yrs), concluded that anger either (1) disrupted the discrimination between depictions of mutually consenting sex and rape that occurs in normal sexual arousal or increased the power of rape cues to elicit sexual arousal.

Bozman et al. (1991) focused their attention on the effects of anger and anxiety presented during sexual stimuli and their results indicated significant differences in sexual desire. Their research partially support Kaplan's model of maintaining factors in hypoactive sexual desire by demonstrating that anger may be the primary mechanism through which sexual desire and arousal are inhibited.

Prerost (1995) shows that individuals with a high sexual desire show enhanced appreciation of humor with sexual content compared to low sexual desire persons. High sexual desire individuals, when angry, are able to utilize the appreciation of humor with both sexual and aggressive content to dissipate the angry feeling. Individuals with a low sexual desire show little appreciation of sexual humor, and they are not able to utilize the humor to diminish the state of anger.

Research on anger and marital adjustment show a relationship between anger traits and intensity of anger, and between anger repression and marital adjustment. This is particularly true for the spouse who represses anger (Laughrea et al., 1997). Distressed couples can have more problems in controlling their anger than non-distressed couples (Laughrea et al, 2000).

Ridley et al. (2008) found that sexual thoughts and behaviors could be strongly related to positive feelings. The associations of positive feelings and sexuality were found in connection with sexual arousal, sexual desire, and sexual behavior for both males and females in heterosexual relationships. Negative feelings were not associated with sexual desire, sexual behavior, or wanted sexual behavior.

According to Rinaldi (2003) many studies confirmed the existence of a direct correlation between the "independent variable frustration" and the "dependent variable aggressiveness. The hypothesis of the author is to reassess the role of personality variables in the frustration-aggression correlation.

A recent study was addressed to determine the extent in which trait anger was associated with dysfunctional sexual behavior, taking into account possible gender differences. In this correlational study, 410 voluntary subjects (199 men and 211 women) recruited from the students of the

Messina University, Italy, participated in the study. The subjects' sexual behavior was assessed using the Sex and the Average Woman (or Man) questionnaire. In this study was found no association between trait anger and sexual excitement and fulfillment. Gender had no effect on either of these variables. Trait anger had a negative effect on sexual behavior and exerted its worst effects on the nature of sexual behavior rather than on sexual motivation. It was found that a positive correlation between anger and sexual behavior was stronger for men than for women (Muscatello et al., 2010).

Anger-prone individuals are primarily interested in seeking sexual pleasure rather than in committing to a deep relationship. Impersonal sex-prone individuals are likely to engage in sex without emotional closeness and commitment. Therefore, it may be hypothesized that anger-prone individuals may have a gratifying sexual life, but they exert a negative influence on their partners' sexual life. In fact, it was showed how being devalued and undermined may cause sexual withdrawal (Goldstein et al., 2009). Therefore, anger exerts a deeper effect on men than women. Research addressing male-female differences on sexual behavior showed how men express their natural aggressive tendencies by being more assertive than women and by taking the lead in sexual interactions more frequently. Trait anger-prone males are less likely to inhibit their aggressive behavior during sexual intercourse if compared with women.

Gender-role identification may be connected to cultural factors that determine an appropriate behavior for men and women (Bem, 1984) and may have an important effect on the association between sexual behavior and anger. More psychometric specific measures of sexuality are however required, since the SA\NM questionnaire (Eysenck, 1976) lacks validation data.

Trait anger does not seem to affect fulfillment and desire. A growing body of research is emphasizing how negative emotions are not necessarily associated with reduced sexual desire (Nobre et al., 2004; Koukounas & McCabe, 2001; Peterson & Janssen, 2007).

From many points of view, anger seems to be very important for the evaluation of sexual behaviour, not least because losing sexual interest is a clinical entity defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th Edition -text revision (DSM - IV- TR) (APA, 2000) as hypoactive sexual desire disorder. This clinical entity is a widespread condition involving women more often than men (Hems & Crow, 1999), also frequent in patients with mental disorders, particularly in mood

disorders (Goldstein et al, 2009). Therefore, it is possible to hypothesize that sexual withdrawal involves only situational anger evoked by sexual intercourses, not trait anger. Sexual problems are probably more common than it is known; therefore people can have troubles even in discussing them with clinicians (Peplau, 2003). This problem needs a scrupulous clinical attention, since trait anger may be considered an indicator of a discomfort in sexual life involving both sexual activity and closeness between partners.

Anger mechanism control implies a negative emotion caused by the perception of a frustration. Its physical expression is an intensive ("hot") aggressive attack. It must be distinguished from a less intensive ("cold") aggressive attack, typical of predators. Another kind of aggression is linked to male dominant behavior, referring to social rules, that seems to be connected to desidering and angry behavior. When this system is activated at a low level it creates a general state of arousal caused by any daily stable frustration. (Graziottin, 1998a, 2004).

Available knowledge of interactions between desidering and angry systems, and their implications for social dominance, suggest that these systems are biologically important for the regulation of instinctual components of male sexual desire. Furthermore, they can explain why aggressivity can be perceived as a sexual arousal by many men, both in normal and in psychopathological conditions. (Kafka, 1997; Panksepp, 1998; Anderson et al., 1999; Sols & Turnbull, 2002). In daily life, clinical experience suggests that anger can induce men to look for sex as a physical and emotional outflow. For women, instead, anger seems to be a discouragement, a desire inhibitor, particularly when the partner is considered the responsible of the female frustration.

Gray et al. (1994) examined the relation between two personality characteristics (dominance and anger) and hormones in normally aging men. It was found that an identification of a personality profile characterized as dominant with some aggressive behavior exists; it tends to be correlated with a hormonal pattern, labelled as "availability of androgens." These results are partially consistent with previous findings in animals, adolescents, and criminal populations about the fact that "aggressive dominance" is related to testosterone. Kelley et al. (1983) found that neither provocation anger nor the possibility of engaging in aggressive acts affect the sexual arousal. Anger do not seem to facilitate sexual arousal, dominance clearly elicits perceptions of sexuality.

A study of Blain et al (1996) suggest that dysfunctional sexual behavior (DSB), which is high in survivors of physical and sexual assault , can

increase risk for a number of negative outcomes, including STD risk and unwanted pregnancy (Bartoy & Kinder, 1998; Smith et al, 2004; Koenig, Doll, O'Leary, & Pequegnat, 2004) . In previous studies, anger has been found to be a predictor of sexual risk taking (Schroder & Carey, 2005). In the Blain et al study, subjects completed the Trauma Symptom Inventory (TSI; Briere, Elliott, Harris, & Cotman, 1995), the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI; Spielberger, 1988), and the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II; Beck, Steer, Ball, & Ranieri, 1996). Results showed that "Anger In" may be considered an important risk factor for women with a history of interpersonal trauma. It seems that males and females may have different risk factors for DSB, according to previously observed gender differences in anger (Zoccali et al, 2007). On the contrary, trait anger was not predictive of sexual concerns for either gender. Ridley et al. (2008) found that sexual thoughts and behaviors are strongly related to positive feelings. Positive feelings and sexuality are connected with sexual arousal, sexual desire, and sexual behavior for both males and females in heterosexual relationships and same-sex relationships. Negative feelings are not associated with sexual desire, sexual behavior, or wanted sexual behavior. Positive feelings are associated with sexual variables.

ANGER IMPACT ON MARITAL SEXUAL SATISFACTION

A Canadian study (Belanger, Laughrea & Lafontaine, 2001) explored the influence of different forms of anger on marriage sexual satisfaction, in clinical and non-clinical population. On the basis of examined data, wives' sexual satisfaction is best explained by their disposition to perceive a wide range of situations as annoying or frustrating (Trait Anger), and by how often their angry feelings toward her partner are held or suppressed (Anger-in) or expressed in an angry manner (Anger-out). Their sexual satisfaction was also explained by the intensity of their husband's hangry feelings (State Anger). Furthermore, the husband's State Anger, his Anger-in and his wife's Anger-out expression predicted a significant part in his sexual satisfaction. However, there have been few studies on the role of anger in sexual adjustment within marriage, while some studies deals with the connection between anger and marital adjustment (Laughrea, Belanger, Write, 1996, 1996b; Laughrea et al., 1997, 2000).

It is supposed that an interrelation exists between the quality of sexual communication, sexual satisfaction and marital well-being (Cupa and

Cornstock, 1990). Furthermore, Sprecher and McInney (Sprecher & McKinney, 1993) showed that communication, feeling of control, empowerment, and self-control within a relationship are all linked to sexual satisfaction. Other studies also showed (Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994) that sexual satisfaction and adaptation during the first year of marriage could be predicted by the number of episodes in which a partner felt good and esteemed because of his/her assertiveness in relation with the partner. On the other hand, feelings of tension predicted sexual maladjustment (Henderson-King & Veroff, 1994).

It could be important to consider the difference between female and male perception of fundamental factors in sexual satisfaction. Some researches on marital relationships found that women were more prone than their partners to connect the quality of their sexual life to their level of affinity, tenderness, love, and intimacy (Hatfield et al, 1988; Patton & Waring, 1985). Beck and Bozman (1995), submitted women and men to erotic audiotapes designed to elicit either negative feelings such as anxiety and anger, or neutral feelings. They found that anxiety and anger reduced sexual desire in both sexes, but anger had a greater impact on female sexual arousal rather than on male one. Therefore, anger may provoke different reactions in female and male sexual arousal. Sexual dissatisfaction in women is supposed to be connected to the intensity of their angry feelings towards their partner, their perception of marital situations as annoying or frustrating, disposition to keep angry feelings and express anger through sarcastic remarks towards their partner.

DISCUSSION AND CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

It may be interesting for marital and sex therapists to take into consideration the clinical implications of the connection between anger and sexual behavior. It is possible to hypothesize an evaluation and an intervention addressed to improve sexual satisfaction within a relationship, taking into account the level and anger intensity between the partners. Gender differences in anger expressions, therefore, are required to be taken into consideration. Women seem to be more vulnerable to anger expressions than their male partners. Such vulnerability may imply that women need to be in relationships where there is a good communication and lower levels of conflict in order to have a satisfying sexual response. Furthermore, male sexual response could be less influenced by their partners' anger expression.

According to a study, sexual assertiveness increases sexual satisfaction (Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 1991). Therefore, it would be interesting to determine whether positive anger management including assertiveness may help to increase sexual satisfaction. Several studies emphasised the existence of a continuum between anger manifestation and marital violence (Metz and Dwyer, 1993) So, it may be important to determine whether a risk of sexual violence is connected to those relationships which show stronger expressions of anger.

Milovchevich et al (2001), investigated the influence of sex, gender role identification and sex of the target of anger on measures of state and trait anger in an Australian community sample. Subjects adopting a masculine gender role reported higher levels of trait anger and outward anger expressions and rated a lower anger control; feminine subjects showed lower levels of trait anger, expressed inward anger and were able to display higher levels of control. Finally, those classified as androgynous reported high levels of trait anger, outward anger expressions and greater anger control.

They showed that gender role identification rather than sex were related to anger experience, expression and control. Sex of the target of anger was found to provide a weak contextual influence on male and female expression of anger. Males and females reported similar levels of anger and disposition to express and control anger across state and trait measures, although the gender role identification of respondents significantly affected anger experience and expression. This finding is consistent with previous works by Kopper (1993) and Kopper and Epperson (1991, 1996).

Anger is also primarily interpersonal (Averill, 1983; Deffenbacher et al, 1996; Denham & Bultemeier, 1993). The presence of a male target reduces anger expression of females and increases anger expression in males whilst levels of anger experience did not differ (Brody et al, 1995; Harris, 1994). The presence of a male target increases the level of outward anger expression for male subjects and decreases anger expression for female subjects. The presence of a female target reduces male anger expression.

These results can have important implications in clinical practice. In the same way in which it was suggested a number of techniques for anger control and management (Kassinova, 1995; Deffenbacher et al, 1996; Robins & Novaco, 1999; Mayne & Ambrose, 1999; Hazebroek, Howells e Day, 2001; Harmon-Jones, 2003; Eckards, Norlander and Deffenbach, 2004), can be possible a management of the connection between anger and sexuality form a clinical perspective. As a consequence of assumed sex

differences, it is possible that male patients need assistance in reducing their anger expression, whilst women should be encouraged to explore their effective anger expression including increased expression (Kemp & Strongman, 1995). Unfortunately, there is little support for differential approaches to male and female patients in anger management therapy. However, classifications of gender role, not sex per se, seems to have a strong connection to anger experience, expression and control to both a trait and state level.

People respond to anger eliciting situations using gender patterns which process information in line with gender role categories (Bem, 1984). Therefore, individuals operate from differential relational structures; consequentially, intensity of anger experience and ability to regulate one's behavior are based on gender role identity. In this context gender roles are taught and validated as relational patterns dealing with one's relationship with others. Masculine individuals experience greater intensity of anger and outward behavioral responses, whilst feminine individuals learn to control anger experience and expression.

There are massive sex differences in violence expression (Archer & Parker, 1994) and specific behaviors involved in expression of anger. Furthermore, there is some evidence (Campbell & Muncer, 1994) that males and females differ in their social representations of behavioral aggression, with men perceiving the instrumental function of behavioral aggression and women privileging expressive function. Research in anger sex differences may need to take into a major consideration cultural frameworks and rules conditioning specific forms of anger expression (see, for example Deffenbacher & Swain, 1999) rather than anger expression in general.

From a biological and ethological point of view, sexual behavior in animals may suggest new important paradigms in the approach to the evolution of behaviors (see Pennisi for a comment) (2005). The comparison between behaviors of various animal species shows that for some species as fishing spiders, aggression may help individuals survive, but it can impair reproductive success. The female of this species is more aggressive and eats the would-be partner. Paleontologist Steven J. Gould (2002) and geneticist Richard Lewontin (2004) suggest that maladaptive traits could persist if linked with beneficial ones in an often-precarious balancing act.

CONCLUSIONS

It appears quite difficult to summarize results about the state of the art of the relationship between anger and sexuality. According to available data and views the relationship between anger and sexuality sometimes seems to demonstrate that both women and men are conditioned by anger. Such a relation seems to be more negative for women than for men. There is no presence of unfailing data. Therefore, data from clinical and experimental studies within the frame of biological, psychological and psychiatric theories are quite discordant. There is no concordance of views about the relationship between these two variables. A general evaluation of the state of the art, suggests the absolute lack of consistency, both in theoretical frameworks and in experimental data. Future studies, based on a common methodology, a common scientific language and standardized evaluation instruments, are strongly required. Therefore, according to us, at the present time, an only conclusion can be drawn: there is no conclusion. In our opinion, future researches about the relationship between anger and sexuality are urgently required. These researches actually could be fundamental for the understanding of problematic couple relationships, of diagnosis of their sexual difficulties and for the finding and utilization of due therapies.

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