

Leader's Anger and Employee Upward Voice *

Wu Liu

Department of Management and Marketing
Faculty of Business
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong
E-mail: wu.liu@polyu.edu.hk

Fenghao Wang

Department of Management and Marketing
Faculty of Business
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong
E-mail: andrew.wang@connect.polyu.hk

Zhenyu Liao

Department of Management and Organizational Development
D'Amore-McKim School of Business
Northeastern University
E-mail: liaozenyu@northeastern.edu

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“So why the f*** doesn't it do that??” on a summer day of 2008, Steve Jobs questioned his team angrily when he found out that MobileMe (an online service provided by Apple) did not meet his expectations (Viticci, 2011). Actually, this IT genius and incredible leader often unleashed his incisive temper on those who failed to meet his incredibly high standards, and surprisingly, his teams could often come up with and share great ideas that shook the world eventually. Similarly, in the Oscar-winning movie “Whiplash”, the famed conductor (Mr. Fletcher) told his student that “There are no two words in the English language more harmful than “good job”.” He felt that it was his responsibility to push people beyond what's expected from them, and he always displayed anger to his students for demanding better performance. In short, anger displayed by the authority seems to motivate members to proactively change the status quo on the way to achieve extraordinary performance.

However, we also know that oftentimes, when facing an angry boss, people tend to sweep things under the carpet rather than speaking up (see a recent Wall Street Journal article by Shellenbarger, 2012). In this context, anger displayed by the authority figures seems to demotivate members from initiating possible changes and achieving superior performance.

The above anecdotal discussions suggest that leader’s anger may have complicated and even seemingly contradictory effects on employee *upward voice*, or employees’ expression of constructive work-related ideas to organizational leaders (Morrison, 2011, 2014). In many organizations, employees are uniquely positioned to identify emerging problems and opportunities that can critically influence the effectiveness of work processes and outcomes (Morrison, 2000; Ryan & Oestreich, 1998). In this context, upward voice plays a critical role in linking employees' private knowledge and insights with leaders' organizational influence.

The purpose of this book chapter is to share some experience in the journey of

exploring whether, why leader's display of anger influences employee voice. Based on emotion as social information theory (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2010), we differentiate two types of anger: anger toward tasks or task-focused anger, and anger toward employees or person-focused anger. We thought that task-focused anger signals leader's dissatisfaction with tasks or current situation, and it would motivate employees to reflect status-quo, thus leading to upward voice. By contrast, person-focused anger signals leader's dominance and status, and it would threaten employees' self-esteem, thus discouraging voice.

Our initial findings have suggested that it is important to examine voice at the within-individual level and that our hypothesized model makes sense. In the following, we structuralize our experience-sharing in several sections. We will highlight why our exploration is important and meaningful by reviewing the relevant literature, then we will propose our theoretical model, and we will share the empirical work devoted into this project. In the final section, we would like to summarize the lessons and potential future directions to continue this journey.

Leader's Emotional Display and Employee Voice Behavior

Employee voice, or the "discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning" (Morrison, 2011: 375; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), plays an important role in organizations (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Scholars have argued that organizational effectiveness largely depends on members sharing opinions and speaking up with suggestions and concerns (Edmondson, 1999; Erez, LePine, & Elms, 2002; McClean, Detert, & Burris, 2013). Hence, it is not surprising that the antecedents of upward voice are the focus of a growing body of research (see Morrison, 2011, 2014, for a review).

In the leader-member context, employees often fear speaking up to their leaders, because they are concerned about damaging their own images, hurting relationships with

leaders, or even being retaliated against (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Kish-Gephart, Detert, Treviño, & Edmondson, 2009; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Meanwhile, prior voice literature has highlighted the important role that leaders play in eliciting voice from subordinates, suggesting critical antecedents such as leader-member exchange relationships (e.g., Burris, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008; Liu, Tangirala, & Ramanujam, 2013; Van Dyne, Kamdar, & Joireman, 2008), ethical leadership styles (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009) and openness to change (Detert & Burris, 2007; Liu, Zhu, & Yang, 2010).

Although existing voice research is invaluable in demonstrating stable, dyadic-level antecedents of voice for leader-member interactions (see Morrison, 2011, 2014), it has two critical limitations. First, little research has paid attention to the effects of leader's emotions on voice. Although some qualitative studies and conceptual discussions have highlighted that employees' own emotions play a critical role (e.g., Edwards, Ashkanasy, & Gardner, 2009; Kish-Gephart, Detert, Treviño, & Edmondson, 2009; Milliken et al., 2003), we still know little about how leader's emotions affect employee voice (one exception is Liu, Song, Li, & Liao, 2017). This is surprising because recent research has shown that leader's emotions could importantly shape employee's affective experiences, attitudes, and behaviors (see a review by Gooty, Connelly, Griffith, & Gupta, 2010). Emotion literature has also suggested that emotions serve as a form of communication that influences the behavior of others in social interactions (Fridlund, 1994; Frijda, 1986). Individuals, especially those with less power, pay particular attention to the emotions of others in order to behave appropriately in social interactions (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004a). Therefore, leader's emotion should be an important predictor of employee voice.

Second, the possible within-individual variance of voice has almost been neglected. Both employees and leaders can behave differently in the moment; that is, an employee may be more likely to speak up to a leader in certain interaction episodes, while being less likely

to do so in other episodes (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Detert & Treviño, 2010). Some prior discussions, for example, have suggested that employees “read the wind” to discern whether the situation is favorable to sharing their suggestions, opinions, or concerns with leaders (Dutton, Ashford, Wierba, O'Neill, & Hayes, 1997; Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003). However, little attention has been paid to the possible fluctuation of employee voice from one episode to another. To really capture the within-individual dynamics of voice, we need to take a within-individual perspective to explore voice.

One recent study conducted by Liu and colleagues (2017) has highlighted that leader's emotion critically influence employee voice behavior. Using cell phones to collect interaction data from both managers and their subordinates, the authors obtained 640 interactions from 85 leader-employee dyads in 5 IT companies in mainland China. They found that leaders' positive affect was positively related to employees' voice behavior for two different reasons. On the one hand, leader's positive affect was contagious to employees (emotional contagion mechanism); and on the other hand, employees were cognitively aware of leader's positive affect (signaling mechanism). Both mechanisms made employees feel psychologically safe, especially when the leader-member exchange relationship was weak. Interestingly, they also found that leaders' negative affect was positively related to employees' voice, but neither emotional contagion nor signaling mechanisms explained this effect.

Liu et al.'s (2017) work highlights the important role of leaders' affect in the voice process and also provides insights concerning when employees would choose to speak up to their leaders. With the experience sampling method (ESM) through mobile surveys, they showed that over 60 percent of the variance of employee voice behavior actually resided at the within-individual level. This finding confirms the conceptual discussions that employees would choose some episodes to speak up, but not others. It also indicates that it is important

to examine voice at the within-individual level.

Moreover, another interesting finding is that both leader's positive emotions and negative emotions were positively related to employee voice. Although it is relatively easy to explain the effects of leader's positive emotions, it is hard to explain the impact of leader's negative emotions. Part of the reason is probably due to the complexity of negative emotions. Indeed, compared with positive emotions (e.g., happiness, joy, and enthusiasm), negative emotions (e.g., guilt, anger, and sadness) carry richer and more diversified meanings, especially in social interactions (de Rivera et al., 1989; Fredrickson, 1998). For example, when a leader feels guilty toward his or her member, the leader is likely to compensate the member in order to eliminate the guilt feeling. While a leader gets angry toward a member, the leader is likely to punish the member in order to decrease the anger. In other words, different types of negative emotions have distinct or even contradictory implications to social interactions. Therefore, some scholars suggest that it would be more fruitful to examine discrete emotions rather than aggregated affect in the investigation of affective experience in social interactions (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2010).

In this chapter, we choose to focus on anger, a particular type of negative emotion, in leader-member interaction, and its effects on employee voice behavior. We develop a conceptual model based on the emotion as social information theory (EASI, Van Kleef et al., 2010).

Emotion as Social Information Theory and Anger

The critical premise of EASI is that an individual's emotion can influence other's affective experience, attitudes, or behaviors in social interactions (Fridlund, 1994; Frijda, 1986; Parkinson, 1996). Integrating previous emotion research (e.g., Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994) and motivated information processing theory (De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003), Van Kleef and colleagues have examined the social functions of emotions, mainly in social

decision making settings (e.g., negotiation, Van Kleef et al., 2004, 2009, 2010). One important type of discrete emotion explored in this line of research is anger, a discrete emotion associated with a tendency to aggress against a target (a person or a situation, e.g., Miron-Spektor, Efrat-Treister, Rafaeli, & Schwarz-Cohen, 2011; Steinel, Van Kleef, & Harinck, 2008; Van Dijk, Van Kleef, Steinel, & Van Beest, 2008).

Anger signals both frustration from blocked goals and accusation of others' wrongdoing, thus serving important but complicated social functions (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). On the one hand, anger signals dissatisfaction with the current situation, thus calling for situation modification and change. When one is the target of anger expression, people may infer that this person did something wrong and this inference may in turn inform the person's behavior (e.g., apologizing, changing one's conduct, acceding to the other's wishes). Supporting this idea, expressions of anger have been found to elicit greater concessions in negotiations than expressions of happiness do (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004a). In interactions between leaders and employees, leader's display of anger may increase employee effort and motivation (Van Doorn, van Kleef, & van der Pligt, 2013; Van Kleef, Homan, Beersma, & Van Knippenberg, 2010) as well as team performance (Van Kleef, Homan, Beersma, van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, & Damen, 2009). Just as described at the beginning of the chapter, Steve Jobs' anger seemed to successfully motivate employees at Apple to make innovative achievements.

On the other hand, as anger is also related to accusing and aggressing others, it also signals power and distance (Tiedens, 2001), thus indicating threat and insecurity. As a consequence, anger may elicit a "prevention orientation," namely a motivation to seek security and avoid pain (Higgins, 1998). Research suggests that observing anger expressions evokes a sense of threat (Miron-Spektor et al., 2011). Not surprisingly, leader's expression of anger has also been found related to low effectiveness (Gaddis, Connelly, & Mumford, 2004;

Lewis, 2000) and less coordination among team members (Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). Just as the other example described at the beginning of the chapter, the anger displayed by the conductor in the movie of “Whiplash” hurt some students so badly that those students eventually lost faith to their beloved career.

In short, as anger may signal both situation change and dominance over others, existing literature of anger seems to suggest contradictory effects of anger, especially in the leader-employee interaction context.

Two Types of Anger and Voice

To unpack the rich meaning of anger in leader-member interactions, we propose to differentiate two types of anger: task-focused anger and person-focused anger. The former emphasizes task performance or status-quo as the target of anger, whereas the latter emphasizes the employee as the target of anger.

An emotion is defined as a discrete feeling state associated with a particular target, often a person or a situation (Frijda, 1986). In other words, target is a critical component of emotion. It is especially important to consider the target of an emotion in social interactions because it would help to accurately interpret the social information carried with the emotion (Keltner & Haidt, 1999). Supporting this idea, in negotiation settings, Steinel et al. (2008) used computer to manipulate anger with offer (they called “behavior-oriented anger”) and anger with negotiation partner (they called “person-oriented anger”). They found that anger with offer elicited more concessions from the other party than anger with person, because anger with offer provided more clear and diagnostic information to the other party than anger with person (Van Kleef et al., 2004a). This finding has also been replicated by Lelieveld and colleagues (Lelieveld et al., 2011) in negotiation settings.

Extending these discussions to the context of leader-employee interactions, we argue that these two types of anger exist and have distinct effects on voice. Specially, leader’s

display of task-focused anger signals leader's dissatisfaction with the current task performance and status-quo. It thus calls for situation modification and change. In other words, task-focused anger provides clear and diagnostic information regarding change (Lelieveld et al., 2011; Steinel et al., 2008), a core purpose of voice (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Previous research has suggested that employees are more likely to speak up to their leader to share constructive ideas, opinions, and concerns to change status-quo when their leaders seek such inputs (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). Therefore, we predict that in interaction episodes, leader's display of task-focused anger is positively related to employee voice (H1).

By contrast, leaders' display of person-focused anger signals power, distance, and control over employees (c.f., Lemay, Overall, & Clark, 2012; Tiedens, 2001). It may elicit feelings such as fear and threat, as well as prevention-oriented responses of employees (Miron-Spektor et al., 2011). According to the existing voice literature, employees are less likely to speak up when they perceive themselves to be in disadvantaged positions in social hierarchy (Islam & Zyphur, 2005; Liu, Tangirala, Lam, Chen, Jia, & Huang, 2014) or to have low sense of control (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). Therefore, we predict that in interaction episodes, leader's display of person-focused anger is negatively related to employee voice (H2).

In the following, we further propose the mediating mechanisms for these effects.

Leader's Display of Task-focused Anger. We argue that reflection is an important mediator linking leader's display of task-focused anger to employee voice. By definition, reflection refers to a cognitive process in which a person endeavors to increase his or her awareness of personal experiences and therefore his or her ability to learn from them (Anseel et al., 2009: 23; Gordon & Hullfish, 1961). Leader's display of task-focused anger signals dissatisfaction with the current task performance and status-quo, so it motivates employees to

analyze current situations and reconsider strategies to make improvements. In a recent experimental research, Van Doorn et al. (2013) found that instructor's anger was positively related to students' learning performance. They explained that compared with positive emotions, anger calls for behavioral change. In a similar vein, Miron-Spektor and colleagues (2011) argued and reported that observing anger motivated employees to focus on problems and engage in analytic thinking to make changes. Therefore, leader's display of task-focused anger would lead to employees' reflection.

Employee's reflection, in turn, would lead to voice. One underlying driving force of voice is to reflect upon what is going on, identify gaps with expectation, and make improvements (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). When employees engage in reflection, they are more likely to find space for improvements and thus speak up to leaders. Based on these discussions, we predict that in interaction episodes, employees' reflection mediates the positive relationship between leader's display of task-focused anger and employee voice (H3).

Leader's Display of Person-focused Anger. We argue that self-esteem is an important mediator linking leader's display of person-focused anger to employee voice. Leader's display of person-focused anger may elicit feelings such as fear, threat, and powerlessness (Miron-Spektor et al., 2011). It reminds employees of their low value and dependence on leaders during the interaction. As a result, leader's person-focused anger results in the decrease of employees' self-esteem.

Self-esteem, in turn, would drive employees to speak up (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Voice behavior requires proactive and assertive nonconformance. It is challenging and thus risky because it is often interpreted as trouble-making or rebel (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Accordingly, self-esteem would encourage voice because it enables employees to stand up to share different opinions and challenge the status quo (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012; Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995). Supporting this premise in a field study, LePine

and Van Dyne (1998) found that employees' self-esteem was positively related to voice in groups. Based on the above discussions, we argue that in interaction episodes, employee self-esteem mediates the negative relationship between leader's display of person-focused anger and employee voice (H4).

Research Journey and Methodology

Phase 1. Survey instrument development and validation

There were no existing scales to measure the two core independent variables in our study—task-focused anger and person-focused anger. All existing studies only manipulated them in laboratories (e.g., Lelieveld et al., 2011; Steinel et al., 2008). Therefore, we developed scales to measure them in the field.

First, we carefully reviewed the relevant literature on anger (e.g., Azevedo, Wang, Goulart, Lotufo, & Benseñor, 2010; Lemay, Overall, & Clark, 2012; Tiedens, 2001; Watson & Clark, 1999), and generated 10 items for each type of anger (task vs. personal) after intensive discussions among co-authors.

Second, we conducted an online study in mainland China via Wenjuanxing with the purpose to validate this newly-created scale. Specifically, we solicited participants with work experience, and asked them to recall and write up a past experience when their direct managers were angry toward them. We then asked them to fill in a survey, including the new anger scale, and measures of abusive supervision (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007), fear (Watson & Clark, 1999), leader's trait anger (modified from Azevedo et al., 2010), and leader's state anger (modified from Tiedens, 2001). All the survey questions were on 5-point Likert scales (1 = "mostly disagree", and 5 = "mostly agree").

Three-hundred and twelve participants filled out our online survey, but 7 of them reported somebody else's experience or did not finish the survey. Our final sample was 305 people, with 50.82% female, an average age of 32.13 (SD = 6.67), an average work

experience of 8.73 years ($SD = 6.42$), an average tenure in the current organization of 5.56 years ($SD = 4.67$) and an average tenure with the current manager of 3.42 years ($SD = 2.77$). Most of them had a bachelor's degree (76.39%).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) on the two anger scales revealed that some items had low loadings, or were double-loaded, so we finally chose 4 items for each anger scale. Specifically, task-focused anger scale includes the following items: 1. My leader was angry toward me because I did not engage in my work enough. 2. My leader was angry toward me because I did not do well for my assigned task. 3. My leader was angry toward me because my work was not satisfactory. 4. My leader was angry toward me because the task I finished was not up to standard. Person-focused anger scale include the following items: 1. My leader was angry toward me because s/he did not like me as a person. 2. My leader was angry toward me because s/he looked down on me. 3. My leader was angry toward me because s/he hated me. 4. My leader was angry toward me because s/he just wanted to find faults.

We further conducted a series of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) by including these two new anger scales, abusive supervision, fear, leader's trait anger, and leader's state anger. The CFA results showed that task-focused and person-focused anger were differentiated from each other, and they were also distinguishable from other related constructs, such as fear, abusive supervision, state anger, and trait anger. Table 1 showed the descriptive statistics and correlations of these measures. Interestingly, the task-focused anger was not related to person-focused anger at all ($r = -.05$, non-significant).

Phase 2. The field study

The second phase of our research is a field study aiming to test our proposed model. Immediately after we obtained the new measures of two types of anger, we had an opportunity to collect data using Experience Sampling Method from several construction companies in a northwestern city in China. From our pilot interviews in these companies, we

learned that employees closely worked with their managers in project teams for managing a particular construction project. A typical project team included a project manager, who was in charge of everything in this project, a chief engineer, an estimator, an architect, a construction expeditor, a construction site safety manager, a construction site materials manager, and a quality control manager. As a team, they worked together to ensure that construction projects could be finished on time. Usually the work was very stressful for coordination and meeting deadlines, so the emotional expression of leaders was usually quite common and straightforward.

We invited 56 teams and randomly selected 3 members from each team to participate in our study. All participants were invited to briefing sessions, in which we communicated the purpose, content, and procedures of the study. During the briefing, every participant was trained on a one-to-one basis on how to use the mobile survey system through which we would collect interaction data (described in the next paragraph). Toward the end of the briefings, they finished a baseline survey, in which demographic information and control variables were collected.

We tracked participants for 11 working days. On each day, participants filled in mobile surveys twice, once in the morning and the other in the afternoon. In the morning survey, they reported their self-reflection and self-esteem; while in the afternoon survey, they reported leader state anger on that day, task- and person-focused anger, and voice behavior. To encourage participation, we paid participants 10 RMB (about 1.5 USD) for each mobile survey. We cleaned the data by conducting attention check embedded in the mobile survey, deleting surveys submitted more than one hour later than the required time, excluding incomplete responses, and matching mediators and dependent variables with independent variables measured in previous days. Finally, we obtained 656 episodes from 105 members working in 48 teams. Among these 105 members, 21 were female (20%), 95 (90.5%) hold a

degree from junior college or above, the average age was 31.3 years old, the average work tenure was 112.4 months, the average organizational tenure was 73.9 months, and the average team tenure was 37.4 months.

Measures. We used the same scales as in phase 1 study to measure leader state anger, task and person-focused anger. We employed a modified scale from Rosenberg (1965) to measure member's momentary self-esteem. We also modified the scale of systematic reflection scale proposed by Ellis, Carette, Anseel, & Lievens (2014) to measure member's momentary self-reflection. Finally, members reported voice behavior using the scale proposed by Liu et al. (2017). Table 2 showed the descriptive statistics and correlations of these measures.

Analysis. The data we collected was nested in nature, with interaction episodes nested within members, and members nested within teams. We thus conducted three-level Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) analysis to check variance partition for different variables (see Table 3). We found that for all of the focal variables, the main variances were at the within-individual and individual levels, rather than at the team level.

Results. We reported HLM results in Table 4. Hypothesis 1 predicts that leader task-focused anger would positively lead to employee voice, and Hypothesis 3 argues that such a path is explained by self-reflection. In Model 1, we controlled for employee voice in the previous day and person-focused anger, and we found that leader task-focused anger was negatively but not significantly related to employee voice ($r = -.03$, *n.s.*; Model 1). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. In addition, after controlling for self-reflection in previous day and person-focused anger, we found a negative effect of task-focused anger on employee self-reflection ($\gamma = -.05$, $p < .05$; Model 2), and a marginally significant positive effect of self-reflection on voice behavior ($\gamma = .14$, $p < .10$; Model 4) after controlling for voice in previous day. Results of the mediation test showed a non-significant indirect effect of $-.01$ (95% CI [-

.02, .001]). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was not supported either.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that leader person-focused anger would lead to employee voice, and Hypothesis 4 argues that such a path is explained by self-esteem. In Model 1, we controlled for employee voice in the previous day and task-focused anger, and we found that leader person-focused anger was positively but not significantly related to employee voice ($\gamma = .03$, *n.s.*; Model 1). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Moreover, after controlling for self-esteem in previous day and task-focused anger, we found a positive but non-significant effect of person-focused anger on self-esteem ($\gamma = .03$, *n.s.*; Model 5), and a significant positive effect of self-esteem on voice behavior ($\gamma = .13$, $p < .05$; Model 7) after controlling for voice in previous day. Results of the mediation test showed a non-significant indirect effect of -.01 (95% CI [-0.01 0.02]). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Discussions

It was quite daunting for us to get these results. We thus carefully reviewed each step we followed for identifying the potential reasons. One critical reason we found was that the measures we developed for task- vs. person-focused anger were probably employee's attribution toward leader anger rather than leader anger itself. Indeed, the items we created seemed not only about leader anger, but also the reasons why the leader is angry. This mistake is perhaps fundamentally rooted in the conceptualization ambiguity for the two types of anger. In experimental and negotiation settings (e.g., Lelieveld et al., 2011; Steinel et al., 2008), it is fairly clear to distinguish the anger toward a negotiation offer from the anger toward a negotiator. However, at work settings where leaders and members usually have past interaction history, the line between task-focused and person-focused is not explicitly clear. A leader displays anger probably because s/he is not satisfied with the task, but the member could interpret leader anger as a personal retaliation for something the member did long time ago. Therefore, member's attribution toward leader anger plays an important role. Whether a

leader displays anger is one thing, and how a member attributes the leader anger is another thing. Moreover, these two together would influence how a member responds to leader anger.

With these thoughts in mind, we wanted to further explore the ESM data. Assuming what we generated and measured were task- and person-focused anger attribution, can we find the interaction effects of leader anger and member anger attribution on employee self-reflection or employee self-esteem, and thus employee voice? We thus conducted more analyses, and reported our findings in Table 5.

Table 5 shows the results for supplementary analyses including leader anger. In terms of task-focused anger path, we did not find a joint effect of leader anger and task-focused anger attribution on voice behavior ($\gamma = .01$, *n.s.*, Model 1). In addition, we did not find their interactive effect on self-reflection ($\gamma = -.01$, *n.s.*, Model 2), despite a positive effect of self-reflection on voice behavior ($\gamma = .23$, $p < .01$, Model 3). Not surprisingly, we did not find support for a mediated moderation model (.01, 95% CI [-.02, .04]) in which self-reflection mediates the joint effect of leader anger and task-focused anger attribution on voice behavior.

In terms of person-focused anger path, we did not find a joint effect of leader anger and person-focused anger attribution on voice behavior ($\gamma = -.02$, *n.s.*, Model 1). Moreover, we found their marginally significant interactive effect on self-esteem ($\gamma = -.14$, $p < .10$, Model 4), and a positive effect of self-esteem on voice behavior ($\gamma = .23$, $p < .01$, Model 5). Consequently, we found support for a mediated moderation model (-.03, 95% CI [-.06, -.004]) in which self-esteem mediates the joint effect of leader anger and person-focused anger attribution on voice. To further depict joint effects, we conducted simple slope analysis using the tool developed by Preacher, Curran, and Bauer (2006). The interaction effect is displayed in Figure 2. Consistent with our prediction, when employees interpret leader anger as highly person-focused, leader anger is likely to impair employee self-esteem ($\gamma = -.18$, $p < 0.001$). However, when leader anger is regarded as lowly person-focused, employee self-esteem is

not affected by leader anger ($\gamma = .01, p > 0.05$).

Future Research Directions

We propose to address these critical limitations of voice research by taking a within-individual approach to examine the effects of leader's display of anger on employee voice. Specially, we propose to differentiate two types of leader's anger. Task-focused anger signals dissatisfaction with the current task performance and situation, thus calling for situation modification and change. We predict that it would be positively associated with voice via employee's reflection. By contrast, person-focused anger signals power and distance over employees (Tiedens, 2001), thus indicating threat and insecurity. We predict that it would be negative associated with voice via self-esteem. However, our data failed to provide support to these hypotheses. Instead, we found that what we measured was probably anger attribution rather than anger per se. Moreover, we obtained some initial evidence that leader anger and person-focused attribution together hurt employee self-esteem, thus discouraging voice behavior.

Despite the findings from our field data, a number of puzzles remain unsettled and future research is needed further explore the phenomenon. First, it remains debatable if the categorization of task-focused vs. person-focused anger is legitimate. Theoretically, our study is focused on leader anger episodes, which may vary in time; that is, we concentrate on within-individual variances of leader anger. Therefore, one assumption we made was that each leader anger episode can be different according to the task-focused or person-focused degree. While person-related characteristics is, by definition, only variable at individual level, it seems a fallacy to categorize leader anger episodes into task-focused vs. person-focused. Indeed, we did find considerable variances in our measure of person-focused leader anger, but this might be due to a lack of construct validity. One possibility (as mentioned before) is that the measure captured employee attribution of leader anger, rather than leader anger per se.

Another possibility might be that task-focused anger scale reflected anger triggered by employees (i.e. “me”), while person-focused anger scale covered anger elicited due to leaders (i.e. “him or her”). In either case, future research shall re-validate the scale. For example, it might be helpful to change the scale anchors from agreement to frequency.

Second, although we found some support for the negative effect of person-focused anger attribution on voice behavior, we failed to obtain evidence supporting the positive effect of leader anger on employee proactivity. Thus, future research might endeavor to explore whether, why, and when leader anger may evoke employee proactivity. One possible direction might be affective mechanisms; that is, employees engage in proactive behaviors following leader anger because they experience certain affective feelings which motivate them to fix the status quo. Such possibility has been discussed both theoretically (Van Kleef, 2009) and practically (Liu et al., 2017). It is also possible to consider boundary conditions of such effects. As Liu and colleagues (2017) demonstrated, employees’ reliance on leader emotions as social information may weaken when they have satisfactory relationships. It is therefore legitimate to propose certain boundary conditions for this effect.

Finally, because our data was collected solely from China, the generalizability of our conclusion remains questionable in other cultural contexts. Indeed, cross-cultural research has documented culturally divergent functions of anger expressions (Kitayama et al., 2015). Therefore, our current finding may not be generalizable to Western culture. Among various cultural dimensions, power distance might play a particularly critical role, because it shapes how employees view their relationships with leaders (which are oftentimes power-asymmetric). As a consequence, power distance might alter employee responses toward leader anger. Future research is welcome in exploring the generalizability of our predictions.

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Table 1: Pilot Study – Means, Standard Deviations (SD), Reliabilities, and Coefficients

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Task Focused Anger	3.37	1.02	(.82)					
2.Person Focused Anger	2.16	1.12	-.05	(.93)				
3.Fear	3.51	0.83	.49**	.03	(.86)			
4.Abusive Supervision	2.62	0.96	.08	.69**	.18**	(.83)		
5.Leader State Anger	3.60	0.83	.14*	.17**	.21**	.31**	(.84)	
6.Leader Trait Anger	3.20	1.04	.01	.44**	.04	.56**	.52**	(.90)

n = 305, the numbers on the diagonal were Cronbach's alphas.

Table 2: Main Study – Means, Standard Deviations (SD), Reliabilities and Correlations

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Leader Anger	2.33	1.22	<i>(.94)</i>					
2. Task-focused Anger	2.66	1.51	.33***	<i>(.96)</i>				
3. Person-focused Anger	1.98	1.13	.64***	.44***	<i>(.95)</i>			
4. Self-reflection	4.41	1.28	-.21***	-.12**	-.15***	<i>(.95)</i>		
5. Self-esteem	5.40	.90	-.31***	-.22***	-.26***	.37***	<i>(.79)</i>	
6. Voice	4.66	1.26	-.20***	-.05	-.16***	.56***	.39***	<i>(.98)</i>

Notes: $n = 656$. Reliabilities are reported on the diagonal.

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed)

Table 3
Parameter Estimates and Variance Components for Null Models for Within-Person Level Variables

Variables	Intercept (g000)	Within-Person Level Variance / Percentage	Individual Level Variance / Percentage	Team Level Variance / Percentage
1. Leader Anger	2.35***	.67*** / 43.49%	.86*** / 55.73%	.01/ 0.78%
2. Task-focused Anger	2.64***	1.07*** / 49.06%	1.04*** / 47.51%	.08 / 3.43%
3. Person-focused Anger	2.02***	.47*** / 35.46%	.84*** / 63.19%	.02 / 1.35%
4. Self-reflection	4.49***	.47*** / 29.17%	1.00*** / 62.14%	.14 / 8.69%
5. Self-esteem	5.34***	.28*** / 32.98%	.57*** / 65.74%	.01 / 1.28%
6. Voice	4.69***	.46*** / 29.62%	1.06*** / 68.21%	.03 / 2.18%

Notes: n = 656.

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed)

Table 4
Results of the Original Model Testing

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Dependent Variable	Voice	Self-reflection	Voice	Voice	Self-esteem	Voice	Voice
Control Variable							
Self-reflection (T-1)		.15**					
Self-esteem (T-1)					.01		
Voice (T-1)	.05		.03	.03		.04	.04
Independent Variable							
Task-focused anger (T-1)	-.03	-.05*		-.02	-.06†		-.02
Person-focused anger (T-1)	.03	.01		.03	.03		.03
Mediators							
Self-reflection (T)			.13†	.14†			
Self-esteem (T)						.13*	.13*

*Notes: n = 656. †p < 0.10 *p < 0.05 **p < 0.01 ***p < 0.001 (two-tailed)*

Table 5
Results of the Revised Model Testing

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Dependent Variable	Voice	Self-reflection	Voice	Self-esteem	Voice
Control Variable					
Self-reflection (T-1)		.15**			
Self-esteem (T-1)				-.01	
Voice (T-1)	.05		.01		.04
Independent Variable					
Leader anger	-.02	-.02	-.02	-.07*	-.01
Task-focused anger (attribution)	-.03	-.05*	-.02	-.04	-.02
Person-focused anger (attribution)	.04	.02	.03	.06	.03
Leader anger x Task-focused anger (attribution)	.01	-.01	.01	.01	.01
Leader anger x Person-focused anger (attribution)	-.02	.07	-.04	-.14†	.01
Mediators					
Self-reflection (T)			.23**		

Notes: $n = 656$. $\dagger p < 0.10$ * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed)

Figure 1
Interaction between Leader Anger and Person-focused Anger (Attribution)

