

Employee Voice Behavior Interactive Effects of LMX and Power Distance in the United States and Colombia

Isabel C. Botero
Illinois State University
Linn Van Dyne
Michigan State University

In contemporary organizations, competitive advantage can come from ideas employees communicate to supervisors for improving processes, products, and services. One approach to studying employee communications with supervisors is voice behavior. In this research, the authors consider leader-member exchange (LMX) and the individual cultural value orientation of power distance (PD) as predictors of voice. Two studies, conducted in different countries, demonstrate the unique and combined effects of these predictors. In Study 1, conducted in the United States, LMX was positively related to voice, PD was negatively related to voice, and PD made more of a difference in voice when LMX was high. In Study 2, conducted in Colombia, LMX and PD were both related to voice but did not interact. The authors discuss the implications for theory and practice.

Keywords: *LMX; intercultural communication; employee voice behavior; power distance*

Understanding employees' views of their communications with supervisors in contemporary organizations is important because organizations need employee input for continuous improvement and competitive advantage (Krone, 1991; Waldron, 1999). One way that organizations can develop competitive advantage is through the ideas employees have for

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improving processes, products, and services. Research on voice behavior is one approach for exploring communication between employees and supervisors.

Voice behavior is defined as employee expression of constructive ideas, information, and opinions about change in organizations (Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003). Although similar to other concepts such as employee dissent, articulated dissent (Kassing, 1997a), upward dissent (Kassing, 2002), and upward influence (Waldron, 1999), voice is unique for its grounding in the organizational citizenship literature (Organ, 1988). In addition, voice differs from these other behaviors because it uniquely focuses on verbal expressions (directed up, down, or horizontally) that are explicitly intended to benefit the group or organization (see Table 1 for comparisons).

Although research on voice is growing, there are two critical gaps in our understanding. First, limited research exists on the quality of employee-supervisor relationships (leader-member exchange; LMX) and voice. This gap is especially intriguing given past evidence of strong relationships between LMX and employee-supervisor communication (Fairhurst, 1993; Fix & Sias, 2006; Kassing, 1997b; Krone, 1991; J. Lee & Jablin, 1995) as well as between LMX and affiliative organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), such as helping (Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007; Kamdar & Van Dyne, 2007). Second, we are aware of no research that has considered the role of cultural values in predicting voice behavior in different cultural settings. Instead, research has focused on within-culture studies of voice (e.g., Choi, 2007 [Korea]; Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007 [China]; LePine & Van Dyne, 1998 [United States]).

Responding to these issues, this field research examines LMX quality and the individual cultural value orientation of power distance (PD) as predictors of voice. Drawing on Johns (2001, 2006), we emphasize the benefits of examining substantive relationships in two different settings (the United States and Colombia) because "the field of international management has different populations, and therefore different contexts" (Shapiro, Von Glinow, & Xiao, 2007, p. 130). Following the recommendations of Gelfand, Erez, and Aycan (2007), we move beyond cross-cultural comparisons and instead acknowledge variability within culture (Brockner, 2003). Overall, we predict that LMX will be positively related to voice and PD will be negatively related to voice in both cultures. Drawing on trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003), we also propose an interaction between LMX and PD, such that PD will make more of a difference in voice when LMX is high.

Table 1
An Integrative Summary of Voice-Related Behaviors: Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), Voice, Upward Influence, Dissent, Articulated Dissent, and Upward Dissent

	Voice (A Specific Type of OCB) (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998)	Upward Influence (Schilt & Locke, 1982)	Organizational Dissent (Kassing, 1997a)	Articulated Dissent (A Specific Type of Dissent) (Kassing, 1997a)	Upward Dissent (A Specific Type of Dissent) (Kassing, 2002)
Type of Behavior	Spoken words or behaviors	Spoken words	Spoken words or behaviors	Spoken words	Spoken words
Examples	Express opinion about changes to procedures or policies	Efforts to influence the supervisor	Express disagreement or complaints	Express objections to status quo	Express objections and present solutions to supervisor
Target	Withhold complaints Help others Work hard Up, down, or horizontal	Up	Up, down, or horizontal	Up	Up
Intent	Benefit group or org Constructive	Benefit self, group, or org Constructive or destructive	Benefit self or org Constructive or destructive	Benefit self or org Constructive or destructive	Benefit self or org Constructive or destructive

Note: We restrict our focus to employee behaviors that occur within organizations. (The above behaviors can also be directed at individuals outside of the organization.)

Literature Review

Employee Voice

Hirschman (1970) introduced the idea of employee voice behavior in his model of exit, voice, and loyalty and described voice as a response to dissatisfaction. More recently, the OCB literature described voice as a form of extrarole behavior that occurs when employees proactively express constructive suggestions for change (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995). As summarized in Table 1, voice is one specific form of proactive employee behavior. In contrast to OCB, which is more general and includes helping others, voice emphasizes suggestions for change intended to benefit the group or organization. Thus, voice is a communication behavior. Although voice can be directed up, down, or horizontal, we specifically focus on voice directed upward toward the supervisor. Voice differs from upward influence because it does not include communication intended to benefit the self.

In thinking about voice and other proactive employee communications, it is also important to consider Kassing's (1997a, 1997b, 2002) research on dissent. In its most general form, organizational dissent includes spoken words and behaviors designed to express disagreements or complaints (Kassing, 1997a). A more specific behavior is articulated dissent—a construct that is limited to spoken words and includes objections to the status quo and upward efforts to change the organization. More recently, Kassing (2002) introduced the concept of upward dissent, which includes objections and suggestions for change. Thus, articulated dissent and upward dissent are similar to voice because they are change oriented. Both, however, differ from voice because only voice is limited to constructively intended behavior directed at benefiting others. Table 1 clarifies the unique characteristics of voice and highlights important linkages between voice and other proactive employee behaviors.

LMX

LMX is a theory that describes the quality of supervisor-subordinate relationships (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). High-LMX (in-group) members share mutual trust, respect, reciprocal influence, loyalty, liking, and a sense of obligation with their leaders (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Employees with high-LMX relationships have more opportunities to speak up, exchange information or ideas with their supervisors, and use more

communication channels compared to those in low-LMX relationships (Fairhurst, 1993; Krone, 1991, 1992). They have more communication exchanges with their supervisor and benefit from greater work support and supervisor responsiveness (Fix & Sias, 2006). In contrast, low-LMX (out-group) members have more formal and restricted relationships that are based on economic exchange and are characterized by low trust, low support, and few rewards. As a result, employees in low-LMX relationships have less access to their supervisors, fewer resources, and restricted information (Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989). LMX quality is important because it relates to employee satisfaction, promotions, performance ratings, OCBs, and communication behaviors (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Kamdar & Van Dyne, 2007; Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997).

We are aware of only one study to date on LMX and voice (Van Dyne, Kamdar, & Joireman, 2008). Other research on leadership, however, provides indirect support for expecting a positive link between LMX and voice. For example, research demonstrates positive relationships for voice with employee views of psychological safety and managerial openness (Detert & Burris, 2007). In addition, research on employee-supervisor communication demonstrates that LMX quality affects how subordinates and supervisors talk to each other, what they talk about (Fairhurst, 1993; Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989), and whether they express dissent (Kassing, 1997b). Other research suggests that quality of LMX is related to upward influence behaviors, such that employees who have high-quality LMX relationships are likely to be more direct when communicating with supervisors, whereas those with low-quality LMX relationships are more indirect (Krone, 1991, 1992).

Given this previous research, we expect that LMX quality will be positively related to voice. Those in high-LMX relationships should have better knowledge about the supervisor and a sense that communication is open. Thus, we expect that the higher the quality of LMX, the more employees will be willing to express constructive ideas, information, and opinions for ways to improve work in organizations.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): LMX will be positively related to employee voice.

PD

Cultural values are important because they influence norms about roles and communication (Burgoon, Dillard, Doran, & Miller, 1982; Hirokawa & Miyahara, 1986). We suggest that the individual cultural value orientation

of PD should have special relevance to voice behavior because beliefs about the extent to which differences in power and status are expected and accepted (Hofstede, 1980) should influence employee perceptions of appropriate supervisor-subordinate behaviors. Thus, it seems reasonable that PD will have implications for employee willingness to speak up to supervisors and make suggestions for change.

PD orientation is an individual's beliefs about the extent to which superiors are entitled to status and privilege and the extent to which individuals should support and accept the views of superiors (Hofstede, 1980). In contrast to LMX, which is situation specific, PD represents a relatively stable individual belief that applies across situations. In work contexts, employees with higher PD orientations believe that supervisors should have a large amount of power over them and employees with lower PD orientations believe that all people should be relatively equal and that employees have the right to speak up with their ideas and opinions (Hofstede, 1980).

Although Hofstede (1980) originally conceptualized PD and other cultural values at the societal level, recent research has focused on individual variability in value orientations within culture (C. Lee, Pillutla, & Law, 2000; Maznevski, Distefano, Gomez, Nooderhaven, & Wu, 2002). This individual focus is important because individuals within a culture differ in the extent to which they subscribe to the dominant values of their culture (Farh et al., 2007). For example, Dorfman and Howell (1988) demonstrated that cultural beliefs moderated the relationship between leadership behaviors and employee satisfaction, commitment, and job performance. More recently, Farh and colleagues (2007) demonstrated that the individual cultural orientation of PD moderated the relationship of perceived organizational support with commitment, performance, and OCB.

Returning to our primary focus on voice, we note that voice can be risky because it can be seen as challenging the status quo (Edmondson, 1999; Van Dyne et al., 2003). In organizations, supervisors typically control resources that employees need to complete their work, and they set the rules subordinates must follow (Porter, Allen, & Angle, 1980; Waldron, 1999). Thus, voice that is directed toward supervisors can be especially risky. Hierarchical differences can make upward communication about ideas for change especially threatening (Waldron, Hunt, & Dsilva, 1993) because employees fear that voicing will trigger punishment and other negative consequences (Ryan & Oestreich, 1991). Consistent with this thinking, research on upward influence and silence suggests that employees often refrain from communicating their ideas to supervisors (Burgoon et al., 1982; Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Given these potential risks of voice, we expect individual PD orientation will be negatively related to voice. Recall that those with high individual PD cultural value orientations are comfortable with status differences. They accept the authority of the supervisor and prefer not to question or challenge those in authority. Instead, they agree with superiors and conform to expectations. Thus, those with higher PD should be less likely to speak up with suggestions for change because it would be inconsistent with their cultural values and could be viewed as challenging the status of the supervisor (Porter et al., 1980). In contrast, those with lower individual PD cultural value orientations tend to deemphasize differences in status and should be more comfortable speaking up. They are more likely to express their ideas for constructive change because they believe that good ideas can come from all levels in the hierarchy and are less intimidated by the formal authority of the supervisor.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Individual PD will be negatively related to employee voice.

The Joint Effects of LMX and PD on Voice

Drawing on trait activation theory as our conceptual framework, we propose that an individual's PD orientation can be viewed as a trait that is activated in some situations but not in others (Tett & Burnett, 2003). According to this theory, individual characteristics (traits) make a difference in behavior only when they are theoretically relevant to specific outcomes that are being considered. Consistent with this theory, research demonstrates that individual differences such as personality (or traits such as the cultural value of PD in our case) are salient in some situations and not salient in other situations (Tett & Burnett, 2003). For example, Premeaux and Bedein (2003) demonstrated that top management openness was positively related to speaking up for employees lower in self-monitoring and negatively related to speaking up for employees higher in self-monitoring. In trait activation theory terms, top management openness activated the trait of self-monitoring and made it salient—with dramatic effects on speaking up.

Applying this thinking to our model, we argue that PD will make more of a difference in voice when employees have high-quality LMX relationships with their supervisors. We theorize that high LMX gives them the sense that they have the freedom to act on their individual beliefs about appropriate superior-subordinate relationships. When LMX is higher,

employees lower in PD should be especially likely to speak up, but those with higher PD should be especially unlikely to speak up with suggestions for change. In each case, we propose that high LMX allows employees to feel they have the choice to act in accordance with their fundamental beliefs about appropriate roles and behaviors when interacting with someone in a position of power, such as their supervisor. In contrast, we suggest that those with low-quality LMX relationships feel they must conform to expectations. Their personal values, beliefs, and preferences are less salient. Thus, when LMX is low, individual traits such as PD should be less likely to influence the relationship between LMX and voice. Accordingly, we predict,

Hypothesis 3 (H3): PD will moderate the LMX–voice relationship, such that PD will make more of a difference in voice when LMX is high.

Method

We designed our research to include two field studies to examine our predictions in different cultural settings: the United States and Colombia. We selected these countries for two reasons. First, previous research described the United States (PD score = 40) and Colombia (PD score = 67) as differing in PD values (Hofstede & Bond, 1988) at the country level. Yet we have no conceptual reason to expect substantive relationships to differ across contexts. Thus, we followed recommendations of Gelfand and colleagues (2007) to study relationships within each setting rather than focusing on more traditional *t* test comparisons of means across cultures. In sum, testing proposed relationships in two historically contrasting cultural settings provides a strong test of our substantive hypotheses.

Study 1

Method

Participants and Procedure

Study 1 was conducted in the United States with a convenience sample of 109 individuals who worked in a variety of organizations (57% public sector, 30% private sector, 13% nonprofit). The average age of participants was 31.24 years ($SD = 9.77$), 63% were female, and 95% had at least some college education. Overall, organizational tenure was 4.92 years

($SD = 6.23$). Jobs included professional support (30%), professionals (27%), administrative support (12%), managers (10%), and sales (7%).

Employees were recruited from organizations in which the investigators had contacts. Participants received an invitation by electronic mail to participate in a study about communicating and presenting ideas to supervisors. This e-mail provided a link to the survey and asked them to forward the information to other potential participants. When participants visited the survey site, they read a description of the study, and if they agreed to participate, they were linked directly to the survey.

Measures

LMX. We used six items from Graen, Novak, and Sommerkamp's (1982) LMX-7 Scale for employee perceptions of LMX (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

PD. We assessed employee beliefs about PD with three items (Dorfman & Howell, 1988).

Voice behavior. We assessed voice with six items based on Van Dyne and LePine's (1998) large-scale construct validity study involving 597 employees plus their peers and supervisors across 95 groups from 21 organizations. The appendix lists the voice items.

Analyses

We assessed discriminant validity with factor analysis. Results (Eigenvalues > 1.0 , varimax rotation) produced three clean factors (primary loadings = .69–.90; highest cross loading = .37; variance explained = 73.61%). We tested hypotheses with hierarchical regression analysis and controlled for sex, education, and tenure in Step 1 because these characteristics can be associated with voice (Burris, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). We entered centered main effects for LMX and PD in Step 2 and the interaction between LMX and PD in Step 3. We evaluated the significance of each step with change in F (ΔF) and interpreted betas with t -values.

Results

Table 2 reports means, standard deviations, reliabilities (.87–.94), and correlations. Regression analyses supported each of the predictions. After

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations
(Study 1, United States)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Voice	5.57	1.12	(.90)					
2. LMX quality	5.43	1.51	.34**	(.94)				
3. Power distance	2.35	1.05	-.52**	.04	(.87)			
4. Sex ^a	0.71	0.45	.08	-.04	-.03			
5. Education ^b	3.30	0.92	.07	.03	-.29**	-.06		
6. Tenure in org ^c	4.92	6.23	.17	.19	-.09	-.13	-.01	

Note: *N* = 108. LMX = leader-member exchange. Alpha coefficients are in parentheses.

a. Coding: 0 = *male*, 1 = *female*.

b. Coding: 1 = *high school*, 2 = *some college*, 3 = *bachelor's degree*, 4 = *master's degree*, 5 = *PhD*.

c. Coding: years.

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

accounting for the controls, the addition of main effects in Step 2 significantly increased explained variance in voice ($\Delta F = 33.14, p < .01$). The addition of the interaction in Step 3 produced a significant increase in the explained variance in voice ($\Delta F = 6.82, p < .05$). As reported in Table 3, the beta for LMX was positive and significant in Step 3 ($\beta = .49, p < .01$), supporting H1. Consistent with predictions, the beta for PD was significant and negative ($\beta = -.56, p < .01$), supporting H2. Finally, the interaction between LMX and PD was significant ($\beta = .24, p < .05$). Figure 1 illustrates the form of this interaction, supporting H3. When LMX is high, PD makes more of a difference in voice behavior than when LMX is low. Overall variance explained was 45.9% (adjusted $R^2 = .43$).

Study 2

Method

Study 2 was conducted in Colombia with a convenience sample of 138 employees working for a variety of organizations (52% public sector, 40% private sector, and 8% nonprofit). The average age was 39.36 years ($SD = 10.00$), 66% were female, 95% had at least some college education, and the average organizational tenure was 8.50 years ($SD = 7.54$). Jobs included professional support (29%), professionals (27%), administrative support (12%), managers (11%), and sales (6%).

Table 3
Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Voice Behavior
(Study 1, United States)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Sex ^a	.11	.08	.05
Education ^b	.08	-.09	-.11
Tenure in org ^c	.19	.06	.07
LMX quality centered		.36**	.49**
Power distance centered		-.55**	-.56**
LMX × power distance centered			.24*
<i>F</i>	1.72	14.93**	14.93**
ΔF		33.14**	6.82*
<i>R</i> ²	.05	.42	.46
ΔR ²		.37	.04
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.020	.39	.43

Note: LMX = leader-member exchange. Model statistics are betas.

a. Coding: 0 = *male*, 1 = *female*.

b. Coding: 1 = *high school*, 2 = *some college*, 3 = *bachelor's degree*, 4 = *master's degree*, 5 = *PhD*.

c. Coding: years.

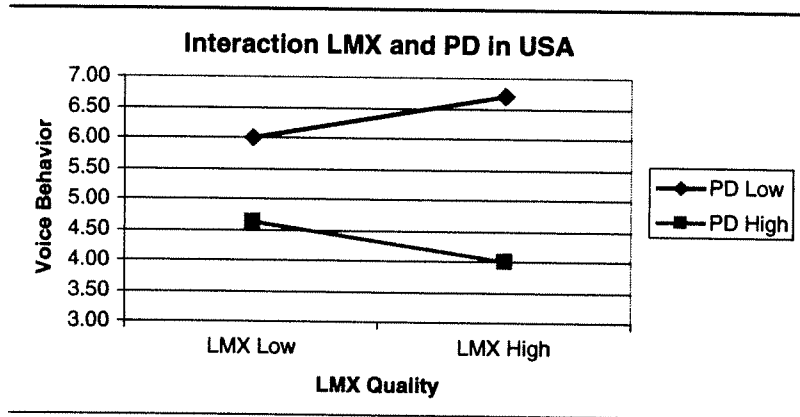
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

We used the same procedures and methods as in Study 1. In addition, two bilingual speakers translated questionnaires into Spanish, and one of the experimenters back translated them into English. Factor analysis produced three clean factors (primary loadings = .58–.84; highest cross loading = .36; 60% variance explained).

Results

Table 4 reports means, standard deviations, reliabilities (.69–.86), and correlations for the Colombian sample. After accounting for the controls (see Table 5), the addition of main effects in Step 2 significantly increased explained variance in voice ($\Delta F = 13.16$, $p < .01$). The addition of the interaction in Step 3, however, did not produce a significant increase in explained variance in voice ($\Delta F = .17$, *ns*). Thus, results support H1, demonstrating a significant positive relationship between LMX and voice ($\beta = .33$, $p < .01$), and H2, with a significant negative relationship between PD and voice ($\beta = -.22$, $p < .01$). Results, however, do not support H3. The interaction between LMX and PD failed to reach significance in the

Figure 1
LMX × Power Distance as Predictors of Voice
(Study 1, United States)



Colombian sample. At Step 2, the predictors explained 24.5% of the variance in voice (adjusted $R^2 = .21$).

Discussion

Overall, these studies demonstrate an interesting pattern of similar as well as contrasting results. First, all predictions for LMX, PD, and the interaction of LMX and PD were supported in the U.S. sample. Second, results from the Colombian sample demonstrated support for the two main effects, showing that LMX and PD predicted voice. In contrast to predictions and to the results for the U.S. sample, results in Colombia did not show an interaction between LMX and PD in predicting employee voice.

Theoretical Implications

Both studies demonstrated positive relationships between LMX and voice. Thus, one contribution of the research is that we complement prior discourse analysis research on LMX and employee-supervisor communication (Fairhurst, 1993; Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989) by taking a more psychological approach where we assessed employee perceptions of leadership relationships and voice. This psychological approach is important

Table 4
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (Study 2, Colombia)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
Voice	5.54	1.15	(.86)					
LMX quality	5.08	1.22	.34**	(.84)				
Power distance	2.58	1.45	-.27**	-.02	(.69)			
Sex ^a	0.66	0.48	-.05	.03	.05			
Education ^b	3.21	0.93	.25**	.04	-.27**	-.21*		
Tenure in org ^c	8.50	7.54	.16	.07	.10	-.03	.01	

Note: *N* = 135. LMX = leader-member exchange. Alpha coefficients are in parentheses.

a. Coding: 0 = male, 1 = female.

b. Coding: 1 = high school, 2 = some college, 3 = bachelor's degree, 4 = master's degree, 5 = PhD.

c. Coding: years.

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

Table 5
Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Voice Behavior
(Study 2, Colombia)

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Sex ^a	.01	-.01	-.01
Education ^b	.26**	.18*	.18*
Tenure in org ^c	.16	.16*	.15
LMX quality centered		.33**	.33**
Power distance centered		-.22**	-.22**
LMX × power distance centered			.03
<i>F</i>	4.47**	8.44**	7.07**
ΔF		13.16**	0.17
<i>R</i> ²	.09	.25	.25
ΔR ²		.15	.01
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.07	.22	.21

Note: LMX = leader-member exchange. Model statistics are betas.

a. Coding: 0 = male, 1 = female.

b. Coding: 1 = high school, 2 = some college, 3 = bachelor's degree, 4 = master's degree, 5 = PhD.

c. Coding: years.

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

because voice is a special type of upward influence communication (Porter et al., 1980), and we need a better understanding of how employees view their upward relationships and upward communication processes. Voice

requires effort because it is a constructively intended behavior directed at benefiting others. Accordingly, results shed light on one theoretical reason why some employees are willing to take the risks of speaking up with suggestions for change. Specifically, results suggest that the loyalty, liking, and sense of obligation that are characteristic of high-quality leader-member relations help motivate employees to invest effort in developing ideas and speaking up with suggestions for change.

In addition, results have more general implications for leadership theory. Prior work has used two different explanations for why some employees are more open and direct in communicating suggestions for change to supervisors. The first perspective suggests that employees who have good relationships with their supervisors will take fewer risks in making suggestions because they want to maintain good relationships with the supervisor (Waldron, 1999). In contrast, the second perspective suggests that those who have good relationships accrue idiosyncratic credits that allow them more freedom to communicate risky information to their supervisors (Hollander, 1958). Results of our research are consistent with this second approach, suggesting that high-quality relationships enhance voice because these employees have already "paid their dues."

Our focus on LMX and voice in two different cultural contexts is the basis for another set of theoretical implications with relevance to leadership. The consistencies in the main effect relationships across the two samples suggest underlying similarities in the fundamental relationships for LMX and PD with employee voice. These similarities show that even though historical research shows differences in basic cultural values for the United States and Colombia (Hofstede & Bond, 1988), the substantive main effect relationships for LMX and PD are basically the same. For example, the negative relationships between PD and voice in both studies are insightful because this is the first research to follow the recommendations of Collinson (2005) and consider interpersonal relationships and the role of power as predictors of voice.

More important, the differences in the results for H3—the interaction between LMX and PD—suggest possible new explanations for ways that cultural values have implications for leadership processes. As expected based on trait activation theory, PD and LMX interacted in the U.S. sample, such that PD made more of a difference in voice when LMX was high and less of a difference when LMX was low. These differences are important because they suggest that the relationship between LMX and voice is conditional in the United States—that it varies based on the individual cultural value orientation of PD. In contrast, results showed no interaction between

LMX and PD in the Colombia sample. In thinking about this difference, one possible theoretical implication is that trait activation theory may have less relevance in high-context cultures where communication is more implicit compared to low-context cultures where communication is more explicit (Hall, 1976). For example, high-context cultures, such as Colombia, tend to emphasize politeness, whereas low-context cultures, such as the United States, tend to emphasize directness. In addition, although individual traits are salient in Anglo cultures, they are less salient in other cultures (Morris & Peng, 1994; Nisbett, 2003). Thus, another theoretical implication is that trait activation theory may have stronger implications for leadership and communication processes in low-context cultures than in high-context cultures.

Practical Implications

The positive relationship between LMX and voice in both studies also has important implications for practitioners. High-quality relationships enhance voice. Encouraging employees to voice their ideas, information, and opinions about work improvements reinforces open communications. High-quality communication, in turn, should facilitate positive outcomes for the work group and organization (Ng & Van Dyne, 2005). Thus, relationship quality has implications for positive individual and organizational outcomes (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999).

Collinson (2005) noted that many leadership studies emphasize the benefits of high-quality relationships and do not pay adequate attention to the role of power in influencing interactions between supervisors and subordinates. Responding to this gap, our research highlights the practical implications of simultaneously acknowledging the importance of relationships (LMX) and power (PD) as predictors of employee behaviors. In addition, results provide evidence that many employees view themselves as proactive—that they communicate their ideas, information, and opinions about change to their supervisors. These results suggest that managers should acknowledge proactive employee communication and pay attention to issues of power as well as relationships.

Because H3 was supported in the U.S. sample and not in the Colombian sample, we suggest the need for caution in thinking about implications for managers. If, however, our results were replicated in other samples, this would indicate that it may be somewhat easier for managers in Colombia to predict and manage the upward voice of their subordinates. For example, it is possible that high-context communication in Colombia provided widely

accepted implicit norms about appropriate roles and behaviors; this could account for the direct effects and lack of interaction effects in Study 2.

In contrast, the importance placed on individual traits in low-context communication cultures may explain the interactive effects in the U.S. sample, suggesting that making judgments about which employees would be most likely to speak up and make suggestions for change may be more complex for managers in the United States. Based on the form of the interaction, managers might be surprised to learn that U.S. employees with high-LMX relationships are not necessarily willing to speak up and communicate change-oriented ideas. Instead, high LMX is positively related to voice *only* for those who also have low PD. Thus, perceptions of LMX and PD influence the strategies employees use when communicating with their supervisors (Chiaburu, Marinova, & Van Dyne, 2008). Although we did not directly assess specific communication practices, results suggest that when managers in the United States want to increase employee voice, they should communicate in ways that diminish status differences while enhancing perceptions of trust (i.e., personal relationships and informal communication styles). Examples would include informal socializing, providing participation opportunities, and directly communicating positive regard and high trust.

We note that the combination of high LMX and high PD predicted especially low levels of willingness to engage in voice. This finding has practical implications because it shows that the United States, as expected, is not uniformly low in PD. Rather, results show variability in PD in the United States ($SD = 1.05$). Thus, managers should not assume all employees have similar cultural values. Results for PD also provide a novel explanation for why some employees with high-LMX relationships still do not speak up. When managers want employees to speak up but employees have high-PD cultural values, more formal relationships may be more comfortable for these employees and lead to higher voice. In contrast, informal communication may seem inappropriate, insincere, and uncomfortable for those with high-PD beliefs. Thus, managers should be sensitive to cultural values such as PD, especially in the context of high-LMX relationships.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

To our knowledge, this is the first study to consider LMX, PD, and voice behavior. In addition, this is the first study that considers these relationships in two countries—the United States and Colombia. Thus, a key strength of this research is our unique focus on specific substantive relationships in

two different cultural settings. At the same time, we note the limitations of opportunity sampling because it prevents calculation of a response rate. Nevertheless, it allowed us to obtain responses from employees in a wide range of organizations and jobs in both countries. According to Singleton, Straits, Straits, and McAllister (1988), opportunity sampling is acceptable for projects like ours that are in "early stages of research, when the objective is to become more informed about a problem itself" (p. 156). Our research is also limited because self-report of voice can inflate relationships, and we did not assess the extent to which employees had ideas for change.

Thus, future research should use different sampling procedures so that a response rate can be calculated. Future research should also consider observers as raters of voice, the extent to which employees feel they have ideas about change, and effects on voice in face-to-face interactions. Research should also consider the applicability of U.S. measures to other cultural settings. Although we used back translation and showed similar factor structures across the two samples, we note the difference in the explained variance provided by main effects across the two samples (approximately 25% at Step 2 for the Colombia sample vs. 43% in the U.S. sample). Thus, our measures may have been more appropriate for the U.S. sample.

Responding to these issues, we recommend replication of these analyses in other settings. Because respondents in both countries were from a broad range of firms, our results were not influenced by the organizational culture of particular organizations. Still, it will be important to see whether results are unique to our samples or if they generalize to other samples and other cultures. For example, it would be interesting to examine LMX, PD, and voice in Asian cultures (e.g., China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, India) and other Latin cultures (e.g., France, Spain, Italy) to see if the LMX \times PD interaction is unique to Anglo cultures.

Finally, we recommend research on other moderators of LMX-voice relationships because this would provide additional insights into boundary conditions that influence these relationships. Because the national culture of Colombia has traditionally emphasized high PD, employees may be reticent to speak up unless they have high-quality LMX *and* the opportunity to speak up. Perhaps situational moderators are critical in Colombia, such that voice is high only when employees have high-quality LMX *and* they feel the situation provides them with the opportunity to voice (Avery & Quiñones, 2002). These are interesting ideas for future research.

Appendix

Voice Items

1. I develop and make recommendations to my supervisor concerning issues that affect my work.
2. I speak up and encourage others in my work unit to get involved in issues that affect our work.
3. I communicate my opinions about work issues to others in my work unit, even if their opinions are different and they disagree with me.
4. I keep well informed about issues at work where my opinion can be useful.
5. I get involved in issues that affect the quality of life in my work unit.
6. I speak up to my supervisor with ideas for new projects or changes in procedures at work.

Note: 1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*.

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Isabel C. Botero (PhD, Michigan State University, 2005) is an assistant professor in the School of Communication at Illinois State University, USA. Her main research interests include voice and silence as information-sharing mechanisms in organizations, perceptions of justice and their effects on communication in teams, and communication in and about family firms.

Linn Van Dyne (PhD, University of Minnesota, 1993) is a professor in the Eli Broad Graduate School of Management at Michigan State University, USA. Her research focuses on proactive employee behaviors, such as helping and voice, as well as on international organizational behavior and cultural intelligence.

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