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Speaking Up and Moving Up: How Voice Can Enhance Employees' Social Status

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Abstract

A central argument in the literature on employee voice is that speaking up at work carries image risk. Challenging this assumption, we propose that voice can in fact positively affect how employees are viewed by others, thereby enhancing their social status. Using theory on status attainment and the fundamental social perception dimensions of agency and communion, we suggest that employee voice will result in higher status evaluations by increasing the extent to which an employee is judged as confident/competent (agency) and other-oriented/helpful (communion). We conducted a survey study and two experiments to test these hypotheses. The results supported our predictions. Employees who voiced were ascribed higher status than those who did not, and this effect was mediated by judgments of agency (in all three studies) and communion (in two studies). These results highlight the implications of voice behavior for status enhancement within organizations.

Key words: employee voice; proactive behavior; social status; agency and communion

Speaking Up and Moving Up:

How Voice Can Enhance Employees' Social Status

Being proactive means taking control to make things happen (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010), and one of the most important ways in which employees can be proactive at work is by engaging in voice: constructively challenging the status quo by raising suggestions, concerns, or opinions on workplace or organizational issues (Morrison, 2014). A central argument throughout the voice literature is that employee voice is critical for organizational effectiveness, providing a mechanism for innovation, learning, and error prevention/correction (Morrison, 2014). Yet despite the value of employee voice for organizational performance, employees often fail to speak up with valuable ideas or important concerns. A key reason for this failure to speak up is fear of negative social consequences: specifically, the fear that supervisors and co-workers will respond negatively, and thus form a less favorable impression of the employee (Detert & Burris, 2007; Detert & Trevino, 2010; Grant, 2013; Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003).

Interestingly, as noted in two recent papers (Burris, 2012; Whiting, Maynes, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2012), research on how supervisors and peers *actually* respond to voice has been quite limited, there has not been a unified theoretical framework for explaining these responses, and the results from the few studies that have been done have been mixed. Moreover, the main focus of these studies has been on how voice affects performance evaluations and not other aspects of social judgment (Burris, 2012; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998; Whiting Podsakoff, & Pierce, 2008; Whiting et al., 2012). As a result, we lack systematic, theory-based understanding of the individual-level effects of voice behavior, and the question of how voice affects impressions of the employee is still unclear. This is the gap that we seek to fill in this research.

Specifically, our focus is on the effects of voice on evaluations of the employee's social

status. By social status, we mean the amount of prestige, respect and esteem that one has in the eyes of others (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001; Blader & Chen, 2012; Fiske, 2010; Ridgeway, 2001). Specifically, we are interested in examining whether individuals who engage in voice are held in higher regard for their contribution to the group and/or organization, or as often feared by employees (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Milliken et al., 2003), viewed more negatively for challenging the views of others or how things are currently being done. We focus on social status as it is one of the most fundamental aspects of social relations, with a large body of research demonstrating that it has important career- and health-related consequences for individuals (Adler, Epel, Castellazzo & Ickovics, 2000; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Singh-Manoux, Marmot, & Adler, 2005). Given these far-reaching implications, it is important to understand whether social status is affected by voice behavior, and if so, the mechanisms that account for this effect.

Our central argument is that, contrary to what is implied in much of the voice literature, voice is likely to *enhance* an employee's social status. In our theorizing, we integrate theory on status attainment (Ridgeway, 1982) and the fundamental social perception dimensions of agency and communion (e.g., Abele & Wojciszke, 2014; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007) to explain how voice, despite the fact that it is inherently challenging, is likely to have a positive effect on an employee's social status. Building from these theoretical frameworks, we argue that voice will affect two fundamental social judgments that observers use when assessing the behavior of other persons: agency and communion (e.g., Bakan, 1966; Abele & Wojciszke, 2014). Agency judgments relate to a person's competence, whereas communion judgments relate to his or her other-orientation. We argue that engaging in voice will lead to higher attributions of both agentic and communal attributes because it provides cues about a person's ability to make a

competent contribution as well as his or her helpfulness for the group, and both of these factors help people to attain social status (Ridgeway, 1978).

To test our proposed model, we conducted three studies. In each, we either measured or manipulated employee voice, and then examined its effects on others' assessments of the employees' agency, communion, and social status. Using three different methodologies (survey, vignette, laboratory experiment), as well as operationalizations of voice that spanned both promotive (raising suggestions or new ideas) and prohibitive (raising problems or concerns) forms of the behavior (Chamberlin, Newton, & LePine, 2017; Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012), we found support for the idea that voice leads to higher ascribed status via higher perceived agency and communion.

In offering theory for how voice positively impacts the status that is ascribed to an employee, our work makes important contributions to the literature on employee voice. Although there is a widely-held assumption in the literature that voice can have negative effects on how an employee is viewed by others (Milliken et al., 2003; Morrison, 2014), an assumption that may discourage employees from speaking up, our work adds to a small yet growing body of empirical work suggesting that voice can actually lead to more positive impressions, such as higher ratings of performance (Burris, 2012; Whiting et al, 2008; 2012). Importantly, we extend the voice literature by drawing attention to an outcome of voice (i.e., status) that has not previously been examined, but that has important theoretical and practical implications. Our paper suggests not only a way to increase employee well-being by enhancing their social status, but also a way to encourage more input by reducing employees' fears about voicing.

We also contribute to theory on voice by outlining the underlying social attribution process that accounts for the effect of voice on status judgments. In particular, by adopting a

social judgment perspective, specifically, the agency-communion framework, we offer new theory for understanding *how* voice enhances social perceptions and the attributions that both superiors and peers make in response to employees' voicing. The agency-communion framework may even provide a useful theoretical lens for understanding the effects of voice more broadly (e.g., how it affects perceptions of performance, loyalty, prosocial motives etc.).

Our work also contributes to theory and research on social status. There has been growing interest in the effects of status within workgroups and organizations, and how status develops and changes over time (e.g., Blader & Chen, 2012; Doyle, Lount, Wilk, & Pettit, 2016; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Pettit, Sivanathan, Gladstone, & Marr, 2013). Yet the research on how people attain status at work has tended to focus on the effects of demographic characteristics (e.g., Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972), personal dispositions such as trait dominance (Anderson et al., 2001; Anderson & Kilduff, 2009a, 2009b), non-verbal dominance cues (e.g., Hall, Coats & LeBeau, 2005), or changes in formal rank (e.g., Pettit et al., 2013). We extend this work by showing that individuals can gain higher social status by engaging in voice—a critically important form of extra-role behavior—and that this effect may hold regardless of formal position (e.g., a subordinate with little power/ formal status) or status characteristics (e.g., gender, race). As such, our work adds new insight into the question of how changes in social status, and in social hierarchies more generally, occur.

In addition, our work informs research on the process of social perception, which has identified agency and communion as the two fundamental dimensions that people use to define themselves and others (e.g., Abele, 2003; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). We show that perceptions of agency, and in some cases also perceptions of communion, are strengthened when employees speak up with suggestions, concerns and opinions in the workplace. These findings

are consistent with research showing a connection between assertive behavior and perceptions of agency (e.g., Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Fiske et al., 2002; Wojciszke & Abele, 2008), but also extend that research by suggesting that assertive behavior in the form of voice can enhance perceptions of communion, which suggests an additional pathway to higher social status.

Theory and Hypotheses

Employee Voice Behavior

In their foundational paper, Van Dyne and LePine (1998, p. 109) defined voice as “promotive behavior that emphasizes expression of constructive challenge intended to improve rather than merely criticize,” and as “making innovative suggestions for change and recommending modifications to standard procedures even when others disagree.” This conceptualization of voice, as a behavior that is constructive yet challenging, has become the dominant one in the literature, with dozens of studies defining and operationalizing voice as the expression of constructive challenge in the form of suggestions, new ideas, concerns, or opinions (for a meta-analytic review, see Chamberlin et al., 2017)¹. Employee voice is widely regarded as an extra-role behavior that is critical for organizational innovation, performance improvement, and the prevention of errors (Morrison, 2014).

The empirical research on voice has focused mainly on identifying individual and contextual predictors in order to understand when and how people choose to speak up when they have ideas or concerns. Yet in addition to understanding the antecedents to voice, it is also

¹ More recently, a few scholars have offered alternatives to the dominant conceptualization of employee voice. For example, Burris (2012, p. 853) departed from the “challenging” part of the definition, and argued that voice can also be “supportive of the status quo.” Similarly, Maynes and Podsakoff (2013) proposed that promotive/challenging communication is just one type of voice, and offered a broader definition that does not require the behavior to be promotive or challenging. Yet these two works are exceptions to the large number of studies that have converged around the original Van Dyne and LePine (1998) definition.

important to understand the outcomes, and in particular, the implications of voice for the employee. People consider the reactions of those around them—specifically those of their superiors and bosses—when deciding whether to speak up or remain silent (Detert & Burris, 2007; Detert & Trevino, 2010; Morrison, 2014; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Research suggests that employees often withhold potentially useful or important information because they fear that offering new ideas or opinions, or expressing concerns, might cause friction with colleagues, cause them to be viewed unfavorably, or result in some other negative outcome for them such as lower performance evaluations (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Detert & Trevino, 2010; Milliken et al., 2003). Unclear, however is whether speaking up actually has such negative effects, and thus whether those fears are justified. As noted, the existing research has focused mainly on performance-related outcomes. Moreover, the results have been mixed (Chamberlin et al., 2017)². Seibert and colleagues (2001) found a negative effect of voice on subsequent promotions and salary increases. Similarly, Burris (2012) found lower performance ratings for employees who constructively challenged a new proposal, as compared to those who expressed support for it. On the other hand, two laboratory studies (Whiting et al., 2008; 2012) showed that voice can in some cases have a positive effect on how an observer rates an employee's performance. If positive effects also hold for evaluations of social status, this could help “debunk” one of the most common reasons for employee failure to voice (i.e., employee silence).

Social Status

Social status is defined as prestige, respect, and esteem in the eyes of others (Anderson et al., 2001; Blader & Chen, 2012). It is an indicator of the amount of social worth that others ascribe to a focal person (Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Ridgeway, Boyle, Kuipers, & Robinson,

² The recent meta-analysis by Chamberlin et al. (2017) found a positive zero-order correlation between voice and job performance, but an insignificant relationship when task performance and OCB were controlled for.

1998). As this definition implies, social status is conceptually distinct from formal hierarchical position or rank. A person can have a high-ranking position within an organization but not be respected or admired by others, or vice versa (Fast & Chen, 2009; Fast, Halevy, & Galinsky, 2012). Status is also distinct from power, which is rooted in asymmetric control over valued resources (Blader & Chen, 2012; Fiske, 2010; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). A person can have high social status without necessarily possessing resources. At the same time, status and power are inter-related, both because status can beget power, and because the cognitions and actions of those in high versus low power positions tend to be self-reinforcing in ways that maintain the informal status hierarchy (Magee & Galinsky, 2008).

Unlike power, which can be *taken* by an individual, status is *given* to a person by others based on characteristics and behaviors that the group deems valuable and that enhance the value of that person for the group (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009a; Berger et al., 1972). For these reasons, status ascriptions are dynamic and can change as a function of individual behavior and context (Aime et al., 2014; Petit et al., 2013). As a large number of studies have shown, status is not just a fundamental aspect of social relationships, but also a significant determinant of job satisfaction, intention to quit, well-being, and health (Lichtenstein, Alexander, McCarthy, & Wells, 2004; Adler et al., 2000; Singh-Manoux et al., 2005). It is thus important to understand how a behavior such as voice might affect social status.

The Effect of Voice on Social Status

The most detailed and well-established theory of status attainment was developed roughly forty years ago by Ridgeway (1978; 1982; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986, Ridgeway & Correll, 2006). Ridgeway took as a starting point expectations states theory (EST; Berger et al., 1972), which identifies performance expectations, or assumptions about general task ability, as the

essential basis of status within a social group. According to this theory, performance expectations are a function of both external status characteristics (e.g., race, gender, age) as well as specific information on task competence. However, Ridgeway added an additional basis for awarding status, namely whether the individual is judged to be self- or group-oriented. If a group member's behavior conveys that he or she is motivated by a desire to help the group succeed, his or her contributions are more likely to be valued and accepted—even if they challenge others—and he or she is more likely to be granted status within the group (Ridgeway, 1978; 1982).

Further, Ridgeway (1978) argued that conformity and nonconformity behaviors are part of the evidence upon which group members make judgments about a member's task competence and group-oriented intentions. A central argument she made is that non-conformity (e.g., offering a different perspective, challenging the status quo) can communicate a person's group-oriented intentions more effectively than conformity, thereby facilitating the status attainment process. In addition, she argued that non-conformity is more likely to attract the group's attention to a person's contributions to the group, thus facilitating the perception of competence, which according to EST, also enhances status. As Ridgeway (1978, p. 180) argued, a contribution "will have increased visibility before the group if its content deviates significantly from the group's prevailing task judgment." This added attention then paves the way for judgments of the person's task contributions. Conformity (i.e., not challenging the status quo), on the other hand, attracts little attention, thereby encouraging the group to overlook the person's competence (Ridgeway, 1978).

Building from Ridgeway's theory of status attainment, we propose that an employee who engages in voice will be more likely to be granted higher status by others. Voice, in challenging the status quo, reflects non-conformity. As such, it will be more likely to attract others' attention

(Van Dyne, Ang & Botero (2003). This attention, in turn, will increase the likelihood of others viewing the person as competent and group-oriented, the two essential foundations of status attainment (Ridgeway, 1978). Based on the above arguments, we hypothesize a positive relationship between employee voice and social status.

Hypotheses 1: Employees who voice will be seen as higher in social status than employees who do not engage in voice.

The Mediating Effects of Agency and Communion

We are interested in examining not just the relationship between voice and social status, but also the causal mechanisms that account for this relationship. In other words, we seek to understand not just whether people ascribe higher status to employees who voice, but also why. To address this question, we integrate Ridgeway's (1978) theory on status attainment, which highlights that evaluations of competence and group-oriented motivation are important determinants of attaining status, with one of the most well-established frameworks in social psychology pertaining to how social judgments are inferred from behavior. Research has consistently pointed to two fundamental dimensions on which individuals and groups are perceived: agency and communion. These dimensions, often called the "Big Two" of judgment of self and others (Abele & Wojciszke, 2013), were introduced by Bakan in 1966, and have been used in a large number of studies on social cognition, interpersonal perception, stereotyping, and personality (for reviews, see Abele & Wojciszke, 2014; Fiske et al., 2007; Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, & Kashima, 2005). Agency (referred to by some scholars as competence) reflects attributes related to goal-attainment, such as being capable, confident, and independent, whereas communion (referred to by some scholars as warmth) reflects attributes related to the establishment and maintenance of social relationships, such as being other-oriented, trustworthy,

and helpful (Cuddy, Glick & Beninger, 2011). But how do observers make judgments about whether a person is more or less agentic or communal?

Foundational work on trait attribution suggests that such judgments are made from behavioral cues by means of correspondence. That is, people assume that certain behaviors correspond with, or are reflective of, an underlying attribute (Jones & Davis, 1977). For example, a person who is seen giving their seat to an elderly person on the subway is more likely to be judged as empathic and kind than one who does not, because perceivers assume that the behavior is an indicator of a relatively stable personal characteristic.

Building from these ideas, we argue that when a person engages in voice behavior, other people are likely to infer attributes that pertain to both agency and communion: (a) being able to assert oneself, suggesting that the person is confident and competent, and (b) being other-oriented, helpful, and caring about the social group. The dual perception of agentic and communal attributes corresponds with seeing a person as competent and group-oriented, which according to Ridgeway (1978) forms the basis for granting individuals higher status. In other words, we propose that perceptions of agency and communion are key mediators linking voice behavior to social status.

To begin, we argue that judgments of agency play a key role in the relationship between voice and social status. Researchers have argued that people who speak more often, more fluidly and more assertively are seen as more competent, which is a key aspect of agency (Smith, Brown, Strong, & Rencher, 1975; Reynolds & Gifford, 2001). Others may also believe that people who voice are more competent because they identify opportunities for improvement or solutions to problems. In a similar vein, speaking up with suggestions, concerns or opinions is likely to signal that one is proactive and assertive. As a result of signaling these characteristics,

employees who display voice behavior are likely to be judged as more agentic than employees who do not speak up with ideas, suggestions or concerns.

We expect not only that voice will enhance perceptions of agency, but also that perceptions of agency will lead to higher ascribed status. A core idea in the status literature is that people who are highly self-confident and who convey competence are seen as more valuable by their group, and thus gain higher status (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009b). Similarly, Ridgeway (1978) argued that once an individual receives attention for his/her task contribution to a group, evaluations of competence, which is a crucial part of agency, play a key role in determining status enhancement. Wojciszke, Abele, and Baryla (2009) identified three reasons for the relationship between perceived agency and social status. One, it is in a group's interest to grant status on the basis of perceived agency, as group goals are facilitated when agentic members are granted higher status. Two, individuals who are perceived as more agentic may be granted higher status as a way to justify and maintain the existing status hierarchy. Three, at least in individualistic societies, people assume that agentic people have a higher chance of success, so individuals who demonstrate agency are assumed to have greater potential for success, and as a result, are granted higher social status. In a series of experiments, Wojciszke et al. (2009) showed that information about a target person having high agency led to higher ratings of respect, which is a core facet of social status. Based on the above, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived agency mediates the relationship between voice and social status such that employees who voice are perceived as more agentic and in turn as higher in social status than employees who do not.

Perceptions of communion may also mediate the relationship between voice and status. The clearest part of this proposed mediation is a positive link between perceived communion and

status. Both theory and empirical results suggest such a relationship. As noted, theory on status attainment argues that an individual's demonstrated level of group-oriented motivation, which is reflective of communion, affects the status the group is willing to accord that individual. The idea has been that cooperative, group-oriented members are more valuable to the group than self-interested ones, and thus accorded higher status. Empirical support for this idea comes from the study by Ridgeway (1982), which showed that group members with low external status characteristics can gain status if they demonstrate that they are motivated to help the group. Wojciszke et al. (2009) also showed a positive relationship between ratings of a target person's communion and respect for that person, and Hardy and Van Vugt (2004) showed that individuals who display communal behavior in the form of altruism are awarded higher status.

Less clear is how voice will affect perceptions of communion. A central theme in the voice literature is that voice can be seen as threatening by others (Morrison, 2014). It is not uncommon for people to feel nervous about or threatened by the possibility of change, which may cause them to view people who raise new ideas or different points of view as "rocking the boat" or as "troublemakers" (Milliken et al., 2003). On the other hand, voice is a prosocial behavior that is motivated by the desire to positively impact the functioning of one's organization or work unit. Assuming that others recognize it as such, they will tend to view an employee who voices as *higher* on communal attributes. That is, voicing an idea, concern, or suggestion for improvement may convey behavioral cues about the person caring about the organization or work unit, which may enhance judgments of communion. Indirect empirical support for this idea comes from Whiting et al. (2012), who found that when an employee speaks up with a solution to a problem, observers liked the person more and attributed more prosocial motives to that person. In addition, research on job interviews suggests that individuals who

assertively express their beliefs and feelings are more likeable (Gallois, Callan, & Palmer, 1992), and Wojciske et al. (2009) have argued that liking reflects perceptions of communion.

Support for the argument that voice may positively affect perceived communion also comes from Van Dyne et al (2003) who argued that supervisors often attribute silence (the absence of voice) to a lack of motivation or interest. Drawing on attribution theory (e.g., Kelly, 1973), they argued that because being silent provides fewer behavioral cues than voice, there is more ambiguity about the motive behind it. As a consequence, people who do not voice may be perceived as disengaged or not interested in contributing to the group (Van Dyne et al., 2003) — in other words as less communal. The flip-side of this argument is that employees who voice may be seen as *more* communal. In sum, while we recognize that a case could be made for a negative effect of voice on perceptions of communion, we believe that a more compelling case can be made for a positive relationship. We therefore offer the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Perceived communion mediates the relationship between voice and social status such that employees who voice are perceived as more communal and in turn as higher in social status than employees who do not.

Overview of the Present Research

We conducted three studies to test our proposed mediation model, enabling us to examine the robustness of our findings across different samples, contexts, and operationalizations of voice. Study 1 was a correlational survey study. Individuals working across a range of organizations provided ratings of the extent to which a co-worker offers work-related suggestions, and then ratings of that colleague's agency and communal attributes, and social status, two weeks later. The main strength of this study was external validity. However, a weakness of the study is that it does not enable us to draw confident conclusions about causality. We therefore ran two

experiments where we could directly test the causal relationship between voice and perceived status, and the mediating mechanisms. Study 2 was a vignette study in which we manipulated whether or not a subordinate raised a concern, and then assessed perceptions of that employee's agency, communion, and social status. In Study 3, participants worked on a decision making task in three-person teams. We manipulated the voice behavior of the most junior person of the team (he/she either did or did not raise a divergent opinion), to examine how this affected the other team members' ratings of that person's agency, communion, and social status.

Using experimental methods so that we could test whether voice has a *causal* effect on status was critical given that the relationship between these two variables is likely to be reciprocal. For example, research has shown that higher status individuals engage in more assertive communication in groups (Hall, Coats, & LeBeau, 2005). In addition, it has been shown that employees with higher *self-perceived* status engage in more voice (Janseen & Gao, 2015), and that work-flow centrality (which is likely related to status) results in more voice behavior (Venkataramani & Tangirala, 2010).

Study 1

Method

Procedure. Study 1 was a two-wave survey study. On the first survey (T_1), participants were asked to identify a person in their work unit (other than their supervisor) with whom they regularly interact. Next, they were asked to think back over the last several weeks and to rate the extent to which that person had engaged in voice behavior. They were also asked to rate the person's overall performance, and to provide basic demographic and job-related information (age, gender, race, education level, industry, tenure). Two weeks later, participants were sent a second survey (T_2). They were asked to think about the same person whom they had rated at T_1 and to

rate that person's social status, agency, and communion. On each survey, they provided the initials of the person that they were rating, so that we could confirm that they were the same.

Participants. Participants were recruited from a nationally representative online panel (Prolific Academic) and invited to participate in the study for a small reimbursement. To participate in this study, participants needed to be fluent in English and working full-time in the United States. It was also required that participants had a coworker whom they could rate. Thus, we asked whether their work required them to regularly interact with other employees, and if so, whether they work closely enough with at least one of these other employees that they could answer a set of questions about that person's behavior. To ensure that respondents carefully read the instructions, we used an attention filter at both measurement times. Of the 277 respondents at Time 1, 232 submitted a complete survey at Time 2, representing a follow-up response rate of 84%. After eliminating those who did not respond in the affirmative to the two questions about working with other employees, those who did not pass both the attention filters, and those who did not provide the same initials of their coworker at T_1 and T_2 , our final sample size was 155.

Forty-one percent of the sample was female, and 81% identified themselves as White/Caucasian. Average age was 32.8 years and average tenure was 4.3 years. Participants worked across 24 different industries. Seventy-nine percent had a college degree, and of these, 17% held an advanced degree. Seventy-one percent indicated that they held a supervisory or managerial position. Seventy-three percent indicated that the person they were rating was at the same level as themselves and 27% indicated that the person they were rating was a subordinate.

Measures. Participants rated their coworker's voice behavior at T_1 using the five-item promotive voice scale by Liang et al. (2012). Sample items (7-point agree/disagree scale) are "he or she proactively develops and makes suggestions for issues that may influence the unit"

and “he or she makes constructive suggestions to improve the unit’s operation.” The items formed a highly reliable scale ($\alpha = .95$). We also asked respondents to rate their coworker’s work performance (1 = *performs very poorly*; 7 = *performs very well*), so that we could use this as a control variable.

At T₂, we measured agency, communion, and social status. Drawing from the status literature (Pettit, Yong, & Spataro, 2010, Pettit et al., 2013), we had participants rate their coworker on the following five dimensions using a 7-point scale: respect, status, prestige, admiration, and influence ($\alpha = .94$).

Following prior studies that have assessed agency and communion perceptions (Abele, 2003; Caprariello, Cuddy, Fiske, & Caprariello, 2009; Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002) we measured agency by having participants rate their coworker on the following attributes: competent, intelligent, capable, efficient, independent, and confident ($\alpha = .92$), and we measured communion by having them rate their coworker on the following: helpful to others, trustworthy, supportive, friendly, warm, and sincere, ($\alpha = .96$). Responses were on a seven-point scale.

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviation and correlations of all variables. As shown, voice was positively correlated with agency, communion, status, and ratings of performance. As in a number of past studies (e.g., Judd et al., 2005; Rosenberg, Nelson, & Vivekananthan, 1968; Suitner & Maass, 2008), there was a strong positive correlation between agency and communion. Respondents’ gender related to their ratings of agency and communion (females provided higher ratings than males), but their age, tenure, rank, and whether they were rating a subordinate versus a peer were unrelated to any of our variables of interest.

We performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to ensure that our multi-item scales

of voice, agency, communion, and social status were empirically distinct. The four-factor model showed reasonable fit indices, $\chi^2(203) = 460.68$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .92, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .09, and provided significantly better fit to the data than (a) a two-factor model where the agency, communion, and status items were combined into a single factor ($\chi^2(208) = 872.69$, $\Delta\chi^2(5) = 412.01$, $p < .001$, CFI = .77, RMSEA = .14), (b) a three-factor model where the agency and status items were combined into a single factor ($\chi^2(206) = 599.73$, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 139.05$, $p < .001$, CFI = .87, RMSEA = .11), (c) a three-factor model where the agency and communion items were combined into a single factor ($\chi^2(206) = 676.98$, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 216.30$, $p < .001$, CFI = .85, RMSEA = .12), and (d) a single factor model ($\chi^2(211) = 1802.62$, $\Delta\chi^2(8) = 1341.94$, $p < .001$, CFI = .45, RMSEA = .22).

To test our hypotheses, we used the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes & Preacher, 2013) so that we could test the direct and indirect effects in the relationship between voice, agency, communion, and social status, and used bootstrap estimates to construct bias-corrected confidence intervals. In all models, we controlled for the ratings of the coworker's performance and for the respondents' gender given that it was significantly correlated with the ratings of agency and communion. However, the results were similar without the inclusion of these control variables. Table 2 summarizes the results. As shown, voice related positively to both agency (Model 1: $B = .20$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$) and communion (Model 2: $B = .15$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$). Supporting Hypothesis 1, Model 3 shows that voice significantly and positively predicted social status ($B = .13$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$).

Consistent with Hypotheses 2 and 3, when agency and communion were entered into the model, the effect of voice was no longer significant ($B = -.05$, $SE = .05$, $p = .31$), but both agency ($B = .81$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$) and communion ($B = .17$, $SE = .07$, $p < .05$) had positive

relationships with social status. Bootstrapping analysis ($z = 5000$ samples) confirmed that the indirect effects of voice through agency and communion were significant, with point estimates of $B = .16$ (95% CI [.05, .28]) for agency and $B = .02$ (95% CI [.001, .08]) for communion.

Discussion

This study provides initial support for our hypotheses as we found a positive relationship between ratings of an employee's voice and subsequent evaluations of his/her social status, and evidence suggesting that this is mediated by judgments of the employee's agency (i.e., being more capable, independent, confident) and communion (i.e., being more friendly, trustworthy, supportive). A strength of this study was that participants were actual employees, working in a wide range of organizations, and that they were rating a true coworker. However, the study has some limitations. First, we did not directly measure voice behavior, and we cannot determine how well the ratings of voice reflect the coworker's actual behavior. Second, even though we separated the measurement of our variables across two points in time, our results do not permit us to draw firm conclusions about causal direction. Third, most of our respondents were rating a co-worker, and it is possible that their ratings would have been different if they were evaluating the status of a subordinate. In light of these limitations, our second study was a controlled experiment, where we could directly manipulate information about a subordinate's voice behavior and then see whether this affected subsequent perceptions of his status, and also examine whether judgments of agency and communion mediated this effect.

Study 2

In Study 2, our goal was to see whether our hypotheses would be supported using a design with stronger internal validity than is possible with a survey study. Specifically, Study 2 was a scenario-based experiment with two conditions: one in which the subordinate in the

scenario voiced concerns about a new plan, and one in which he did not.

Method

Participants. In order to have a diverse sample, we recruited working adults from the US through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), which has been shown to be a reliable and valid source of data (Buhrmester, Kwang & Gosling, 2012). To be eligible to participate, individuals needed to be fluent in English, have at least a two-year college degree, and be working full-time and not self-employed. After eliminating those who did not pass the attention filter, we had a sample size of 368.

Fifty-one percent of the sample was female, and 57% identified themselves as White/Caucasian. Average age was 34.56 years, and average job tenure was 5.58 years. Eighty-six percent had at least a college degree and 27% held an advanced degree. Participants worked across 24 different industries, with the most common being computer and electronics (10%), healthcare or social assistance (9%) and finance or insurance (8%). Sixty-nine percent indicated that they either currently held a supervisory position or had been a supervisor in the past.

Procedure. The experiment was conducted on-line. Participants were asked to read a scenario and put themselves in the shoes of the manager described. The scenario, shown in Appendix A, was adapted from Burris' (2012) study. We used a randomized between-subjects design. In the voice condition ($n = 183$), the employee voiced his concerns with the manager's plan. In the no-voice condition, he did not raise concerns. After reading the scenario, participants rated the employee's status, a set of agency and communion-related attributes, and the employee's performance. They also provided basic demographic and job-related information (age, gender, race, industry, tenure).

Measures. We used the same measures for social status, agency, and communion as in

Study 1. Participants indicated the extent to which they felt each of the items applied to the employee in the scenario, using a 7-point scale. Reliabilities for the social status ($\alpha = .94$), agency ($\alpha = .93$) and communion ($\alpha = .93$) measures were again very high.

As a control variable, we asked participants to indicate how they would rate the employee's job performance, using the same 7-point scale used in Study 1. As a manipulation check, we asked: "How likely is Brandon to voice an opinion different from that of his supervisor?" Response options ranged from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 6 (*very likely*).

Results

Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations and correlations of all variables. As in Study 1, we performed a CFA to determine whether the measures of agency, communion, and social status exhibited sufficient discriminant validity. Our proposed three-factor model had a good fit to the data ($\chi^2(116) = 248.72$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06), and provided significantly better fit to the data than (a) a two-factor model where the agency and status items were combined into a single factor ($\chi^2(118) = 427.45$, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 178.73$, $p < .001$, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .08), (b) a two-factor model where the agency and communion items were combined into a single factor ($\chi^2(118) = 335.38$, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 86.66$, $p < .001$, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .07), and (c) a single factor model ($\chi^2(119) = 524.22$, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 275.50$, $p < .001$, CFI = .88, RMSEA = .10).

Next, we examined the responses to the manipulation check question. We found that participants in the voice condition reported a significantly higher likelihood of the employee voicing an opinion different from that of the supervisor ($M = 4.59$, $SD = .89$) than participants in the no-voice condition ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.36$), $t(367) = -9.77$, $p < .001$.

To test our hypotheses, we again used the PROCESS macro in SPSS and bootstrap estimates to construct bias-corrected confidence intervals (Hayes & Preacher, 2013). As in

Study 1, we controlled for perceived performance. We also controlled for participants' age as it was significantly correlated with agency, communion, and social status. Table 4 summarizes the results. Model 1 and 2 show that the voice manipulation positively affected ratings of both agency ($B = .40, SE = .10, p < .001$) and communion ($B = .29, SE = .10, p < .01$). Model 3 shows that the voice manipulation significantly and positively predicted ratings of social status ($B = .21, SE = .11, p < .05$), which supports Hypothesis 1. Model 4 shows that when agency and communion were entered into the model, the effect of voice condition on social status was no longer significant ($B = -.08, SE = .08, p = .32$), but both agency ($B = .51, SE = .06, p < .001$) and communion ($B = .27, SE = .06, p < .001$) each had a positive effect on social status.

Bootstrapping analysis ($z = 5,000$ samples) confirmed that the indirect effects of voice through agency and communion were significant, with a point estimate of $B = .20$ (95% CI [.08, .37]) for agency and a point estimate of $B = .08$ (95% CI [.02, .17]) for communion. Hence, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were both supported.

Discussion

Confirming the results from Study 1, Study 2 provides further evidence that employees who voice their concerns are more likely to be judged as having high status than those who do not. The results also support our argument that perceptions of the employee being both agentic and communal are key mechanisms explaining this effect. Compared with employees who remain silent, those who speak up are seen as more capable and independent, and also as more helpful and trustworthy, which in turn causes them to be ascribed higher status by an observer.

A strength of Study 2 is that it we were able to manipulate voice behavior and then directly examine whether this has a causal effect on perceptions of social status. However, a weakness of scenario designs is potential lack of realism. In this case, participants were rating a

fictitious character rather than an actual person with whom they have had the opportunity to interact face-to-face. Given this weakness, we conducted a third study where participants directly interacted with a person in a subordinate position. In one experimental condition the subordinate voiced, and in the other condition he/she did not.

Study 3

Study 3 was a laboratory experiment in which three-person teams worked together on a decision making task. We randomly assigned participants to roles on the team, and manipulated the voice behavior of the team member with the lowest professional rank. The other two members of the team then rated his/her level of agency and communion, and his/her social status.

Method

Participants and procedure. Participants were 132 students (63% female, 50% undergraduate), ranging from 18 to 37 years of age ($M = 22.54$, $SD = 3.46$), who were recruited through the business school's online subject pool system (SONA). We used three randomization procedures. Upon arrival at the lab, participants were randomly assigned to a 3-person team, and each team was randomly assigned to an experimental condition. There were 44 teams in all. Twenty-three teams ($n = 69$) were in the voice condition and 21 ($n = 63$) were in the no-voice condition. Next, each person within a team was randomly assigned to one of three roles: senior marketing director, project manager, or associate. It was in this context that we manipulated voice by giving one team member (the associate) different information regarding how he/she should behave during the team interaction.

Participants were told that they were members of a marketing team at a large pharmaceutical company. Their team task consisted of making two decisions concerning the launch of a new painkiller: deciding how to design the packaging of the drug and which

marketing channels (i.e., TV, print, radio, internet) to use in order to achieve maximum reach of their advertising. They were told that their budget was constrained such that they could only choose two main marketing channels.

Each participant received different background information regarding his or her role in the team. These role descriptions were read in private and not shared among the team. The marketing director was told that he or she was the most experienced and senior person on the team, and had worked on a similar campaign for a different drug, in which the most innovative designs and advertising channels had been used. It was further described that the campaign had failed and therefore the director had become reluctant to using non-conventional packaging design. The director was also told that he or she was in favor of traditional media such as TV.

The project manager was told that he/she was responsible for the supervision and execution of the campaign. It was highlighted that he/she had conducted some research showing that consumers react favorably to conventional packaging design (e.g., bold font). The project manager was also told that he or she was in favor of traditional media channels such as TV ads and print media.

The associate was told that he or she was the least experienced person on the team, having just graduated from college. It was explained that he/she had done a lot of research on media usage by different age groups, which made an argument for the use of online and print media to effectively reach all target groups while being more cost-efficient than TV ads. Moreover, the associate was told that he or she was in favor of a non-conventional packaging design (e.g., using pictures of a family) to make the product more distinguishable from competitors and to convey that the drug is safe for all targeted age groups. Thus, while the senior marketing director and project manager received arguments for conventional packaging and

traditional media channels, the associate received arguments for non-conventional packaging and a mix of traditional and non-traditional media channels.

Associates received the same background information and role description in both the voice and no-voice conditions. We then manipulated voice via additional instructions for the associate. In the voice condition the additional instruction read: “Given the research you have done and the opinions you have, it is important that you speak up with your point of view and opinions (based on the information provided). This will help your team to make the right decision. People in groups are sometimes uncomfortable expressing their views or disagreeing with others, but this often leads to poor decisions, so you should openly share your opinions with the team. Remember: Speak up with your point of view!”

In the no-voice condition the additional instruction read: “Despite the research you have done and the opinions you have about the packaging and marketing, you recognize that the senior marketing director and project manager are much more experienced than you. They are also much more senior. As the least experienced on the team, you are not comfortable disagreeing with the senior marketing director or project manager. So you should keep your opinions to yourself, even if the others ask for them, and not share them with the team.”

After receiving and studying their role description, each team was guided to a conference room. They were instructed to act on the basis of their role description and to reach a team decision on the two marketing issues. The discussion time was limited to ten minutes and the team interaction episode was videotaped. After ten minutes, the experimenter returned to the room and instructed the team to write down its decisions on the two issues. Next, participants were directed to cubicles to complete a questionnaire, which asked the senior marketing director and the project manager to rate the associate’s social status and to make judgments about his or

her level of agency and communion.

Measures. Social status was measured using the same measure used in Studies 1 and 2 ($\alpha = .92$). Agency ($\alpha = .94$) and communion ($\alpha = .92$) were also assessed using the same items as in the previous two studies.

We had four manipulation check questions. Associates were asked: “To what extent did you feel that you expressed a point of view that differed from the others?” and “To what extent did you feel that you offered opinions regardless of being asked?” The other team members were asked: “To what extent did you feel that the associate expressed a point of view that differed from the others?” and “To what extent did you feel that the associate offered opinions regardless of being asked?” Responses were on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very often*). Results suggest that the voice manipulation was effective. Associates in the voice condition reported being more likely to express a different point of view and to offer opinions regardless of being asked ($M = 5.91, SD = .90$, and $M = 5.52, SD = 1.37$) as compared to associates in the no-voice condition ($M = 3.42, SD = 2.24$, and $M = 3.43, SD = 2.01$), $t(42) = -4.89, p < .001$, and $t(42) = -4.05, p < .001$). Associates in the voice condition were also more strongly perceived by the other team members as expressing a different point of view and offering their opinion regardless of being asked ($M = 5.43, SD = 1.11$, and $M = 4.78, SD = 1.26$), as compared to associates in the no-voice condition ($M = 3.33, SD = 2.00$, and $M = 2.86, SD = 1.28$), $t(42) = -4.36, p < .001$, and $t(42) = -5.03, p < .001$.

An examination of the video-taped discussions confirmed that associates in the voice condition offered suggestions, opinions, and concerns (e.g., “Most firms use bold colors and fonts for the packaging but I think we should use a different approach because it’s a different kind of pill that we can market to pretty much all ages”, “But we have less side effects than

others, that's our advantage and we should totally market on it", "If it's something that's going to be too similar to our competitors I don't know that it's really going to distinguish it"). In contrast, most associates in the no-voice condition agreed with the suggestions of the other two team members (e.g., "Yes, I agree with that", "Ok, sounds good") and did not provide a different point of view even when the other team members asked for it (e.g., "It's ok with me. You guys have more experience than me").

We also coded the decisions made by each team: specifically, whether the team decided to use non-conventional packaging and/or non-traditional media channels. The decision regarding packaging was coded as 1 if it contained the words "*picture*" or "*family*" (more innovative ideas) and 0 if it contained "*bold font*" or "*like Advil*" (more traditional ideas). The decision regarding the marketing channels was coded as 1 if it contained the words "*internet*," "*online*" or "*website*" and 0 if it did not contain any reference to online media. The coded responses were summed to create a composite measure of team innovation.

Analytic approach. The voice manipulation was conducted at the team-level. To ensure that it was appropriate to aggregate the ratings of status, agency and communion to the team level, we computed ICC(1) values, which reflect the ratio of between-group variance to total variance (Bliese, 2000). The ICC(1) statistics were .14 for social status, .26 for agency, and .08 for communion. All ICC(1)s thus were in the acceptable range for aggregation (.05-.20; Bliese, 2000). We also computed $r_{wg(j)}$ for each team. The median $r_{wg(j)}$ for the 44 teams was .87 for status, .88 for agency, and .91 for communion, showing a high level of agreement between the two people rating each associate, and providing further support for aggregating to the team-level (LeBreton & Senter, 2007).

Results

Table 5 shows the means, standard deviations and inter-correlations for all team-level variables. Before testing our hypotheses, we conducted a series of CFAs to examine the discriminant validity of the status, agency and communion measures. The three-factor model had reasonable fit indices considering the small sample size, $\chi^2(116) = 266.71$, CFI = .87, RMSEA = .12, and provided significantly better fit to the data than (a) a two-factor model where the agency and status items were combined into a single factor ($\chi^2(118) = 359.19$, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 92.48$, $p < .001$, CFI = .76, RMSEA = .17), (b) a two-factor model where the agency and communion items were combined into a single factor ($\chi^2(118) = 313.29$, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 86.66$, $p < .001$, CFI = .83, RMSEA = .14), and (c) a single factor model ($\chi^2(119) = 404.63$, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 137.92$, $p < .001$, CFI = .76, RMSEA = .17).

As in Studies 1 and 2, we used the PROCESS macro to run a series of regression models. As shown in Table 6 (Model 3), the voice manipulation had a significantly positive effect on ratings of social status ($B = .83$, $SE = .28$, $p < .001$). The voice condition also positively predicted ratings of agency ($B = .82$, $SE = .28$, $p < .01$). However, the positive effect of voice condition on ratings of communion was not statistically significant ($B = .25$, $SE = .25$, $p = .326$). Bootstrapping analysis ($z = 5000$ samples) showed that the indirect effect through agency was significant, with the confidence intervals for the estimates excluding zero ($B = .37$, 95% CI [.19, .86]). This was not the case for communion ($B = .09$, 95% CI [-.05, .42]). These findings confirm the mediating role of perceived agency, but not of perceived communion.

Lastly, we conducted an exploratory investigation of whether the associate's voice behavior affected the team's decision to use non-conventional packaging and/or non-traditional media channels, as reflected in the two-item composite measure of team innovation. Independent t-tests showed that teams were more likely to decide on an innovative approach in the voice ($M =$

1.39, $SD = .50$) than in the no-voice condition ($M = .43$, $SD = .68$) $t(42) = -5.41$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

The results of Study 3 are largely consistent with those of Studies 1 and 2 as they show that voice had a positive effect on a team members' social status and that this effect was mediated by agency. However, unlike in Studies 1 and 2, voice was not significantly related to perceptions of communion. Thus, we did not find support for Hypothesis 3.

Our exploratory analyses showed that voice behavior not only impacted the associate's social status, but made it more likely that the team would adopt an innovative approach to the marketing task. This suggests that associates who voiced were in fact influential, consistent with research showing that voice can promote team learning and the adoption of novel approaches (Edmondson, 2003) and that minority views can promote innovative team decisions (De Dreu & West, 2001).

General Discussion

Recent years have witnessed a burgeoning number of studies of employee voice behavior (Chamberlin et al., 2017). Voice, by constructively challenging the status quo, is one of the primary means by which employees can help their organizations innovate and adapt. Yet it is widely viewed as a risky activity for employees. The risks cannot be denied—supervisors and peers are not always receptive to voice and may respond negatively. However, drawing from theories of status attainment and the agency-communion framework of interpersonal judgment, we have argued and shown that when it comes to social status, voice has positive implications for employees.

In our survey study, we found that more frequent voice behavior was associated with higher status ratings from coworkers. In our two experiments, we found that employees who

raised a concern or offered an opinion that challenged the views of a superior were ascribed higher social status than those who did not. In all three studies, perceptions of agentic attributes mediated this effect, and in two of the studies, perceptions of communal attributes served as a mediator as well. In the third study, communal attributes *were* related to status judgments, but they were not significantly affected by voice behavior. We cannot know for certain why this was the case, yet it is possible that the face-to-face group interaction made agency more salient or did not provide sufficient cues about communal qualities.

Taken as a whole, our findings advance the small but growing body of research on the implications of voice behavior for the employee, confirming studies suggesting that it may have positive effects (Whiting et al., 2008; 2012) and challenging studies suggesting the opposite (Burris, 2012; Seibert et al., 2001). Our work also represents an extension beyond the existing focus on performance evaluations, examining the implications of voice for status, one of the most fundamental aspects of social relationships.

It is noteworthy as well that we found support for a positive relationship between voice and status judgments using three different operationalizations of voice: how often an employee expressed new ideas or suggestions overall, whether a subordinate raised concerns with a manager's plan, and whether a lower-level employee advocated for an outcome different from the one preferred by his/her superiors. These operationalizations spanned both promotive (raising suggestions or new ideas) and prohibitive (raising problems or concerns) forms of voice (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012). Previous research has suggested that prohibitive voice carries an especially high level of risk, causing others to view the employee as threatening or disloyal, and negatively affecting ratings of job performance (Chamberlin et al., 2017). Yet our results show that in the context of evaluations of social status, employees who engage in prohibitive forms of

voice may actually be seen more positively.

Theoretical Contributions

Drawing from theory on status attainment (Ridgeway, 1978; 1982) and the two fundamental dimensions of social judgment, agency and communion (Abele & Wojciszje, 2014), our work makes an important theoretical contribution to the voice literature. We provide theory to not only argue that voice has a positive effect on social status, but also to explain how perceptions of the employee's agency and communion are the mechanisms explaining this relationship. To date, research on the individual-level outcomes of voice has mostly focused on the impact of this behavior for performance evaluations. Studies have identified a number of mediators, such as perceptions of loyalty, threat, liking, and trustworthiness (Burris, 2012; Whiting et al., 2012), yet there has not been any overarching theoretical framework for understanding these effects. Thus, the voice literature has lacked not only systematic research on outcomes, but also theory on *how* voice affects social perceptions and the attributions that others make about an employee. Our work provides such theory.

Our work also contributes to the research on the fundamental dimensions of agency and communion (Abele, 2003; Fiske et al., 2002), which has been interested in factors that shape judgments of others. Our findings suggest that individuals, regardless of their formal level of power or professional status, can influence the extent to which they are viewed as agentic and communal by engaging in voice behavior. Building from our work, scholars interested in how judgments of agency and communion are made in the workplace should consider the role of proactive behavior such as voice. Our work also highlights the potential role of communal attributes in status appraisals. Although researchers have argued that perceptions of agency are primary in determining how much status people attribute to others (Wojciszke et al., 2009), our

work shows that perceptions of communion positively affect status appraisals as well.

Our work is also of relevance for theory on the emergence and stability of status hierarchies (Anderson et al., 2006; Pettit et al., 2010; 2013), which has tended to focus on the effects of demographics, personal traits, non-verbal cues, and formal rank, and has only recently begun to consider alternative routes to status such as knowledge sharing (Cheng et al., 2013). In highlighting the effect of voice behavior, our work speaks as well to the dynamic quality of status relations. While it has been recognized that status relations can be quite dynamic (e.g., Pettit et al., 2013), understanding of how changes in the perceived social hierarchy occur over time is limited. Future research should build on our work by studying the effects of voice on a person's standing in the social hierarchy and on shifts in the status hierarchy more broadly. For example, if voice induces status change, or instability in the status hierarchy, it may also be the case that others can *lose* status when a co-worker speaks up and consequently receives more recognition and respect. This would be an interesting issue to investigate.

Practical Implications

Our findings have implications for both employees and their organizations. For employees, our results suggest that they can use voice behavior as a means toward not just helping their work unit or organization, but also toward bolstering their social status. Higher status, in turn, will make it easier for them to be influential and effective, and may enhance their personal well-being (Adler et al., 2000). The positive effect of voice on one's status may also have motivational effects. Research suggests that when employees feel that they are viewed positively, they are more motivated to contribute to their organization (Janssen & Gao, 2015), which may lead to higher engagement and performance.

These effects may also be of benefit to the organization. A core argument in the voice

literature is that employee voice facilitates innovation, error correction, and organizational learning (Morrison, 2014). Our results suggest an additional reason why it may be good for organizations to encourage and support employee voice behavior. It is a given in most organizations that there will be employees with low professional status—individuals in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs and without much formal clout. Yet such individuals might still be able to elevate their standing in the informal social status hierarchy by voicing, thereby mitigating some of the negative effects associated with lack of formal status and/or power, such as disengagement.

Limitations and Future Research

A strength of this research is that we used a range of methodologies: a time-lagged survey design, a scenario-based experiment, and a face-to-face small group experiment. However, our research also has some limitations. One limitation is that, in all three studies, social status and the two proposed mediators were rated on the same instrument at the same point in time. This was true even though we temporally separated the voice measure from the other ratings in Study 1 and experimentally manipulated voice behavior in Studies 2 and 3. As a result, the correlations between agency, communion and status may have been inflated by common method/source bias.

Another limitation is that we did not explore boundary conditions. Although we found a positive effect of voice behavior on a person's social status in all three studies, we recognize that there are likely to be conditions under which voice may not enhance, and may even harm, one's status. For example, if an employee raises a suggestion or concern in a manner that is rude or that exhibits poor emotional regulation (Foste & Botero, 2012; Grant, 2013), this would likely diminish rather than enhance his or her status. Similarly, if a supervisor is insecure and as a result feels highly threatened by input from employees (Fast, Burris, & Bartel, 2014), he or she may view an employee who voices more negatively, which may result in lowered status.

Organizational and cultural factors may also serve as boundary conditions, and these should be investigated as well. For instance, in organizations that do not value innovation or employee participation, or in ones that have a climate of silence rather than voice (Morrison & Milliken, 2000), voicing may damage rather than increase one's social status. Voice may also be seen less positively, and thus lead to lowered social status, in collectivistic or high power distance cultures. We thus encourage research that examines the effects of voice on status across different organizational and cultural contexts. In addition, we encourage longitudinal research on how changes in voice and status relate to one another over time, as well as research on how existing impressions about an employee (e.g., perceptions that he or she is communal) shape the attributions that are made about the employee's voice behavior, and how these in turn affect changes in perceived status.

Conclusion

Voice is inherently risky and can potentially harm an employee's image. Yet building from theory on status attainment and the two fundamental dimensions of social perception, agency and communion, we have explained and demonstrated how voice can enhance a person's social status, or the respect, prestige, and admiration one has in the eyes of others. Our results not just advance the voice literature, which to date has lacked a systematic understanding of how voice affects the individual, but also contribute to our understanding of status enhancement within organizations.

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Table 1

Study 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (n = 155)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	32.80	8.58									
2. Gender ^a	.41	.49	.15								
3. Job tenure	4.38	2.34	.62**	.13							
4. Supervisor ^b	.72	.45	.15	.00	.19*						
5. Relative rank ^c	.73	.45	-.11	.03	-.14	.04					
6. Performance	4.89	1.17	-.03	-.10	-.12	-.11	.07				
7. Voice	4.11	1.66	.00	-.04	.01	-.04	-.06	.18*			
8. Agency	5.40	1.24	-.05	-.17*	-.08	-.06	.08	.34***	.31***		
9. Communion	5.44	1.43	-.02	-.17*	-.04	-.04	-.06	.33***	.23**	.73***	
10. Social status	4.59	1.48	.03	.00	.00	-.01	.07	.34***	.21*	.78***	.65***

Note. Variables 1-4 reflect characteristics of the respondent; Variables 5-10 are respondents' ratings of their co-worker.

^a0=female, 1=male.

^b0= non-supervisory, 1 = supervisor/manager.

^cco-worker is at same level as the respondent, 1=co-worker is at a lower level.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 2

Study 1: Results of Mediated Regression Analyses (n = 155)

	Dependent variables			
	Agency	Communion	Social status (T₂)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Controls</i>				
Performance (T ₁)	.30 (.08)***	.36 (.09)***	.41 (.10)***	.10 (.07)
Gender ^a	-.34 (.18)	-.39 (.22)	.11 (.23)	.45 (.15)**
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Voice (T ₁)	.20 (.06)***	.15 (.07)***	.13 (.07)*	-.05 (.05)
<i>Mediators</i>				
Agency (T ₂)				.81 (.09)***
Communion (T ₂)				.17 (.07)*
R ²	.20***	.16***	.14***	.66***

^a0=female, 1=male.* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 3

Study 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (n = 368)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	34.56	9.96								
2. Gender ^a	.59	.50	-.08							
3. Job tenure	5.58	4.20	.41***	-.04						
4. Prof. position ^b	.69	.46	.14**	-.01	.08					
5. Voice condition ^c	.49	.50	.10	.07	-.05	.06				
6. Performance	4.40	1.23	.19***	.06	.06	.12*	.37***			
7. Agency	5.29	1.21	.21***	.03	.08	.09	.38***	.70***		
8. Communion	5.11	1.22	.14**	-.03	.07	.10	.34***	.69***	.79***	
9. Social status	4.96	1.27	.11*	-.05	-.05	.07	.30***	.67***	.79***	.76***

Note. Variables 1-4 reflect characteristics of the respondent; Variables 6-9 are respondents' ratings of the focal employee.

^a0=female, 1=male.

^b0=non-supervisory, 1=supervisory/managerial.

^c0=no-voice, 1=voice.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 4

Study 2: Results of Mediated Regression Analyses (n = 368)

	Dependent variable			
	Employee's	Employee's	Employee's	
	agency	communion	social status	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Controls</i>				
Performance	.58 (.04)***	.62 (.04)***	.64 (.05)***	.17 (.04)***
Age	.01 (.005)*	.001 (.004)	-.003 (.01)	-.01 (.004)
<i>Independent variable</i>				
Voice condition ^a	.40 (.10)***	.29 (.10)**	.21 (.11)*	-.08 (.08)
<i>Mediator</i>				
Agency				.51 (.06)***
Communion				.27 (.06)***
<i>R</i> ²	.47***	.46***	.42***	.67***

^a0=no-voice, 1=voice.* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 5

Study 3: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (n = 44 teams)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Voice condition ^a	.52	.50				
2. Competence	5.21	1.29	.41**			
3. Warmth	5.30	1.13	.15	.73***		
4. Social status	4.42	1.35	.36*	.80***	.73***	
5. Team innovation	.93	.76	.64***	.50**	.04	.40**

^a0=no-voice, 1=voice.* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 6

Study 3: Results of Mediated Regression Analyses (n = 44 teams)

	Dependent variables			
	Agency	Communion	Social status	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Predictor</i>				
Voice condition ^a	.82 (.28)**	.25 (.25)	.83 (.28)**	.36 (.20)
<i>Mediator</i>				
Agency				.45 (.15)**
Communion				.36 (.16)*
<i>R</i> ²	.17***	.02	.43**	.67***

^a0=no-voice, 1=voice.* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Appendix: Scenario Used in Study 2

TravelAir is a small commuter airline that serves the Pacific Northwest, California, Nevada, and Arizona. TravelAir has served this market for the past 15 years. You have been a manager at TravelAir for about 2 years now, and you are in charge of 35 employees and 42 daily routes, primarily in California. You took the position with the charge of increasing profits within a 3-year period. During the last 2 years, profits have grown and employee morale has improved.

Despite these improvements, one thing you have recently noticed is that there have been increasing complaints from customers. The complaints seem to center on two issues. First, the planes are overbooked during the morning and evening rush hours. Consequently, some passengers are bumped and have to wait for other planes with available seating. Second, some of the flight attendants have been described as rude. They often yell at customers to hurry up or find a seat. When you have confronted the flight attendants about this, they simply tell you that they are instructing the passengers to sit down so that they can keep on schedule.

Over a two-month period, you worked on developing an action plan to address the increase in complaints. Having studied the routes, interviewed passengers, and analyzed the passenger loads on each flight, you have concluded that you need to restructure the routes and maintenance schedules. Because a sizable number of the travelers during rush hour are required to switch planes halfway through their route home, you believe that you could capitalize on some efficiencies by serving direct routes between four cities. You spent the next several weeks reworking the routes, taking into consideration: 1) the most popular routes traveled; 2) the air traffic conditions at each airport; 3) cost of fuel at each airport; and, 4) daily maintenance schedules. By taking five planes off of existing routes to serve the new direct flights, you can operate with one less plane while still satisfying all of these issues. You feel confident that these new routes will better meet the demands of customers during the rush hours. If implemented, you believe that the changes will lead to an annual profit of \$300,000 for your area in the first year with steady gains expected over the next 3 years.

Voice condition:

This morning, you had your weekly meeting with the head of flight maintenance, Brandon Spencer. At that meeting, you explained your action plan in detail. Brandon indicated that he was impressed with all of the work that you put into designing the plan to re-work the routes. However, he also raised some concerns with the plan. Specifically, he said he is worried that the proposal does not allot enough time for the daily maintenance checks (tire checks, light checks, walk-arounds, etc.) and monthly maintenance (changing the oil, checking the brakes, cockpit functions, engine tune-ups, etc.). As a result, he believes that planes would begin to experience problems with increasing regularity in about a month, with costs and delays both increasing within 3 months. Given these concerns, he suggested that revisions be made to your plan that would call for more maintenance time.

No voice condition:

This morning, you had your weekly meeting with the head of flight maintenance, Brandon Spencer. At that meeting, you explained your action plan in detail. Brandon indicated that he was impressed with all of the work that you put into designing the plan to re-work the routes. However, you got a clear sense from his reaction that he had some concerns with the plan. Specifically, you suspected that he might be worried about the proposal not allotting enough time for the daily maintenance checks (tire checks, light checks, walk-arounds, etc.) and monthly maintenance (changing the oil, checking the brakes, cockpit functions, engine tune-ups, etc.), and problems that this might create. But Brandon did not say anything, nor offer any suggestions for revising your plan.