

**Direct or Polite? Antecedents and Consequences of How Employees Express Voice**

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For My Family

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## **Direct or Polite? Antecedents and Consequences of How Employees Express Voice**

### **Abstract**

Prior research on voice has focused predominantly on voicers' perception of threats *to the self*, paying significantly less attention to voicers' perception of threats *to the presumed voice targets*, such as to their manager. In this dissertation, I posit that voicers' perception of threat to their manager in a voice episode influences the methods of voice. In particular, I draw from politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) to propose that voicers actively mitigate anticipated threats to their manager in a voice episode by varying the degree of directness (being explicit about desire for change) and politeness (being mannerly, courteous, and respectful). I then explain how interpersonal characteristics between voicers and their manager (in the form of psychological power and leader–member exchange) alter the voicers' perception of how their manager interprets and reacts to voice. Results from a diary study and a situated experiment provide convergent evidence that employees are less direct and more polite when they raise an issue that is perceived as potentially threatening to their manager. Moreover, these effects are mitigated when the quality of the leader–member exchange relationship is stronger. Finally, results linking voice directness and voice politeness with managerial responses to voice show that voice directness is more strongly associated with idea endorsement, whereas voice politeness is more strongly associated with subordinate liking. Theoretical contributions and practical implications are discussed.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Employee voice involves communicating ideas and suggestions intended to benefit one's workgroup or the organization (Hirschman, 1970; Morrison, 2011; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Suggestions can be recommendations aimed at improving the status quo (Liang, Fahr, & Fahr, 2012; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), or they can be concerns aimed at altering or modifying existing procedures or workplace issues (Burriss, 2012; Liang et al., 2012). Regardless of the types of ideas employees raise, scholars have argued that increased employee voice can lead to more effective decision making (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998), better error detection (Morrison & Milliken, 2000), and a greater ability for organizations to adapt to a competitive business environment (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1994). Empirical studies have shown that voice is associated with enhanced team learning (Edmondson, 1999, 2003), better decision making (Nemeth, Connell, Rogers, & Brown, 2001), improved work processes and innovation (Argyris & Schon, 1978), better crisis prevention (Schwartz & Wald, 2003), and stronger group performance (Frazier & Bowler, in press; Lam & Mayer, in press; Walumbwa, Morrison, & Christensen, 2012).

Given these desirable effects of voice for organizations, the preponderance of research has focused on studying factors that promote or deter voice (Burriss, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008; Detert & Burriss, 2007; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008a). In particular, past research has suggested that employees may be discouraged from sharing useful suggestions with their manager when they perceive that voice can cause potential *threats to the self* (i.e., voicer). Such threats are defined as having the potential for material or social harm or loss incurred for

expressing ideas (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, and Dutton, 1998; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence, & Miner-Rubino, 2002; Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003; Morrison, 2011; Pinder & Harlos, 2001; Withey & Cooper, 1989). For example, Ashford et al. (1998) found that female middle managers were less likely to raise issues related to women when they perceived that raising such issues would harm their image in the organization. Similarly, Detert and Edmondson (2011) found that employees remained silent at work based on socially acquired beliefs about factors that made voice risky, such as the belief that speaking up could have negative career consequences. Indeed, much research on voice has invoked some type of expectancy logic (Ajzen, 1991; Vroom, 1964) to suggest that when employees make decisions about whether to speak up or remain silent, they are particularly concerned about the potential threats they may inflict on themselves.

In this dissertation, I contend that past research has not paid sufficient attention to employees' perception of potential threats, harms, or losses to their presumed voice targets, in most cases, their manager. Empirical evidence shows that people often avoid sharing a message when the message is deemed negative and reflects unfavorably on the recipient (Bisel, Kelley, Ploeger, & Messersmith, 2011; Lee, 1993; Rosen & Tesser, 1970; Tesser & Rosen, 1972). In a study examining voice and silence, Milliken et al. (2003) interviewed 40 full-time employees about (1) whether they felt they could openly express their concerns and (2) the reason for not raising their concerns. They found that as many as 20% of the respondents cited not wanting to embarrass or harm their supervisor as a major reason for remaining silent. In this dissertation, I argue that such perceptions have key implications for *how* employees engage in voice. When employees assess whether or not to offer a suggestion or speak about an issue, the decision is largely individual; it does not involve communicating with their manager. Therefore, concern for

self-oriented threat is more salient than concern for target-focused threat. After employees decide to speak up, they must communicate the suggestion to their manager. At this time, employees' perception of threats to their manager becomes more salient, and they are more likely to think about how to mitigate those threats to their manager in addition to threats to the self.

To develop a framework that describes employees' perception of threats to their manager during the voice episode and how this perception influences the methods they use to express voice, I draw on the theory of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). According to politeness theory, when speakers perceive that a social interaction is threatening to the face of their target, they engage in linguistic strategies to mitigate face-threat to the target. In particular, these linguistic strategies vary along two continua known as "directness," which refers to the extent to which speakers state the intention of their statement explicitly (as opposed to implicitly), and "politeness," which refers to the extent to which speakers is courteous and mannerly. In particular, politeness theory argues that stronger perception of threat to the target recipients will be associated with lower directness and more politeness.

Based on these insights, I propose that when voicers perceive that voice is potentially threatening to their manager in a voice episode, they actively mitigate such potential threat to their manager by using less direct and more polite voice tactics. In this way, politeness theory provides a theory-driven model to describe general tactics in terms of their potential to mitigate anticipated threat to the manager. I then explicate how individual psychological power (voicers' perception that they can influence their manager) and leader-member exchange (the relationship quality between employees and their manager) may influence voicers' perception of how their manager might interpret and react to voice. Specifically, I theorize that those with higher psychological power or a more positive leader-member exchange will perceive that their

manager will respond to voice in a benign and non-defensive manner. Such individuals will thus be more willing to speak up in a more direct and less polite manner, even when they must raise an issue that is potentially threatening to the manager in a voice episode. Finally, again drawing from research and theory on politeness, I examine the potential interaction between voice directness and voice politeness and how they influence idea endorsement and subordinate liking. Specifically, I posit that levels of idea endorsement and subordinate liking are greater when individuals are both direct and polite.

My dissertation makes several key contributions to the voice literature. First, I build on existing research and theory on voice that has focused on personal threat and its deterring effect on whether employees express voice (Detert & Burris, 2007; Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). I do so by theorizing the role that voicers' perception of threats to the presumed targets plays in influencing how employees engage in voice. Second, extant research on voice and related domains has identified myriad voice tactics, such as content presentation, rational or moral appeals, bundling, coalition, publicity, formality, consultation, drama, emotion, threat, and repetition, among others (Andersson & Bateman, 2000; Piderit & Ashford, 2003; Dutton & Ashford, 1996; Kassing, 2002; Sonenshein, 2006). Notwithstanding the importance of identifying multiple voice tactics, very little agreement exists on how these tactics are related, which tactics to investigate, why people choose to employ one tactic rather than another, and how different tactics influence key outcomes. Drawing from politeness theory, I create a theory-based model of how employees engage in voice and why employees express ideas in different ways. Specifically, I introduce the concept of voice directness and voice politeness, which serve as a useful starting point to capture the complex ways employees may express voice. Finally, although theory and empirical research on how managers respond to employee voice has

emerged in recent years (Ashford, Sutcliffe, & Christianson, 2009; Burris, 2012; Menon, Thompson, & Choi, 2006), few empirical investigations have explored how the methods of voice influence the ways managers respond to voice attempts (c.f. Whiting, Maynes, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2012). In this dissertation, I examine empirically how voice directness and voice politeness influence the managers' cognitive (i.e., idea endorsement) and affective (i.e., subordinate liking) responses of receiving voice.

The remainder of this dissertation is organized as follows. In Chapter 2, I provide my definition of voice, review voice and voice-related constructs, and provide a review of the voice literature. In addition, I also review theory and research that casts light on the tactics employees use to express voice. In Chapter 3, I introduce the theory of politeness to describe how employees express voice and why they express voice in particular ways. Furthermore, I explain how psychological power and the leader-member exchange relationship alter employees' perception of how their managers might respond to the voice episode differently, thus modifying the effect of perceived face-threat to the manager and, consequently, the ways employees express voice. I then conclude Chapter 3 by proposing how voice directness and voice politeness interact to predict idea endorsement and subordinate liking. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, I report two studies—a diary study and a situated experiment—that test my hypotheses. In Chapter 6, I discuss findings, highlight theoretical implications and methodological strengths, and address study limitations.

I use several terms frequently in the chapters that follow. First, I use the term “idea,” “suggestion,” “recommendation,” “concern,” and “issue” interchangeably to encompass the content of a voice episode that has implications for the work unit or organizational performance. Second, I use the term “voice episode” to refer to an employee's experience in raising an issue

with a manager. Finally, research on voice has developed from several separate streams of research that use different labels such as issue selling, whistle-blowing, dissent, and breaking silence (Morrison, 2011). Following Ashford and Barton (2007), I consider voice as a general class of behaviors that involves speaking up in an organization about issues. Thus, I use the terms “speak up,” “express voice,” and “raise issues” interchangeably.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Defining Voice

A review of the voice literature reveals that scholars have offered their own conceptualization of voice. For example, voice has been defined as “promotive behavior that emphasizes expression of constructive challenge intended to improve rather than merely criticize” (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998, p. 109); “intentionally expressing rather than withholding relevant ideas, information, and opinions about possible work-related improvements” (Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003, p. 1360); “openly stating one’s views or opinions about workplace matters, including the actions or ideas of others, suggested or needed changes, and alternative approaches or different lines of reasoning for addressing job-related issues” (Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003, p. 1538); “discretionary provision of information intended to improve organizational functioning to someone inside the organization with the perceived authority to act, even though such information may challenge and upset the status quo of the organization and its power holders” (Detert & Burris, 2007, p. 869); and “employees’ expression of challenging but constructive opinions, concerns, or ideas about work-related issues” (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008b, p. 1189).

Although such varied definitions of voice exist, Morrison (2011) suggested three notable commonalities across these definitions. First, voice is communicative: it is an act of verbal expression that involves communicating an idea from a speaker to a target (Morrison, 2011). Second, voice is discretionary (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998): employees can choose whether or not to speak up about an idea. Finally, voice is both challenging and constructive (Van Dyne,



Cummings, & Park, 1995): it is challenging because it aims to change, modify, or alter existing practices, and it is constructive because it is intended to improve organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Based on these commonalities, Morrison (2011) defines voice as “discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning” (p. 375). According to this definition, the presumed target of voice can be one’s immediate boss or manager or it can be members of one’s team. The content of voice is quite broad as well: the message associated with voice can be a suggested way to improve (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998; Liang et al., 2012), an organizational or work-related problem (Milliken et al., 2003; Liang et al., 2012), a situation involving injustice (Bemmel & Foley, 1996; Pinder & Harlos, 2001) and ethical misconduct (Miceli, Near, & Dworkin, 2008), or a strategic issue of importance (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Although the content of the voice message varies, voice is related to communicating ideas that strive to improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Here, I follow Morrison (2011) to define voice as discretionary behavior that involves communicating ideas and suggestions intended to improve the workgroup or organizational effectiveness and performance.

### **Literature on Voice**

The concept of voice can be traced back to Hirschman’s seminal work on exit and voice (1970). He argued that the ability for firms, organizations, and even states to recover from declines depends on levels of voice and exit. For example, citizens may send a message to their government by either immigrating to a new country or express discontent by electing new government representatives. Likewise, dissatisfied consumers can use another product or voice concerns with a particular product to the supplier, and employees can decide to quit and find another job or exert effort to improve current conditions when deteriorating working conditions

emerge (Farrell & Rusbult, 1992; Hirschman, 1970; Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainous, 1988; Withey & Cooper, 1989). Building on Hirschman's (1970) insight, research elaborated and expanded two other forms of responses to work dissatisfaction: loyalty (employees remain in the organization due to high exit costs; Withey & Cooper, 1989) or neglect (employees accept that recovering from dissatisfaction or poor conditions is not going to occur and put in less effort at work; Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982).

Since the exit/voice/loyalty/neglect model was introduced, separate streams of research and related concepts of voice have developed in the organizational literature. In their typology of prosocial forms of organizational behavior, Brief and Motowildo (1986, p. 715) included voice as a type of prosocial behavior that involves suggesting "procedural, administrative, or organizational improvements" and "objecting to improper directives, procedures, or policies." These forms of behaviors are what Graham (1986) described as principled organizational dissent, or efforts by individuals to change the status quo because they conscientiously objected to current policies or practices. A substantial amount of theoretical analysis and empirical studies have focused on whistle-blowing, an act of disclosure by former or current organizational members related to illegal, immoral, or unethical practices (Miceli et al., 2008). A significant body of research has also developed on issue selling in organization, which involves convincing others of strategic ideas and key trends, developments, and events that have significant implications for organizational performance (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton & Ashford, 1993). The concept of voice has also attracted attention in the human resource management and industrial relations domains, which focus on the ways in which employees express dissatisfaction, try to change a problematic situation, or become involved in organizational decision making (e.g., grievance filing, collective bargaining, suggestion systems, work councils; Klaas, Olson-

Buchanan, & Ward, 2012; Spencer, 1986; Wood & Wall, 2007). A body of research also exists on silence (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Milliken et al., 2003), which refers to intentionally withdrawing information, suggestions, or ideas that are potentially important for the organization. Although a thorough literature review of the voice and related streams of research described above extends beyond the scope of my dissertation, my intention is to draw from these separate yet related literature streams to inform our understanding of voice behaviors.

### **Factors Predicting Voice**

The extent to which employees communicate ideas, suggestions, or concerns about problems has implications for an organization's performance and survival (Morrison, 2011; Nemeth et al., 2001). Scholars have argued that, for organizations facing environments that are complex, dynamic, and ambiguous, managers need employees to express voice and offer constructive suggestions (Argyis & Schon, 1978; Deming, 1986; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1994; Perlow & Williams, 2003; Saunders, Sheppard, Knight, & Roth, 1992). Although it is possible that too much voice on too many issues may be problematic (Ashford et al., 2009; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011), lack of voice aimed at improving status quo is likely to result in missed opportunities and loss of competitive advantage, contributing to reduced organizational effectiveness. Empirically, Frazier and Bowler (in press) reported that unit-level voice is positively associated with group performance, and Lam and Mayer (in press) showed that more hospital-level voice is associated with greater levels of hospital service performance. Scholars have also shown that the benefits of voice could go beyond group performance. In four experimental studies, Brockner et al. (2001) showed that employees who are able to express voice and whose cultural heritage is characterized by low power distance (or the perception that inequality should not exist among persons in different positions of formal

power) have greater levels of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance. Similarly, research on human resource management and industrial relations have provided evidence that those who have an opportunity to express voice are less likely to quit their job (Batt, Colvin, & Keefe, 2002; Delery, Gupta, Shaw, Jenkins, & Ganster, 2000). Indeed, opportunities to express voice are more likely to result in greater employee satisfaction toward their leader and top management even if they have little or no influence over decisions made (Tyler, Rasinki, & Spodick, 1985). Taken together, it is generally accepted that having employees express voice is a critical component of organizational success (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Given the importance of voice for individual work attitudes, job performance, and organizational performance, some scholars have examined a number of trait-like individual differences as determinants of voice. For example, voice is positively associated with conscientiousness (Thomas, Whitman, & Viswesvaran, 2010), emotional intelligence (Rego, Sousa, Pina e Cunha, Correia, & Saur-Amaral, 2007), self-monitoring (Fuller, Barnett, Hester, Relyea, & Frey, 2007; Premeaux & Bedeian, 2003), felt responsibility (Fuller, Marler, & Hester, 2006), felt obligation and organizational-based self-esteem (Liang et al., 2012), empathy (Joireman, Kamdar, Daniels, and Duell), openness to change (Lipponen, Bardi, & Haapamäki, 2008), and prosocial motives (Grant, 2007; Grant & Mayer, 2009).

Other scholars have argued that, since voice is a type of prosocial behaviors, employees' motivation to benefit the workgroup or the organization should be a key factor in promoting voice (Grant & Mayer, 2009; Morrison, 2011). One factor that influences individual motivation to benefit the workgroup or organization is the way employees are treated by their organization. Drawing from social exchange logic, organizational scholars argued that when organizations

treat their employees in a positive manner, employees are more likely to reciprocate those positive treatments through voice. For example, research on issue selling suggests that the strongest predictor of middle managers' willingness to raise gender-equity issues is perceived organizational support (Ashford et al., 1998). Another source of motivation to benefit the workgroup or the organization comes from employees' experience with their immediate supervisor. For example, Burris, Detert, and Chiaburu (2008) theorized and found that positive relational quality in the form of the leader–member exchange relationship is positively associated with the employee feeling psychologically attached to the organization, which increases voice. In contrast, an abusive style of supervision is associated with lower levels of psychological attachment, which reduces voice. Similarly, Hofmann, Morgeson, and Gerras (2003) used social exchange logic to argue that safety-related voice is greater when both the leader–member exchange relationship and safety climate were higher. In two field studies, Van Dyne, Kamdar, and Joireman (2008) illustrated that the quality of the leader–subordinate relationship was positively associated with voice behaviors, especially when the employee perceived that voice was in-role (rather than extra-role) behavior. More recently, Ng and Feldman (in press) examined the impact of idiosyncratic deals (special employment arrangements tailored to the employee's personal preferences and needs) on employee voice. Based on 466 managers and professionals in the United States and China, they showed that idiosyncratic deals (in the form of scheduling flexibility and professional development) were more likely to result in voice behaviors, because the individuals reciprocated the customized, highly caring treatment from their organizations that was inherent in idiosyncratic deals. Finally, in a quasi-experimental study, Parker and her colleagues (Parker, Johnso, Collins, & Hong, in press) showed that doctors who

receive formal structural support perceive lower role overload, enhanced perceived skill utilization, and increased proactive behaviors such as voice.

Employees' motivation to benefit the workgroup or the organization via voice is also influenced by their levels of identification with the workgroup or the organization. Drawing from social identity theories, Ashford and Barton (2007) introduced a model of identity-based issue selling, in which they posited that for some employees, selling an issue was driven by the employees' personal identity, subgroup identification, and organizational identification. When people strongly identified with a subgroup or an organization, they were more likely to sell identity-relevant issues, because they perceived the issue as more important and perceived greater gain for their organization for selling these issues (Ashford & Barton, 2007). Supporting these viewpoints, other voice scholars have found that workgroup or organizational identification is a key predictor of voice behaviors (Lipponen et al., 2008; Jaussi, Randel, & Dionne, 2007; Liu, Zhu, & Yang, 2010; Morrison, Wheeler-Smith, & Kamdar, 2011; Seppala, Lipponen, Bardi, & Pirttila-Backman, 2012; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008; Venkataramani & Tangirala, 2010). For example, Liu et al. (2010) found that those who identified more strongly with their workgroup were more likely to express voice to their coworkers. Similarly, research has shown that those who are open to change are more likely to engage in voice behaviors when they are also strongly identified with their workgroup (Seppala et al., 2012) or with their organization (Lipponen et al., 2008). Finally, research on grievance has similarly found that the use of suggestion systems is positively associated with identification with the firm (Ekvall, 1976; Hatcher, Ross, & Collins, 1991; Pizam, 1974).

The motivation to speak up and benefit the workgroup, however, often clashes with two factors that deter voice. A study conducted by Withey and Cooper (1989) provides the building

block for understanding these factors. Drawing from the logic of traditional theories of motivation (Vroom, 1964), Withey and Cooper (1989) predicted that an employee's decision to express voice, exit the firm, remain loyal, or show neglect is determined by the efficacy and the costs of these behaviors. Both factors will be further explained below.

*Efficacy of Voice.* Research and theories of voice suggest that voice efficacy, or people's belief that they cannot express their ideas effectively (Frazier & Bowler, in press; Morrison, 2011; Morrison et al., 2011; Wither & Cooper, 1989), is a key factor in deterring voice attempts. Ajzen (1991) argued that the beliefs one can influence an outcome is a critical antecedent to any planned behavior, and efficacy is theorized to be an important factor in motivating whistleblowing behaviors (Near & Miceli, 1985) and principled organizational dissent (Graham, 1986). Similarly, research on issue selling suggests that individual willingness to engage in selling behaviors depended on perceived probability of successfully getting the attention of top management (Ashford et al., 1998). Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence, and Miner-Rubino (2002) designed a between-subjects study that asked women respondents to sell a gender-related issue. They found that women who perceived their company culture as clubby and exclusive to men felt lower levels of efficacy in selling issues specifically related to women. In turn, lower selling efficacy was associated with less willingness to sell the issue. Similarly, research on employee silence suggests that when employees experience a feeling of futility or resignation (Milliken et al., 2003; Pinder & Harlos, 2001), they are less likely to engage in voice. Van Dyne et al. (2003) labeled silence rooted in a feeling of futility as "acquiescent silence."

Voice scholars have noted the importance of voice efficacy in promoting voice (Avery & Quinones, 2002). For example, dissatisfied employees are more likely to transform an unsatisfactory work condition into a satisfactory one through voice when they cannot quit their

current job and the levels of helping and support from coworkers are high (Zhou & George, 2001). When levels of coworkers helping and support are high, dissatisfied employees are likely to believe that useful new ideas will be heard and successfully implemented. Similarly, using a sample of hospital nurses, Parker (1993) reported that employees' decision to engage in voice in response to workplace injustice was governed by their sense of voice efficacy. This feeling of voice efficacy is fostered when individuals experience a sense of job control at work, because greater job control increased the expectation of resolving workplace problems and issues effectively through personal actions (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008b). Leaders can also help encourage employee voice by enhancing subordinates' perception of voice efficacy (Ashford et al., 2009). For example, they can engage in consulting or behaviors such as soliciting or listening to suggestions about work issues to enhance employees' perception that they can voice effectively (Janssen & Gao, in press; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). Finally, individual ability to regulate emotions is also an important factor in promoting voice efficacy. Grant (in press) theorized and found that those who lacked emotional regulation knowledge were less capable of engaging in emotional labor strategies such as surface and deep acting, which reduced their confidence in expressing the emotions necessary to voice safely, which consequently discouraged speaking up. In contrast, those who felt capable of regulating their emotions were more capable of engaging in surface and deep acting that helped employees overcome potential fear associated with voice. This, in turn, enhanced their efficacy feeling that they could communicate their ideas clearly, confidently, and constructively. Finally, research on whistle-blowing has similarly shown that employee motivation to blow the whistle is related to perceptions with respect to the effectiveness of the whistle-blowing system. When the system is



believed to be effective, the efficacy to blow the whistle effectively is significantly increased, creating greater motivation to raise ethical issues (Casal & Bogui, 2008; Trevino & Victor, 1992).

*Costs of Voice.* In addition to voice efficacy, another factor that deters voice is the potential costs of voice to the voicers themselves. In particular, people are especially fearful of speaking up when doing so would cause material or social losses to the employees themselves (Kish-Gephart, Detert, Trevino, & Edmondson, 2009; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Morrison and Milliken's (2000) conceptual model of organizational silence posited that employees remained silent when they believed that speaking up about problems would bring themselves harm. Van Dyne et al. (2003) called this type of silence "quiescent silence" (i.e., self-protective behavior based on fear). As Kish-Gephart et al. (2009) noted, a major reason people remain silent in organizations is due to "fear of experiencing unwanted social or material consequences for saying something that might anger or disappoint others" (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009, p. 165). Supporting these claims, Ashford (1998) reported that concerns about being separated from the group affect individual decisions to express concerns regarding gender-equity. Similarly, Milliken et al. (2003) found that employees are reluctant to speak up due to potential losses in their social capital (e.g., being rejected by others in the organization). These findings are consistent with Noelle-Neumann's (1974) contention that even if people do not agree with the group's majority opinion, they prefer to remain silent because they fear isolation by peers and managers for being deviant.

A cost-related variable that has received particular attention is the voicer's perception of image risk or the perceived damage to status and reputation associated with voicing. In their theoretical analysis of issue selling, Dutton and Ashford (1993) drew on theories of impression management to argue that issue sellers who perceived themselves as less credible in the eyes of

top management were less likely to engage in issue selling, because doing so would likely damage their reputation. Supporting their claim, Ashford et al. (1998) found that women were less likely to sell women-related issues to the top management team when they perceived issue selling was risky to their image in the organization. Detert and Burris (2007) found that leaders with the qualities of individual consideration and inspirational motivation enhanced their followers' perceived psychological safety in speaking up. In a qualitative analysis of sense-making processes a sample of medical residents experienced related to lapses in reliability in patient care, Blatt, Christianson, Sutcliffe, and Rosenthal (2006) found that medical residents were more likely to speak up about emerging medical mistakes when they perceived that their superiors would consider and use their input. Meyerson and Scully (1995) examined tempered radicals, defined as individuals who identified with and were committed to a cause, community, or ideology that was fundamentally different from their organizations' dominant culture. The authors illustrated how this demographic often feared raising controversial or radical ideas that would damage their image in the process. On a collective level, too, perception of group safety is a key determinant of voice. Morrison et al. (2011) introduced a concept called "voice climate" which captures collective voice safety (a shared belief that expressing voice was either safe or dangerous) and collective voice efficacy (a shared belief that group members are able to express voice effectively). Using 47 work groups of engineers responsible for designing and operating measurement instruments and managing instrumentation projects, (Morrison et al., 2011) found that an organization's voice climate promoted voice behaviors among those who also identified strong with their workgroup.

Research on whistle-blowing has similarly examined the detrimental effect of perceived voice cost on whistle-blowing frequency. For example, employees are less likely to engage in

whistle-blowing when they believe that it will not be supported within the organization (Lee, Heilmann, & Near, 2004; Miceli & Near, 1988; Near & Miceli, 1996) and that their whistle-blowing behaviors will be retaliated by managers or top management (Casal & Bogui, 2008). By contrast, whistle-blowing is significantly more likely when laws, regulations, or organizational policies offer protection from retaliation (Miceli & Near, 1989; Miceli, Rehg, Near, & Ryan, 1999; Near & Dworkin, & Miceli, 1993).

The reviewed voice literature thus far has revealed two general trends. First, the majority of voice research has focused predominantly on *whether* employees express voice or remain silent. As I review in the next section, much less theory and research exists regarding *how* employees express voice. Second, a central theme emerging from the literature is that employees' assessment of whether to express voice or remain silent is focused on the employee's perception of threat to themselves as a result of voicing. In the next chapter, I extend the current viewpoint by arguing that when employees assess how they should speak up to their manager, they are more focused on how to speak up in ways that do not threaten their voice targets.

### **How Employees Speak Up and Why It Matters**

In reviewing the few theoretical and empirical studies on the various tactics employees use to express voice and the consequences associated with these tactics, three research questions have received the most attention: (1) What are the voice tactics and how do employees choose which tactics to use? (2) How do managers respond to voice attempts? and (3) Are employees rewarded with higher performance evaluation for speaking up?

*What are the voice tactics and how employees choose which tactics to use?* The first research question that has attracted scholars' attention relates to the voice tactics employee use and how employees choose those tactics. In their conceptual analysis of issue selling, Dutton and

Ashford (1993) identified an array of selling tactics that divide into two general categories: issue packaging and the selling process. Issue packaging refers to how an issue is framed, the way an issue is presented, and how an issue's boundaries are established. The selling process refers to the persuasive options available to the issue seller; tactics include the breadth of involvement (selling solo versus with others), channels (private versus public), and formality (formal versus informal). In addition, Dutton and Ashford (1993) also theorized a series of propositions relating to the effect of selling tactics on the amount of attention top management paid to a raised issue and the seller's credibility for future selling attempts. For example, they posited that an issue seller was more likely to attract top management's attention when the seller successfully conveyed that an issue had significant payoff for the organization, used factual evidence, featured two-sided arguments and novel information, involved others, used public channels, and matched formality with prevailing organizational norms. Furthermore, the authors proposed that selling tactics such as bundling an issue with other issues, implying responsibilities for the top management team, forming a coalition, using private channels, and selling an issue with formal tactics could alter the seller's credibility for future attempts.

Building on Dutton and Ashford, Sonenshein (2006) examined how individuals used language to portray an issue in ways that differed from their private view. He found that those with less formal hierarchical power and those who perceived their organization espoused finance-oriented values used a more economic justification than those with more formal hierarchical power and those who perceived their organization espoused social-oriented values. Piderit and Ashford (2003) explored women's implicit theories about the right way to discuss gender-equity issues with top management. The results suggested individuals could be clustered into four groups based on how they used issue-selling tactics: those who indicated they would do

whatever was required to sell the issue to top management; those who indicated a high likelihood of framing the issue as a moral concern; those who indicated a high likelihood of using private settings; and those who indicated a low likelihood of using any tactic whatsoever.

Research on upward communication of dissent has also examined how employees engage in voice. For example, Graham (1986) theorized that a person becoming aware of a critical issue in the organization may wish to report an issue to his or her direct superior or by using a channel available in the workplace for reporting observations of wrongdoing, such as using channels outside the organization. According to this perspective, the magnitude of the response (defined as the number of targets approached and the highest target chosen) will be greater with more significant levels of perceived issue seriousness, the stronger the attribution of personal responsibility for a response, and the perceived feasibility of alternative responses. In an empirical study of how individuals express disagreement with workplace policies to their supervisor or someone higher in the chain of command, Kassing (2002) found that employees used five tactics to communicate dissent: direct factual appeal, repeated dissent over time, provide solutions to address dissent-triggering issue, express dissent to someone higher in the chain of command than one's supervisor, and use threat of resignation as leverage to obtain a response and action from supervisors and management.

*How do managers respond to voice attempts?* Research on issue selling has also shed light on the impact of selling tactics on managerial attention paid to the raised issue. Using interview-based descriptions of issue selling, Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, and Lawrence (2001) examine whether tactics suggested by Dutton and Ashford (1993) were associated with successful or unsuccessful selling episodes. Their results showed that some tactics are more successful than others. For example, issue sellers reported that successful issue selling attempts

are associated with using the logic of a business plan, tying issues to valued goals such as profitability and market share, involving others at an upper level or at the same level, being persistent in selling activities, and engaging in issue selling at opportune times. Likewise, Andersson and Bateman (2000) took a similar qualitative approach to examine how champions sold environment-related issues in their organization. They found that champions were more adept at attracting top management's time and money to invest in an environmental issue when they conveyed a sense of urgency for the raised issue and build coalition within the organization.

While these studies provide insight into how managers respond to voice tactics, it is important to note that these scholars have focused primarily on whether managers *pay attention* to an issue, not whether managers actually *endorse* the raised issue. Indeed, scholars have painted a rather grim picture that managers usually do not listen to voice episodes (even if they may pay attention). For example, in a detailed and impactful analysis of organizational silence in organizations, Morrison and Milliken (2000) argued that a climate of silence arises because managers hold implicit managerial beliefs that discourage voice, including the notions that (1) employees are self-interested, (2) management knows best, and (3) unity is good and dissent is bad. In addition, managers often fear receiving negative feedback that may damage status, reputation, and self-esteem. According to Morrison and Milliken (2000), these implicit managerial beliefs and fear of negative feedback result in organizational policies and managerial practices that contribute to a climate of silence. These policies and practices include failing to involve employees in decision making, not having formal upward feedback mechanisms, rejecting or responding negatively to dissent or negative feedback, and not soliciting negative feedback from employees to avoid damaging their status and reputation.

The contention that managers avoid listening to voice is further explicated by Ashford et al. (2009), who asserted that managers are particularly prone to cognitive biases, such as heuristic information processing (the lack of attentional capacity to process complex voice-related information that requires systematic processing), confirmation bias (listening to information that affirms their opinions and disregarding information that challenges their opinions), and the fallacy of centrality (“If it was important, I’d know about it”). In addition, the authors argued that it is difficult for managers to accept constructive challenges due to their success and positions within their organization; indeed, accepting challenges could be perceived as a threat to their status and reputation. Finally, managers often fail to listen to voice because they are often selected based on their ability to act and advocate rather than to listen. Taken together, the general conclusion is that managers will not endorse voice easily even if they devote a significant amount of time and energy to the issues raised.

Empirical research on whether managers listen to and endorse raised ideas is scarce, and the two studies found, both confirm Morrison and Milliken’s (2000) and Ashford et al.’s (2009) predictions that managers are often unwilling to endorse raised ideas. Menon et al. (2006) conducted empirical work using a series of laboratory studies that examined how individuals react to good ideas authored by internal rivals (employees at the same organization) versus external rivals (employees at a competitor organization). Across two laboratory studies and an experiment, these authors found that individuals react differently to good ideas posed by their internal rivals versus their external rivals. Specifically, they found that ideas originating from internal rivals were perceived as more threatening to the recipient’s competence and status, which resulted in defensive patterns of responses, such as downgrading the rival’s relevance, criticizing the rival’s ideas, or reacting in a condescending manner. In contrast, when individuals

received knowledge from external rivals, they help the organization compete and resolve issues within the organization, which contributed to potential status gains within the organization. An important insight this study generated is that whether the individual receiving voice would endorse versus reject raised ideas depended on whether they saw the raised ideas as threats or opportunities. As such, endorsement was less likely when voice was perceived as a threat to the self.

A second study relevant to the discussion here was reported by Burris (2012), who contrasted the effect of supportive voice (suggestions that affirm existing organizational policy and procedures) and challenging voice (suggestions that alter, modify, or destabilize a generally accepted set of practices) on the manager's perception of threat and endorsement. Across two field studies and an experimental study, Burris found that supportive voice reduced the manager's perception of the threat, whereas challenging voice increased that perception. In turn, perception of threat reduced managerial endorsement. Like Menon et al. (2006), Burris (2012) illustrated that the manager's perception that a raised idea represented a threat was positively associated with whether voice was endorsed. Notably, Burris (2012) assumed that people would speak up about their ideas directly, without modifying or altering the way they communicate challenge-oriented ideas. Research on communication, however, suggests that when individuals perceive a message to be negative, unpleasant, or threatening, they tend to couch the message in ways that reduce threat (Glauser, 1984; Lee, 1993; Rosen & Tesser, 1970). Furthermore, as a recent study by Grant (in press) shows, individuals who have knowledge of how to regulate high emotions are better able to mask their fear and engage in emotional labor to express voice in a less threatening way voice. As such, it is possible that when employees desire to raise challenging ideas, they do so in a manner that differs from the way Burris (2012) operationalized.



*Are voicers rewarded with higher performance evaluation for speaking up?* A third research question that has attracted considerable attention is whether voicers are rewarded for speaking up, mostly via favorable performance evaluations. In this aspect, the results are equivocal. On the one hand, some studies have found a positive relationship between voice and performance evaluation (Whiting, Podsakoff, & Pierce 2008). Respondents in this study rated the performance of a fictitious individual based on 24 written descriptions of critical incidents, some of which described high levels of voice, and others described low levels of voice. Results showed that participants were more likely to provide a higher performance rating to those who engaged in speaking up, above and beyond the effects of in-role performance and helping behaviors. Similarly, Van Dyne and LePine (1998) examined the effect of both helping and voice behaviors on managers' performance evaluation. They found that these two forms of behaviors explained variance in performance six months later, above and beyond the effect of in-role behaviors. In contrast, other research has shown that managers sometimes punish employees for voicing. For example, Seibert, Kraimer, and Crant (2001) showed that voice was negatively associated with salary progression and promotion two years later.

To resolve these conflicting findings, scholars have started to examine boundary conditions that modify the relationship between voice and performance evaluation. Grant, Parker, and Collins (2009) reported that employees who engaged in proactive behaviors (including issue selling) were evaluated less positively than their non-proactive counterparts when an employee's prosocial values were low or negative affect was high. According to Grant and his colleague, supervisors used their subordinates' feelings (e.g., negative affect) and displayed value (e.g., prosocial value) to attribute the intentions or motives behind proactive behaviors. When prosocial values were high, supervisors might attribute their subordinates' proactivity toward

good intentions, leading to an overall positive performance evaluation. Similarly, when levels of negative values were low, supervisors might attribute their subordinates' proactivity deriving from bad attitudes or counterproductive intentions, resulting in lower levels of performance evaluation. Using a similar logic, Grant (in press) found that emotion regulation knowledge would modify the effect of voice behaviors on performance evaluation, such that those who have stronger skills in this quality are more likely to receive more positive performance evaluation for voicing. Grant argued that this is the case because emotion regulation helps regulate negative emotions that often leak into the actual suggestion-making process. Furthermore, those with emotional regulation skills are better able to engage in surface acting to hide their emotions and to exercise restraint to express voice at appropriate times. This leads managers to evaluate these employees in a more favorable light. Moreover, as noted, Burris (2012) distinguished between support-oriented voice and challenge-oriented voice. In addition to findings that managers are less likely to endorse challenge-oriented voice, he also found that challenge-oriented voice is negatively associated with performance evaluation, because employees who express challenging ideas are perceived as less loyal to the organization.

The only study that examines the effect of voice tactics on performance evaluation directly was conducted by Whiting et al. (2012). These authors conducted a series of laboratory studies asking participants to rate the performance of a fictitious individual based on written descriptions of 24 critical incidents. In some descriptions, the voicer provided either a multistep solution to the problem or identified a problem but did not provide a solution. The authors argued that messages with solutions decreased a manager's workload, resulting in an increase in attraction (or liking) for the voicer. In addition, identifying a solution also signaled the employee's concern for the organization, which communicated to the manager that the voicer

was concerned about the organization and solving its problems. Finally, when employees included a solution in their voice expression, they increased managers' awareness of the value of speaking up with solutions. In support, they found that the presence of a solution increased participants' rating of liking, attribution of prosocial motives, and perception of constructive voice. In turn, liking, attribution of prosocial motives, and perception of constructive voice were positively associated with the performance evaluation.

Whiting et al. (2012) provided an important insight that voice can lead to enhanced performance when subordinate liking, perception of prosocial motives, and perception of constructive voice is positively associated with performance evaluation. I intend to build on Whiting et al.'s (2012) study in two ways. First, Whiting et al. (and other past research examining how employees express voice or raise ideas) have examined in isolation of one another. In reality, voicers usually use these tactics *together*. For example, an employee may choose to tie issues to organizational profits or market share, but they may avoid building a coalition with upper-level managers to avoid overstepping the employee-supervisor relationship. Another employee may instead choose to build a coalition within the organization to sell an issue, but he or she may fail to sell the issue at an opportune timing to capture the organization's attention. What if a voicer blames the target for being responsible for causing the issue, but at the same time provides a solution for the issue? What if a voicer creates a coalition with another coworker but does not provide a solution? One way to resolve these theoretical limitations is to focus on the dimensions *underlying* the choice of these tactics. Rather than focusing on *which specific tactics* employees use to sell an issue (and how individual tactics influence key outcomes), scholars can gain a more complete understanding of how employees express voice based on the motivation behind why employees express voice in particular ways. In the next

chapter, I introduce and explain the concept of voice directness and voice politeness to capture two key motivations underlying how employees voice.

Second, Whiting et al. (2012) examined performance evaluation as the only outcome; it remains unclear how providing a solution to a raised issue will lead the manager to either endorse an idea or not. Following Dutton and Ashford (1993), who argued that issue sellers focused on the goals of getting their ideas attended to, and following Burris (2012), who examined the impact of supportive versus challenging voice on idea endorsement, I build on Whiting et al.'s (2012) research by examining voice tactics influence whether managers endorse or reject a raised idea.

Taken together, studies examining the impact of voice and performance evaluation suggest that the ways employees express voice can influence how they are evaluated in significant ways. For example, those who have high positive affectivity as a personality trait are also more likely to express positive emotions during voice (Grant et al., 2009). Similarly, those with emotional regulation skills are able to mask negative emotions and express voice in ways that are not hostile or disrespectful (Grant, in press). When voice is expressed in an agreeable manner (Burris, 2012) and is offered with solutions (Whiting et al., 2012), managers evaluate employees more positively. These proposed tactics—expressing positive emotions, hiding negative emotions, appearing loyal and supportive, and providing solutions during voice—suggest that a common denominator may be underlying tactics that contribute to a better performance evaluation. As I will argue in Chapter 3, these tactics can be conceptualized as tactics that enhance voice politeness.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on voice and its related constructs. The review reveals two trends. First, employees engage in more voice behaviors when the motivation to benefit the workgroup and/or the organization is higher; when the perceived costs of voice to voicers themselves are lower; and when the perceived ability to voice effectively is higher. Second, with the predominant focus on *whether* employees speak up, relatively fewer studies have investigated *how* employees speak up, why they speak up in particular ways, and how the ways they speak up influence the manager's response. Although past research has provided some insights on the types of tactics that employee may use (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Piderit & Ashford, 2003; Sonenshein, 2006; Whiting et al., 2012) little research has studied the dimensions underlying these tactics. Similarly, although some recent studies have started to examine how managers respond to voice in the form of an endorsement (Burris, 2012; Menon et al., 2006) and a performance evaluation (Whiting et al., 2012), much remains to be learned about these research questions. In the next chapter, I draw from the theory of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) to argue that the ways employees express voice is a function of the employees' perception of threats to their manager in a voice episode and how this perception is modified by a sense of psychological power and the relational quality between the employees and their manager.

### CHAPTER 3: THEORY AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Human interaction is characterized as a ritual process governed by an implicit recognition of the “face” of the participants (Goffman, 1955). Face is associated with respect, honor, status, reputation, credibility, and competence, and is something people care about and invest in emotionally (Earley, 1997; Goffman, 1967; Scott & Lyman, 1968; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). When others affirm a person’s face in a social interaction, he or she is likely to feel good about himself or herself. In contrast, when a person’s face or valued self-image is questioned or contradicted, he or she is likely to feel hurt, threatened, and disengaged from interaction (Cupach & Metts, 1994; Goffman, 1967; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Research on face (Goffman, 1959) suggests that in any social interaction, people not only care about their personal face but also the face of their interaction partner (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1955; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Goffman (1955) asserted that “just as the member of any group is expected to have self-respect, he or she is also expected to sustain a standard of considerateness; he is expected to go to certain lengths to save the feelings and the face of others present” (p. 215). Likewise, Ho (1976) stated that “face is never a purely individual thing. It does not make sense to speak of the face of an individual as something lodged within his person; it is meaningful only when his face is considered in relation to that of others in the social network” (p. 882). Hence, people not only want affirmation from others on how they view themselves, but they also want to give respect to others to confirm their face (Brett, Olekalns, Freidman, Goates, Anderson, & Lisco, 2007; Drake & Moberg, 1986; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

Using the conceptualization of face as a theoretical basis, Brown and Levinson (1987) propose a theory of politeness that is well-recognized in the field of linguistics, sociolinguistics, and anthropology, yet has not been applied in organizational studies. According to politeness theory, any social interaction that fosters interpersonal conflict by threatening a target's face is known as a face-threatening act. These acts can occur throughout different types of social interaction, such as making an apology (Marquez-Reiter, 2000), offering criticism (Trees & Manusov, 1998), asking for a favor (Baxter, 1984; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990), offering advice (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000), managing conflict and dispute (Brett et al., 2007; Folger, & Poole, 1984), and negotiating business opportunities (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003).<sup>1</sup> When speakers engage in a face-threatening act, they are more likely to use a multitude of linguistic tactics to show consideration for the face of others.<sup>2</sup> In particular, research and theory on politeness suggests two general dimensions of face-saving tactics: directness and politeness. *Directness* refers to the extent to which speakers are straightforward and explicit about what they intend to say. When speakers are direct, their delivered message is direct, and the danger of being misunderstood is minimized. In contrast, when speakers are indirect, they avoid stating

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the concept of threat in politeness theory differs from the types of threats discussed in Staw, Dutton, and Sandeland's (1981) threat rigidity hypothesis. According to their propositions, when individuals feel threatened by an impending event, they restrict their information processing and emphasize prior expectations or internal hypotheses about their environment. As a result, individuals tend to respond with dominant, well-learned, or habituated responses when they feel threatened. Such responses may help individuals adapt to the change in environment when threats originate from common or familiar problems, whereas threats arising from radical environmental change may generate a maladaptive reaction. These insights about individual responses to threats differ from Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of face in two ways. First, whereas Staw et al. (1981) focused on threats directed *to the self*, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory focuses primarily on threats *to a speaker's target during an interaction*. As such, Staw et al.'s (1981) threat rigidity hypothesis is concerned primarily with how people respond to threats and how threats impact subsequent performance. In contrast, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is concerned primarily with how people mitigate threat to their interaction partners. Second, threat rigidity hypothesis and politeness theory also offer different predictions of how people respond to threat. Specifically, Staw et al. (1981) suggest that people experience a constriction in control and respond more rigidly when they experience threat. In contrast, politeness theory argues that individuals engage in face-saving strategies that are designed to mitigate or defray any anticipated threats to the face of the social partner (Brown & Gilman, 1989; Brown & Levinson, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> These tactics include "bald-on-record," "positive politeness," "negative politeness," and "off-record," with bald-on-record tactics as the most direct and the least polite and off-record tactics as the least direct and the most polite.

their intent in a clear and direct manner in an effort to reduce possible threat to the target.

Although speaking in an indirect manner helps mitigate the potential threat to the target, speakers risk failing to communicate their intention to their speaker clearly and directly. *Politeness* refers to the extent to which speakers are respectful, courteous, and mannerly when they engage in voice (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990, 1992). When speakers are polite, they show that they care about their listeners' feeling of relationship, enhancing the listeners' feeling of appreciation. By contrast, when speakers are impolite, they disregard their listeners' feeling of appreciation and belongingness.

Empirical studies of politeness theory lend support to the notion that directness and politeness are two distinct constructs (Blum-Kulka, 1987, 1990; Lee-Wong, 2009; Meier, 1995). In an empirical examination on the distinction between directness and politeness, Blum-Kulka (1990) studied how parents asked their children to behave during family dinner. She found that parents used both very direct and polite language in requesting their children for actions. Similarly, research on leave-taking (defined as how individuals retreat from a conversation; Kellermann, 1992; Kellermann & Park, 2011; Kellerman, Reynolds, & Chen, 1991) found that the two primary and distinct factors affecting tactical choices in exiting a conversation are concerns for efficiency and appropriateness. Efficient tactics of leave-taking are immediate, to the point, and do not waste time and energy. Appropriate tactics are mannerly, courteous, and respectful. Finally, research on nonverbal behaviors provides similarly suggests that speakers can manipulate the levels of directness by adjusting the levels of positive tone, such that a direct message delivered with a positive tone is associated with a message shifted perceptions toward greater politeness, whereas a direct message delivered with a negative tone associated with the same message shifted perceptions toward less politeness (LaPlante & Ambady, 2003). Taken



together, on the basis of extant theory and research on politeness theory, I posit that the ways employees express voice can be similarly conceptualized based on the extent to which they are direct and polite. I call these concepts *voice directness* and *voice politeness*.

***Voice directness.*** Voice directness refers to the employees are direct, clear, and straightforward about what they desire for change and improvement from voice recipients. When employees express voice in a direct manner, they are clear and explicit about their intentions to implement change in the workgroup or the organization, and their managers do not need to look below the surface to understand what the employee desires, and little risk exists for miscommunication. However, direct voice is also a threat to the manager, as the manager is told what they are supposed to do and, as a result, voicers infringe on their manager's personal autonomy. Dutton and Ashford (1993) raise the notion of imposition when they posited that tactics such as moral appeal, selling issues in public, and building a coalition to influence higher levels in the organization help issue sellers pressure top managers into action but also may create reactance. These tactics, indeed, are direct because they pressure managers to take action.

In contrast, when employees express voice in an indirect manner, they avoid making explicit statements about their desire for change to preserve the face of the manager. Although the manager's face is protected, the communication efficiency by using indirect tactics is undermined, and managers must read between the lines to understand their subordinates' desire for change. An example of indirect tactics is to hint. Hints are often articulated by describing the consequences of a problem if actions are not taken or by describing potential opportunities to motivate the manager to engage in change-oriented behaviors; still, the voicer does not state clearly what the manager should do. Rather than stating a suggestion directly to the manager, the employee may hint his or her suggestion without stating what to do with the situation.

***Voice politeness.*** Voice politeness refers to the extent to which employees are courteous, respectful, and preserve the dignity for their managers when they engage in voice. When voice is polite, employees attend to the feelings of appreciation and belonging within their managers. In contrast, when voice is impolite, employees ignore these feelings. To be polite, employees can add words or sentences that enhance a feeling of belonging. For example, employees can use respectful greetings (“Dear,” “Good morning”), inclusive forms such as “we” or “let’s” to include both employees and their managers in the activity (“We should do this” instead of “You should do this”), and polite adjuncts such as “Please” and “Would you consider...?”

In contrast, an employee is impolite when he or she is rude and discourteous, such as explicitly placing blame or assigning responsibility to the manager for causing an issue in the workplace (Dutton and Ashford, 1993). According to Dutton and Ashford (1993), putting blame or assigning responsibility on the top management for causing or resolving an issue can attract top management’s attention to address the issue. Often, it motivates (or obligates) top management to think more carefully about an issue and participate in the selling effort. Thus, it can be perceived as a direct strategy in which employees make clear that their managers are responsible for causing an issue at work. However, as Dutton and Ashford (1993) suggested, placing responsibility on top management is impolite because top management is put in a difficult position in which they must somehow respond to a suggestion, thus threatening the manager’s feeling of autonomy. In addition, by blaming the manager for causing or failing to address an issue, employees convey the sense that they are better than their managers in judging what is right and wrong in the workplace, thereby threatening the manager’s feeling of affiliation and belongingness. Therefore, this particular tactic is an impolite form of voice.

## **A Model of Voice Directness & Voice Politeness**

Provided that employees vary their levels of directness and politeness in voice expression, what predicts their desired levels of directness and politeness, and how do these dimensions influence manager's response to voice? To develop a theoretical framework to explain how employees choose to express voice, I again draw from politeness theory. Politeness theory identifies three primary factors that influence an individual's choice to be polite in an interaction: the perceived importance of the message, the message urgency, and the extent to which the message might potentially threaten the face of the target. When a message is perceived to be more important and more urgent, speakers are more likely to be direct and explicit about their message to convey whatever intentions they want to convey in the conversation. Assuming the perceived importance and perceived urgency of the message remain constant, politeness theory focuses on the third factor: the extent to which a message is threatening to the face of the target. In particular, individuals are more likely to mitigate face-threat when they perceive that an interaction will threaten the face of their interaction partner. This insight leads to identifying a key antecedent of voice directness and voice politeness: issue threat (see Figure 1).

***Issue threat.*** Issue threat refers to employees' perceptions that raising an idea may cause harm or loss to their voice recipients' image, reputation, status, and credibility in a voice episode. Consistent with prior research examining how frequent employees express voice to their manager, I focus on the manager as the voice recipients. In particular, some issues are particularly more threatening to the face of the manager than other types of issues. According to Milliken et al. (2003), issues that employees typically raise include the supervisor's competence or performance, problems with organizational processes, concerns about pay and equity, disagreement with company policies and decisions, ethical or fairness issues, harassment or

abuse, and conflict with a coworker (Milliken et al., 2003). Some of these issues—such as concern with the supervisor’s competence—can be more threatening to the manager’s face than other issues, because they either contain information that reflects the manager’s undesirable traits or explicitly or implicitly challenge the manager’s viewpoints or opinions about workplace issues (Glauser, 1984). These issues are what Liang et al. (2012) described as prohibitive voice or what Burris (2012) described as challenging voice. Prohibitive voice refers to the type of voice messages intended to express concern about existing practices, incidents, or behaviors that may harm the organization. Similarly, Burris (2012) introduced the concept of challenge-oriented voice that seeks to alter, modify, or destabilize a generally accepted set of practices. Both types of voice are more likely than other types of voice to be face-threatening to the manager in a voice episode, because they call attention to a questionable decision the manager made (Klaas et al., 2012).

Theory and empirical research regarding politeness suggests that individuals become less direct as the level of perceived face-threat to the target increases. This is because speaking in a less direct manner helps avoid embarrassing the target. For example, consider a speaker who wishes to tell his target a better way to perform an action. If the speaker believes that his target might be offended by his advice on how to improve performance, the speaker would give his advice in a less direct manner to avoid embarrassing his target. Instead of telling the target directly how to perform an action more effectively, the speaker may instead use suggestive comments, questions, or hints to convey his suggestion.

Applying this insight to the current context, I expect that, holding issue importance and issue urgency constant, employees who perceive higher levels of issue threat to the manager in any given voice episode are more concerned about mitigating potential face-threats to their

manager. If they believe that raising an issue would result in a loss to their manager's status and reputation in the company, employees should become less direct to avoid further aggravating face-threat. In contrast, when employees perceive that raising an issue is nonthreatening to the face of the manager in a voice episode, they would not expect to embarrass their managers and, as a result, they can afford to invoke some levels of face-threat to the manager by being more direct; they can directly tell managers what they should do with the sole intention of improving organizational effectiveness and not embarrassing or threatening the status of the manager.

Therefore, I predict the following:

*Hypothesis 1 (H1): The stronger the issue threat, the less direct the employee's voice.*

I further expect issue threat to be positively associated with voice politeness. When issue threat is low, there is less of a need for voicers to be polite for two reasons. First, being polite requires significant amount of time and effort, as voicers have to think about how to express their ideas in a courteous and nonthreatening manner to protect the feeling of their manager. Second, being polite may also inadvertently reduce the perceived urgency of the matter, as voicers perceive that polite phrases may distract their manager from paying attention to raised ideas. As the perceived issue threat to the manager in a given voice episode increases, voicers will become more likely to be respectful and courteous to their manager to avoid further embarrassing the face of the manager. Thus, as issue threat increases, they will also become more polite. Stated formally:

*H2: The stronger the issue threat, the more polite the employee's voice.*

### **Moderating Effects of Psychological Power and Leader–Member Exchange**

In the previous section, I draw from politeness theory to theorize that employees express ideas in a less direct and more polite manner when they perceive voice to be more threatening to

the manager in a voice episode. This is the case because raising an issue that is threatening to the manager in a direct and impolite manner might further aggregate face-threat to the manager. However, given the rich and complex nature of organizational contexts, I expect that the relationship between issue threat and voice directness and the relationship between issue threat and voice politeness is more complicated than what politeness theory predicts. Specifically, I propose that these relationships are modified by the social and contextual characteristics in which voice occurs. These social and contextual characteristics are likely to modify the relationships because they influence employees' perception of whether their manager will react to threatening voice in a retributive or benign manner. In particular, employees will be more direct and less polite even if the perceived issue threat is high when they perceive that their manager will react to voice in a calm, benign, and positive manner. In this dissertation, I identify two such social characteristics: psychological power and leader–member exchange (LMX). Employees who feel psychologically more powerful than their manager feel that their manager depends on their effort, input, and performance. Moreover, employees with a positive LMX relationship with their manager feel comfortable and safe raising ideas that are threatening. As a result, individuals who feel psychologically more powerful than the manager or who have a positive work relationship with their manager may perceive that even when they embarrass their manager, their manager will react in a nonthreatening manner. Thus, the employee becomes more direct and less polite, despite high levels of perceived threat.

***Psychological power.*** Power is defined as one's ability to influence behavior, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things they would not ordinarily do (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In this sense, organizational scholars often associate formal and hierarchical positions with power, such that employees depend on their managers to a

greater extent than vice versa (Emerson, 1954). However, scholars contend that this is not always the case. For example, a manager may depend on a subordinate who possesses valuable resources, such as technical expertise (Mechanic, 1962). Likewise, employees who are responsible for carrying out non-replaceable procedures and who are instrumental to the group's success and achievement or organizational goals can hold power over their managers. In this case, the manager's performance depends on his or her subordinates successfully completing procedures (Kotter, 1977, 1979). Following Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson (2003), I focus on the psychological feeling of power (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006), rather than on objectively possessing power, and I define psychological power as the sense that one can influence others.

Prior research has suggested that the experience of power can influence how one thinks and feels. Specifically, Keltner et al.'s (2003) theory of psychological power suggests that more psychologically powerful individuals are more likely to exhibit signs of an active approach system that helps these individuals pursue and obtain goals and rewards. In contrast, less psychologically powerful individuals exhibit signs of an active inhibition system that activates sensitivity to threat and punishment and results in response inhibition (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). As a result, psychologically-powerful individuals are more likely to express their true attitudes, feelings, and personality (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Berdahl & Martorana, 2006; Brinol, Petty, Valle, Rucker, & Becerra, 2007; Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008) and feel more optimistic and confident in their decisions (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Brinol et al., 2007) than their low-psychologically-powerful counterparts. Research on power further suggests that a feeling of power can reduce awareness of other's feelings (Fiske, 1993). In an experimental study, Galinsky et al. (2006) found that individuals primed to feel psychologically

powerful are less likely to adopt other's visual perspective and background knowledge and are less accurate in judging others' facial expressions of emotion. Furthermore, Overbeck and Park (2006) found that individuals assigned to occupy a more powerful position recalled less correct information about those who occupied a less powerful position and were less able to distinguish the unique characteristics of those in the less powerful group.

Extending these insights to the current context, I propose that psychological power can modify the relationship between perceived threat to the manager in a voice episode and the levels of voice directness/politeness. In particular, employees high in psychological power are more concerned with getting their voice heard than preserving their manager's face because they are motivated to express their ideas, suggestions, or feelings toward a situation. They feel that even if they speak up in a direct and impolite manner, their manager will have no choice but to react positively and listen to their suggestion because their manager depends on the employee's input, effort, and performance. Furthermore, because they are unable to engage in taking their manager's perspective, employees who experience a sense of psychological power are unlikely to be sensitive toward how their managers may react to their voice. Actually, they may not be able to see how their manager will react when they speak up in a direct manner. As a result, feeling psychologically powerful enables employees to express a threatening issue without worrying about offending their manager. In contrast, employees with low psychological power are particularly concerned with their manager's reaction when they raise an issue that is threatening to the face of the manager in a voice episode. They are particularly worried that raising an issue that is threatening to the manager will make their managers angry and negative, which in turn, will result in punishment and retribution. As a result, individuals low on the psychological feeling of power express issues with high levels of threat to the manager in a less



direct and more polite manner than their high-psychological-power counterparts. This leads to my next set of hypotheses:

*H3a: Psychological feeling of power moderates the effect of issue threat on voice directness such that the hypothesized negative effect of issue threat on voice directness is amplified when psychological power is lower.*

*H3b: Psychological feeling of power moderates the effect of issue threat on voice politeness such that the hypothesized positive effect of issue threat on voice politeness is amplified when psychological power is lower.*

**LMX.** The relationship quality between subordinates and managers is an essential determinant of voice (Ashford et al., 1998; Detert & Burris, 2007; Detert & Edmondson, 2009; Liu, Tangirala, & Ramanujam, in press). In particular, employees who maintain a positive relationship with the manager are less afraid to express voice, because they feel it is interpersonally safe to express ideas (Ashford et al., 1998; Edmondson, 1999; Detert & Burris, 2007). In contrast, poor relationship quality contributes to lower levels of psychological safety for expressing voice, resulting in a lower likelihood of voice (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Roberts & O'Reilly, 1974). Building on past research on the role of relationship quality in voice, I propose that the relational quality between voicers and their managers in the form of LMX will moderate the effect of issue threat on voice directness and voice politeness. LMX theory proposes that leaders have differential relationships with specific subordinates (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975), and the quality of relationships can influence attitudes and behaviors at work. Positive LMX relationships are personal, intangible, and are exemplified by mutual trust and respect. In contrast, negative LMX relationships are impersonal, driven by economic exchange, and exemplified by lack of trusting interactions and support (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997).

Based on past research on LMX, I posit that LMX will moderate the negative effect of issue threat on voice directness and the positive effect of issue threat on voice politeness. I have argued that issue threat should be negatively associated with voice directness and positively associated with voice politeness. In theory, employees who perceive that raising an issue that is non-threatening to their managers are less concerned about preserving their manager's face. In comparison, employees who perceive that raising an issue is particularly threatening to their manager in a voice episode will avoid further aggravating face-threat by speaking less directly and more politely. However, such effects may be attenuated when employees share a strong, positive LMX with their manager. This strong, positive relationship might lead employees to perceive that their manager will react nondefensively or in a way that does not imply he or she is offended, even if the employee speaks up in a more direct and less polite manner. Indeed, speaking up about a threatening issue may be perceived as affirming the positive relationship between employees and their managers. In contrast, employees with poor or negative LMX with their manager are likely to perceive that their manager may react in a negative manner. This is the case because managers might feel especially offended by someone who is direct and impolite because they lack of a close relationship. As such, low-LMX employees should be especially concerned about protecting the face of their manager when a raised issue is threatening to the manager in a voice episode by reducing directness and increasing politeness in voice. In sum, this line of reasoning suggests that those with positive LMX should be relatively unaffected by the perception of issue threat, whereas those with negative LMX will show lower levels of voice directness and greater levels of voice politeness when issue threat is high. Therefore, I hypothesize:

*H4a: LMX moderates the effect of issue threat on voice directness such that the hypothesized negative effect of issue threat on voice directness is amplified when LMX is lower.*

*H4b: LMX moderates the effect of issue threat on voice politeness such that the hypothesized positive effect of issue threat on voice politeness is amplified when LMX is lower.*

### **Consequences of Voice Directness and Voice Politeness on Managerial Response to Voice**

In considering how managers respond to voice, two outcomes are relevant. First, although voice is perceived as constructive to the organization, it has been argued that managers are not always open to listening to their subordinates' voice. This is the case because they fear negative feedback and hold implicit beliefs about employees and the nature of management (Ashford et al., 2009; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Furthermore, several theoretical (Dutton & Ashford, 1993) and empirical studies (Dutton et al., 2001; Andersson & Bateman, 2000) have examined the attention top management pays to a raised issue as a key outcome of issue selling. Although these studies stop short at focusing on attention paid to an issue (and not on actual endorsement of a raised issue), they collectively suggest that the first key outcome of voice is *idea endorsement*, which refers to the managers' decision to support, recommend, or implement a raised issue (Burris, 2012). Second, past research has shown that voice has significant implications on interpersonal liking between employees and their manager. "Liking" is defined as the degree to which managers exhibit positive emotional feelings toward employees who express voice (Whiting et al., 2012). By challenging the status quo and existing procedures—some of which may have existed for a long time but are ineffective—employees risk being disliked by their managers for introducing change. This suggests that a second key outcome of voice is whether managers continue to show affective liking toward those who speak up.

Following Burris (2012), Dutton and Ashford (1993), and Whiting et al. (2012), I focus on these two managerial responses to voice: *idea endorsement* and *subordinate liking*.

***Idea endorsement.*** The effect of voice directness on idea endorsement can take two forms. On the one hand, directness minimizes the amount of time managers need to understand the meaning and intent of changes. Top leaders usually receive and must process a great amount of information (Ashford et al., 2009), and they may not have time to process each idea or suggestion thoroughly. Therefore, employees who express voice in a direct manner signal a sense of urgency or immediacy that actions must be taken to alter a situation. This enhances idea endorsement. In contrast, when voice is expressed in an indirect manner, managers may perceive that an issue is not urgent giving that it is raised in an indirect manner. As a result, managers might choose to *ignore* an issue that is perceived as less urgent (Andersson & Bateman, 2000). When voice is indirect, therefore, the probability of idea endorsement will be lower. Based on this logic, one may expect voice directness to be positively associated with idea endorsement.

On the other hand, it is possible that voice directness results in *less* idea endorsement. As theorized, directness will threaten a manager's negative face because employees impose on their manager to consume valuable time and resources to engage in change. Such face-threat is particularly real and salient because the threat originates from an individual occupying a position lower in the hierarchy than the manager. When managers perceive direct voice as threatening, the most common response to the threat is rigidity, or in ways that reduce flexible thinking and action tendencies (Staw, Sandeland, & Dutton, 1981). This rigid reaction suggests that when voicers are direct, managers may react in a manner that reduces the probability of idea endorsement. Thus, it is equally possible that the more direct the voice, the stronger the

manager's reaction will be. To regain face, managers will react negatively by rejecting a raised idea.

To explain these opposing predictions, I argue that the effect of voice directness on idea endorsement depends on the levels of voice politeness. Research on face has suggested that when people are treated in a less polite manner, they are more likely to respond defensively and be uncooperative. Disrespectful comments elicit feelings of anger, hurt, and defensiveness (Blumstein, 1973; Goffman, 1959; Prus, 1975). Likewise, research on interpersonal relationships found that severe or aggravating reproaches were associated with defensive responses (Cody & Braaten, 1992). Therefore, voice that conveys a desire for a positive relationship (i.e., high politeness) produces positive feelings about the speaker and affirms face. It signals that the speaker values the target, which in turn affirms the target's standing (Oetzel, Myers, Meares, & Lara, 2003; Taylor, 2002; Wilson & Putnam, 1990). When people feel their face is preserved through high levels of politeness, they are more likely to respond in a cooperative and helpful manner (Cupach & Carson, 2002).

Drawing from this insight, I propose that voice politeness helps compensate for the loss of face associated with voice directness. Specifically, managers are less likely to endorse the idea when employees express voice in an indirect manner, either because they do not get the intention behind voice, or because they can avoid responding to voice altogether due to low levels of directness. Therefore, how polite voicers express their suggestion may have little influence on the way managers respond to voice when voice is expressed indirectly. As employees become more direct, the effect on idea endorsement will depend more and more on voicers' politeness. Specifically, when employees speak up in a direct *and* polite manner (i.e., they are diplomatic), they affirm their managers' dignity and generate positive emotions, which compensates for the

face-threat associated with voice directness. As a result, managers will be more open-minded, helpful, and cooperative when considering the raised issues thus increasing idea endorsement. In contrast, when employees express voice in a direct *and* impolite manner (i.e., they are blunt), they further aggravate the face-threat associated with voice directness. As a result, managers will be more defensive, close-minded, and uncooperative when considering raised issues. To regain the loss of positive and negative face, managers will reduce the likelihood of agreeing with their subordinates, thus lowering idea endorsement. In sum, assuming the quality of the raised ideas equal, I hypothesize the following:

*H5: Voice directness interacts with voice politeness to predict idea endorsement such that idea endorsement is the greatest when voice is direct and polite.*

***Subordinate liking.*** I also expect voice directness and voice politeness to predict subordinate liking in an interactive manner. On the one hand, speaking up in a direct manner may enhance subordinate liking because employees are perceived as those who are willing to speak up, be helpful, and contribute to the organization's performance. When actions are perceived to be driven by prosocial motives, the individuals are liked and evaluated more favorably (Whiting et al., 2012). Thus, in this scenario, the relationship between direct voice and subordinate liking should be positive.

On the other hand, when subordinates express an issue in a direct manner, managers are put in a somewhat unpleasant or uncomfortable situation because they are compelled to respond, especially if they do not have the intent to endorse the raised idea. Furthermore, if managers reject a raised idea, subordinates may perceive their managers as close-minded or unresponsive, which can hurt their image. Finally, due to the hierarchical power inherent in their position, managers often view themselves as more competent than their subordinates (Morrison & Rothman, 2009); as a result, they feel a strong need to avoid embarrassment, threat, and feelings

of vulnerability or incompetence (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Therefore, when subordinates raise an issue in a direct manner, managers may perceive that subordinates are challenging their power and credibility, which should reduce their liking of the subordinate.

A possible way to reconcile these opposite predictions is that the effect of voice directness on subordinate liking once again depends on voice politeness. When employees speak up in a less direct manner, managerial liking of the employees are less likely to be affected because they do not understand the intention behind voice, or they simply do not know that the voicer is making a suggestion). As voice directness increases, whether voice directness is viewed as an attack to the manager's authority or as a prosocial gesture to benefit the work unit will depend on the extent to which managers are treated courteously. When subordinates are direct and polite, managers may perceive that their subordinates' motivations to express voice are driven by a prosocial intent to improve the work unit's effectiveness. As a result, subordinate liking increases. In contrast, when subordinates are direct and impolite, managers may perceive that their subordinates are motivated to challenge the manager's power, authority, and credibility, which contributes to lower levels of subordinate liking. Thus, I propose the following:

*H6: Voice directness interacts with voice politeness to predict subordinate liking such that the relationship between voice directness and subordinate liking is positive when voice politeness is high, and the relationship is negative when voice politeness is low.*

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I develop a theoretical framework of how employees express voice in organizations. Specifically, I draw from politeness theory to posit that employees vary the degree of directness and politeness to mitigate potential threats to the face of their managers in a voice episode. Furthermore, drawing again from politeness theory, I posit that employees' decision to be direct and polite is a function of the employees' perceived threat to the manager, their

experience of psychological power, and the relational quality between employees and their managers. Finally, I argue that voice directness and voice politeness will interact to predict idea endorsement and subordinate liking. In the next chapter, I describe how I tested my conceptual model using two studies, each employing a different research method. The first study was a diary study conducted with a service management organization, and the second study was a situated experiment with university staff members.



## CHAPTER 4: STUDY 1

### Sample and Procedures

The participating organization for Study 1 was a support service management company that delivers environmental and food services to hospitals, healthcare systems, long-term care facilities, and continuing care retirement communities. It provided environmental management (e.g., housekeeping, laundry, and patient transportation) and food and nutrition management (e.g., patient dining, senior dining, and clinical nutrition) services. The firm places a team of two to 11 qualified individuals at each site. Their daily work includes implementing established procedures and programs to ensure a clean and safe environment and conducting quality improvement inspections within assigned areas to ensure quality and satisfaction levels. Each facility also included an onsite manager who provided ratings of directness, politeness, idea endorsement, and subordinate liking. To avoid terminology confusion, I refer to the employees who provided ratings for issue threat, psychological power, and LMX interchangeably as “participants” and “voicers” and the onsite managers who provided ratings for directness, politeness, idea endorsement, and subordinate liking interchangeably as “targets” or “raters.”

I employed an event-sampling, diary method (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003) with two phases of data collection (see Appendices A–E for recruitment emails, reminder emails, thank you note, consent forms, and survey instruments). All surveys were administered online.

***Phase 1 (questionnaire data).*** After the organization agreed to participate in the research, I sent an email to all participants and invited them to fill out a questionnaire that included questions regarding the independent variables (psychological power and LMX), control variables (gender, number of years working with raters, proactive personality, and psychological voice

climate), and demographic variables. Raters also completed a questionnaire, which included questions regarding the control variables (perceived credibility of each participant they oversaw) and demographic variables. Those who participated in Phase 1 survey received a \$10 gift card as a token of appreciation.

***Phase 2 (weekly survey data).*** Two weeks after Phase 1 data collection, Phase 2 began. Participants were sent an online survey toward the end of each week for four weeks. The structure and methodology of the weekly survey was patterned after the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954). For example, it began with a general description of the phrase “speaking up,” followed by a series of open-ended questions asking participants to report whether they spoke up during the course of the week. If they did not, the survey was complete, and they were thanked for participating. If they did, they were asked to describe their suggestion briefly, followed by a survey that included independent variables (issue threat) and control variables (issue importance and issue urgency). By the end of the week, I collected participants’ responses, emailed raters with a brief description of the participants’ idea, and asked them to provide ratings on voice directness and politeness, idea endorsement and subordinate liking.

Among 169 possible participants, I obtained 236 voice episodes from 96 participants in Phase 2. Of the voice episodes reported, I received 161 matched responses from raters. In total, I obtained 161 voice episodes from 57 participants, representing a 68.2% (voice episode) and 33.7% (participants) response rate. Participants’ mean age was 45.5 ( $SD = 11.3$ , range = 20–67). About 64.6% were female. Participants have worked at the organization for an average of 1.74 years ( $SD = 2.93$ , range = 0 to 18) and at their current post for an average of 6.01 years ( $SD = 7.99$ , range = 0–25). In addition, 73.8% of the participants held a high school diploma or had passed the GED test; 23.1% had some college or an associate’s degree; and 2% had earned a

master's degree. The average age of the raters was 36.67 years ( $SD = 4.71$ ), and 72.4% were male. Ninety-eight percent had at least a bachelor's degree, and 29% had a graduate degree. Their average tenure with the organization was 7.31 years ( $SD = 3.99$ ), and their average tenure with their work group was 4.00 years ( $SD = 2.03$ ).

To address the possibility of response bias, I conducted a non-response analysis to examine whether there were any differences between participants who were included in the final analyses and those who were not. I found no significant difference in terms of gender ( $F = .11, p < .74$ ), age ( $F = .01, p < .94$ ), educational level ( $F = 1.98, p < .16$ ), tenure at the facility ( $F = .55, p < .46$ ), and tenure at the participating organization ( $F = .07, p < .79$ ). I also found no significant difference in terms of years of experience in the industry ( $F = .00, p < .99$ ), years of working with raters ( $F = 2.37, p < .13$ ), and how often participants interacted with raters on a daily basis ( $F = .24, p < .62$ ). I also conducted a nonresponse analysis to examine whether there were any differences between raters who provided ratings and those who did not. Again, I found no significant difference in terms of gender ( $F = .00, p < .98$ ), age ( $F = 1.63, p < .21$ ), educational level ( $F = 1.37, p < .25$ ), tenure at the facility ( $F = 2.37, p < .13$ ), tenure at the participating organization ( $F = .18, p < .67$ ), and years of experience in the industry ( $F = .29, p < .60$ ). In sum, I concluded that there was little indication of nonresponse bias in my data.

## Measures

I pretested three measures—issue threat, voice directness, and voice politeness—using 234 participants recruited from Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk online survey program. Mechanical Turk allows researchers to post questionnaires, which are completed by Amazon.com users who participate in exchange for small contributions toward an Amazon.com gift voucher. The platform records each participant's IP address to prevent participants from

completing the same questionnaire more than once (Alter, Oppenheimer, & Zemla, 2010). When asked why they were motivated to be an Amazon Mechanical Turk user, 13.8% of the participants reported that the Turk platform served as a primary source of income and 61.4% reported that it was an avenue for additional income (Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). Furthermore, 69.6% reported that it was a fruitful way to spend their free time (e.g., rather than watching television). Paolacci et al. (2010) concluded that participants in the Amazon.com Mechanical Turk sample are closer to the US population as a whole than individuals recruited from a university subject pool. I used the data from this sample to revise the scales by altering item wording or adding items. All participants in the pretest sample (66.7% male; mean age = 29.7;  $SD = 8.25$ ) were working adults who were fairly well educated (12.4% with a high school degree; 60.3% with a bachelor's degree; and 27.4% with a master's degree). The Cronbach's alphas for issue threat, voice directness, and voice politeness in the pretest sample were .88, .78, and .86, respectively.

Unless otherwise indicated, participants and raters responded to the survey items with the following prompt, "To what extent do you agree with the following statement?" All multi-item scales were assessed on a 1 to 7 scale (anchored by 1 = *very strongly disagree* to 7 = *very strongly agree*).

### **Phase 1 (Questionnaire Data)**

***Psychological power.*** I measured participants' experience of psychological power using Anderson and Galinsky's (2006) sense-of-power scale. This measure is based on the idea that individuals form internal representations of their power relative to others across contexts and relationships. Past research has shown that the scale was correlated with people's standing in power hierarchies and predicted the same behaviors as structural manipulations of power

(Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Anderson & Galinsky, 2006). The scale consisted of a stem, “In my relationship with my manager...” followed by eight items: (1) “I can get my manager to listen to what I say;” (2) “My wishes do not carry much weight [reverse-coded]” (3) “I can get my manager to do what I want;” (4) “Even if I voice them, my views have little sway [reverse-coded];” (5) “I think I have a great deal of power;” (6) “My ideas and opinions are often ignored [reverse-coded];” (7) “Even when I try, I am not able to get my way [reverse-coded];” and (8) “If I want to, I get to make the decisions.” The coefficient alpha was .83.

***Leader–Member Exchange.*** I assessed LMX using Graen and Uhl-Bien’s (1995) 7-item LMX scale. Items included (1) “Do you know where you stand with your manager; that is, do you know how satisfied your manager is with what you do?” (1 = *rarely*; 5 = *very often*); (2) “How well does your manager understand your job problems and needs?” (1 = *not a bit*; 5 = *a great deal*); (3) “How well does your manager recognize your potential?” (1 = *not at all*; 5 = *fully*); (4) “Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, what are the chances that your manager would use his/her power to help you solve problems in your work” (1 = *none*; 5 = *very high*); (5) “Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your leader has, what are the chances that he/she would ‘bail you out,’ at his/her expense?” (1 = *none*; 5 = *very high*); (6) “I have enough confidence in my manager that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so” (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*); and (7) “How would you characterize your working relationship with your manager?” (1 = *extremely ineffective*; 5 = *extremely effective*). I chose this particular measure of LMX because it was the most often used LMX scale by organizational scholars (Liao, Liu, & Loi, 2010; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Scandura et al., 1986; Vidayarthi, Liden, Annad, Erdogan, & Ghosh, 2010; Zhang, Waldman, & Wang, 2012). The coefficient alpha was .80.

***Control variables.*** I included control variables for both participants and raters. For participants, I included gender, number of years participants have worked with targets, proactive personality, and voice climate. First, I controlled for gender because research on politeness suggests that women tend to be more polite than men (Brown, 1980; Lakoff, 1975). Second, I controlled for the number of year participants have worked with raters, because politeness theory has posited that speakers who knew their listeners for a longer period of time tend to use more direct and less polite language (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Third, I controlled for proactive personality (Bateman & Crant, 1993), which refers to an individual's behavioral tendency to take action to influence his or her environment. I controlled for this variable because people high on proactive personality would seek opportunities to improve, show initiative, take action, and persevere (Crant, 2000). Thus, I expected that individuals with a proactive personality would be positively associated with voice directness. To measure proactive personality, I used Seibert, Crant, and Kraimer's (1999) validated 10-item proactive personality measure (alpha coefficient = .87). Finally, it could be argued that participants at facilities with higher perceived levels of voice climate (Morrison et al., 2011) might express voice in a more direct and straightforward way than employees with lower perceived levels of voice climate at the same facility. In the current study, the alpha coefficient of Morrison et al.'s (2011) voice climate measure was .98.

I also asked managers to evaluate the credibility level of each participant they supervised; that is, their perceived levels of competence of their subordinates. Research on social influence has suggested that individuals are more likely to be influenced by more credible individuals (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Likewise, scholars interested in whistle-blowing have argued that organizations are more likely to terminate unethical conduct in organizations when the whistle-blowers are credible (Near & Miceli, 1995). Thus, targets who perceive voicers to be more

credible should be more likely to endorse a raised issue. To control for the effect of credibility, I employed Ohanian's (1990) well-established measure of credibility. Items included "This person is an expert in what he/she does," "This person is experienced," "This person is knowledgeable," "This person is qualified," and "This person is skilled." The alpha coefficient for perceived credibility was .95. Finally, I controlled for subordinate liking when idea endorsement is the outcome variable, as it is possible that managers who like the participants more interpersonally will be more likely to endorse a raised idea. Similarly, I controlled for idea endorsement when subordinate liking is the outcome variable, as managers may come to like those whose ideas are endorsed.

### **Phase 2 (Weekly Survey Data)**

*Issue threat.* To measure participants' perceived threat that their ideas might pose to their manager, I adapted items from Burris (2012). The original items, completed by superiors, were (1) "How likely is it that you will lose status in the organization if your superiors heard this person's comments?"; (2) "How likely is it that your superiors will question your ability to devise an effective plan if your superiors heard this person's comments?"; and (3) "How likely is it that your superiors will judge your plan to be faulty if your superiors heard this person's comments?" Mirroring these items, I included the following: (1) "By raising this idea/suggestion, my manager might lose status in the organization," and (2) "By raising this idea/suggestion, my manager's ability to succeed in his/her position will be questioned." I dropped a third item here because the manager is not seeking particular input on a particular plan that the subordinate is introducing. To further improve the quality of the measure, I included three self-developed items: (1) "By raising this idea/suggestion, I might have made my manager lose face," (2) "By raising this idea/suggestion, my manager might feel hurt," and (3) "By raising this idea/suggestion, my

manager might feel that I overstepped the boundaries.” The internal consistency of the combined, 5-item scale was .88, showing sufficient reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

***Voice directness.*** I developed a measure of voice directness by adapting Holtgraves’s (1997) measure of conversational indirectness scale. These items included (1) “He/she was direct,” (2) “He/she was clear about what he/she desired to improve,” (3) “He/she was explicit about what he/she hoped for,” and (4) “What he/she suggested was straightforward and to the point.” The alpha coefficient was .97, showing excellent levels of internal consistency.

***Voice politeness.*** I adapted four items from Colquitt’s (2001) measure of interactional justice to measure voice politeness. He defined interactional justice as “the interpersonal treatment people receive as procedures are enacted” (p. 386). People experience a sense of interactional justice when decision makers treat people with respect and sensitivity. This definition is closely aligned with the definition of politeness, which refers to one’s sensitivity to the feelings of another person. The items used to measure interactional justice are (1) “Has he/she treated you in a polite manner?” (2) “Has he/she treated you with dignity?” (3) “Has he/she treated you with respect?” and (4) “Has he/she refrained from improper remarks or comments?” Although the scales are originally designed to measure interactional justice, I believe they are closely aligned with the definition of politeness advanced here. The alpha coefficient was .95.

***Idea endorsement.*** To measure idea endorsement, I used Burris’s (2012) 3-item measure of idea endorsement scale. These items were (1) “This person’s suggestion has been, is being, or will be implemented,” (2) “I agree with this person’s comments,” and (3) “This person’s recommendation is valuable.” The alpha coefficient was .86.



***Subordinate liking.*** To measure this variable, I used Wayne and Ferris's (1990) measure of subordinate liking. Items included "I like this person," "I get along well with this person," and "Supervising this person is a pleasure." The alpha coefficient was .89.

***Control variables.*** For participants, I controlled for their perception of issue importance and issue urgency. According to politeness theory, situations deemed more important would be communicated more directly (Brown & Levinson, 1987). To control for the issue's importance, I included Ashford et al.'s (1998) 3-item measures of issue importance: (1) "I am personally concerned about this idea/issue," (2) "This idea/issue matters to me personally," and (3) "This idea/issue is important to me." The alpha coefficient was .76. Furthermore, research on politeness has suggested that people are less polite when a situation is more urgent and serious (Isenberg, 1981; Kellermann & Park, 2011). Thus, I controlled for employees' perception of issue urgency using two items adapted from Morgeson and DeRue (2006): "My manager had to respond to this idea/issue immediately," and "My manager had to stop what he/she was doing and respond to this idea/issue." The alpha coefficient was .72.

For raters, I controlled for their perceived *feasibility* of a raised issue ("This person's suggestion would be difficult to implement"); perceived *importance* of a raised issue ("This person's suggestion would be important for the work unit"); and the targets' perception that the issue might be a threat to them ("This person's suggestion might threaten my status in the work unit"). I expected that raters would be more likely to endorse a raised idea when the idea was feasible, important, and not threatening.

### **Analytical Approach**

Each participant and rater provided data at the issue level (Level 1; issue threat provided by voicers; voice directness, voice politeness, idea endorsement, and subordinate liking provided

by targets) and at the person level (Level 2: psychological power and LMX). Therefore, the data was hierarchical, with issue-level data nested within the person-level data. To test my hypotheses, I used Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM; Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2001), which explicitly accounts for the nested nature of the data. Furthermore, HLM can simultaneously estimate the impact of factors at different levels on voice-level outcome, while maintaining appropriate levels of analysis for the predictors (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). In testing the effects of a psychological feeling of power and LMX on voice directness and politeness, I grand-mean centered the Level 1 predictors (issue threat). This centering approach facilitates interpreting the HLM results, ensures that the Level 1 effects are controlled when testing the incremental effects of the Level 2 variables, and reduces multicollinearity in Level 2 estimation by reducing the correlation between the Level 2 intercept and slope estimates (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998). In addition, I group-mean centered my Level 1 variables in testing the cross-level interaction (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998). This analytical technique ensures that I separate the cross-level and between-group interactions. Finally, I group-mean centered both voice directness and voice politeness as I examined their effect on idea endorsement and subordinate liking.

## **Results**

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for key study variables in Study 1 are presented in Table 1 (issue level) and Table 2 (person level). Before testing my hypotheses, I investigated whether systematic within- and between-individual variance existed in the ratings of episode-level variables. Table 3 presents parameter values and variance components for this null model. The null model analyses indicated that significant between-individual and within-individual variance exists in all of the variables. Specifically, episode-level variance was 51% for

issue threat, 42% for voice directness, 33.7% for voice politeness, 58% for idea endorsement, and 22% for subordinate liking. These results suggest that participants and raters discriminated among voice episodes when rating those episodes for issue threat, voice directness, voice politeness, idea endorsement, and subordinate liking. These results also suggest that HLM was appropriate.

### **Hypotheses Testing**

I conducted a series of tests to examine the effect of issue threat, psychological power, and LMX on voice directness (Table 4) and voice politeness (Table 5). My hypotheses stated that issue threat would be negatively associated with voice directness (H1) and positively associated with voice politeness (H2). As shown in Table 4 (Model B) and Table 5 (Model B), the coefficient of the main effect of issue threat was significant in predicting voice directness ( $\gamma_{30} = -.28, p < .05$ ), but the coefficient of the main effect of issue threat was non-significant in predicting voice politeness ( $\gamma_{30} = -.11, ns$ ). Therefore, H1 is supported, but H2 is not supported.

Hypothesis 3a stated that the negative effect of issue threat on voice directness would be amplified when psychological power was lower. As shown in Table 4 (Model D), the coefficient term for the interaction between issue threat and psychological power was significant ( $\gamma_{35} = -.55, p < .05$ ). In line with prescriptions from Aiken and West (1991), I plotted these interactions in Figure 2a. Contrary to my expectations, the negative effect of issue threat on voice directness was stronger for participants experiencing *greater* levels of psychological power (see Figure 2a). Simple slope results indicated that individuals experiencing high psychological power (one *SD* above the mean) were less likely to speak up in a direct manner when issue threat was high ( $\beta = -.60, p < .01$ ). In contrast, individuals experiencing low psychological power (one *SD* below the mean) were less likely to speak up in a direct manner irrespective of issue threat level ( $\beta = .08,$

*ns*). These interaction patterns suggest that when issue threat is low, employees who feel psychologically more powerful than their manager are more likely to speak up in a direct manner. In contrast, when issue threat is high, employees are less likely to speak up in a direct manner irrespective of their psychological power. Given these findings, H3a is not supported.

Hypothesis 3b stated that the positive effect of issue threat on voice politeness would be amplified when psychological power was lower. Results shown in Table 5 (Model D) indicated that the coefficient term for the interaction between issue threat and psychological power was non-significant ( $\gamma_{35} = .07, ns$ ). Thus, H3b is not supported.

Hypothesis 4a predicted that the negative effect of issue threat on voice directness is indeed amplified when LMX was lower. The results shown in Table 4 (Model D) indicate that the coefficient term for the interaction between issue threat and LMX was significant ( $\gamma_{36} = .44, p < .05$ ). Simple slope results show that individuals with lower LMX (one *SD* below the mean) were less likely to speak up in a direct manner when issue threat was higher ( $\beta = -.56, p < .01$ ), whereas individuals with higher LMX (one *SD* above the mean) were more likely to speak up in a direct manner irrespective of levels of issue threat ( $\beta = .11, ns$ ).

H4b predicted that the hypothesized positive effect of issue threat on voice politeness would be amplified when LMX was lower. As shown in Table 5 (Model D), the coefficient for the interaction between issue threat and LMX was significant ( $\gamma_{36} = -.50, p < .05$ ). Simple slope results indicate that employees with high LMX (one *SD* above the mean) were less likely to speak up in a polite manner when the issue was threatening to the manager ( $\beta = -.62, p < .01$ ). In contrast, employees with low LMX (one *SD* below the mean) were more likely to speak up in a polite manner when the issue was threatening ( $\beta = .28, p < .05$ ) (see Figure 4a and 4b). As such, both H4a and H4b are supported.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that voice directness would interact with voice politeness to predict idea endorsement such that levels of idea endorsement are the greatest when voice is both direct and polite. The results shown in Table 6 (Model B) indicate that the coefficient term for voice directness was positive and significant in predicting idea endorsement ( $\gamma_{50} = .30, p < .05$ ), whereas the coefficient term for voice politeness was non-significant ( $\gamma_{60} = -.04, ns$ ). Furthermore, the coefficient term for the interaction between voice directness and voice politeness (Table 6; Model C) was non-significant in predicting idea endorsement ( $\gamma_{70} = -.03, ns$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 5 is not supported.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that voice directness would interact with voice politeness to predict subordinate liking, such that the relationship between voice directness and subordinate liking is positive when voice politeness is high. When voice politeness is low, the relationship between voice directness and subordinate liking is negative. The results shown in Table 7 (Model C) indicate that the coefficient term for voice directness was non-significant ( $\gamma_{50} = .03, ns$ ), but the coefficient term for voice politeness was significant and positive in predicting subordinate liking ( $\gamma_{50} = .29, p < .01$ ). In addition, the HLM results shown in Table 7 (Model C) indicate that the coefficient of the interactive term was significant ( $\gamma_{70} = .14, p < .01$ ). As shown in Figure 3, the relationship between voice directness and subordinate liking was positive for participants who spoke up in a polite manner. In contrast, participants who spoke up in a direct and impolite manner were less liked by their manager. Simple slope results confirmed that individuals who spoke up in a polite manner (one *SD* above the mean) were rated as more likeable when their voice was direct ( $\beta = .38, p < .05$ ). In contrast, individuals who spoke up in an impolite manner (one *SD* above the mean) were rated as less likeable when their voice was direct ( $\beta = -.47, p < .05$ ). This finding suggests that the effect of voice directness on subordinate

liking might depend on the degree of voice politeness. Politeness acts as a signal to managers, whether direct voice is intended to improve organizational effectiveness or to challenge the managers. When subordinates speak about an idea in a direct but impolite manner, managers are more likely to perceive the subordinate voice as a challenge to their competence and authority, which thus reduces subordinate liking. In contrast, when subordinates raise issues in a direct and polite manner, managers are more likely to perceive subordinate voice as a behavior driven by prosocial motives, which thus enhances subordinate liking.

### **Supplemental Analyses**

*Interactive effects of directness and credibility on idea endorsement.* Theories of social persuasion suggest that individuals are more likely to be influenced by someone who is an expert (Brinol & Petty, 2009; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Consistent with this claim, the perceived credibility of the voicers was significantly and positively related to endorsement ( $\gamma_{01} = .42$ ; Table 6, Model B). It is possible that the interactive effect of voice directness and voice politeness on idea endorsement is more apparent among those with less credibility; that is, less credible employees must speak up more directly and politely than more credible employees to gain idea endorsement. The HLM results indicated, however, that the coefficient term for the 3-way interaction between voice directness, voice politeness, and perceived credibility was nonsignificant ( $\gamma = .05, ns$ ). These findings are consistent with those reported by Burriss (2012), who found that the manager deemed both experts and nonexperts threatening when they raised challenging voice.

## **STUDY 1 DISCUSSION**

This present study supported the majority of my hypotheses. First, drawing from the theory of politeness, I theorized and found that issue threat was negatively associated with voice

directness. In other words, employees who perceive that raising an issue will be threatening to their manager in a voice episode will try to minimize such threats by expressing the issue in a less direct manner. These findings suggest that when employees assess how they should speak up to their manager, their perception of a potential threat to the manager plays a key role in influencing how direct and polite they should be in expressing voice.

Second, the results support the notion that LMX moderates the effect of issue threat on voice directness and voice politeness. Individuals with more positive LMX perceive that their manager may respond to voice more positively. When the relational quality between employees and their managers is positive, employees may interpret that their managers will not feel threatened or harmed by a voice episode. As a result, they can express voice in a more direct and less polite manner to communicate their idea clearly without being concerned about threatening the face of the manager in a voice episode.

Finally, I found that voice directness is positively associated with idea endorsement. Furthermore, voice directness interacted with voice politeness to predict subordinate liking. Specifically, being direct was associated with greater levels of subordinate liking when voice was polite. In contrast, being direct was associated with lower levels of subordinate liking when voice was impolite. This set of findings suggests that being direct conveys a sense of urgency about an issue and prevents managers from side-stepping the issue or avoiding a response. These mechanisms increase the chance that managers will endorse the raised issues. As Dutton and Ashford (1993) theorized, however, it is possible that although these managers accept direct voice, they grow to dislike their employees for restricting their autonomy in deciding whether to accept or reject an idea (i.e., their negative face is threatened). Therefore, employees must be polite to mitigate the potential threat associated with voice directness. When employees express

voice in a direct *and* polite manner, managers may come to perceive that these employees are willing to express ideas that are useful for the work unit. Managers are more likely to perceive these employees as prosocial individuals who are genuinely concerned about the organization's well-being. As a result, managers are more likely to exhibit high levels of subordinate liking toward employees who are direct and polite. In contrast, managers might perceive those who speak in a direct but impolite manner are motivated to express voice simply to fulfill a personal goal of challenging the manager's power and authority. As a result, managers are less likely to like those who express voice in a direct and impolite manner.

In Study 1, I attempted to address this issue by examining a possible interactive effect of directness/politeness and voicers' credibility on idea endorsement, as one may argue that those with higher credibility can be more direct and impolite in their voice. However, results did not support this finding. Rather, I found that those managers are more likely to endorse ideas raised by those who are more credible, which is consistent with prior research suggesting that credibility is a key factor in social influence (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Still, the levels of directness associated with voice can exert a significant effect on idea endorsement above and beyond the effect of individual credibility. These findings suggest that there are values in examining how employees express voice in terms of voice directness in understanding whether employees would endorse raised ideas.

Although initial results from Study 1 are encouraging, it is important to note that some of my hypotheses are not supported. First, I did not find support for the hypothesized effect of issue threat on voice politeness. A possible explanation for the insignificant finding is that even when employees try to be polite, their managers may perceive them as impolite for raising a face-threatening issue. As a result, the hypothesized positive effect of issue threat on voice politeness



is negated by the negative effect of issue threat on managers' perception of voice politeness. To address this concern, I asked an independent coder to provide ratings on voice politeness to remove bias in Study 2.

Second, it was hypothesized that the negative effect of issue threat on voice directness was amplified for employees with low psychological power. Although the results showed a significant interaction between issue threat and psychological power, contrary to my expectations I found that low-psychological-power employees were less likely to express voice in a direct manner irrespective of issue threat. It appears that those with low psychological power feel that they cannot influence their manager. As a result, they speak in a less direct manner irrespective of the degree to which the issue may be threatening to the manager. For high-psychological-power employees, the results showed that such employees were more likely to express voice when the issue threat was low. When issue threat was high, they were less likely to express voice in a direct manner. These findings imply that feeling psychological power does not necessarily lead employees to interpret that their managers will respond in a benign, nonthreatening way if they speak up about an issue that is threatening to the manager. In Study 2, I manipulated the participants' experience of psychological power to further investigate its moderating role in the effect of issue threat on voice directness.

In addition to the insignificant findings, several methodological limitations must be noted. First, consistent with extant field research in the voice literature, my data are all based on surveys. As a result, I cannot draw causal conclusions from the present study. To address these concerns, I conducted a second study in which I manipulated psychological power and LMX to establish casual effect on voice directness and voice politeness. Second, Study 1 relied on retrospective accounts of voice experiences. Retrospective accounts may threaten the validity of the findings

because people have limited, imperfect recall (Ericsson & Simon, 1980), are influenced by their implicit theories of the past (Duncan, 1979), and are subject to cognitive processes such as rationalization, self-presentation, or attribution (Wolfe & Jackson, 1987). Although it is possible that retrospective bias exists, I believe that its effect on memory and recall bias is minimized in Study 1. First, the retrospective period was relatively short (at most four days, if not less), especially when compared with past research on voice and issue selling, which employed longer retrospective timeframes (e.g., Dutton et al., 2001). In addition, my research design was consistent with Huber's (1985) guidelines for minimizing memory and recall bias. Specifically, all of the voice experiences occurred within a week and were meaningful enough for the participant to identify. Moreover, all of the participants were employees in each voice episode, which enhanced the meaningfulness of the recall. Still, to address this concern, I asked participants to provide an idea they considered raising *in the future*, thus employing an approach that eliminates memory and recall bias. Finally, it is important to note that the managers all rated voice directness, politeness, idea endorsement, and subordinate liking in the present study. As a result, method commonality may have increased the likelihood that I found a significant relationship even if one does not exist. Therefore, in Study 2, I addressed these concerns by hiring four independent coders to rate how employees express voice and how managers respond to voice.

## CHAPTER 5: STUDY 2

### Participants

Participants were staff members at a Midwestern US university. Participant recruitment was conducted through an email solicitation sent by the Human Resource Director (see Appendix F1 for recruitment email, Appendix F2 for consent form, and Appendix F3 for survey instruments and instruction). In total, 65 participants took part in Study 2. Participants' mean age was 44.6 ( $SD = 12.67$ , range = 24 to 75). About 78.9% were female. Participants have worked at the organization for an average of 10.74 years ( $SD = 10.18$ , range = 0 to 42) and at their current post for an average of 5.95 years ( $SD = 6.42$ , range = 0 to 31). In addition, 7.9% of the participants held a high school diploma or had passed the GED test; 36.8% had some college or an associate's degree, 52.6% had earned a master's degree, and 2.6% held a doctorate. Unfortunately, the participating university was unable to provide demographic information on those who received the recruitment email but did not participate in the study, and so I cannot assess response bias.

### Procedures

In a situated experiment, I manipulated psychological power and LMX with a fictitious manager. Participants first filled out a short survey to tap their demographic information, including age, gender, education, tenure at the participating university, and tenure in their current position. They were then asked to describe an idea they had considered presenting to their manager in the near future and explain why the issue was important to them. By having participants select issues that were personally important to them, I increased task realism and

enhance their motivation to provide high quality data. After briefly describing the issue and explaining the importance of the issue, participants were asked to fill out a survey on issue importance and issue urgency.

Next, participants were asked to imagine that they had to raise the idea they just described to a fictitious manager, Chris. In a  $2 \times 2$  design (high/low psychological power by high/low LMX), I manipulated experimental variables using a one-page scenario that consisted of two paragraphs. The first paragraph described high/low psychological power and the second described high/low LMX. In psychological research, a “scenario” is a brief description of a situation that is used to assess respondents’ perceptions and reactions. Scenarios are commonly used to manipulate two or more independent variables systematically, as they allow researchers to remove potential confounding and extraneous sources of variance that other methods may introduce. Past research has also successfully manipulated subordinate–supervisor relationships through scenarios (e.g., Ansari & Kapoor, 1987; Bhal & Dadhich, 2011; Fu & Yukl, 2000).

### **Manipulation**

***Psychological Power.*** Based on Anderson and Galinsky’s (2006) sense-of-power measures, I created two scenarios to describe the power dynamics between the participants and the fictitious manager. In the low psychological power condition, the paragraph read as follows: “Chris is your direct boss. You depend a lot on Chris for gaining access to people, resources, and rewards, and you feel that you cannot get Chris to listen and do what you want to do.” In the high psychological power condition, the paragraph read as follows: “Chris is your direct boss. Chris depends a lot on you for gaining expertise and knowledge about your department, and you feel that you can get Chris to listen and do what you want to do.”

**LMX.** Following Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) operationalization of LMX, I created a high-LMX scenario by describing the quality of LMX as positive and a low-quality LMX scenario by describing the quality of LMX as negative. The scenario of the low-LMX condition read as follows: "In terms of work relationship, you do not know the extent to which Chris is satisfied with what you do. Chris does not understand your job problems and does not recognize your potential. If you encounter problems at work, Chris will not help you solve them. And if you make a mistake, the chance that Chris will 'bail you out' at his/her expense is very small." The scenario of the high-LMX condition read as follows: "In terms of work relationship, you know very well the extent to which Chris is satisfied with what you do. Chris understands your job problems and recognizes your potential. If you encounter problems at work, Chris will help you solve them. And if you make a mistake, the chance that Chris will 'bail you out' at his/her expense is very high."

After reading the two-paragraph vignettes, participants were asked to fill out the manipulation check items and a scale designed to measure issue threat, before they prepared a memo describing how they would speak up to the fictitious manager about the issue they just described. The study took about 20 minutes to complete, and participants were compensated by entering their names in a \$165 raffle (one \$50, two \$25, and five \$15 cash gifts).

## **Measures**

Unless otherwise noted, all measures were rated on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = *very strongly disagree* and 7 = *very strongly agree*).

**Manipulation check.** To test whether the manipulation of high versus low psychological power was successful, I employed Anderson and Galinsky's (2006) sense-of-power scale, which

is the same scale used in Study 1 ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Similarly, to test whether my LMX manipulation was successful, I asked participants to rate Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) 7-item LMX scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

***Issue threat.*** The measure was the same scale as used in Study 1. The coefficient alpha for the measure was .84.

***Directness and politeness.*** Two doctoral students majoring in Communications coded the degree of directness and politeness for each memo. Based on the procedures outlined by Dillard, Wilson, Tusing, and Kinney (1997) and Morand (1996), I first provided a formal definition of voice directness and voice politeness to the coders. I then asked a coder to respond using a scale of 1 to 5 (anchored by 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*) to describe the extent to which she agreed with the following statement: "This person is direct in his/her suggestion." A second coder then rated the extent to which he agreed with the following statement: "This person is polite in his/her suggestion" using the same rating scale.

***Idea endorsement and subordinate liking.*** I recruited two managers working at the participating university as expert judges of idea endorsement and subordinate liking. On a 5-point Likert scale (anchored by 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*), one rater indicated the extent to which she would endorse the raised idea ("I will implement the idea raised by this person"), whereas the other rater indicated the extent to which she liked the participants ("I like this person.")

***Control variables.*** Items for issue urgency ( $\alpha = .76$ ) and issue importance ( $\alpha = .94$ ) were the same as those used in Study 1. It is also possible that the longer the length of a memo, the greater the likelihood that an idea would be endorsed and the greater the levels of subordinate liking (Blumenstock, 2008). Therefore, I controlled for *word count* (number of words in each memo) in all analyses. Finally, as with Study 1, I controlled for subordinate liking when

examining the effect of voice directness and voice politeness on idea endorsement. Similarly, I controlled for idea endorsement when examining the effect of directness and politeness on subordinate liking.

## **Results**

**Manipulation checks.** Before I tested my hypotheses, I conducted a manipulation check to ensure that my manipulation was successful. A 2 (Power)  $\times$  2 (LMX) ANOVA on the power manipulation check item yielded a significant main effect for power,  $F(1,77) = 5.03, p < .05$ , and LMX,  $F(1,77) = 25.72, p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .27$ . The interaction,  $F(1,77) = .179, p < .67$ , was not significant. Similarly, a 2 (power)  $\times$  2 (LMX) ANOVA on the LMX manipulation check item yielded a significant main effect for LMX,  $F(1,77) = 115.73, p < .001$ , power,  $F(1,77) = 14.3, p < .001$ , as well as the interaction between LMX and power,  $F(1,77) = 3.84, p < .05$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .63$ . These results suggest that participants assigned to the high-psychological-power condition gave a significantly higher rating on the LMX manipulation check items than participants assigned to the low-power condition. Similarly, participants in the high-LMX condition gave a significantly higher rating on the power manipulation check items than participants assigned to the low-LMX condition. A possible explanation for this intriguing pattern is that psychological power and LMX are possibly related. In the high-power condition, participants read that the fictitious manager depended on them a lot, and they could convince the manager to listen and to do what they desired. This framing might have led participants to assume that Chris was an open and friendly manager who would also exhibit high-quality exchange relationships. Similarly, in the high-LMX condition, participants read that the fictitious manager recognized their potential, would help participants solve problems, and would be willing to ‘bail them out’ if they made a mistake at work. This framing might have led participants to believe that the fictitious manager

somehow depended on their input, abilities, and performance, which contributed to a sense of psychological power that participants in the low-LMX condition did not experience.

Given that my manipulation did not differentiate psychological power and LMX, I analyzed the effect of issue threat, psychological power, and LMX on voice directness and voice politeness using two approaches. First, I analyzed my data as originally proposed by regressing voice directness and politeness on issue threat, psychological power (dummy-coded, 0 = low psychological power, 1 = high psychological power), LMX (dummy-coded, 0 = low LMX, 1 = high LMX), and the interactive terms of these independent variables. Results using this methodological approach are shown in Model 3a and Model 3b in Table 9 and Table 10 (labeled as Analysis Method A). Second, given that I created four scenarios in my study (high and low psychological power conditions  $\times$  positive and negative LMX conditions), I created three dummy variables to represent low-power–high-LMX, high-power–low-LMX, and high-power–high-LMX, respectively. Results using this methodological approach are presented in Model 4a and 4b in Table 9 and Table 10 (labeled as Analysis Method B).

The hypotheses testing, which I report next, is based on a discussion of Analysis Method A. In the supplemental analysis, I describe my findings further based on Analysis Method B.

### **Hypotheses Testing**

Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations for the Study 2's variables are displayed in Table 8. In all analyses, I conducted ordinary least squares regression analyses in which voice directness and voice politeness were regressed on three control variables (word count, issue importance, and issue urgency) at Step 1, issue threat at Step 2, and the manipulation groups at Step 3. Following Aiken and West (1991), I centered issue threat by subtracting the mean from each score; subsequently, I based the interaction terms on these centered scores.



Hypothesis 1 predicted that issue threat would be negatively associated with voice directness, and H2 predicted that issue threat would be positively associated with voice politeness. As shown in Table 9 (Model 2) and Table 10 (Model 2), the coefficient of the main effect was significant for issue threat in predicting voice directness ( $\beta = -.40, p < .01$ ), which supports H1. However, the coefficient of the main effect was non-significant for issue threat in predicting voice politeness ( $\beta = -.11, ns$ ), which refutes H2. These results replicate the pattern of findings for Study 1.

Hypothesis 3a predicted that the negative effect of issue threat on voice directness would be amplified when psychological power was lower. The results (Table 9, Model 3b) indicated that the coefficient for the interaction between issue threat and psychological power was insignificant ( $\beta = -.06, ns$ ). Thus, I found no support for the hypothesis that psychological power moderates the effect of issue threat on voice directness. Consequently, H3a is not supported.

Hypothesis 3b predicted that the positive effect of issue threat on voice politeness would be amplified when psychological power was lower. The results shown in Table 10 (Model 3b) indicate that the coefficient of the interactive term between issue threat and psychological power was insignificant ( $\beta = -.19, ns$ ). Thus, H3b is not supported.

Hypothesis 4a predicted that the negative effect of issue threat on voice directness would be amplified when LMX was lower. Results showed that the coefficient for the interaction between issue threat and LMX was non-significant ( $\beta = .21, ns$ ). Therefore, H4a is not supported.

Hypothesis 4b predicted that the positive effect of issue threat on voice politeness would be amplified when LMX was lower. Results indicated that the coefficient of the interactive term between issue threat and LMX was significant ( $\beta = -.51, p < .05$ ). Following Aiken and West (1991), I plotted these interactions in Figure 4a. These figures revealed that participants in the

low-LMX condition were more likely to be polite when they perceived that raising an issue would threaten the face of the manager. In contrast, participants in the high-LMX condition were less polite when issue threat was high. Simple slope results indicated that individuals experiencing low LMX (one *SD* below the mean) were more likely to speak up in a polite manner when issue threat was high ( $\beta = .54, p < .01$ ). In contrast, individuals experiencing high LMX (one *SD* above the mean) engage in similar levels of voice politeness irrespective of issue threat level ( $\beta = -.08, ns$ ). These results support the notion that when an issue is threatening to their manager, individuals with low-LMX quality are more likely to attend to the face of the manager by expressing voice in a polite manner. In contrast, participants who maintain a positive LMX with their manager speak up in a less polite manner, even when issue threat is high, presumably because positive relationships help buffer their perception of threat to the manager. This interaction pattern is similar to the results reported in Study 1.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that voice directness and voice politeness would interact to predict idea endorsement, such that levels of idea endorsement are greater when voice is both direct and polite. As shown in Table 11 (Model B and Model C), although the coefficient term for voice directness in predicting idea endorsement was positive and significant ( $\beta = .27, p < .01$ ), the coefficient term for the interaction was nonsignificant ( $\beta = -.03, ns$ ), replicating the findings in Study 1. Hypothesis 5 is not supported.

Finally, Hypothesis 6 predicted that voice directness and voice politeness would interact to predict subordinate liking, such that voice directness would be positively associated with subordinate liking when voice politeness is high. When voice politeness is low, the relationship between voice directness and subordinate would be negative. As shown in Table 12 (Model B), voice directness was unrelated to subordinate liking ( $\beta = .08, ns$ ), but voice politeness was

positively associated with subordinate liking ( $\beta = .32, p < .01$ ). However, the coefficient term of the interaction between voice directness and voice politeness was nonsignificant ( $\beta = .04, ns$ ). Thus, H6 is supported in Study 1 but not in Study 2.

### **Supplemental Analyses: Analysis Method B**

As noted, the manipulation check results suggested that participants did not distinguish differences between psychological power and LMX. Thus, in Analysis Method B, I created three dummy variables that represent low-LMX–high-power, high-LMX–low-power, and high-LMX–high-power respectively. I then conducted similar analyses (with the exception of entering these dummy variables and their interactions with issue threat) to test my interaction hypotheses. Results based on Analysis Method B are presented in Table 9 and Table 10 (Model 4b).

In predicting voice directness, the results (Table 9; Model 4b) indicate that the coefficients of interaction terms between issue threat and the manipulated conditions was nonsignificant in predicting voice directness ( $\beta = .04, ns$ ;  $\beta = -.43, ns$ ; and  $\beta = .03, ns$  for the interaction between issue threat and low-power–high-LMX condition; between issue threat and high-power–low-LMX condition, and between issue threat and high-power–high-LMX condition, respectively). Thus, much like the results based on Analysis Method A, none of the interactions between power and issue threat and between LMX and issue threat were significant.

In predicting voice politeness, the results (Table 10; Model 4b) indicate that neither the interaction between issue threat and low-power–high-LMX ( $\beta = -.23, ns$ ), nor the interaction between issue threat and high-power–low-LMX ( $\beta = .13, ns$ ) was significant. However, the coefficient of the interactive term between issue threat and high-power–high-LMX condition was significant ( $\beta = -.53, p < .05$ ). Simple slope results further indicated that subjects in the low-power–low-LMX condition were more likely to speak up in a polite manner when issue threat

was high ( $\beta = .58, p < .01$ ). In contrast, subjects in the high-power-high-LMX condition were less likely to speak up in a direct manner when issue threat was high ( $\beta = -.48, p < .05$ ). As shown in Figure 4b, participants in the low-power-low-LMX condition were more polite when they perceived that issue threat was high. In contrast, participants in the high-power-high-LMX condition became less polite in their voice when issue threat was high. This interaction pattern suggests that when participants feel psychologically less powerful and have a less positive relationship with their managers, they are more likely to speak in polite manner when they perceive that raising the issue is threatening to the face of the manager in a voice episode. In contrast, participants who feel psychologically more powerful and have a more positive relationship with their managers speak in a less polite manner when issue threat is high. This interaction pattern is again consistent with the results reported in Study 1.

## **STUDY 2 DISCUSSION**

In summary, Study 2 provided support for the hypothesis that greater levels of issue threat to a manager's face correspond with lower levels of voice directness in a voice episode. Employees are less likely to express ideas in a direct manner when they perceive that raising the idea will threaten the face of the manager. Moreover, I found support for the prediction that the positive effect of issue threat on voice politeness was greater when LMX was low rather than high. This interaction pattern suggests that when employees maintain a positive relationship with their manager, they are more likely to perceive that their manager will react to voice in a more benign manner; indeed, they expect that their manager will not be angry with them for raising an issue that might threaten the manager's face. As a result, they devote less time, effort, and energy to being polite. In contrast, when LMX is low, employees may perceive that their manager will react to voice in a negative manner; they expect that their manager will be embarrassed and

become more defensive if they raise a face-threatening issue. To avoid further aggravation of face loss, low-LMX employees will speak up in a more polite manner.

In addition, I replicated Study 1's findings that voice directness was positively associated with idea endorsement, whereas voice politeness was positively associated with subordinate liking. When employees are more direct and explicit, managers are more likely to endorse a raised idea, because they perceive the raised issue as more urgent. When employees are polite, respectful, and courteous when they express voice, they create a positive emotional atmosphere, which contributes to greater levels of subordinate liking.

These findings extend the insight generated by Casciaro and Lobo (2008). To understand how people choose an interaction partner with whom to engage in a task interactions, these authors examined three organizational contexts. The authors theorized and found that people tend to prefer interacting with and seeking resources from individuals for whom they have positive feelings, even when the individuals are not the organization's most competent people. In other words, likable but less competent people (the "lovable fools") were more likely to be sought for task interaction than were people who were competent but disliked (the "competent jerks"). In the present study, direct and impolite employees equate to the competent jerk: they are competent enough to be direct in voice, but their managers dislike them because they are impolite. In contrast, employees who are indirect and polite equate to the lovable fools: they may not be competent enough to express voice in a direct way, but their managers like them a great deal for being polite in voice. The present study's findings, however, suggest that being direct is critical for gaining idea endorsement, and managers are willing to accept a raised idea irrespective of the levels of voice politeness.

Integrating Casciaro and Lobo's (2008) work with the findings reported here, I suggest an interesting implication is that although employees may seek advice or solutions from people they like but who are not competent, they may not actually endorse their advice; indeed, these individuals are not competent enough to influence decisions. In a workplace setting, these findings present a paradox: managers may seek input from subordinates whom they like (and consider incompetent), but they will not listen to the ideas these subordinates present. Eventually, little change is initiated from the bottom in this situation.

## CHAPTER 6: GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Given that employee voice provides important benefits for workgroups and organizations (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Lam & Mayer, in press; Nemeth et al., 2001), it is critical that employees voluntarily contribute ideas and information for organizational learning and improvement (Detert & Burris, 2007; Dutton & Ashford, 1993). As such, existing theories and research on voice have focused predominantly on *whether* employees speak up or remain silent, paying insufficient attention to *how* employees express voice. As Morrison (2011) pointed out in her recent review, “the voice literature has conceptualized voice as a dichotomous choice (speak up or remain silent) and has not focused very much on employees’ choices about how to express voice their views or concerns” (p. 399). Drawing from politeness theory and theories of psychological stress and coping, this dissertation addresses recent calls for more research on this topic (Morrison, 2011) by introducing and unpacking the concept of voice directness and voice politeness; identifying key issue- and person-level factors that shape how employees express voice; and advancing our understanding of how managers respond to voice attempts.

Comparing the results of the two studies reveals three consistent patterns. First, issue threat is negatively associated with voice directness. When employees perceive voice as threatening to the face of the manager, they express voice in a less direct manner to protect the manager’s face. Second, consistent with theories of psychological stress and coping, I found that low-LMX employees are less direct and more polite in voice when issue threat is high, whereas high-LMX employees are more direct and less polite in voice when issue threat is high. These

results support the notion that LMX is an important contextual variable that impacts how employees perceive that their manager might interpret and react to their voice. Finally, across both of the present studies, I found that voice directness is positively associated with idea endorsement, and voice politeness is positively associated with subordinate liking.

### **Theoretical Implications**

My findings offer several important theoretical contributions to existing understandings of voice. First, voice can be characterized in the terms of how often employees choose to remain silent due to fear of retaliation (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Morrison et al., 2011); how much attention they can get from top management (Andersson & Bateman, 2000; Dutton et al., 2001); how they protect their image and credibility for selling an issue (Dutton & Ashford, 1993); and whether voice can help create favorable images and lead to a higher performance evaluation (Burris et al., in press; Grant et al., 2009). Such characterizations have focused primarily on how individuals minimize threats to themselves in deciding whether to express voice or remain silent. The present study is the first to examine the effect of employees' perceptions of threat to their manager in a voice episode regarding how voice is expressed. Although the present study focuses on employees' perception of threat to their manager, the findings can potentially be extended across status lines. For example, employees may speak laterally to any presumed targets (e.g., coworkers and subordinates) about how to perform a task more effectively. Depending on the level of threat to the presumed target in a voice episode, employees may choose to speak in a more direct and polite manner to avoid embarrassing or threatening the face of their target in any given voice episode.

It is important to note that I did not find support for the hypothesized positive effect of issue threat on voice politeness in either Study 1 or Study 2. A possible explanation is that people



are conditioned to be polite when they engage in a conversation with someone occupying a hierarchically higher position, such as their manager. A second possible explanation is that different people have different levels of politeness in their communication pattern, depending on individual trait factors such as emotional intelligence (Grant, in press) and ability to communicate effectively (Ferris, Witt, & Hochwarter, 2001; Ferris et al., 2005) as well as norm for politeness (Cohen, Vandello, Puente, & Rantilla, 1999). Therefore, when issue threat is low, people simply pay less attention to their levels of politeness and exhibit their normal level of politeness. However, as issue threat increases, employees become more polite.

It is also interesting to note that voicers' view of issue threat in Study 1 is actually unrelated to their manager's view of issue threat. In other words, voicers actually worry about something they should not be, and issues they think is a threat is actually not. The opposite, of course, can also be true: it can be the case that issues employees think are not a threat is actually a threat to the manager. The discrepancy between voicers' and their manager's view of issue threat suggest there are values in considering the effect of such discrepancy on how employees express voice, individual performance evaluation, and group performance. For example, individuals who avoid speaking up as they think they will threaten the manager (when in fact it would not) may choose indirect tactics to express voice, and voice indirectness may result in lower levels of idea endorsement and missed opportunities for improving organizational effectiveness. On the other hand, individuals who speak up without knowing that they will threaten the manager may use direct tactics that offend their manager, which result in lower subordinate liking and contribute to lower levels of performance evaluation. These individuals may even wonder why they receive a lower level of evaluation as a result of voice, become

dissatisfied and perceive a lack of justice in the performance evaluation process, and eventually quit their job.

A second theoretical implication of the present dissertation is that I unpack and elaborate the construct of voice directness and voice politeness to provide a conceptually grounded framework to describe how employees express voice. As such, the concepts of directness and politeness can be used as a framework for future research to more holistically how people express voice. Some of the prior research on how employees express voice has focused on a particular voice expression tactic (e.g., Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2002; Sonnenshein, 2006; Whiting et al., 2012). In real-world situations, people must decide whether to speak up in public or private, involve a coalition, and use rational or moral appeals, among many other tactics. These tactics are not likely to be used in isolation. For example, an employee may choose to speak up about an issue in public to exert pressure on his or her manager to take action and to endorse his idea. But, the employee may choose to add polite phrases or avoid assigning blame to the manager to enhance politeness. This dissertation helps move the literature forward by creating a two-dimensional model that allows scholars to capture the complex nature of how employees express voice. An area for future research is to examine possible profiles of directness and politeness using multidimensional scaling technique. For example, will some combinations of tactics be considered as direct/polite, direct/impolite, indirect/polite, and indirect/impolite? Once a profile for each combination is created, we can then explain and predict variation in the 4 types of voice tactics. Another interesting extension of the present study's directness and politeness framework is to integrate the *nonverbal* aspect of voice behaviors by examining how pitch, tone, and accent may influence the extent to which voice is considered direct and polite. Research by Ambady, Koo, Lee, and Rosenthal (1996) provides a useful starting point. Using

politeness theory as a framework, these authors posited that interpreting polite utterances to save face depends not only on the conversation's content but also on the accompanying nonverbal cues—vocal, kinesic, and facial—that contextualize the conversation. In this aspect, nonverbal cues such as tone, facial expression and visual gaze can provide subtle cues about the extent to which employees are direct and polite during a voice episode.

Third, I extend the present study's contribution by theorizing and providing evidence that the negative effect of issue threat on voice directness can be offset if employees have a positive relationship with their manager. The theoretical argument is that employees with a high-quality LMX relationship have a different perception of how their manager might interpret and respond to voice than those with a low-quality LMX relationship. When LMX is higher, employees may perceive that their manager will respond in a more benign and non-aggressive manner even if they raise issues that are threatening. As a result, high-LMX employees will speak up in a more direct and less polite manner than those with low-LMX. Interestingly, this finding is not consistent with predictions of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), which suggests that each party in a relationship must offer something the other party considers valuable, and each party must consider the exchange as reasonably equitable. When one party treats a second party well, the second party is more likely to reciprocate the positive treatment (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Similarly, Ashford et al. (2009) asserted that "subordinates who have close relationships with leaders [high LMX] may feel that their images are protected when they raise issues, but they still may be reluctant to bring up disquieting information for fear of harming those relationships" (p. 176). Indeed, Boroff and Levin's (1997) study on grievance-filing behaviors showed that employees with greater loyalty to their employers are less likely to file a grievance against perceived unfair treatment. Drawing

from social exchange theory, one might expect that employees who maintain a more positive LMX relationship with their manager are more likely to reciprocate their manager's positive treatment by minimizing potential threat to the face of the manager.

One way to reconcile these opposing predictions is that when employees decide whether or not to speak up, they use social exchange logic. For example, employees may ask themselves, "Did the supervisor treat me well such that I am motivated to speak up to address issues and concerns in the workplace?" After an employee decides to speak up, he or she may perceive that the manager would react positively to the voice behaviors. As a result, the employee becomes less concerned about preserving the face of their manager and becomes more focused on communicating ideas directly and explicitly to ensure that the manager hears the voice.

In this dissertation, I did not find support for the hypotheses that psychological power would moderate the effect of perceived issue threat to the manager and voice directness or voice politeness. Instead, the results from Study 1 showed that those with lower psychological power are less likely to speak up in a direct manner irrespective of issue threat to the manager. Indeed, they do not feel they have the ability to influence their manager. Employees with greater psychological power are more likely to speak up directly about issues that are not threatening to the face of the manager. One potential explanation for this finding is that although I have manipulated the feeling of psychological power of the voicers, the voicers cannot overcome the fear associated with voice because they occupy a lower formal position than their boss. One way to test my revised theory is to modify the presumed target of voice. For example, I could manipulate the voice target by asking participants to report voice episodes when they speak up to their coworkers (in Study 1) or ask participants to write a memo to either a fictitious manager or

a fictitious coworker. I could then compare whether result patterns are similar depending on the target of voice.

A second explanation is that the manipulation effect of psychological power over a fictitious manager is not strong enough; indeed, participants' interaction with the fictitious manager amounted to reading two short paragraphs. As a result, the manipulation might not be salient enough to induce the expected interaction effects. Future research should build on this design to enhance the salience of the manipulation. For example, I could ask participants to write about a recent interaction with their manager in which they felt powerful or had a positive interaction. Immediately after the manipulation, I could then ask participants to write a memo to their current managers about the idea/issue they described earlier. This strategy will make the manipulation more salient than the current manipulation, because participants will have a stronger and more vivid experience with their real-world managers than with the fictitious managers based on the short descriptive paragraphs.

Fourth, findings from the present study have significant implications for existing theory and research related to the role of leadership in voice. In particular, I build on existing theory that assumes that positive relationship between subordinates and leaders is always desirable for voice (Ashford et al., 1998; Blatt et al., 2006; Detert & Burris, 2007; Gao, Janssen, & Shi, 2011; Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2012; Wong, Laschinger, & Cummings, 2010). On the one hand, past research has suggested that leaders must maintain high-quality relationships with their employees to reduce employees' perception of image risk associated with voice (Ashford et al., 2009; Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005; Detert & Burris, 2007; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). By contrast, negative leadership behaviors such as abusive supervision are associated with lower levels of subordinate voice (Rafferty & Restubog, 2011; Rank, Nelson, Allen, & Xu,

2009). Consistent with past research, the current findings suggest that subordinates with more positive relationships with their managers are more likely to speak up in a direct manner even if the idea is threatening to the manager. Such directness is important because managers are more likely to endorse the proposed idea. On the other hand, subordinates with positive relationships with their manager are also less likely to be polite, presumably because they feel little need to regulate threat when relationships are warm, trusting, and positive. The present findings also suggest, however, that such lack of politeness may result in less subordinate liking, even for those with high LMX relationship. Together, this set of findings extends prior research by highlighting the potential dark side of positive relationship in voice, namely the negative effect of LMX on subordinate liking due to the lack of voice politeness.

Fifth, the current study's findings extend research and theory on how managers respond to voice. In an empirical study, Burris (2012) reported that when individuals raise a challenge-oriented idea or an idea that challenge existing work procedures, managers are more likely to view these individuals as a threat to their power and authority, which reduces the likelihood of idea endorsement. In his conceptualization, challenging ideas are ideas that reflect voicers' different opinions from the managers. The current findings challenge prior assumptions on how employees express challenge-oriented ideas (or ideas that threaten the face of the manager) and provide an alternative explanation to why managers may reject these ideas. Specifically, I theorize and provide empirical evidence that when employees raise a challenging idea, one for which they believe there is image threat to their manager, they do so by actively minimizing potential face-threats to their manager by reducing voice directness. By becoming less direct in voice, however, employees reduce the likelihood that their idea will be endorsed. In other words, my findings suggest that managers do not endorse challenging ideas not only because they

perceive these ideas as threatening (Burriss, 2012), but also because employees avoid being direct, clear, and straightforward about what changes are needed.

Sixth, in Study 1, I found that when employees are direct and polite, managers tend to indicate a greater degree of subordinate liking (compared to those who are indirect and polite). In contrast, when employees are direct but impolite, managers tend to indicate a lower degree of subordinate liking (compared to those who are indirect and impolite). I theorized that managers' perceived motives of employee voice may explain these findings. Specifically, managers may perceive that employees who speak up directly and impolitely are motivated to challenge the manager's authority. As a result, subordinate liking decreases. In contrast, managers may perceive that employees who speak up directly and politely are driven by the prosocial motivation to enhance organizational effectiveness. As a result, subordinate liking increases. Although I found support for this hypothesis, it is important to note that I did not measure the mechanism underlying this interaction pattern. Furthermore, the interaction pattern was not replicated in Study 2. Future research should manipulate both directness and politeness and ask participants to rate their perception of prosocial motives, idea endorsement, and subordinate liking to further tease out the interactive effect of directness and politeness on idea endorsement and subordinate liking.

Finally, understanding how employees express voice from the perspectives of both directness and politeness offers a novel explanation of why the consequences of voice to the performance evaluation vary between employees. By conceptualizing and clarifying the effect of voice directness and voice politeness on managers' liking of the voicers, I reconcile these findings by illustrating that it is not *how frequently* employees express voice that governs managers' responses; rather, it is the *ways and methods* employees express voice that alter

managers' perceptions of voice attempts. Although I did not measure effects on performance evaluation in this study, past research has shown clearly that the supervisor's positive affect toward the subordinate is associated with better performance evaluation (Allen & Rush, 1998; Dipboye, 1985; Ferris, Judge, Rowland, & Fitzgibbons, 1994; Johnson, Erez, Kiker, & Motowildo, 2002; Judge & Ferris, 1993; Tsui & Barry, 1986; Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Liden, 1995; Whiting et al., 2012; see also Lefkowitz, 2000 for a review). Thus, it appears that the extent to which employees are polite in their voice expression can have important implications on future performance evaluations by the same manager through enhanced subordinate liking.

### **Methodological Limitations and Strengths**

Notwithstanding the contributions noted above, several limitations should be noted. First, I was not able to examine directly the psychological mechanisms by which issue threat influences voice directness and voice politeness. I encourage researchers to investigate multiple psychological mechanisms that may explain the relationship between perceived issue threat and voice directness and voice politeness.

Second, the validity of the current design might be threatened by reactance effect, which occurs when the intensity, frequency, and/or quality of a target variable changes when it is being observed, monitored, or assessed (Nelson, 1997). Two reasons lead me to conclude, however, that reactance effect is less of a concern in the current study. First, according to Bolger et al.'s (2003) comprehensive review on diary studies, little evidence emerged that reactance poses a threat to the validity of using an event-sampling technique. Although participants sometimes noted being more aware of the monitored behavior, the behavior itself was not reactive (Litt, Cooney, & Morse, 1998). In an event-sampling study among college students, Hufford, Shields,



Shiffman, Paty, and Balabanis (2002) found no evidence of reactivity among undergraduate problem drinkers, even among those who were the most motivated to reduce excessive drinking behaviors. Second, one might expect reactance to attenuate the within-person variance among the voice episodes. However, the results suggest that both participants and raters sufficiently discriminated among the voice experiences. Therefore, I believe that any potential psychological reactance was small and was offset by the benefits of having employees report voice behaviors over time.

Third, Study 1 relied on retrospective accounts of voice experiences, which may contribute to recall errors and bias (Ericsson & Simon, 1980). Notably, research on experience-sampling technique has shown that retrospective reports are consistent with real-time reports of life events (Ptacek, Smith, Espe, & Raffety, 1994). To address this concern, in Study 2, I asked participants to think of an issue that they considered raising in the future. One methodological concern that might arise is that these employees may not actually speak up to the manager in the way they describe. Future research could use videos to capture real-time voice episodes and subsequently code different dimensions of voice to eliminate both retrospective and prospective biases.

Fourth, it is possible that participants in Study 1 became tired and bored after several waves of surveys. This threat was minimized by the methods used for data collection. In the current design, participants were asked to report only *one* voice episode *once* a week, which was less demanding than most other organizational research that studied people for 10 to 14 days per day with at least one survey per day (e.g., Marco & Suls, 1993; Seo & Barrett, 2007). In addition, as a check for recall bias, I collected self-reports of motivation to report voice experiences; these ratings were consistent across different weeks of the survey. Finally, participants were

compensated with a gift certificate for participating, which has been shown to improve response rates (Church, 1993). Finally, the response rate in the present study was similar to those in other studies on voice. Nonetheless, to address this limitation, researchers should use a shorter time frame (rather than a week) to reduce possible data fatigue.

Finally, the effect of voice directness and voice politeness on idea endorsement and subordinate liking were all provided by the managers in Study 1, which might contribute to inflated relationships. Although issues related to common method bias are important limitations, several reasons suggest that common method is not a significant concern in the present research. First, the findings suggest that voice directness was associated with idea endorsement but not subordinate liking, whereas voice politeness was associated with subordinate liking but not idea endorsement. These divergent findings suggest discriminant validity of voice directness and voice politeness. Second, as a check for common method bias, I collected self-reports of voice directness; these ratings converged with those collected from managers. Third, the results were replicated in Study 2, which used a different methodology to measure directness and politeness, which eliminated concerns for common method threats. Finally, my findings in Study 1 are constrained to employee voice in a service management setting, which involves highly customer-focused, interaction-based work tasks, and my findings in Study 2 are confined to the context of an academic environment. The consistency in findings across two different contexts suggests that the findings exhibit high generalizability. Still, more research is needed to exhibit the validity of the present study's findings further.

Despite these limitations, the methodological designs for both studies have several strengths. First, I employed multiple methods (i.e., qualitative techniques to capture rich descriptions of voice experiences; quantitative survey measures to collect data on key variables;

and expert coding). Moreover, the quantitative survey data were collected from multiple sources and at different times. In Study 1, psychological power and LMX were collected first from the participants. After voice episodes were collected, participants' supervisors provided data on idea endorsement and subordinate liking. In Study 2, participants provided both qualitative descriptions of voice episodes and quantitative survey measures on episodic-level characteristics. Expert coders then independently provided ratings on key outcome variables. By using multiple sources and multiple methods, I minimized common method variance as a potential explanation for the results and strengthened the validity of my conclusions.

Another important strength of this research is the multilevel nature of its design. Prior research on how employees express voice has focused on episodic-level tactics (e.g., Andersson & Bateman, 2000; Burris, 2012; Dutton et al., 2001). This episodic-level experience does not address the fact that different employees have different feelings of psychological power and different levels of relational quality with their managers, and as a result of these differences, they would express voice in different manners. The current research design explicitly models within-episode and within-person variance in voice that would not be considered at the episodic level.

### **Agenda for Future Research**

This dissertation takes the first step in understanding how employees engage in voice. In this section, I highlight several directions for future research. *First*, in my dissertation, I theorized and empirically found that the relational quality between voicers and their voice targets can influence the effect of issue threat on voice directness and voice politeness. Future research will benefit from examining additional social and contextual characteristics that modify the relationships. One such variable is cultural differences on a national level. For example, I expect that in a nation low on power distance where people are expected to be treated in an egalitarian

manner (Hofstede,1991), employees may perceive that their manager would accept voice more readily because people are encouraged and expected to speak their mind. In contrast, in a nation high on power distance where people are expected to accept power and authority differences, management does not genuinely want to transfer a sense of power to the employees and the employees also do not seek power over their managers. As a result, high power-distance employees may perceive that their manager will likely react negatively when they express an idea that is threatening to their manager, resulting in lower levels of voice directness and greater levels of voice politeness. In this sense, national culture such as power distance may be a critical boundary condition in modifying the effect of issue threat on voice directness and voice politeness. In a related manner, in some types of contexts such as non-profit or public services, employees may feel obligated to speak about issues that enhance the welfare of the intended beneficiaries. As such, they may be more likely to speak up and express ideas even if these ideas might be threatening to the face of their immediate manager, as they experience a sense of felt responsibility for change to benefit their beneficiaries (Fuller et al., 2006). By contrast, in other types of organizations such as military in which discipline from below is strongly expected, employees may be less direct and more polite in speaking up threatening issues as they are not expected to challenge their manager or the authority explicitly. In sum, future research will most likely benefit from understanding the role of national and organizational culture in influencing how employees express voice.

The selling process (Dutton & Ashford, 1993), such as breadth of involvement (forming coalition with one's subordinate, peer, customers/stakeholders, or manager's boss), publicity (public versus private), and communication channel (face-to-face versus virtual), may be another set of boundary conditions influencing the effect of issue threat on voice directness and voice

politeness. In terms of breadth of involvement, one may theorize that employees who form coalition with a subordinate or with a peer may be less direct in expressing an issue threatening to the manager compared with employees who form coalition with the manager's boss or with customers/stakeholders. This is because forming coalition with a subordinate or a peer grants voicers little power in terms of influencing their manager to take actions based on change. Their managers are not dependent on voicers' subordinates or peers who have little hierarchical power in influencing how managers should act. As a result, voicers may feel especially concerned about embarrassing their manager for speaking up a threatening issue, resulting in lower levels of voice directness and greater levels of voice politeness. By contrast, when voicers form coalition with their manager's boss, they are in a more powerful position as their manager has to listen to his or her boss's opinion and take into account the influence of the boss. As a result, employees may worry less about embarrassing their manager and, consequently, speak up in a more direct and less polite manner. In terms of publicity, I would expect those who speak up in a public setting to be less direct and more polite about an issue that is threatening to the manager than those who speak up in a private setting. In a public setting where other colleagues are present, the threat to the manager's face and the potential embarrassment to the face of the manager is greater, as everyone witnesses such embarrassment. By contrast, speaking up in a private setting can decrease the relative face-threat to the manager given that no one will witness a possible embarrassment to the manager (besides the employee who makes the suggestion). As a result, employees are more likely to speak up in a more direct and less polite manner even when an issue is threatening to the face of the manager in the voice episode when they speak up in private. Finally, in terms of communication channel, whether communication takes place in a virtual versus face-to-face setting may influence how direct and polite employees express voice. When

employees express voice through a virtual context (e.g., email), they may be more direct and less polite because, compared to a face-to-face conversation, a virtual setting gives voicers a feeling of anonymity, which grants voicers a sense of safety that they are immune from retaliation from the manager. As a result, these voicers may be more direct and less polite in their voice expression than those who express voice in a face-to-face manner.

Another key contextual variable modifying the effect of issue threat on voice directness and voice politeness is leadership behaviors. One way to theorize the effect of leadership behaviors on how employees express voice is to employ an integrative framework of theories of leadership introduced by DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, and Humphrey (2011). According to these authors, leadership behaviors can be broadly categorized into one of four groups: task-oriented behaviors, relational-oriented behaviors, change-oriented behaviors, and passive leadership behaviors. In turn, I expect these leadership behaviors may influence how employees express an idea that is threatening to the face of their manager. For example, leaders who exhibit task-oriented behaviors such as *Initiating Structures* (the extent to which a leader defines and organizes his role and the roles of followers, is oriented toward goal commitment, and establishes well-defined patterns and channel of communication; Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004) may signal to subordinates that their leader prefers employees to accept their role, focused on their assigned goals, and follow existing procedures, discouraging employees to express ideas that de-stabilize existing workplace procedures but nevertheless benefit the workgroup in a direct manner. Similarly, leaders who exhibit passive leadership behaviors such as *laissez-faire* (absence of leadership behavior; Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999) or management by exception-passive (leaders only engage followers when task-related problems or challenges arise; Bass, 1990), may signal to employees that change is not desired or rewarded in the work unit.

Therefore, when employees speak up issues that are threatening to the manager, employees may perceive that the manager will not respond to their proposed changes in a positive manner, resulting in less direct and more polite voice. By contrast, leaders who exhibit relational-oriented behaviors such as *Consideration* (the extent to which a leader shows concern and respect for followers; Judge et al., 2004) or change-oriented behaviors such as *Inspirational Motivation* (the extent to which a leader develops and communicates vision for change; Bass, 1990) and *Intellectual Stimulation* (the extent to which a leader seek different perspectives from group members, take risk, and challenge assumptions; Bass, 1990) may result in more direct voice irrespective of levels of issue threat to the manager, because employees perceive that making suggestions for change will be awarded and not punished. It will be interesting for future research to examine how different types of leadership behaviors may influence the ways employees handle voice that is highly threatening to the manager.

A *second* arena for future research is to consider how employees raise different types of issues in different ways. In a qualitative study of silence, Milliken et al. (2003) identified 8 types of issues commonly raised by employees. These issues include concerns about a colleague's or supervisor's competence or performance, problems with organizational process, concerns about pay or pay equity, disagreement with company policies or decisions, personal career or concerns, ethical or fairness issues, harassment or abuse, and conflict with a coworker. For example, voicers may feel justified to raise a moral issue (e.g., concerns about pay or pay equity; ethical or fairness issues) because it is morally the 'right' thing to say. As a result, they may feel more legitimate to raise these issues and speak in a more direct manner than other types of issues (e.g., disagreement with company policies or decisions; concerns about a colleague's competence). It

will be fruitful for future research to further examine if employees raise issues in different manners depending on whether the types of issues raised is one of financially or morally based.

*Third*, in this dissertation I argue that employees are less direct when issue threat to the manager in a given voice episode is higher. A promising area for future study is to understand whether the degree of voice directness changes over the course of a change conversation. Research on change conversation proposed by Ford and Ford (1995) may provide an initial starting point for theorizing. According to Ford and Ford (1995), a change process unfolds in a dynamic of four distinct types of conversations: initiatives (a proposal of *what* needs to be changed), understanding (explaining *why* change is necessary), performance (deciding *how* to change), and closure (bringing an end to the change conversation). It may be fruitful to consider how issue threat influences different levels of voice directness at varying phases of a change conversation. For example, consider an employee who would want to raise an issue particularly threatening to the manager (e.g., discussing a disagreement with procedures within the work unit previously implemented by the manager). The employee may start off the change conversation by being indirect in proposing *what* needs to be changed, and wait to see how the manager would respond to his or her change initiatives. If the manager appears to be receptive to change, voicers may then become more direct about why and how changes are needed in the conversation. By contrast, if the manager appears hesitant or even resistant to change, the employee may decide to maintain indirectness in explaining *why* and *how* changes are needed. In turn, the effect of voice directness at differing stages of change conversation may affect idea endorsement. For example, an employee who is direct about what needs to be changed and but is less direct about how to engage in change may be less likely to gain endorsement than an employee who is less direct about what needs to be changed but more direct about how and why they need to engage in



change. This is because being direct about what needs to be changed may appear to be too challenging at an initial phase of a change conversation, which creates resistance from the manager to change. By contrast, managers may receive voice in a more positive manner when employees are direct and explicit about how changes need to be made, as the probability of successfully implementing change is clearly thought and laid out. Unpacking the different dimensions of directness at different phases of change communication may prove fruitful for understanding what brings about changes in organization.

*Fourth* and finally, there is a generally accepted assumption that more voice is better for unit performance (Morrison, 2011), and as such, being open to voice is generally viewed as a desirable behavior by leaders and managers. Although recent empirical studies have suggested that group-level voice is positively associated with group-level performance (Frazier & Bowler, in press; Lam & Mayer, in press), several reasons point to why this may not be the case. For example, too much voice may overwhelm managers because they need to sort through voice episodes to determine which of the concerns merits further consideration (Ashford et al., 2009). To maintain an image that they are open to voice, managers may spend time listening to subordinates' ideas even if they have no intention to change. This may divert attention and resources away from other issues that require more immediate attention from the manager. Furthermore, voice directed at coworkers may also create relational conflicts that contribute to poorer group performance (Mackenzie et al., 2009). For example, a team member may propose ideas or suggestions to improve a team member's work performance, but that targeted team member may perceive such voice as a threat to his or her image (Menon et al., 2006). Such perceptions of threat may result in conflict that hampers task performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). Furthermore, by having employees raise threatening

issues all the time, the managers may appear incompetent or feel that their authority in the organization is undermined. If they further endorse or accept these issues, their status and credibility as a manager may be further undermined. One avenue for promising future research is to examine when group-level voice is conducive to work performance and when it is not.

### **Practical Implications**

Findings from the present study have important practical implications for managers. First, the results suggest that organizations can facilitate voice with high levels of issue threat by fostering the relationship between voicers and the managers. It seems that, without a positive relational quality, managers are less likely to receive information directly that may be threatening to themselves but nevertheless are important for the welfare of the workgroup. Organizations might therefore examine ways in which they can improve the quality of the relationship between the manager and their subordinates. Past research indeed suggests that organizational leaders can produce better relational quality between employees and their manager by providing significant resources and support by the organization (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997) being fair in an interactional manner (Erdogan, Liden, & Kraimer, 2006), and providing contingent reward (Wayne, Shore, Bommer, & Tetrick, 2002). All of these strategies can help facilitate a positive relationship between subordinates and their manager.

Second, provided that managers would like to hear voice from below and consider such voice as conducive to the performance of the unit, it seems important for managers to recognize situations when employees are making a suggestion in an indirect manner. Furthermore, if managers do not recognize that employees are willing to raise threatening issues to them due to their positive relationship and take offense by their lack of politeness, these managers may respond in ways that jeopardize the relationship with their employees and discourage future

voice behaviors. Indeed, such assertions corroborate with recent research conducted by Janssen and Gao (in press), which suggests that when managers are respectful in handling voice from their subordinates, these subordinates are more likely to perceive that they have greater status in the organization, which promotes future voice behaviors. Therefore, it appears that managers not only must be trained to harvest the instrumental value of the information raised in voice (i.e., how to listen to indirect voice), but they must also recognize the symbolic value of voice by responding to voicers in a polite manner. Organizations may therefore benefit from organizing communication workshop to train their managers to be more capable in (a) handling and processing information raised by employees, especially for information that is raised in an indirect manner, and (b) responding to voicers in ways that does not seem dismissive and uncaring.

The present study also emphasizes the importance of organizational practices, programs, and policies that prepare and support employees raising voice in their organizations. It is likely that employees will benefit from other mechanisms that reduce employees' concern about embarrassing their managers for speaking up. For example, at the organizational level, organizations can facilitate a culture or climate that is supportive of voice (Morrison et al., 2012). At the work-group level, leaders can also act in ways to signal their openness to voice (Ashford et al., 2009; Detert & Burris, 2007), such as explicitly asking for input, involving employees in discussions and decisions in which their voices and perspectives might add value, showing interest in the issues and concerns that employees raise, and providing credible explanations to employees as to why their ideas are not used. Similarly, having a positive relationship with peers may also encourage employees to feel that they are supported by others in the workunit to speak up. Finally, on an individual level, organizations may wish to include in their recruitment process

to hire employees with high levels of extraversion (Nahrgang, Morgeson, & Ilies, 2009) or low levels of negative affectivity and neuroticism (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012; Hui, Law, & Chen, 1999), as these personality traits have been shown to be positively associated with relational quality between subordinates and their manager over time.

Finally, findings from the current study also suggest that having employees to speak up in a direct and polite manner is the most desirable for the employees, because it enhances the probability of idea endorsement by the manager and maintains positive relationship with the manager at the same time. From a training perspective, it is especially important for leaders and managers to introduce interventions aimed at improving how employees communicate ideas to their manager in a more effective manner. For example, employees can be taught that being polite does not mean that they have to be indirect; rather, they should maintain being direct, straightforward, and clear about what issues they are raising, why they are raising particular issues, and how such issues may contribute to building a more effective work unit.

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation provides a theoretical framework and an empirical investigation of how employees express voice. Drawing from politeness theory and research on psychological stress and coping, I found that employees who perceive voice as more threatening to their managers are less direct and more polite in expressing voice. Moreover, these relationships are amplified among employees with lower quality exchange relationships with their manager. Finally, findings from both studies suggest that voice directness is more strongly associated with idea endorsement, whereas voice politeness is more strongly associated with subordinate liking.

Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Issue-level Variables (Study 1)<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Issue threat (participant) <sup>b</sup>	2.10	1.01	(.88)									
2. Issue importance (participant)	5.22	1.11	-.15	(.76)								
3. Issue urgency (participant)	3.28	1.15	.39	.08	(.72)							
4. Feasibility (manager)	2.27	1.56	.23	-.02	.14	---						
5. Threat (manager)	1.74	.92	.04	-.07	-.02	.39	---					
6. Issue importance (manager)	5.70	1.34	-.01	.17	.09	-.33	-.39	---				
7. Voice directness (manager)	5.38	1.36	-.07	.23	.03	-.27	-.43	.46	(.97)			
8. Voice politeness (manager)	5.88	1.01	-.08	.17	.10	-.34	-.52	.49	.60	(.95)		
9. Idea endorsement (manager)	5.76	1.07	-.13	.16	.04	-.59	-.50	.80	.59	.66	(.86)	
10. Subordinate liking (manager)	6.06	.80	-.03	.18	.05	-.28	-.38	.53	.60	.67	.56	(.89)

<sup>a</sup>.  $n = 161$ . Coefficients greater than .16 are significant at a  $p < .05$  (two-tailed). Numbers on the diagonal represent the alpha reliabilities.

<sup>b</sup>. (participant) denotes self-rated. (manager) denotes manager-rated.

Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Person-level Variables (Study 1)<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	8
1. Gender (participant) <sup>b</sup>	.35	.48	---						
2. Number of years worked with manager (participant)	45.5	11.3	.06	---					
3. Proactive personality (participant)	5.20	.70	.03	-.16	(.87)				
4. Psychological voice climate (participant)	5.20	.95	.03	.03	.07	(.98)			
5. LMX (participant)	3.84	.76	-.10	-.01	.14	.34	(.83)		
6. Psychological power (participant)	4.62	.71	.05	-.02	.21	.37	.66	(.80)	
7. Credibility (manager)	5.75	1.01	-.06	.33	-.31	.00	.13	.25	(.95)

<sup>a</sup>.  $n = 57$ . Coefficients greater than .23 are significant at a  $p < .05$ , two-tailed. All scales, except LMX, are rated on a 1–7 Likert scale. LMX scales are rated on a 1–5 Likert Scale. Gender is coded such that 0 = Female, 1 = Male. Numbers on the diagonal represent alpha reliabilities.

<sup>b</sup>. (participant) denotes self-rated. (manager) denotes manager-rated.

Table 3

*Parameter Estimates and Variance Components for the Null Model (Study 1)<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	$M (\gamma_{00})$	Within-individual variance ( $\sigma^2$ )	Between-individual variance ( $\tau_{00}$ ) <sup>b</sup>
Issue threat	2.11	.53	.51**
Voice directness	5.42	.80	1.11**
Voice politeness	5.93	.41	.80**
Idea endorsement	5.84	.74	.53**
Subordinate liking	6.12	.13	.45**

<sup>a</sup>.  $n = 161$  (Level 1);  $n = 57$  (Level 2).<sup>b</sup>. \*\*:  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

Table 4  
*Results of Multilevel Analysis of Voice Directness (Study 1)<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	Voice Directness				
	Null Model <sup>b</sup>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
Intercept	5.42**	5.42**	5.43**	5.39**	5.40**
Gender		.25	.34	.39	.53
Number of years working with rater		.06	.11**	.12**	.12**
Proactive personality		-.05	-.07	-.22	-.26
Psychological voice climate		.12	.07	-.12	-.19
Issue importance		.10	-.06	-.10	-.10
Issue urgency		-.12	.08	.06	.09
Issue threat			<b>-.28*</b>	-.14	-.25*
Psychological power				.55*	.73**
LMX				.45*	.58*
Issue threat × Psychological power					<b>-.55*</b>
Issue threat × LMX					<b>.44*</b>
$\sigma^2$	.80	.76	.40	.42	.38
$\tau_{00}$	1.11	1.09	1.11	1.00	.95
Pseudo $R^2$ <sup>c</sup>		.05	.50	.48	.53

<sup>a</sup>.  $n$  (Level-1) = 161;  $n$  (Level-2) = 57. Entries corresponding to the predicting variables are estimations of the fixed effects, gamma ( $\gamma$ ), with robust standard errors. Gender is coded such that 0 = female; 1 = male.

<sup>b</sup>. \*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

<sup>c</sup>. Pseudo  $R^2$  values are calculated as follows: [(Unrestricted within-person variance – restricted within-person variance) / unrestricted within-person variance] (Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998).



Table 5  
*Results of Multilevel Analysis of Voice Politeness (Study 1)<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	Voice Politeness				
	Null Model <sup>b</sup>	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
Intercept	5.92**	5.89**	5.93**	5.86**	5.86**
Gender		.09	.11	.04	.12
Number of years working with rater		.06*	.09*	.09*	.09*
Proactive personality		.01	-.00	.01	-.06
Psychological voice climate		.27*	.29*	.10	.09
Issue importance		.13	.01	.04	-.07
Issue urgency		.02	.07	.12	.09
Issue threat			-.11	-.22	-.19
Psychological power				.39	.36
LMX				-.10	-.14
Issue threat × Psychological power					.07
Issue threat × LMX					<b>-.50*</b>
$\sigma^2$	.40	.40	.28	.27	.29
$\tau_{00}$	.80	.74	.88	.59	.57
Pseudo $R^2$ <sup>c</sup>		.01	.30	.33	.37

<sup>a</sup>.  $n$  (Level-1) = 161;  $n$  (Level-2) = 57. Entries corresponding to the predicting variables are estimations of the fixed effects, gamma ( $\gamma$ ), with robust standard errors. Gender is coded such that 0 = female; 1 = male.

<sup>b</sup>. \*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

<sup>c</sup>. Pseudo  $R^2$  values are calculated as follows: [(Unrestricted within-person variance – restricted within-person variance) / unrestricted within-person variance] (Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998).

Table 6

*Results of Multilevel Analysis of Idea Endorsement (Study 1)<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	Idea Endorsement			
	Null Model <sup>b</sup>	Model A	Model B	Model C
Intercept	5.84**	5.89**	5.90**	5.93**
Feasibility		.15**	.13**	.13**
Importance		.41**	.35**	.34**
Threat (manager rated)		-.16	-.09	-.08
Subordinate Liking		.40*	.34*	.35*
Credibility		.35**	.32*	.33*
Voice Directness			.30*	.32*
Voice Politeness			-.04	-.06
Voice Directness * Voice Politeness				<b>-.03</b>
$\sigma^2$	.74	.23	.15	.15
$\tau_{00}$	.53	.65	.69	.69
Pseudo R <sup>2c</sup>		.69	.79	.80

<sup>a</sup>.  $N$  (Level-1) = 161;  $N$  (Level-2) = 57. Entries corresponding to the predicting variables are estimations of the fixed effects, gamma ( $\gamma$ ), with robust standard errors.

<sup>b</sup>. \*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

<sup>c</sup>. Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> values are calculated as follows: [(Unrestricted within-person variance – restricted within-person variance) / unrestricted within-person variance] (Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998).

Table 7

*Results of Multilevel Analysis of Subordinate Liking (Study 1)<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	Subordinate Liking			
	Null Model <sup>b</sup>	Model A	Model B	Model C
Intercept	6.12**	6.13**	6.12**	5.99**
Feasibility		.09*	.09*	.08*
Importance		-.04	-.01	.00
Threat (manager rated)		-.03	-.06	-.08
Idea Endorsement		.17*	.06	.03
Credibility (manager rated)		.25**	.14*	.10
Voice Directness			.03	-.03
Voice Politeness			.29**	.40**
Voice Directness * Voice Politeness				<b>.14**</b>
$\sigma^2$	.12	.09	.07	.06
$\tau_{00}$	.45	.42	.21	.19
Pseudo R <sup>2c</sup>		.26	.46	.48

<sup>a</sup>.  $N$  (Level-1) = 161;  $N$  (Level-2) = 57. Entries corresponding to the predicting variables are estimations of the fixed effects, gamma ( $\gamma$ ), with robust standard errors.

<sup>b</sup>. \*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

<sup>c</sup>. Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> values are calculated as follows: [(Unrestricted within-person variance – restricted within-person variance) / unrestricted within-person variance] (Kreft & de Leeuw, 1998).

Table 8

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (Study 2)<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Word count	125	70.2												
2. Issue urgency	2.80	.95	-.09	(.76)										
3. Issue importance	5.23	.93	-.03	-.00	(.94)									
4. Issue threat	2.53	1.08	-.18	.30	.18	(.84)								
5. LMX manipulation	---	---	.13	-.14	-.13	-.37								
6. Power manipulation	---	---	-.11	-.02	-.02	-.10	.03							
7. Low-LMX–High-power	---	---	-.05	.08	.09	.22	-.55	.58						
8. High-LMX–Low-power	---	---	.22	-.06	-.05	-.10	.58	-.55	-.32					
9. High-LMX–High-power	---	---	-.07	-.10	-.11	-.33	.58	.58	-.32	-.32				
10. Voice directness	3.68	1.05	.16	-.13	-.17	-.41	.04	.22	.12	.19	.14			
11. Voice politeness	3.54	.94	.42	-.36	.19	-.32	.00	-.17	-.19	.03	-.03	.23		
12. Idea endorsement	3.48	.88	.43	-.11	-.25	-.26	-.06	-.10	.09	.13	-.18	.24	.39	
13. Subordinate liking	3.56	.91	.27	-.40	-.21	-.16	-.14	.05	.10	-.13	-.03	.24	.49	.37

<sup>a</sup>.  $n = 64$ . Coefficients greater than .30 are significant at a  $p < .01$  (two-tailed). Coefficients greater than .25 are significant at a  $p < .05$  (two-tailed). Numbers on the diagonal represent the alpha reliabilities.

Table 9

*Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Voice Directness (Study 2)<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	Voice Directness					
	Analysis Method A				Analysis Method B	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 4a	Model 4b
Intercept	4.64**	3.78**	4.13**	4.10**	4.14**	3.99**
Word count	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Issue urgency	-.11	.02	.03	.03	.03	.05
Issue importance	-.18	-.07	-.06	-.06	-.07	-.06
Issue threat		-.40**	-.50**	-.58*	-.51**	-.47 <sup>+</sup>
Power (dummy)			.50*	.48*		
LMX (dummy)			.33	.34		
Issue threat × Power (dummy)				-.06		
Issue threat × LMX (dummy)				.21		
Low-Power–High-LMX					.18	.15
Low-LMX–High-Power					.30	.09
High-LMX–High-Power					.84*	.78*
Issue threat × Low-Power–High-LMX						.04
Issue threat × Low-LMX–High-Power						-.43
Issue threat × High-LMX–High-Power						.03
F	1.34	3.29*	3.42**	2.57*	2.98*	2.17*
Adjusted $R^2$	.02	.13	.19	.17	.18	.16

<sup>a</sup>.  $n = 64$ . <sup>+</sup>:  $p < .10$ ; \*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$ ; (two-tailed).

Table 10  
*Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Voice Politeness (Study 2)<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	Voice Politeness					
	Analysis Method A				Analysis Method B	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 4a	Model 4b
Intercept	4.60**	4.35**	4.63**	4.52**	4.62**	4.62**
Word count	.01**	.01**	.01**	.01**	.01**	.01**
Issue urgency	-.31*	-.27*	-.26*	.23*	-.26*	-.24*
Issue importance	-.15	-.12	-.12	-.13	-.11	-.13
Issue threat		-.11	-.21 <sup>+</sup>	.11	-.20	.01
Power (dummy)			-.20	-.27		
LMX (dummy)			-.38 <sup>+</sup>	-.39 <sup>+</sup>		
Issue threat × Power (dummy)				-.19		
Issue threat × LMX (dummy)				<b>-.51*</b>		
Low-Power–High-LMX					-.55*	-.49 <sup>+</sup>
Low-LMX–High-Power					-.43	-.53
High-LMX–High-Power					-.57*	-.71*
Issue Threat * Low-Power–High-LMX						-.23
Issue Threat * Low-LMX–High-Power						.13
Issue Threat * High-LMX–High-Power						<b>-.53*</b>
F	8.72**	6.83**	5.51**	5.08**	4.88**	4.15**
Adjusted $R^2$	.27	.27	.30	.34	.30	.33

<sup>a</sup>.  $n = 64$ . <sup>+</sup>:  $p < .10$ ; \*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$ ; (two-tailed).

Table 11

*Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Idea Endorsement (Study 2)<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	Idea Endorsement		
	Model A	Model B	Model C
Intercept	1.86**	2.29**	2.29**
Word Count	.60**	.46**	.46**
Subordinate Liking	.23*	.16	.16
Voice Directness		.27**	.27**
Voice Politeness		.14	.15
Voice Directness * Voice Politeness			-.03
df	(2,62)	(4,60)	(5,59)
F	14.61	10.51	8.37
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.21	.27	.26

<sup>a</sup>.  $N = 105$ . \*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

Table 12

*Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Subordinate Liking (Study 2)<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	Subordinate Liking		
	Model A	Model B	Model C
Intercept	2.67**	3.07**	3.06**
Word Count	.03	-.08	-.07
Idea Endorsement	.24*	.16	.16
Voice Directness		.08	.08
Voice Politeness		.32**	.32**
Voice Directness * Voice Politeness			.04
df	(2,62)	(4,60)	(5,59)
F	3.90	4.66	3.73
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.05	.12	.12

<sup>a</sup>.  $N = 105$ . \*:  $p < .05$ ; \*\*:  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).



Figure 1

*Forms, Antecedents, and Consequences of Voice Directness and Voice Politeness*

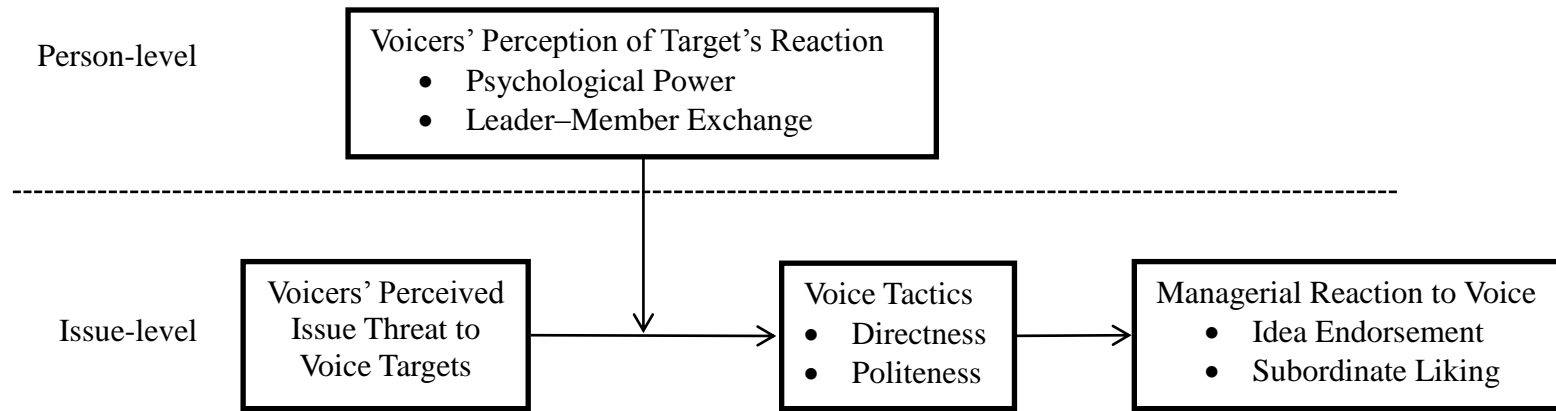


Figure 2a

*Interactive Effect of Issue Threat and Psychological Power on Voice Directness*

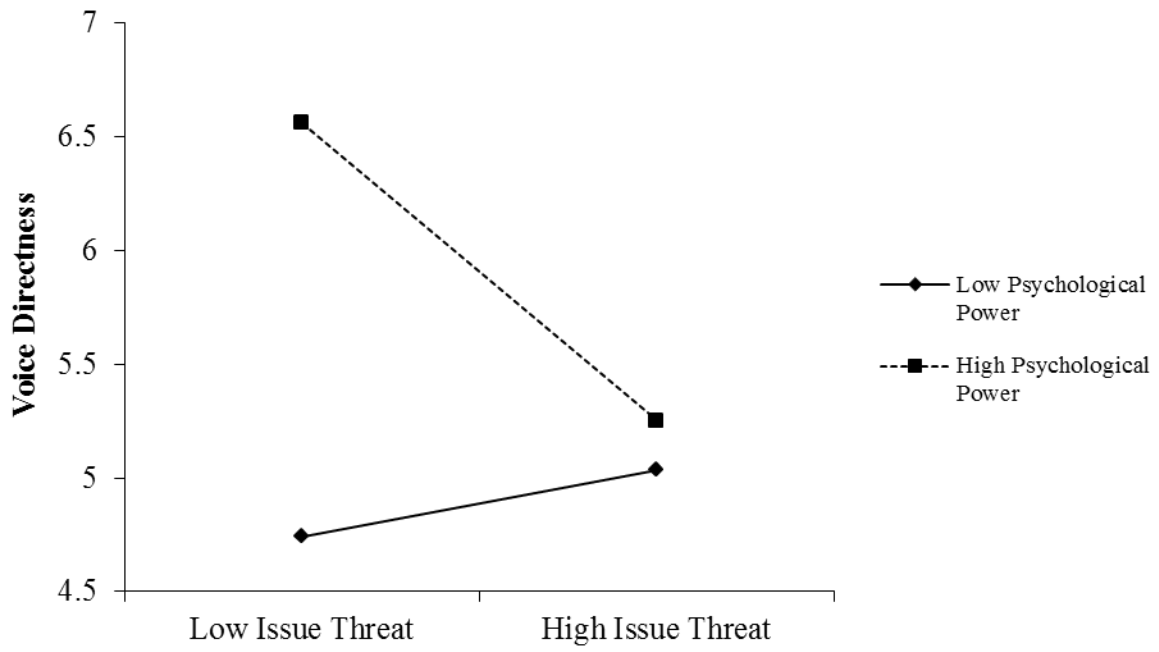


Figure 2b

*Interactive Effect of Issue Threat and LMX on Voice Directness*

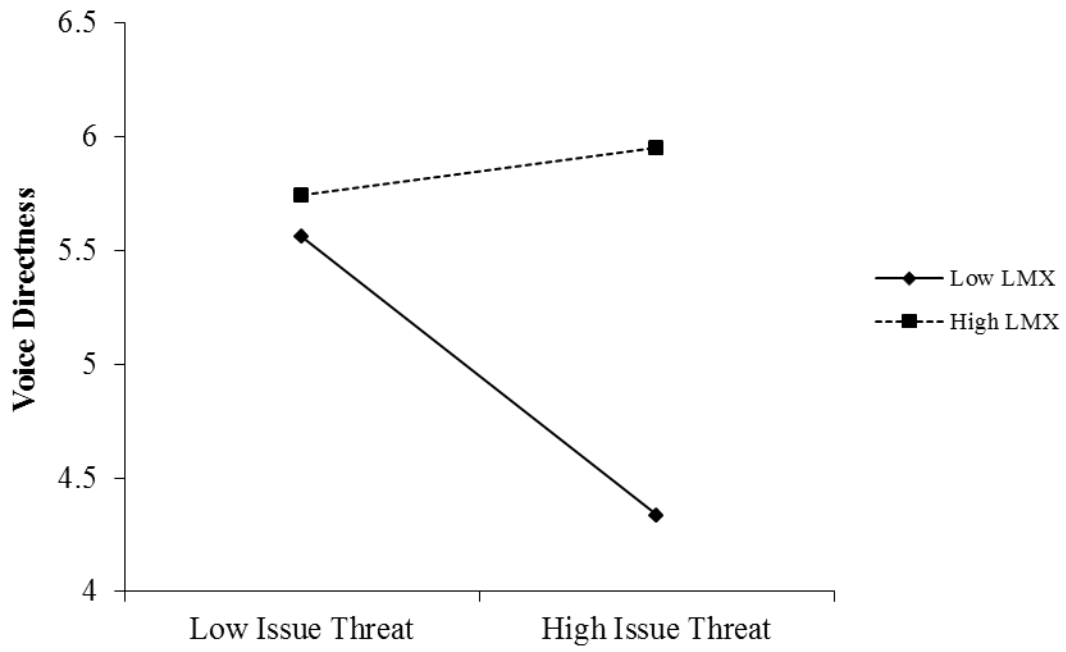


Figure 2c

*Interactive Effect of Issue Threat and LMX on Voice Politeness*

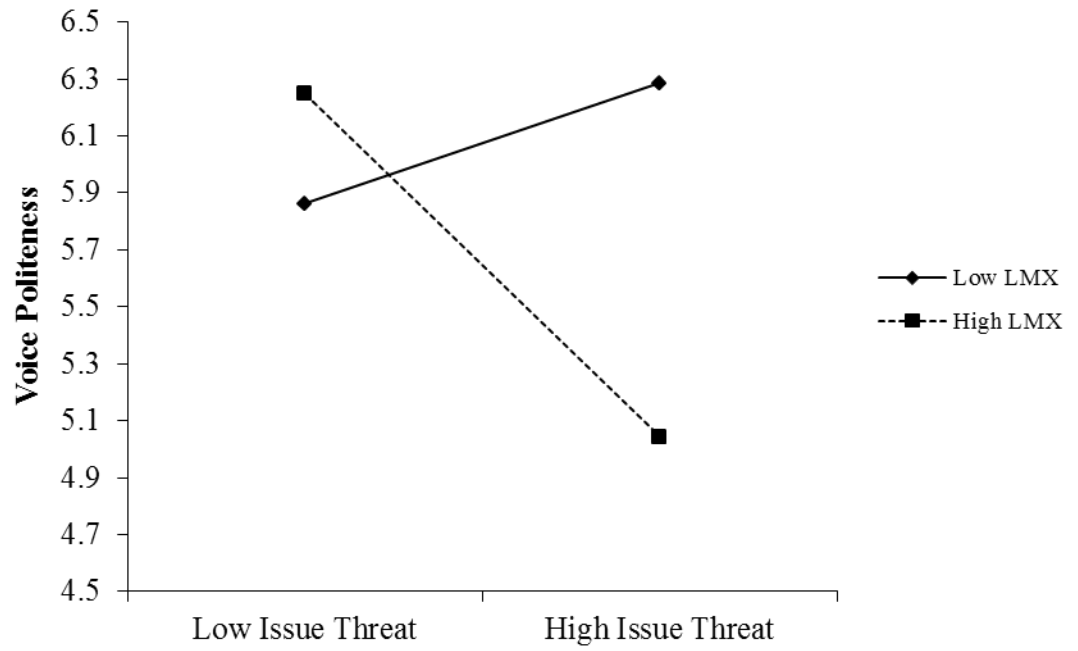


Figure 3

*Interactive Effect of Voice Directness and Voice Politeness on Liking*

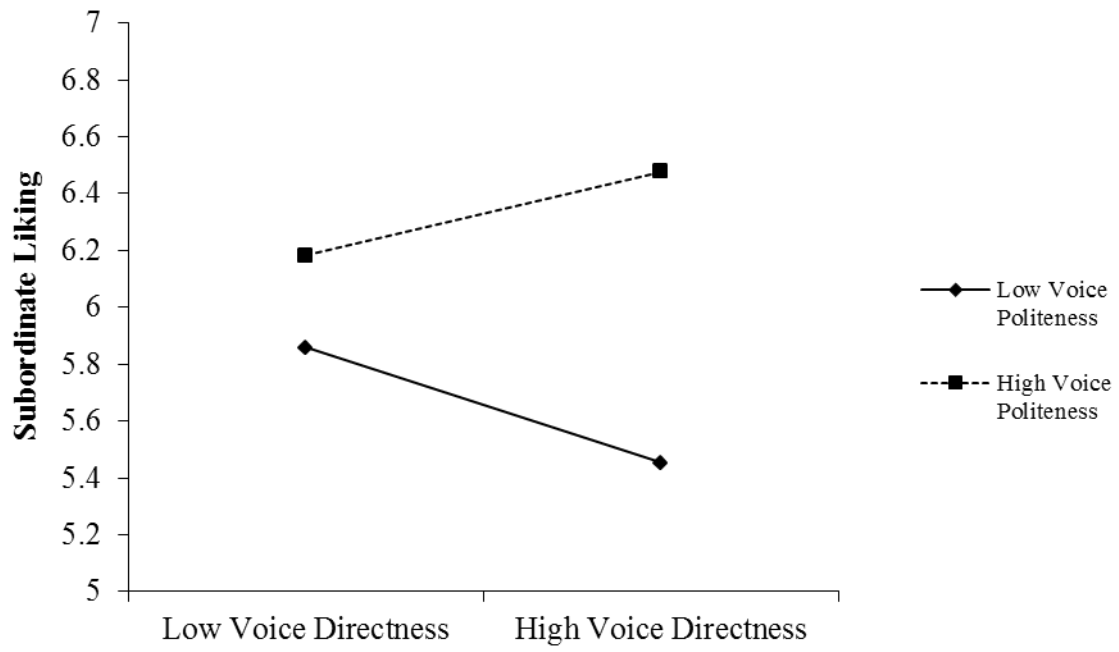


Figure 4a

*Interactive Effect of Issue Threat and LMX on Voice Politeness (Analysis Method A)*

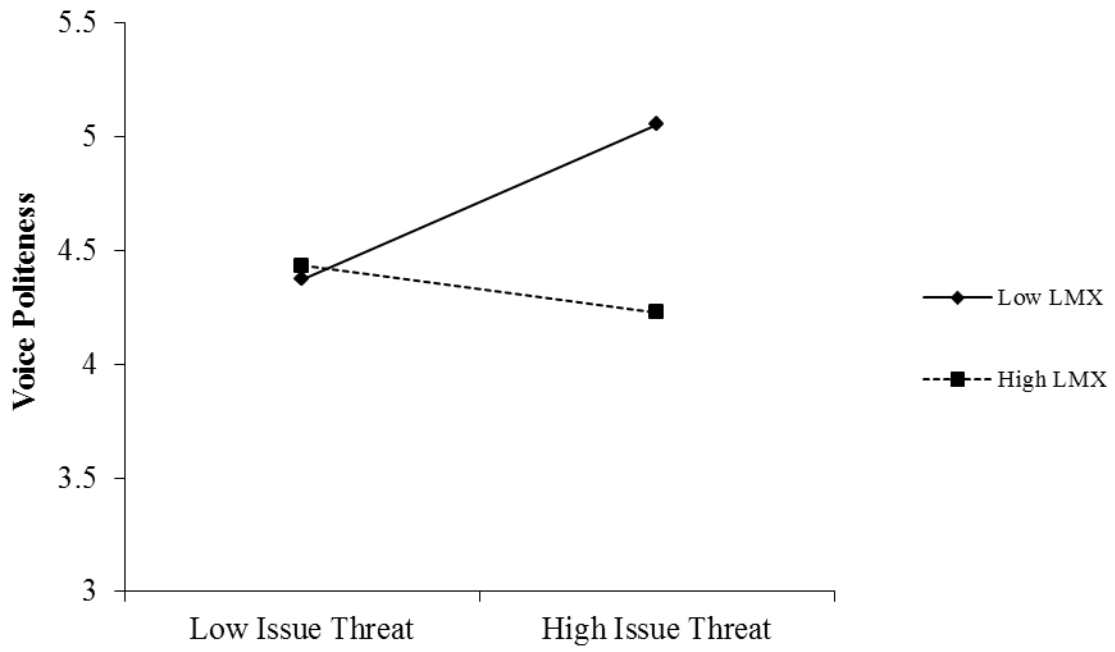
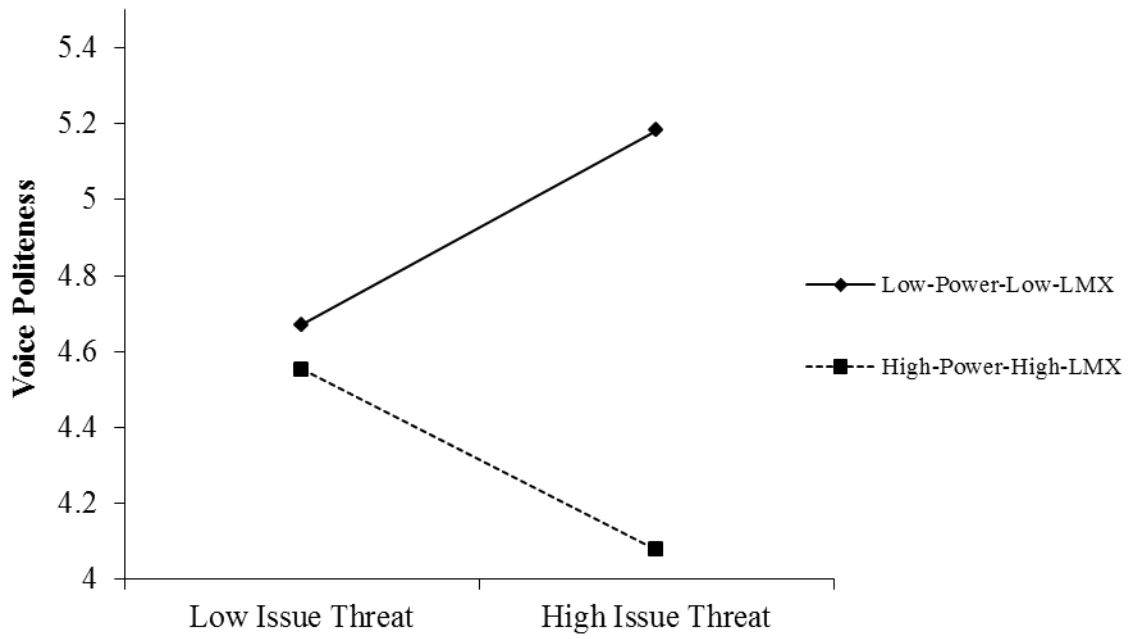


Figure 4b

*Interactive Effect of Issue Threat and LMX on Voice Politeness (Analysis Method B)*



## Appendix A1: Study Recruitment Email (Participant Version)

Subject line: UofM Survey Study (Overview)

Dear (Participant's Name),

My name is Chak Fu Lam and I am a doctoral student at the University of Michigan, and I am writing to ask for your participation in my dissertation research. This research, supported by the University of Michigan and [Name of Participating Organization], explores how employees raise important ideas at work. Be assured that your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for the purposes of this research.

All surveys can be completed online. There are two phases of this study:

- In Phase 1, you will complete an online survey about yourself and your experiences at work. The survey will take approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. **The link will be sent to your email on 7/10.** As a token of appreciation, you will receive a \$10 gift card (your choice of Target or Marathon Gas) upon completion of Phase 1.
- In Phase 2, you will be invited to complete a weekly online survey for 4 weeks. **The links for Phase 2 will be sent to your email on 7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13.** Each survey will take about 10–15 minutes to complete. Upon completion of each survey, you will receive an additional \$10 gift card.
- The total amount you can receive for the completion of the entire study is \$50.
- In addition to the gift cards, you will also receive a detailed summary of the research findings and tips on how to communicate effectively with your manager.

Thank you very much for considering participating in this important research study! Your participation will be greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Chak Fu Lam  
Doctoral Candidate, Management and Organizations  
University of Michigan  
Email: [chakfu@umich.edu](mailto:chakfu@umich.edu)  
Contact: 734.846.4378



## **Appendix A2: Phase 1 Survey Invitation (Participant Version)**

Subject line: UofM Survey Invitation (Phase 1)

Dear (Participant's Name),

A week ago I sent you an email inviting you to participate in my dissertation research. I would now like to invite you to participate in Phase 1 of the research study. The survey will take approximately 15–20 minutes to complete. Upon completion of this survey, you will receive a \$10 gift card (your choice of Target or Marathon Gas) as a token of appreciation.

You can complete the Phase 1 survey here:

[https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_2fUwdC6NRf51NoU](https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_2fUwdC6NRf51NoU)

Use the following ID when prompted to enter one: <<IDcode>>.

**Please complete the survey by 7/189.** Remember that your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for the purposes of this research.

Next, you will receive the first of 4 weekly online surveys beginning on 7/20. This survey will take about 10–15 minutes and is shorter than the one you complete today. It is crucial for the success of this study that you complete all 4 weekly surveys. You will receive a total of \$50 for the completion of the entire study.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Chak Fu Lam  
Doctoral Candidate, Management and Organizations  
University of Michigan  
Email: [chakfu@umich.edu](mailto:chakfu@umich.edu)  
Contact: 734.846.4378

### **Appendix A3: Phase 1 Reminder email (Participant Version)**

Subject line: Reminder: UofM Survey Invitation (Phase 1)

Dear (Participant's Name),

At the beginning of the week, you received an online survey asking about yourself and your experiences at work. If you have already completed the survey, please accept my sincere thanks.

If not, your participation is crucial to the success of this study. Please click here to fill out the survey:

[https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_2fUwdC6NRf51NoU](https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_2fUwdC6NRf51NoU)

Use the following ID when prompted to enter one: <<IDcode>>.

**Please complete the survey by 7/20.** Remember that your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for the purposes of this research.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Chak Fu Lam  
Doctoral Candidate, Management and Organizations  
University of Michigan  
Email: [chakfu@umich.edu](mailto:chakfu@umich.edu)  
Contact: 734.846.4378

**Appendix A4: Thank you email for participating in Phase 1 (Participant Version)**

Dear (Participant's Name),

Thank you so much for participating in Phase 1 of my dissertation project. Your responses have been recorded and greatly appreciated! Stay tuned for more information on the surveys for Phase 2, which will be sent to you on 7/23. Remember that if you participate in all phases of the study, you will receive a total of \$50!

Thank you once again for your support.

Yours,  
Chak Fu Lam  
Doctoral Candidate, Management and Organizations  
University of Michigan  
Email: [chakfu@umich.edu](mailto:chakfu@umich.edu)  
Contact: 734.846.4378

## **Appendix A5: Phase 2 Survey Invitation (Participant Version)**

Subject line: UofM Survey Invitation (Phase 2, Week 1)

Dear (Participant's Name),,

Thank you for participating in Phase 1 of my dissertation research. Your participation is very important and I truly appreciate it.

I would now like to invite you to participate in Phase 2 of my research study. Here is the first of 4 weekly online surveys on how you raise important ideas over the course of the current week. For each survey that you complete, you will receive \$10 gift card (\$50 total for the entire study!) Remember that your weekly responses are crucial to the completion of this study.

The survey for this week can be completed here:

[https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_9QCy9py8QGhZP12](https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9QCy9py8QGhZP12). ID code: <<IDcode>>.

Thank you for participating!

Sincerely,

Chak Fu Lam  
Doctoral Candidate, Management and Organizations  
University of Michigan  
Email: [chakfu@umich.edu](mailto:chakfu@umich.edu)  
Contact: 734.846.4378

**Haven't filled out Phase 1 survey yet but still want to participate? It's not too late yet! You can complete it at [https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_2fUwdC6NRf51NoU](https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_2fUwdC6NRf51NoU), and your ID code is <<IDcode>>.**

## **Appendix B1: Study Recruitment Email (Rater Version)**

Dear <<Rater's name>>,

I hope this note finds you well. My name is Chak Fu Lam and I am a doctoral student at the University of Michigan, and I am writing to ask for your help with my dissertation research.

This research, supported by the University of Michigan and [Name of Participating Organization], explores how people at work make suggestions to their manager. The findings from this research will help us understand more about how people make suggestions effectively.

There are two phases of this study:

- In Phase 1, you will complete an online survey about yourself (10–15 minutes to complete) and your relationship with each direct report you oversee (3–5 minutes to complete). The link will be sent to your email on 7/10. By completing the online survey about yourself, you will receive a \$10 gift card (your choice of Target or Marathon Gas). In addition, by completing each survey regarding your relationship with each direct report, you will receive an additional \$3 (again, your choice of Target or Marathon Gas).
- In Phase 2, you will complete one or more online surveys about your direct reports' behavior during the course of that week (depending on your direct report's response). Each survey will take only 2 minutes to complete. Phase 2 will begin on the week of 7/20. By completing each rating, you will receive a \$2 gift card (your choice of Target or Marathon Gas)!
- Finally, at the end of the study, you will receive a one-page summary report of key findings from this research. Your responses are confidential and will NEVER be shared with your direct reports.

Thank you very much for helping with this important research project! Your help is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Chak Fu Lam  
Doctoral Candidate, Management and Organizations  
University of Michigan

Email: [chakfu@umich.edu](mailto:chakfu@umich.edu)

Contact: 734.846.4378

## Appendix B2: Phase 1 Survey Invitation (Rater Version)

Dear (Rater's name),

A week ago I sent you a recruitment email inviting you to participate in my dissertation research. I would now like to invite you to participate in Phase 1 of my research project. Phase 1 consists of two parts:

1. Please complete the Phase 1 questionnaire here:  
[https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_1X375H2nocJ9p08](https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1X375H2nocJ9p08). Please use the following ID code when you are prompted to enter an ID code: <<IDcode>>. Your response will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone. Remember, by completing this questionnaire, you will receive a \$10 gift card (your choice of Target or Marathon Gas)!
2. In addition, I would like to invite you to complete a series of short surveys (that will take no more than 3–5 minutes to complete per supervisor) regarding your relationship with each of your supervisors below:
  - <<Participant 1's Name>>. <<IDcode>>
  - << Participant 2's Name>>. <<IDcode>>
  - << Participant 3's Name>>. <<IDcode>>
  - ...

The online questionnaire for this part of the survey can be found here:

[https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_1AF1E0iZIoLiWd6](https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1AF1E0iZIoLiWd6). Please provide your supervisors' ID codes to indicate which supervisors you are rating. For each survey entry you complete, you will receive an additional \$3 gift card.

Once again, thank you very much for helping with this important research project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 734.846.4378.

Sincerely,

Chak Fu Lam  
Doctoral Candidate, Management and Organizations  
University of Michigan  
Email: [chakfu@umich.edu](mailto:chakfu@umich.edu)  
Contact: 734.846.4378

### Appendix B3: Phase 1 Reminder email (Manager Version)

Dear (Rater's name),

About a week ago, you received brief online questionnaires from me asking about yourself, your experiences at work, and your relationship with your supervisors. If you have already completed the surveys, please accept my sincere thanks.

If not, it's definitely not too late yet! Phase 1 consists of two parts:

1. Please complete the Phase 1 questionnaire here:  
[https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_1X375H2nocJ9p08](https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1X375H2nocJ9p08). Please use the following ID code when you are prompted to enter an ID code: <<IDcode>>. Your response will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone. By completing this questionnaire, you will receive a \$10 gift card (your choice of Target or Marathon Gas)!
2. In addition, I would like to invite you to complete a series of short surveys (take no more than 3–5 minutes to complete per supervisor) regarding your relationship with each of your supervisors below:
  - << Participant 1's Name>>. <<IDcode>>
  - << Participant 2's Name>>. <<IDcode>>
  - << Participant 3's Name>>. <<IDcode>>
  - ...

The online questionnaire for this part of the survey can be found here:

[https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_1AF1E0iZIoLiWd6](https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1AF1E0iZIoLiWd6). Please provide your supervisors' ID to indicate which supervisors you are rating. For each Phase 1 survey entry you complete, you will receive an additional \$3 gift card!

Once again, thank you very much for helping with this important research project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 734.846.4378!

Sincerely,

Chak Fu Lam  
Doctoral Candidate, Management and Organizations  
University of Michigan  
Email: [chakfu@umich.edu](mailto:chakfu@umich.edu)  
Contact: 734.846.4378

**Appendix B4: Thank you email for participating in Phase 1 (Manager Version)**

Dear (Rater's name),

Thank you so much for participating in Phase 1 of my dissertation project. Your responses have been recorded and are greatly appreciated! Stay tuned for more information on the surveys for Phase 2. Thank you once again for your support.

Sincerely,

Chak Fu Lam  
Doctoral Candidate, Management and Organizations  
University of Michigan  
Email: [chakfu@umich.edu](mailto:chakfu@umich.edu)  
Contact: 734.846.4378



### **Appendix B5: Phase 2 Invitation Email (Rater Version)**

Dear (Rater's name),

Thank you for completing the Phase 1 surveys. Your participation is very important and I truly appreciate it.

Beginning this week, I will send you several online questionnaires asking about your direct reports' communication patterns during the course of the past week. Depending on the number of responses I receive from your direct reports, you may receive more than 1 email per week. Like the last surveys, Phase 2 surveys will only take about 2–3 minutes each to complete.

Finally, for each survey that you complete, you will receive an additional \$2 gift card! The more survey you complete, the more money you receive.

Thank you once again for helping with this important research project!

Sincerely,

Chak Fu Lam  
Doctoral Candidate, Management and Organizations  
University of Michigan  
Email: [chakfu@umich.edu](mailto:chakfu@umich.edu)  
Contact: 734.846.4378

## Appendix B6: Phase 2 Survey Invitation (Rater Version)

Dear (Rater's name),

Your supervisor, <<first name>> <<last name>>, filled out a survey this week regarding his or her behavior at work. Here is a brief description of the supervisor's idea:

**He/she suggested to <<idea description>>.**

**Based on this particular idea**, please complete this online survey here:  
[https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_2t0GJmgd57ELpI0](https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_2t0GJmgd57ELpI0).

When you are prompted to enter the supervisor's code and the idea code, please use the following information:

- Supervisor's code: <<IDcode>>
- Idea code: <<IdeaCode>>

Thank you very much for helping with this important research project! Remember, for each Phase 2 survey you complete, you will earn \$2!

Sincerely,

Chak Fu Lam  
Doctoral Candidate, Management and Organizations  
University of Michigan  
Email: [chakfu@umich.edu](mailto:chakfu@umich.edu)  
Contact: 734.846.4378

## **Appendix C1: Consent Form (Participant Version)**

### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

#### **VOICE AT WORK: How People Speak Up to their Manager**

**Principal Investigator:** Chak Fu Lam, Ph.D. Student, University of Michigan  
**Faculty Advisors:** Dr. Scott DeRue and Dr. Sue Ashford, University of Michigan

**Invitation to participate in a research study:** Chak Fu Lam invites you to participate in a research study about Voice at Work. This study examines how people make suggestions, present ideas, and/or express concerns or issues at work to improve customer service and organizational effectiveness.

**Description of subject involvement:** If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to participate in two phases of survey. In the first phase, you will be asked to fill out an online survey about you and your work. The survey will take approximately 15–20 minutes to complete.

In the second phase, you will receive a weekly online survey asking you to report one suggestion that you made to your manager over the past week. You will fill in the online survey once a week by the end of the week. Each entry will take about 10 minutes to complete. Phase 2 will last for four weeks.

**Benefits:** You may directly benefit from being in this study because you will learn more about how people express ideas at work to improve customer service. Your organization may also gain important knowledge about how employees can effectively communicate ideas in the workplace.

**Risks & Discomforts:** The researchers have taken several steps to minimize the risks of this study. You will be provided with an identification code, which is generated randomly, and your response will be matched with your manager only using the identification code. In addition, all of these identification codes will be removed immediately after I match your responses to your manager's response. Furthermore, your data will be encrypted and password-protected and stored in a secured office; only the principle investigator will know the password and have access to the data. Finally, you and your manager will never be identified in any reports on this study.

**Compensation:** As a token of appreciation, you will receive a \$10 gift card (your choice of Target or Marathon Gas) for participating in Phase 1 of the research project and a \$5 gift card (again your choice of Target or Marathon Gas) each week in Phase 2. This means that you may earn up to \$20 gift card if you participate in all four weeks of survey in Phase 2.

**Confidentiality:** Confidential information will be separated from all other data. Your supervisors will not have access to your responses and you will not have access to your supervisors' responses. Only aggregated data will be studied. The data will be retained by the PI for recordkeeping purposes only for an unlimited time. Your responses will be stored in a password-protected computer that only the principal investigator can access. The data will be analyzed and potentially used for publication in a management journal. When submitted to a management journal, your organization will not be identified.

**Storage and future use of data:** The data you provide will be stored in a secure, locked office for an unlimited time period. The data may be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study, but it will not contain information that could identify you.

**Voluntary nature of the study:** Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. Your decision about participation will not affect your relationship with the organization for which you work. Data cannot be discarded for subjects who decide to withdraw after identification codes are removed.

**Contact information:** If you have questions about this study, please contact Mr. Chak Fu Lam at University of Michigan – Ross School of Business (chakfu@umich.edu; 734-846-4378). This study is overseen by Dr. Scott DeRue (dsderue@umich.edu; 734-934-2835) and Dr. Sue Ashford (sja@umich.edu; 734-763-1091).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 540 E Liberty St., Ste 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933 [or toll free, (866) 936-0933], irbhsbs@umich.edu. (HUM# 00063713)

**Consent:** By completing this survey online, you are agreeing to be in this study. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

## **Appendix C2: Consent Form (Rater Version)**

### **Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

#### **VOICE AT WORK: How People Speak Up to their Manager**

**Principal Investigator:** Chak Fu Lam, Ph.D. Student, University of Michigan

**Faculty Advisors:** Dr. Scott DeRue and Dr. Sue Ashford, University of Michigan

**Invitation to participate in a research study:** Chak Fu Lam invites you to participate in a research study about Voice at Work. This study examines how people make suggestions, present ideas, and/or express concerns or issues at work to improve customer service and organizational effectiveness.

**Description of involvement:** If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to participate in two phases of survey. In the first phase, you will be asked to fill out a survey, which will take approximately 10 minutes to complete, about you and your relationship with your supervisors at work.

In the second phase, you will receive a weekly email with instructions on rating several supervisors you are overseeing. You will be provided with an online link and a description of your supervisor's behavior. Each individual supervisory assessment will require 2 minutes to complete. Phase 2 will last for four weeks.

**Benefits:** You may directly benefit from being in this study because you will learn more about how people express ideas at work to improve customer service. Your organization may also gain important knowledge about how employees can effectively communicate ideas in the workplace.

**Risks & Discomforts:** The researchers have taken several steps to minimize the risks of this study. You will be provided with an identification code, which is generated randomly, and your response will be matched with your manager only using the identification code. In addition, all of these identification codes will be removed immediately after I match your responses to your manager's response. Furthermore, your data will be encrypted and password-protected and stored in a secured office; only the principle investigator will know the password and have access to the data. Finally, you and your manager will never be identified in any reports on this study.

**Compensation:** As a token of appreciation, you will receive a \$5 gift card (your choice of Target or Marathon Gas) for participating in Phase 1 of the research project. In addition, for each survey that you complete regarding your relationship with your supervisor in Phase 1, you will receive an additional \$3. Finally, you will also receive \$2 gift card for each survey rating you complete in Phase 2.

**Confidentiality:** Confidential information will be separated from all other data. Your supervisors will not have access to your responses and you will not have access to your supervisors' responses. Only aggregated data will be studied. The data will be retained by the PI for recordkeeping purposes only for an unlimited time. Your responses will be stored in a password-protected computer that only the principal investigator can access. The data will be analyzed and potentially used for publication in a management journal. When submitted to a management journal, your organization will not be identified.

**Storage and future use of data:** The data you provide will be stored in a secure, locked office for an unlimited time period. The data may be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study, but it will not contain information that could identify you.

**Voluntary nature of the study:** Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. Your decision about participation will not affect your relationship with the organization for which you work. Data cannot be discarded for subjects who decide to withdraw after identification codes are removed.

**Contact information:** If you have questions about this study, please contact Mr. Chak Fu Lam at University of Michigan – Ross School of Business (chakfu@umich.edu; 734-846-4378). This study is overseen by Dr. Scott DeRue (dsderue@umich.edu; 734-934-2835) and Dr. Sue Ashford (sja@umich.edu; 734-763-1091).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board, 540 E Liberty St., Ste 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933 [or toll free, (866) 936-0933], irbhsbs@umich.edu. (HUM# 00063713)

**Consent:** By completing this survey online, you are agreeing to be in this study. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

**Appendix D1: Study 1 Phase 1 Survey (Participant Version)**

**Part 1: This section asks questions about yourself.**

Before we begin, what is the ID code that you were provided in the invitation email? \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ F

Highest degree completed: High school \_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's \_\_\_\_\_ Master's \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time in this facility: \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

Length of time in your position: \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

Length of time in [Name of Participating Organization]: \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

Years of experience in your industry: \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

How long have you been working with your current manager? \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

How often do you interact with your manager on a daily basis?

1 (not at all)    2 (a little)    3 (moderately)    4 (mostly)    5 (fully)

Would you prefer a Target or Marathon Gas Gift Card? Target \_\_\_\_\_ Marathon Gas \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate to what extent the following statements are descriptive of you:

		Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree
1.	I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	If I see something I don't like, I fix it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	I excel at identifying opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	I am always looking for better ways to do things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Part 2: Please answer the following questions about your relationship with your manager.**

1. Do you know where you stand with your manager, that is, do you know how satisfied your manager is with what you do?

1	2	3	4	5
Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often

2. How well does your manager understand your job problems and needs?

1	2	3	4	5
Not a Bit	A Little	A Fair Amount	Quite a Bit	A Great Deal

3. How well does your manager recognize your potential?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at All	A Little	Moderately	Mostly	Fully

4. Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, what are the chances that your manager would use his/her power to help you solve problems in your work?

1	2	3	4	5
None	Small	Moderate	High	Very High

5. Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your manager has, what are the chances that he/she would “bail you out,” at his/her expense?

1	2	3	4	5
None	Small	Moderate	High	Very High

6. I have enough confidence in my manager that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. How would you characterize your working relationship with your manager?

1	2	3	4	5
Extremely Ineffective	Worse Than Average	Average	Better Than Average	Extremely Effective

**Please indicate to what extent the following statements are descriptive of your relationship with your manager.**

**In my relationship with my manager ...**



	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1. I can get my manager to listen to what I say.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My wishes do not carry much weight.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I can get my manager to do what I want.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Even if I voice them, my views have little sway.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I think I have a great deal of power.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My ideas and opinions are often ignored.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Even when I try, I am not able to get my way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. If I want to, I get to make the decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Part 3: Please answer the following questions about your workgroup.**

**Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statement:**

**Other supervisors in your department feel that they are capable of...**

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1. Developing and making recommendations concerning issues that affect this workgroup.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Speaking up and encouraging others in this group to get involved in issues that affect this workgroup.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Communicating your opinions about work issues to others in this group even if their opinion is different and others in the group disagree with them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Keeping well-informed about issues where their opinion might be useful to this workgroup.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Getting involved in issues that affect the quality of work life here in this workgroup.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. Speaking up in this group with ideas for new projects or changes in procedures. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

**Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statement: Other supervisors in your department feel that it is safe to...**

				Very Strongly Disagree				
			Strongly Disagree					
		Disagree						
	Neither Agree Nor Disagree							
	Agree							
	Strongly Agree							
	Very Strongly Agree							
1.	Developing and making recommendations concerning issues that affect this workgroup.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.	Speaking up and encouraging others in this group to get involved in issues that affect this workgroup.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Communicating your opinions about work issues to others in this group even if their opinion is different and others in the group disagree with them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.	Keeping well-informed about issues where their opinion might be useful to this workgroup.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.	Getting involved in issues that affect the quality of work life here in this workgroup.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.	Speaking up in this group with ideas for new projects or changes in procedures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY! PLEASE CLICK THE >> BUTTON TO SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSE!**

## Appendix D2: Phase 1 Survey (Rater Version)

Before we begin, what is the ID code that you were provided in the invitation email? \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ F

Highest degree completed: High school \_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's \_\_\_\_\_ Master's \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time in this facility: \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

Length of time in your position: \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

Length of time in [Name of Participating Organization]: \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

Years of experience in your industry: \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months

Would you prefer a Target or Marathon Gas Gift Card? Target \_\_\_\_\_ Marathon Gas \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY! PLEASE  
CLICK THE >> BUTTON TO SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSE!**

After you submit your response, you will be re-directed to complete several questions related to relationship you have with each of your supervisors.

Before we begin, what is the ID code of the supervisor for whom you are providing the rating?  
\_\_\_\_\_

How often do you interact with this person every day?

1 (not at all)    2 (a little)    3 (moderately)    4 (mostly)    5 (fully)

How long have you worked with this person? \_\_\_\_\_ (year / month)

1. Does this person know where he/she stands; that is, how satisfied are you with what he/she does at work?

1	2	3	4	5
Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often

2. How well do you understand this person's job problems and needs?

1	2	3	4	5
Not a Bit	A Little	A Fair Amount	Quite a Bit	A Great Deal

3. How well do you recognize this person's potential?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at All	A Little	Moderately	Mostly	Fully

4. What are the chances that you would use your power to help this person solve problems in his/her work?



## Appendix E1: Phase 2 Survey (Participant Version)

Thank you for taking part in Phase 2 of the research study. This survey consists of several questions relating to your behaviors at work. Your answers will help us better understand how people behave in organizations. Thank you!

### Before we begin, what is the ID code provided to you in the invitation email?

Before you fill out the survey, I would like to tell you a little bit more about the study. I am interested in behaviors that relate to how you *speak up* to your manager. By “speaking up,” I mean that you make suggestions for new projects or changes in procedures, present new ideas about improving work-related issues, or bring up recommendations for issues that could affect the performance of your specific unit or the facility.

Based on the description above, please tell me one example of you “speaking up” an idea, issue, or concern to your manager this week. Please feel free to say anything you think is relevant. Remember that I am not looking for any particular response. I am simply interested in different people’s experiences and points of view about how they “speak up” to improve your specific unit’s or the facility’s performance.

In the space provided below, describe the idea/suggestion you presented to your manager.

**Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements. Before I spoke up to my manager about this idea, I felt that...**

			Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree
						Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1. By raising this idea/suggestion, my manager might lose status in the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. By raising this idea/suggestion, my manager’s ability to succeed in his/her position will be questioned.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. By raising this idea/suggestion, I might have made my manager lose face.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. By raising this idea/suggestion, my manager might feel hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. By raising this idea/suggestion, my manager might feel that I overstepped the boundaries.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Others in the organization would think worse of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. My image in the organization would be hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. My reputation in the organization could suffer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I could express this particular idea/issue successfully to my manager.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I could get my manager to listen to this particular idea/issue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I could get my manager to pay attention to this particular idea/issue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I am personally concerned about this idea/issue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. This idea/issue matters to me personally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. This idea/issue is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. My manager had to respond to this idea/issue immediately.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. My manager had to stop what he/she was doing and respond to this idea/issue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY! PLEASE CLICK THE >> BUTTON TO SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSE**

**Appendix E2: Phase 2 Survey (Rater Version)**

Before we begin, what is the supervisor ID code that you were provided in the email? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Also, what is the idea ID code that you were provided in the email? \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following:**

	Very Strongly Agree						
	Strongly Agree						
	Agree						
	Neither Agree Nor Disagree						
	Disagree						
	Strongly Disagree						
	Very Strongly Disagree						
1. This person’s suggestion would be difficult to implement.							
2. This person’s suggestion would be important for the work unit.							
3. This person’s suggestion might threaten my status in the work unit.							
4. This person’s suggestion has been, is being, or will be implemented.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I agree with this person’s idea.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. This person’s recommendation is valuable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I like this person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I get along well with this person.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Supervising this person is a pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Based on the particular suggestion raised by this person, please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:**

**When this person made this suggestion to you...**

	Very Strongly Agree						
	Strongly Agree						
	Agree						
	Neither Agree Nor Disagree						
	Disagree						
	Strongly Disagree						
	Very Strongly Disagree						
1. He/she was direct.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. He/she was clear about what he/she desired to improve.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. | He/she was explicit about what he/she hoped for.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. | What he/she suggested was straightforward and to the point. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. | He/she treated me in a polite manner.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. | He/she treated me with dignity.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. | He/she treated me with respect.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. | He/she refrained from improper remarks or comments.         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

THANK YOU FOR FILLING IN THIS SURVEY! PLEASE CLICK THE >> BUTTON TO SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSE.



**Appendix F1: Study 2 Subject Recruitment Email (sent by HR director)**  
**Subject Line:** Staff Research opportunity with the Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship

Dear Staff,

As many of you know, the Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship at the Ross School does amazing research on how organizations go from good to great. We at the [participating university's name] has been asked to participate in the research of one of their PhD students, Chak Fu Lam, a doctoral student in Management and Organization at Ross is a "voice" research scholar. His research explores how people at work make suggestions or present new ideas to their manager.

His dissertation is aimed at increasing the body of knowledge around how we give "voice" to values, specifically how staff communicates their ideas and suggestions to their manager. To help him gather data for his dissertation, we have been asked to participate in a survey he is conducting. **The closing date to participate in the survey is Feb 8, 2013.** The link to the survey is here: [https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_ems4kPolFkvs7DD](https://umichbus.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_ems4kPolFkvs7DD)

I am excited about [participating university's name] being invited to participate in research, and hope that you will take the time to complete the survey. And by participating in the survey, you may enter yourself in a raffle that includes one \$50, two \$25, and five \$15 cash gifts!

Thank you,

[NAME of HR director]

(Note: A reminder was sent a week from the initial recruitment email to increase response rate).

## **Appendix F2: Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

### **Study Title: Suggestion Making at Work**

**Principal Investigator:** Chak Fu Lam, Ph.D. Student, University of Michigan

**Faculty Advisors:** Dr. Scott DeRue and Dr. Sue Ashford, University of Michigan

**Invitation to participate in a research study:** Chak Fu Lam invites you to participate in a research study about how people make suggestions at work.

**Description of subject involvement:** If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to write a memo to a fictitious manager to make a suggestion or present a new idea.

**Benefits:** You will directly benefit from being in this study because you will learn more about how people express ideas at work.

**Risks & Discomforts:** There will be minimal risk associated with this study because data collection is completely anonymous. You will not be identified in any phase of this research.

**Confidentiality:** You will never be identified in any reports on this study. Only aggregated data will be studied. No identification codes will be assigned. The data will be retained by the principal investigator for recordkeeping purposes for an unlimited time. Your responses will be stored in a password-protected computer that only the principal investigator can access. The data will be analyzed and potentially used for publication in a management journal. When submitted to a management journal, you or your organization will not be identified.

**Storage and future use of data:** The data or specimens you provide will be stored in a secure, locked office for an unlimited time period. The data/specimens may be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study, but it will not contain information that could identify you.

**Voluntary nature of the study:** Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. Your decision about participation will not affect your relationship with the organization for which you work.

**Contact information:** If you have questions about this study, please contact Mr. Chak Fu Lam at the University of Michigan – Ross School of Business (chakfu@umich.edu; 734-763-7820). This study is overseen by Dr. Scott DeRue (dsderue@umich.edu; 734-934-2835) and Dr. Sue Ashford (sja@umich.edu; 734-763-1091).

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional

Review Board, 540 E Liberty St., Ste 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, (734) 936-0933 [or toll free, (866) 936-0933], irbhsbs@umich.edu. (HUM#00064887)

**Consent:** By completing this survey online, you are agreeing to be in this study. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

## Appendix F3: Study 2 Situated Experiment Measures & Instructions

### INTRODUCTION:

This survey will help understand how employees raise important issues at work. Completion of this survey is voluntary and should take around 20 minutes. We hope that you will answer all of the questions, but you may skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. If you wish to comment on any questions or qualify your answers, please feel free to write in the space in the margins.

Thank you for your help.

Chak Fu Lam  
Doctoral Candidate, Management and Organizations  
University of Michigan  
Email: [chakfu@umich.edu](mailto:chakfu@umich.edu)  
Contact: 734.846.4378  
Website: [www.sitemaker.umich.edu/chakfu.lam/home](http://www.sitemaker.umich.edu/chakfu.lam/home)

### Part 1: This section asks questions about yourself.

Before we begin, please provide the following information:

Age \_\_\_\_  
Gender \_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_ F  
Highest degree completed: High school \_\_\_\_ Bachelor's \_\_\_\_ Master's \_\_\_\_ Doctorate's \_\_\_\_  
Length of time at [participating university's name]: \_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_ months  
Length of time at your current position: \_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_ months

### Part 2: Making Suggestions at Work

In this research, I am interested in how you make suggestions or present ideas that impact the performance of your work unit and/or the University. Please take a few minutes to think about a suggestion, an idea, or a concern that you might consider making in the near future. Keep in mind that there is no right or wrong answer. The best answer is the one for which you feel strongly about. **Also remember that your responses will NOT be reported back to your manager.**

1. Use the space below to describe in a few sentences the suggestion you just thought about. Please be as detailed as possible.
2. Please explain briefly why the issue you described was particularly important to you.

**Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:**

	Very Strongly Agree						
	Strongly Agree						
	Agree						
	Neither Agree Nor Disagree						
	Disagree						
	Strongly Disagree						
	Very Strongly Disagree						
1. I am personally concerned about this issue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. This issue matters to me personally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. This issue is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. If I make this suggestion to my boss today, he/she must respond to this idea/suggestion immediately.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. If I make this suggestion to my boss today, he/she must stop what he/she is doing and respond to this idea/suggestion.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Phase 3: Writing a Memo to a Fictitious Manager**

You have just identified a suggestion, an idea, or an issue that is important to you and that you may raise to your manager in the near future. Now, imagine that you have to make the suggestion or present the new idea you just described to a fictitious manager, Chris. Here is a brief description of this fictitious manager:

*Low-power condition.* “Chris is your direct boss. You depend a lot on Chris for gaining access to people, resources, and rewards, and you feel that you cannot get Chris to listen and do what you want to do.”

*High-power condition.* “Chris is your direct boss. Chris depends a lot on you for gaining expertise and knowledge about your department, and you feel that you can get Chris to listen and do what you want to do.”

*Low-LMX condition.* “In terms of work relationship, you do not know the extent to which Chris is satisfied with what you do. Chris does not understand your job problems and does not recognize your potential. If you encounter problems at work, Chris will not help you solve them. And if you make a mistake, the chance that Chris will ‘bail you out’ at his/her expense is very small.”

*High-LMX condition.* “In terms of work relationship, you know very well the extent to which Chris is satisfied with what you do. Chris understands your job problems and recognizes your potential. If you encounter problems at work, Chris will help you solve

them. And if you make a mistake, the chance that Chris will ‘bail you out’ at his/her expense is very high.”

**Before you continue, please indicate to what extent the following statements are descriptive about you and your relationship with Chris:**

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
1. I can get Chris to listen to what I say.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. My wishes do not carry much weight to Chris.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I can get Chris to do what I want.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Even if I voice them, my views have little sway to Chris.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I think I have a great deal of power over Chris.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My ideas and opinions are often ignored by Chris.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Even when I try, I am not able to get my way with Chris.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. If I want to, I get to make the decisions over Chris.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I know how satisfied Chris is with what I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Chris understands my job problems and needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Chris recognizes my potential.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Chris would use power to help me solve problems in my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Chris would ‘bail me out’ at his/her expense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. I would defend and justify Chris’s decision if he/she is not present to do so.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. My working relationship with Chris is effective.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. If I make the suggestion, Chris would think worse of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I feel that I can get Chris to pay attention to my suggestion.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. By raising this idea/suggestion, Chris might feel hurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. By raising this idea/suggestion, I might have made Chris lose face.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. By raising this idea/suggestion, Chris's ability to succeed in his/her position will be questioned.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Now, suppose that you want to convince Chris to listen to and accept your idea about the suggestion you described earlier. Please write a detailed memo to Chris in order to get him/her to consider and support your idea, and you are all set. Thank you for taking the time to help with this survey!

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