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DOI

[10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.03.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.03.001)

Publication date

2015

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

The Leadership Quarterly

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Koning, L. F., & van Kleef, G. A. (2015). How leaders' emotional displays shape followers' organizational citizenship behavior. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 26(4), 489-501. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.03.001>

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How leaders' emotional displays shape followers' organizational citizenship behavior☆

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29 April 2014
Received in revised form 4 March 2015
Accepted 5 March 2015
Available online 27 April 2015

Editor: Shane Connelly

Keywords:

Emotional expressions
Leadership
OCB
Anger
EASI theory

ABSTRACT

We examined the effects of happy and angry expressions of leaders on followers' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). OCB involves behaviors that benefit an organization, but fall outside of formal job requirements and reward structures (Bateman & Organ, 1983). We show that leaders' emotional displays play a role in encouraging or discouraging OCB. In contrast to previous evidence that anger displays can increase follower motivation and in-role performance, Study 1 (a scenario study among employees of various companies) revealed a decrease in willingness to perform OCB after a leader expressed anger rather than happiness. In Study 2 (a lab experiment involving university students), participants expended less effort working overtime after being confronted with an angry rather than a happy leader. In both studies, the detrimental effects of anger were stronger when the anger was perceived as inappropriate. We conclude that anger may decrease OCB, especially when the target considers it inappropriate.

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Introduction

Emotions are ubiquitous in organizational life. People may feel joy or pride about their accomplishments or disappointment and frustration about their failures. Moreover, people may express these emotions to others around them. There is growing evidence that such emotional expressions have a considerable influence on organizational behavior (Elfenbein, 2007; Van Kleef, Homan, & Cheshin, 2012), especially when they are emitted by powerful agents such as leaders. Indeed, several studies have shown that leaders' emotional displays have the potential to influence followers' task performance, pointing to the critical importance of leaders' emotions for our understanding of organizational success (for an overview, see Gooty, Connelly, Griffith, & Gupta, 2010). Clearly, however, such success depends not only on an employee's job-prescribed task performance — organizational success also hinges on an employee's willingness to invest effort on behalf of the company outside of formal job prescriptions.

Productivity and effectiveness are only partly determined by formal job descriptions. Many tasks performed by employees fall outside of such formal descriptions and yet are essential to the company's success. Working overtime when needed, helping a new colleague become acquainted with company procedures, or advertising the company to friends and relatives are all tasks that are typically not covered by formal job descriptions. Yet such tasks are crucial to the success of the company. For example, working overtime can help a company meet important deadlines. Helping new colleagues find their way contributes to the effectiveness of these employees and increases knowledge transfer within the organization. These voluntary actions are often described as forms of

☆ This research was supported by a grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO 452-09-010) awarded to the second author.

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organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; e.g., Bateman & Organ, 1983; Organ, 1988; Organ & Paine, 1999; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983).

Given the importance of OCB, organizations should make every effort to motivate their employees to perform these behaviors. However, since OCB falls outside of formal job requirements and reward structures, it cannot easily be required from employees. Organizations must therefore find other ways to encourage their employees to be good citizens. Indeed, a considerable amount of research has been dedicated to addressing the questions of when employees will engage in OCB and how OCB can be promoted among employees.

Early research has focused on characteristics and perceptions of the employee that shape OCB (e.g., Bateman & Organ, 1983; Smith et al., 1983). For instance, factors such as job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, perceived fairness, and perceived leader support have been found to contribute to employees' willingness to exhibit OCB. Organ and Ryan (1995) argued that a 'morale' component is present in all these factors, suggesting that employee morale is the major underlying employee characteristic contributing to OCB.

Later research expanded the focus to include the influence of factors outside the employee in promoting OCB. A substantial body of research has focused on leaders and leadership, indicating that leaders play an important role in encouraging OCB. More specifically, research has shown that transformational leadership has a positive impact on OCB. Leader behaviors such as articulating a vision, setting goals, and expecting high performance have been found to stimulate OCB in employees (e.g., Chen, Tsui, & Farh, 2002; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990). OCB has also been linked to characteristics of transactional leadership. For instance, there is evidence that contingent rewards are positively related to OCB, while the opposite is true for non-contingent punishments (e.g., Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996; Walumbwa, Wu, & Orwa, 2008). Finally, prior research has revealed that characteristics of the exchange relationships between leaders and followers also play a role in shaping OCB. In particular, the quality of leader–member exchange (LMX) has been found to correlate positively with OCB (e.g., Deluga, 1998).

Research thus shows that leaders play an important role in encouraging OCB. However, the role of leader emotion – although widely recognized as a critical force in organizations – is still largely unexplored. We set out to address this issue by studying the interpersonal effects of leaders' emotional expressions on follower OCB. Below we first discuss theory and research on the interpersonal effects of emotions. Next we address prior studies on the effects of leaders' emotional displays on follower affect and performance. Then we develop hypotheses about the effects of leaders' emotional expressions on followers' OCB, and finally we report two studies that tested these hypotheses.

An interpersonal approach to emotions

Emotional expressions are powerful tools of social influence (Côté & Hideg, 2011; Van Kleef, Van Doorn, Heerdink, & Koning, 2011). By observing others' emotional expressions, people can distill information about the feelings, attitudes, and intentions of others around them (Elfenbein, 2007; Hareli & Hess, 2010; Keltner & Haidt, 1999; Van Kleef, 2009). Specifically, according to Emotions as Social Information (EASI) theory, emotional expressions engender interpersonal effects through two different mechanisms; affective reactions and inferential processes (Van Kleef, 2009; Van Kleef et al., 2012). Affective reactions include processes such as emotional contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1992), which refers to the often automatic and non-conscious process whereby individuals "catch" the emotional states of others. For example, one person's happiness may instill positive feelings in others. In a similar vein, one person's anger may trigger reciprocal anger in observers (see e.g., Cheshin, Rafaeli, & Bos, 2011; Friedman et al., 2004; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004). In addition to emotional contagion, affective processes involve changes in impression formation and interpersonal liking (see e.g., Clark & Taraban, 1991; Hareli & Hess, 2010; Knutson, 1996). For example, being confronted with someone who expresses anger may decrease liking for that person. On the other hand, being confronted with a happy expression may increase interpersonal liking (Hess, Blairy, & Kleck, 2000).

In addition to these affective reactions, perceiving another person's emotional expressions may trigger inferential processes in observers (Van Kleef, 2009). Emotions are elicited when people evaluate ("appraise") a situation in relation to their current goals (Frijda, 1986; Frijda, Kuipers, & Ter Schure, 1989). For example, anger is typically experienced when a goal is frustrated and someone else is held accountable. By reverse logic, when people are confronted with an angry person, they may infer that the person's goals are not met and that the person thinks they are responsible. People may thus "reverse engineer" others' emotional expressions (De Melo, Carnevale, Read, & Gratch, 2014; Hareli & Hess, 2010) to gain insight into their evaluations of the situation.

Affective reactions and inferential processes may take place at the same time, and both can influence behavior (Van Kleef, 2009). EASI theory posits that the relative influence of both processes on behavior depends critically on the perceived appropriateness of the emotional expression (Van Kleef et al., 2012). Appropriateness refers to the degree to which an emotional reaction is fitting for the situation at hand (Shields, 2005). The exact same emotional reaction may be relatively appropriate in one situation, but rather inappropriate in the next. For instance, a leader's expressions of anger may be perceived as appropriate in the context of a follower's low effort or suboptimal performance, but as rather inappropriate in the context of high effort or adequate performance.

Effects of leaders' emotional displays on followers

In the last two decades or so, an increasing scholarly awareness has emerged that emotions play a pivotal role in the leadership process (George, 2000; Humphrey, 2002; Newcombe & Ashkanasy, 2002). A growing body of research has documented that leaders' emotional expressions influence followers' attitudes, cognitions, affective states, and behavior. An early study by George and Bettenhausen (1990) demonstrated that service workers were more likely to help customers, sold more products, and had lower

turnover rates when their leader scored high rather than low on state positive affect. The authors attributed these effects to emotional contagion between leaders and followers, suggesting that subordinates took over the positive mood of the leader and therefore performed better. In a similar vein, [Gaddis, Connelly, and Mumford \(2004\)](#) showed that the affective tone in which leaders delivered failure feedback had an impact on follower performance. When leaders delivered failure feedback in a positive tone, they were perceived as more effective by their followers and instigated better team performance than when they delivered such feedback in a negative tone.

Evidence for a possible role of emotional contagion in producing such effects was reported by [Barsade \(2002\)](#), who investigated emotional contagion in work groups. Although this study was not about leadership per se, the results did show that groups experienced a more positive mood when they were confronted with a confederate expressing positive affect. As a result, these groups showed more cooperation and less conflict. [Bono and Ilies \(2006\)](#) provided additional support for the role of emotional contagion in a leadership setting. They showed that the affective states of leaders elicited similar affective states in their followers, which in turn influenced followers' ratings of the leader's effectiveness (see also [Damen, Van Knippenberg, & Van Knippenberg, 2008](#)).

In another study, [Sy, Côté, and Saavedra \(2005\)](#) invited groups of participants to the lab, and randomly selected one group member as the leader. The leader then watched a film that induced either a positive or a negative mood. Next, the leader joined the rest of the group and coached them as they built a tent together while blindfolded. Teams led by a leader who had been induced to experience a positive mood also developed a positive mood themselves and exhibited better coordination than did teams that were led by a leader with a negative mood. Teams with a leader in a negative mood expended more effort, however, presumably because they inferred that their team performance was unsatisfactory. In line with EASI theory, these studies suggest that both affective and inferential processes shape followers' performance and effort expenditure in response to the emotional expressions of leaders, but in different ways.

A more direct test of EASI theory in the context of leadership was provided by [Van Kleef et al. \(2009\)](#). Results from this study indicated that leaders' displays of anger as well as happiness can increase team performance, but under different circumstances. Teams consisting of members with high dispositional information processing motivation performed better when the leader expressed anger, whereas teams composed of members with low information processing motivation performed better when the leader expressed happiness. In line with EASI theory, performance effects in teams high on information processing were mediated by inferential processes (i.e., inferences about performance quality), whereas effects in teams low on information processing were mediated by affective reactions (i.e., positive vs. negative emotions and liking of the leader).

Although this review is far from comprehensive (for a more extensive discussion see [Gooty et al., 2010](#)), the general pattern that seems to emerge from research in this area is that expressions of happiness enhance followers' task performance to the degree that the expressions elicit positive affective reactions (i.e., positive emotions, increased liking) in followers; conversely, leaders' expressions of happiness undermine followers' performance to the degree that followers infer from the leader's happiness that no additional effort is needed to meet organizational goals. Leaders' expressions of anger, in turn, appear to enhance followers' performance to the degree that followers deduce from the leader's anger that their performance was insufficient; conversely, leaders' expressions of anger undermine followers' performance to the degree that they elicit negative affective reactions (i.e., negative emotions, reduced liking) in followers ([Van Kleef, 2014](#)). Next we consider the implications of this emerging pattern for understanding the effects of leaders' emotional displays on followers' OCB.

Leader emotion and follower OCB

So far research has demonstrated that leaders' expressions of anger can be effective in increasing followers' in-role performance to the degree that they trigger inferential processes. When anger triggered negative affective reactions, it lowered performance. EASI theory posits that such negative affective reactions are more potent when the anger display is perceived as inappropriate ([Van Kleef et al., 2012](#)). Combining these insights with the voluntary nature of OCB, we propose that leaders' expressions of anger are likely to undermine followers' OCB. While anger might be relatively appropriate when emphasizing legitimate demands for adequate job-prescribed task performance, it would seem less fitting in the context of voluntary behaviors such as OCB. When expressed in such a context, a leader's anger may therefore trigger strong negative affective reactions in followers due to the perceived inappropriateness of the anger display.

These negative affective reactions may in turn lower followers' willingness to perform OCB. Indeed, research shows that OCB is positively correlated with the experience of positive affect (e.g., [Clark & Isen, 1982](#); [Isen & Baron, 1991](#); [Lee & Allen, 2002](#); [Miles, Borman, Spector, & Fox, 2002](#); [Spector & Fox, 2002](#)). For example, [Lee and Allen \(2002\)](#) studied the relationship between cognition, affect, and various forms of OCB. Their results indicate that employee affect is indeed associated with OCB, especially OCB directed at other individuals within the organization. This research thus suggests that affective states shape intentions to perform OCB.

As discussed above, leaders displaying anger may lower the positive affect of their employees or even instill negative affect through emotional contagion (e.g., [Sy et al., 2005](#)). This negative affect may in turn decrease the employee's motivation to perform OCB. Moreover, if we consider OCB a form of prosocial behavior, anger may also have an impact through interpersonal liking. Past research has documented a positive correlation between liking and prosocial behavior (e.g., [Clark, Pataki, & Carver, 1996](#)). If employees dislike an angry leader, they may be less willing to perform prosocial behaviors (such as OCB) on behalf of that leader.

Present research

Based on the foregoing analysis, we hypothesized that displays of anger on the part of a leader decrease followers' intentions to perform OCB compared to displays of happiness. Furthermore, we expected the negative consequences of anger expressions for

OCB to be enhanced when followers perceive the anger as inappropriate given the situation. To test these hypotheses, we conducted two studies. The first was a scenario study among employees of various companies. In this study, we described a leader displaying either anger or happiness towards an employee (the participant). We expected that displays of anger on the part of the leader would lower respondents' intentions to perform OCB compared to displays of happiness. Furthermore, we expected the negative consequences of anger to be enhanced when the anger was perceived as inappropriate given the situation. The second study was a laboratory experiment in which we measured actual behavior. Participants performed a computer task and afterwards received feedback in either an angry or a happy tone. We then measured how long participants worked overtime on the same task as a measure of OCB. We expected participants to work longer for a happy as opposed to an angry leader, and we expected this difference to be larger when the anger was perceived as inappropriate in light of the participant's performance of the task.

Study 1: scenario

Method

Participants and design

This study used a 2 (leader's expressed emotion: anger vs. happiness) by 2 (appropriateness: appropriate vs. inappropriate) between-subjects factorial design. Ninety-two Dutch commuters participated in trains during rush hours (57 men, 35 women; mean age = 37.50, $SD = 14.14$). Fifty-two participants (56.5%) indicated that they worked for large companies (100 employees or more), while 32 (34.8%) worked for medium-sized companies (10 to 100 employees) and 7 (7.6%) for small companies (10 employees or less). One participant (1.1%) did not answer the question. Forty participants (43.5%) had worked for the same company for more than 5 years, 30 participants (38%) between 1 and 5 years, and 15 (16.3%) for less than a year. Two participants (2.2%) did not answer the question. Thirty-six participants (39.1%) indicated that they held leadership positions.

Procedure

Participants were asked to imagine themselves in a scenario in which they were an employee in a medium-sized company. Participants read that they had worked for the company for several years. Next they learned that they had just completed a project together with a team of coworkers. All team members had been jointly responsible for the project, but the effort team members had put in the project had varied. Half of the participants read that, compared to the other team members, they had put *more* effort into the project. The other half of the participants read that they had put in *less* effort than the other team members. This manipulation of the participant's contribution to the team's performance was used to create differential perceptions of appropriateness of the leader's emotional expressions (see below).

Participants then learned that the project had either been a success or a failure, and accordingly, that the leader was happy or angry about the team's performance. Participants read that the leader came up to them personally the next day to evaluate their role in the team project. Half of the participants read that the leader entered the room with an angry face, shouted that he was very angry at them for letting the project fail, and slammed the door while leaving the room. The other half of the participants read that the leader looked happy when he entered the room, said that he was very pleased with them for making the project a success, and left the room with a smile on his face.

The appropriateness of the leader's emotional expression depended on both the amount of effort the participant had put into the project and the leader's emotional expression. That is, expressions of anger on the part of the leader would be rather inappropriate if the participant had put in more effort than the rest of the team, whereas the leader's anger would be relatively appropriate in the condition in which the participant had put in less effort than the rest of the team. The other way around, the leader's expressions of happiness would be appropriate in case the participant had put in a lot of effort, but relatively inappropriate in case the participant had put in little effort.

After participants had read the scenario, we measured their intentions to perform OCB using an 8-item questionnaire. The items reflected different aspects involved in OCB, as outlined in the overview by Coleman and Borman (2000). Because the survey was conducted in the train during rush hours, we tried to keep the questionnaire as short as possible. The reliability of the eight-item questionnaire was good (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$). The scale contained items measuring to what extent participants would help other employees by taking over their tasks, keep up with developments in the company, and voluntarily promote the company. Participants indicated their intentions to perform these behaviors on rating scales ranging from 1 (*would not perform the behavior*) to 7 (*would perform the behavior*).

To tap into interpersonal affective processes, we measured whether the leader's anger triggered reciprocal anger in participants. We asked participants to what extent they would experience anger in the situation described by the vignette. Participants rated their anger on a scale ranging from 1 (*would not experience anger*) to 7 (*would experience anger*). We also measured whether participants would feel pride or shame. Although we had no a priori hypotheses as to how these emotions might influence OCB, they are related to performance and may also be affected by the leader's emotions. We therefore included these emotions for exploratory purposes.

Finally, we used two manipulation checks to assess whether participants had understood which emotion the leader had expressed and whether they had put in more or less effort than the rest of their team. Both items were dichotomous choices between happy or angry and between more or less effort, respectively. We also had an item measuring whether the conditions indeed differed in terms of *perceived* appropriateness. To tap into perceived appropriateness, we asked participants to what extent they considered the leader's reaction appropriate. Answers were recorded on a scale ranging from 1 (*inappropriate*) to 7 (*appropriate*).

Results

Manipulation checks

Out of 92 participants, 87 (95%) correctly indicated which emotion the leader had displayed. In addition, 83 participants (90%) correctly indicated whether they had put in more or less effort than the rest of the team. Overall, these results indicate that the scenario was understood as intended. Removing participants who answered these items incorrectly did not yield a different pattern of results. Therefore we decided to retain all participants in the analyses to maximize statistical power.

Perceived appropriateness

A two-way ANOVA showed that appropriate anger ($M = 4.88, SD = 2.05$) and happiness ($M = 5.16, SD = 1.43$) were perceived as more appropriate than inappropriate anger ($M = 2.93, SD = 1.78$) and happiness ($M = 3.43, SD = 1.81$), $F(1, 88) = 34.10, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .28$.

OCB

Results showed an interaction of displayed emotion and appropriateness on intentions to perform OCB, $F(1, 88) = 6.31, p = .014, \eta_p^2 = .07$. Simple effects showed that when the leader was happy, it did not matter whether the emotion was perceived as appropriate ($M = 4.60, SD = 0.97$) or inappropriate ($M = 4.70, SD = 0.86$), $F(1, 88) = 0.16, p = .692, \eta_p^2 = .00$. When the leader was angry, however, inappropriate anger led to a decrease in willingness to perform OCB ($M = 3.93, SD = 1.17$) compared to appropriate anger ($M = 4.80, SD = 0.68$), $F(1, 88) = 9.57, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .10$. The interaction is graphically displayed in Fig. 1.

Reported emotions

Two-way ANOVAs were used to analyze the emotions participants reported. Although main effects for both displayed emotion and appropriateness were found, these were all qualified by strong interaction effects. Interaction effects were found for anger ($F[1, 88] = 10.14, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .10$), shame ($F[1, 88] = 62.30, p = .000, \eta_p^2 = .42$) and pride ($F[1, 88] = 19.58, p = .000, \eta_p^2 = .18$). The interaction patterns are displayed in Fig. 2.

We used simple effects analyses to decompose these interaction patterns. Participants reported that they would feel more anger when confronted with a leader displaying inappropriate anger ($M = 4.90, SD = 2.08$) rather than appropriate anger ($M = 2.92, SD = 1.64$), $F(1, 88) = 19.18, p = .000, \eta_p^2 = .18$. Participants reported equally low levels of anger when the leader displayed appropriate ($M = 1.88, SD = 1.17$) or inappropriate happiness ($M = 1.87, SD = 0.97$), $F(1, 88) = 0.00, p = .981, \eta_p^2 = .00$.

Furthermore, participants reported that they would feel more shame when the leader's anger was appropriate ($M = 5.38, SD = 1.66$) rather than inappropriate ($M = 2.15, SD = 1.39$), $F(1, 88) = 46.71, p = .000, \eta_p^2 = .35$. Interestingly, participants also reported greater levels of shame when the leader displayed inappropriate happiness ($M = 4.04, SD = 1.58$) compared to appropriate happiness ($M = 2.12, SD = 1.56$), $F(1, 88) = 18.25, p = .000, \eta_p^2 = .17$.

Finally, participants reported that they would feel more pride when the leader displayed appropriate happiness ($M = 5.48, SD = 1.53$) compared to inappropriate happiness ($M = 3.26, SD = 1.57$), $F(1, 88) = 33.19, p = .000, \eta_p^2 = .27$. When the leader displayed anger, participants reported equally low levels of pride regardless of whether the anger was appropriate ($M = 1.50, SD = 0.83$) or inappropriate ($M = 1.75, SD = 1.25$), $F(1, 88) = 0.38, p = .537, \eta_p^2 = .00$.

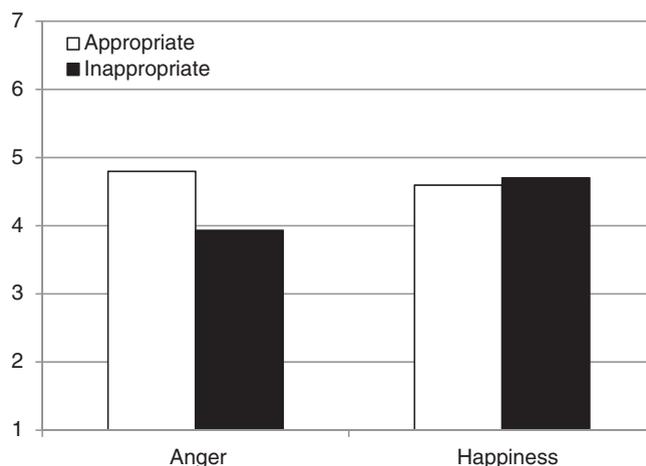


Fig. 1. Intention to perform OCB as a function of the leader's emotional expression and perceived appropriateness.

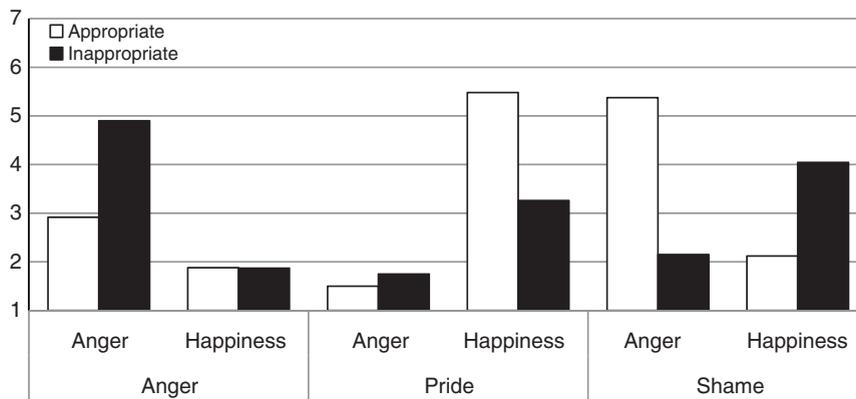


Fig. 2. Experienced anger, pride, and shame as a function of the leader's emotional expression and perceived appropriateness.

Discussion

This study provides initial evidence that leaders' expressions of anger may undermine followers' intentions to engage in OCB. This was especially the case when the leader's anger was perceived as inappropriate given the situation (i.e., when the participant had put a lot of effort into a team project). Furthermore, interesting patterns emerged on the emotions that participants reported they would feel in the various scenarios. Compared to the other conditions, inappropriate displays of anger by the leader triggered the highest levels of (reciprocal) anger in participants. This finding corroborates EASI theory's assertion that expressions of anger are more likely to trigger negative affective reactions when they are perceived as inappropriate. Interestingly, participants further reported that they would feel more shame when the leader displayed appropriate rather than inappropriate anger. Conversely, participants reported more shame when the leader expressed inappropriate rather than appropriate happiness. Finally, pride was felt most strongly when the leader displayed appropriate happiness compared to all other conditions.

Although this first study showed promising support for our hypotheses, two limitations preclude definitive conclusions. First, the work setting in Study 1 was imagined rather than real, and accordingly, the study did not involve actual behavior. Second, the leader's emotional expressions in Study 1 were tied to the success of the project. Although this choice increased the ecological validity of the study, it may have undermined the study's internal validity. We remedied these limitations in Study 2. In this study, we simulated a work setting in the laboratory. Participants performed a computer task and received emotional feedback from a leader. The content of this feedback was kept constant across conditions and only the emotional tone was varied. As a behavioral measure, we recorded how much (voluntary) overtime participants spent on the task. Although we are aware that OCB is a multifaceted construct, we focused on putting in extra time – thus helping the leader – as our main dependent variable. Working overtime and thereby helping the organization (or others within the organization) is considered central to OCB (e.g., Bateman & Organ, 1983; Organ, 1988; Organ & Paine, 1999). It also symbolizes the trade-off for employees who do something for the company at their own expense. By voluntarily working overtime, participants sacrificed some of their own time while not being rewarded for it. Finally, the amount of extra time spent on the task afforded a clean and objective behavioral measure that has ecological validity within the laboratory setting.

In line with our first study, we expected that expressions of anger on the part of a leader would decrease the amount of time participants worked voluntarily, especially if the leader's anger would be perceived as inappropriate. For happiness we expected no effects of appropriateness on how much extra time the participants put into the task. To shed more light on the processes underlying the effects of the leader's emotional expressions on OCB, we also measured liking of the leader. We expected that the leader's emotional expression and the appropriateness of the expression would jointly influence liking. Specifically, we expected liking for the leader to be the lowest when participants were confronted with inappropriate anger. We expected changes in liking to be carried over onto motivation and finally OCB. Fig. 3 depicts this hypothesized model.

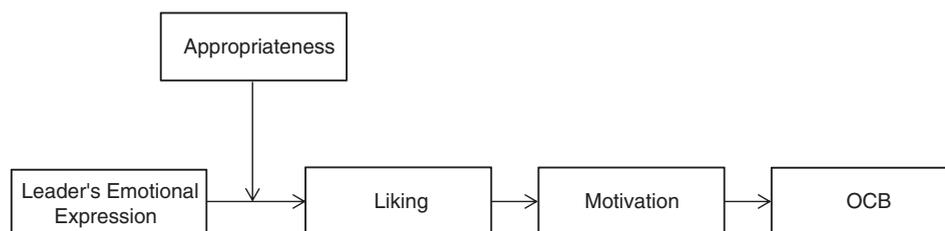


Fig. 3. A model of the influence of leaders' emotional expressions and appropriateness on followers' OCB through followers' liking of the leader and motivation.

Study 2: laboratory experiment

Method

Participants and design

This study used a 2 (leader's expressed emotion: anger vs. happiness) by 2 (appropriateness: appropriate vs. inappropriate) between-subjects factorial design. Eighty-seven students participated (21 men, 66 women; mean age = 20.70, $SD = 2.83$).

Procedure

Upon entering the laboratory, participants were seated in separate cubicles with a computer. They were told that their computer was linked to the computer of another person participating in the experiment. Participants learned that they would perform a task during the experiment, which consisted of putting cookies into boxes. We then told participants that the other person would be their leader, monitoring their performance and providing feedback. From then on, we referred to the participant as "employee" and to the other person as "leader". In reality, all participants were assigned to the employee role and the feedback provided by the leader was standardized.

Next, we explained that participants would receive a fixed payment for performing the packing task, just as many employees in various industries receive fixed payment. In contrast, we told participants that the leader's payment would be dependent on how many boxes they filled during the task. This payoff structure was implemented to provide a credible context for the leader's emotions (see below). It also resembled the relatively common situation in which employees receive a fixed salary while their leaders are paid according to performance (e.g., in the form of bonuses).

After the roles and payoff schemes had been explained, participants received information about the task itself. The task was newly developed by the authors and tailored specifically to the purpose of this study. The task was rather simple and involved putting cookies into boxes, resembling assembly-line work in a factory (see Fig. 4 for a screenshot of the task). Participants were presented with a 4 by 4 grid of cookies, which could be refreshed by pressing the spacebar. There were three different types of cookies and the amount of each type was randomized. Participants could click on cookies to put them in the box. Each box could hold 6 cookies in total, 2 of each type. Participants thus had to click on the correct type of cookie to fill the box. When the box was full, it was automatically replaced by an empty one and the process would start over. The goal of the task was to fill as many boxes as possible.

After explaining the task, participants were allowed to practice on it for 3 min. During this practice round, the number of boxes the participant filled was measured. After the practice round had ended, we told participants that we compared the number of boxes to the average stored in a database. Participants saw that they had performed either above or below average.

Next, participants received feedback from the leader in the form of a written message sent by the leader via the computer connection. This feedback was delivered in either a happy or an angry tone, with the content of the feedback being held constant. Participants in all conditions read that the leader had looked at their results and thought the participant could have done better. He then proceeded to give some tips to increase performance on the task (i.e., to click as fast as possible and to refresh the grid frequently). Finally, depending on condition the leader indicated that he was either happy or angry and urged the participant to do their best. Similar verbal emotional expressions have been successfully employed in previous research (e.g., [Friedman et al., 2004](#); [Heerdink, Van Kleef, Homan, & Fischer, 2013](#); [Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006](#); [Van Kleef et al., 2004](#)), and they have been shown to have similar effects as nonverbal emotional displays (e.g., [Heerdink et al., 2013](#); [Sinaceur & Tiedens, 2006](#); [Wang, Northcraft, & Van Kleef, 2012](#)).

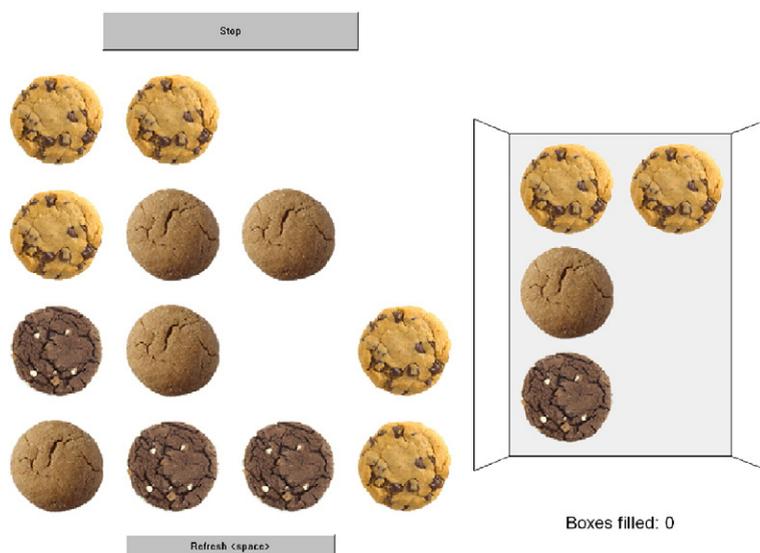


Fig. 4. Screenshot of the computer task employed in Study 2.

Depending on whether the participant had performed below or above average, the leader's anger or happiness could be construed as either appropriate or inappropriate. That is, the leader's anger could be perceived as rather inappropriate when the participant had performed above average, but as relatively appropriate when the participant had performed below average. Conversely, the leader's happiness would be appropriate when the participant had performed above average, but inappropriate when the participant had performed below average.

After receiving the feedback, participants were again presented with the task of putting cookies into boxes. However, this time they could continue with the task for as long as they wanted. After 3 min, a stop button appeared on the screen that participants could use to exit the task. The number of boxes participants filled and the amount of time they spent on the task during this voluntary extra time were used as indices of OCB.

After participants stopped the task, we assessed how appropriate they considered the emotional expressions of the leader. We asked participants whether the leader's reaction was appropriate, just, and understandable, and whether they agreed with the leader's reaction. The scores of the individual items were averaged into a scale with excellent reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .91), which ranged from 1 (*feedback inappropriate*) to 7 (*feedback appropriate*). Furthermore, we measured whether the leader's reaction had an impact on the participants' motivation to work on the task by asking them whether they had tried harder as a result of the leader's reaction. Finally, we included items tapping into affective reactions to the leader's emotional display. One item measured whether participants liked the leader and another measured whether participants felt angry as a result of the leader's feedback. All items were answered on seven-point rating scales ranging from 1 (*certainly not*) to 7 (*certainly*).

Results

Manipulation checks

Out of 87 participants, 78 (90%) correctly indicated which emotion the leader had displayed. In addition, 81 participants (93%) correctly indicated whether they had performed above or below average. Again, removing participants who answered these questions incorrectly did not yield a different pattern of results, and we therefore decided to retain all participants in the analyses to maximize statistical power.

Perceived appropriateness

A two-way ANOVA on perceived appropriateness showed a significant main effect of the leader's emotion, $F(1, 83) = 52.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .39$. Participants considered the leader's reaction more appropriate in the happiness conditions ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.64$) compared to the anger conditions ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 1.19$). However, this main effect was qualified by an interaction between leader emotion and appropriateness, $F(1, 83) = 21.84$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .21$. When the leader was angry, participants considered his reaction more appropriate in the appropriate condition ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.07$) than in the inappropriate condition ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 1.06$), $F(1, 83) = 7.74$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. The effect unexpectedly reversed when the leader was happy: Inappropriate happiness was perceived as more appropriate ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 1.18$) than appropriate happiness ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.71$), $F(1, 83) = 14.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$. This might be attributed to participants considering the enthusiastic reaction of the leader as extra polite when they performed subpar.

Time spent on task

A boxplot in SPSS was used to check for extreme outliers (i.e., values deviating from the mean by three times the interquartile range) in the time participants spent on the task. Three participants were identified as extreme outliers and were removed from the analysis. Next, an ANOVA was used to test for significant differences between the experimental conditions. The ANOVA showed a significant main effect of the emotion displayed by the leader, $F(1, 80) = 4.26$, $p = .042$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. More importantly, this main effect was qualified by a significant interaction between the leader's emotion and the appropriateness of that emotion, $F(1, 80) = 5.25$, $p = .025$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. Simple effects showed that participants tended to spend less time on the task when confronted with inappropriate ($M = 49.15$, $SD = 46.33$) rather than appropriate anger ($M = 108.42$, $SD = 121.94$), $F(1, 80) = 3.00$, $p = .087$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. No effect was found when participants were confronted with inappropriate ($M = 155.74$, $SD = 144.56$) or appropriate happiness ($M = 102.82$, $SD = 109.15$), $F(1, 80) = 2.29$, $p = .134$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. This effect is displayed graphically in Fig. 5a.

Boxes filled

Again a boxplot in SPSS was used to check for extreme outliers, resulting in the removal of 3 participants. An ANOVA on the number of boxes participants filled in total showed a trend for the emotion displayed by the leader, $F(1, 80) = 2.88$, $p = .094$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. More importantly, this trend was qualified by a significant interaction between the leader's emotion and the appropriateness of the emotion, $F(1, 80) = 4.56$, $p = .036$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Simple effects showed that participants filled fewer boxes when confronted with inappropriate ($M = 64.00$, $SD = 17.39$) rather than appropriate anger ($M = 87.35$, $SD = 40.81$), $F(1, 80) = 5.07$, $p = .027$, $\eta_p^2 = .060$. No effect was found when participants were confronted with inappropriate ($M = 92.79$, $SD = 32.64$) or appropriate happiness ($M = 84.05$, $SD = 40.36$), $F(1, 80) = 0.65$, $p = .424$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. This effect is displayed graphically in Fig. 5b.

Motivation

ANOVA showed an interaction of emotion and appropriateness on participants' motivation, $F(1, 83) = 19.78$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .19$. Participants indicated that the leader's anger had lowered their motivation when it was inappropriate ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.77$) compared to when it was appropriate ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.72$), $F(1, 83) = 4.78$, $p = .032$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. The reverse was true for happiness;

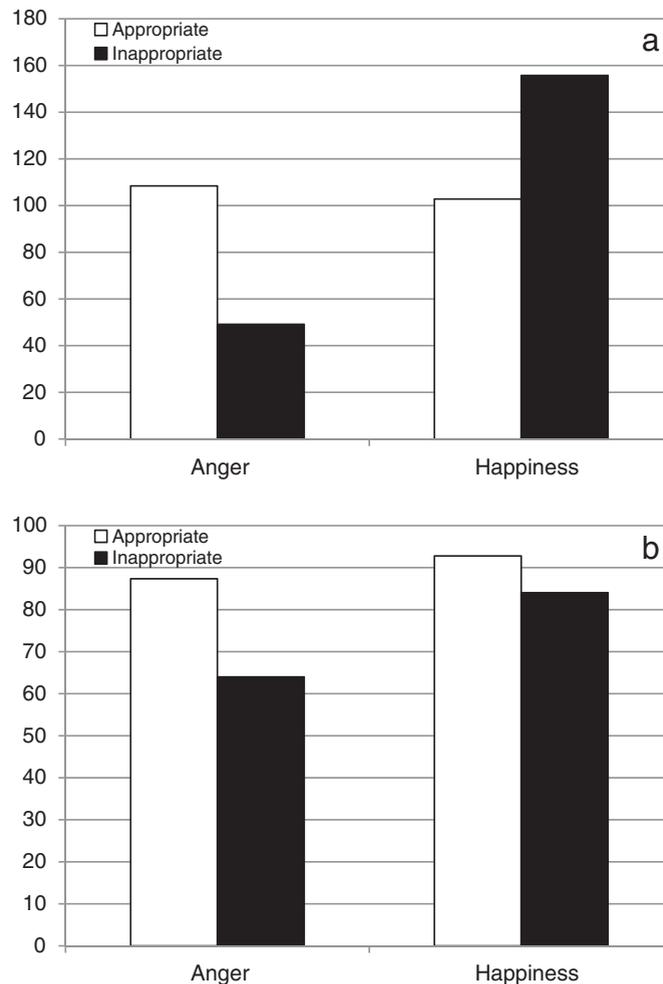


Fig. 5. a. Extra time spent on the task in seconds as a function of the leader's emotional expression and perceived appropriateness. b. Number of extra boxes filled during the task as a function of the leader's emotional expression and perceived appropriateness.

participants' motivation was raised more with inappropriate ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.22$) rather than appropriate happiness ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.66$), $F(1, 80) = 16.76$, $p = .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .17$. Perhaps participants saw the happiness as an encouragement when they performed subpar, which may have raised their motivation to perform OCB.

Using the PROCESS method described by Pollack, VanEpps, and Hayes (2012), we tested whether changes in motivation mediated the interactive effect of leader emotion and appropriateness on the time participants spent on the task. We used a bootstrap procedure with 5000 resamples to test for moderated mediation (PROCESS Model 8). Results indicated that motivation fully mediated the interactive effect of emotion and appropriateness on time spent on the task (point estimate = -90.33 , $SE = 28.21$, bias corrected 95% CI [-155.67 , -42.74]).

Liking

ANOVA showed a main effect of emotion on liking for the leader, $F(1, 83) = 94.50$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .53$. Participants liked the leader more when he was happy ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.67$) rather than angry ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 1.05$). This main effect was qualified by an interaction of emotion and appropriateness, $F(1, 83) = 8.32$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. Participants liked the leader more when he showed inappropriate happiness ($M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.03$) rather than appropriate happiness ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.86$), $F(1, 83) = 13.76$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$. The inappropriate happiness may have been seen as a kind encouragement to the participants. Unexpectedly, the means for inappropriate ($M = 1.90$, $SD = 1.26$) and appropriate anger ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 0.83$) did not differ significantly, $F(1, 83) = 0.12$, $p = .73$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$. Given the low means, this may be due to a floor-effect (i.e., participants disliked the angry leader regardless of the appropriateness of the anger).

Again using the PROCESS method (Pollack et al., 2012), we tested whether changes in liking mediated the interactive effect of leader emotion and appropriateness on participants' motivation. We used a bootstrap procedure with 5000 resamples to test for moderated mediation (PROCESS Model 8). Results indicated that liking for the leader fully mediated the interactive effect of leader emotion and appropriateness on participants' motivation (point estimate = -0.59 , $SE = 0.31$, bias corrected 95% CI [-1.37 ,

–0.11]). We performed a similar mediation analysis on the time participants spent on the task. Results showed that liking also fully mediated the interaction between leader emotion and appropriateness on time spent on the task (point estimate = –33.93, $SE = 19.71$, bias corrected 95% CI [–88.05, –6.08]).

Reciprocal anger

ANOVA showed a strong main effect of the leader's emotional expression on participants' self-reported anger, $F(1, 83) = 32.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .28$. Participants confronted with an angry leader experienced more anger ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.71$) than participants confronted with a happy leader ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 1.29$). There was no effect of appropriateness ($F[1, 83] = 0.52$, $p = .474$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$) and no interaction between appropriateness and leader emotion ($F[1, 83] = 0.48$, $p = .489$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$).

Discussion

Again our results demonstrate that the emotions of a leader can have an impact on followers' OCB, in this case measured in terms of actual behavior. Our results show that participants were less willing to invest their spare time working on a voluntary task after their leader had displayed inappropriate anger as opposed to appropriate anger or happiness. Anger thus had a clearly negative influence compared to happiness, especially so when the anger was inappropriate given the prior performance of the participant. When participants knew that they had performed above average and were then confronted with an angry leader, their levels of OCB were the lowest. For happiness no effect was found for the appropriateness of the emotion on actual behavior. However, in the post-task questionnaire some effects did appear. Motivation and liking were higher when the leader displayed happiness despite the fact that the participant performed subpar. It is possible that participants perceived the leader's happiness as a friendly encouragement in these conditions.

Unexpectedly, we did not find a difference in liking in the anger conditions; liking was low in both the appropriate and inappropriate anger conditions. Looking at the means, this could well be due to a floor effect. Perhaps the question whether they liked the leader was inadequate to measure differences in liking. Adding reverse-coded items may help combat these issues. It is also possible that effects of anger expressions on liking are so strong (see e.g., Van Kleef et al., 2009) that they are not moderated by the appropriateness of the anger. Despite this caveat, we did find moderating effects of appropriateness on motivation and actual behavior.

General discussion

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) is important for effectively running an organization. However, the voluntary nature of such behavior makes it hard to manage for organizations. Our research shows that leaders' emotional expressions can have a significant impact on OCB. Specifically, we demonstrated that leaders' expressions of anger and happiness influenced followers' willingness to engage in OCB (Study 1) as well as their actual OCB (Study 2). Two experiments (a scenario and a laboratory experiment) showed that leaders displaying anger can have a detrimental effect on OCB compared to leaders displaying happiness. Interestingly, the negative effect of anger was stronger when the anger was perceived as inappropriate given the effort (Study 1) or the performance (Study 2) of the employee. Anger thus is a tool that leaders should use carefully, because it can easily backfire. Inappropriate anger triggered reciprocal anger (Study 1) and decreased liking for the leader (Study 2). Study 2 further showed that reduced liking of the leader lowered the motivation to perform OCB on behalf of an angry leader.

These findings provide a significant contribution to the growing literature on emotions in organizations. This area of research is expanding rapidly, and some have even labeled it an "affective revolution" in organizational science (Barsade, Brief, & Spataro, 2003, see also Côté & Hideg, 2011; Elfenbein, 2007). Much of the research on emotions in organizations has focused on the intrapersonal effects of emotions, that is, how one's own affective state influences one's attitudes and work performance. More recently, scholars have begun to unravel the interpersonal effects of emotions in organizations (for overviews, see e.g., Elfenbein, 2007; Gooty et al., 2010; Van Kleef et al., 2012). So far, studies in this area that included measures of performance have focused on in-role performance. The current research adds to this growing literature by looking at extra-role behaviors; behaviors that are voluntary in nature and that are not part of formal job descriptions or reward structures. The voluntary nature of OCB makes it difficult to require or demand it from employees. While anger has been found to be successful in increasing role-prescribed task performance under particular circumstances (e.g., Connelly & Ruark, 2010; Sy et al., 2005; Van Kleef et al., 2009), we demonstrate that it can easily backfire when it comes to voluntary behaviors such as OCB.

The current findings add to the literature on leader-member exchange (LMX). Our results show that the relationship between leaders and their followers is crucial for OCB. Building rapport with followers is an essential component in promoting OCB (e.g., Deluga, 1998; Podsakoff et al., 2000), and emotions may play a pivotal role in building such rapport. Research has demonstrated that leaders' expressions of anger may increase followers' perceptions of the leader and performance on the job (e.g., Connelly & Ruark, 2010; Sy et al., 2005; Van Kleef et al., 2009; Waples & Connelly, 2008). For example, Waples and Connelly (2008) demonstrated that leaders' emotional expressions influenced the extent to which their leadership was perceived as 'transformational.' Moreover, they demonstrated that anger may help leaders implement a vision and increase task performance related to this vision. However, this was only the case when the anger was not directed at the employee. The context in which anger is displayed may thus determine which motivational or affective consequences it has. Anger expressions can easily hurt leader-follower relationships, as the present studies also demonstrate. Our results show that this is especially the case when the anger is perceived as inappropriate. Therefore, leaders must consider which emotions followers find appropriate and in which contexts. Our findings indicate that being able to react in an emotionally appropriate manner contributes to the effectiveness of a leader in encouraging OCB.

Our findings also resonate with previous work showing that expressions of anger may be more acceptable from some types of leaders than from others. [Connelly and Ruark \(2010\)](#) demonstrated that negative emotions produced higher-quality performance for transformational leaders than for transactional leaders. They suggested that followers of transformational leaders may have performed well because they accepted negative emotional expressions as an integral part of the strategies by which transformational leaders motivate and inspire their followers. In other words, they may have perceived expressions of anger emitted by transformational leaders as more appropriate than expressions of anger emitted by transactional leaders.

Furthermore, our findings contribute to the literature on the interpersonal effects of emotions in general, and they provide support for EASI theory (e.g., [Van Kleef, 2009](#)) in particular. This model posits (among other things) that leaders' emotional displays can exert influence on followers by eliciting affective reactions in followers, such as emotional contagion and liking. Our results show that leader anger indeed triggered reciprocal anger in our participants. Moreover, participants formed a more negative impression of the leader when the leader displayed anger. This was especially so when participants perceived the anger of the leader to be inappropriate given their performance. As EASI theory would predict, inappropriate expressions of anger gave rise to stronger negative affective reactions, thereby increasing the influence of these reactions on behavior.

With regard to affective reactions, we did not find effects only for anger but also for pride and shame. Although we had no a priori hypotheses concerning these emotions, they too may have an effect on OCB. Pride might enhance the motivation to perform OCB as it is a positive emotion, and positive affect has often been found to correlate with prosocial behavior and OCB (e.g., [Belschak & Den Hartog, 2009](#); [Clark & Isen, 1982](#); [Isen & Baron, 1991](#)). When people take pride in their work, they also may be more willing to expend extra effort for the organization. On the other hand, pride might also cause people to conclude that they have done more than required and this may cause them to lower their efforts (cf. [Van Kleef et al., 2009](#)).

For shame, predictions may also diverge. On the one hand, shame is associated with behavioral intentions to withdraw from the situation ([Scherer & Wallbott, 1994](#)). Thus employees experiencing shame may want to withdraw from their workplace, possibly lowering the motivation to perform OCB. On the other hand, shame may motivate people to repair an unbalanced relationship and perform prosocial behaviors ([De Hooge, Breugelmans, & Zeelenberg, 2008](#); [Tangney, Miller, Flicker, & Barlow, 1996](#)). Therefore one could also predict that shame increases intentions to perform OCB. Employees may want to compensate for the inappropriate praise they received from their leader by putting in extra effort. If this is indeed the case, then inappropriate praise could be a pay-it-forward way of raising the motivation to perform OCB. Future research could shed more light on which processes play a role when pride and shame are triggered in response to a leader's emotional displays.

A possible limitation of the current research is that the organizational context was imagined or simulated rather than real. In both the scenario and the lab experiment, we asked participants to imagine themselves being part of a larger organization. However, their interactions (imagined in Study 1 and computer-mediated in Study 2) took place only with a leader of the organization. Although in many real organizations employees also have considerable contact with their direct supervisors, such interactions are embedded in a richer organizational context that may also influence OCB ([Organ & Paine, 1999](#); [Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1995](#); [Podsakoff et al., 2000](#)).

Another possible limitation is that Study 2 operationalized OCB in terms of working extra time on a task voluntarily. Even though working overtime is an important form of OCB, OCB can come in many other forms as well (for an overview, see [Podsakoff et al., 2000](#)). Oftentimes these behaviors also involve co-workers, such as helping someone find their way around their work place or providing advice. Furthermore, there is a distinction in the literature between OCB directed at co-workers or other individuals (OCBI) and OCB directed at the organization as a whole (OCBO; see e.g., [Lee & Allen, 2002](#)). It would be interesting to test whether leaders' emotional expressions have similar or differential effects on these two types of OCB.

Both limitations mentioned above stem from the fact that we relied on experimental designs for testing our hypotheses. In leadership research, field and laboratory experiments are relatively uncommon compared to field surveys. However, experiments have the advantage that they allow for more rigorous testing of causal relationships. This is why [Gardner, Lowe, Moss, Mahoney, and Cogliser \(2010\)](#); see also [Lowe & Gardner \(2000\)](#) encourage the use of experimental designs in this particular field of research. Given that our hypotheses imply causal relationships, experimental designs were especially suitable for the present purposes.

Despite the advantages of using an experimental setup, questions regarding the external validity of our findings may arise. As [Mook \(1983\)](#) argues, one may wonder whether experimental settings generalize to realistic settings. However, experiments are primarily constructed to enhance understanding of theoretical relationships. Our hypotheses were thoroughly grounded in theory about the interpersonal effects of emotions, which has received extensive support in both experimental and field research. We see no reasons to assume that the theoretical relationships hypothesized and tested in our experiments would not generalize to more realistic settings. As [Driskell and Salas \(1992, p. 113\)](#) also note, "experimental research is generalized on the basis of the theoretical relationships that are tested, not through the concrete results of a single study." Moreover, correlations between effect sizes obtained in lab experiments and field studies (including leadership research) have been shown to be as high as .73 ([Anderson, Lindsay, & Bushman, 1999](#); see also [Anderson & Bushman, 1997](#)). This indicates that the conclusions derived from experimental studies often closely mirror those derived from field studies ([Van Knippenberg & Van Knippenberg, 2005](#)). We therefore are confident that the theoretical relationships uncovered in our experiments will generalize to other settings. Nonetheless, future research is needed to substantiate this.

To conclude, our findings provide a first step in investigating the effects of leaders' emotional expressions on followers' OCB. We demonstrated that expressions of anger may hamper the motivation to perform OCB, especially when the target of the emotion perceives the anger as inappropriate. These findings add to the growing literature on emotions in organizations ([Elfenbein, 2007](#); [Van Kleef et al., 2012](#)). It is challenging for organizations to promote OCB given its voluntary nature. We showed that leaders' emotions may play a significant role in encouraging or discouraging OCB and we identified an important moderator, namely the perceived appropriateness of the emotional display. Leaders displaying inappropriate anger had the most negative impact on the motivation to perform OCB. Anger is a motivational tool that leaders should use with great care.

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