Voice Behavior in Creative Teams: A Case Study of Music Production

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Abstract: Putting people together with distinct roles on a team often seems effective for creative work, as group work can share diverse ideas based on roles and expertise. However, to refine and build on one another's suggestions, members must proactively engage in voice behavior without fear of being criticized or negatively evaluated. Voice or challenging the status quo and expressing suggestions for change are critical in enhancing the final team outcome. However, not all the team members engage in voice behavior. What is often ignored is the effect of variation in members' role centrality on voice behavior. A member's role in a team is highly related to the member's perception of his or her status on a team and perceived self-efficacy. Self-efficacy motivates members to engage in voice behavior and express their diverging ideas that could eventually improve the creativity of the joint team outcome. The present research aims to examine the dynamics of voice behavior focusing on creative teams considering two contextual factors: variation in team members' role centrality and time pressure. The results from pilot qualitative field interviews and observations indicate that members with a less central role on a team are less likely to be proactive in voice behavior, and time pressure is likely to strengthen such a tendency. In particular, our preliminary findings suggest that dampened self-efficacy might be one underlying mechanism that explains the negative effect of low member role centrality on voice behavior, in particular, for teams that work under time pressure.

Keywords: Voice Behavior, Time Pressure, Self-Efficacy, Creativity, Team Innovation

1. Introduction

To make superior decisions, groups need honest input from their members. In fact, teamwork requires that group members share ideas and knowledge so that multiple insights are considered in making decisions (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). More importantly, sharing thoughts and ideas about work processes can enhance team learning (Edmondson, 1999). However, despite having valuable information and learning opportunities, team members often are reluctant to voice, defined as the discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, or opinions intended to improve organizational or unit functioning (Morrison, 2011). Because voice plays a vital role in the creativity and innovation process in teams and organizations, it is crucial to understand better the factors that suppress the likelihood of voicing in teams, particularly creative teams.

Three lines of research have focused on barriers to voice. The first line of research has focused mainly on individual personality differences, highlighting that some individuals (e.g., extroverts) are more likely than others to engage in speaking up (e.g., LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). The second line of research suggests that employees engage in voice behavior when dissatisfied with some aspects of their workgroup or organizations (e.g., Withey and Cooper, 1989). Finally, the third line of research focused on organizational or contextual factors, such as the perceived safety of voice climate or leadership behavior as predictors of speaking up (e.g., Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 1999; Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

In the present research, seeking to develop further the contextual stream, we focus on the roles that time pressure (or deadlines) and the degree of centrality of members' roles play in the dynamics of voice behavior in groups. As contextual factors, time pressure and members' role attributes are critical aspects of new product development teams that could significantly affect how members collaborate to produce the final product (Chen et al., 2010). Current empirical research on team dynamics provides some initial evidence on how time pressure and the centrality of members' roles might affect the likelihood of voice behavior in groups.

Time pressure is a critical contextual factor affecting members' cognitive and emotional appraisals and, eventually, team decision-making. Time pressure, in particular, has been linked to stress (Cannon-Bowers and Salas, 1998). According to a stream of research exploring the effect of stress due to time pressure, when experiencing stress, members are less willing to engage in interpersonal communication. This line of research highlights that team members' ability to communicate, share information, and seek information is hindered

under time pressure (Kleinman and Serfaty, 1989, Durham et al., 2000). Importantly, members' tendency to conform under time pressure increases, and they rely more on high-status team members to produce ideas (Driskell and Salas, 1991). Such findings suggest that team members may engage less in voice behavior under time pressure due to what we call in the present research the "status gap" that develops due to time pressure and affects people's perceptions of their relative status and self-efficacy within their teams. Thus, the first aim of the present research is to gain a deep understanding of the processes underlying the effect of time pressure on voice behavior.

As another critical contextual factor, the degree of a member's role centrality may also affect the likelihood of voice behavior; the nature of the work a team member performs within a workgroup is likely to promote or demote voice behavior. For instance, team members who occupied a more central role in the team had a more personal influence on their team and engaged more in voice behavior (Venkataramani and Tangirala, 2010). Voice requires the speaker to feel confident that their message gets across, and status is suggested to promote this type of confidence and efficacy (LePine and Van Dyne, 1998). The degree of centrality of a member's position in a team is positively associated with status (LePine and Van Dyne, 1998), suggesting that the high degree of member's centrality is likely to provide the member with efficacy and credibility to engage in proactive behaviors such as voice (Venkataramani and Tangirala, 2010). Thus, the second aim of the present research is to explore whether members who occupy a more (vs. less) central position in a team (e.g., producer in a music production team) feel more (vs. less) confident and experience higher (vs. lower) self-efficacy that their suggestions for change will be received more (vs. less) positively by other members. As such, they engage more (vs. less) in voice behavior.

In sum, in a qualitative field study, we address the questions, "*How do time pressure (formulated as deadlines) and the degree of member's role centrality affect voice behavior?*" and "*If so, why?*" Our study extends the current literature in meaningful ways. First, researchers have long raised the critical role of understanding and incorporating temporal dynamics in team effectiveness (Mathieu et al., 2014; McGrath & Tschan, 2007). Investigating whether and how time pressure formulated as deadlines affect voice behavior in a team extends our current understanding of the effect of temporal dynamics on team effectiveness (Mohammed & Nadkarni, 2011). Conducting in-depth interviews with teams with temporal pacers such as deadlines enables us to get deep insights into voice behavior in these teams and its effect on their performance. Second, conducting semi-structured interviews with teams composed of members with identified roles that vary in the degree of centrality (e.g., producer versus lyric writer) will enable us to understand whether and why members who occupy various team roles would exhibit differential voice behavior. We add to research that suggests attributes of members with identified team roles and positions might differentially affect team performance (Humphrey, Morgeson, & Mannor, 2009; Pearsall & Ellis, 2006). Voice behavior may be one crucial underlying mechanism explaining the relationship between team members holding various roles and team outcomes. Combining the evidence from the literature, interviews, and observations, we aim to develop a conceptual framework and testable propositions regarding the effects of time pressure and members' role centrality on voice behavior.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Creative teamwork

Our study of voice behavior in music production teams draws from literature on social cognition and creative process in teams. As in many inductive studies, our literature review serves as a guiding point that anchored our research questions, informed our methods, and provided directions for our analysis (Dutton et al., 2006). Our emerging awareness of the importance of time pressure and members' role centrality in the team's proactive interactions, such as voice behavior, led us to enrich our understanding of these dynamics by incorporating insights from the literature on voice behavior. Creativity in teams, such as music production teams, is defined as the generation of novel and useful ideas by members and is a product of interactions and influence of team members (Gilson et al., 2005). While challenging the status quo and suggesting new ideas are central to the creative process, social and contextual factors will affect such behaviors (Shalley and Gilson, 2004).

2.2 Time pressure and voice behavior

Many groups in organizations face deadlines. A deadline is a critical time maker that motivates groups to start working on the task within the time allotted (Gevers et al., 2001). Time pressure arises when members work under fixed or stable deadlines, which creates a perception of insufficient time to complete a task, leading to

increased arousal and psychological stress in employees (Driskell et al., 1999, Škerlavaj et al., 2018). How does stress due to time pressure relate to voice behavior? According to theories on coping with stressful situations (Schaubroeck and Merritt, 1997), a negative association exists between experiencing stress and perceived self-efficacy. Current empirical evidence suggests that team members were less likely to share their ideas with others when they worked under time pressure than when they did not (Kleinman and Serfaty, 1989, Durham et al., 2000). Self-efficacy plays a significant role in voice behavior. Indeed, expressing opinions and sharing suggestions for change requires team members to believe their suggestions will improve group performance and that other group members will value the suggested ideas (Detert and Edmondson, 2011). However, such belief and confidence in improving performance and successfully communicating suggestions are hindered under stress (due to time pressure), leading to decreased perceived self-efficacy (Bandura et al., 1988). Nevertheless, despite the current empirical research supporting the assertion that time pressure can induce stress and hinder self-efficacy and, as such, willingness to voice suggestions, there is also empirical evidence suggesting that time pressure might not necessarily impede information sharing and voice behavior in teams (e.g., Ellis, 2006).

2.3 Member's role centrality and voice behavior

Individual members' role on a team affects their behavior, including proactive or extra-role behaviors (Morrison, 1994). Members who are central to a team interact more frequently with other team members and, as critical hubs of the wheel, continuously facilitate their teams' performance. As such, members with more central positions on a team attain status and respect, which makes them highly respected and causes their opinions and ideas to be influential (Venkataramani and Tangirala, 2010). The status these members gain due to their role centrality is likely to equip them with a higher feeling of self-efficacy and belief that their ideas will make a change and be influential (LePine and Van Dyne, 1998), and fear less challenging the status quo (Morrison and Rothman, 2009) all of which facilitate voice behavior (Venkataramani and Tangirala, 2010). However, although the current literature provides converging evidence on a positive linkage between a team member's role centrality and voice behavior, how and why members in less central positions in a team might engage in voice behavior is less clear. Evidence in the current literature nevertheless suggests that members who occupy a less prominent role in a group may engage less in voice behavior. In line with research on status differentials (Hage et al., 1971, Bendersky and Hays, 2012), the likelihood of information sharing and flow among the team members is influenced by members' perceptions of their relative status within a team. For instance, when team members perceived the difference between their status and other members higher, they were less likely to engage in voice behavior (Edmondson, 2003, Koudenburg et al., 2013). According to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), when individuals perceive their status as lower than others, they are more likely to fear being criticized or penalized by others, conform to group norms, and avoid challenging the status quo or sharing diverging ideas (Jetten et al., 2006, Durand and Kremp, 2016).

3. Methods

3.1 Context: Music production teams

Our interest in music production teams emerged from the fourth author's extensive experience (cumulatively ten years) as a music producer and instructor. Given our interest in elaborating theory on voice behavior in creative teams, we conducted an inductive qualitative study using a grounded theory approach (e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Such a method is appropriate when the research question focuses on developing a theory. Aligning with this logic, we used purposeful sampling, which relies on a context that offers a less cluttered view of the dynamics of theoretical interest (Yin, 2009). Given our research question, it was important to find a context that emphasizes creativity and enables us to observe group interactions and communication (e.g., Harrison and Rouse, 2014). The members of music production teams have diverse expertise and roles (e.g., lyric writer, producer) and need to work collectively throughout improvisations. More specifically, the music team members in our study are students who work in groups during which they need to develop songs under time pressure (e.g., the group needs to start working at 10 in the morning and perform the song they produced at 10 in the evening). Taken together, typical organizational group features in music teams, such as holding various roles and working under time pressure or deadlines, allow us to observe a phenomenon of interest that can have important implications for organizational groups with similar features (e.g., new product development teams).

Music team formation. The process through which music instructors establish a team to develop a new song is based on the resource-seeking strategy (Davidsson and Honig, 2003), that members should be selected based

on the resources required to create a new song. More specifically, a week before the song development project starts, the instructors survey the students and ask them about the role they will feel more comfortable having on a team (e.g., vocalist, producer, lyric writer). Then, the instructors put the members together based on the preferred roles they indicated on the survey, and each team has at least four members (meeting the criteria of being a group which is at least three members) with identified roles. Group members' identifiers or roles included producer, lyric writer, vocalist, idea maker, instrumentalist, and singer.

Access and sample. We gained access to five groups for this project via the paper's fourth author, who is instructing students during the song development project. After each group is formed, they are requested to work together from morning till evening. They must decide on the music genre and engage in idea generation, initial idea development, further development and implementation, and performance. It is important to note that there is a general deadline for these groups to develop a song (from morning to evening); however, the groups are not provided with a specific timeline about which task they need to work on within a particular time window. That is, they need to take care of the progress of each stage of song development themselves. The groups are composed of second-year bachelor students who study music production. To capture the interactions and extra-role behaviors, such as voice behavior in collective creative work (Hargadon and Bechky, 2006), we followed the groups throughout the song development process, starting in the morning and ending in the evening. Next, we describe the data collection in detail.

3.2 Analytical Process

The process began with early themes that arose during the pilot interviews, and we iteratively moved between data collection, analysis, and theory throughout the study. Initially, we were interested in how group members with identified roles and working under pressure engage in voice behavior. The reviewed literature suggested new opportunities for theorizing if we considered these groups' dynamic nature of voice behavior. We adopted an inductive approach to our analysis, integrating back and forth between the data we collected (e.g., via interviews, observation, recordings, etc.), relevant literature, and an emerging set of theoretical concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Pilot interviews. We conducted exploratory pilot interviews to better understand the music groups' group process. The interviews were purposely broad and touched on topics such as general feelings about working on a team, motivation to engage in discussions and working with others, and attitudes about disagreements and managing them on a team. Specifically, the first and second authors interviewed five individuals with distinct roles on the team: two producers, two vocalists, and one singer. We excluded these individuals from the groups that became the present study's focus.

An initial outline of emerged themes. The notions of members' role centrality, efficacy, and time pressure emerged using these pilot interviews. For instance, one producer (Produc01) noted that he feels comfortable expressing his disagreements and openly telling others about the directions they should take and is open to others' inputs: "*I often listen to others and let them speak. I usually give them feedback*." More importantly and related to our research question, the producer sees voice behavior as part of his role and feels confident to share his opinions: "*I usually give feedback. It's my job to tell them my opinions. I kind of try to figure out that artists try to do this and that idea; if I feel the idea does not seem good because of this, I say, oh, maybe you could try something different*." Notably, the fact that the producer sees speaking up as part of his role encourages him to engage in spontaneous voice behavior, raising suggestions and concerns without being asked to do so.

Similarly, the producer (Produc02) highlighted: "*[…] when I disagree with my team, I usually speak up first and then look for a solution to which I can contribute.*" Notably, the producer is proactive in sharing his ideas and consciously frames his opinions in a way that will be perceived as less offensive. As an example, the producer (Produc02) said: "*[…] sometimes I have heard someone come up with an idea but feel we can do better, and then speak up in the best way I can in the situation so that it is not perceived as wrong or as criticism of their ideas or opinions.*"

More evidence supports that the role individuals occupy on a team affects their perceptions of the efficacy of the voice, and in turn, it is likely to guide their tendency towards voice or silence (Detert and Edmondson, 2011). For instance, in contrast to the producer, who has a more central role on a team, the vocalist seemed less proactive in initiating the voice or raising suggestions. One vocalist (Vocal01) said: "*If we disagree, usually someone takes the lead, and we just follow*." In another example, another vocalist (Vocal02) mentioned that she speaks up only if she has a solution or alternative ideas and noted: "*[…] what happened was that I slightly disagreed with the content of some lines in the text. So, I spoke about it and had another alternative to the text.*

This was well received by the group." This last example shows the relationship between members' roles and confidence in speaking up. While a producer (with a more central role) may easily disagree without having an alternative solution or suggestion, the vocalist (with a less central role) is confident to speak up only if she has an alternative idea or solution. Regarding questions related to group deadlines, the singer clearly pointed to the interplay of members' lack of confidence/efficacy and time pressure to share ideas and raise suggestions. Specifically, she (Singer01) mentioned: "[…] *I had no self-confidence to take place, so I didn't feel I had anything to do, no one else wanted to take any responsibility…so then we just sat and just, no one said anything, didn't they ... so then the time pressure became very difficult because we had no clear leader figure who started the creativity and the thought pattern."* She (Singer01) added*: "*[…] *then you also have the group members who are really just interested in making their own music, and then it's actually like that. The time perspective has nothing to do with it because they know they have a plan and know what they want to make.*" In these examples, the singer pointed to the importance of having a detailed time-based guideline for pursuing the project or a proactive member or leader on board who initiates sharing ideas under time pressure. Such a proactive member will be able to stimulate other members to speak up and engage in active discussions when a team works under time pressure or has strict deadlines. Finally, the signer pointed to the role of time pressure in encouraging conformity and discouraging discussion and disagreements on a team when she (Singer01) noted: "*[…]the more pressed for time you are, the easier it is easier to go with the first idea…it is a little easier to prepare for discussion if we have more time.*" In sum, our pilot interviews indicated that the roles members occupy on a team and the time pressure/deadlines might be critical factors for understanding the dynamics of voice behavior in creative teams and that music production teams aligned with our theoretical sampling needs, providing a strong sense of methodological fit (Edmondson and McManus, 2007).

Song development observations and video collection. To capture the real-time aspect of social and continuous aspects of voice behavior during the creative development process of a song, we relied on our observations as primary data sources. Particularly, we observed group interactions during song development at various times. The first author observed one group in the morning, during which the group members began discussing the choice of music and melody. The second and third authors observed the rest groups in the morning, afternoon, and evening. In addition, the last author recorded some group interactions as additional support for our findings from observations. To reduce the presence of research and camera on group interactions, we kept the duration of observations and recording short.

Formal interviews and informal conversations. To enrich our understanding of voice behavior dynamics in groups, we conducted formal interviews with at least two group members, which were recorded and transcribed[1]. We interviewed each group member individually during their song development process breaks and asked them questions regarding their interactions and voice behavior. In addition to formal interviews, one of the authors had informal conversations with some group members a couple of days after the project and took notes.

Preliminary analysis. The first, second, and third authors met throughout the data collection process and reviewed filed notes. In addition, they have several follow-up conversations with the fourth author (the music instructor) to verify some of the insights and reflections on these groups' interactions and development process. Importantly, these conversations were beneficial because the fourth author was psychologically close to the research setting and could offer a distinct perspective on the process and dynamics of these teams, which enabled us to bring in our theorizing a broadened interpretative frame (Bartunek and Louis, 1996). During this preliminary stage of data analysis, initial themes began to emerge; we noticed that the group members seemed to engage in voice behavior when they felt confident and considered doing so as part of their role and that members with certain types of roles seemed to be more proactive in speaking up. Furthermore, we realized that team members with less central roles tend to engage less in voice behavior under time pressure and delegate responsibility to another member with a more prominent role (e.g., producer). Additionally, when stressed due to time pressure, they follow the suggested ideas by the producer without engaging in further discussion or challenging the status quo. Figure 1 illustrates a testable research model based on the preliminary findings.

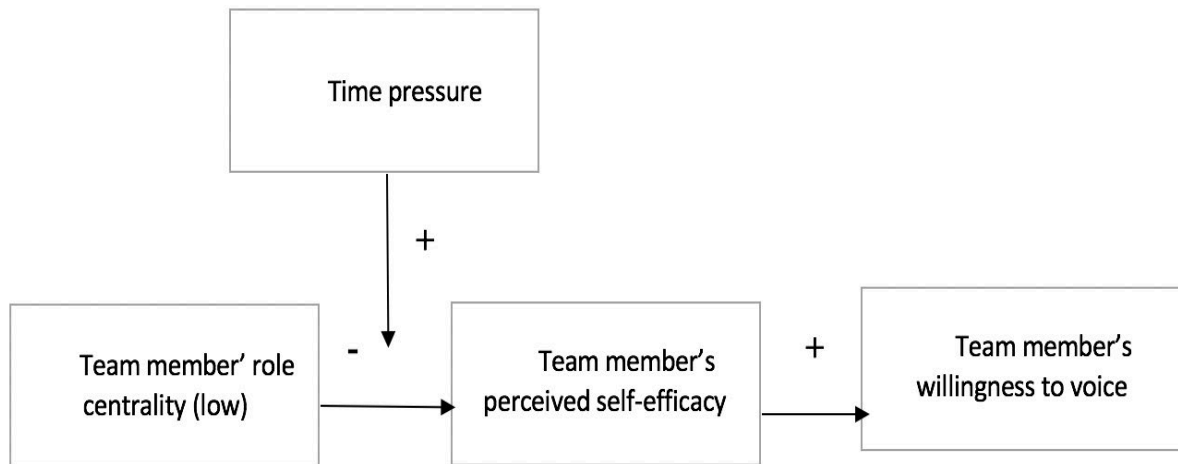[1] The analysis is in progress and unavailable at this research stage.

Figure 1: **A testable research model based on the preliminary findings.**

4. Findings

Our preliminary analysis of music groups reveals that, throughout the song development process, a group's voice behavior and tendencies to challenge the status quo seem to be influenced by the role of team members. In particular, those members who occupy a more central role in a team, such as a producer, are likely to feel more confident and able to step in when they believe the group ideas are suboptimal. This finding supports our notion that the effect of a member's role centrality on voice behavior operates through perceptions of self-efficacy. Additionally, the preliminary analysis indicates that the time pressure due to the deadlines might suppress the voice behavior more for the team members with less central roles. In particular, the time pressure may lead to an increased "status gap," which can hinder members' self-efficacy, a key driver of voice behavior. Such a finding suggests a possibility of interactive effects of the degree of member's role centrality and time pressure on voice behavior.

5. Discussions

In the present study, we aimed to examine the relationships between team members' role centrality, time pressure, and voice behavior. The preliminary findings from exploratory pilot interviews and our observations indicate that members with lower central roles on a team engage less in voice behavior due to perceived lower self-efficacy. Additionally, the results reveal that time pressure might be more detrimental to voice behavior when it leads to a "status gap" in teams, and members with low central roles on a team are more prone to the detrimental effect of time pressure. Based on these findings, we suggested a testable research model illustrating the team member's role centrality and time pressure interact to affect group voice behavior. It is important to note that our research is not without limitations. One significant limitation is that our findings are based on five pilot interviews and observations, limiting the generalization of the current research findings.

Nevertheless, our research question and initial findings may contribute to several lines of research in the current literature, including research on group creativity and innovation, voice behavior, and group information sharing. Finally, our research has an important practical contribution, particularly for organizations planning to use interventions to enhance creativity and innovation in project teams with strict deadlines. Although further research is needed to explore the interventions that can help members with less central positions on a team to engage in voice behavior under time pressure, our preliminary findings suggest two possible interventions: providing the team members with specific guidelines on the tasks informing them which tasks they should perform within a particular deadline or ensuring the presence of a proactive leader or member who engages early in voice behavior in the idea development process in a team. Such interventions may be helpful for organizations and managers aiming to cultivate team creativity through heightened extra-role behaviors such as voice.

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