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ANGER-EXPRESSION AVOIDANCE IN ORGANIZATIONS IN CHINA:
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL FACE

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ANGER-EXPRESSION AVOIDANCE IN ORGANIZATIONS IN CHINA:
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ABSTRACT

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The Role Of Social Face

by

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Master of Philosophy

Chinese people have been theorized to be particularly sensitive to social face and avoid direct discussion in conflict to promote interpersonal harmony. This study uses the theory of social face to predict Chinese employees' strategies to avoid expressing anger with their supervisors in the organizations. Inspired by previous research, this study proposes that anger-expression avoidance is a complex behavior with different motivations and actions, leading to diverse outcomes. It identifies four strategies for the employees to avoid expressing anger with their boss; they are named outflanking (turn to the third party to resolve the anger), withdrawal (staying cool, ignoring, giving the silent treatment), retaliation (covert, indirect revenge, in an attempt to get even or to balance the apparently inequitable situation) and re-channeling (expressing anger on persons or things unrelated to the source of the anger). The results from an interview study conducted in the summer of 2008 can help explain the dynamic structure of anger-expressing avoidance: Why employees in organizations in China avoid expressing anger, how they act, and the consequences. Based on the data collection and analysis, this study has implications both for the general theory of social face and conflict management in China as well as the understanding of how anger-expression avoidance strategies affect organizational relationships and employee future productivity, job satisfaction, and stress.

Keywords: anger, avoidance, social face, organization, China

DECLARATION

       I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

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(Ms. Han Xu)

Date

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Anger is a normal, healthy emotion, but when you act out your anger in destructive or underhanded ways, or when you withhold anger, take in criticism or verbal abuse from others and then turn it against yourself, anger can become a very negative emotion. Although we tend to manage our anger in different ways depending on the circumstances, people generally develop certain patterns. The way we handle anger affects literally every aspect of our life, our physical and emotional health, self-esteem, motivation, and ability to defend ourselves. It can empower us and add vitality to our life, or it can sap our energy and poison our relationships.

This chapter first provides background information for the study, and then briefly presents related concepts leading to the literature review. Finally, it summarizes this study's contributions.

Emotion

Organizational behavior researchers are increasingly recognizing the importance of emotions in everyday work life (Arvey, Renz, & Watson, 1998; Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; Lord, Klimoski, & Kanfer, 2002). Although the study of emotions in work settings has a long history (see Mastenbroek, in press; Brief and Weiss, 2000), the starting point for modern research on emotion in organizations seems to have been sociologist Hochschild's (1983) seminal book on emotional labor: *The Managed Heart*. This work inspired Rafaeli and Sutton's work (1987, 1989;

Sutton and Rafaeli, 1988) which focused the attention of management scholars on emotional expression as part of the work role.

Although philosophers and dramatists have conjectured about the role of emotions in human experience for thousands of years, emotions and emotional phenomena only recently began to attract attention from scholars within social psychology. One frequently used method of investigating emotion scripts is to do context-free studies. In this kind of study, the respondents are not required to recall or imagine an emotional episode in relation to any specific context (Fitness & Fletcher, 1993). But it's more and more evident that both context and the nature of the relationship between the people whose emotion interact play important roles. Using the common sense we may have the same conclusion. Imagine when we are angered by different people, in different contexts, for example, in family or in company, by a lover or by the boss, our reaction would be totally different. So the research here is not a context-free study. And the workplace we chose, with its inherent power structures and relational complexities, is a context described as saturated with emotions. The workplace has been identified as one of the most interpersonally frustrating contexts that people have to deal with (Allcorn, 1994; Bensimon, 1997). Therefore, the primary purpose of our study is to examine the choices that employees make to manage anger, one of the most important emotions, in a natural work setting in China.

Although there is little empirical research documenting this management process, there is a widespread belief that supervisors are the key source of bad moods

at work. Influential theories of transformational and charismatic leadership posit

emotional links between leaders and followers (e.g. Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993).

A key assumption of this research is that superiors affect employees' emotional

experiences; the relationship between the two parties can even change employees'

choice when they encounter anger episode towards superiors. From a theoretical

standpoint, there are at least two reasons why employees may feel not free to express

their feelings like anger directly during supervisory interactions. First, superiors are

the individuals who evaluate their performance. Second, research by Diefendorff and

Richard (2003) suggests that superiors' expectations may lead employees to constrain

their emotional expressions, which may lead to negative outcomes. Empirical

research is also consistent with the notion. Fitness (2000) interviewed employees

about their experiences of anger and found that unfair treatment by supervisors,

which tended to remain unresolved, was a key source of employee anger.

Anger

The role of emotions in organizations has been given a close examination in

that relationships very much affect organizational work and productivity (Ashkanasy,

Hartel,& Daus, 2003; Gersick, Bartunek & Dutton, 2000). In addition to the general

mood effects of interactions with supervisors, we also expected supervisors'

behavioral patterns to influence employees' emotional experiences. For example,

supervisors who use transformational leadership behaviors may elicit feelings of

happiness and enthusiasm in employees (Bono, Foldes, Vinson & Muros, 2007)

while abusive supervisors might be expected to elicit frustration, anxiety, and anger (Tepper, 2000). So we assume that a*nger* does occur, sometimes in heightened ways, in organizations. It seems unrealistic to expect organizations to be anger free (Glomb & Hulin, 1997; Allred, Mallozzi, Matsui, & Raia, 1997).

Anger is an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage. Anger is neither a positive nor a negative emotion. It is the way we handle our anger that makes it negative or positive. Recent studies indicated that open-minded discussion (constructive controversy) of the anger can be very useful to strengthen relationships and restoring respect between people (Tjosvold, 2002; Tjosvold & Su, 2007). Results of this study found that open expression of feelings and ideas, listening and incorporating each other's views, and working toward mutual benefit can characterize effective anger management.

These dynamics occur when organizational members felt cooperatively interdependent. Goals may be cooperatively, competitively or independently related. In cooperation, people consider their goal achievements positively correlated; as others move toward reaching their goals, they also reach their goals. In competition, people believe their goal achievements are negatively correlated; each perceives that the achievement of one makes it less likely that others will achieve their goals. With independent goals, achievements are thought to be unrelated; one's goal attainment neither assists nor frustrates others' reaching their goals. Also the study mentioned above showed that contrary to widespread belief, conflict's benefits are not limited to task and rational issues. My study begins from these results, extends them, and

examines what happens after employees make concrete choices. Conflict literature has not as yet generated sound prescriptions for concrete strategies for managing anger effectively.

Objectives of the Study

This study contributes to our understanding of the multifaceted phenomenon of anger-expression avoidance, which has not been directly and adequately explored in previous studies. In detail, this exploratory study contributes to previous research in this area by distinguishing more specific strategies that are commonly used by Chinese employees to avoid expressing their anger with their boss, while in particular paying attention to the role of social face, which is very popular and valued in Chinese organizations and companies, and exploring its impact on anger-expression avoidance interaction.

Although there is a growing body of research within the sociological and organizational literatures on the expression and regulation of emotions in different occupational contexts, such as between customers and service providers, there is still relatively little known about anger-expression avoidance and its effect on employees' future productivity and self-esteem. So the overall aim of my study is to:

- To explore the dynamic structure of anger-expressing avoidance；why employees avoid expressing anger, how they act, and the consequences.
- To use the theory of social face to predict Chinese employees' strategies to avoid expressing anger with their boss.

- To understand how much anger-expression avoidance strategies affect organizational relationship and the employees' future productivity and well-being.

Contributions of this Study

This study makes several contributions to the literature. Firstly, although the impact of social face has been thought to be powerful and is often used to explain such findings as Asian people's tendency to avoid conflict (Jehn & Weldon, 1992), little empirical work, especially in China, has directly measured social face's role and explored its impact on employees anger avoiding strategies. This study proposes that the social face concern the employees have for the superiors very much contributes to a willingness to avoid directly expressing their anger and to adopt several concrete avoiding strategies that in turn affects their future relationship, employee performance, and self-related variables.

In addition to testing the generalization of the theory of social face and the theory of conflict avoiding with both qualitative and quantitative data, this study links the literatures on social face, emotion regulation, and four important employee outcomes. It contributes to the theory and existing research on social face and anger management by considering job satisfaction and stress as important outcomes, which is commonly done in organizational research on emotional regulation. And the study tests the effects of the confirmation of social face on the four anger-expression avoidance strategies, which also all belong to emotional regulation category.

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The study also makes methodological contributions to previous research in that it used Averill's (1982) structure to design new instruments to have employees in organizations in China identify when they felt angry with their superior but did not try to discuss it directly with him/her and then responded to questions concerning specific anger incidents. These responses reflect employees' various ways of responding to feeling anger that affect anger's consequences. The interview questionnaire helps identify the incidents with which employees became anger, the ways that they avoid expressing their anger, and their reinterpretations. To test the hypotheses directly, employees also completed questionnaires on how they managed anger incidents.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews studies on social face and conflict avoidance. First, it discusses definitions and concepts of social face to understand the ideas of the study's theoretical framework. Then this chapter examines how social face effects the motivation to avoid expressing anger. It also uses previous research to identify different approaches employees adopt to deal with the anger aroused by their superior, especially in collectivistic culture of China. It presents the hypotheses and finally summarizes the literature review.

Social Face

Significance of Social face in Anger Study

Anger is a social and intellectual experience and also a physiological and behavioral one. The explanations of how it is elicited and out of what concern people choose to avoid it are various.

Researchers have also proposed that leaders' behaviors very much affect employees' emotion management at work (see Danna & Griffin, 1999, for a review). Furthermore, research by Diefendorff and Richard (2003) suggested that supervisors' expectations may lead employees to constrain their negative emotional expressions, which also lead to destructive effects.

We believe that what makes people angry and how they handle it depends on social norms and values (Averill, 1993; Deffenbacher & Swaim, 1999). Certain

norms and beliefs shared by a social group could influence individuals' preferred

approaches toward anger. That's why when we want to understand the dynamics of

anger and identify ways to manage it, we should examine Chinese culture and

specifically its valued norm of social face.

Understanding Social Face

Social face has been found to be important in the West (Deutsch & Krauss,

1962; Goffman, 1967; Tjosvold, 1983). Actually, most research on social face has

been conducted in the West. 'Face' is an image of the self delineated in terms of

approved social attributes, according to a pioneer in social face research, Goffman

(1967, p.2). Social face therefore could be defined as the image of strength persons

want to project in conflict. It assumes people attempt to project a desirable image and

want assurance their image is accepted (Hodgins, Liebeskind & Schwartz, 1996;

Tjosvold, 1983).

Social face among Chinese

Although theories developed in one culture cannot be assumed to apply in

others (Hofstede, 1993)--the causes of provocation, frequency of anger expression,

methods used to express anger can be indeed culturally different--behavioral and

conflict management theories developed in the West may still help identify social

face and suggest how it affects interactions in China (Hupka, Zaleski, Otto, Reidl, &

Tarabrina, 1997), because the underlying relationship among variables may be

similar. And it seems likely that whatever the culture is, people are likely to resent being bullied and intimidated and they are more able to manage their conflicts constructively when they feel respected.

 As a matter of fact, social face values can bind diverse people together, particularly in collectivist cultures like China where the data for this study were collected. Based on the research on Chinese people and other East Asians, researchers have concluded that direct disagreements are generally avoided in China because they easily communicate disrespect and disrupt harmony.

China is thought to be a collectivist culture where relationships are highly valued and conflict and anger avoided (Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990). Given the sensitivity, they seek harmony and communicate that they respect their partners as capable and worthy (Ting-Toomey, 1988). The collectivism and the understanding of social face lead Chinese to be hesitant about engaging in aggressive interaction that may challenge the face of others (Tjosvold, Hui, & Sun, 2004). In other words, Chinese people, as they are collectivists with a strong emphasis on maintaining relationships, are expected to be particularly motivated to protect the face of others as well as concerned that their own face be accepted (Boisot & Child, 1996). Importantly, Chinese society is also considered a traditional, hierarchical one where employees readily defer to their superiors (William, Morris, Leung, Bhatnagar, Hu, & Kondo, 1998). Chinese subordinates respect authority and believe that the rules of all the corporate games are written by the bosses. Rather than taking risk to argue with the boss, the employees prefer to hide their opposite opinions and avoid

conflicts.

Studies indicate that it is not simply social face concerns that impact interaction but how these concerns are managed (Tjosvold & Sun, 2001). In particular, social face can be confirmed or disconfirmed. Confirmation of face in conflict involves communication that the person is considered capable and strong; dis-confirmation (also called an affront to face or a loss of face) in conflict communicates that the other is considered incapable and weak. In everyday language, confirmation in conflict involves showing respect to people in that their positive image as capable, strong persons is accepted whereas disrespect is a dis-confirmation of face that communicates a rejection that the other is capable and strong (Ohbuchi, Chiba, & Fukushima, 1996). People are expected to be both ready to prevent dis-confirmation and make restitution after they have suffered an affront to face (Brown, 1968; Goffman, 1967).

In general understanding, mutual confirmation of social face between superiors and employees is likely to help them feel confident that they can successfully reflect upon and improve their interaction. Believing that they are open to each other and are willing to give each other resources, they initiate discussion about barriers that interfere with their joint success. On the other hand, disconfirmation of social face leaves the other partner suspicious that discussions of interpersonal problems may well be closed-minded and mutually harmful. They avoid discussing interpersonal and coordination difficulties or discuss them in tough, win-lose ways.

Conflict Avoidance in East Asia

As we clarified that the impact of social face on conflict management has been thought to be powerful, it is important to understand more about conflict avoidance in East Asia. Conflict avoidance is the behavior of refusing the overt recognition and open engagement in any active actions toward solving the conflict (Ohbuchi & Takahashi, 1994). It is the attempt to smooth over conflicts and to minimize the discussion of them (Chen, Liu, & Tjosvold, 2005). When encountering a conflict or sensing a potential conflict, individuals avoid openly discussing and directly debating with the other; instead, they simply agree with the other to prevent the surface of the conflict or choose indirect and dis-confirmational ways to deal with it.

It has long been concluded that culture, characterized by certain norms and beliefs shared by a social group (Deutsch, 1973), could influence individuals' preferred approaches toward conflicts (Hofstede, 1980; Cocroft & Ting-Toomey, 1994; Triandis, 1990). Compared with in Western countries, conflict avoiding is much more common in East Asia (Bond & Huang, 1986; Smith & Dugan, 1998). In a study between American and Japanese students, Japanese students used an avoiding strategy 48% of the time whereas American students used this strategy 22% of the time (Ohbuchi & Takahashi, 1994). Morris et al. (1998) also concluded that Chinese are more likely to avoid conflict whereas Americans are more likely to use a competitive or dominating strategy.

It is believed that people in East Asia are generally collectivistic and value harmonious personal relationships with others and they prefer avoiding direct debate and confrontation in order to protect other's face and maintain harmonious relationships (Leung, 1997, 1996). Chinese people, as collectivists, are thought to avoid aggressive ways of working with others in order to strengthen their interpersonal relationships and make sure the other's face is unchallenged. The strong emphasis on harmonious relationships in the collectivist Chinese culture thus leads to conflict avoidance (Boisot & Child, 1996; Tung, 1991).

Though conflict avoidance is relatively less constructive compared with the cooperative approach where conflict is openly discussed and directly dealt with, the rejection of conflict avoidance and nearly complete endorsement of confrontation may be premature. Rahim (1986) speculated that conflict avoidance was an appropriate response to trivial conflicts or when a cooling-off period was needed before a complex problem could be effectively dealt with. Compared with Western managers, Chinese people endorse and rely upon conflict avoidance, partly supporting the reasoning that conflict avoidance is at least sometimes functional (Kirkbride, Tang, &Westwood, 1991). A recent study on the patterns of conflict avoidance among university students, professors, administrators and staff also demonstrated the positive role of avoidance in some circumstances (Barsky & Wood, 2005). Andrews and Tjosvold (1983) did experiments among student teachers and their sponsor teachers showing that avoidance could contribute to relationship effectiveness when conflict intense was high. Avoiding conflict, like other strategies,

can be constructive in some conditions.

Open-Mindedness in Conflict

Western studies suggest that conflict can be quite constructive but that it has to be managed effectively (Jehn, 1997). Open-mindedness has been documented to be a useful way to characterize the interaction between protagonists that contributes to productive conflict (Deutsch, 1973; Tjosvold, 1998)

Direct discussion of opposing views, labeled controversy, has been found to induce curiosity. Protagonists, confronted with an opposing position, have been found to doubt the adequacy of their own perspective (Tjosvold, 1998). People in controversy, especially when they seek mutually acceptable solutions, feeling uncertain that their present views are complete and accurate, are motivated to search the arguments and perspective of opposing positions. They have, for example, shown more interest in learning, asked more questions, demonstrated more understanding, and incorporated elements of the opposing position into their own thinking and decisions. Avoiding disagreement and discussing with persons with a similar position induce a complacent acceptance of one's own view a complete and an illusion of understanding the other's arguments.

With constructive controversy, people continue to consider the provocation and open-mindedly collect more information about the other's intentions and motivation. This open-mindedness toward information and consideration of the other's motives provide more possibilities to conclude that the provocation was

unintended or justified (Tjosvold & Su, 2007). Furthermore, they found that the theory of cooperation and competition and the idea of constructive controversy, though developed in the West, can be useful to understand anger dynamics in Chinese organizations. When organizational members felt cooperatively interdependent, constructive controversy can help them manage their anger to feel their face is affirmed and strengthen their relationships.

Anger-expression Avoidance in China

To be open-minded and express what you feel, or not? That is a question. Within specific contexts, such as marriage, we often notice that that angry spouses tend to confront their partners and engage with them in an attempt to communicate their feelings and to give their partners an opportunity to make amends. Does this happen in the context of workplace? Maybe not. Confronting an anger-instigator may not be a viable option if the instigator occupies higher status, or holds more power, than the offended party (Fitness, 2000), especially when power difference is large in Eastern countries such as China than in Western countries, where there is a higher tendency for the Chinese people to accept the uneven distribution of power and status and to obey the social hierarchy (Hofstede, 1980).

Direct expression of anger has been proposed as a critical first step in managing conflict (Bach & Wyden, 1968) and expressing anger can potentially be constructive (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997) as it can signal that a standard of socially acceptable behavior is violated and the behavioral adaptation is needed,

However, it is also found that expressing anger can disrupt negotiations (Allred, Mallozzi, Matsui, & Raia, 1997; Pillutla & Murnighan, 1997).

However, anger, according to some behavioral researchers, once expressed, provokes additional uncontrolled anger and counter aggression (Ronka & Pulkkinen, 1995). These intense reactions may occur to a large extent with little reference to how individuals construe, think about, and attribute the causes and motives behind the provocation. The aggressive strategies may escalate conflict because the targets believe they must counterattack to restore their face (Deutsch & Krauss, 1962)

For example, Drory and Ritov (1997) in their study on conflict resolution strategies found that with a high-power opponent there was a lower preference for dominating and a higher preference for avoiding, obliging. and integrating. They concluded that in general, employees tend to adopt a rather submissive stance towards those who control their future rewards.

These findings suggest that employees angered by superiors may be less likely to confront the other party than when angered by subordinates and peers. This study identifies strategies employees adopt during and after anger interactions to avoid expressing their anger.

The Confirmation Of Social Face and Anger-Expression Avoidance

Confirmation of social face has been successfully adopted to explain the proclivity of East Asians to smooth over conflict. Deutsch argued that confirmation of social face and cooperative goals reinforce each other whereas dis-confirmation

and competition provoke each other (Deutsch & Krauss, 1962). An experimental study also supported theorizing that confirmation of social face induces cooperative goals and open-mindedness (Tjosvold, Hui & Sun, 2004). However, confirmation of social face has been seldom applied to understand employees' anger management dynamics in China.

People even with cooperative goals might also avoid expressing their anger directly to his boss due to their concern with showing respect and harmonious relationships. This is especially true in the collectivistic cultures, like China.

This study argues that employee respect, the confirmation of his boss' face, leads to anger-expression avoidance. Expressing anger in China is typically thought to affront the social face of the superior by communicating that he or she has appeared weak and ineffective (Earley, 1997), which is definitely the kind of information an employee would not want to send to a respected superior. The values to obey the social hierarchy and to respect people of higher status make Chinese employees highly sensitive to managers' face and image and reluctant to express their angry emotions freely. In other words, when an incident which makes one employee really angry with his boss happen, he would first consider showing respect to his boss and then decide to avoid expressing this anger in order to communicate that he considers his boss capable, strong and authoritative.

We propose that Chinese valuing of social face can, when confirmed, lead to anger-expression avoidance, which is a complex behavior with different motivations and actions, leading to diverse outcomes. As with conflict avoidance more generally,

anger-expression avoidance can be implemented in various ways with diverse behaviors, leading to different outcomes. The next section introduces the major strategies Chinese employees have to avoid expressing anger.

Diverse Motives and Strategies in Anger-expression Avoidance

How people react to anger depends on their thinking about the present situation and their prior learning about how to respond to provocations (Tjosvold & Su, 2007). Moreover, the literature suggests that there may be differences in employees' later or ongoing behaviors, depending on their status in the interaction. So we assume that: Avoiding expressing anger is complex in that people develop and adopt a variety of strategies in different situations.

Avoiding is much more complex than the common perception of passive complying and withdrawal from the resolution; people develop and adopt a variety of strategies in different situations (Bond & Huang, 1986; Friedman et. al., 2006; Tjosvold & Sun, 2002). Bond and Huang (1986) reported several strategies other than open debate when Chinese people were in conflict, such as indirect language, middlemen, face-saving plots, a long-range view, flexibility, and so on. More recently, Tjosvold and Sun (2002) pointed out that there were different motives and strategies in conflict avoidance, ranging from passive strategies to highly proactive ones that often involved working through third parties. Avoiding a direct discussion does not mean that protagonists simply withdraw and accommodate (Leung et al, 2002; Roloff and Ifert, 2000).

Averill's (1982) important anger diary survey listed several possible actions when the respondents became angry and then we screened and categorized them. It identified four strategies for the employees to avoid expressing anger with their boss; they are named outflanking (turn to the third party to resolve the anger), withdrawal (staying cool, ignoring, giving the silent treatment), retaliation (covert, indirect revenge to get even or to balance the apparently inequitable situation) and re-channeling (misplace anger on irrelative persons or things).

Feeling angry is not automatic but depends to a large extent on attribution of the reasons behind the frustration (Averill, 1982, 1993; Fitness, 2000). For example, whether the frustration is intended and unjustified affects whether anger is experienced. Social norms and values affect anger as they alter how people think about the present situation, make immediate judgment of these reasons, and lead him or her to have various ways of responding. In the following part, we will propose a model linking this most important Chinese social value—the confirmation of social face with various anger-expression avoidance strategies.

Participants in Averill's (1982) study responded to specific questions regarding how they responded to being angry. One of them is " when you become angry, did you feel like talking the incident over with a neutral, uninvolved third party, with no intent to harm the offender or make him or her look bad?". It represents one of the typical strategies in conflict avoidance called outflanking that involves working through third party (Tjosvold & Sun, 2002). So what is it good for? Fitness (2000) pointed out that people tell others about the anger-eliciting event in

order to obtain emotional support and to bolster their versions of events. Rimé (1995) found that the social sharing emotion is valuable and suggested that workers' friends, families and colleagues play a potentially significant role in the process of successful or unsuccessful resolution of workplace anger episode.

Based on these, we develop outflanking as an important strategy that subordinates would adopt to avoid expressing anger directly. It can be defined as turning to the third party to resolve the anger without affronting social face. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H1: *To the extent that subordinates confirm their superiors' social face, they use outflanking to avoid expressing anger with their superiors.*

Sometimes people use anger tactically to intimidate others at work, which is called the strategic presentation of anger. In particular, angry people are perceived by others as dominant and that, in an experimental situation at least, people will present anger for instrumental purposes (Ostell, 1996, Clark et al., 1996). So what are the uses of confronting? It may "sort the situation out", and if it's the supervisor's strategy, they may choose to confront when they feel angry, to let the subordinate know "who is in charge". Parrott (1993) claimed if one's workers have become complacent, a display of irritability may make them more anxious about their situations and induce more motivation and concentration. People with higher power are more likely to use strategies like forcing and confronting to deal with conflicts whereas those with lower power are to follow the others to avoid conflicts

(Bacharach & Lawer, 1981; Greenhalgh, 1987).

Due to the inequality in authority and power, subordinates are more likely to avoid assertive ways to handle conflicts (Brew & Cairns, 2004; Friedman et al. 2006). The perceived power difference is larger in eastern countries such as China than in western countries, so there is a higher tendency for the Chinese people to accept the uneven distribution of power and status and to obey the social hierarchy (Hofstede, 1980). This obedience to power and social hierarchy is one of the reasons that Chinese employees are expected to be particularly motivated to protect the face of superiors and use accommodating ways to deal with conflict. Averill (1982) also asked "did you feel like engaging in calming activities opposite to the expression of anger?" Fitness (2000) categorized this maintaining silence, walking away or ignoring the offender as examples of "immediate withdrawal".

Basing on these studies, we develop withdrawal as a second strategy that subordinates would adopt to avoid expressing their anger. It is assumed to be similar to "a cooling period", which has been thought to be effective to avoid intense conflict. (Rahim, 1992, 2001). It can be defined as staying cool, ignoring, and giving the silent treatment.

According to the above research and reasoning, it is hypothesized that:

H2: *To the extent that subordinates confirm their superior's social face，they use withdrawal to avoid expressing anger with their superiors.*

Some researchers developed evidence that anger elicited behavior aimed at

punishing or retaliating against the harm doer (Allred, 1995; Allred, Chiongbian & Parlamis, 1998). Of course, people often considered several different categories of consequences before acting on a retaliatory impulse, like losing their job, evoking retribution from their superior, or harming their reputation at work. Many people believe that retaliation is unlikely to change or accomplish anything and that retaliation may violate norms of what is considered professional and appropriate.

But even if we assume that Chinese employees, as the low power people, always seek harmony and try to communicate that they respect their superiors as capable and worthy, Skarlicki and Folger (1997) suggested that employees who feel unjustly treated may not take direct or confrontational action to remedy the situation, instead, they may take covert retaliatory action, such as theft or sabotage, in an attempt to get even or to balance an apparently inequitable situation. Bies and Tripp (1998) indicated the perceptions of injustice which elicited anger often result in retaliation. For example, employees reported that they gave the superior fabricated reasons why they could not provide the superior with the help that he or she sought on a subsequent occasion (Affred, 2006)

Therefore, we can develop the third strategy: retaliation. We define it as covert, indirect revenge, in an attempt to "get even" or to balance an apparently inequitable situation.

Based on the above research and reasoning , the present study's framework posits that:

H3: *To the extent that subordinates confirm the superior's social face，they*

use retaliation to avoid expressing anger with their superiors.

While anger can be a signal that something is wrong, often we do not take the time to discover exactly what the problem is (Maier, 1970). Misplacing anger is when we take anger for one person (in this study, superiors) out on another. People misplace or misdirect their anger from time to time, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. When we misplace our anger on a regular basis, when we consistently avoid dealing with the people with whom we really angry by discharging it on innocent people, it becomes an important problem.

Indeed, we often simply go with the anger and let it out on whoever or whatever is around us. But in Chinese employees' mind, it may not that simple, they choose to re-channel anger to somewhere else mostly because conforming to Chinese values, they are supposed to communicate respect for their boss and they know very well that affronting their boss' social face would likely to provoke him to retaliate harshly in the future. Averill (1982) measured misplacing anger by asking: "did you feel like taking your anger out on some person, some non-human object or thing not related to the instigation?". Tjosvold and Su (2007) found that angry respondents relied on indirect aggression, like taking their feelings out on some other person or thing.

Although anger seems to be expressed in some way, these actions belong to "expression avoiding strategies" category as they do not involve expressing anger directly to the boss who is the anger trigger. Our fourth strategy is re-channeling,

which can be defined as misplacing anger on persons or things irrelative to the reasons for being angry. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H4: *To the extent that subordinates confirm the superior's social face，they use re-channeling to avoid expressing anger with their superiors.*

Outcomes

Avoiding expressing anger has important outcomes. It has effects not only on organizational salient behaviors, like the relationship between employee and his or her boss or employee's future productivity, but also on some personal salient variables, like the satisfaction they feel about the job and the stress they may experience due to the emotion regulation. Next section introduces these important outcomes and more related hypothesis.

Relationship

Protecting social face is especially valued in Chinese society to promote interpersonal harmony (Earley, 1997; Ho, 1994). Chinese people are expected to protect the face of others as well as concerned that their own face be accepted, to maintain relationships (Bond, 1986; Hofstede, 1980) and Chinese tend to use avoiding way to protect their relationships (Bond & Lee, 1981; Hwang, 1987, 2000). These theories gave us a solid foundation to examine the effect of different avoiding strategies on relationships in China.

Future Productivity

Anger has been considered inimical to organizational work as it provokes aggression that disrupts relationships and productivity (Glomb & Hulin, 1997; Lewis, 2000). Uncontrolled anger, and aggression, can result in a negative cycle of mutual frustration with substantial long-term consequences (Ronka & Pulkkinen, 1995). We are curious about the subordinates' future productivity after adopting particular strategies in anger.

Although it is hard to predict the exact effects of four different strategies on relationship and future productivity, we can still categorize them into two groups according to whether they are aggressive or not. Outflanking and withdraw, relatively submissive and less violent; retaliation and re-channeling involves more intense emotions and more radical actions.

Based on above reasoning , it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 5a: *To the extent people use the strategy of outflanking to avoid expressing anger, they improve their relationship and future productivity.*

Hypothesis 5b: *To the extent people use the strategy of withdrawal to avoid expressing anger, they improve their relationship and future productivity.*

Hypothesis 6a: *To the extent people use the strategy of retaliation to avoid expressing anger, they undermine their relationship and future productivity.*

Hypothesis 6b*: To the extent people use the strategy of re-channeling to avoid expressing anger, they undermine their relationship and future productivity.*

Job Satisfaction and Stress

The preceding arguments imply direct effects of social face and the anger avoiding strategies on employees' organizational salient behaviors. A second potential influence of these strategies involves personal influences caused by the employees' regulating their angry emotion at work. Here emotional regulation refers to processes by which individuals choose which emotions they express, relative to those they experience, in either a controlled or an automatic way (Gross, 1998). People habitually regulate their emotions and emotional displays to conform with social norms and expectations of the workplace, as well as job role demands. According to this definition, our four anger-expressing avoidance strategies are all about the employees' hiding their original negative emotion, anger, out of the concern of confirmation of social face, and then taking action to avoid expressing it, which makes them one kind of emotional regulation.

Initial theoretical work by Hochschild (1979) and the more recent free trait theory (Little, 2000) both view emotional regulation as harmful to employees because it involves acting without authenticity. Hochschild (1983) suggested that when employees regulate their emotions at work, they experience feelings of depersonalization and separation from self; John and Gross (2004) reported that if employees only changed their emotion expression instead of changing the way they thought about an emotional event, they would have less healthier patterns of social functioning and worse well-being. Empirical evidence supports this notion, as researchers have found that suppressing emotions has both physiological and

cognitive costs (dissatisfaction of job or decreased memory for social information) and is also associated with psychological strain (e.g., stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout) and physical complaints (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000). Therefore, we expected the following:

Hypothesis 7: To the extent employees use the four anger-expression avoidance strategies with their superior, they experience job dissatisfaction and stress.

The literature and reasoning above suggest the study's model: the confirmation of social face affects anger-expression avoidance strategies, which then improve or undermine relationships and employees' future productivity and is also negatively associated with their job satisfaction while positively associated with their experienced stress. We classify relationship and future productivity as organizationally salient outcomes, , and job satisfaction and stress as individually salient outcomes.
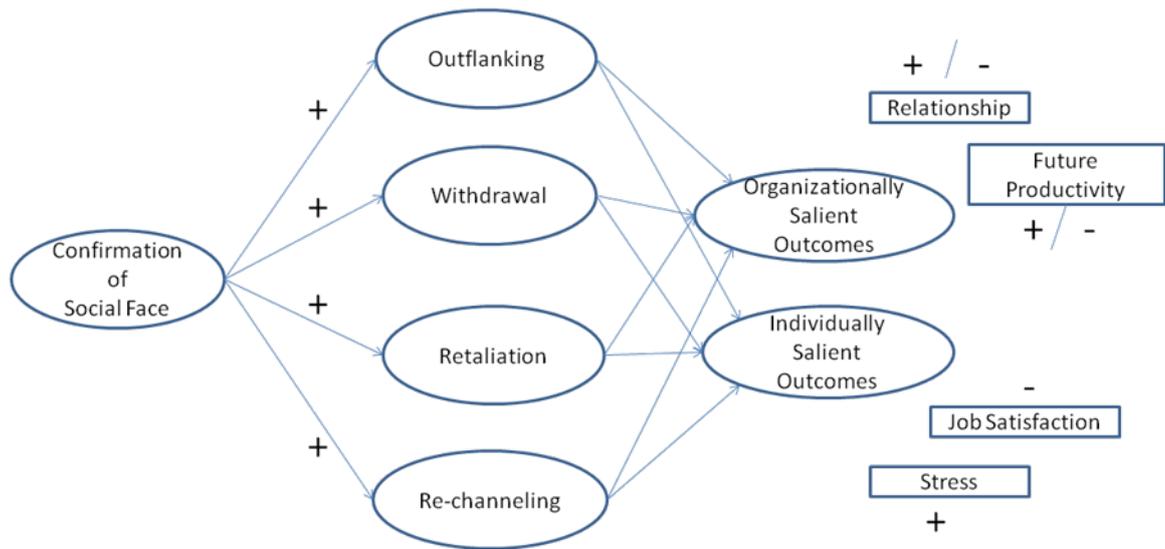
Figure 1   Hypothesized Model

Concluding Comments

Emotions have until recently been largely ignored in the study of

organizational behavior (Arvey, et al., 1998; Putnam & Mumby, 1993). The

workplace was viewed as a rational environment, where emotions interfere with

sound judgment. Thus, emotions were not even considered as explanations for

workplace phenomenon. This view is being dismantled as more researchers are

finding how workplace emotions help to explain important individual and

organizational outcomes (for a review, see Arvey et al., 1998). More specifically,

researchers are beginning to explore how emotions are managed by employees to

improve work outcomes, which means the ability of managing the emotions that are

inevitably evoked by conflicts has been considered as a critically important skill. One

example is an employee changing how she feels, or what feelings she shows, in order

to interact with customers or clients in an effective way (Grandey, 2000).

Anger is a basic feeling that everyone experiences and is part of

organizational life. Averill (1982, 1993) has described its basic aspects and dynamic.

It can be provoked by a range of behaviors that have in common the effect of making

people feel unfairly treated or socially disrespected. This chapter first reviewed the

social face and conflict avoiding research, which included the need and significance

of introducing the concept of social face into the anger-expression avoidance

framework. Then it discussed previous studies about peoples, especially subordinates

behaviors after they feel angry with their superiors, and proposed the hypotheses.

The next chapter reviews the hypotheses and model.

CHAPTER III

HYPOTHESES

Based on the review of the literature of previous studies on anger and anger avoidance in Chapter II, this chapter displays the hypotheses. It first identifies the study's variables and then presents the hypothesized model.

Variables of the Model

This study proposes that employees' confirmation of social face affects their actions toward anger-expression avoidance, and then the specific actions determine the outcomes. There are nine variables in the hypothesized model with one antecedent variable, four mediators and four outcomes. All the variables were measured with either 5 or 7 point Likert-type scales.

This section defines each variable in the model (Figure 1):

Confirmation of social face is measured by the extent the interviewees respect their managers and see their superiors as effective.

Outflanking: Instead of directly expressing their anger and arguing with the boss, employees work through a third party, either an individual or an association, to get the anger resolved and perhaps the conflict solved.

Withdrawal: Employees stay cold and ignore the anger-trigger and the superiors to avoid potential conflict if they expressed their anger directly, even when they actually do not like or agree with the superiors' position.

Retaliation: Employees do not express directly their anger or complaints

about the superiors' decisions or attitude, but take covert, indirect revenge in an attempt to "get even" or to balance an apparently inequitable situation.

Re-channeling: employees avoid expressing anger towards the superiors who are the people with whom they really angry; instead they discharge it on people or things unrelated to the source of anger.

Relationship is measured by the effect the interaction between the subordinate and his/her superior had their relationship.

Future productivity is measured by the effect of the interaction had on efficiency for the participants to solve the problem and accomplish the task.

Job satisfaction is measured by the passion and motivation for the job the employees had after the anger incident.

Stress is measured by the personal feeling for themselves related with emotional tension or depression after the anger incident.

Hypothesized Model

Figure 1   Hypothesized Structural Model
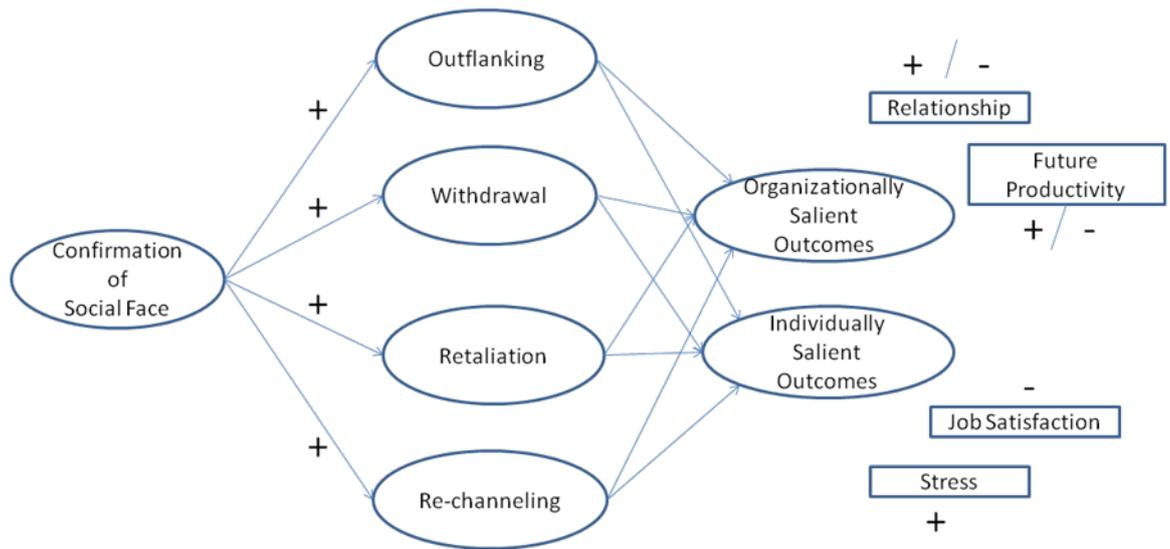
Figure 1

As shown in Figure 1, the basic model to be tested is that the confirmation of social face affects subordinates' anger-expression avoidance behaviors and then leads to four outcomes. In this model, social face is identified as antecedent to affect the outcomes of relationship, future productivity, job satisfaction and stress. Seven hypotheses are listed below:

Hypothesis 1: *To the extent that subordinates confirm the superior's social face，they use outflanking to avoid expressing anger with their superiors.*

Hypothesis 2: *To the extent that subordinates confirm the superior's social face，they use withdrawal to avoid expressing anger with their superiors.*

Hypothesis 3: *To the extent that subordinates confirm the superior's social face，they use retaliation to avoid expressing anger with their superiors.*

Hypothesis 4: *To the extent that subordinates confirm the superior's social face，they use re-channeling to avoid expressing anger with their superiors.*

Hypothesis 5a: *To the extent subordinates use the strategy of outflanking to*

avoid expressing anger, they improve their relationship and future productivity.

Hypothesis 5b: *To the extent subordinates use the strategy of withdrawal to avoid expressing anger, they improve their relationship and future productivity.*

Hypothesis 6a: *To the extent subordinates use the strategy of retaliation to avoid expressing anger, they undermine their relationship and future productivity.*

Hypothesis 6b*: To the extent subordinates use the strategy of re-channeling to avoid expressing anger, they undermine their relationship and future productivity.*

Hypothesis 7: *To the extent employees use the four anger-expression avoidance strategies with their superior, they experience job dissatisfaction and stress.*

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter III summarized the hypotheses and briefly described the proposed model. This chapter examines the research methodology for testing these hypotheses and model. It introduces the sample, interview schedule, and the data analyses.

An interview-based study was used to collect the data to test the hypotheses. In half a year, I interviewed more than 100 people in mainland China for the sample of this study.

The interview process was divided into three phases. First I did pre-testing in Hong Kong in April 2008, to make sure the questions designed in the interview are understandable and practical. Sixteen students in my tutorial courses – Introduction of Behavior Science in Lingnan University, Hong Kong participated in the pre-test. After obtaining their answers and refining the questionnaire according to my supervisor's suggestions, I collected data in Guangzhou in the summer of 2008. It took one month to carry out the interviews. The interviewees were recruited through my personal relationship network, such as my former university classmates, schoolmates, my relatives' colleagues, and other friends. The last phase was interviewing employees who worked in Beijing in the late summer and winter of 2008; the sources of the interviewees were similar to Guangzhou.

Participants

The study was conducted among employees located in two major cities in

Chinese mainland, namely, Beijing and Guangzhou. Beijing, the capital city of China, has generally high educational level; Guangzhou has a relatively high per capita income with a well-developed industrial base.

Of the more than 100 participants, 8 of them felt it hard to understand some of the questions and definitions and did not provide all the answers or consistent answers, so their questionnaires are not included in the final data used in the analysis, which reduced the final number of the date to the still acceptable 100. These 100 respondents are not representative of all of China, but their incidents can suggest some important anger-expression avoidance dynamics in organizations in China. Among them, 57 are male and 43 are female with an average age is 30. Seventy-eight had been employed by their company for more than 1 year. Seventy-six have bachelor degrees and twelve have a higher degree. Detailed descriptions of the interviewees are shown in Table 1.

Table 1   Characteristics of Interviewees

		Beijing		Guangzhou	
Gender	Male	33	54%	24	62%
	Female	28	46%	15	38%
Age	Below 25	20	33%	18	46%
	25-30	25	41%	13	33%
	30-40	16	26%	8	21%

		Beijing		Guangzhou	
Education Level	**Without Bachelor**	9	15%	3	8%
	Bachelor Degree	47	77%	29	74%
	Above Bachelor	5	8%	7	18%
Work Year	**>1 year**	52	85%	26	67%
	<1 year	9	15%	13	33%
Nationality	**Chinese**	58	95%	37	95%
	Foreigner	3	5%	2	5%

Interview Schedule

Critical Incident Technique

The critical incident technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954) was used to develop

the interview structure. It is "an observable human activity that is complete enough

in itself to permit inferences to be made about the person performing the act" (Bitner,

Booms, & Tetreault, 1990). CIT has been considered a particularly useful method

when studying complex interpersonal phenomenon (Walker & Truly, 1992).

Researchers have begun to use interviews as practical ways to help people report past

events fully with accuracy (Yukl, et al, 1996). In addition, this method is thought to

help moderate errors when persons are asked to summarize across many incidents as

required by most surveys (Schwartz, 1999).

The interviews were conducted in Chinese Mandarin and usually lasted around 1 hour each. No recording devices were used other than paper and pen. Interviewees were assured that their responses would be kept totally confidential and were informed that the objective of the study was to find out their reactions after feeling anger with their superior and what effect these reactions may bring about in their future working life and how they may even influence their personal well-being. In order to reduce biases, interviewees were not informed of the hypotheses in the whole process.

They were first asked to describe in detail a recent, significant incident when they felt angry with their superior but did not try to discuss it directly with him or her. As illustrations, they were advised like this, "for example, you had a disagreement with your superior and he or her did not want to listen to your ideas. Or perhaps your boss scolded you without good reason". The 100 interviewees reported one incident each. After describing the setting, what occurred, and the consequences, they were asked to rate specific questions on 5 or 7-point Likert-type scales (from 1=little to 5 or 7=a great deal) during the rest of the interview to indicate their own ratings of various aspects of the incidents. All scales were based on the recalled incident. Measures included social face, anger-expression avoidance strategies, relationship, employee's future productivity, job satisfaction and stress. Respondents could read as well as listen to the questions and scales.

Open questions were also introduced before they responded to the scales.

Examples are "How intense was your anger in the incident you described?" and "As time passes by, how do you feel now, about the job and yourself ?". These open questions were to help the respondents clarify how intense their anger was and make sure they understand we asked them to rate the scales based on their immediate feelings after the anger incident. Their report of the over-time feelings will be included in discussion part as a comparison to our model.

As the interview schedule was originally written in English, one bi-lingual research assistant translated it into Chinese. To ensure conceptual consistency, the questionnaires were back-translated into English to check for possible deviation. (Brislin, 1970). The translators and back-translators met to examine the differences and modifications were made to develop the final Chinese version of the instrument. The questions were pretested to ensure the respondents would clearly understand them.

Confirmation of Social Face

The measure of confirmation of social face was developed from theorizing and studies conducted on social face in North America and China (Tjosvold & Sun, 2001; Tjosvold & Huston, 1978). It was thought that measuring confirmation and dis-confirmation as communication respect was more descriptive and less leading than asking direct questions about "social face". Respondents indicated the extent that respect was communicated as they dealt with each other. They indicated on one 7-point scales "How much respect did you have for the other person?". Using these

item is because giving face by showing respect is a basic ingredient that promotes

collaboration whereas doubts that people are respected is expected to disrupt joint

work in the West as well as in China (Goffman, 1967).

Anger-expression Avoiding Strategies

A scale for drawing a typology of employee's anger expression avoiding

behaviors was newly designed but based on previous studies. Seventeen items were

developed to describe the diverse individual actions in avoiding expressing their

anger with the boss that were the basis for developing the measures of the four anger

avoiding strategies.

The items were developed to measure four strategies underlining the diverse

ways to avoid expressing anger. Outflanking is turning to the third party to resolve

the anger without affronting social face with a sample item "I turned to the friend or

my family who was trusted to talk about the incident." ; Withdrawal is staying cool,

ignoring, giving the silent treatment), with a sample item "I tried not to see my

supervisor in a few day after the incident."; Retaliation is covert, indirect revenge, in

an attempt to get even or to balance the apparently inequitable situation, with a

sample item "I said bad things about my supervisor behind his/her back."; and

re-channeling is misplacing place anger on persons or things irrelative to the reasons

for being angry, with a sample item "I took my anger out on a non-human object or

thing." Each strategy had about four items and then exploratory factor analysis was

applied to extract these factors.

Relationship

Relationship was measured by the average of three items taken from Tjosvold and Sun (2000). This three-item scale was developed to measure the extent that the interviewee improved his/her relationship with the superior after the interaction. A sample item is " to what extent did this interaction make you more trusting of your supervisor?" The relationship scale had a Cronbach alpha of .94.

Future Productivity

Employee future productivity was measured by four items that have been successfully used but not subject to vigorous psychometric tests (Tjosvold et al., 1996; Tjosvold, Hui & Sun, 2004). A sample item is "How much did this interaction help you feel confident that you can use your abilities effectively in the future?" This 4-item scale has a Cronbach alpha reliability of .74.

Job Satisfaction

Ilies and Judge (2000) have found considerable variation in job satisfaction over the course of the workday, so we obtained a measure of momentary job satisfaction, using five Brayfield-Rothe items (e.g., "After the incident, I find real enjoyment in my work", "After the incident, I have to force myself to go to work most of the time.(reversed), see Bono & Judge,2003; Brayfield & Rothe, 1951). The response formats from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* were coded 7 to 1 to represent satisfaction.

Stress

Job-related stress was measured with a revised version of a scale created by Motowidlo, Packard, and Manning (1986). The 6-item scale measures subjective stress by asking employees about the stress, strain, and tension they experience because of their job after the anger incident. Higher scores on the scale indicate higher levels of job-related stress. An example item is "After the incident, I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing." The Cronbach alpha reliability is .83.

Table 2 provides detailed information about the measures.

Table 2   Measures Information

	Number of Items	**Alpha**
Confirmation of Social Face	1	
Anger-expression Avoidance	17	0.86
Relationship	3	0.94
Future Productivity	4	0.74
Job Satisfaction	5	0.91
Stress	6	0.83

Analyses

Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used in this study. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was first applied, based on the interviewees' ratings on the scales, to extract several underlying diverse anger-expression avoidance strategies. Sample difference was first analyzed to test whether the hypothesized model differed across the two groups-----people from different cities, Beijing and Guangzhou. Correlation analysis was then used to have initial tests of the relationships among different variables, the confirmation of social face, the anger-expression avoidance strategies and the four outcomes. Finally, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to further study the causal relationships among all the variables. As for the qualitative data, from the participants' accounts on critical incidents, I chose and summarized some specific cases shown in the discussion part to give a glimpse of the conditions that may lead to different anger-expression avoidance and outcomes in the workplace in China.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

To simplify interviewees' various responses of avoiding anger expression to their superior, we conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to extract the routine patterns underlying diverse behaviors. The extraction method used here is Principle Component Analysis and the rotation method is Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Two rounds of EFA were conducted to obtain the final result.

The original 17 items were included in the first-round EFA analysis, and five

factors were extracted after the first round. The result is shown in Table 3.

Table 3   EFA for Anger-expression Avoidance Strategies

Item No.	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Act20	.760				
Act12	.781				
Act8	.846				
Act16	.811				
Act13		.643			
Act9		.564			
Act21		.848			
Act17		.785			
Act10			.764		
Act18			.757		
Act14			.816		
Act22			.719		
Act11				.545	
Act15				.801	
Act23				.826	
Act19				.681	
Act7					.723

Note:
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

As there was only one item with a loading above .4 on the fifth factor, we

therefore reduced the number of factors into four, and ran the EFA again using the

same method mentioned above. (The deleted item was: I tried to play more computer

game at work time while my boss was away.) And then, as shown in Table 4, there is

a quite clear loading pattern of four factors underlying the diverse avoiding behaviors,

which is consistent with our hypotheses. Based on the previous studies, we labeled

these four factors as outflanking (turning to the third party to resolve the anger

without affronting social face), withdrawal (staying cool, ignoring, giving the silent

treatment), retaliation (covert, indirect revenge, in an attempt to get even or to

balance the apparently inequitable situation) and re-channeling (misplacing place

anger on persons or things irrelative to the reasons for being angry). Therefore, the

scale of anger-expression avoidance was divided into four sub-scales with Cronbach

alpha reliabilities of .85, .82, .76, and .83 respectively; all reached acceptable levels.

Table 4   Final Results of EFA

	Four Factors			
Items in the Scale	**Outflanking**	**Withdrawal**	**Retaliation**	**Re-channeling**
Act20 turn to family member	.805			
Act12 talk through a third party	.798			
Act8 turn to a friend	.843			
Act16 turn to higher authorities	.837			
Act9 leave the scene		.745		
Act21 try not to see the boss		.782		
Act17 maintain silence		.816		
Act9 give up opposing position		.788		
Act10 say bad things behind his back			.612	
Act18 be slow on urgent task			.832	
Act14 take away office's stuff			.587	
Act22 remove boss' benefit			.751	
Act11 take anger out on other people				.809
Act15 take anger out on objects				.727
Act23 be angry with subordinates				.848
Act19 do calming activities				.668

Note:
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Complete description of each item is presented in Appendix I

Scale validation

We carried out a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) using EQS for

Window (Bentler & Wu, 1995) to establish whether the respondents' ratings would

load on outflanking, withdrawal, retaliation and re-channeling as four distinct

variables. Although some of the items used in this study have been validated in

previous study, the forms and values may be different from those in China. Also,

some of the definitions and the questionnaire are newly and differently structured.

Therefore, it is necessary to examine if these scales are appropriately organized.

These series of confirmatory factor analyses were conducted at the individual level

(N=100) in order to maximize the statistical power of the analyses.

Table 5   Confirmatory Factor Analysis Result

	d.f.	Model χ^2	$\Delta\chi^2$	NFI	NNFI	CFI
Baseline 4-factor Model (M0)	76	185.57		.91	.89	.90
Combined Outflanking and Withdrawal (M1)	78	221.87	36.30	.85	.83	.80
Combined Withdrawal and Re-channeling (M2)	79	206.32	20.75	.80	.81	.80
Combined Retaliation and Outflanking (M3)	80	286.01	100.54	.75	.74	.73

	d.f.	Model χ²	Δχ²	NFI	NNFI	CFI
2-factor Model (M4)	85	311.18	114.41	.68	.67	.66
One factor solution (M5)	88	421.12	224.35	.63	.61	.59

Note:
4-factor Model (M0) includes outflanking, withdrawal, retaliation and re-channeling.
The 3-factor Models are developed based on the correlations among four strategies
In 2-factor Model (M4), re-channeling and retaliation are combined into one factor,
  and withdrawal and outflanking are combined into the other factor.
In the one-factor Model (M5), all the factors were combined into one factor.
NFI：Bentler-Bonnett Normed Fit Index; CFI：Comparative Fit Index;
NNFI：Bentler-Bonnett Non-Normed Fit Index.
N of cases =100

Results of the confirmatory factor analysis are shown in Table 5, which

indicates a good fit between our proposed 4-factor measurement model (M0) and the

data, with a Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and a Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) of .90

and .89, respectively. The 4-factor measurement model was then compared to three

different 3-factor models, a 2-factor model, and a 1-factor solution model. In order to

make these comparisons, we simplified the structural model in this study by reducing

the number of indicators for the constructs. Each of the 3-factor models (M1, M2,

and M3) was formed by merging two of the four factors into one aggregate factor,

the 2-factor model (M4) was formed by merging two factors into a group while the

left two factors into another, and the one-factor solution model (M5) by merging all

indicators into a single factor. These five alternative models were selected on the

basis of the logical possibility that the variables in the model might not be

conceptually distinct, and that instead of causal relationships, the variables might

form a single factor.

As shown in Table 5, the model chi-squares of five alternative models (M1, M2, M3, M4, M5) were significantly greater than that of the proposed 4-factor model (M0) and the fit index scores of the five models were also lower. Therefore, the five comparative models have significantly worse fit indices than the hypothesized model and the comparisons suggest that the four factors in the proposed model (M0) were distinct measures of the constructs in our study. We can conclude that there are four distinct measures of avoiding expressing anger strategies and these four variables will be used in later analysis.

Hypotheses Testing

Correlational analysis was performed for initial hypothesis testing. Structural equation analysis was then used through the EQS for Windows program (Bentler & Wu, 1995) to examine the underlying causal relationships among social face, anger-expression avoidance strategies (i.e., outflanking, withdrawal, retaliation, re-channeling) and the outcomes (i.e., relationship, future productivity, job satisfaction and stress). In our analysis, the confirmation of social face was specified as exogenous variable that predicts the outcomes by the mediation of the different anger-expression avoidance strategies.

A nested model test commonly adopted in causal model analysis was used where the two other alternatives, the partially mediated model and the non-mediated model were compared to our hypothesized model (fully mediated model). In the

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non-mediated model, the confirmation of social face impact outcomes directly, without causal relationships between the different avoidance strategies and the outcomes. The partially mediated model implies that the confirmation of social face will influence the strategies of anger-expression avoidance and the outcomes and the behavior of different strategies also has effect on the outcome variables.

We then tested whether the differences of groups of respondents had effects on the results. We divided all the participants into two groups according to their cities and tested the differences of their responses between these interviewees who worked in different cities in mainland China.

Summary

One hundred Chinese employees were interviewed in Beijing and Guangzhou, during from June 2008 to December 2008. We used critical incident technique (CIT) to develop the interview. Interviewees were first asked to describe an incident in detail when they felt angry with their superior but did not try to discuss it directly with him or her. They then answered specific questions on 5/7-point Likert-type scale based on the recalled incidents. Scales included the confirmation of social face, different strategies of anger-expression avoidance and four outcomes of relationship, future performance, job satisfaction, and stress.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) explored four strategies underlying the diverse anger-expression avoidance responses, which were titled as outflanking, withdrawal,

retaliation and re-channeling. CFA results validated these four distinct strategies.

Correlational analysis was used to do the initial test of the relationship among all

variables in the hypothesized model. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was then

adopted to explore the causal relationships among the confirmation of social face,

different strategies of anger-expression avoidance and four outcomes. Some specific

cases were selected to understand the conditions that lead to these avoiding choices

and the outcomes.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Previous chapters have explained the study's theories, measures, and methods. This chapter reports how we analyze the data collected from the interviews and presents the results of the data analyses. Specifically, it describes the results of regional difference, correlational, and structural equation modeling analyses. Lastly, it presents the analyses of the incidents.

Sample Difference Analysis

Multivariate statistics were used to test the differences of the anger-expression avoidance strategies between employees who worked for companies in different cities, either in Beijing and Guangzhou. The effects of the interviewees' working city were examined to see whether cultural background and working environment significantly affected interviewees' responding. Because the two cities of China are in different phrases of development and have different cultures and traditions in doing business, it may be that the reported anger-expression avoidance strategies adopted may differ across the cities the interviewees are working in, as well as other variables. The results (Table 6) indicate that there are no significant effects of the region on employees' ratings to confirmation of social face, the four strategies, and outcomes. As the results do not find significant differences, we combined the samples in the other analyses.

Table 6   Results of Regional Difference Analysis

	df	Square	F	Sig.
(1) Confirmation of Social Face	1	4.337	2.319	.168
(2) Outflanking	1	2.235	1.186	.228
(3) Withdrawal	1	.908	.521	.816
(4) Retaliation	1	1.510	.883	.201
(5) Re-channeling	1	.836	.416	.338
(6) Relationship	1	.528	.282	.824
(7) Future Productivity	1	2.205	1.369	.331
(8) Job Satisfaction	1	4.017	2.653	.348
(9) Stress	1	.925	.472	.607

Correlational Analysis Findings

Correlations among the scales support the overall framework that the confirmation of social face by the employees have for their boss affects the anger-expression avoidance strategies and outcomes. The results of correlations (see Table 7) provide initial support to the first four hypotheses (H1-H4) that subordinates' confirmation of social face towards their superior lead to different anger-expression strategies. Specifically, social face was significantly positively related with outflanking, withdrawal, and retaliation ($r = .63$, $p < .01$; $r = .64$, $p < .01$; $r = .66$, $p < .01$).

Results were also consistent with the fifth and sixth hypotheses that outflanking and withdrawal lead to improved future productivity ($r = .40$, $p < .05$; $r = .48$, $p < .05$) whereas retaliation and re-channeling were related to low levels of

relationship (r= -.64, p< .01; r= -.47, p< .05) and future productivity (r= -.32, p< .05;

r= -.38, p< .05).

Correlations indicate that four anger-expression avoidance strategies are

negatively related to employee job satisfaction (r= -.31, p< .05; r= -.52, p< .01; r=

-.67, p< .01; r= -.53, p< .01) and positively related with stress (r= .57, p< .01; r= .47,

p< .05; r= .60, p< .01; r= .42, p< .05). These results support hypothesis seven.

Table 7   Correlations among Variables [a, b, c]

	Mean	St. D.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
(1)Confirmation of Social Face	5.04	1.62									
(2)Outflanking	4.58	1.78	.63**								
(3)Withdrawal	4.96	1.71	.64**	.11							
(4)Retaliation	4.62	.83	.66**	.19	.25						
(5)Re-channeling	4.02	.79	.41*	.05	.23	.11					
(6)Relationship	3.58	1.14	.29	.33	.36	-.64**	-.47*	(.94)			
(7) Future Productivity	3.99	.86	.42*	.40*	.48*	-.32*	-.38*	.56**	(.74)		
(8) Job Satisfaction	4.57	.83	-.45*	-.31*	-.52**	-.67**	-.53**	.39	.65**	(.91)	
(9) Stress	4.22	.85	.37	.57**	.47*	.60**	.42*	-.27	-.44*	-.47*	(.83)

Notes:
a   N=100
b   Values in bracket are reliability (coefficient alpha) estimates.
c   **p<.01; *p<.05.

Model Comparison

Structural equation modeling analyses were used to explore the relationship among confirmation of social face, anger-expression avoidance, and the outcomes of relationship, future performance, job satisfaction and stress. We first compared the hypothesized model to some alternative models to see if the hypothesized one was the best. Two alternative models (M1-M2) were introduced in to compare with the hypothesized fully mediated model (the hypothesized model). Specifically, the first alternative model (M1) is a direct model with the mediator omitted. The second alternative model (M2) indicates that anger-expression avoidance strategies impacts the confirmation of social face first and then social face impacts the dependent variables.

Results (see Table 8) indicate that the hypothesized model statistics fits the data very well. The χ^2 of the hypothesized model was 28.63 (d.f.=17) and NFI, NNFI and CFI were 0.96, 0.95 and 0.96, respectively. Given the usually critical value of .90 (Bentler & Bonnett, 1980), results of the fit statistics suggested that the hypothesized model be accepted and either the position exchange of the independent and mediating variables or the omitting of parameters for the mediating effects of different avoidance behaviors on outcomes significantly deteriorated the model fit to the data.

We can see that hypothesized model fit the data better after comparing the hypothesized model to the alternative models: For the non-mediated model (M1), the

χ^2 was 132.28 (d.f.=12). The χ^2 for the changed-mediated model (M2) is 78.56 (d.f.=7). The hypothesized model thus showed substantial improvement in the chi-square indicates over the other two alternative models.

As for other model fits, CFI, NNFI and NFI for non-mediated model (M1) were 0.81, 0.83 and 0.84, respectively. Those for changed-mediated model (M2) were 0.84, 0.86 and 0.86 respectively. We can see the superiority of the hypothesized model after these comparing with the other models. Overall, the fit statistics indicated that the Indirect Effects Model M0 fitted the data best.

Table 8 Results of the Nested Model Analyses

Indirect Effects Model (M0)		Direct Effects Model (M1)		Changed-mediated Model (M2)	
Model χ^2	28.63	Model χ^2	132.28	Model χ^2	78.56
d.f.	17	d.f.	12	d.f.	7
CFI	0.96	CFI	0.81	CFI	0.84
NFI	0.95	NFI	0.83	NFI	0.86
NNFI	0.96	NNFI	0.84	NNFI	0.86

Note: NFI= normed-fit index; CFI=comparative fit index

Structural Equation Modeling Analysis

The path coefficients of the theorized model help to explore the findings more specifically (Figure 2a: organizational salient outcomes, 2b: personal ones).
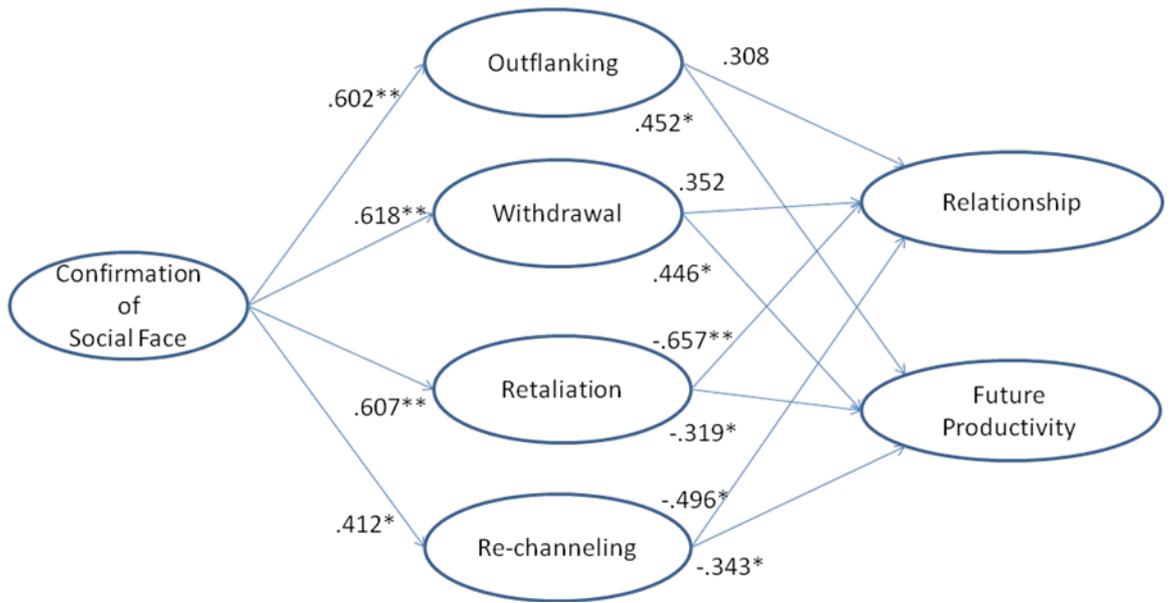
Figure 2a   Path Estimates for the Hypothesized Structural Model
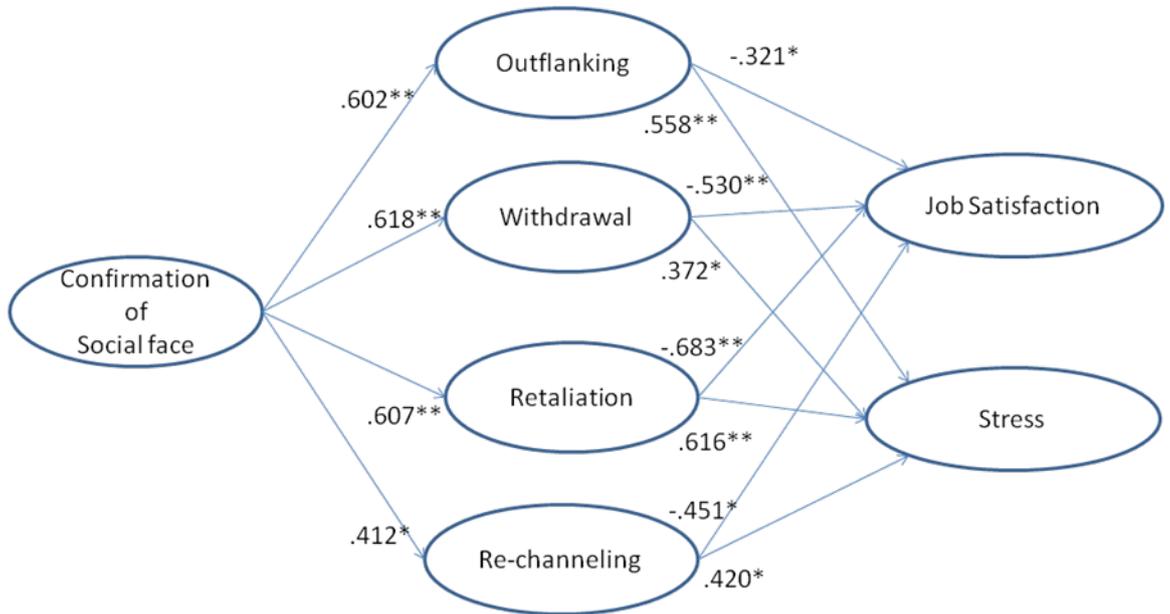
Figure 2b   Path Estimates for the Hypothesized Structural Model

Generally, findings on path coefficients were consistent with the correlational

findings and provided reasonably good support for the study's hypotheses.

Results indicated that confirmation of social face had significant positive effects on four anger-expression avoidance strategies (β= .602, p< .01; β= .618, p< .01; β= .607, p< .01; β= .412, p< .05), which support hypothesis one, two, three, and four.

Originally, it was assumed that the adoption of strategy outflanking and strategy withdrawal would improve the relationship between employees and their superiors. However, results from the path analyses indicated that these two strategies had a weaker effect on relationship (β= .308, β= .352) than on future productivity (β= .452, p< .05; β= .446, p< .05). Outflanking and withdrawal have positive but not significant effects on relationships. Hypothesis 5a and 5b are partially supported.

Consistent with hypothesis 6a and 6b, results of the path analysis suggest the other two strategies, retaliation and re-channeling, would undermine relationship (β= -.657, p< .01; β= -.496, p< .05) and future productivity (β= -.319, p< .05; β= -.343, p< .05).

Finally, four anger-expression avoidance strategies (outflanking, withdrawal, retaliation and re-channeling) had significant negative effects on job satisfaction (β= -.321, p< .05; β= -.530, p< .01; β= -.683, p< .01; β= -.451, p< .05) and significant positive effects on stress (β= .558, p< .01; β= .372, p< .05; β= .616, p< .01; β= .420, p< .05). These results are consistent with hypothesis seven.

To conclude, this study identified four types of anger-expression avoidance strategies, labeled as outflanking, withdrawal, retaliation and re-channeling.

Multivariate statistics did not find significant differences in subordinates' strategies

and other variables due to the regional differences.(Beijing or Guangzhou).

Hypotheses one to four were supported by correlational and SEM analysis, indicating

that confirmation of social face can lead to the adoption of different anger-expression

avoidance strategies. Hypotheses five and six were partially supported that

outflanking and withdrawal have a positive effect (not significant) on relationship

and significantly positive effect on future productivity, while retaliation and

re-channeling have a significantly negative effect on relationship and future

productivity. All analysis also supported our hypotheses seven that four strategies of

anger-expression avoidance result in less job satisfaction and more stress in the

collectivist organization of China.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

This chapter provides an overview of the study's results and then discusses its findings. These findings include four typical cases in which respondents in their effort to show respect chose different strategies to handle the anger as they avoided expressing it. The chapter also discusses issues on the relationship between the confirmation of social face in the workplace and the employees' anger-expression avoidance strategies and the relationship between the avoiding behaviors and their influence on important outcomes. Then it describes the limitations and practical implications.

This study identified four types of anger-expression avoidance behaviors, labeled as outflanking, withdrawal, retaliation and re-channeling. Multivariate statistics did not find significant differences in subordinates' strategies and other variables due to the culture of their city (Beijing or Guangzhou). The correlations largely supported the hypotheses by indicating that all the four strategies were significantly positive-related with the confirmation of social face; Structural Equation Modeling was used to test the causal relationships among confirmation of social face, anger-expression avoidance strategies and the outcomes. In particular, confirmation of social face can lead to the adoption of different anger-expression avoidance strategies that result in less job satisfaction and more stress in the collectivist organization of China. Outflanking and withdrawal have a positive effect

on relationship and significantly positive effect on future productivity, while

retaliation and re-channeling have a significantly negative effect on relationship and

future productivity.

Illustrative Cases

A total of 100 cases were recorded; this section presents four typical cases to

illustrate the four anger-expression avoidance strategies of outflanking, withdrawal,

retaliation, and re-channeling. We found these four styles were not fully separated;

they were indeed often used in combination (Van de Vliert, Euwema, & Huismans,

1995). For example, covert, retaliatory tactics are often used while people are giving

in and following their supervisors' decisions without revealing their anger to them.

Also participants might turn to a third party to express their anger after they at the

first place withdrawal from the scene. The cases presented here illustrate the four

styles of people's anger-expression avoidance behavior and suggest how the

confirmation of social face affects the interviewees' avoidance strategies, and then

how these strategies lead to different outcomes.

Outflanking

A female engineer in a biochemistry company in Beijing talked about an

incident in which she did not express her anger about her yearly bonus was not as

much as she had expected. This situation happened near the end of the year 2008

when managers distribute bonuses according to the employees' annual performance.

As a woman, she is in a small minority in this company, but she worked hard, staying

late in the laboratory, busying working on the endless experiment and report writing. As her contributions to the company are quite fundamental and indispensable, she thought she deserved a quite fair bonus compared to other people. But the result disappointed her so much although others' bonus were not open in public, she got to know their numbers anyway. The first thing she wanted to do after she knew about this was to talk to her boss directly, expressing her anger and asking why.

However, after thinking that this kind of action may affront her boss' social face by communicating that he was not aware of the comprehensive situation of the company and every person's contribution, that he was not fair enough or clever enough to make such decision of bonus, she hesitated. Because she knew that the outcome could not be good, in that their future working relationship could be completely destroyed due to her momentary anger. After second thought, she chose to suppress her anger and tried to get her anger resolved by talking with a colleague who was also a good friend of her boss. The colleague showed sympathy and promised to say something about the bonus in private with the boss. Meanwhile, she talked about the incident with her husband and gained emotional support, for her husband had a clear understanding of how hardworking his wife was during the past year. Finally, the boss had a long talk with her, explaining the situation the company was facing, giving full recognition of her contribution, and promising to make up her in other ways in the future. Her anger was partly relieved but she did not sense any relationship improvement after the incident and she was still not feeling satisfied with her job and her boss.

Withdrawal

A middle manager in a large oil company in Beijing told an incident in which he avoided expressing his anger with his immediate supervisor. Weeks before the interview, the manager was responsible for composing a report for his superior, as his responsibility was to analyze the industry's developments and give his opinions about how his company could keep ahead of other competitors. He structured his report carefully and put a lot of creative ideas in it. At least, he thought them very creative. But after his superior read this report, he was dissatisfied and objected strongly to his suggestions. He did not talk to the middle manager in private; on the contrary, he directly and aggressively pointed out the mistakes the manager made in the report and, with his peers in attendance, expressed his disappointment and asked the manager to do it again.

The manager felt hurt and angry, partly because he thought that his superior was so critical and judgmental because of a previous disagreement on something else, not this incident itself. His boss was just taking revenge. He knew that so he did not talk back in his boss' face, because he still wanted to show respect to him and not to challenge his face by letting the angry emotion out. Instead of yelling back or vigorously defending himself, he ignored what his boss said, did not say anything, and left the scene.

Retaliation

A female employee working in a state-owned company in Guangzhou described an occasion when she found that her new superior was always seeking chances to judge her, not only her work performance, but also her personal life, even her appearance. She felt angry and tried to communicate with her boss, who was also a female, but her boss seemed to be accustomed to judging her and others. Department colleagues had the similar uncomfortable feelings. But they did not choose to express their anger, the collectivistic atmosphere in the state-owned company and the understanding of confirmation of social face prevented them to face the woman directly and express it. That would mean they did not agree with the superior's suggestions about their work, even if they were not related to work, and that they did not want to accept her considerate caring and did not show enough respect to her authority.

Instead, they frequently got together, laughing and gossiping, complaining about their boss behind her back. That has already become a tradition in the office and they all seemed to enjoy it. This interviewee admitted that as she has not been given respect in the workplace, she thought she did not have to make the best of herself, so she performed quite slowly on the designed job on purpose and did not hand in the work to her boss until the deadline.

Re-channeling

An employee of a real estate company in Guangzhou told me that he had been in his company for more than seven years and received harsh treatment from his

boss, who always made him angry. He usually took the anger out on irrelevant things or people, for example, his keyboard or his secretary. He knew that keeping the anger to himself would harm his body, but he also knew that doing this to his subordinates or to objects he owned was not a good solution. But he had no choice. In his philosophy, confronting and directly expressing his anger means the end of his career in this company. His boss would not tolerant to anyone who had open disagreement with him. In his boss' mind, being questioned means face losing in front of his employees and without full respect to his leadership and he would conclude that his employees would not be hardworking, which is fatal to a real estate company. This interviewee felt he knew his boss well and he wanted to confirm the boss' face, so he has experimented with other ways to vent when he felt angry to his boss, like gym activities, golfing, bowling, and swimming. He tried to calm himself and focused on the problem he had to face during the exercise. He told me that after a while, he felt better after the anger incident, because not only did he develop a solution, he kept fit.

These cases show that employees chose to avoid anger-expression due to their collectivist concern—confirmation of social face. These quantitative findings of the cases provide specific support that confirmation of social face is a useful addition to the social cognitive perspective, which influences the choices Chinese organizational members make as the deal with anger. Chinese employees were found to approach their anger in different ways, with contrasting consequences. Our analysis results also support this overall framework that confirmation of social face

impacts the interaction that occurs during anger management which in turn affects the anger episode's consequences.

The Role of Social Face in Anger Management

Although the impact of social face on conflict management has been thought to be powerful, little empirical work, especially in China, has directly studied social face (Ohbuchi et al., 1996). Specifically, social face has never been analyzed as an antecedent in anger management dynamics.

To complement previous research on conflict avoiding from the goal interdependence perspective (Tjosvold & Morishima, 1999; Tjosvold & Sun, 2001) and leadership perspective (Danna & Griffin, 1999), this study developed a new theoretical perspective that could predict employees' anger-expression avoidance behaviors. The results (Figure 2a and 2b) support our first four hypotheses that confirmation of social face, which has typically been employed as an explanatory variable rather than directly studied, is an important antecedent that impacts the anger-expression dynamics and outcomes of Chinese employees. Participants who confirm the face of their superior compared to those who were less concerned adopted various avoiding strategies to avoid expressing their anger.

These results have implications both for developing the general theory of conflict avoiding and negative emotion management, and for understanding social face in China. Social face researchers have theorized a wide range of effects of affronts on interaction and outcomes. Our results support the usefulness of the

concept of social face to analyze the interaction during negative emotion management, probing the theorizing that confirmation of social face plays a significant role in managing and regulating negative emotion, specifically anger.

Consistent with the hypotheses, this study showed that Chinese people generally value avoiding open discussion and suppress their anger as a way to confirm social face, as they understand that an indirect conflict management approach would be more practical and necessary, especially when the anger-elicitor processes a higher status and power.

Social Face and Emotion Regulation

Our lives are saturated with emotions (feelings, emotional behaviors, and associated bodily reactions), yet emotions usually do not just happen to us. Most of the time, we attempt to regulate our emotions in some way, by denying, intensifying, weakening, curtailing, masking, or completely altering them. In our study, we discussed four anger-expression avoidance strategies used by Chinese employees in organizations to regulate their anger.

Yet despite that anger has to be regulated frequently in everyday life, effective anger control and management is difficult to achieve. Studies to date have for the most part focused on *deliberate* type of emotion regulation (Mauss, Bunge, & Gross, 2008). However, our study gave evidence that individuals often seem to regulate their anger without much deliberate questioning about the basis assumption about showing face through avoidance, they just used their social instinct. We used

the confirmation of social face as the antecedent in our framework, which is one of the most important social norms that has been planted deeply into Chinese people's mind even when they are children. They are taught to be relationship oriented and always confirm others' social face, especially someone stronger, has more power, or stands at a higher level of social hierarchy. These norms surround us to the point that they appear completely natural and become almost invisible (Adams & Markus, 2004; Kitayama & Duffy, 2004; Konwles, Morris, Chiu & Hong, 2001).

Results support hypothesis one to four, demonstrating that anger-expression avoidance strategies are induced by employees' confirmation of social face, which supports the reasoning that emotion regulatory processes are engendered by over-learned habits, culturally transmitted norms, and implicitly held beliefs (Mauss, Bunge, & Gross, 2008). To give personal face and establish a mutually beneficial relationship as well as to avoid affrontive disagreement and anger expression are of such culturally transmitted social norms and implicitly held beliefs.

This study links the literature of social face and emotional regulation, explored what leads Chinese employees to avoiding expressing their anger, how exactly they behave and what effects anger expression avoidance have on the individual itself and the relationship between him and the superior. The results show that confirmation of social face plays an important role in determining employees' ways to deal with anger and also give us more understanding about what these

emotion regulation strategies' consequences are for individuals' well-being, psychosocial functioning, and social functioning.

Regulation of negative emotions, especially potentially destructive ones such as anger, is important in many domains of functioning, including well-being, social functioning, and health. In addition, certain forms of anger control (e.g., suppression) may have negative consequences for the individual. This study includes two organizational salient outcomes, relationship and future productivity, and two personal salient ones, job satisfaction and stress. In the next part we will discuss how the four anger-expression avoidance strategies affect these organizational and personal outcomes.

Strategies for the Employees to Avoid Expressing Anger to Boss

Previous studies have identified various indirect strategies for the Chinese to deal with conflict, such as indirect language, middlemen, face-saving plots, a long-range view, flexibility, and so on (Bond & Huang, 1986). In this study, seventeen items describing Chinese subordinates' responses and tactics to avoid expressing their anger elicited by their superiors were collected from the established measurements or qualitative descriptions in previous studies (Averill, 1982; Bies & Tripp, 1998; Fitness, 2000; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997; Tjosvold & Su, 2007). Four factors were extracted in the exploratory factor analyses (EFA). They were labeled as outflanking, withdrawal, retaliation, and re-channeling. This part discusses these four strategies and their effects on relationships and future productivity.

Outflanking

Consistent with the study conducted by Tjosvold and Sun (2002), this study also identified that employees often used indirect ways in the process of their emotion management, like talking with another friend, indirectly pointing out the defects in their supervisors' viewpoints and so on. This indirect strategy was identified as outflanking, an effective approach toward potential conflict to get ideas and plans accomplished. Rather than simply follow the superiors' decisions, employees who avoid conflicts and choose to hide their anger can be pro-active through a powerful third party to solve the problem (Tjosvold & Sun, 2002). For example, as the first illustrative case showed, the subordinate can turn to his colleagues to get the deserved benefits while avoiding directly expressing his anger and risk the possible negative outcome of the future.

As illustrated in the first case, outflanking was found useful for problem solving and as the problem between the superior and the employee solved, the anger which was previously hidden purposely by the employees has some channel for expression, thus facilitating a steady work productivity of the employees in the future. This reasoning finds its support in the result that outflanking strategy has a significant positive effect on future productivity (see Table 8 and Figure 2a).

However, partly contrary to hypothesis 5a, the path coefficient from outflanking to relationship was insignificant, which means outflanking may help get things done and improve the future productivity of employees, but might not help

build mutual relationships. This result suggests that similar to general conflict avoidance, outflanking is also a coin of two sides with at least two different underlying motives: self-interest concern and mutual relationship concern (Leung, 1996; 1997). When employees are only concerned with their own benefits, they try to obtain their own ends while ignoring the interests and needs of their superiors, leading to low quality relationships. Previous studies have pointed out that outflanking is frequently used in Asian countries to solve conflict as it helps avoid direct confrontation with the other party, especially when the other is of higher authority (Kozan & Ergin, 1999; Tinsley & Brett, 2001). Our study implies that outflanking can be productive when appropriately used, though its effect is not significant (Figure 2a), but can also potentially harm mutual relationships if inappropriately managed. Employees should think through who they can turn to when using this strategy. In our illustrative case one, the employee turned to one of her friends who was also a close friend of her boss, and the outcome was not so bad, so we can deduce that turning to superior's boss is often not an effective way since the immediate supervisor will consider this as a very serious confrontation and embarrassment, leading to mistrust and ineffective relationships.

Withdrawal

Some studies named the "withdrawal" strategy (leave the scene, avoid meeting each other for a while or adopt other wispy tactics to make the other feel guilty) as passive aggression, in which the expression of anger is not pro-active and

subtle (Murphy, 2005). But we here categorize the withdrawal behavior as one of the strategies of avoiding expressing anger to the boss.

Generally, withdrawal is a familiar choice to avoid expressing anger with the superiors by the employees and often thought as a useful one in conflict avoidance. Employees, with less power, often do not dare to argue and express their anger, so they keep silent, leave the scene or avoid meeting the boss for some time, to give the superior a feint idea that they have given up their different positions and accept the event, so as to prevent the conflict and protect each other's social face, especially the superiors'.

Withdrawal is thought to be especially popular in China where the acceptance of social hierarchy leads to deference to authorities. (Hofstede, 1980). A recent study found that Chinese people were more sensitive to hierarchy so that they avoided conflict more often when the other party was of higher status (Friedman, Chi & Liu, 2006). This study provides further evidence that Chinese employees often avoid arguments and obey their superiors' decisions to confirm social face even when they do not agree and have anger internally.

While leading to good future productivity as we hypothesized, this study found that withdrawal did not maintain relationships as effectively as we expected (Hypothesis 5b, Figure 2a). This may due to the psychological stress and frustrated, unsatisfied feeling about the work because of the unresolved anger, even though they choose avoidance out of the consideration of superiors' social face. The

non-significant positive effect of withdrawal on relationship indicates that hidden conflict has its own cost and suppressing anger could be destructive to maintaining relationships between employees and their superiors in the long run.

Retaliation

Studies have pointed out that people adopt a variety of behaviors to negotiate face during conflicts, ranging from politeness to aggression (Oetzel, et. al., 2000). This study provides evidence that the employees sometimes behave aggressively but not overtly when dealing with their anger with their boss, named retaliation. This passive aggression occurs when people are avoiding overt discussion of their feeling angry with their superiors.

Tripp and Bies (1997) asked participants to think both of an occasion when they did take revenge and an occasion when they wanted to take revenge but did not. In the latter occasion, they were asked to report why they did not take revenge. In our interview, it was also a sensitive topic when people were asked about whether they took measures to retaliate or why they finally gave up the plan.

We found that there were five categories of reasons for why employees did not take revenge. They 1. could not invent anything to do, 2. feared returned retaliation, 3. did not have an opportunity to take revenge, 4. believed that the superiors would get what was coming to them without their own revenge taking, and 5. wanted to avoid doing something that seemed morally or professionally wrong.

Employees who reported to have taken revenge often acted out of an impulse and the revenge only lasted a short period of time.

Not surprising, consistent with our hypothesis 6a, retaliation undermined relationship and the employees' future productivity (see Figure 2a). Employees who take these aggressive tactics to express their hidden anger might not get much achieved with still unresolved issues and guilt. Findings overall suggest that to resolve the conflict successfully, employees should learn to control negative emotions and avoid expressing it in this way.

Re-channeling.

Re-channeling of anger is not strictly suppression. Anger is taken out in this situation, not towards the source of the anger, but to some person or thing unrelated to the reasons for being anger. Psychologically, the employees may feel better after expressing the strong emotions, but considering the feeling of the target of anger acceptor, their personal bound would be weaker after the re-channeling. Our results support this reasoning that misplacing of anger would eventually result in negative outcomes such as reduced future productivity, increased stress, and less job satisfaction. These results reinforce that re-channeling can undermine the relationship between the employee and the superior. (Figure 2a)

Influence of the Four Strategies on Job Satisfaction and Stress

Now we examined the data to address the link between the avoidance

behaviours and two personal salient outcomes: employee job satisfaction and stress.

Results revealed a significant, negative association between all the anger-expression

avoidance strategies and job satisfaction and a significant positive link between all

the types of the strategies and stress. These results suggest that regardless of which

anger-expression avoidance strategy the employees' used after the incident, these

avoiding behaviours are associated with increased stress and decreased job

satisfaction, supporting our Hypotheses 7. In the interviews, we asked the employees

how they felt shortly after the anger incident and used these responses in the analysis.

We also asked them how they feel at the time of our interview (in most cases, at least

after 3 months from the anger incident), then the answers revealed less stress and

more job satisfaction compared to the former one. As a comparison, the path

coefficients with results of three months after the incident are shown in Figure 3
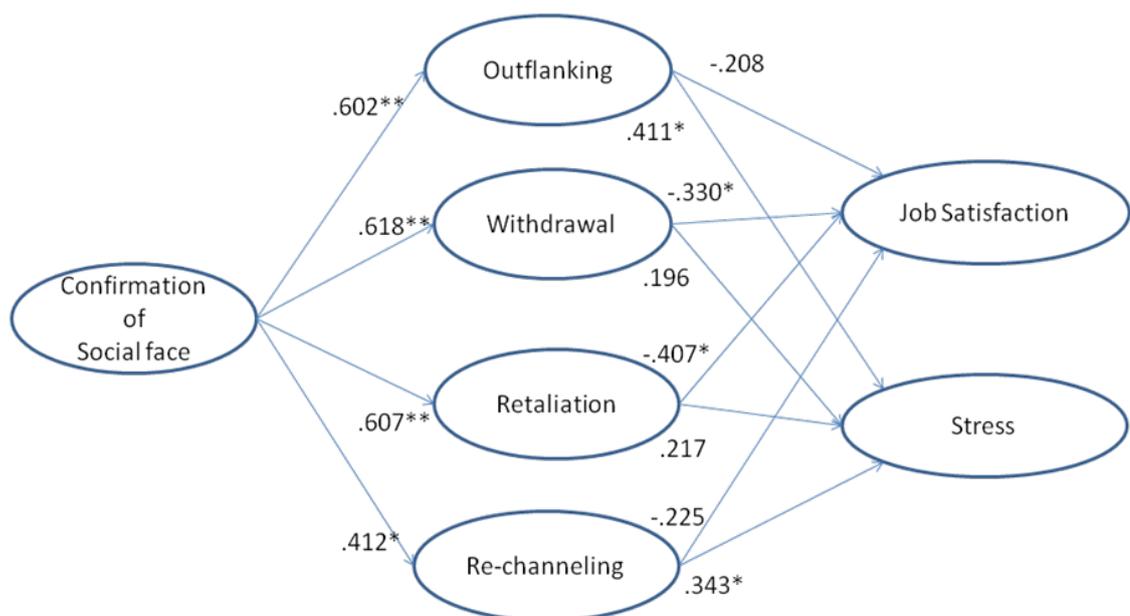
Figure 3   Path Estimates for the Over-time Effect of Strategies

Therefore we suppose that when people adopt the anger-expression avoidance strategies to regulate their emotion, they may consciously or subconsciously decide that it is worth doing because it helps them to perform better in a job they care about and identify with. Thus, they may felt momentarily unhappy with their job and boss and uncomfortable with themselves because the adoption of all avoiding strategies demand inauthentic emotional expressions. However, these effects may be fleeting. As shown in Figure 3, the four avoiding strategies have less strong effect on employees job satisfaction and stress, compared to Figure 2b, which suggests that the employees understand very well how these avoidance behaviours contributes to their job and over time, their dissatisfaction and stress could be gradually resolved.

Relationship among Different Strategies

Our results do not document confirmation of social face leads to a specific strategy. Indeed, the four types of anger-expression avoidance strategy are inter-related. For example, withdrawal was often accompanied with re-channeling or retaliation, while outflanking is usually positively related to withdrawal. Anger-expression avoidance should be considered as a configuration of different strategies; it should be understood as a complex pattern of different behaviors rather than a single one. These strategies can be categorized as "emotion regulation" . The results are consistent with previous studies that found conflict behavior is a mix pattern conglomerated with different conflict management styles (Munduate, Ganaza, Periro & Euwema, 1999; Van de Vliert, Euwema, & Huismans, 1995).

It is how people act in avoidance that determines the outcomes. In this study, the strategy of outflanking and withdrawal contributed to future productivity but probably at the expense of relationship. Retaliation and re-channeling undermined relationships while all the four strategies are negatively related with job satisfaction and positively related with stress.

Limitations

The sample and operations, of course, limit the results of the current study. First, the relatively small sample of 100 respondents limits the validation and generation of the findings. Although interview is a very useful method for this study, its procedure makes collecting a wider sample of data rather difficult and the critical incident methodology may bring possible demand characteristics into many of the interview questions. In particular, the data in this study describe only one partner's perspective on the anger-eliciting incident (the employees); we would obtain richer results if we gathered data on the same anger-eliciting event from both perspectives.

Regarding internal validity, the data are self-reported and thus subject to biases and may not accurately or completely report the incidents, although recent research suggests that self-reported data are not as limited as commonly expected (Spector, 2006). In addition, the composition of the sample of interviewees may limit the generality of the results. In our study, we selected data from two different cities in China to make the data better represent the China as a whole, but fairly speaking, Beijing and Guangzhou are both different than much of China. These data are also

correlational, which are not able to provide direct evidence of causal links between of social face, anger-expression avoidance strategies and outcomes.

In addition, the study relied on Western-developed scales. Although most of the scales used in this study have been tested in China, researchers have doubted the viability of applying scales developed in the West to China because Chinese people's ideas and understandings may be different and are likely to result in different outcomes (Helms, 1992; Hofstede, 1993). If the model in this study could be tested in the future research in the West, it could provide more direct evidence of the cultural equivalence of this study's measurements. Spector and Brannick (1995) have argued that the most effective way to overcome recall and other methodological weaknesses is to test ideas with different methods, so developing different sources for the scales could reduce the possibilities of errors and bias than one-source method for the results.

Directions for Future Research

Our study highlights the need for follow-up research. Firstly, future research could more systematically study anger management by collecting data from two perspectives, the employees and the superiors, or by having larger samples of subordinates, who need to be classified into different status levels, or have different recalled anger-eliciting reasons. Studies could also gather more finely-detailed data about their constituent emotions, for example, anxiety, depression, etc., because emotions come in blends and sequences.

Secondly, although this study gave emphasis on the status difference between the anger incident participators, one is an employee, the other is his or her superior, yet we did not include power as one antecedent in our dynamics. But the power concern or the power relationship between the participants in the anger interaction of workplace indeed plays a critically important role in their behaviors and outcomes. Future research could directly examine the role of power in the process of managing anger.

Thirdly, more studies are needed to shed light on the emotional side of conflict and to show how some basic ideas about managing conflict can be applied to discussing anger. In this study, we focused on anger avoidance, but more questions about anger expression need answers, like how can anger be expressed that reconciles and integrates people and what conditions lead to anger expression and its effective management. Studies are needed on the nature of effective discussion of anger.

Lastly, in future research, additional methods, such as diary studies and more general surveys not tied to critical incidents could be used in anger study.

Practical Implications

Our results strongly support the Confucian perspective that Chinese people intrinsically value social face and find affronts to social face disruptive and therefore when they deal with anger aroused by their superiors in workplace, they have the tendency to avoid directly expressing anger, but to adopt strategies that have

consequences on their organizational behaviors and personal well-being. Overall, the theory of social face and emotion regulation, although developed in the West, proved to be useful in this study in understanding the anger-expression avoidance, one of the ways to mange anger in China. This study identified four strategies used in collectivistic cultures that affect of the employees' relationship with their boss, their future productivity, job satisfaction, and stress.

The findings could have practical implications for employees to manage their anger in organizations in China. Considering job satisfaction and stress as important outcomes, our study found that although Chinese employees optimistically choose to avoid directly expressing their anger to protect the face of their superiors and themselves in front of other people, in the long run, these avoidance strategies of managing anger may harm employee job satisfaction and increase stress that are likely to be harmful for the organization and their relationship with their superiors.

Chinese are regarded as collectivist and concerned about their relationships with others. How to build sound relationships with their superior is a first critical question in Chinese employees' mind. The results of our study reaffirm the need to manage anger to maintain and strengthen relationships. We cannot assume that the collectivistic concern could always help to develop good relationships between employees and their superiors in organizations. The confirmation of social face which leads to various anger-expression avoidance behaviors can undermine relationships between them. For example, retaliatory and re-channeling behaviors were found to significantly deteriorate the relationship, while the other two strategies,

outflanking and withdrawal, although have some constructive effects on the relationship still undermine job satisfaction and induce stress. In order to build good relationships with Chinese superiors, employees should widen their view, not just manage their anger from the collectivistic perspective and do not expect anger-expression avoidance too result in much relationship improvement. Open expression of feelings and ideas, listening and incorporating each other's views, and working toward mutual benefit may be more likely to strengthen relationships and performance (Tjosvold & Su, 2007).

To know that their employees care about their social face and act according to it is not altogether good news for supervisors in Chinese organizations. Employees may not feel very well about the job and themselves after the behaviors they choose out of their willing to confirm their boss' social face.

Maybe the lack of the superiors' managerial interactions during and after the incidents that leads to these dissatisfaction and stress. Social support has been recognized as important to the experience of emotional management at work because providers of social support (e.g., family, coworkers, and supervisors) are thought to enable employees to cope better with job stressors and increase their sense of control. (Abraham, 1998; Zapf, 2002). We can see from this study's result that the avoidance strategies may lead to employees' good performance in the future but not necessarily aid relationship building. Managers then can take action and change the related outcomes by providing support for the employees, to help improve the confidence the employees have for the job and for themselves.

Conclusions

According to Brief and Weiss (2002), the organizational literature is populated with many more ideas about the leader's role in the production of moods and emotions than it is with relevant data.

This study did not focused on the role of managers in producing employee emotions, but on the role of confirmation of social face in producing employee strategies and how these strategies would affect their relationship with boss, their future productivity and personal well-being. Specifically, this study links the literatures on social face, emotion regulation, anger-expression avoidance and four important outcomes for the employees, and makes methodological contributions to previous research by restructuring Averill's (1982) survey to have employees in organizations identify their ways of managing anger. This research approach may also be a viable addition to the traditional alternatives of using indigenous theory (social face theory was first theorized by western researchers) to investigate organizations in a different culture and comparing differences from samples drawn from different cultures (Earley, 1997).

Our results revealed that employees frequently avoid expressing anger with their superiors in China for the concern of confirmation of social face, which supported our first four hypotheses. This study also contributes to our understanding of anger-expression avoidance as a multi-faceted phenomenon by identifying a range

of related behaviors. It identifies four specific avoiding strategies that which helps understand the conditions when avoiding can be more or less helpful.

The effects of the avoiding expressing anger depends on what specific tactics employees take. For example, as our hypotheses 5a, 5b ,6a, and 6b predicted, of the four strategies, outflanking and withdrawal are relatively more constructive by contributing to both future performance and probably mutual relationship; retaliation and re-channeling, on the contrary, undermine relationships and future performance. Furthermore, consistent with hypothesis 7, the four avoiding strategies lead to negative job satisfaction and increased stress.

Findings in all suggest that in collectivistic China, confirmation of social face is critical for employees managing their anger towards their superiors in avoiding way instead of direct controversy. It is the most important motivation of anger-expression avoidance in China and can be used to explain emotion-related conflict avoiding behaviors, even though avoiding is not the best choice of effective anger management. The extracted four strategies in this study also prove that anger-expression avoidance is complex in that people develop and adopt a variety of avoiding behavior patterns in different situations, which can lead to diverse organizational and personal outcomes.

Appendix I

Interview Questionnaire

Anger-expression avoidance in organizations in China

Interviewee:
Position:
Organization:
Years in organization:
Gender:
Age:
Education:

We are studying how employees in China deal with anger by avoiding direct discussion with their boss. We want you to recall a concrete example when you felt angry with your superior but did not try to discuss it directly with your boss. For example, you had a disagreement with your superior and he or her did not want to listen to your ideas. Or perhaps your boss scolded you without good reason.. Please describe the full incident, including what happened and who was involved.

A. Describe what led to the situation, with whom you were angry, how both of you reacted.

B. 1. How intense was your anger in the incident you described?

Very mild   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Very intense

2. As the time passes by, how do you feel now about the job and yourself?

3. Did the incident in any way involve:(please tick, could be multiple choices)

Unjust treat
Immoral behavior
Job incompetence
Disrespect
Public humiliation
Frustration of ongoing activity
Violations of expectations

C. Scales

Goal interdependence

(1) At the beginning of the incident, how much would your reaching your objectives help the boss reach his objectives?
Little   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   A great deal

(2) At the beginning of the incident, how much were your goals and the supervisor's goals structured so that they were win-lose?
Little   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   A great deal

(3) At the beginning of the incident, how much would your accomplishing your goal affect whether the supervisor achieved or did not achieve his goals?
Little   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   A great deal

Social face

a. How would you describe your mood just prior to the incident? (Record Verbatim)

b. How did you feel about your superior before the incident occurred?
(Record Verbatim)

(4) Before the incident, how much respect did your superior have for you?
Little   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   A great deal

(5) Before the incident, how much respect did you have for your superior?
Little   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   A great deal

(6) Before the incident, to what extent did your superior and you see each other as competent and effective.
Little   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   A great deal

(7) Before the incident, to what extent did you and your superior trust each other?
Little   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   A great deal

Anger-expression avoidance

a. What actions did you use to avoid expressing your anger towards your boss?(record)

(8) I turned to friend who I trusted to talk about the incident.
(9) I tried not to see my supervisor for a few days after the incident.
(10) I said bad things about my supervisor behind his/her back.
(11) I took my anger out on another person, not related to the incident.
(12) I talked with my superior about the incident through a third party.
(13) I left the scene.
(14) I took small office things away to my house and never returned them.
(15) I took my anger out on a non-human object or thing.
(16) I talked to higher authorities.
(17) I gave up my opposing position to solve the problem .
(18) I deliberately went slow on urgent jobs he designated to me.

(19)I did some calming activities.
(20)I turned to my family members for emotional support.
(21)I maintained silence and kept anger to myself.
(22)I tried to remove some benefit customarily enjoyed by my boss.
(23)I redirected my anger to my subordinate.

(8,12,16,20 outflanking; 9,13,17,21 withdrawal; 10,14,18,22 retaliation; 11,15,19,23 re-channeling)

Conflict avoiding approach

(24) I tried to keep my differences of opinion with my boss quiet.
   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   strongly agree
(25) I tried to keep my feelings and views from spoken out.
   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   strongly agree
(26) I sought harmony at the expense of open discussion.
   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   strongly agree
(27) I tried to avoid discussing the divisive issues.
   Strongly disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   strongly agree

Outcome
These questions ask you about the incident after you have had a chance to evaluate it.

a.   Specify the effects of this interaction on you:

b.   Specify the effects of this interaction on the organization:

Relationship

(28)   How much did this interaction make you feel more confident that you could work successfully with your superior in the future?
            little   1   2   3   4   5   a great deal
(29)   To what extent did this interaction make you more trusting of your superior?
            little   1   2   3   4   5   a great deal
(30)   To what extent did this incident strengthen your relationship with your superior?
            little   1   2   3   4   5   a great deal

future productivity

(31)   How much did this interaction help you feel confident that you can use your abilities effectively in the future?
         little   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   a great deal
(32)   How much did this interaction help you feel motivated to work with this

person in the future?

little   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   a great deal

(33) How much did this interaction help you feel more motivated to take on projects for the company?

little   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   a great deal

(34) How much did this interaction help you feel more like quitting and finding a job with another company? (reversed)

little   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   a great deal

job satisfaction

(35) After the incident, I enjoyed my work more than my leisure time.

Strongly disagree 1   2   3   4   5   strongly agree

(36) After the incident, I have to force myself to go to work most of the time.(reversed)

Strongly disagree 1   2   3   4   5   strongly agree

(37) After the incident, I find real enjoyment in my work.

Strongly disagree 1   2   3   4   5   strongly agree

(38) After the incident, I am disappointed that I ever took this job.(reversed)

Strongly disagree 1   2   3   4   5   strongly agree

(39) After the incident, it seems that my friends are more interested in their jobs than I am interested in my job.(reversed)

Strongly disagree 1   2   3   4   5   strongly agree

Stress

(40) After the incident, I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing.

Strongly disagree 1   2   3   4   5   strongly agree

(41) After the incident, I felt I was rather touchy

Strongly disagree 1   2   3   4   5   strongly agree

(42) After the incident, I found it difficult to relax

Strongly disagree 1   2   3   4   5   strongly agree

(43) After the incident, I found myself getting agitated.

Strongly disagree 1   2   3   4   5   strongly agree

(44) After the incident, I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy.

Strongly disagree 1   2   3   4   5   strongly agree

(45) After the incident, I found it hard to wind down I tended to over-react to situations.

Strongly disagree 1   2   3   4   5   strongly agree

Feedback:

1. **What do you feel about the interview?**
2. **What if anything did you learn about managing conflict or anger?**

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