

The Influence of Anger Expressions on Outcomes in Organizations

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Abstract

Anger can lead to positive organizational outcomes. Anger is an important emotion in negotiations and organizations create situations that promote anger, yet little research has examined the conditions under which anger expressions can lead to positive outcomes in organizations. We analyzed 129 anger episodes across six organizations. In these episodes we link the form of anger expression, characteristics of the expresser, and the organizational norms surrounding anger expressions with the valence of individual, relationship, and organizational outcomes. We find that outcomes are better when anger expressions are of low intensity, expressed verbally rather than in a physical way, and expressed in settings where anger expressions are normatively appropriate. Compared to expressions of anger by men, expressions of anger by women are associated with less positive organizational outcomes.

Prior research has focused on the harmful effects of expressions of anger in the workplace (Allcorn, 1994; Glomb, 2002; Stearns & Stearns, 1986). At the individual level, workplace anger has been linked to elevated blood pressure, heart disease, and feelings of hostility (Begley, 1994). At the interpersonal level, anger has been implicated in team conflict (Jehn, 1995), interpersonal revenge (Tripp & Bies, 1997), and blame (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001). At the organizational level, excessive anger expression has been linked to harmful organizational climates (Aquino, Douglas, & Martinko, 2004), decreased job satisfaction (Glomb, 2002), increased organizational incivility (Pearson, Andersson, & Wegner, 2001) and, at the extreme, aggression and violence (Fox &

Spector, 1999; Neuman & Baron, 1998). In conflict management and negotiation research, expressing anger has been associated with spirals of increasing conflict, with an increasing potential for retaliation, a tendency to reduce trust, and for both parties to a conflict to focus on the anger-producing behavior rather than the goal of reaching agreement (Adler, Rosen, & Silverstein, 1998; Allred, Mallozzi, Fusako, & Raia, 1997; Daly, 1991; Friedman, Anderson, Brett, Olekalns, & Lisco, 2004).

Both emotion theory and empirical investigations of anger, however, attest to its dual, complex nature: that anger expressions are not always harmful. Indeed, emotion theorists have argued that anger expressions serve a number of adaptive functions for individuals in responding to environmental events and reaching interpersonal and intrapersonal goals (Izard, 1993; Keltner & Gross, 1999) and, in fact, can and do lead to positive outcomes (Averill, 1982; Tafrate, Kassinove, & Dundin, 2002; Tripp & Bies, 1997). Recently, studies have begun to examine the conditions under which anger expressions can be functional in conflict management situations, arguing that emotions such as anger help to prioritize and organize behaviors, help to focus individuals on key issues for negotiation, and may be useful in strategically achieving negotiation outcomes (Friedman et al., 2004; Kopelman, Rosette, & Thompson, 2006; Van Dijk, Van Kleef, Steinel, & Van Beest, 2008; Van Kleef & Côté, 2007; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004).

Given these potentially adaptive aspects, why has anger generally been assumed to produce negative outcomes in the organizational context? One answer may be that historically, academic research and managerial practice have focused primarily on *regulating* negative and intense emotional expressions in the workplace, rather than evaluating their consequences (Stearns & Stearns, 1986). In conflict management research, the primary focus has been on the *intrapersonal* effects of moods and emotions (e.g., Carnevale & Isen, 1986; Forgas, 1995) rather than on the potential for socially functional *interpersonal* outcomes (Morris & Keltner, 2000; but see Van Dijk et al., 2008; Van Kleef et al., 2004). And while recent work in organizational behavior has begun to address anger as a specific emotion (e.g., Fitness, 2000; Gianakos, 2002; Glomb, 2002; Glomb & Hulin, 1997), the predominant focus of emotions research has been on controlling negative and enhancing positive emotions (e.g., Pugh, 2001; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). As a result, organizational research has not fully investigated anger expressions and their outcomes in organizations.

This study departs from previous research in that we identify some conditions under which anger expressions may lead to positive rather than negative outcomes for organizations and individuals. We explore these conditions and outcomes across multiple organizations, and test how differing organizational norms affect the outcomes of anger expression, an inquiry that has been called for, but not implemented in current research (Aquino et al., 2004; Fitness, 2000). While emotion theory suggests that individual characteristics, the way anger is displayed, and the setting or situation in which it is displayed will determine the overall effect of displayed anger (Arvey, Renz, & Watson, 1998), these variables have not been tested simultaneously in extant research. In the next sections we provide a rationale for including these variables, and develop hypotheses for their predicted effect on organizational outcomes.

Theoretical Background

We define anger as an emotional state that may include feelings ranging from mild irritation to intense rage, physiological and cognitive reactions, behavioral tendencies, and observable verbal and motor behaviors (see Glomb, 2002; Kassinove & Tafrate, 2002). While a range of conceptions of anger exist in the literature, we study anger as experienced by individuals in temporal “episodes” (Beal, Trougakos, Weiss, & Green, 2006; Gibson, 2006). This view asserts that emotions are *transactions* between individuals and their environment. These transactions involve other people and issues that have meaning for individuals and tend to be experienced as a sequence of reactions occurring over time (Frijda, 1993; Lazarus, 1991). An emotion episode is typically comprised of four primary elements: (a) an antecedent or triggering event; (b) a physiological reaction, and an awareness of “feeling” the emotional reaction; (c) expression or behavior or effortful regulation of expression or behavior; and (d) an outcome, which may include the individual’s own reaction to the episode as well as the reactions of others (Fehr, Baldwin, Collins, Patterson, & Benditt, 1999; Lazarus, 1991; Tafrate et al., 2002). Theorists have argued that emotion episodes are characterized by a conceptual coherence that makes them worthy of consideration as emotional units in their own right (Beal et al., 2006; Frijda, 1993). Moreover, individuals’ phenomenological experience of anger tends to be episodic in nature, and thus self-reports of these episodes can yield psychologically meaningful information. Indeed, using an episode approach is common in analyzing anger (Averill, 1982; Fitness, 2000; Kassinove, Sukhodolsky, Tsytarev, & Solovyova, 1997; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O’Connor, 1987).

Prior Research on Anger in Workplace Conflict

Recent research in conflict management and affect suggests a trend away from focusing on the influence of generalized affect on individual negotiator cognitions and strategy (e.g., Barry & Oliver, 1996) to examining how specific emotions such as anger influence interpersonal conflict, and what consequences may result (e.g., Allred et al., 1997; Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996; Van Dijk et al., 2008; Van Kleef & Côté, 2007; Van Kleef et al., 2004). The latter “social functional” approach, as articulated by Morris and Keltner (2000), has several important elements. It focuses on acute, specific emotions, such as anger, rather than generalized negative affect. It addresses the nuances of emotional expression, and examines how specific expressions affect interpersonal relationships, thus raising the level of analysis from intrapsychic and individual to interpersonal and group (see Hareli & Rafaeli, 2008). It has a concern for context, arguing that in order to understand the meaning of emotion for an interaction, contextual norms and structure must be taken into account. Finally, it examines a wider range of consequences, suggesting ways in which some consequences resolve the triggering problem, and others do not.

While experimental negotiation research has begun to elaborate this social functional approach (e.g., Van Dijk et al., 2008), it is not yet well represented in the extant field research on anger in the workplace. Existing work on anger episodes in organizations have primarily focused on antecedents to anger. Gianakos (2002) found that employees

cited their work performance and their relationships with coworkers and supervisors as the primary causes of anger. Grandey, Tam, and Brauburger (2002) found that customers were a frequent source of anger “events” for employees. Researchers have also identified supervisors’ and coworkers’ unjust treatment, incivility (Domagalski & Steelman, 2005; Pearson et al., 2001), and interpersonal conflict (Frone, 2000) as critical sources.

Fewer researchers have focused on consequences or outcomes of anger episodes in the workplace. However Fitness (2000) found that 43% of respondents to interviews thought their anger episodes were successfully resolved, though this perception differed depending on who instigated and who received the expression of anger. Respondents angered by superiors were much less likely to think that the anger-eliciting event had been resolved (34%) than were respondents angered by subordinates (74%). Glomb (2002) found that the outcomes of anger incidents were related to the severity of aggressive behavior involved, such that increased severity was associated with lower perceived job satisfaction, lower performance, and higher job-related stress.

By assessing the frequencies of antecedents and outcomes of workplace anger episodes, these studies provide valuable descriptive data. From a social functional approach, however, these data do not provide a complete picture of the relationship between anger expressions and outcomes. For example, theorists have emphasized that organizational norms and culture shape the potential for positive outcomes of anger episodes (Arvey et al., 1998; Fitness, 2000), yet these variables have rarely been taken into account in anger episode studies. Similarly, while status and gender of anger expressers have been proposed as critical variables, the relative importance of these variables to outcome valence has not been examined using a single database of episodes (see Domagalski & Steelman, 2007; Fitness, 2000; Kopper & Epperson, 1996).

The Current Approach

In this study, we recognize the potential for anger expressions to lead to negative outcomes, but also conceptualize anger as potentially adaptive and functional (Keltner & Gross, 1999). As a result, we expect anger expressions to lead to both negative and positive perceived outcomes. We expect a number of factors to moderate the relationship between an anger expression and the valence of the perceived outcome. These factors include two aspects of how anger is expressed (its intensity, and whether it involves verbal or physical expression), two aspects of the individual (sex and status level), and three aspects of the organizational setting (whether anger expressions are considered appropriate, whether they apply differentially to particular organizational groups, and whether they are frequent).

We focus on the anger episode as the unit of analysis, identifying the *expresser* as the individual who initiates a sequence of anger feelings and expression; the *target* as the individual or group of individuals to whom the anger is directed; and the *observer* as an individual who observes an anger episode. *Setting* refers to the social norms and conditions of the organizational environment in which the episode takes place, as perceived by the individuals involved.

We examine the outcomes of anger by adopting a constructivist and functionalist approach. Following Averill (1982), we argue that the emotion of anger is a social construction in the sense that, while there are biological and physiological components, individuals' angry feelings and expressions are substantially affected by social rules and norms. Therefore, the best sources of data on these anger constructions are the perceptions of participants in their own or others' anger episodes (see Hareli & Rafaeli, 2008). Using a functional perspective, we judge the outcomes of an anger episode by assessing the degree to which expressers, targets, or observers perceive that an anger episode serves adaptive or beneficial purposes versus maladaptive or harmful purposes. Finally, we explore the valence of these perceived outcomes at three levels of analysis: for the individual expresser, for the interpersonal target of an expresser's anger, and for the organization as a whole.

Proposed Variables Affecting Outcomes of Anger Expression

Level of Intensity

An important dimension in the expression of anger is its intensity—the degree to which an emotional experience is apparent to the self and others. Intensity can be indicated through a variety of behavioral means, including the scope or amplitude of active bodily movement, the duration of response, and the amount of muscular tension involved (Frijda, 1986). While the concept of intensity is complex (see Sonnemans & Frijda, 1995), the approach we take here is to focus on the degree to which anger is perceived by expressers, targets, and observers. This concept is similar to *state anger-out*, a condition defined by subjective feelings of anger accompanied by readiness to engage in aggressive behavior and expressions extending from a frowning of eyebrows and pursed lips to a rage involving violent physical action (Spielberger, Krasner, & Solomon, 1988). An expresser's anger intensity is likely to affect outcomes because of the target's likely reaction: individuals who are the target of intense anger tend to respond negatively, decreasing the likelihood for a positive outcome to the episode. Intense anger expressions may also be associated with a perceived lack of control, indicating an inability on the part of the expresser to regulate strong feelings in organizational settings, which typically stress reason and rationality (Stearns & Stearns, 1986). Indeed, norms for professional conduct typically deem occasional low intensity anger as appropriate in work settings—and thus, unlikely to incur sanctions—while highly intense anger is considered unprofessional and is likely to be punished, both informally and formally.

Hypothesis 1: Compared to low intensity anger expressions, high intensity anger expressions will lead to less positive perceived outcomes.

Verbal Versus Physical Expression

Clinical approaches to anger management (e.g., Allcorn, 1994; Kassivnové & Tafrate, 2002) emphasize that effective expressions of anger are associated with verbal assertiveness rather than nonverbal gestures or actions, especially physically aggressive behaviors. In order to prevent negative outcomes from anger expressions, expressers are urged to

“acknowledge feelings” and “be direct” in addressing the cause of anger rather than avoiding discussion or reacting behaviorally (McClure, 2000). Verbal assertiveness is defined as expressers clearly articulating their wants, needs, and goals in the anger episode in an effort to constructively solve the problem. Recent laboratory research supports the clinical view, finding an association between constructive anger behavior and lower resting blood pressure in individuals (Davidson, MacGregor, Stuhr, Dixon, & MacLean, 2000). These researchers’ findings suggest that when an expresser uses an anger communication style that is goal-oriented and focused on problem-solving, it can lead to a speedier resolution of anger-provoking situations, which leads to a faster return to healthy blood pressure levels. This suggests that a constructive, verbally based approach to anger is associated with fewer negative physical outcomes of expressing anger.

The primary alternative to expressing anger verbally is engaging in aggressive behaviors, which may include heightened vocal tone (e.g., shouting, insults, swearing), mild forms of physical aggression (such as dirty looks or angry gestures), and more severe forms of physical aggression, such as throwing objects or assaulting others. Supporting a link between increased physical expressions of anger and negative outcomes in organizations, Glomb (2002) found that the number of aggressive behaviors (which included verbally aggressive behaviors, such as an angry tone of voice and yelling or raising one’s voice), was associated with more negative outcomes. Drawing on these studies, we predict the following:

Hypothesis 2a: Greater verbal expression of anger will lead to more positive perceived outcomes.

Hypothesis 2b: Less physical expression of anger will lead to more positive perceived outcomes.

Gender of Expresser and Anger Outcomes

Despite widely held stereotypes holding that men express anger more freely than women, several studies conclude that there are few differences between men and women in either the experience or expression of anger (Averill, 1982; Kopper & Epperson, 1996; Kring, 2000). Gianakos (2002) found no gender differences in either the number or types of issues prompting anger or in the methods of coping with anger reported by workers. Averill (1982) found that women and men did not differ in the issues that caused anger or in the level, frequency, intensity, or tendency to express their anger, though women reported crying more often when angry (see also Egerton, 1988). Kring’s (2000, p. 222) review of the emotions literature finds that “the accumulated evidence does not allow us to conclude that men are more angry than women or that women are more angry than men or that men and women do not differ.”

Two cautions have been raised about these findings, however. First, there is substantial evidence for gender differences in people’s *beliefs* about gender and anger expressions. Both men and women believe that men express anger more frequently and with more vehemence, and that women express anger less frequently and with less intensity (Fabes & Martin, 1991). One reason postulated for these differences is a difference in

motivation: women are expected to express less anger because they believe it will lead to negative consequences for interpersonal relationships (Gianakos, 2002). Men are expected to express more anger because they believe it will help to maintain status and power, and are less concerned with consequences to relationships (Timmers, Fischer, & Manstead, 1998).

Second, a critique of studies finding no gender differences in anger expression is that they do not take *context* into account. Since emotions are related to goal-directed behavior, and men's and women's goals change depending on context, it is imperative that studies of gender differences and emotion measure the effect of contextual norms (Brody & Hall, 2000). For example, studies have shown that results for anger expression differences may depend on whether respondents are assessing outcomes in an interpersonal or achievement context (Hutson-Comeaux & Kelly, 2002). This critique is especially relevant when studying anger in organizations (an achievement context), since cultural norms for anger expression appear to emphasize an association between masculinity (represented by aggressiveness, self-confidence, and status awareness) and effective leadership in organizations (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). The stereotypical belief that women should not express anger appears to be heightened in organizations. As Gianakos (2002, p. 156) notes (citing Payne & Cangemi, 1997), "feminine women leaders have reported the need to control anger because they believed displays of anger would be costly to their interpersonal relationships." Additionally, studies suggest that anger is an "endorsed" or encouraged emotion for men in organizations, while anger is not endorsed behavior for women (Lewis, 2000).

We argue that individuals' stereotypes regarding anger expression are likely to substantially affect their evaluation of anger episode outcomes (Hutson-Comeaux & Kelly, 2002). We predict that respondents will regard men's expression of anger as more legitimate and appropriate than women's expression of anger (Shields, 2005). Specifically, emotion expression that deviates too far in quality or quantity from what is socially expected is likely to be met with negative social sanctions (Saarni, 1998). We predict that since women are regarded as less likely to express anger, and anger expressions by women are more likely to be regarded as inappropriate, women's expressions of anger will be less likely to lead to positive outcomes than will men's.

Hypothesis 3: Compared to expressions of anger by men, expressions of anger by women will lead to less positive perceived outcomes.

The Effects of Status Differences

Research suggests that status differences (distinctions based on hierarchy or power) between expresser and target affect how anger is displayed and perceived (Tiedens, 2001). For example, individuals in lower status positions are more likely to inhibit expressions of overt anger to higher status targets, while individuals in higher status positions are likely to be less inhibited in expressing anger toward lower status targets (Kuppens, Van Mechelen, & Meulders, 2004). Ridgeway and Johnson (1990, p. 1207) assert that "the expression of socioemotional behavior in task groups is deeply intertwined with the status hierarchy of the group." They propose that high status members are more likely to feel

mastery of situations, take responsibility for successful outcomes, and feel pride and express positive emotions. If they encounter disagreement from lower status group members, they are free to express anger or other negative emotions toward them. Lower status members, however, are not free to express negative emotions upward, and thus power produces an asymmetry in the kinds of emotional behavior allowed (see Domagalski & Steelman, 2005, 2007).

These studies suggest that there are distinct norms for anger expression relating to the expresser's status in relation to his or her target. These norms stipulate that higher status individuals are expected to have greater leeway for expression of anger, while lower status individuals should be more constrained in their anger expressions (Gibson & Schroeder, 2002; Sloan, 2004). Given the likely presence of these norms in organizations, we predict that anger expressions that violate these norms (i.e., expressions of anger by lower status people directed at higher status people) will lead to less positive organizational outcomes than anger expressions that comport with these norms (i.e., expressions of anger by higher status people directed to lower status people). One drawback of previous research on the effects of status on anger expressions is that status has been measured based on general occupational status or formal hierarchical position in a particular organization (e.g., Domagalski & Steelman, 2007; Sloan, 2004). In this study, we use the perceptions of respondents as to their status vis à vis a target, rather than assuming status based on position. This type of measure provides one way of capturing informal as well as formal status perceptions (Tiedens, 2001).

Hypothesis 4a: Anger expressions directed to higher status individuals from lower status will negatively affect perceived outcomes in an organization.

Hypothesis 4b: Anger expressions directed to lower status individuals from higher status will positively affect perceived outcomes in an organization.

Organizational Anger Norms

Researchers of emotion have long argued that cultures and groups develop norms for how and when individuals should express particular emotions, called "display rules" (Ekman & Friesen, 1974). In describing "appropriate" emotions, Shields (2005, p. 7) argues that "there tends to be a good degree of cultural consensus both concerning which emotions [if any] are desirable and on how [quantity, quality, and duration] these emotions ought to be felt and shown." Within organizations, theorists have argued that a critical aspect of organization culture is that it frequently involves specific norms governing the feeling and expression of emotion (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) argue that organizations encourage codified emotion norms by socializing individuals to display emotions appropriate to their work role. Sutton (1991) demonstrated that organizations often generate feeling and display norms for specific emotions, and that employees may be trained to regulate their own anger displays as well as the anger displays of others. Van Kleef and Côté (2007) argued that differing negotiation contexts cause expressions of anger to be considered more or less appropriate, and showed that perceived appropriateness affects the perceptions and behaviors of high power negotiators.

While empirical evidence for differences in anger expression norms across differing organizational cultures is scant, the above studies suggest that organizations are likely to develop unique norms governing the expression of anger. Different work environments are likely to foster different normative expectations, and individuals' perceptions of these expectations can shape how they respond to anger-provoking events (Aquino et al., 2004; Geddes & Callister, 2007). Since many elements or "triggers" that are predicted to lead to angry feelings are present in the workplace (see Fitness, 2000), and given the emphasis that organizations have traditionally placed on controlling employee expressions of anger (Stearns & Stearns, 1986), we assert that organizations are likely to develop and encourage specific norms prescribing appropriate expressions of anger.

Researchers analyzing cultural norms suggest several means for measuring their prevalence. We draw on Jackson (1966) and O'Reilly (1989) for three of these measures. Jackson notes that norms can be measured by the "range of tolerable behavior" (1966, p. 39) that participants regard as normative. Similarly, O'Reilly suggests that norms can be examined in terms of the amount of approval or disapproval attached to a particular behavioral expectation. We group these measures under the term *appropriateness*, the degree to which respondents regard anger expressions to be acceptable in their particular work setting. Following Jackson (1966) and O'Reilly (1989), we define *crystallization* as the degree to which a norm for anger expressiveness applies to particular groups of employees and not to others. Finally, we assess *frequency* as a measure of how common anger expressions are perceived to be in a work setting.

Our assertion is that the greater the degree to which anger expressions are considered appropriate by individuals, are characterized by clear normative expectations for particular groups, and are relatively infrequent, the more likely they will be associated with positive perceived outcomes. In terms of appropriateness, we reason that settings vary to the degree they regard anger expressions as legitimate and potentially part of work processes. In settings that tend to regard anger expressions as generally appropriate, there is little overt sanction to employees expressing anger. In these settings, because the expression of anger itself is not considered inappropriate, the target and observers of such expressions may be able to focus more closely on what caused the expresser's anger rather than focusing on whether the expression itself is appropriate or not. Focusing on causes rather than expressions has been shown to lead to more constructive resolutions of the conflict situation (Allcorn, 1994). In settings where anger is considered normatively inappropriate, expressing anger is discouraged through visible sanctions. In these settings, anger expressions are more likely to be regarded especially negatively because a norm violation has occurred in addition to the situational triggers causing the anger. This, we argue, is likely to magnify the potential for negative perceived outcomes, and make positive outcomes less likely.

In terms of crystallization, some theorists (e.g., Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989) have suggested that norms for appropriateness adhere to particular status roles. They argue that emotion expression is more acceptable for individuals in positions near the bottom or near the top of organizational hierarchies. We predict that increased clarity in expectations regarding anger expression will lead to more positive perceived outcomes because

individuals will express their anger with greater knowledge of when it is acceptable or unacceptable.

In terms of frequency, we reason that increased frequency of anger expressions will *decrease* their effectiveness, since frequent expressions of anger (especially by the same individuals) is likely to cause observers to make trait rather than situational attributions. That is, when individuals frequently express their anger, observers may regard this behavior as part of that person's personality tendencies rather than indicative of a situation that needs to be addressed (see Geddes & Callister, 2007; Spielberger et al., 1988). Thus, we predict:

Hypothesis 5a: Expressions of anger are more likely to lead to positive perceived outcomes when they occur in organizational settings where anger expressions are regarded as more appropriate.

Hypothesis 5b: Expressions of anger are likely to lead to positive perceived outcomes when they occur in organizational settings with crystallized norms.

Hypothesis 5c: Expressions of anger are likely to lead to positive perceived outcomes when they occur in organizational settings in which anger expressions are less frequent.

Method

Respondents and Organizations

We conducted 49 interviews with individuals in six different organizational settings. The organizations were chosen in an effort to provide variance in terms of the anger expression norms we expected to find. Specifically, we expected that in organizations in which customer service or clients were emphasized, we would find stronger norms against expressing anger, given the possible negative repercussions from such expression. For these organizations, we examined a medical social work department (seven respondents; $n = 20$ episodes), a nursing home (10 respondents; $n = 23$), and a surgical team in a hospital (18 respondents; $n = 29$). We also chose organizations that we thought would have norms that encouraged anger expression; for these settings we selected labor union organizers (six respondents, $n = 21$) and two different university athletic staffs (eight respondents; $n = 36$). In these organizations, where anger may be used as a motivation tool to encourage participation (in the case of the union) and, during practice and half-time, as a way to increase energy and action (in the case of the university athletic staff), we expected that there would be fewer constraints on anger expression. Interviews lasted from 30 to 90 minutes. From these interviews we identified a total of 129 anger episodes. Women comprised 70% of respondents (34); within anger episodes, women represented 59.2% of the expressers of anger in the episodes, and 53.8% of the targets. For research on emotions in organizations, this ratio of men and women respondents is typical or slightly more balanced than other studies (cf. Diefendorff & Richard, 2003; Glomb & Liao, 2003; Grandey, 2003; Pugh, 2001).

We used an interview methodology to derive respondents' subjective views on the organizational norms regarding anger, their own experiences with anger, and their perceptions of the outcomes of anger (see Interview Protocol, Appendix). This method has been used in previous studies of anger feeling and expression (Averill, 1982; Tafrate et al., 2002). In the interviews we focused on specific anger episodes, which were elicited from respondents by asking, "Think about a time in the last 3 months when you've been angry at work. How did you feel? What happened afterwards? Please describe the incident in detail." Respondents were also asked to recall incidents in which they had observed anger expressions by others. The interview schedule was piloted on five people, and minor modifications were made to it to distinguish incidents in which the interviewee was an expresser, a target, or an observer of the expression of anger. Using anger episodes as the unit of analysis, we content-analyzed and coded the interview data for the following independent variables: form of anger expression (intensity, verbal versus physical expression); characteristics of the participants (sex of expresser, status of expresser and target); and organizational norms for anger expression (appropriateness, crystallization, and frequency). We also coded data for the dependent variables: perceived individual, interpersonal, and organizational outcomes (see below for details).

Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed. We then had three independent raters, who were blind to the study hypotheses, code each transcript. The coding template asked raters to evaluate the four types of variables listed above. The data for the key variables used in the study represent an average score across the three coders, who read the complete transcripts of the episodes. They were asked to evaluate aspects of the anger episode as perceived by the respondent at the time of the episode. Only variables that showed sufficient reliability across coders were included (using Cohen's Kappa, reliabilities for the categorical variables used in this study were in excess of .70, suggesting sufficient reliability; Kappas greater than 64% are considered reasonable; Schmitt & Klimoski, 1991, p. 53).

Form of Anger Expression

Expresser emotional intensity was measured on a 10-point scale by raters assessing how the respondent characterized the visible or audible expression of anger. Describing an anger episode, respondents were asked, "On a scale of 1 (low, little to no visible expression of anger) to 10 (extreme, visible expression, such as yelling, or threatening) how angry were you?" For example, in response to this question, one respondent answered:

I was in a situation that probably shouldn't have happened. I was 10 [on the scale]. I was furious. I'm still really angry. I look at what I do like that could be my mom on the [operating] table. That could be my daughter...And I think when it hits that close to home, that is when I'm really mad.

The inter-rater reliability between the three raters on this measure was .88 (Cronbach's alpha).

The second form of expression measure was the degree to which the expresser used words to discuss and explain their anger. The data were derived from the interviewers' question, "How was the anger expressed, if it was? (What were the words or behaviors

used?).” This variable was categorized as high verbal (coded as 3), indicating that expressers predominantly used words and discussion in expressing their anger, moderate verbal (coded as 2), indicating that expressers partially verbalized their anger, and low verbal (coded as 1), indicating that expressers did not express their anger verbally (but may have used nonverbal expression, such as leaving the room). This measure had an inter-rater reliability (Cohen’s Kappa) of .72. We identified relatively few moderate cases, and as a result, for the regression analysis we scored moderate and high verbal episodes as 1 and low verbal episodes as 0. *Physical expression* was assessed by the same question, measuring the degree to which expressers were rated as using overt aggressive behavior (including indirect aggression, such as slamming a door; coded as 1) or indicated their anger with little or no overt aggression (coded as 0). This measure had an inter-rater reliability (Cohen’s Kappa) of .74.

Individual Characteristics

We consider *expresser sex*, as well as the hierarchical relationship between the expresser and a target. Interviewers asked respondents for the sex of the expressers and targets in each episode. In terms of hierarchical status, with respect to the expresser, the target may be someone who is the same status (*Peer*—coded as the baseline case), higher status (*Anger directed up*—dummy coded as 1 or 0), lower status (*Anger directed down*), or someone who is outside of the organizational hierarchy (*Anger directed outside*), such as a client. Information on this variable was derived by the interviewers asking respondents directly about hierarchical relationships. They asked, for example, “What position were you in, in comparison to the other person?”

Organizational Anger Norms

Perceptions of norms governing the expression of anger were measured with three variables. *Appropriateness* was assessed by coders gauging respondents’ perceptions of the acceptability of expressing anger in their work setting. This variable was measured on a 10-point scale (1 = *Never appropriate—expressing anger is generally not allowed in this setting; there are substantial, visible normative sanctions for expressing anger to 10 = Generally appropriate—anger expression is considered a legitimate representation of normal work stresses and concerns; there is little overt sanction for expressing anger*). To determine this measure, coders rated responses to the following interview question, “How appropriate is it to openly express anger in this organization? What would you say are the spoken or unspoken rules about openly expressing anger?” As predicted, appropriateness norms differed substantially in different organizational settings, though they did not always differ in the direction we expected. An example of a setting with low appropriateness norms (the university athletic staff) is represented in this quote: “Here at [this organization] you don’t see any anger expressed because that’s not the norm here. Everything is somewhat brushed under the table and it’s a nonchallenging environment.” On the other hand, a respondent in the labor union setting argued that expressions of anger were quite appropriate: “People have to sort of take each other on and have fights about it. And when you need to show anger, you show anger. We push each other to do the hard things that we need to do. And you come to the

realization that, 'Oh, I have to go fight with so and so about x.' And then you go and do it. It needs to be done." The inter-rater reliability for this measure was .86 (Cronbach's alpha).

Crystallization was measured on a 10-point scale (1 = *Low crystallization—anger expression norms tend to apply to everyone equally* to 10 = *High crystallization—anger expression norms tend to apply to certain, specified groups of people*). To determine this measure, raters coded responses to the following interview question, "Is it more appropriate for some people in your organization to express anger than for others to do so? If yes, why?" Crystallization appeared to be especially pronounced in the hospital and medical social worker settings, where the hierarchical distinctions between staff and doctors produce divergent anger norms. One respondent in the hospital setting remarked:

You are in a position where there is a definite pecking order or social stratification. A physician's anger is going to be much more tolerated than a nurse. A nurse may be more tolerated than a CNA [Certified Nurse Assistant] and down. I'm not sure that always happens through the ranks and employees but certainly I think a doctor's anger is much more tolerated than a nurse's.

On the other hand, in the labor union setting, there appeared to be little distinction to the norm of expressing anger when necessary, even to leaders (who in this case, were running a meeting):

Given that there's so much anger and given that there's so much injustice that we try to talk about and we bring out, daily there are explosions in the office, where somebody says, "I am really angry," and pounds the table with their fist. And if you're running a meeting and everybody sits there and nods, it's a really bad meeting because you aren't getting people to really invest in it and show some emotion.

This measure had an inter-rater reliability of .84 (Cronbach's alpha).

Frequency was measured on a 10-point scale (1 = *Extremely uncommon—visible expressions of anger are rarely seen in this setting*, to 10 = *Extremely common—visible expressions of anger are quite common and frequent, nearly a daily occurrence*). This variable was assessed through the question, "Do you see a lot of anger expressed here? That is, if I had a scale from 1 (no one ever acts angry around here) to 10 (people yell at each other every day), how would you characterize your workplace?" Again, there were a range of responses; one respondent noted, "I don't feel that there is a lot of anger expressed. Two on the scale"; while another stated, "I would say about 8–10 at least." The inter-rater reliability for this scale was .91 (Cronbach's alpha).

Control Variables

We included a control variable for the *role* of the respondent, whether he or she was the expresser, target, or observer in an anger episode. A one-way ANOVA across the three categories revealed a nonsignificant effect of role on outcomes. Expresser, $n = 65$, $M = 4.92$; Target, $n = 29$, $M = 4.89$; Observer, $n = 32$, $M = 4.63$; $F(2, 123) = 0.35$, p -value n.s. For the regression analysis we collapsed the three categories to focus our investigation on the distinction between expressers (scored as 1) and others (scored as 2).

Outcomes

For each episode, coders assessed three separate items: the degree to which the episode resulted in positive outcomes for the individual expresser, for the relationship between expresser and target, and for the organization, as perceived by the respondent. These three items were each on a 10-point scale (1 = *the episode resulted in generally negative consequences for the individual/relationship/organization*; 10 = *the episode resulted in generally positive consequences for the individual/relationship/organization*). Placing this measure on a single continuum is based on Averill's (1982, p. 206) approach of judging outcomes on the basis of whether they are "adaptive [beneficial] ... or maladaptive [harmful]." The inter-rater reliability for individual outcomes was .77, for relationship, .80, and for organizational, .72.

Results

We identified a wide range of anger experiences in our sample. For example, the intensity of anger expressions ranged from 2.0 to 10.0 with a mean of 7.02 ($SD = 2.11$), indicating that we elicited fairly intense anger episodes. Organizational outcomes ranged from 1.0 to 8.56. Similar to recent empirical findings (e.g., Kassonove et al., 1997), we found that slightly less than half of the anger expressions resulted in positive outcomes for the expresser. The mean outcome score was 4.85 ($SD = 1.63$); overall, 54% (69 episodes) were below 5 on the 1–10 scale, while 46% (60 episodes) were at 5 or above on the scale. We report descriptive statistics and a correlation table of our variables in Table 1. To test our hypotheses, we conducted an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression using respondents' perceived individual, relationship, and organizational outcomes as dependent variables (see Table 2). We checked the VIFs (variance inflation factors) for a test of multicollinearity among the independent variables (Myers, 1990; Neter, Wasserman, & Kutner, 1990). All VIF factors were within acceptable limits (one rule of thumb being that VIF factors should not exceed 5), with the maximum at 2.54. We also analyzed the data using multilevel random coefficient modeling (see Hofmann, Griffin, & Gavin, 2000, for a description). We utilized the hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) procedure recommended by Singer (1998), using SAS Proc Mixed. This was done to account for the fact that our data are represented at three levels: Level 3 = Site, where respondent is located; Level 2 = Respondent, who described multiple anger episodes; and Level 1 = Episode, each nested within the next higher level. The results, using this HLM analysis, were identical to the OLS regression results in terms of the significance of hypothesized relationships (see Tables 2 and 3). Therefore, in the following results, we will report only the OLS statistics.

Our first hypothesis predicted that the level of anger intensity used by an expresser would negatively affect organizational outcomes. This hypothesis was confirmed. The regression analysis showed that intensity of expression negatively affected outcomes at all three levels (Individual Beta = $-.28$, $p < .05$; Relationship Beta = $-.52$, $p < .001$; Organization Beta = $-.32$, $p < .01$). Our second hypothesis predicted that (a) increased use of verbal and (b) decreased use of physical expression of anger would positively affect organizational outcomes. This hypothesis was confirmed for verbal, but not for physical expressions of anger. Verbal communication increased positive organizational

Table 1
Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Respondent role†	1.48	0.50									
2. Intensity of expression	7.02	2.11		.27**							
3. Emphasis on verbal	0.74	.44		.26**	.22*						
4. Emphasis on physical	0.11	.31	.11	.22*	-.12						
5. Expresser sex‡	1.62	.49	-.14	-.15	-.10	-.14					
6. Anger directed upward§	0.23	.42	-.22*	-.05	.07	-.13	.16				
7. Anger directed downward	0.41	.49	.19*	.05	.08	.10	-.29**	-.46***			
8. Anger directed outward	0.05	.22	.08	.01	.04	.04	.02	-.13	-.20*		
9. Appropriateness	5.11	2.05	-.02	.10	.08	-.02	-.31***	-.14	-.18	.04	
10. Crystallization	7.01	1.97	.07	-.03	-.01	-.05	.13	.12	.18	-.13	-.68***
11. Frequency	7.15	2.60	.09	.15	-.09	.10	-.02	.09	-.16	.05	.05
12. Outcome, individual	5.02	1.84	-.13	-.12	.05	.04	-.24**	-.02	-.03	.11	.26**
13. Outcome, relationship	4.16	1.67	-.02	-.31***	.09	-.11	-.19*	-.06	.16	.06	-.00
14. Outcome, organization	5.36	1.99	.02	-.06	.16	.11	-.32***	-.08	.04	.16	.22*

Variable	10	11	12	13
1. Respondent role†				
2. Intensity of expression				
3. Emphasis on verbal				
4. Emphasis on physical				
5. Expresser sex‡				
6. Anger directed upward§				
7. Anger directed downward				
8. Anger directed outward				
9. Appropriateness				
10. Crystallization				
11. Frequency	.07			
12. Outcome, individual	-.15	.03		
13. Outcome, relationship	.19*	.05	.59***	
14. Outcome, organization	-.06	.08	.78***	.66***

Notes. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

†Expresser = 1, target or observer = 2.

‡Men = 1, women = 2.

§Dummy coded, with "Anger directed at peer" status level as the baseline.

outcomes (Individual Beta = .22, $p < .05$; Relationship Beta = .19, $p < .05$; Organization Beta = .21, $p < .05$). We did not find a significant effect for the use of physical forms of expression except in the unexpected positive relationship with respect to organization outcomes. We consider explanations for these results in the discussion.

Our third hypothesis predicted that anger expressed by women would lead to less positive organizational outcomes than anger expressed by men. We find partial support for this hypothesis in the regression analysis (Individual Beta = -.17, $p < .10$; Relationship Beta = -.22, $p < .05$; Organization Beta = -.27, $p < .01$). We also find support in

Table 2
Results of Regression Analysis for Perceived Positive Episode Outcomes

Predictors	Outcomes of anger episode-individual	Outcomes of Anger episode-relationship	Outcomes of anger episode-organization
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Control variables			
Role of respondent	-0.18†	-0.04	-0.12
Independent variables			
Intensity of expression	-0.28*	-0.52***	-0.32**
Emphasis on verbal	0.22*	0.19*	0.21*
Emphasis on physical	0.16†	.03	0.24*
Expresser sex	-0.17†	-0.22*	-0.27**
Anger directed up	-0.02	-0.04	-0.05
Anger directed down	-0.03	0.12	0.02
Anger directed outside organization	0.10	0.11	0.16†
Appropriateness	0.33*	0.31*	0.35*
Crystallization	0.10	0.40**	0.21
Frequency	0.05	0.14	0.12
R ²	.23	.38	.30
F	2.482**	4.953***	3.594***

Notes. †*p* < .10; **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; ****p* < .001.
Entries are standardized regression coefficients.

Table 3
Multilevel Random Coefficient Model of Main Effects of Independent Variables on Perceived Positive Episode Outcomes

Predictors	Outcomes of anger episode-individual		Outcomes of anger episode-relationship		Outcomes of anger episode-organization	
	Estimate (SE)	F _{III} (1, 106)	Estimate (SE)	F _{III} (1, 106)	Estimate (SE)	F _{III} (1, 106)
Role of respondent	0.74 (0.45)	1.56	0.39 (0.37)	0.95	0.68 (0.44)	1.16
Intensity of expression	-0.24 (0.09)	6.44*	-0.38 (0.08)	25.67***	-0.26 (0.09)	7.55**
Emphasis on verbal	0.94 (0.44)	4.51*	0.72 (0.36)	4.08*	0.92 (0.43)	4.54*
Emphasis on physical	1.03 (0.61)	2.79†	0.25 (0.50)	0.26	1.53 (0.60)	6.49*
Expresser sex	-0.67 (0.41)	2.67†	-0.75 (0.33)	5.16*	-0.96 (0.42)	5.36*
Anger directed up	-0.06 (0.50)	0.01	-0.11 (0.40)	0.08	-0.23 (0.49)	0.23
Anger directed down	-0.13 (0.46)	0.08	0.36 (0.37)	0.94	0.10 (0.45)	0.05
Anger directed outside organization	0.85 (0.79)	1.16	0.86 (0.64)	1.79	1.30 (0.78)	2.77†
Appropriateness	0.29 (0.13)	5.14*	0.25 (0.10)	5.76*	0.32 (0.13)	6.04*
Crystallization	0.09 (0.13)	0.48	0.32 (0.10)	9.83**	0.19 (0.13)	2.20
Frequency	0.03 (0.07)	0.21	0.09 (0.06)	2.23	0.08 (0.07)	1.14

Notes. †*p* < .10; **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; ****p* < .001.
Type III *F*-values are from multilevel random coefficient models.

follow-up *t*-tests to check the specific pattern of the hypothesized relationships. Expressions of anger by men resulted in outcomes that were perceived as significantly more positive than expressions of anger by women across all three outcome levels (Men expressers, $n = 47$, Individual $M = 5.54$; Women expressers, $n = 77$, $M = 4.66$; difference significant, $p < .001$; Relationship, Men $M = 4.61$, Women $M = 3.94$, difference significant, $p < .05$; Organization, Men $M = 6.20$, Women $M = 4.91$, difference significant, $p < .01$).

Hypotheses 4a and 4b predicted that the hierarchical status of the expresser vis à vis the target would have an effect on organizational outcomes. These hypotheses were not supported. Directing anger upward to a higher status target did not harm outcomes significantly, nor did directing anger downward to a lower status target improve outcomes significantly.

Hypotheses 5a–c predicted that the informal cultural norms in a particular work setting would affect the outcomes associated with anger expressions. Specifically, H5a proposed that anger expressions in organizational settings where anger is considered to be an appropriate response would result in more positive outcomes. This hypothesis was supported. Anger expressions in settings with anger appropriate norms resulted in more positive outcomes across all three levels (Individual Beta = .33, $p < .05$; Relationship Beta = .31, $p < .05$; Organization Beta = .35, $p < .05$). Respondents' judgments of whether anger was an appropriate emotion to express did differ across the sites we examined. Specifically, a post hoc ANOVA revealed that expressed anger was considered least appropriate in the Medical Social Work setting, and most appropriate in the Labor Organization setting, Surgical Unit Site, $M = 4.59$; Labor Org. Site, $M = 8.60$; Nursing Home, $M = 4.52$; Medical Social Work Site, $M = 3.83$; University Athletic Staff no. 1, $M = 5.75$; no. 2, $M = 3.94$; $F(5, 125) = 39.53$, $p < .001$. We do not, however, find support for hypothesis 5b or 5c. One significant effect was found for increased crystallization of anger expressions and positive Relationship outcomes (Beta = .40, $p < .01$), but Frequency did not affect outcomes at any of the three levels.

Discussion

Researchers have recently begun to examine anger as a specific emotion in organizations. While anger expressions have traditionally been associated with negative outcomes, little empirical research exists to confirm or disconfirm this assumption. This study represents the first effort to empirically examine potentially positive individual, relationship, and organizational outcomes from anger expressions, and to examine variables that emotion theory has suggested will impinge on this relationship. It answers the calls by emotions researchers to investigate discrete emotions rather than general affect (Barsade, Brief, & Spataro, 2003) and to take specific contexts, such as organizations, more explicitly into account (Arvey et al., 1998; Fitness, 2000). We do this by examining anger culture norms in six different organizations. This study confirmed theorized links between the intensity of anger expression, the use of words versus physical action, the sex of the expresser, and the presence of organizational norms regarding the appropriateness of anger expression and positive outcomes.

We found that the intensity of an anger expression was negatively related to outcomes. While many anger expressions led to positive outcomes, intense anger expressions rarely did. Anger expression intensity has been associated with perceptions of the expresser as lacking control over themselves and/or the situation (Frijda, 1986). Self-control is highly emphasized in bureaucratic organizations, where the appearance of rationality is essential (Jackall, 1983). The use of intense anger, then, may increase the likelihood that observers will regard an expresser as ineffective and reduce the possibility for positive outcomes. Furthermore, because expressions of intense emotions may be regarded as a threat to a target, they may also generate intense responses and create negative outcomes for the expresser, target, and organization.

Prescriptively, these results suggest that popular recommendations to “vent” anger as a means of reducing negative effects may be misguided (Bushman, 2002; Tavris, 1982). Our results suggest that venting—at least using intense anger expressions—may be counterproductive. Given the important role venting plays in many organizations, future work should explore the relationship between venting and organizational outcomes in more detail (see Brown, Westbrook, & Challagalla, 2005). For example, experimental work could carefully disentangle the intensity of the anger expression from the magnitude of the underlying problem.

We found that using verbal approaches to expressing anger led to superior outcomes. While intense feelings of anger often triggered nonverbal behaviors (such as clenched fists, moving toward a target, or using exaggerated gestures) that threatened to escalate a conflict situation, verbal expressions can focus attention on the source of the anger and enhance the possibility for a positive outcome. This finding is consistent with prior work suggesting that verbally identifying the source of anger can change the cognitive frame that participants are using to view a situation from a competitive or conflict (win-lose) approach to a problem-solving (win-win) approach (Pinkley & Northcraft, 1994).

We did not find, however, that physically aggressive behavior by the expresser significantly decreased positive outcomes, and in the case of organizational outcomes, counter to our predictions, these behaviors actually increased positive outcomes. In exploring this anomaly, we find that respondents used verbal responses in 70.8% of the episodes, and used physical aggression in 10.8% of the episodes. These ratios comport well with previous frequency data (see Averill, 1982). Most of the physical responses in our dataset were also action toward inanimate objects (such as slamming doors, inflicting damage on property) rather than direct harm or injury to a human target. Examining our data more closely suggests that these dramatic gestures captured the attention of managers, peers, and subordinates, and in some cases initiated organizational action that was ultimately positive. In one case, for example, the anger of a nurse over a miscommunication (expressed by overturning a surgical cart) resulted in a substantial change in hospital procedures.

We found that outcomes were significantly influenced by the sex of the expresser. Specifically, when women expressed anger, outcomes from the episode were perceived to be lower than when men expressed anger. This finding provides evidence for the theoretical contention that women are judged differently than men in terms of emotional

expression, especially regarding anger (Shields, 1987). While anger studies have found substantial similarity in the meaning and use of anger for men and women (Kring, 2000), we found that the consequences of expressing anger appear to be more negative for women than for men, suggesting that women are sanctioned to a greater degree than men when they express anger. Drawing on Eagly et al.'s (1995) work, we would expect this finding to be accentuated in organizations, where masculine role behavior tends to be equated with achievement. While expressions of anger are relatively common in the workplace, and in some cases, may contribute to perceptions of heightened expresser power (Tiedens, 2001), our findings suggest that women are not accorded the same level of normative freedom in terms of anger expression as are men.

Our findings pertaining to expresser sex, while consistent with men's and women's stereotypical beliefs about the appropriateness of women expressing anger, must be viewed with caution. Post hoc analyzes revealed that both men and women respondents tended to focus on *same-sex* expressers (recall that gender was not specifically mentioned in interview questions; respondents were free to recall any anger episode within the past 3 months). Ninety-two percent of men respondents focused on male expressers, while 84% of women respondents focused on female expressers. The negative effect we found for women expressers, then, could reflect accurate perceptions of the outcomes of episodes, but could also reflect differing perceptions by women respondents, who generally perceived anger episodes to have more negative outcomes than did men respondents (men respondents, $M = 5.62$; women respondents, $M = 4.51$; difference significant, $t_{125} = 3.65$, $p < .001$). These findings point to an unexpected result: the perception of anger expressions leading to less effective outcomes for women did not come from men respondents, but overwhelmingly from women.

This finding is consistent with at least one laboratory study, which found that women responding to a vignette depicting a woman supervisor expressing anger judged the episode as having greater costs to the supervisor-subordinate relationship and greater personal costs to themselves than did men respondents (Davis, LaRosa, & Foshee, 1992). Future research should investigate the relationship between gender and anger expressions in field settings to explain these relationships more fully. Specifically, researchers should examine who holds the stereotype of negative outcomes from women's anger expressions, and what effect the stereotype itself has on the potential for positive outcomes.

Surprisingly, the relative status of the expresser and target did not significantly influence outcomes. Our sample contained a number of episodes in which anger was expressed by a higher status expresser to a lower status target (41%), and expressed toward peers (31%). Fewer respondents discussed anger expressions upward in the hierarchy (23%) and toward external parties such as clients (5%). Recent results cited by Kuppens et al. (2004) may help to interpret these findings. With a sample of university students, these researchers showed that individuals' tendency to express their anger was stronger toward a lower status target and more inhibited toward a higher status target. Our study's frequency data show the same pattern. This relationship suggests that while the *expression* of anger may differ based on these status differences—i.e., it may be more likely that high status individuals will express anger toward lower-status targets—our

results indicate no relationship to outcomes of that expression. Our results suggest that it is the *way* the anger is expressed, rather than the status direction, which has an effect on outcomes.

Organization cultural norms have been proposed to influence employees' emotional expressions (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989), but there is scant research examining these norms across different organizations. This study provides evidence that the outcome of anger expressions does partially depend on cultural emotion norms: in organizational settings that accommodate anger expressions, positive outcomes were more likely to result. We defined appropriateness in terms of the relative absence of normative sanctions for anger expression. In settings in which there are high sanctions for anger expression, negative outcomes could come from *both* the interpersonal cost of expressing anger (the fact that the target may react negatively, be threatened, etc.), and the sanctions that occur as a result of violating a norm. In settings where anger is appropriate, the negative repercussions from norm violation are removed. It is also important to note that in settings in which anger expressions were considered more appropriate, anger expressions were not more frequent; the correlation between appropriateness and frequency was not significant ($r = .05$, p -value, n.s.).

Our findings also allow us to consider the implications of status differences and cultural norms together. While there was not an overall tendency with regard to the status-direction of anger, our findings do suggest that in terms of priority among variables, the form of anger expression (such as its intensity and the use of constructive verbal modes) appears to be more important in determining outcomes than status differences. Coupling this finding with the significant results we found for appropriateness norms, this suggests that it is not necessarily the role of the expresser (such as boss or subordinate) that determines whether anger expressions are effective. Rather, outcomes appear to be primarily determined by whether the anger is (a) expressed in a manner that indicates sufficient individual regulation and control and (b) expressed in a manner that is considered normatively appropriate to the specific situation. This finding (and the lack of our results for status) is consistent with research suggesting that the relationship between status and anger is complicated by the fact that managers—who typically hold higher-status positions—may feel constrained by occupational and organizational norms to exert self-control over their expressions of anger. Lower-status workers, in contrast, may actually face fewer sanctions for anger expression (see Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989).

In discussing our results, we consider limitations to our findings. One methodological limitation which characterized this study and virtually every other study of emotion episodes is common method bias: these studies rely on the perceptions of respondents for data on both antecedents and outcomes of the episodes. In this study, since we explicitly focus on *perceived* outcomes for the respondent, this method is appropriate for our research question and consistent with previous anger studies (see, e.g., Averill, 1982; Fitness, 2000). However, further research on the positive outcomes of anger expression is warranted. For example, in future work, researchers should ask multiple respondents to reflect on the same episode, so that perceptions of expresser, target, and observer can simultaneously be analyzed.

This study has important implications for managers. Managers should be aware, at an individual level, that controlling the intensity of their own anger expressions is most likely to lead to constructive outcomes for themselves and their work teams. Intense managerial expressions of anger have a dual negative effect in that they are likely to lead to less positive results for targets and observers and they also represent modeled behavior that may cascade through the hierarchy, creating norms for intense anger expressions. Related to this, our findings pertaining to cultural norms suggest that managers should consciously foster norms that enhance transparency around when and where expressions of anger are appropriate. In thinking about these norms, it is critical to consider our findings that anger expressions can generate positive outcomes. That is, norms that allow *some* expression of justified anger appear to be effective. Very permissive norms for anger expression, however, may be disruptive to the organization.

Prescriptively, managers should encourage the constructive—low intensity and high verbal—expression of anger. A work environment with constructive anger expression norms will enable employees to provide critical task-related and interpersonal feedback. This approach suggests that managers should actively manage the anger norms within their organization. Ultimately, managers can use expressions of anger to enhance team functioning and workplace performance.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Although we don't talk about it much, we all know that dealing with other people in the workplace can cause us to feel strong emotions—emotions such as happiness or satisfaction or team camaraderie—but also emotions such as jealousy, disgust, and anger. I'm interested in talking with you today about what makes you and others angry in your workplace, and what tends to happen when you or others express your anger—if you do—here at [your organization].

1. Do you see a lot of anger expressed here? That is, if I had a scale from 1 [no one ever acts angry around here] to 10 [people yell at each other every day], how would you characterize your workplace?
2. What are the ways that you've seen others express their anger at work?
 - a. How often do you see each of these happen?
 - b. Can you tell when people are angry even if they don't express it openly? How?
3. How appropriate is it to openly express anger in this organization? What would you say are the spoken or unspoken rules about openly expressing anger?
 - a. Is it more appropriate for some people in your organization to express anger than for others to do so? If yes, why? Is there anyone to whom it is acceptable for you to express anger? Who? Why?
 - b. Who is it never OK to express anger toward? Why?
 - c. Were you ever told explicitly when or where anger was acceptable or unacceptable?
 - d. [if applicable] Do expressions of anger vary depending upon whether or not the other party is internal to the organization (coworker, superior) or external (client, patient, etc.)?
4. How often would you say you feel angry, whether you express it or not? [daily, weekly, monthly]. What are some of the ways you express anger?
5. Now think of a time within the last 3 months when [no. 1 you saw someone get angry at work, either at you or someone else] [no. 2 you've been angry at work]. Please describe the incident in detail.
 - a. When did it happen?
 - b. What caused it?
 - c. Who was the target of the anger? [Position? Gender?]
 - d. How was the anger expressed, if it was? [What exactly were the behaviors used?]
 - e. What was the other person's response?
 - f. How intense was the expression of anger? On a scale of 1 [no visible expression of anger] to 10 [yelling, or threatening] how angry were you?
 - g. On a scale of 1–10 how angry did the other person get?
 - h. What were the effects or results of the expression of anger? Did the anger last a long time or did it seem to disappear quickly?
 - i. Have there been any long term effects?
 - j. How positive or negative were each of the effects?
6. When you think back on that incident:

- a. From your perspective, do you think this incident should have been handled differently? How? Why?
 - b. From [the organization's] perspective would it have been better if this incident had been handled differently?
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