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Supervisory Responsiveness and Employee Self-Perceived Status and Voice Behavior

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We investigated the role of employees' status appraisals within their work group in relation to their challenging-promotive voice behavior. We argued that fair and respectful treatment of their voice input by the authority figure of the group (i.e., supervisory responsiveness) enhances employees' self-perceived status, thereby motivating them to engage in subsequent voice behavior. Using a sample of 337 supervisor-subordinate dyads collected in manufacturing industry organizations in China, we found that self-perceived status mediated the relationship between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior. We further identified employees' self-efficacy for voice as a moderator in this mediational chain for the path from supervisory responsiveness to self-perceived status. The indirect relationship between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior through self-perceived status was more pronounced when self-efficacy for voice was higher rather than lower.

Keywords: *supervisory responsiveness; self-efficacy for voice; self-perceived status; voice behavior*

Employee voice—defined as the expression of challenging but constructive concerns, opinions, or suggestions about work-related issues (e.g., Venkataramani & Tangirala, 2010)—is widely assumed to be essential for the early detection of serious problems and the creation of

This article is dedicated to the memory of Liping Gao. She unexpectedly passed away in June 2012 due to heart and lung failure.

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improvement and innovation opportunities in organizations (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; Greenberg & Edwards, 2009; Van Dyne, Kamdar, & Joireman, 2008). In accordance with the importance of voice behavior, there has been a growing research interest in exploring its antecedents, focused on identifying personal causes such as personality and demographic characteristics (e.g., Crant, 2000; LePine & Van Dyne, 2001) and work contextual factors, such as specific supervisor behaviors that can create a voice-supportive environment in which employees feel safe and encouraged to espouse their concerns and ideas (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 2003; Gao, Janssen, & Shi, 2011).

Although this previous work has provided valuable insights into particular antecedents and associated psychological mechanisms underlying employee voice, several issues remain to be addressed. A topic that has largely been overlooked is employees' evaluation of their status within the work group in relation to their voice behavior. As status reflects the prominence, respect, and influence that an individual enjoys in the eyes of others (e.g., Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001; Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972; Fiske, 1993), self-perceived status in the context of a work group refers to how valued and respected an employee perceives himself or herself to be as a group member (e.g., Tyler, 1999; van Dijke, De Cremer, Mayer, & Van Quaquebeke, 2012). When employees experience high levels of group-based status, they feel respected by others in the work group and tend to become voluntarily motivated to contribute to the group using their distinctive qualities and abilities (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Hence, it is important to examine whether, when, and how self-perceived status may encourage employees to engage in challenging-promotive voice behaviors that are intended to improve problematic situations in the work group.

Pointing out problems and coming up with suggestions for change may challenge the status quo of thoughts and routines in the workplace (Detert & Burris, 2007; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). As supervisors are the power holders of the status quo and have the authority to make decisions on voice input, employees are likely to pay close attention to how their supervisors respond to the concerns, opinions, and suggestions they put forward within the work group (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 2003). Prior research has indeed shown that the more employees perceive their supervisors to be responsive to their voice input, the more likely they are to engage in subsequent voice behavior (Saunders, Sheppard, Knight, & Roth, 1992). We used relational fairness theories like the group-value model (Lind & Tyler, 1988), relational model of authority (Tyler & Lind, 1992), and group engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2003) to propose and test whether this relationship between supervisory responsiveness and employee voice behavior is mediated by an employee's assessment of his or her standing within the group (i.e., self-perceived status). We argue that employees' status appraisals are strongly influenced by their judgments of the degree to which their voice input usually receives fair and respectful treatment by the supervisor (i.e., supervisory responsiveness). The basic notion is that an employee derives status from supervisory responsiveness because fair and trustworthy treatment by the authority figure of the group indicates that the group values and respects this particular employee (cf. Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). This amount of status that an employee perceives himself or herself to have within the work group may, in turn, promote or inhibit his or her expression of ideas about work-related issues in the work group.

Effective voice behavior requires specific abilities and skills for identifying work-related problems and expressing opinions and ideas about those problems to others in the work

Figure 1**Research Model in Which Self-Perceived Status Mediates and Self-Efficacy for Voice Moderates the Relationship Between Supervisory Responsiveness and Voice Behavior**

group. Employees differ in their beliefs about their self-efficacy for voice (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). When employees have more positive self-efficacy beliefs, they feel more confident about their ability to provide meaningful voice input that can make a difference in the work group. As status is based on an individual's potential to benefit the group (e.g., Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Blau, 1964; Pettit, Yong, & Spataro, 2010; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986), we argue that higher self-efficacy for voice reinforces and enhances the positive status appraisals that employees tend to derive from fair treatment by their supervisor. In other words, self-efficacy for voice may operate as a boundary condition that strengthens the positive relationship between supervisory responsiveness and self-perceived status, thereby further promoting engagement in voice behavior. Thus, we tested a mediated moderation model proposing an indirect relationship between supervisory responsiveness and employee voice that is mediated by employee self-perceived status and moderated by employee self-efficacy for voice. Figure 1 presents this research model.

The present study was aimed at making two unique contributions. First, we integrated insights from relational fairness theory (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Blader, 2003; Tyler & Lind, 1992) and status theory (e.g., Anderson, Srivastava, Beer, Spataro, & Chatman, 2006; Chizhik, Alexander, Chizhik, & Goodman, 2003; Pettit et al., 2010; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986) with the literature on the role of supervisors in employee voice (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; Landau, 2009; Liu, Zhu, & Yang, 2010; Saunders et al., 1992; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009) to examine employee self-perceived status within a work group as a potential mediating mechanism that links supervisory responsiveness to employee voice behavior. Second, we used notions from self-efficacy theory (e.g., Bandura, 1986, 1997; Tierney & Farmer, 2002, 2011) to identify individual differences in self-efficacy for voice as a boundary condition that moderates the indirect relationship between supervisory responsiveness and employee voice through self-perceived status.

Conceptual Background and Hypotheses

Supervisory Responsiveness, Self-Perceived Status, and Voice Behavior

As challenging-promotive voice may disrupt the work-related status quo in the work-group (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), it implicates the supervisor as the power holder of the existing framework of thoughts and practices within the group (Detert & Burris, 2007).

Supervisors have the principal task of recognizing and managing employee voice because it has the potential to detect serious problems and provide valuable improvement opportunities (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; Saunders et al., 1992; Venkataramani & Tangirala, 2010). Given supervisors' pivotal role as voice manager and their power over a broad range of valuable resources (e.g., information, support, pay, promotion, work assignments, career opportunities), employees tend to pay close attention to how their supervisor responds to their voice input (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 2003). Empirical research has shown that perceptions of their supervisor's responsiveness play an influential role in employees' intentions whether or not to speak up (Saunders et al., 1992).

In the present research, we proposed and tested employees' status appraisals as a mediating process mechanism that can clarify why supervisory responsiveness is linked to employees' voice behavior. Supervisory responsiveness has been defined as the extent to which employees perceive their supervisor as fair, prompt, unbiased, willing to take action, and effective in dealing with their voice. The group-value model (Lind & Tyler, 1988) and the relational model of authority (Tyler & Lind, 1992) suggest that individuals derive group-based status from how they are treated by the authority figure of the group. These models assume that people care and seek out information about their standing and reputation within the group they belong to. "Empowered by the group, the actions of authorities are presumed to reflect collective opinions" and provide individual members with crucial information about the prominence, respect, and influence they possess within the group (Huo, Binning, & Molina, 2010: 201).

There are several reasons to suggest that the supervisor of a work group plays an important role in communicating group-based status information to employees. Supervisors not only represent organizational authority but also are members of the work group they supervise, and thus they influence relationships within the groups (Lau & Liden, 2008). Social information theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) suggests that social cues emitted by influential actors in the social context are critical in employees' interpretation of what happens at work. Through their formal roles as performance appraiser and mentor of subordinates, and through their decisions about pay raises, promotions and demotions, and training opportunities, supervisors' communications are highly salient to group members and may influence their reputation and standing in the group (Lau & Liden, 2008). In line with this reasoning and in support of the relational fairness models, research has shown that the fairness of treatment enacted by a leader influences group members' self-perceived status stronger when the leader is an in-group member rather than an out-group member (Smith, Tyler, Huo, Ortiz, & Lind, 1998). In addition, coworkers were found to place more trust in fellow coworkers who were also trusted by the work groups' supervisors than in coworkers who were less trusted by supervisors (Lau & Liden, 2008), albeit the relationship between perceived supervisor fairness and trust in coworkers is stronger when the supervisor is highly group prototypical rather than less group prototypical (Seppälä, Lipponen, & Pirttilä-Backman, 2012).

Responsive and fair supervisors treat voicing employees with dignity and respect and are unbiased, prompt, supportive, and effective in dealing with their voice input (e.g., Saunders et al., 1992). Such responsive and fair treatment demonstrates a supervisor's recognition and appreciation of a voicing employee and is, therefore, a critical antecedent of positive status evaluations. That is, fair and respectful treatment by the authority figure of the group is used by the employee to derive the conclusion that he or she is a valued, high-status group member.

In contrast, when a supervisor responds to an employee's voice input in ways that fail to meet procedural and relational fairness standards, this may communicate that the employee enjoys less respect and is less valued as a group member. Thus, based on relational fairness theory, we suggest that supervisors' responsiveness to employees' voice may substantially affect employees' perceptions of how they are respected and valued within the group. Fair responses from the authority figure of the group inform employees that they enjoy high status in the group, whereas unfair responses indicate that they are marginal, low-status group members.

Furthermore, the group engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2003) suggests that enhanced levels of self-perceived status induced by fair and respectful treatment increase an employee's motivation to engage in discretionary group-serving behaviors (e.g., Blader & Tyler, 2009; Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2003; van Dijke et al., 2012). Drawing on this proposition, we examined whether status appraisals can link the fair treatment effect as reflected by supervisory responsiveness to employee voice. As group members' status is based on their potential to help the group reach its goals (e.g., Berger et al., 1980; Blau, 1964; Pettit et al., 2010; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986), higher-status members are more prominent, visible, and well-known and are allowed to have more influence over group recourses, interactions, and decisions than lower-status individuals (Anderson et al., 2001; Bales, Strodtbeck, Mills, & Roseborough, 1951; Berger et al., 1972).

Considering this core functional characteristic of status for group dynamics and outcomes, there are valid theoretical reasons to suggest that higher self-perceived status should promote engagement in voice behaviors. When employees perceive that they have respect and influence in the work group, they feel they are expected and allowed by low-status individuals to monitor and control practices and processes that are key to effective group functioning and outcomes. These perceived expectations are likely to facilitate employees to detect problems and come up with opinions and ideas for improvement and change. In contrast, appraising themselves as marginal, low-status group members should cause employees to rely on higher-status employees when critical issues emerge, thereby inhibiting employees with low self-perceived status from exhibiting challenging-promotive voice behaviors.

In addition, as status determines influence over group resources, processes, and decisions, employees with high self-perceived status not only may believe they have a large capacity for voice, but also may feel less constrained by others in their inclinations and intentions to voice (e.g., Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). Employees who perceive that they enjoy high status in the group feel less dependent on others of lower status for acquiring critical resources (i.e., respect, influence, information) for voice and are, therefore, subject to fewer threats and certain forms of social influence. As a result of being less influenced by others, employees with high self-perceived status are more likely to be able to stay focused on detecting problems and expressing their concerns, opinions, and ideas for betterment even in the face of potential social obstacles in the work group. Thus, we argue that perceptions of higher status make individuals less vulnerable to the typical situational and interpersonal pressure of voice situations, thereby setting them free to speak up.

Some prior studies have been conducted on constructs adjacent to status, from which empirical indications can be inferred for the assumed role of status in promoting voice.

Using a social network perspective, a survey study by Venkataramani and Tangirala (2010) found bank employees' work-flow centrality (i.e., the extent to which they are critical to the task-related interaction networks of their work groups) to be positively associated with their personal influence and voice behaviors within their work groups. In addition, Islam and Zyphur (2005) found in a business simulation with students as participants that individuals high in a power hierarchy tend to voice their opinions to a greater extent than low positional power individuals, but only when high positional power individuals believe that social hierarchies are justified (high on social dominance orientation). In contrast, an interview-based research study (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003) revealed that employees mentioned status-relevant characteristics such as their lack of experience, tenure, or rank as important reasons for why they felt unable to speak up. Relative to older, more experienced employees in higher organizational ranks, those who are young, inexperienced, or in low organizational positions are likely to be more concerned about the risks and probable negative outcomes associated with voice. Thus, based on both theoretical reasoning and these empirical indications, we propose that employees with higher self-perceived status within the work group are more likely to engage in voice behaviors and express their concerns, opinions, and suggestions about work-related issues.

In sum, combining relational fairness theory with insights from theory and research on status, we propose that an employee derives status from high supervisory responsiveness because receiving fair and respectful treatment from the authority figure of a group informs the employee that he or she is respected and valued as a group member. In contrast, receiving unfair responses from the supervisor may cause the employee to believe that he or she is a low-status, marginal group member. In turn, higher levels of self-perceived status motivate the employee to engage in voice behavior with the intention of improving group functioning and outcomes. Accordingly, we hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 1: Self-perceived status mediates the positive relationship between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior.

Self-Efficacy for Voice as a Moderator

To further advance understanding of self-perceived status as the process through which supervisory responsiveness is related to employee voice, we propose that employees' self-efficacy for voice operates as a boundary condition that influences the status appraisals they derive from the responsiveness of their supervisor. We argue that fair treatment of voice by the authority figure of the group (i.e., supervisory responsiveness) is more likely to result in enhanced self-perceived status when employees are higher on self-efficacy for voice—that is, when they feel they are competent to provide meaningful concerns, opinions, and suggestions that can make a difference and benefit group functioning and outcomes.

Self-efficacy has been defined as “a person's estimate of his or her capacity to orchestrate performance on a specific task” (Gist & Mitchell, 1992: 183). In the work domain, self-efficacy beliefs refer to an individual employee's personal judgment of his or her capabilities to effectively perform tasks and adequately complete job responsibilities (e.g., Gist & Mitchell,

1992; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012; Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Employees with high self-efficacy beliefs feel that they are competent and have the skills to perform well on specific tasks; those with low self-efficacy beliefs lack confidence in the possibility of being proficient at tasks and feel unsure about their skills and ability to be effective on the job (e.g., Bandura, 1986, 1997; Gist, 1987).

Challenging-promotive voice behavior requires specific expertise and cognitive abilities to detect and diagnose potential work-related problems and generate suggestions for solutions and improvements. In addition, specific social and communication skills are required to be able to present concerns, opinions, and ideas in the work group in a persuasive and effective manner. Self-efficacy theory suggests that beliefs about one's capabilities in a specific domain of activity may significantly influence one's motivation to engage in specific behaviors in that domain (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). We use this notion from self-efficacy theory to argue that self-efficacy beliefs for the specific activity of voice may function as a moderator that influences the relationship between supervisory responsiveness and employee status appraisals.

We delineate that employees tend to derive status from fair and respectful treatment of their voice input by the authority figure of the work group (i.e., supervisory responsiveness). Employees with relatively high self-efficacy for voice typically believe they are competent to provide meaningful voice input that may benefit the group. As status is based on an individual's potential to benefit the group (e.g., Berger et al., 1980; Blau, 1964; Pettit et al., 2010; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986), such positive self-efficacy beliefs are likely to reinforce and boost the self-perceived status that employees tend to derive from fair and respectful responses to their voice input they receive from the supervisor of the work group. The underlying argument for this interaction is that high supervisory responsiveness matches employees' beliefs that they can benefit the group with their voice input, and this match results in enhanced status appraisals. In turn, this enhancement of status appraisals induced by the interaction between supervisory responsiveness and self-efficacy should further promote engagement in subsequent voice behaviors.

In contrast, if employees have a low sense of efficaciousness for voice, then they feel that they lack the requisite abilities and skills to provide voice input that has sufficient value to substantially improve group functioning and outcomes. Because of these negative self-efficacy beliefs, such employees are likely to be hesitant to derive high status from receiving fair and respectful treatment of their voice input from their supervisor. Consequently, beliefs of low self-efficacy for voice should inhibit the fair treatment effect of supervisory responsiveness on self-perceived status. In turn, this inhibition of self-perceived status will result in diminished involvement in voice behavior.

Our theoretical argument for a moderator role of self-efficacy for voice is in line with findings from prior research on the consequences of procedural fairness showing that better opportunities for voice delivery (i.e., procedural fairness) elicit more positive reactions (i.e., work motivation, organizational identification, satisfaction with the decision reached) among high-esteem individuals who are confident about their ability to provide meaningful input than among low self-esteem individuals who are less confident about making a difference (Brockner et al., 1998). In addition, a recent study by Tangirala and Ramanujam (2012) found the relationship between managers' consultation (soliciting suggestions on work

issues from employees) and employees' upward voice to be mediated by employees' perceived influence at work and moderated by their work self-efficacy. Similar to our proposed research model, this recent work articulates the influential role of supervisory behaviors and employees' self-efficacy beliefs in employees' decisions whether or not to engage in voice behaviors. However, our study extends this previous work in that we focused on different supervisory behaviors, a different mediating mechanism, and a different target of voice behavior. That is, we examined the influence of supervisors' responses to employee voice input rather than their solicitation for upward voice. Furthermore, whereas we identify employees' self-perceived status as a mediator that can clarify why supervisory responsiveness is related to employees' voice targeted at the work group (including peers and the supervisor), the recent study by Tangirala and Ramanujam (2012) proposes the motivational state of having influence at work as a mediator that can clarify why manager consultation encourages employees to upwardly voice their thoughts to the supervisor. Moreover, we focus on self-efficacy beliefs for the specific activity of voice as a potential moderator in the relationship between supervisory responsiveness and employee status appraisals, whereas Tangirala and Ramanujam's (2012) study implicated work self-efficacy in terms of job competencies (Spreitzer, 1995).

Based on the theoretical and empirical arguments delineated above, we propose that the indirect relationship between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior through self-perceived status is conditional on voice self-efficacy for the path from supervisory responsiveness to self-perceived status. Using this mediated moderation model, we sought to clarify why supervisory responsiveness is positively related to voice behavior (through self-perceived status) and under what conditions this relationship is more pronounced (in case of high self-efficacy for voice). To test this mediated moderation model, we formulated two additional hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Self-efficacy for voice moderates the relationship between supervisory responsiveness and self-perceived status such that this relationship is more positive when self-efficacy for voice is higher.

Hypothesis 3: The indirect relationship between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior through self-perceived status is conditional on self-efficacy for voice such that this indirect relationship is more positive when self-efficacy for voice is higher.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Hypotheses were tested using data from a survey on employee voice among frontline employees of manufacturing industry companies in mainland China. As new technologies were introduced in these companies, employees' voicing of problems with and improvement suggestions about the new equipment and associated work procedures was important to ensure their efficient and effective use. Employees from 80 work teams were invited to participate in the survey. These teams were from seven manufacturing companies operating in different industries (chemical, energy, cotton textile, and agricultural) in Shandong Province, China.

Team meetings were organized to inform team members about the research procedures and to emphasize their anonymity. Questionnaires were administered to employees to gather self-reports of personal and situational factors relevant to employee voice behavior. This survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete. To ensure participant confidentiality, a research assistant distributed the questionnaires after the preparatory meeting and collected them on completion. In addition to these self-reported data, immediate supervisors rated participants' voice behavior. Each questionnaire was coded using a researcher-assigned identification number to match participants' responses with their supervisors' evaluations.

The focal sample for this study consisted of 400 supervisor-employee pairs from 80 work groups, from which 337 matches of completed and usable questionnaires were obtained, resulting in a response rate of 84.3%. These 337 employees were nested within 65 teams, each headed by a team supervisor. The average size of each team was 5.18 ($SD = 1.32$). Of our respondents, 70.3% were male, the average age was 32.47 years ($SD = 6.50$), and the average organizational tenure was 8.41 years ($SD = 6.72$). The participants were rather well educated: 10.1% had a bachelor's degree or higher, 21.7% had an associate's degree, 44.5% had a high school or secondary school degree, and the remaining 23.7% had a middle school degree.

Measures

As all questionnaire items were originally developed in English, they were translated into Chinese by an academic who is bilingual in Chinese and English. Following Brislin's (1980) translation-back translation procedure, we obtained a back translation from another bilingual academic to ensure that the English and Chinese versions of the items were comparable at a high degree of accuracy.

Supervisory responsiveness. We used six items of the seven-item questionnaire developed by Saunders et al. (1992) to assess employee perceptions of supervisory responsiveness. All ratings were on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). Sample items are "My boss is willing to support me if my concern is valid" and "My boss takes action to correct the concerns that I speak to him or her about." As we were focused on employees' individual perceptions of how their supervisors respond to their personal voice input, we deleted the seventh item of the original scale, which refers to how supervisors respond to employee voice in general ("My supervisor gives high priority to handling employee concerns").

For each of the seven manufacturing companies included in our sample, we calculated an intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC_1) to get an indication of the individual-level variability within teams relative to the between-team variability in respondents' perceptions of supervisory responsiveness. The average value of ICC_1 across the seven companies was .33 (range from .04 to .72). Thus, although the team-level variability was substantial, the remaining amount of variability at the individual level indicated that employees within a team differed significantly in their perceptions of the supervisor's responsiveness. This individual-level variability allowed us to test whether perceived supervisor responsiveness was related to employee self-perceived status within the work group.

Self-efficacy for voice. Three items revised from the Competence subscale of Spreitzer's (1995) empowerment measure were used to measure self-efficacy for voice. Items used are "I am self-assured about my capabilities to voice my opinion about work activities," "I have enough skills and experience to voice my opinion," and "I am confident about my ability to voice my opinion in the team." All ratings were on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*).

Self-perceived status. We used the three-item status scale developed by Tangirala and Ramanujam (2008) to measure employees' self-perceived status. Items used are "I have a lot of status within the team" and "My team holds me in high regard." All ratings were on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*).

Voice behavior. A six-item employee voice questionnaire developed and validated by Van Dyne and LePine (1998) was used to measure challenging-promotive voice behavior. Supervisors indicated how frequently each statement fitted focal employees' behavior. The response scale ranged from 1 = *almost never* to 7 = *almost always*. Sample items are "This employee develops and makes recommendations concerning issues that affect this work-group" and "This employee speaks up in the group with ideas for new projects or changes in procedures."

Control variables. Following previous research (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007), we included four demographic variables as control variables: sex (0 = *female*, 1 = *male*), age (in years), organizational tenure (in years), and education (1 = *middle school*, 2 = *high school/secondary school*, 3 = *associate's degree*, 4 = *bachelor's degree*, 5 = *master's or doctoral degree*). Team size was also controlled for because it has been recognized that this is linked to voice behavior (e.g., LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Venkataramani & Tangirala, 2010).

Analytical Approach

As the employees in our sample were grouped in 65 teams, and team supervisors provided ratings of employee voice, the data may not be totally independent. To control for possible supervisor and team effects, we used multilevel modeling employing linear mixed models in SPSS with fixed and random effects. We included work team as a random variable to account for the nesting effect by allowing a random intercept. Thus, the level of analysis was the individual; the effects of supervisory responsiveness, self-efficacy for voice, and self-perceived status on voice behavior were examined, while possible team effects were taken into account. To reduce any potential multicollinearity when testing interaction effects, we standardized all of the predictor variables.

Finally, as data were collected from seven companies, and company-level variability in employee voice behavior was substantial ($ICC_1 = .27$), we included six dummies for company level in the analyses as control variables. Due to space limitations, we report the analyses including the six dummies for company level, but not including the statistical details of these dummies.

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Prior to testing the hypotheses, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to check the measures' convergent and discriminant validity of the scales of supervisory responsiveness, self-efficacy for voice, self-perceived status, and voice behavior. The four-factor model showed reasonable fit indices, $\chi^2(129) = 368.52$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .89, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .07, with all factor loadings being significant (.39 to .82, $p < .001$). This four-factor model was superior to a two-factor model distinguishing between employee self-reports of the predictor variables (supervisory responsiveness, voice self-efficacy, and self-perceived status) and supervisor ratings of the outcome variable (voice behavior), $\chi^2(134) = 544.45$, $\Delta\chi^2 = 175.93$, CFI = .81, RMSEA = .10, and to a single factor model, $\chi^2(135) = 766.87$, $\Delta\chi^2 = 398.35$, CFI = .71, RMSEA = .12.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha coefficients, and correlations among the study variables are presented in Table 1. Among the four demographic variables, education level was positively correlated with employee voice, whereas the correlation between organizational tenure and voice was negative. As expected, supervisory responsiveness was positively related to both self-perceived status and voice behavior; self-perceived status was also positively correlated with voice behavior.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1 stated that self-perceived status would mediate the indirect relationship between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior. When the individual demographic variables (sex, age, education level, and tenure), team size, and company were controlled for, supervisory responsiveness was found to be significantly and positively related to self-perceived status ($\gamma = .46$, $p < .001$; see Table 2). Furthermore, when the effect of supervisory responsiveness was controlled for, self-perceived status was significantly and positively related to voice behavior ($\gamma = .10$, $p < .01$). A Sobel test and an additional bootstrapping procedure with percentile confidence intervals (CIs; Selig & Preacher, 2008) revealed that the indirect relationship between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior was significant (indirect effect = .06; Sobel $z = 2.54$, $p < .001$; 95% CI = .01 to .08; see Table 2), indicating that self-perceived status mediated the relationship between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior. These results provided support for Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that self-efficacy for voice would moderate the relationship between supervisory responsiveness and self-perceived status such that this relationship would be more positive when self-efficacy for voice was higher. As the results reported in Table 3 show, supervisory responsiveness and voice self-efficacy were found to interact significantly in their effects on self-perceived status ($\gamma = .17$, $p < .01$). To clarify this conditional effect of

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Level 1: Individual level										
1. Gender	0.70	0.46								
2. Age	32.47	6.50	.06							
3. Education	2.18	0.92	-.13*	-.11						
4. Organizational tenure	8.41	6.72	-.07	.78***	-.09					
5. Supervisory responsiveness	4.84	1.02	.02	.03	-.03	-.08	(.85)			
6. Voice self-efficacy	4.78	1.11	-.07	.05	.07	-.06	.55***	(.75)		
7. Self-perceived status	4.03	1.17	-.04	.06	.03	-.04	.50***	.46***	(.70)	
8. Voice behavior	3.50	0.66	-.08	-.08	.15**	-.18***	.46***	.40***	.38***	(.77)
Level 2: Team level										
1. Team size	5.18	1.32								

Note: Cronbach's alpha coefficients are on the diagonal in parentheses. For Level 1 variables, $N = 337$; for Level 2 variable, $N = 65$.

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

Table 2
Results of Mediation Analysis

Predictor	Dependent Variable	
	Self-Perceived Status (γ)	Voice Behavior (γ)
Intercept	4.04***	3.50***
Sex	0.01	-0.01
Age	0.11	0.07
Education	-0.04	0.02
Organizational tenure	-0.26**	-0.06
Team size	-0.09	-0.04
Supervisory responsiveness	0.46***	0.19***
Self-perceived status		0.10**
-2 restricted log likelihood	926.30	530.44
Pseudo R^2	.24	.25
Indirect Relationship between Supervisory Responsiveness and Voice Behavior through Self-Perceived Status		
Indirect Effect	Sobel Test (z)	95% Confidence Interval ^a
.05	2.54***	.012, .080

Note: Pseudo- R^2 value indicates percentage of the total variance in the dependent variable predicted by the variables in the respective models together.

a. Based on 20,000 Monte Carlo samples.

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

supervisory responsiveness on self-perceived status, simple slope tests were conducted. As Figure 2 illustrates, the positive relationship between supervisory responsiveness and self-perceived status was found to be much stronger for employees with high self-efficacy for voice ($M + 1$ SD ; $\gamma = .53$, $p < .001$) than for employees with low self-efficacy for voice ($M - 1$ SD ; $\gamma = .19$, $p < .05$). This pattern of results supported Hypothesis 2.

Table 3
Results of Mediated Moderation Analysis

Predictor	Self-Perceived Status			
	γ	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.94	0.09	46.07	.000
Sex	0.08	0.08	1.02	.309
Age	−0.11	0.07	−1.69	.093
Education	−0.06	0.06	−1.01	.315
Organizational tenure	−0.22	0.09	−2.38	.018
Team size	−0.06	0.13	−0.46	.648
Supervisory responsiveness	0.36	0.06	5.57	.000
Voice self-efficacy	0.28	0.06	4.66	.000
Supervisor resp. $\times$ voice self-efficacy	0.17	0.06	3.14	.002
−2 restricted log likelihood	908.42			
Pseudo R^2	.32			
Predictor	Voice Behavior			
	γ	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	3.49	0.04	82.56	.000
Sex	−0.01	0.03	−0.28	.780
Age	0.06	0.05	1.37	.172
Education	0.02	0.03	0.60	.551
Organizational tenure	−0.06	0.05	−1.05	.294
Team size	−0.04	0.06	−0.65	.516
Supervisory responsiveness	0.17	0.04	4.45	.000
Voice self-efficacy	0.07	0.04	2.00	.046
Supervisor resp. $\times$ voice self-efficacy	0.02	0.03	0.51	.614
Self-perceived status	0.08	0.04	2.10	.036
−2 restricted log likelihood	536.43			
Pseudo R^2	.27			
Conditional Indirect Relationship Between Supervisory Responsiveness and Voice Behavior Through Self-Perceived Status at Low and High Values of Voice Self-Efficacy				
Voice Self-Efficacy	Conditional Indirect Effect		Sobel Test <i>z</i> <i>p</i>	
			95% Confidence Interval ^a	
High ($M + 1$ <i>SD</i>)	.04		2.01 .044	
Low ($M - 1$ <i>SD</i>)	.01		1.50 .135	

Note: Pseudo- R^2 value indicates percentage of the total variance in the dependent variable predicted by the variables in the model together.

^aBased on 20,000 Monte Carlo samples.

Finally, Hypothesis 3 predicted that the indirect relationship between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior through self-perceived status would be more positive when self-efficacy for voice was higher rather than lower. When supervisory responsiveness, voice self-efficacy, and their interactive term were controlled for, self-perceived status was found to be significantly and positively related to voice behavior ($\gamma = .08$, $p < .05$; see

Figure 2
The Moderating Role of Voice Self-Efficacy for the Relationship Between Supervisory Responsiveness and Self-Perceived Status

Table 3). A Sobel test and an additional bootstrapping procedure with percentile CIs indicated that supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior were indirectly related through self-perceived status for employees with high self-efficacy for voice ($M + 1 SD$; indirect effect = .04; Sobel $z = 2.01$, $p < .04$; 95% CI = .002 to .083). For employees low on voice self-efficacy, the indirect relationship between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior was not significantly different from zero (indirect relationship = .01; Sobel $z = 1.50$, ns ; 95% CI = -.001 to .038). Hypothesis 3 was, therefore, supported.

Finally, we conducted additional analyses to test an alternative model in which self-efficacy for voice moderates the path from self-perceived status to voice behavior. The argument for this alternative model is that the extent to which employees' self-perceived status would drive their voice behavior might be dependent on their self-efficacy beliefs whether they could benefit the group with their voice input. However, as the interaction between self-perceived status and self-efficacy for voice in predicting voice behavior did not reach significance, we found no empirical support for this alternative model.

Discussion

The goal of the current study was to advance understanding of the effect of employees' evaluation of their status within the work group in relation to their voice behavior. We examined the role of self-perceived status in employee voice using data from a survey among frontline employees of manufacturing industry companies in mainland China. The results show that self-perceived status operates as a mediating mechanism that links supervisory

responsiveness to employee voice behavior. As employees differ in their beliefs about their competency to effectively voice concerns and opinions, we proposed that self-efficacy for voice may operate as a boundary condition that moderates the path from supervisory responsiveness to self-perceived status in this mediational chain. Self-efficacy beliefs for voice were indeed found to moderate the indirect relationship between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior through influencing the path from supervisory responsiveness to the mediator of self-perceived status. Specifically, more positive self-efficacy beliefs for voice were found to strengthen the positive relationship between supervisory responsiveness and self-perceived status, thereby further promoting engagement in voice behavior. In contrast, negative self-efficacy beliefs for voice were found to weaken the supervisory responsiveness–self-perceived status relationship, thereby inhibiting involvement in voice behavior.

Theoretical Implications

Our study has several theoretical implications. First, the current results confirm the outcomes of previous research showing that status plays an important role in employees' decisions whether or not to engage in voice behavior. That is, individuals who were more central in the task-related interaction networks of their work group (Venkataramani & Tangirala, 2010) or higher in the power hierarchy (Islam & Zyphur, 2005) were found to exhibit more voice behavior. In contrast, an interview-based research study (Milliken et al., 2003) revealed that lack of experience, lack of tenure, and rank (low on status-like constructs) were mentioned by employees as important reasons for why they felt unable to speak up. Taken together, these results seem to suggest that employees who choose to voice usually have an elevated sense of status based on their prominence, respect, and expertise in the work group or organization.

To further advance understanding of the role of self-perceived status in employee voice, we used relational fairness theory (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Blader, 2003; Tyler & Lind, 1992) to argue that employees' status appraisals are strongly influenced by their judgments of the degree to which their voice input receives fair and respectful treatment by their supervisor (i.e., supervisory responsiveness). The underlying notion is that responsive treatment by the authority figure of the group of a voicing employee signals that the group values and respects this focal employee (cf., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Lind, 1992). Furthermore, as status determines the relative influence that members have over group interactions and functioning (e.g., Anderson et al., 2006; Chizhik et al., 2003; Pettit et al., 2010; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986), we proposed that the amount of status that employees perceive themselves to enjoy within the work group may promote or inhibit their engagement in voice behavior. The present results indeed demonstrate that self-perceived status operates as a mediator that links supervisory responsiveness to employee voice behavior. This finding is consistent with previous research findings identifying self-perceived status as a critical mediator in the relationship of procedural fairness and empowering leadership with organizational citizenship behavior (e.g., van Dijke et al., 2012). Because we integrated relational fairness theory with basic notions from the literatures on status and voice, the present findings are beneficial for understanding employee self-perceived status as a

reflection of supervisory responsiveness, as well as the process through which supervisory responsiveness affects employee voice behavior.

Furthermore, we found the indirect relationship between supervisory responsiveness and voice behavior through self-perceived status to be contingent on individual differences in self-efficacy for voice. This finding advances understanding of boundary conditions of the fair treatment effect of supervisory responsiveness in promoting voice behavior through self-perceived status. Specifically, the present results seem to suggest that high self-efficacy for voice reinforces and heightens the positive status appraisals that employees derive from the fair and respectful treatment they receive from their supervisor, thereby further promoting their engagement in voice behavior. Besides this implication for relational fairness theory and research, the moderator role that we found for self-efficacy for voice is also interesting for the self-efficacy literature. Previous research has predominantly been focused on examining self-efficacy for a specific task as a direct motivational driver of employee work behavior (e.g., Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009; Tierney & Farmer, 2002, 2004, 2011); in only a few studies have its possible moderator effects been taken into account (e.g., Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). We contribute to the self-efficacy literature by showing how individual differences in self-efficacy for voice may operate as a boundary condition that regulates the influential role of supervisory responsiveness in employees' self-perceived status and voice behavior within a work group.

Potential Limitations

The present results need to be considered in light of the limitations associated with the design of the study. Given the study's cross-sectional design, we cannot clearly establish the causality among the variables. The results might be vulnerable to opposite or bidirectional relationships owing to the possibility that employees might seek to enhance their status by engaging in voice behavior, and that voicing employees with higher status are more likely to receive fair and responsive treatment from their supervisor than lower-status employees. A strong argument against this possibility of reversed causality is that relational fairness theory and research results suggest that fair and respectful treatment by the authority figure of the group (i.e., supervisory responsiveness) enhances employees' self-perceptions of how they are respected and valued within the group, and that enhanced levels of such self-perceived status increase an employee's motivation to engage in discretionary group-serving behaviors (e.g., Blader & Tyler, 2009; Tyler, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2003; van Dijke et al., 2012). In addition, the literature on the function and benefits of status suggests that low-status employees lack the prominence, respect, and influence to be expected and allowed to address challenges and express criticism in the work group (e.g., Anderson et al., 2001; Anderson et al., 2006; Bales et al., 1951; Berger et al., 1972; Keltner et al., 2003). Moreover, in the case of reversed causality, in which employees engage in voice behavior to gain status, employees with lower rather than higher status and who held more positive self-efficacy beliefs should have exhibited the highest levels of voice behavior. However, we did not find any support for such an interaction between self-perceived status and self-efficacy for voice. Nonetheless, longitudinal studies are needed to provide firm evidence of causation.

Another limitation of the present study may arise from the sampling approach used. The data used in the current study were from 65 manufacturing industry teams in China. Because of the characteristics of high power distance and collectivism in this country, it is possible that lower average level and lower variance of employee voice in this sample might have reduced the effect sizes (Venkataramani & Tangirala, 2010). Replication of our findings in other cultural contexts is needed.

In addition, even though potential team effects were taken into account in this study, we proposed and tested a research model about the role of status in employee voice that was confined to the individual level. In future studies, cross-level models might be developed and tested implicating factors and process mechanisms that operate at the team level to broaden understanding of the role of status in relation to employee voice in team contexts.

Practical Implications

Despite these limitations, our results do have some practical implications for members and supervisors of work groups. One straightforward lesson from this study is that voice behavior of employees in work group settings is related to their self-perceived status in the group. Supervisors can learn from this finding by considering that members with a high sense of status in their work group are more likely to express concerns, opinions, and ideas about work-related issues than low-status members. The present results suggest that supervisors can substantially and positively influence employees' appraisals of their standing in the work group by fairly and constructively managing their voice input. Such supervisory responsiveness enhances employees' self-perceived status, through which they keep motivated to help detect serious problems and put forward valuable suggestions for improvement.

Our findings also show that members tend to refrain from expressing their thoughts and ideas when they feel a low sense of status in the work group, thus because of a social factor that is extrinsic to their observations and experiences related to the content of their work (cf. Islam & Zyphur, 2005). Besides being responsive to voicing employees to enhance their self-perceived status, leaders may conduct participation interventions meant to remove barriers to employees' speaking up in the work group. Recent studies by Gao et al. (2011) and van Dijke et al. (2012) may provide some guidelines for such interventions as they suggest that supervisors, even in situations of high trust and procedural fairness, should exhibit empowering leadership behaviors that actively encourage and invite employees to voice their concerns and provide recommendations in the work group.

Finally, our findings on the moderator role of self-efficacy for voice suggest that organizations can benefit from paying attention to skill development among employees for the specific activity of voice. Specific training and development programs should facilitate employees to obtain knowledge and skills that enable them to identify irregularities and problems during task execution, and express their concerns, opinions, and suggestions about those problems. Such specific voice activities require task-related expertise to seek, define, and diagnose problems as well as social skills to speak up and convince their supervisor and others to respond appropriately to their concerns. Such expertise and skills should enhance employees' self-efficacy for voice. The present results suggest that enhanced levels of such specific self-efficacy facilitate employees to engage in more voice behavior.

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