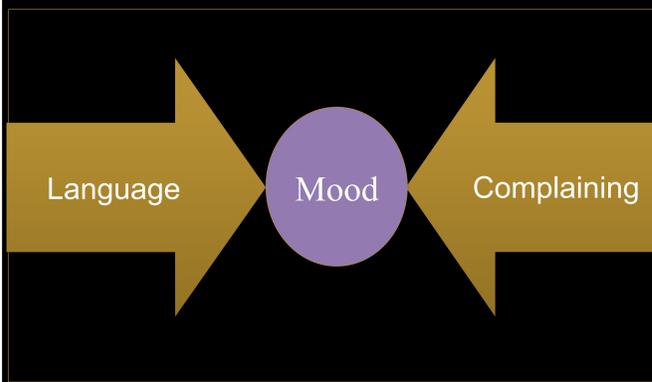


# Does the language used in complaining behavior affect mood?

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## Background

### COMPLAINING

Literature describes;

- People complain to release frustration and solicit sympathy.
- There are personal, relational and financial benefits of complaining.
- Complaining improves mood when incidents are subjective.
- Higher internal locus of control → more susceptible to complain.
- Less uncertainty about situations → more likely to complain

### LANGUAGE

Research has found that by using non-first person pronouns (e.g., you);

- Enhances self-distancing.
- Leads to less maladaptive post event processing.
- Changes the way individuals appraise future stressors.
- Helps in situations that require “self-guidance” and regulation of emotions.

## Objective

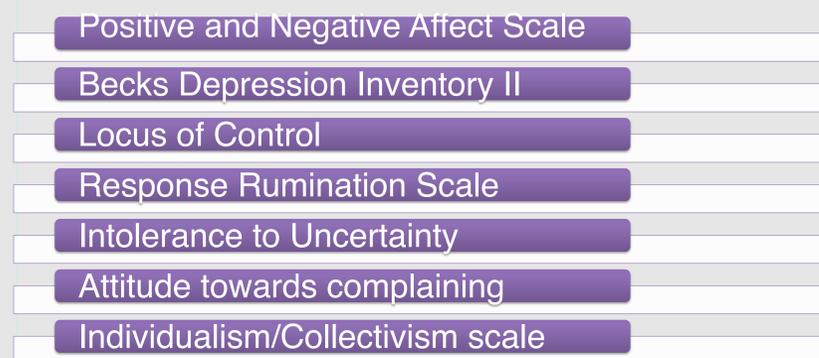
To test whether individuals using the “you” pronoun to complain, describe situations in a more positive light, and/or whether they report better moods after complaining as opposed to individuals using the “I” pronoun.

## Methods

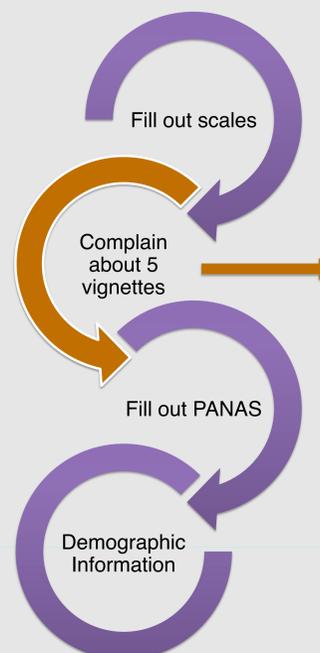
### PARTICIPANTS

- 118 participants (56% = Female)
- Business and Psychology subject pool
- 18 – 25 years

### MATERIALS



### PROCEDURE

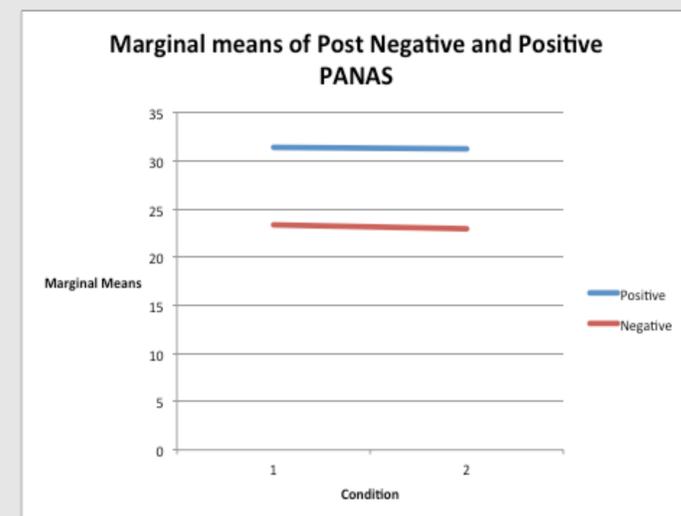


### Example Vignette

You are flying to New York at night for an early interview the next day. You take the bus to O’Hare airport, and eventually reach the gate to your flight. However, you hear an announcement that tells you that your flight is delayed due to bad weather and the next flight will only arrive at New York at 6 am, only 3 hours before your interview.

## Results

- Multivariate analysis → differences in positive and negative affect following the first-person or second-person complaining condition.



$F(2,113) = 0.20$

$p = .82$

Wilk's  $\Lambda = 0.10$

$\eta_p^2 = .003$

- Qualitative analysis → Participants in the “you” condition were more likely to find a solution to the problem after complaining as opposed to the “I” condition.

## Conclusions

- No difference in mood before and after complaining.
- No difference between “you” and “I” pronoun condition.
- No difference across different individuals or cultures.

### LIMITATIONS

- Vignettes presented were not subjective enough to elicit complaining.
- Complaining in the “you” pronoun is unnatural.
- PANAS → not an ideal scale to measure mood changes.