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IMPACT OF COLLECTIVE AFFECT ON EMPLOYEE VOICE AT ONSET OF CRISIS: A SOCIAL IDENTITY PERSPECTIVE

Employee voice—raising concerns and constructive suggestions for improvement of organizational processes (Detert, Burris, Harrison, & Martin, 2013; Morrison, 2011; Satterstrom, Kerrissey, and DiBenigno, 2021)—is a proactive prosocial behavior, where individuals go above and beyond their call of duty to express ideas that will likely benefit their group. Voice is beneficial for work units and organizations, because individuals working on the front lines often see problems and solutions that are not immediately evident to their managers (Detert et al., 2013). As voice is typically aimed to benefit groups (teams, departments, and organizations) rather than just the individual speaking up, voice climate (Morrison, Wheeler-Smith, & Kamdar, 2011) and psychological safety within the group (Detert & Burris, 2007) are important factors that motivate individuals to speak up. Yet, while prior research has focused on these cognitive factors that inform voicers' cost-benefit calculus of whether or not to speak up, emotional aspects in the broader context remain underexplored (Bashshur & Oc, 2015; Kish-Gephart, Detert, Treviño, & Edmondson, 2009). Furthermore, most voice research examines voice in relatively stable organizational conditions (Morrison, 2011). In crisis contexts characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity (James & Wooten, 2005; 2010; Pearson & Clair, 1998), the cost-benefit analysis about whether to speak up or not becomes more complex. In such contexts, we argue that individuals are bound to rely ever more on emotional cues from their relational contexts to decide whether to speak up or not. Therefore, in this paper, we examine how employee voice behavior changes before and upon the onset of a crisis, and how employees perceptions of their immediate emotional context influence their voice behavior during the crisis.

Prior voice research has predominantly focused on factors that influence voice behaviors in relatively stable organizational contexts (Morrison, 2011; 2014). Whether and

how employee voice changes during crisis, and how to facilitate or increase voice behaviors in this context, thus remains unclear. On one hand, crisis situations could lead to frustrations and issues pertaining to resource constraints or crisis-induced problems being voiced by employees. Crises typically require immediate corrective actions in organizations (James & Wooten, 2010). This sense of urgency could create a need for solutions from employees, which may motivate employees to generate new ideas (De Dreu, Baas, & Nijstad, 2008; Gutnick, Walter, Nijstad, & De Dreu, 2012). In turn, employees may have more reasons to voice their suggestions about such responses and actions. However, a crisis could also render work environments uncertain, thereby making employees second-guess whether the time is right to speak up with problems or suggestions to their superiors. Crises induce fear and threat, which have been shown to reduce voice behaviors in organizations (Burris, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008; Morrison & Milliken, 2000), thus potentially lowering voice. In this paper, we systematically study employee voice behaviors over time, and how voice levels are impacted by the sudden onset of an exogenous crisis.

A crisis is a rare, significant, "acute, public, and arduous threat to an organization and its stakeholders" (James & Wooten, 2010; König, Graf-Vlachy, Bundy, & Little, 2020: 130). Compared to localized accidents (Madsen, 2009) or bankruptcy (Crosina and Pratt, 2019) which typically affect a particular department or organization, exogenous (macro-organizational) crises stem from the broader environment that organizations operate in, including natural disasters (Tilcsik and Marquis, 2013), socio-political events (Meyer, 1982), and economic crises (Stoker, Garretsen, and Soudis, 2019; Ünal-Karagüven, 2009). Such macro-organizational crises stem from sources external to the organization, are often beyond organizational control (Coombs and Holladay, 1996; James, Wooten, and Dushek, 2011), and tend to have a more widespread impact on multiple organizations and their employees, thus warranting specific inquiry (Lee, G. K., Lampel, and Shapira, 2020). The *onset* of such crises

bears particular significance (Pearson and Clair, 1998) as it can restrict cognition and enhance anxiety among employees (Bundy, Pfarrer, Short, & Coombs, 2017; König et al., 2020; Staw, Sandelands, and Dutton, 1981). Prior research has examined how leadership behaviors that are important during crises are impacted by the onset of such crises (Chattopadhyay, Glick, and Huber 2001; Lee, T. C., 2020; Shimizu, 2007; Stoker et al., 2019). Yet, an understanding of how crises impact a bottom-up behaviors such as employee voice that can be particularly relevant for managing such crises is harder to come by. Examining employee voice upon crisis onset is important for two reasons.

First, crisis management research in organizations provides indications that the typical outcomes of employee voice such as better decision-making (Sherf, Sinha, Tangirala, & Awasty, 2018), innovation (Detert et al., 2013) and learning (Brykman and King, 2021) are helpful, if not essential, for organizations to stay resilient and recover from crises (Roberts, 1990; Williams, Gruber, Sutcliffe, Shepherd, & Zhao, 2017). Voice can be helpful because subordinates may view problems and possess perspectives that are obscured when viewed 'from the top' (Senge, 1990). Thus, voice could help ensure smooth transitions, as well as effective troubleshooting to improve the quality of learning and decision-making (Milliken, Morrison, and Hewlin, 2003) during crises. Second, crisis research also suggests that the onset of crisis could affect emotions and cognitions that, in turn, have been traditionally known to influence employee voice. Specifically, threat rigidity results in increased anxiety and reduced cognitive capacity (Meuris and Leana, 2018; Staw et al., 1981), both of which are likely to influence employees' propensity to proactively engage in voice behaviors. Therefore, it is critical to study how voice is affected upon crisis onset, as well as what organizations can do to ensure employees continue voicing during crisis.

Given limits on cognitive processing that are imposed by the onset of crises (Bundy et al., 2017; Staw et al., 1981), we argue that the emotional context of crisis will set the tone for

how employees respond, overcome the crisis, and engage in recovery and learning beyond the crisis. Specific to employee voice behavior, we examine the effect of the onset of crisis on voice levels, and then examine how emotional cues from the organization about self-worth, influences voice behavior during the crisis, contingent on the magnitude of crisis experienced by the organization.

To explore these relationships, we draw from and integrate multiple theoretical perspectives. First, given that crisis onset is threatening and anxiety-inducing to employees, we examine the consequences of crisis onset on voice behaviors invoking the threat rigidity thesis, which purports that threat from a crisis leads to anxiety and an over-reliance on habituated routines in organizations (Staw et al., 1981). Second, given the ambiguity surrounding a crisis (James et al., 2011), we draw from social identity theory which suggests that employees likely draw cues from their immediate social context about how to conduct themselves at work (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Specifically, as crises are emotionally anxiety-laden events (James et al., 2011; Staw et al., 1981), employees are likely to use emotional expressions of others to infer how they are perceived in their immediate social context (Van Kleef & Côté, 2021). In this context, we draw from research on collective affect (Barsade, 2002; Barsade & O'Neill, 2014; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000) to show how the emotional context in the organization provide individuals with a compass to ascertain their self-worth, and decide to engage in voice behaviors during a crisis. In doing so, we extend social identity research on cognitive cues to examine how emotional cues from employees' immediate group and interaction partners determine their own standing—i.e., how respected they feel by their colleagues—in their group, and accordingly regulate their group-oriented behaviors (Bartel, Wrzesniewksi, & Wiesenfeld, 2012; Rogers & Ashforth, 2014; Tyler & Blader, 2002). Finally, given that not all organization are affected to the same extent during a crisis, we draw from social identity research on distancing from groups after a failure

(Snyder, Lassegard, & Ford, 1986) to show how the relationships we examine are contingent on opportunities available to the organization during the crisis.

We are among the first studies to systematically study voice behaviors among employees over time, and how a sudden event—the onset of a crisis (Pearson & Clair, 1998)—affects voice behaviors. By integrating social identity theory (Ashforth et al., 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tyler & Blader, 2002) with crisis research (James et al., 2011) and the threat rigidity perspective (Staw et al., 1981), we advance a relational perspective of employee voice behaviors in uncertain organizational contexts. Furthermore, while the social identity theory perspective on respect has hitherto examined the cognitive antecedents of perceived respect (Bartel et al., 2012), we demonstrate in our research that, during crisis that can be cognitively debilitating, factors in the emotional context of the employee (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000)—specifically, positive collective affect—have the potential to influence felt respect, and therefore influence proactive voice behaviors. We further extend social identity research on distancing from groups after negative events (Snyder et al., 1986), by examining the implications of an impending negative future (i.e., lower opportunity) for the organization to which employees belong. Our study also has practical implications for organizations navigating a crisis for how they can continue to encourage employee voice, which could help build resilience during and after crisis.

IMPACT OF CRISIS ONSET ON EMPLOYEE VOICE

Threat Rigidity during Crisis

Research on crises and crisis management in organizations have shown that an unanticipated external event can have significant effects within organizations (Pearson and Clair, 1998; James et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2017). Such events could involve direct physical destruction of organizational property, infrastructure, or product lines, as well as have a psychological effect on its employees (Pearson and Clair, 1998). A crisis is typically

characterized by a collapse of an existing social order (Habermas, 1975), resulting in a breakdown of the collective social construction of reality (Turner, 1976), thereby forcing employees to rethink the way they conduct themselves in organizations (Pearson and Clair, 1998). Crises are importantly distinct from routine business problems in that crises are "deviant events" that entail high levels of ambiguity and high stakes and elicit urgent emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses from organizational leaders (James and Wooten, 2010; James et al., 2011).

Specifically, the *onset* of a crisis is likely to be an anxiety-inducing event akin to suddenly turning a switch on or off in a dark room, thereby forcing individuals in the context to react immediately to the abrupt change. While a crisis can be conceptualized as an ongoing series of events or processes (Williams et al., 2017), there is typically a triggering point which forces organizations and individuals to stop and take notice of the crisis or the changing social order, and therefore respond to it (Pearson and Clair, 1998). The onset of a crisis brings about unpredictability (Mark and Mellor, 1991) and confusion (Weick, 1990; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010), and leads to "strong negative emotions such as anxiety, panic, and distress" among employees (König et al., 2020; p. 131). In their study of working professionals in Singapore at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chong, Huang, and Chang (2020) showed that daily COVID-19 related setbacks resulted in emotional exhaustion among employees. The onset of a crisis could also be accompanied by events such as destruction of personal property or the loss of life of dear ones, which can cause pain, helplessness, and despair (Brockner and James, 2008; Dutton et al., 2002b; James et al., 2011). Thus, the onset of a crisis could be directly personally threatening.

Even if not directly related to an organization or its employees, a crisis could have psychological implications for employees due to the permeability of work and personal lives (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Leigh and Melwani, 2019). For example, police brutality events

against Black Americans in the external community had spillover psychological effects such as perceived identity threat and reduced mental well-being on Black American employees (Bor, Venkataramani, Williams, & Tsai, 2018; Leigh & Melwani, 2019). The psychological effects of a crisis on individuals in organizations is succinctly captured by the threat rigidity thesis, which asserts that individuals (and organizations) who perceive threat from a crisis will rely on prior hypotheses and expectations, and engage in habituated risk-averse behaviors (Sitkin and Pablo, 1992) or "well-learned, dominant responses" (Staw et al., 1981). Specifically, Staw et al. asserted that psychological stress and anxiety are direct consequences of threat stemming from a crisis, and that individuals who are put in threatening situations often respond with their most well-learned or dominant response, even if it is inadequate in adapting to the situation. This is because anxiety results in a reduction in the processing of information.

Consequently, employees, at the onset of a crisis, act conservatively and attempt to maintain more decision-making control with themselves rather than involving subordinates in their decision making. Stoker et al. (2019) showed that the 2008 financial crisis resulted in increased directive leadership among managers across a wide range of organizations around the world. Another study on Australian managers in the aftermath of the financial crisis by Muurlink and colleagues (Muurlink et al., 2012) provided qualitative evidence of "managerial autism", where managers displayed an inward focus and a tendency to repeat known responses and actions. Muurlink et al. also observed that managers' recursive and conservative actions during the crisis produced more strain for themselves and their employees, thereby resulting in a reinforcing cycle of threat rigidity and psychological strain. While the specific outcomes examined in this domain pertain to those in managerial positions and top-down processes such as managerial decision-making (Chattopadhyay et al., 2001; Lee, T. C., 2020; Muurlink et al., 2012; Shimizu, 2007) or leadership styles (Stoker et al.,

2019), we argue that the emotional and cognitive mechanisms due to threat rigidity are likely to affect non-managerial employees and bottom-up processes as well. For example, threat from the onset of crisis could lead to feelings of precarity among employees, which is typically associated with higher anxiety and lower cognitive capacity (Haushofer and Fehr, 2014; Meuris and Leana, 2018). We build on these findings to examine how the onset of crisis influences a specific bottom-up proactive behavior—voice—among employees.

Decline in Employee Voice at Crisis Onset: A Threat Rigidity Perspective

Employee voice is defined as the discretionary and proactive provision of improvement-oriented input aimed at bringing about change in the status quo and directed at someone in the organization with the authority to act (Detert and Burris, 2007; Van Dyne and LePine, 1998). Employees typically voice suggestions to introduce new procedures (Liang, Farh, and Farh, 2012; Satterstrom et al., 2021), or highlight problems, frustrations, or the need for additional resources (Detert et al., 2013). They use cues from their organizational context to "read the wind" (Dutton et al., 1997; Kish-Gephart et al., 2009), or in other words, conduct a cost-benefit analysis before deciding to speak up (Detert and Edmondson, 2011). Employees speak up when they feel efficacy in speaking up, or in other words, that their voice will be heard and could make a difference to their team or organization (Morrison et al., 2011; Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2012). If they are not confident about their opinions being valued by their peers or superiors, employees consider voice to be futile (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Dutton et al., 1997; Dutton et al., 2002a). Confidence about their voice being heard increases employees' approach tendencies and their likelihood of engaging in voice behaviors (Carver and White, 1994; Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson, 2003). Conversely, fear of retaliation from an abusive or unjust manager has been shown to discourage individuals from speaking up (Burris, Detert, and Chiaburu, 2008; Peng, Schaubroeck, Chong, & Li, 2019; Satterstrom et al., 2021; Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008).

However, the effects of factors in the broader social context on employee voice behaviors are unclear, despite calls for such inquiry (Bashshur and Oc, 2015; Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). We argue that beyond the relational factors in the proximal context that inhibit voice such as threat of retaliation from managers, the onset of a crisis is likely to significantly impact employees' propensity to generate ideas and engage in voice behavior.

The onset of crisis could prompt employees to take notice of problems with sudden changes in their organizational processes. Research on creativity has shown that even employees who experience negative emotions, including anxiety, generate creative ideas through more deliberate effort (De Dreu et al., 2008). Ostensibly, the urgency in crisis situations can motivate employees to invest effort in identifying solutions to their ongoing problems (Gutnick et al., 2012). Yet, despite being motivated to generate ideas in times of crisis, we argue that employees may still struggle to speak up with those ideas during the crisis to their managers. Voice involves not just the generation of ideas and suggestions but also the expression thereof to someone with a perceived authority to act (Morrison, 2011). We argue that the uncertainty experienced at the onset of a crisis around managers' adverse reactions is likely to reduce employees' propensity to speak up.

When experiencing threat from a crisis, managers become more controlling and restrictive, and resistant to divergent inputs (Byrne et al., 2014; Stoker et al., 2019). In this context, we argue that employees find it challenging to assess situations that may be conducive for them to speak up. In their qualitative research on the prolonged Greek economic crisis, Prouska and Psychogios (2018) described this phenomenon as "diffident silence", i.e., being uncertain about the situation in which to speak up with improvement-oriented voice. Thus, during times of crisis, employees are diffident about their managers' reactions to voice and likely fear negative evaluation from them. Thus, even if employees have problems or solutions to voice to their managers, the uncertainty around speaking up

implies a reduction in voice behaviors upon crisis onset (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009; Milliken, Morrison, and Hewlin, 2003; Morrison and Milliken, 2000). For example, Livanos and Zangelidis (2013) showed that threat could lead to employees under-reporting accidents and errors due to their urge to safeguard their reputation in the eyes of their manager. Taken together, we hypothesize that at the onset of the crisis, employees will be less able and willing, and therefore less likely than before to engage in voice behavior.

Further, given that the onset of crisis is a specific point in time, we adopt a dynamic perspective to examining patterns of longitudinal change in employee voice (e.g., Bindl, Parker, Totterdell, & Hagger-Johnson, 2012; Ng & Feldman, 2010; Wang, 2007), before and after the onset of the crisis. Prior literature offers no clear indications of how voice is likely to change within a short span of time. No evidence exists of significant changes within a relatively short period in an employee's tenure such as a few weeks or months. There is indicative evidence from prior studies that employee voice may increase with organizational tenure (Fast, Burris, and Bartel, 2014; Liang et al., 2012), ostensibly because tenured employees are more likely to understand the context in which they operate, and are able to better gauge when to speak up. However, this gradual increase in voice with tenure is likely to happen over several years, and as a result will not be detectable within a few months. Thus, we expect voice to remain stable during the months preceding the onset of a crisis--i.e., following a horizontal *maintaining* pattern (Wang, 2007)—followed by a significant *declining* pattern in employee voice at the onset of crisis.

Hypothesis 1: Employee voice significantly declines at the onset of crisis.

PROCESS OF BUFFERING VOICE DECLINE DURING CRISIS

To understand how a reduction in employee voice at the onset of crisis can be attenuated, it becomes essential to consider how employees process cues in their immediate social context. Social identity theory suggests that employees develop an understanding of

how proximal others view them in their organization, and this understanding of their own self-worth as viewed by others is an important factor in predicting their behaviors (Tyler & Blader, 2002). Specifically, as the onset of crisis brings about anxiety and a depletion of cognitive resources (Byrne et al., 2014; Chong et al., 2020; Staw et al., 1981), we argue that cognitive cues are either unavailable or insufficient for employees to resolve the ambiguities brought about by the crisis. They therefore depend on emotional cues from their peers and supervisors (Barsade, 2020; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis, Vogus, and Lawrence, 2013), to conduct themselves according. Thus, we integrate from social identity theory (Tyler & Blader, 2002; Rogers & Ashforth, 2014), research on collective affect (Barsade and O'Neill, 2014; de Rivera and Páez, 2007), and threat rigidity thesis (Staw et al., 1981; Stoker et al., 2019) to explain how the reduction in voice behaviors upon the onset of crisis is buffered. Figure 1 depicts our conceptual model.

Positive Collective Affect Attenuates Decline in Employee Voice at Crisis Onset

In this section, we argue how emotions in the employees' immediate organizational context have the ability to buffer the reduction in employee voice upon the onset of crisis. Emotions can powerfully affect employees' sensemaking of a crisis (Maitlis et al., 2013). The onset of a crisis, in particular, acts as a triggering event (Pearson and Clair, 1998), which interrupts the flow of activities and suggests to employees that they need to take heed and make sense of the changed context (Maitlis et al., 2013). Social identity theory suggests that employees' sensemaking of their changed contexts—or their learning about how to interpret and behave in a situation—in turn, is influenced by cues from those around them (Ashforth et al., 2008). Because emotions and attitudes expressed by colleagues and managers likely inform how employees come to perceive and react to the crisis (Barsade, 2020; Maitlis et al., 2013), we argue that collective affect in the organization (Barsade and O'Neill, 2014) is bound to have an important impact on employees' behaviors, in particular, on employee

voice, at the onset of crisis. Collective affect pertains to the "behavioral norms, artifacts, and underlying values and assumptions reflecting the actual expression or suppression of discrete emotions comprising the culture, and the degree of perceived appropriateness of these emotions" (Barsade and Knight, 2015: 26). Collective affect in an organization is conveyed through non-verbal cues and behavioral norms (Barsade and O'Neill, 2014) and is evidently discernable from the emotions displayed by fellow employees and supervisors in the context (Barsade, 2002; Bartel and Saavedra, 2000). Thus, employees can readily perceive and experience collective affect in their organization during a crisis, based on the emotions they observe being displayed by their managers and colleagues.

In this research, we define an organization's collective 'positive' affect during a crisis to be characterized by organizational members' display of positive emotions such as enthusiasm, energy, calmness, and contentment, incorporating both high- and low-activated positive feelings of the affective circumplex (Russell, 1980). Despite these emotions having individual meanings, research on the cognitive social-psychology of emotions suggests that individual emotions are likely to be "parts of a whole" (Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). In this context, Shaver and colleagues (1987) proposed a multilevel categorization of emotions, where most positive emotions such as calmness, hope, and enthusiasm clustered under broader or superordinate positive-emotion constructs of joy and love. During crisis, individuals are likely to perceive collective positive affect when they see their colleagues and managers exhibit these emotions of calmness, hope, or enthusiasm.

These collective positive emotions, or collective positive affect, have been shown to relate with performance benefits for teams (Adler et al., 2021; West, Patera, & Carsten, 2009). For example, Adler and colleagues (2021) demonstrated that emotional cultures of joy and optimism enabled teams to rebound from failure. At the individual level, positive emotional culture in organizations has been shown to help employees overcome negative

feelings such as threat and anxiety that they may experience at the onset of a crisis (König et al., 2020). Research has also shown that positive emotions that are displayed by significant and proximal others, such as leaders, can result in downstream positive effects on employees' engagement in voice behaviors (Liu et al., 2015; 2017). Taken together, we argue that at the onset of crisis, positive emotions displayed by organizational members, i.e., collective positive affect helps to attenuate a likely reduction of employee voice.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between collective positive affect and post-onset change in employee voice, such that the higher the collective positive affect, the lower the reduction in employee voice at the onset of crisis.

Felt Respect as an Explanatory Mechanism for the Relationship between Collective Positive Affect and Employee Voice Decline at Crisis Onset

In this section, drawing from social identity theory, we hypothesize that felt respect is the mechanism that mediates the negative relationship between collective positive affect and post-onset reduction in employee voice. Felt respect pertains to employees' feelings of self-worth or regard as accorded to them by others in their context, such as their co-workers or supervisors. (Dutton, Debebe, & Wrzesniewski, 2016, p. 10; Rogers and Ashforth, 2014; Rogers, Corley, and Ashforth, 2017; Spears, Ellemers, Doosje, & Branscombe, 2006). Social identity theory suggests that individuals depend on cues from their immediate context to ascertain their self-worth (Tyler & Blader, 2002), and accordingly engage in proactive, prosocial behaviors (Bartel et al., 2012).

Despite the inherent role of emotions in employees' sensemaking of their social contexts (Frijda, 1986; Maitlis et al., 2013), research on respect from the social identity theory perspective has focused on cognitive and behavioral cues—i.e., employees' perceptions of others' attitudes and actions towards them (Bartel et al., 2012; Rogers & Ashforth, 201)—and not on emotional cues. In other words, employees feel respected when

their peers and supervisors treat them in accordance with how they ought to be treated (Bartel et al., 2012; Rogers & Ashforth, 2014; Tyler & Blader, 2002). For example, van Quaquebeke and Eckloff (2010) showed that individuals perceived respect when leaders treated them with trust and conferred them with responsibility for decisions. Bartel et al. (2012) suggested that employees who feel that others are confident in their abilities felt a higher sense of respect. Extending this logic, and integrating from research on social cues from emotional expressions (Heerdink, van Kleef, Homan, & Fischer, 2015), we assert that employees can develop feelings of respect based on their appraisals of others' display of positive emotions.

Individuals are capable of making self-appraisals—i.e., inferences about how they are evaluated by significant others in their organizational groups—based on emotions these significant others display (van Kleef & Coté, 2021). Specifically, Heerdink and colleagues (2015) showed that expressions of positive (negative) emotions led to employees feeling a sense of being included (rejected) in their social groups. This is because positive emotions are associated with affiliative motives. Emotions such as happiness and optimism foster a sense of companionship (Adler et al., 2021; Barsade and O'Neill, 2014). Shaver et al. (1987) showed that individuals' prototypical accounts of experiencing positive emotions of joy and love included exchanges of courtesy, friendliness, and sharing and communicating of good feelings among one another. Furthermore, Rogers and Ashforth (2014) suggested that displays of compassion from organizational members can lead to feelings of respect. Thus, we argue that positive emotions promote among employees the feeling that they have good standing in their organizational groups, resulting in a positive self-evaluation, i.e. that they are respected by others.

Felt respect in turn is likely to foster voice behaviors (Liu et al., 2015; 2017; Ng, Hsu, & Parker, 2019). The feeling of respect makes employees feel included (De Cremer, 2002) and strengthens their identification with the organization, thereby driving effort towards its

benefit (Bartel et al., 2012). Felt respect in their immediate social context drives employees to explore and experiment "with new behaviors" because they feel safe to do so (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005, p. 542). Respect fosters a sense of confidence among employees that their colleagues are genuinely interested in their inputs (Carmeli, Dutton, and Hardin, 2015), and therefore, their voice attempts will be fruitful (Ng et al., 2019). Taken together, we argue that collective positive affect in their immediate organizational environment provides employees with the notion that they are in good social standing—i.e., they are respected—among their colleagues, which in turn motivates them to continue to engage in voice behaviors.

Hypothesis 3: The negative relationship between collective positive affect and post-onset reduction in employee voice is mediated by felt respect at the onset of crisis.

Organizational Opportunity from Crisis as a Contingency of the Relationships between Collective positive affect, Felt Respect, and Employee Voice Decline at Crisis Onset

Although the onset of the crisis sends shock waves through all organizations, organizations are typically not all affected to the same extent by the crisis (Kniffin et al., 2020; Chattopadhyay et al., 2001). Indeed, some organizations may be more successful than others in identifying opportunities to better channel their resources and capabilities during crises towards business gains or an enhanced reputation or image for their organizations (Christianson, Farkas, Sutcliffe, & Weick, 2009; Dutton and Jackson, 1987; Wan & Yiu, 2009). In this section we argue that employees in organizations with fewer opportunities in the crisis context will be more sensitive to emotional cues from their work context for engaging in voice behaviors.

Some organizations survive and capitalize on the crisis situations better than others, either due to a sudden increase in demand for their products or services or merely by virtue of having better capabilities or slack resources to adapt to changes brought upon by the crisis

(Kniffin et al., 2020; Wan and Yiu, 2009). For example, the COVID-19 crisis led to an increased demand for face-masks and sanitizing gels, leading to surge in opportunities for organizations that could reconfigure their production lines to manufacture these products (Napoleone and Prataviera, 2020). In contrast, hospitality organizations were disadvantaged because of lower demand for their services during the crisis (Borden, Akhtar, Hadden, & Bose, 2020). Restaurants that had capabilities for a delivery-only business model were able to thrive and succeed amidst the crisis, while other restaurants without such capabilities were forced to shut down (Jha, 2021). We argue that the level of organizational opportunity has important effects on employee cognitions and therefore their sensitivity to contextual cues that enable employee voice.

Social identity theory suggests that identity is a source of meaning and control for employees, as it provides them with a guide about how to behave in that context (Ashforth, 2001). Employees construct their sense of self and self-worth in organizations based on how they view their organization, as well as how they perceive their interactions with others at work (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Vough, 2012). They strive to maintain a positive self in their organizations, and therefore seek to be associated with organizations in good standing and positive reputation. Organizational reputation and prestige, which stem from organizational opportunity for growth and success, are positively associated with employees deriving a strong sense of self, or identifying strongly, with their organization (Riketta, van Dick, & Rousseau, 2006; Vough, 2012). When opportunities for organizations during crisis are lower, employees assumptions about the positive nature of their organization in terms of its likelihood of survival and success is adversely affected. Snyder, Lassgard, and Ford (1986). showed that an impact on the organization's opportunities could result in employees distancing themselves or reducing their identification with the organization itself. They also suggest that while employees would avoid being connected with negative things (i.e., in

context, low opportunity organizations), they will be driven by a self-enhancement motive to also be connected with positive things to maintain a positive sense of self (Heider, 1958). Extending their proposition, we argue that to compensate for the lack of certainty and control afforded by their organizations, employees may look for alternative cues in their proximal relational environment that will help them avoid damage to their sense of self-esteem and control.

We argue that employees in such low-opportunity organizations are likely to feel a deeper need to strengthen their own self-worth and control from other sources, namely their interactions with proximal others in the workplace. Thus, in organizations with lower opportunities from the crisis, collective positive affect in their proximal context becomes more important for employees to feel respected. Furthermore, Morrison and Milliken (2000) suggested that employees in organizations operating in less munificent or unfavorable contexts suffer from the lack of predictability and control. In such contexts, employees are likely to depend more on cues from their immediate managers to decide whether to voice improvement-oriented ideas or stay silent (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). Taken together, at the onset of crisis, we argue that employees in low opportunity organizations are more sensitive to collective positive affect in their organization, and are therefore more likely to derive a feeling of respect from such collective positive affect, and engage in voice.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between collective positive affect and the decline in employee voice during crisis via felt respect is moderated by organizational opportunity such that the relationship between collective positive affect and felt respect is more strongly positive for employees in organizations with low opportunity.

METHOD

Research Context

We situate our research in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis as a natural experiment (Wan and Yiu, 2009). Consistent with prior research on crisis, we model the first of several COVID-19-related lockdowns as the onset of crisis—a discrete event—with a single group 'before and after' design (Meyer, 1995; Pearson and Clair, 1998; Stoker et al., 2019). This approach enables us to examine temporal trends in employee voice behaviors before and after the onset of crisis, as well as examine the psychological factors that buffered the reduction in employee voice behaviors during the crisis.

The COVID-19 crisis provided an ideal context to test our hypotheses for three reasons. First, the COVID-19 outbreak and associated lockdowns across the world had the characteristic features of an exogenous crisis (James et al., 2011; Pearson and Clair, 1998), such as rarity of occurrence, unanticipated nature, and the significant impact it had on various aspects of organizational life as we knew it. Similar to economic or political crises, the COVID-19 crisis brought about confusion and uncertainty (Bundy et al., 2017), and forced organizations and employees to adapt to sudden and significant changes (Anicich et al., 2020; BBC, 2020; McKinsey, 2020). Second, COVID-19 has been described as being a severe negative emotional event for individuals (Barsade, 2020; Anicich et al., 2020; Trougakos, Chawla, and McCarthy, 2020), thereby providing an ideal opportunity to examine the consequences of threat rigidity and anxiety, as well as to model the effects of collective positive affect. Third, the disproportionate effects of the COVID-19 crisis on organizations enabled a clear conceptualization of our moderator: organizational opportunity from the crisis.

Data and sample

Data was collected from a sample of 548 professionals working across different organizations in the UK through Prolific Academic, an established online participant recruitment service used for academic research (Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, & Acquisti,

2017). Respondents were UK citizens and residents who were employed full-time at the start of the study and who continued to remain employed throughout the course of the 7 waves of data collection. The seven waves of data used in the context of this research are part of a larger-scale longitudinal study conducted during a period overlapping the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. We collected the first 5 waves of data from March 2019 to February 2020 with 1 to 5 months between waves. The 5th wave of data collection was completed in February 2020, shortly before the COVID-19 outbreak in the UK and the ensuing first ever lockdown that began on 21st March, 2020. For the purpose of this study, we proceeded to collect a 6th wave of data two weeks after the onset of lockdown, between 6th and 21st April 2020 - followed by a 7th wave between 30th April and 10th May 2020 - to capture employees' experiences and performance at the onset of the crisis in the UK.

Out of the 548 respondents from the first wave (in March, 2019), we excluded those failing to respond to both waves 6 and 7, or who had changed organizations after wave 5: this ensured that employees were in the same organization during timepoints 5 through 7, when our focal predictor variables were assessed. In addition, because employee voice is typically examined as communication provided to a line manager (Morrison, 2011), we also excluded self-employed individuals from our final sample, resulting in an overall sample of N=359 respondents used for the final analyses described in this paper.

Variables

Employee voice. We measured employee voice behaviors at each of the 7 waves using a 6-item scale from Howell and colleagues (Howell, Harrison, Burris, & Detert, 2015), capturing the extent to which participants engaged in voice behaviors to their manager over the previous two weeks. Items included both promotively and prohibitively framed items (Liang, Farh, and Farh, 2012), such as: "I spoke up to my manager with ideas for new processes, policies, projects, or products" and "when we were experiencing problems in the

work unit, I told my manager" (1 = Not at all to 5 = A great deal; .90 < α < .94 across seven waves of data collection).

Collective positive affect. Given our research questions pertain to the factors that are likely to mitigate the reduction in employee voice upon the onset of crisis, we measured our independent, moderator- and mediator variables two weeks after the onset of crisis in wave 6. We measured collective positive affect in the organization using an adapted measure from Barsade and O'Neill (2014). We asked respondents to report, keeping in mind the first two weeks after the onset of the crisis, "to what extent did employees in your organization express the following emotions", and aggregated the positive emotions of "enthusiasm", "calmness", "relaxedness", "inspiration", "excitement", and feeling "at ease" (Warr, Bindl, Parker, & Inceoglu, 2014; 1 = Not at all" to 5 = Extremely; α = .88).

Felt respect. Similarly, in wave 6, we measured felt respect using the 6-item Bartel et al. (2012) respect measure. We asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they felt that members of their organization valued their skills, abilities, efforts, and ideas, during the first two weeks after the onset of the crisis. An example item was "other employees in your organization value what you contribute at work" (1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree, α = .93).

Organizational opportunity from the crisis. In addition, in wave 6, the perceived opportunity for the employees' respective organizations from the COVID-19 crisis was measured using two items adapted from Golden, Dukerich, and Fabian (2000). An example item was "do you think that the COVID-19 (Corona Virus) situation represents a potential opportunity for your organization?" (1 = Little or no extent to 5 = A very great extent; α = .94).

Control variables. We used respondents' organizational tenure and gender as covariates in our analyses, as prior research has demonstrated that more experienced (Fast et

al., 2014; Liang et al., 2012) and male (Detert & Burris, 2007) employees exhibit higher levels of voice.

Preliminary Analyses

We examined the structural validity of our measures using Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA). For the employee voice measure, assessed across waves 1 through 7, CFA supported a second-order employee voice factor at each wave, measured by two first-order factors representing the promotive and prohibitive dimensions, respectively (chi-square = 1477.58 on 772 df; CFI = .95, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .05). This theorized model outperformed the potential alternative first-order-only single factor model (chi-square = 3065.25 on 798 df, Δ chi-square = 1587.63 on 26 df, $p < .001$; CFI = .83 RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .08). The temporal invariance of the factor structure of employee voice was tested by fitting a series of models with loadings and then intercepts fixed equal across time (Chen, Sousa, and West, 2005). In support of measurement invariance, model fit was maintained when fixing first order, then second order loadings and intercepts equal across time.

In addition, a separate CFA supported the proposed three factor measurement model for all the measures collected at time 6 only (collective positive affect, felt respect, and organizational opportunity from the COVID-19 crisis). Model fit was satisfactory (chi-square = 277.358 on 75 df, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .05), and significantly better than an alternative two-factor model, combining collective positive affect and felt respect items (chi-square = 932.506 on 77 df, Δ chi-square = 655.148 on 2 df, $p < .001$ CFI = .70, RMSEA = .19, SRMR = .16).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for the key study variables are given in Table 1. Models were fitted with Mplus version 8.5 (Muthén and Muthén, 1998-2015), using maximum-likelihood estimation.

To test our Hypothesis 1 regarding a significant reduction of employee voice at the onset of crisis, we modelled the change in employee voice over time using a second-order or "curve of factors" latent growth curve model (LGCM, Preacher, Wichman, MacCallum, & Briggs, 2008). The second order wave 1 to 7 employee voice factors, measured by the individual employee voice items as previously described, were themselves indicators of intercept and slope factors representing starting level and change in employee voice over the study period. We began with a baseline model (Model 1) that allowed wave 1 scores to differ from waves 2 to 7 to account for a difference in employee voice before and after April 1, 2019, the originally proposed date for UK's exit from the European Union (Brexit),[1] and fitted variation in respondents' average levels of employee voice over waves 2 to 7. We first added a single slope factor for waves 2 to 7 (Model 2), and then extended to piecewise (discontinuous) LGCM, where change in employee voice was allowed to vary between a slope encompassing waves 2 to 5, and a second slope for post-onset change in employee voice from waves 5 to 7 (Model 3). Variance parameters for both pre- and post-onset slopes were added (Model 4) to allow pre- and post-COVID change in voice to differ between employees. We then tested between the pre- and post-onset slopes for a formal test of Hypothesis 1.

The baseline model, allowing average wave 1 scores to differ from the average of waves 2 to 7, was outperformed by adding a single slope factor for waves 2 to 7 (Model 2 vs Model 1 comparison: Δ chi-square, Δ df = 11.54, 1; p = .001). In addition, allowing differing slopes for pre- and post-onset change offered a further improvement in fit (Model 3 vs. Model 2: Δ chi-square, Δ df = 10.12, 1; p = .001), as did allowing pre- and post-onset change to vary between subjects (Model 4 vs. Model 3: Δ chi-square, Δ df = 37.31, 5; p < .001). Finally, Model 4, which offered a good fit to the data (1460.025 on 825df, CFI = .952,

[1] We expected employee voice in wave 1 to be slightly increased, given the then ongoing preparations that organizations were making ahead of the originally planned Brexit date of April 1, 2019.

RMSEA = .045, SRMR = .056), indicated post-onset change in employee voice was negative and significant (post-onset slope mean = -.11, $p < .001$), and was significantly different from pre-onset change (difference in slope means = .12, $p = .001$), thus supporting Hypothesis 1.

To test Hypotheses 2 and 3, we added covariates to the piecewise LGCM, as per our theorized model (Model 5; see Figure 1). Specifically, we added the hypothesized paths from collective positive affect and felt respect to the slope for post-onset change in employee voice and from collective positive affect to felt respect, with this latter path moderated by organizational opportunity from the crisis. We tested the significance of conditional effects via 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals (Hayes, 2017).

Adding covariates to this piecewise LGCM, our final, theorized model offered an excellent fit to the data (Chi-square = 2194.16 on 1324, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .07). The covariates collectively explained 35.3% of the variance in post-onset change in employee voice. In support of Hypothesis 2, collective positive affect at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis had a positive and significant direct effect on post-onset change in employee voice (see Table 2; Model 8, B = .10, $p = .006$) and the conditional total effect of collective positive affect on post-onset change in employee voice was positive and significant across all values of the moderator (organizational opportunity from the crisis; see Table 3). In support of Hypothesis 3, collective positive affect at the onset of crisis had a positive and significant effect on felt respect (Table 2; Model 5, B = .46, $p < .001$), and felt respect had a positive and significant effect on post-onset change in employee voice (Table 2; Model 8, B = .13, $p = .009$). These results indicate support for the mediation hypothesis that the effect of collective positive affect on post-onset change in employee voice is mediated by felt respect.

In initial support of Hypothesis 4, the effect of collective positive affect on felt respect was moderated by organizational opportunity from the crisis (B = -.13, $p = .002$; see Table 2). Figure 2 depicts the estimated simple slopes for collective positive affect on

felt respect by levels of organizational opportunity. As hypothesized, the positive effect of collective positive affect on felt respect was strongest when organizational opportunity from the crisis was relatively low (i.e., "Little or No Extent")[2]. In additional support of Hypothesis 4, the conditional indirect effects of collective positive affect on post-onset change in employee voice via felt respect were positive and significant for low and medium levels of organizational opportunity from the crisis (see Table 3).

DISCUSSION

Although bottom-up employee voice behaviors enable organizational resilience and learning (Detert et al., 2013; Brykman and King, 2021), which are important outcomes for organizations during a crisis, research on the factors that promote employee voice during crises situations is sparse. Using this inherent paradox as a springboard, we draw from threat rigidity perspective and examine seven waves of longitudinal data before and during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, to demonstrate that the onset of crisis is followed by a decline in employee voice behaviors from relatively stable pre-crisis levels. We further developed and tested a social identity theory framework of voice drawing from research on collective affect (Barsade and O'Neill, 2014), felt respect (Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley, 2008; Bartel et al., 2012) and organizational opportunity from crisis (Wan and Yiu, 2009), to account for and explain *why* and *how* voice changes during crisis are buffered and for *whom*. In doing so, we make several theoretical contributions and our work has important implications for practice.

Contributions to voice research. Our paper contributes to voice research in three ways. First, a key finding of our research was that voice, while stable in the months leading

[2] Since the overall average of the organizational opportunity variable was low (mean = 1.67 on a 5-point scale; SD = 1.08), we modeled effects of collective positive affect on felt respect at organizational opportunity values corresponding to the first three category labels of its measure—1 "Little or No Extent", 2 "Small Extent", 3 "Moderate Extent" (rather than choosing to model at the mean +/- 1 SD), as these meaningfully corresponded to *relatively* low, medium, and high levels of organizational opportunity from the crisis in our data.

up to the crisis, significantly decreased at the onset of the crisis. The stability in employee voice pre-onset corroborates previous research on voice suggesting that changes tend to be gradual as employee tenure increases (Fast et al., 2014; Liang et al., 2012). Second, to our knowledge, this study is the first to show employee voice, while relatively stable under regular circumstances, is reduced upon the onset of crisis. Although employee voice is vital to modern workplaces (Senge, 1990; Detert and Burris, 2007), particularly in crises when improvement-oriented suggestions of employees may help organizations learn and adapt better to changing external circumstances (Brykman and King, 2021), previous research has focused mainly on individuals engagement in voice in relatively *stable* organizational settings, and has remained agnostic about temporal dynamics of voice over relatively short periods of time (Morrison, 2014). Our findings indicate employee voice is significantly and negatively affected in times of crisis and provide the foundation to examine downstream consequences of such a decline in voice on team and organizational outcomes, in the future.

Third, by integrating social identity theory with research on emotional culture and the threat rigidity perspective, we advance insights into the combined influence of micro- and macro-contextual factors on voice as an inherently relational process. We offer an account of how collective affect in the micro- or proximal context can help counter the effects of threat rigidity on the generation and expression of voice during a crisis in the macro-context, thereby extending the understanding of how the broader organizational and social context influence voice. We show how collective organization-based emotions—indicated by collective positive affect—influence felt respect and, in turn, individuals' propensity to engage in voice behavior. Whereas previous voice research has focused primarily either on individuals' own emotions or socio-cognitive predictors of voice, such as perceived support or justice at work (Chamberlin, Newton, and LePine, 2017; Sherf, Parke, & Isaakyan, 2020), voice research has not examined how threats from the broader social context can influence

employee voice behaviors despite calls for such inquiry (Bashshur and Oc, 2015; Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). Our findings advance an understanding of how emotions of organizational members—an inherent aspect of the social context—enables voice in the face of a crisis. Our integration of organizational opportunity from crisis as a contextual boundary condition responds to wider calls from voice researchers who have advocated the consideration of wider (organizational and environmental) contextual factors when studying employee voice (Bashshur and Oc, 2015). In doing so, our findings enable a more nuanced understanding of what drives (or ensures the retention of) employee voice in organizations, particularly at the onset of crisis, as shown in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We show that the lack of organizational opportunity in the distal environment can exacerbate the importance of collective positive affect in the more proximal context in promoting employee voice behaviors.

Contributions to emotions research. We contribute to research on collective affect by showing how collective positive affect buffers the effects of the onset of crisis on proactive employee behaviors, and specifically on employee voice. The effects of emotional aspects of culture in organizations, although important, have been largely neglected in organizational research (Barsade and O'Neill, 2014). Even emerging research in this domain has only considered specific emotions within a more enduring positive emotional culture such as the effects of a culture of companionate love on positive employee attitudes (Barsade and O'Neill, 2014; O'Neill and Rothbard, 2017) and cultures of joy and optimism on team outcomes (Adler et al., 2021). Yet, employees are likely to look for emotional cues more broadly from colleagues around them. We contribute to this "affective revolution" in organizational research (Barsade, Brief, and Spataro, 2003) by advancing the construct of collective positive affect—where employees perceive a broad range of positive emotions in their work context—and showing how it helps employees to counter feelings of threat

rigidity, bolsters their confidence in the context of a crisis, and motivates them to engage in future-focused and change-oriented proactive voice behaviors. In doing so, we provide support for emerging emotions research, that emotional culture is an effective conceptualization of collective affect, which has significant downstream emotional, cognitive, and behavioral consequences for employees.

Contributions to crisis and threat research. In this paper, we present a more nuanced understanding of the emotional and behavioral consequences for employees at the onset of crisis and associated threat rigidity. In so doing, we address inadequacies in threat rigidity and crisis research which have hitherto focused almost exclusively on those in leadership positions and top-down processes (Stoker et al., 2019). Although threat rigidity is a psychological concept (Staw et al., 1981), research on the concept has focused either on organizations or on individuals in leadership roles. Yet, there is clear indication that all employees will be influenced by threat and associated emotions on the onset of a crisis. Furthermore, prior research suggests that bottom-up change and voice are very important for organizational resilience (Brykman and King, 2021). Our research corroborates emerging research on non-managerial employees (Meuris & Leana, 2018) by showing that threat rigidity during crisis affects cognitive capabilities even among lower-level or non-managerial employees to generate ideas for improving the status quo.

Our research on bottom-up voice supplements findings on top-down processes such as centralization of decision-making (Staw et al., 1981) and changing leadership styles during crisis (Stoker et al., 2019) by shedding light on the employee or the followers. It is likely that these processes reinforce one another, where a more directive leadership restricts voice, and a decline in employee voice strengthens leaders convictions about making decisions without involving their subordinates. By showing that employee voice declines upon the onset of crisis, our findings provide the foundation for future research to examine downstream

attitudinal, behavioral, and relational consequences for employees (both managerial and non-managerial), and by extension, for organizations upon the onset of crisis.

Additionally, our findings corroborate theoretical assertions and qualitative research that suggest that mega-social events or external crises can adversely affect employees' behaviors within organizations because of the permeability of work and personal lives (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Leigh and Melwani, 2018). Although we tested our hypotheses at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis as an ideal context, our theoretical model is likely to be generalizable to other unpredictable events such as socio-economic crises external to the organizations, and to other unstructured contexts which lack the predictability of steady organizations. Using the social identity theory perspective to study organizational opportunity enabled a better understanding of how perceiving opportunity at the organizational level could be an important boundary condition for the effects of affect and respect in a crisis context on employee voice. Specifically, in the context of crisis, perceiving higher organizational opportunity has been shown to counter threat rigidity by fostering a sense of control, certainty, and confidence among employees (Bundy et al., 2017; Chattopadhyay, Glick, and Huber, 2001; König et al., 2020; Wan and Yiu, 2009). Drawing from social identity theory, and identity as a source of control (Ashforth, 2001), we extend these findings, by showing that in organizations where opportunity is perceived to be lower, (creating) a positive affective climate can compensate for the lack of opportunity by providing employees with a higher sense of self-worth, thereby equipping them with alternative sources of control and confidence that are likely depleted in the context of crisis.

Contributions to social identity theory. We also contribute to the social identity theory perspective on respect by examining emotional antecedents of felt respect. Respect is particularly pertinent in a crisis context, as threat from crises and associated feelings of unpredictability could increase self-consciousness. Our data provide support that employees

are able to fulfil their need for control and confidence from their proximal emotional context, specifically through collective positive affect. While the social identity theory perspective has primarily considered respect from a cognitive perspective (Bartel et al. 2012; Dutton et al., 2016; Rogers and Ashforth, 2014; Rogers et al., 2017), we show how felt respect has emotional antecedents, and can operate as a mediating mechanism that enables approach tendencies and voice behaviors. The crisis afforded a pertinent context in which to study these relationships, as cognitive cues are costly in times of crisis (Byrne et al., 2014; Chong et al., 2020; Staw et al., 1981), thus making employees rely on socio-emotional cues to inform their sense of self-worth. In so doing, we open avenues for future research into the emotional underpinnings and implications of felt respect for employee behaviors that may go beyond existing relationships based on cognitive mechanisms alone.

Limitations and Future Research

Our study has certain limitations, addressing which could provide useful avenues for future research. First, our research focused on how employee voice levels changed soon after the onset of the pandemic. Over a longer period of time, employees may learn to overcome the challenges due to physical isolation and social-distancing restrictions that COVID-19 poses and may identify novel ways to communicate with their colleagues and managers (Bernstein, Blunden, Brodsky, Sohn, & Waber, 2020). However, the engagement in employee voice at the onset of the pandemic, i.e., the focus of our current research, is likely an important precursor for long-term positive changes. Second, our predictor variables were based on self-ratings, thereby raising concerns about common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). However, as common method variance typically reduces the likelihood of detecting moderation effects (Siemsen, Roth, and Oliviera, 2010), the interaction-related findings in our paper suggest our findings are relatively robust to biases stemming from common method variance.

Third, our study approach did not allow for in-depth investigation of specific jobs, occupations, or industries. However, given the exogenous nature of the crisis, surveying an inter-organizational pool of respondents afforded us the ability to advance comparisons of the consequences of the same crisis across organizations based on variations in their opportunities from the crisis. In so doing, we also extend organizational research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis on workforces, which has predominantly focused either on employees in the health-care sector (Hennekam, Ladge, and Shymko, 2020) or on employees working from home due to the lockdown (Bernstein et al., 2020; Chong et al., 2020). Future research may focus on employee voice during a crisis in particular industries or organizations, building on our current findings, and thereby unearthing factors that may differ across contexts that help maintain employee voice during such crises.

Practical Implications

As threatening as the onset of a crisis may be, it is often a call for action in organizations to engage in actions that enable sustenance and thriving. Maintaining a culture where employees are not afraid to speak up with improvement-oriented inputs—ideas that managers may not think of for various reasons—may enable the organization to survive and remain resilient to the crisis. Our findings suggest that enabling collective positive affect is a viable solution for organizations to prevent a decline in employee voice during a crisis. Managers are advised to ensure such collective positive affect during the COVID-19 crisis, for example, by keeping abreast of developments and demonstrating calmness and compassion, which is likely to result in a sharedness of positive emotions at work (Barsade, 2020). Relatedly, our findings regarding occupational and organizational enhancement suggest that managers operating in contexts that are depleted of resources or recognition due to the COVID-19 crisis have an even stronger responsibility to maintain hope and optimism to promote respect and voice in their staff.

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Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables

Study variables	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Gender (1 = Male, 0 = Female)	0.38	0.49											
2. Tenure (years)	8.70	7.36	.09										
3. T6 Collective Positive Affect	2.59	0.79	.13*	.09									
4. T6 Organizational Opportunity from Crisis	1.67	1.08	-.05	-.00	.06								
5. T6 Felt Respect	-0.08	0.67	-.06	.00	.35***	-.01							
6. T1 Employee Voice	0.20	1.01	-.03	-.06	.23***	.13*	.34***						
7. T2 Employee Voice	0.04	0.91	-.04	-.04	.28***	.09	.28***	.72***					
8. T3 Employee Voice	-0.04	0.98	.01	-.02	.17**	.17*	.25***	.68***	.70***				
9. T4 Employee Voice	0.03	1.04	-.08	-.04	.31***	.05	.25***	.69***	.69***	.65***			
10. T5 Employee Voice	0.07	0.98	-.04	-.07	.23***	.08	.32***	.62***	.62***	.65***	.77***		
11. T6 Employee Voice	-0.10	1.05	-.10	-.13*	.36***	.16*	.41***	.54***	.58***	.56***	.70***	.66***	
12. T7 Employee Voice	-0.18	1.06	-.03	-.09	.39***	.18**	.40***	.48***	.56***	.56***	.66***	.68***	.71***

Notes. N = 359. All correlation estimates in table derived from model containing and inter-correlating each of second-order latent employee voice factors at each wave, perceived-respect latent factor at time 6, observed measures of collective positive affect, organizational opportunity from crisis (both scale mean, i.e. composite scores), gender, and organizational tenure. T1-7: Time 1-7/waves at which measure was assessed. $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.

Table 2. Latent Growth Curve Model for Change in Employee Voice, with Covariates Explaining Variation in Change (Model 5; as depicted in the overall research model in Figure 1)

	Mediator and Outcomes Measures							
	Model 5: *Felt respect*		Model 6: *Employee Voice*: Intercept factor		Model 7: *Employee Voice*: slope factor for pre-onset (wave 2 to wave 5) change		Model 8: *Employee Voice*: slope factor for post-onset (wave 5 to wave 7) change	
	Est., 95% CI	*p*	Est., 95% CI	*p*	Est., 95% CI	*p*	Est., 95% CI	*p*
Predictors / Mediator								
Gender (1 = male, 0 = female)	-.15 (-.297, .001)	.051	-.04 (-.263, .183)	.722	-.02 (-.079, .035)	.446	.01 (-.097, .115)	.866
Organisational tenure (years)	.00 (-.009, .011)	.902	-.01 (-.021, .011)	.513	-.00 (-.005, .003)	.780	-.01 (-.013, .003)	.199
T6 Collective Positive Affect	.46 (.289, .633)	<.001	---	---	---	---	.10 (.028, .162)	.006
T6 Organizational Opportunity from Crisis	.30 (.072, .518)	.010	---	---	---	---	---	---
CPA*OPP interaction	-.13 (-.207, -.047)	.002	---	---	---	---	---	---
T6 Felt Respect	---	---	---	---	---	---	.13 (.032, .224)	.009

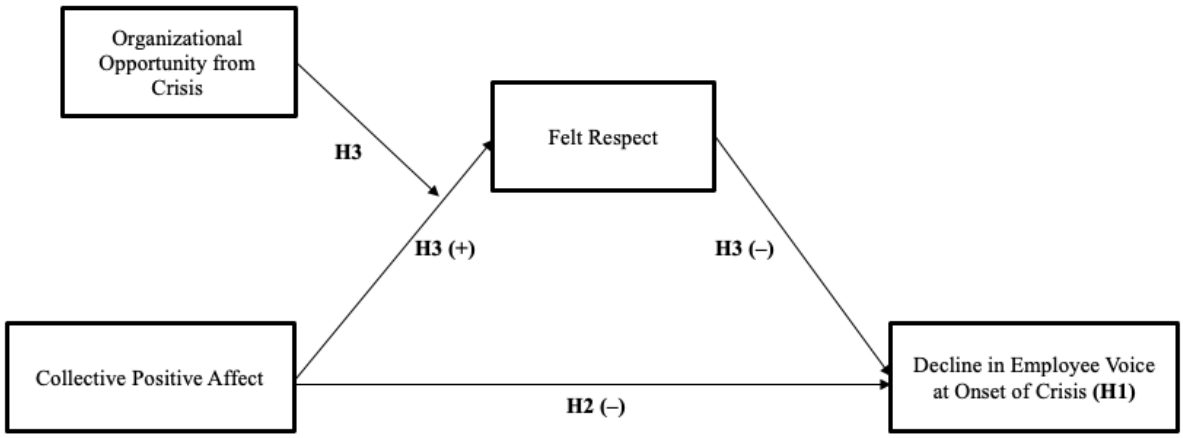
Notes. N = 359. $^{*}p < .05$. CPA = collective positive affect; OPP = opportunity from the crisis. T6: wave 6, at which measure was assessed.

Table 3. Conditional Total and Conditional Indirect Effects of Collective Positive Affect on Post-onset Change in Employee Voice

	Conditional total effects		Conditional indirect effects via felt respect	
Levels of moderator[3]	*Estimate*	*Bootstrapped 95% CI*	*Estimate*	*Bootstrapped 95% CI*
Little/no organizational opportunity	.14*	(.060, .233)	.04*	(.002, .123)
Small organizational opportunity	.12*	(.042, .203)	.03*	(.002, .075)
Moderate organizational opportunity	.11*	(.015, .184)	.01	(-.016, .055)

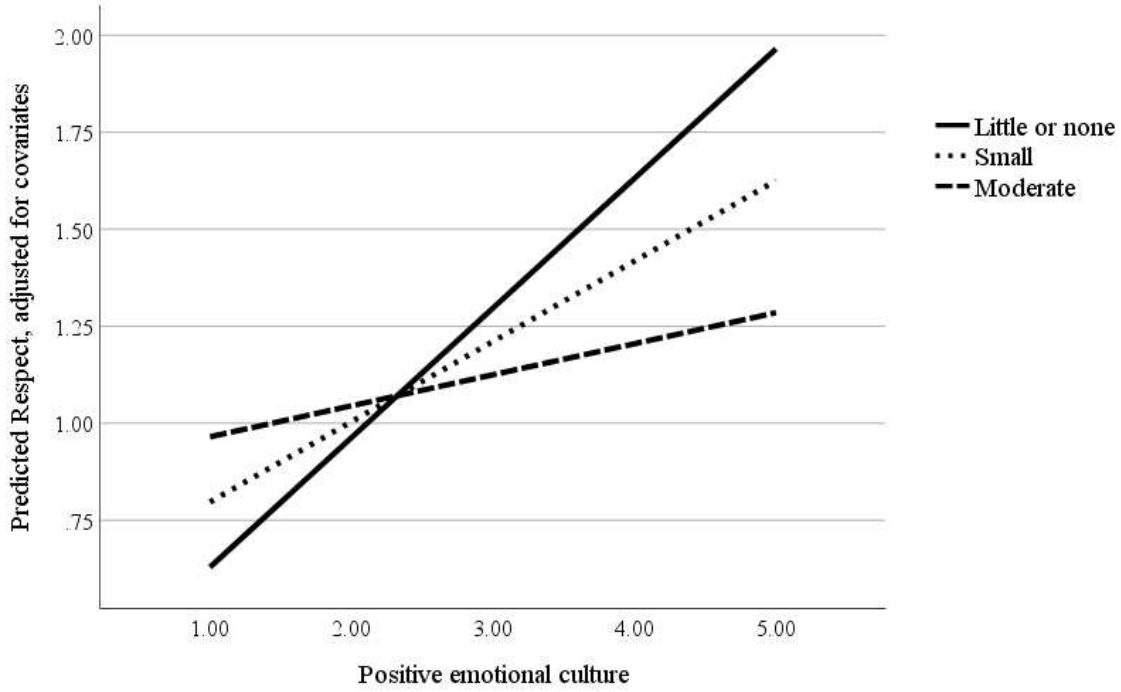
Notes. N = 359. * 95% bootstrapped confidence interval for effect doesn't contain 0.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



[3] Since the overall average of the organizational opportunity variable was low (mean = 1.67 on a 5-point scale; SD = 1.08), we modeled effects of collective positive affect on felt respect at organizational opportunity values corresponding to the first three category labels of its measure—1 "Little or No Extent", 2 "Small Extent", 3 "Moderate Extent" (rather than choosing to model at the mean +/- 1 SD), as these meaningfully corresponded to relatively low, medium, and high levels of organizational opportunity from the crisis in our data.

Figure 2. Effect of Collective Positive Affect on Felt respect, Moderated by Organizational Opportunity from Crisis



Notes. Predicted felt respect, adjusted for covariates (gender and organizational tenure).