

Encouraging Work Group Voice: Exploring How Interventions Can Contribute To Developments In Work Group Voice

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore how employee voice can be encouraged and facilitated successfully, by examining how interventions can contribute to developments in work group voice. Although organizations already try to encourage and facilitate voice, they experience difficulties changing employee voice and silence behaviors. Current literature explains that employees' decisions to express voice or remain silent are often made unconscious or irrational and are partly based upon emotion or implicit beliefs about voice. Consequently, literature indicates that stimulating individual or collective sensemaking processes might be important to encourage and facilitate voice successfully. Hence, the present study explored 'if' and 'how' several group interventions, that stimulate both individual and collective sensemaking, can contribute to positive developments in work group voice. An action research method, with (focus group) interviews, observations, diaries and surveys as interventions, was used to study work group voice developments and development processes in three different work teams.

Findings show 'that' and 'how' different interventions resulted in positive developments in work group voice for every participating team. They show how interventions contributed to *more awareness, more insights, reflection* upon current beliefs or behaviors, and/or (*intentions for*) *behavioral change*, for both team leaders and team members in every participating team. Additionally, findings provide insights into the elements of the development process for work group voice, and how those affect teams with a different starting position in work group voice. Those findings show that indeed both individual and collective sensemaking processes are important for the development of voice beliefs and behaviors. Besides, those findings indicate that work group voice can develop in three different ways, through a positive change in either *voice environment, employee voice beliefs* or *employee voice behaviors*, thereby 'taking a positive step along a work group voice continuum' from a team's starting position in work group voice. At last, findings show that all different interventions were important for a contribution towards development in work group voice. In sum, the results of this study indicate that it is important to use a combination of different interventions, and to focus upon specific areas of development fitting a team's starting position in work group voice, to encourage and facilitate work group voice successfully.

Keywords: action research, employee voice, employee silence, voice climate, group voice development

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary organizations, employee voice is very important for success. By improving processes through employees' input, organizations are better able to remain viable in the rapid changing environment. Scholars and practitioners widely acknowledge that organizations can benefit from employees voicing their suggestions, opinions and concerns (e.g. Greenberg & Edwards, 2009; Morrison, 2011; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) and employee proactivity in general (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010; Parker & Collins, 2010; Tornau & Frese, 2013). Employee voice leads to better decisions and identification of problems and enhances organizational learning and improvement (e.g. Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Besides, employee voice benefits both employees and organizations, as it leads to higher levels of personal control, increased job satisfaction, higher work motivation and lower levels of stress among employees (Morrison, 2011). In sum, voice as a form of upward communication is very important and beneficial for both organizations and individuals.

As this fact has become more acknowledged by organizations, management is trying to open up communication lines and stimulate or facilitate employee voice. However, the everyday experience of managers is still that employees do not always speak up and research indicates that employees many times choose not to voice their suggestions, opinions or concerns and instead remain silent (e.g. Brinsfield, 2013; Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Milliken et al. (2003) even found that 85% of all employees sometimes feel reluctant to speak up about issues they consider important to share. This employee silence not only leads to poor decision making and poor error correction for the organization, but also to lower employee trust and morale (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Considering the above, it is important to understand how employee voice can be encouraged and facilitated within organizations. This study therefore aims to explore how interventions can contribute to positive developments in employee voice.

Prior research on employee voice yields many important insights on individual and environmental antecedents or predictors for voice and gained insights into how and why individual employees decide to express voice based upon their expectation of the outcomes (for extended reviews, see Greenberg & Edwards, 2009; Morrison, 2011). However, many scholars also indicate that employee's expectations and decisions to speak up are often unconscious and irrational (Morrison, 2011). When people, either consciously or unconsciously, make sense of their environment, make an expectation of the outcome of voice and decide whether to speak up or not, they are also affected by emotion (Kish-Gephart, Detert, Trevino, & Edmondson, 2009) and led by deeply rooted implicit beliefs about voice and the outcomes of voice (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Recent research of Brinsfield (2013) shows how such expectations, beliefs, and emotions can result in six different 'silence motives', making employees choose to remain silent instead of expressing voice.

Subsequently, recent research on voice climate provides convincing evidence that collective level beliefs within groups have a strong effect (beyond the effect of individual beliefs) on individual and group voice behavior (Morrison, Wheeler-Smith, & Kamdar, 2011). Those collective level beliefs making up a voice climate are also not only based upon objective workplace features, but originate from the subjective outcomes of a collective sensemaking process. According to Weick (1995), people make sense of their workplace by sharing perceptions and experiences and create a common understanding of their workplace expectations, demands and restrictions. This collective sensemaking process also exists specifically for voice and for the outcome possibilities of voice (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). That explains why only changing environmental factors will not always or not directly result in higher levels of employee voice and why it is so difficult to encourage and facilitate voice behavior.

Employees' individual or shared perceptions of their environment are deeply rooted and not easily changed, as people rather stick to current mental frameworks in their everyday practice, than reframing their beliefs and perceptions (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Detert and Edmondson's (2011) findings clearly demonstrate this, as they found that employees often cannot provide evidence or examples from actual situations to prove the accuracy of their implicit held beliefs about voice. Still, these beliefs exist in their cognitive framework and influence their decision to express voice or remain silent. Detert and Edmondson (2011) suggest that socially assimilated beliefs about voice are difficult to change, but that it might be possible to change these beliefs by acknowledging their existence and by explicitly providing evidence that contradicts overgeneralized or exaggerated beliefs. Morrison and Milliken (2000) state that changing collective perceptions is especially hard because those perceptions are reinforced by peers, even when convincing evidence for the contrary is provided within the individuals' environment. When shared beliefs can be successfully changed towards more positive perceptions of voice though, they have a very positive influence, also on individual voice beliefs and behavior (Morrison et al., 2011).

In summary, for both theory and organizational practice, more insight is needed into the development of individual and group-level voice behaviors, beliefs and perceptions (Morrison, 2011). Even more important for practice is the question how voice can be facilitated successfully. Above insights indicate that both individual and collective sensemaking processes are very important for the development and change of beliefs and behaviors, and thereby also for effectively encouraging and facilitating employee voice. Unfortunately, no studies have focused yet on the actual development or change of individual or group-level voice beliefs, perceptions and behaviors, or interventions for change (Morrison, 2011).

The present study addresses those gaps in voice and voice climate literature, by conducting an 'action research' in three different organizations, studying group-level processes, dynamics and outcomes resulting from several interventions in an action research design. This study illustrates 'what happens' in a work group when interventions raise attention for the topic of voice, thereby stimulating individual or collective sensemaking processes and making employees reconsider their current beliefs and behaviors. The findings of this study address one general research question '*How can interventions contribute to the development of work group voice?*' and explore the contributions of interventions to developments in work group voice for both team members and team leaders. Thereby, this study provides insight into how group voice emerges and evolves in real-world organizational settings, and how interventions can facilitate a positive change in group voice behavior and beliefs.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The description of theoretical background in this section introduces important theoretical constructs included in this study, and highlights the relevance of the current research. To make sure there are no different interpretations of what is meant by the constructs employee 'voice' and 'silence', definitions are given and both constructs are described in detail. Next, important theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from literature on individual voice and silence behavior, implicit voice beliefs and voice climate are described.

Employee voice and silence

Employee voice, silence and related concepts have been subject to research for decades. However, employee voice has been conceptualized very differently throughout literature. Issue selling, whistle blowing, boat rocking, dissent, prosocial organizational behavior, citizenship behavior and upward communication are just a few of the different concepts and labels that have been used to describe voice related behaviors. Therefore, it is necessary to clearly define what is meant by 'employee voice' and 'employee silence'.

In the current study, Morrison's (2011) definition for employee voice is used. Based upon a comparison of different conceptualizations in literature, she defines employee voice as "*discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning*" (Morrison, 2011, p.375). In this definition, voice is a form of extra-role behavior that challenges the status quo and is constructive in intent (Van Dyne, Cummings, & Parks, 1995). Beyond the tasks and responsibilities that are specified for a certain role (e.g. a salesperson that is expected to signal chances in the sales market) an employee might signal chances or things going wrong in the current work situation, and aim to improve the situation by expressing voice. As such, employee voice is a form of proactive behavior. 'Proactive' means that behavior is self-started, change-oriented and future focused (Parker et al., 2010; Tornau & Frese, 2012).

Many scholars argue that employee voice and employee silence are opposite constructs and that they can be treated as two "different sides of the same coin" (Ashford, Sutcliffe, & Christianson, 2009, p.178). In line with this argument, employee silence is defined as '*withholding potentially important information, ideas, concerns or opinions*' (Milliken et al., 2003; Morrison, 2011; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). This definition is different from other conceptualizations of silence, e.g. 'a failure to speak (up)' or 'a lack of signaling issues at all', which are behaviors that also result in silence but do not encompass an element of choice (Morrison, 2011). In this study, voice and silence are both defined as an active choice of respectively speaking up or not speaking up with a certain issue, whether this choice is made consciously or unconsciously.

Treating voice and silence as 'two different sides of the same coin' does not mean that employees are either completely silent in every single situation or express voice on every issue they signal. Morrison (2011) suggests that voice and silence behaviors exist along a continuum. This means that people express voice in some situations but remain silent in other situations. She suggests that voice behavior can vary across both time and type of issue. Research indeed shows that employees voice about some issues and remain silent about others (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Liang, Fahr, & Fahr, 2012). Liang et al. (2012) found that people show different levels of promotive voice (e.g. ideas, suggestions) and prohibitive voice (e.g. concerns, problems). Those findings show the importance to distinguish different types of voice when studying employee voice behavior, because different

underlying mechanisms or motives might influence the choice to express voice or remain silent. It could for example be more risky to express voice about a signaled problem, than to tell about an idea.

In this study, the conceptualization of Morrison (2011) is used to distinguish three different types of voice: (i) *suggestion-focused voice*, defined as the “communication of suggestions or ideas for how to improve the work unit or organization”; (ii) *problem-focused voice*, defined as “an employee’s expression of concern about work practices, incidents, or behaviors that he or she regards as harmful, or potentially harmful, to the organization”; and (iii) *opinion-focused voice*, defined as “communicating points of view on work-related issues that differ from those held by others” (Morrison, 2011, p. 398). This conceptualization incorporates both promotive and prohibitive voice (e.g. Liang et al., 2012) and dissent (Kassing, 2002).

Besides the type of voice, the choice whether to express voice or remain silent depends on the person to whom the voice is addressed. It is important to keep in mind that voice-behavior and voice outcomes are very target-sensitive. Outcomes of voice depend on the person to whom the voice is addressed, and therefore also affect the choice to which person an employee will express voice (Liu, Zhu, & Yang, 2010). Different types of voice could either be directed upward, towards a manager or boss, or directed lateral, towards colleagues or members of one’s team (Morrison, 2011). In this study, the main focus is on upward voice within teams. After all, voice must be directed towards a person with the formal authority to act to be effective, which mostly means that it has to be directed upward (Detert & Burris, 2007), in this case towards the team leader. As employee voice is studied in a team environment though, lateral voice expressed between team members is also taken into account.

The individual choice to express voice or remain silent

As voice behavior differs for every issue, every type of voice and voice target, the choice whether to express voice or remain silent is different in every single situation. However, research results indicate that general patterns can explain the process by which individuals choose to express voice or remain silent. Many scholars have described those general patterns. Overall, they agree that individuals make a cost-benefit and expectancy-like calculus before they decide to express voice (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Detert & Burris, 2007; Milliken et al., 2003; Morrison, 2011).

When an individual has signaled an issue and is motivated to help the organization by sharing important information, he or she will first deliberate on the possible consequences and outcomes of expressing voice. Based upon expected outcomes and consequences, individuals decide how ‘safe versus dangerous’ and ‘effective versus futile’ it is to speak up. If the perceived efficacy of voice is higher, the perceived probability of success and improvement increases and the individual is more likely to express voice. If the perceived safety of voice is higher and perceived risks are lower, the perceived probability of negative personal outcomes decreases and the individual is also more likely to speak up (Milliken et al., 2003; Morrison, 2011).

This decision process for expressing voice is sometimes cognitive and conscious, but in other situations, emotional response and deeply rooted beliefs or schemas are stronger than the conscious level of calculation and decision making. Emotional reactions of fear for possible negative consequences can be for example much stronger than a rational calculation of risks, thereby causing an automatic withdrawal response resulting in silence, rather than a rational choice (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). Detert and Edmondson (2011) show that the rational decision making process can also be influenced by socially assimilated beliefs about voice safety and effectiveness, that may be different from actual risk and consequences. When an employee believes for example that ‘bosses in general do feel personally offended when a work process of their design is questioned’, this employee will feel more reluctant to speak up about a problem in the work process, because speaking up means not only challenging the

status quo but also offending the boss personally. The negative outcomes that the employee expects might then be much more severe than the actual negative outcomes. Detert and Edmondson's (2011) results do not only indicate that socially assimilated beliefs have a very strong influence on voice behavior, they are also very hard to change. When asking employees to recall an actual situation with evidence for the belief, they mostly could not come up with examples. They even had to admit many times that their current manager reacted positively when they had come up with suggestions or concerns. However, this belief still existed in their cognitive scheme and influenced their decision to express voice or remain silent.

In sum, the above insights in current literature show how individuals always balance between acting constructive and pro social on one hand, and minimizing costs, efforts and negative consequences on the other, before they express voice. This process can be conscious or unconscious, rational or led by emotions and socially assimilated beliefs. Whether an individual eventually expresses voice or not depends on how conflicting motives are played out (Morrison, 2011).

Those insights about processes underlying the choice to express voice therefore indicate that the act of 'not expressing voice', resulting in employee silence, can also have different underlying reasons. Not only do employees remain silent because they rationally decide to avoid a certain risk, as was supposed by many scholars before, they can also choose to remain silent for other reasons. Those reasons are not always based upon a rational choice of costs and benefits, but also based upon emotion and implicit beliefs about voice (e.g. Brinsfield, 2013; Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Recently, Brinsfield (2013) conducted several studies to determine the nature and scope of motives to remain silent and found that silence can result from six different silence motives: (i) a *defensive silence motive*: when an employee fears negative consequences associated with speaking up (e.g. a negative job evaluation, punishment, retaliation); (ii) a *diffident silence motive*: when an employee feels insecure about expressing voice (how or when to express it) and/or fears to embarrass him- or herself when expressing voice; (iii) a *relational silence motive*: when an employee remains silent for relational oriented reasons (does not want to hurt someone or harm a relationship); (iv) an *ineffectual silence motive*: when an employee believes that speaking up is not worth the effort (it would not change anything), which can result from feelings of resignation or reluctant agreement with the current situation; (v) a *disengaged silence motive*: when an employee has uncoupled from his or her work role, and does not care what happens to the organization or does not want to do anything extra than strictly expected; and (vi) a *deviant silence motive*: when an employee remains silent because he or she intentionally wants to harm a person or the organization, because of anger or retaliation (Brinsfield, 2013).

Those silence motives, presented by Brinsfield (2013), encompass all different sorts of motives and deliberation processes underlying the individual choice to express voice or remain silent. Therefore, those silence motives are useful when studying work group voice beliefs and behaviors in the current study. They can be used to determine and describe underlying reasons to remain silent for employees participating in the action research, and the interventions of the action research can focus on specific silence motives.

Individual and environmental predictors of voice

As was described above, the individual choice to express voice or remain silent is based upon certain perceptions, beliefs and expectations of the outcomes for expressing voice. Those expectations, perceptions and beliefs do not arise out of the blue. Many individual and environmental factors influence an employee's expectations, beliefs and perceptions concerning voice. Because these factors account for general differences in voice behavior, they can predict voice behavior to some extent. For that reason, most of empirical research on voice behavior has focused on those individual and

environmental predictors for employee voice and their influence in the decision process of individuals (Morrison, 2011).

Morrison (2011) summarizes how individual factors can predict general differences between the voice behaviors of employees facing similar environments. Some individuals, within the same working context, are more likely to voice than others. This can be due to their job attitude, experience, age, proactive personality, full-time job status, their position in the organization and so on. Although personal differences do exist and do predict individual voice behavior to some extent, contextual factors have been found a stronger predictor of voice behavior in general, because individuals strongly rely on contextual cues when they decide whether to voice or remain silent (Morrison, 2011). The organizational context provides cues about whether voice behavior will be effective and safe, and therefore some organizational contexts are more facilitative for voice behavior than others (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Many scholars have therefore also studied how environmental factors can predict individual voice behavior. For example, bureaucratic structures, hierarchical organizations and strong differences in power and status have been found to predict lower levels of voice (e.g. Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Pinder & Harlos, 2001). Higher levels of voice were found when organizational culture supported voice, when (top)management seemed willing to listen, culture was non-bureaucratic, supportive and when the organization was concerned about employees in general (e.g. Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence & Miner-Rubino, 2002; Milliken et al., 2003; Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Additionally, management style and behavior were found to be very strong predictors for voice. Some scholars even suggest that managers are the most important influence (Ashford et al., 2009; Morrison, 2011). They argue that employees need to express voice towards a person with a formal authority to act, which mostly means expressing it towards their supervisor(s) (Detert & Burris, 2007; Detert & Trevino, 2010). In that case, it depends on the supervisor's action whether the expressed voice of the employee will be effective or not. Besides that, supervisors mostly have power to evaluate the employee's performance and to control job assignments and payment level, and thereby influence positive or negative outcomes of voice for the individual (Detert & Trevino; 2010).

Summarized, research results indicate that besides individual factors, organizational contexts and leaders can predict to some extent whether employees will perceive voice as being safe and effective. Contexts can therefore be more or less facilitative for voice behavior. Also, positive changes in a work context (e.g. a change of organizational structure, management behavior, or implementation of formal feedback structures) might encourage voice behavior. Therefore, when exploring developments in work group voice, developments in environmental factors and especially the behavior of managers will be subject of study. As was explained before though, decisions to speak up are not only rational and based upon the actual environment, but also led by emotions and deeply rooted implicit or unconscious beliefs, which are not easily changed, also not when convincing evidence is provided in the environment (Brinsfield, 2013; Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Based upon this, it is considered that changes in environment might not always or not directly result into changed beliefs or behaviors. When analyzing developments in work group voice, this study therefore also analyzes specific developments in beliefs and behaviors, besides developments in environment.

Voice climate

A quite new and interesting movement in voice research and literature views employee voice behavior from a social perspective and has examined the influence of collective level beliefs and perceptions about voice, resulting in a 'voice climate' ranging from very low to high levels of support for voice behavior (Greenberg & Edwards, 2009; Morrison, 2011). The few studies focusing on this new

construct have shown promising results (Frazier & Bowler, 2012; Frazier & Fainshmidt, 2012; Morrison et al., 2011). Results from those studies, together with insights from literature on work climates in general, collective sensemaking and social processes, prove that voice climate is a construct worthy of more empirical attention that should also be taken into account when studying developments in work group voice.

The concept 'voice climate' is based upon the more general concept of 'work climates'. A work climate consists of shared perceptions about policies, practices and procedures that are supported, rewarded and expected within the work environment (Kuenzi and Schminke, 2009). Those originate from social interaction as people make sense of their workplace by sharing perceptions and experiences and thereby create a common understanding of their workplace expectations, demands, restrictions and outcome possibilities (Schneider & Reichers, 1983). Climates are therefore not only rooted in objective workplace features, but also in subjective outcomes of a collective sensemaking process (Weick, 1995). Through this process of collective sensemaking, groups of people, like teams, departments and organizations, also create collective perceptions about voice (e.g. whether it is safe and effective to express voice), resulting in a voice climate (Morrison, 2011; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Morrison et al., 2011). Morrison and Milliken (2000) were the first to deliberate theoretically on the climate construct with regard to voice behavior, focusing on an overall 'climate of silence' within organizations. They argued that specific sorts of organizational contexts and processes provide cues for shared beliefs that speaking up is dangerous or ineffective, as other researchers have argued that contextual factors can predict individual beliefs and behaviors. Recently, Morrison et al. (2011) and Frazier and Bowler (2012) studied the construct of 'voice climate' empirically. They examined not only silence supporting climates, but also climates supportive of voice. Their research results indicate that voice climates indeed exist and that climates can be placed along a continuum ranging from extremely positive (voice is safe and effective) to extremely negative (voice is dangerous and ineffective). Besides beliefs about safety and efficacy of voice, Morrison et al. (2011) suggest that beliefs whether voice is expected, supported or rewarded might be important elements of a voice climate. Just like individual beliefs and perceptions, such collective level beliefs are affected by environmental factors, like managerial behavior. Frazier and Bowler's (2012) results show that the behavior of the direct supervisor has a direct effect on shared beliefs about the safety and efficacy of voice. This again illustrates the importance of studying supervisor behavior, when studying developments in voice behaviors, beliefs and voice climate.

The main reason why voice climate is such an interesting phenomenon, that has to be considered when exploring developments in work group voice, is that collective perceptions are different from (the sum of) individual perceptions. Morrison and Milliken (2000) explain how shared perceptions develop and why they can be very different from individual perceptions. When they describe the phenomenon of 'organizational silence', they argue that collective sensemaking is even "*likely to give rise to exaggerated perceptions of the riskiness and futility of speaking up*" (p.716). They explain that people prefer to learn about possible dangerous behaviors by observing or consulting others and tend to value others' beliefs more than their own. However, causality of events can be falsely interpreted and secondhand information might not be accurate. For those reasons, employees might adopt beliefs about the risks or futility of voice, even while their own perceptions and experiences are different, or even when everyday reality of events is different. When those beliefs spread within groups of people, perceptions of riskiness and futility might amplify far beyond the sum of all individual perceptions based upon personal experiences. Besides that, shared beliefs may become overgeneralized; starting from a perception that speaking up about a specific issue is not safe or worth the effort, eventually spreading towards all sorts of issues that are nonrelated. Morrison and Milliken (2000) argue that the final result of such a 'spiral of silence' might even be a distortion of all upward communication.

Although the above theory of Morrison and Milliken (2000) only focuses on the negative side of organizational silence, it explains how shared beliefs can have a very powerful effect on individual perceptions and behavior.

Consequently, collective level beliefs are a strong predictor for voice behavior, beyond individual beliefs and perceptions underlying voice. Research in different climate domains confirms that specific work climates explain variance in individual behavior beyond variance explained by individual perceptions (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009). Morrison et al. (2011) found similar results for the effect of a voice climate. They found convincing evidence that shared or group beliefs are a strong predictor for voice behavior within work groups beyond individual predictors (Morrison et al. 2011). This effect of collective beliefs on voice behavior is stronger though for individuals that identify stronger with their work group. Hence, Morrison et al. (2011) suggest that individual and group level beliefs interact, and that voice climate moderates the effect of individual level predictors. Therefore, both individual and collective level beliefs are taken into account when studying developments in work group voice.

As described before, the current study is focusing on employee voice behaviors and voice climate at the level of work groups. Although a voice climate exists within every group of employees and affects individual voice beliefs and behaviors, the effects and strength of a voice climate differ per group level and sort of group. Morrison and Milliken (2000) argue that shared beliefs are more likely to develop and to be reinforced within groups of higher similarity, stability and workflow interdependence and with higher density and stronger ties in informal networks. Results of Morrison et al. (2011) indicate that voice climates vary between work groups in similar work divisions, suggesting that climate at department or organizational level has a weaker effect than voice climates within work groups. Although this challenges Morrison & Milliken's (2000) notion that climates pervade complete organizations, the findings are in line with both the statements of Morrison & Milliken (2000) about conditions strengthening a climate effect (e.g. workflow interdependence, high density and strong ties) and research on other types of work climate, showing that especially shared beliefs at the level of work units have a strong effect on individual behavior (Kuenzi & Schminke, 2009). In sum, work groups in which employees are working together intensively seem to have the strongest voice climate effect. Therefore, this action research study focuses specifically on developments of voice in such work groups, which Frazier and Bowler (2012) define as work groups that *"consist of two or more individuals who share common goals, established to utilize employee skills and improve work efficiency"* (p.2).

In all, current insights from literature about employee voice, silence and voice climate provide useful input for both the design of the current study and for the analysis and interpretation of findings. When exploring 'how interventions can contribute to developments in work group voice', this study takes into account the different types and targets of voice; different processes and factors underlying the choice to express voice or remain silent; different silence motives; important individual and environmental predictors for voice; and voice beliefs both on the individual level and collective level (voice climate). In the current action research, this helps to explore from different perspectives 'if' and 'how' work group voice develops when interventions raise attention for the topic of voice. Thereby, it helps to gain more insight into possible developments in work group voice and into the different ways in which work group voice can be encouraged or facilitated by using interventions.

METHOD

Action research is a method of participative inquiry involving members of an organization over a matter which is of genuine concern to them (Eden & Huxham, 1996). It brings together action and reflection, theory and practice (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). In this study, I conducted an action research as described by Eden & Huxham (1996), where the researcher intervenes in an organizational setting, working and collaborating with members of the organization (e.g. as a consultant or facilitator) and looking for insights valuable for both participants' practice and for social science. Eden & Huxham (1996) argue that interventions in action research challenge the status quo and will likely result in a change, thereby revealing insights that would not be found in a stable environment or through hypothetical inquiry. Hence, an action research method can both create more insight into how group voice emerges and evolves, and how interventions contribute to developments in work group voice in complex real-world settings.

Research design

As action research is a highly qualitative research method, where research is conducted in a complex, dynamic and changing organizational setting and conducted by a researcher being participant in the research itself, an action research design should encompass the ability for data triangulation to increase reliability and validity of findings and to check for interpretation effects (Eden & Huxham, 1996; Jick, 1979; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). To gain valid, reliable and rich research results, the research design of this study therefore integrated multiple forms of data triangulation, with data from (i) multiple cases; and (ii) multiple research instruments. This provided the opportunity to compare amongst developments in different (organizational) contexts, amongst data from different research instruments, and amongst viewpoints of different research participants.

Multiple cases

The study had a multiple case design, with a sample of three different teams in different organizational settings, to gain a broad understanding of developments in work group voice and the contribution of interventions in different contexts. A comparison across cases could provide insight into the general contributions of interventions to developments in work group voice. Differences between cases could illustrate how these more general contributions emerge into specific developments of work group voice, within teams in different contexts, with different starting positions for their work group voice and with different group characteristics.

Cases were selected for their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. The result of this convenience sample was a sample of three different work teams, each from another organization in the Netherlands. Each participating team consisted of 8-12 team members (TM) reporting to one single team leader (TL). As both governmental and non-governmental organizations, different sorts of team cultures, different starting positions of work group voice and different education, tenure and age levels were represented in the three participating teams; the sample provided a very rich dataset. To illustrate the team characteristics and thereby the differences between teams, every case is shortly introduced (descriptions are based upon data from interviews, researcher observations, and informal conversations of the researcher with TM and TL during the action research).

'City'-case: a collective and social-oriented open team. The first participating team is located at a governmental organization, at a municipality of a city, and consists of a TL (female, 56, vocational

education), who has been TL of this team for 5 years; and 8 TM (2 male; 6 female) with an average age of 50 (varying from 35 to 59 years), average tenure of 20 years within the organization (varying from 5 to 35 years) and with a high school or vocational level of education. Main tasks of the team encompass client support and office-related activities, carrying out standard procedures.

TM and TL have been working together for a long time together and know each other both personally and professionally quite well. Relationships between TM or between TM and TL are very positive and close, resulting in strong group cohesion. Besides, TM and TL have a highly collective- and social orientation. Solidarity and mutual understanding, support and concern are important values in this team. TM and TL highlight the coziness of their team, and describe how they really care about each other, how they always help and support each other, how they like their colleagues and go to work with greatest pleasure every day.

All TM describe their TL as a very nice person. The TL is an open, friendly and accessible person, with a high interest in the well-being of the TM. She approaches TM behavior in a very positive way and focuses on TM strengths and development. Besides, she easily empathizes with TM feelings and is willing and able to reflect on her own role and behavior.

Although the TL already perceives her team as very open, with a positive voice climate and with TM expressing almost everything, she decides to participate in the research with her team, because she is curious how TM perceive their team's group voice situation. At the start of the research, TM also describe themselves as an already open team without any problems. Nonetheless they are curious about participating, interested in the research and willing to help the researcher.

'Bank'-case: a business- and improvement-oriented quite open team. The second team in this study is located at a financial institution. The team consists of a TL (male, 45, vocational education), who has been TL of this team for 5 months; and 12 TM (7 male; 5 female) with an average age of 44 (varying from 31 years to 67 years), average tenure of 8 years within the organization (varying from 1 month to 31 years) and most with a vocational or higher level of education. The team's main tasks concentrate on checking mortgage advisor's work. The TM can perform most of their tasks from home, and the team meets only once a week in the office.

As the team is quite new in place, the TL is only managing the team for 5 months, and TM perform most of their work individually and from home, TM and TL do not know each other very well yet. However, professional relationships between TM and TL are very positive. When there is any question, difficulty, or concern, TM feel they can easily reach the TL or each other for help. TM and TL describe relationships within the team as very positive 'business-like relations', as they work together constructively, but do not often share private matters or spend time together outside of work.

Both TL and TM highlight the importance of expressing voice in their function. They describe how the team needs to improve continuously, as their business becomes more and more demanding. This results in higher targets for quality and quantity of their work and in a strong focus on efficiency, effectiveness and individual and team-level growth. Helping each other learn, improve and grow is therefore perceived as very important.

TM describe their TL as an open, trustworthy and accessible person, with a positive view towards TM and high involvement in their individual development. He tries to turn every TM's strengths and weaknesses into account, emphasizing their individual talents with extra tasks and responsibilities and supporting TM's individual development by providing them with constructive feedback and tips. Besides, he focuses on his own development continuously. He deploys his own vulnerability, reflects upon weaknesses and points for improvement, and asks for feedback of TM.

The TL perceives his team as quite open. However, he also notices that TM do not always express their suggestions, concerns or opinions towards him. He is interested in research participation, to explore the perspective of TM towards group voice and to identify the team's silence motives and points of improvement. TM also describe their team as already quite open. They are interested in the research though, positive towards participating and eager to identify improvement points. However, they find it difficult to spend much time on the research because of high time pressure in their work.

‘Water’-case: a task- and control-oriented team with complicated relationships. The third team is located at another governmental organization and consists of a TL (male, 53, vocational education), who has been TL of this team for 18 years; and 8 TM (8 male) with an average age of 50 (varying from 24 to 63 years), average tenure of 8 years within the organization (varying from 3 to 28 years) and with only primary education, or a low or average vocational level of education. Half of the team mostly performs outdoor tasks, maintaining, managing and checking water courses and the surrounding greenery. The other half of the team consists of senior team members performing consequent management, policy and office-related tasks.

This team has a very long history together. They know each other both professionally and personally very well, as they have been working together for over twenty years. Most of them even share a family bond, as brothers, father and son, or uncle and nephew. Although they know each other very well, relationships in the team are complicated. Many TM, especially those older than 55, describe how they have had quite some difficulties to adapt to new demands of the organization in the past decade. More computer tasks and registration work, self-managing teams and CO2 reduction policies are only a few examples of changes in the organization causing stress and frustration. Stories of both TM and TL illustrate how TM do not always see the advantages of these changes and how they have felt and shown a lot of resistance in change processes. Their stories also illustrate how the TL is very ambitious and always strives to perform best with his team with every new demand of the organization. He likes to be the first team to participate in a change program, and often tries to reach higher goals and targets than some other team leaders. Therefore, he tries to force his team to adapt to those demands quickly. In the change process, it seems that he sometimes forgets to address the needs, difficulties and feelings of TM.

As TL and TM often lack (to show) understanding for each other's perspectives, there are quite some misunderstandings causing frustrations and dysfunctional relationships within the team, both between TM and between TL and TM. Many TM feel frustrated and some TM even seem to have disengaged from their work roles. For example, they explain that they would change jobs if they could, or that they cannot wait for their retirement to come. Both TM and TL have quite a negative view of each other and seem to have difficulties listening to and empathizing with each other, reflecting upon their own roles and behaviors and communicating constructively.

Although the TL perceives his team as quite open, as TM express many of their frustrations and feelings, he hopes to learn and improve the team situation towards a more positive voice climate in which team members can express voice in a more constructive manner, instead of only expressing their (negative) feelings and thoughts. Because the TL thinks TM might feel resistance towards participating in the research though, he does not ask for their opinion about participating. Especially because they were not informed about the research by the TL, there indeed was resistance amongst TM to participate. Participation is ‘another change’ and ‘difficult’ and some TM seem to be afraid of consequences and think that their statements might be used against them. Eventually, after confirming confidentiality of research data all but one TM agree to participate (this TM was excluded from the research project), but TM remain skeptical and cautious at the start.

Multiple research instruments

The action research design included five different research instruments: observations, diaries, surveys, focus group interviews and individual interviews. It is important to note that research instruments used in this study were both (i) *interventions* in the participating teams, for either TL, TM or for the group as a whole, stimulating individual or collective sensemaking about group voice beliefs and behaviors and thereby possibly contributing to developments in work group voice; and (ii) *instruments for data collection*, gaining insight in both individual and collective voice beliefs and behaviors, and group dynamics and developments resulting from these research instruments as interventions.

Data collection. By combining several research instruments for data collection, both group and individual perspectives of TL, TM and researcher could be taken into account when studying developments in work group voice and the contribution of interventions. This triangulation of data from different data sources, and from different perspectives of individuals or the team as a group, enhances the reliability, validity and richness of the research data (Eden & Huxham, 1996; Jick, 1979).

Observation is a very useful method to study organizational life ‘as it happens’ and to gain insight in the everyday experience of organizational members (Cunliffe, 2010; Van Manen, 1997). By building relationships with organizational members, observing their day-to-day work context, watching their behavior and listening to their interactions, a researcher can gain rich data about how people act and make sense of their environment in their everyday work (Cunliffe, 2010). In this study, *researcher observation* was used especially to observe team characteristics and group voice behaviors, by registering voice events, specific voice behaviors and group dynamics from the perspective of the researcher as an outsider. A *TL observation*, with registration of TM voice behaviors, TL’s own reaction towards voice and his or her opinion and beliefs, provided additional data about (developments in) TM behavior and TL beliefs and behaviors, from the perspective of the TL.

The additional perspective of TM was captured with the use of *TM diaries*. As people provide a report of events and experiences in their daily lives, diaries can provide insight into their experiences, thoughts and feelings (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2002). During the action research, TM reported their choices and thoughts about expressing voice or remaining silent, together with actual voice episodes and subsequent reactions of TL or other TM. TM diaries therefore resulted in data about (developments in) individual TM voice behaviors and beliefs.

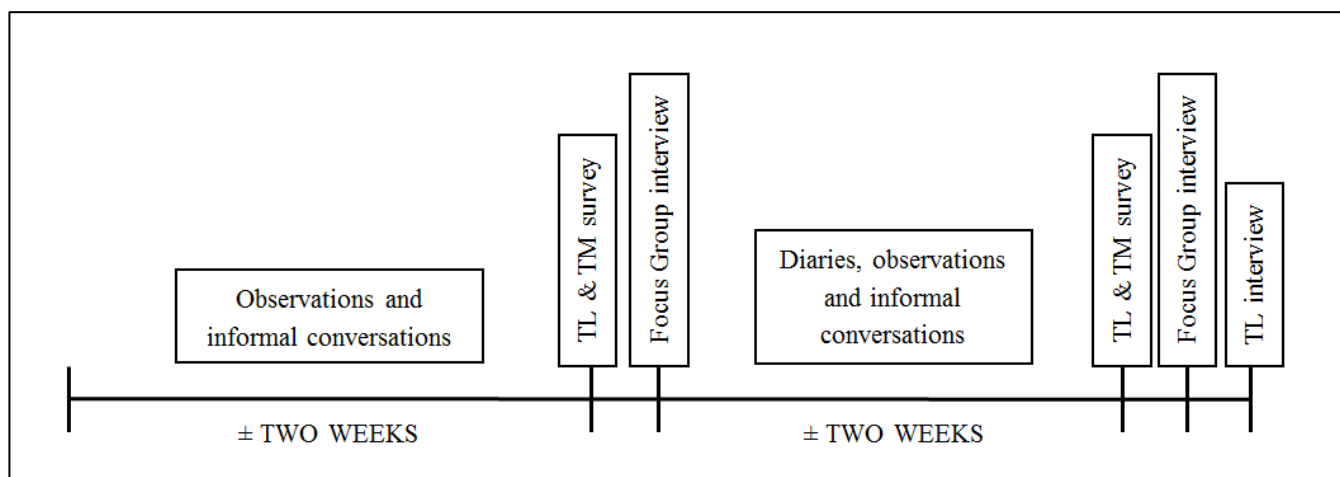
Focus group interviews make use of group dynamics to generate insights and gain access to shared beliefs in a group (Barbour, 2007). Therefore, those were very useful to study group dynamics within every team and to gain insight into (developments in) shared beliefs and group perspectives concerning work group voice. To create a vivid and in-depth discussion in the focus group interview and to gain deeper understanding of differences in individual perceptions, individual *TM surveys* were used to gain input before conducting the focus group interviews. These surveys gained insights into the individual perceptions of collective level beliefs for voice climate, voice theories and TM voice behaviors, before discussing those topics with the whole team. Next, similarities, differences or contradictions between individual perceptions could be discussed within a group-setting. In the focus group interviews, the teams also collectively reflected upon their work group voice situation and the action research process, thereby providing insights into developments in work group voice (behaviors and beliefs) and contributions of interventions from TM’s individual and the team’s group perspective. At last, an individual *TL interview* was used to provide insight into the individual TL perspective of developments in work group voice and the contributions of interventions. Input from a *TL survey* about TM behavior was used as an input to discuss specific developments in TM voice behavior with the TL.

Research procedure and process

Action research is characterized by a flexible research procedure and an iterative and collaborative research process, as the specific issues of study are partly identified during the process itself (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). Although specific issues of study and detailed approach of interventions for every participating team can only be designed during the research process, the outline of the research process and interventions can be predetermined, and research actions can be structured (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). The outline of this study consisted of four corresponding phases: a baseline phase, group-exchange phase, a follow-up phase and a reflection phase, covering a total five- to six-week research period.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the research instruments in a research timeline. Subsequently, Table 1 provides a more detailed overview of the research outline in phases, with a more detailed description of the research instruments used in each phase, the corresponding intervention targets and data collection methods per instrument. After that, the specific research procedure and flexible elements for every research phase are described.

Figure 1: Research timeline



Baseline phase. In every participating team I started my research with a baseline phase of two weeks, to develop initial understanding of the team characteristics, team situation in general, voice climate and group voice behaviors. In an introduction meeting I introduced myself as a researcher and explained the research planning. Subsequent visits of workplace and/or team meetings provided the opportunity for building rapport with TL and TM and for groundwork observation of group voice, voice episodes and general team characteristics, registered in field notes. Informal conversations with TL and TM enriched the observation data. Meanwhile in this research phase, the TL observed voice behavior of TM during 2 weeks. The TL registered voice episodes in an observation protocol, recording voice message, voice target, type of voice and TL's own reaction and opinion about the expressed voice.

At the end of the baseline phase, both TL and TM filled in a survey, to gain input for the (focus group) interviews. In the TL survey, TL rated TM voice behavior in general by indicating on a 7-pt scale how often each TM expresses suggestion-, problem- and opinion-focused voice, the 3 types of voice from Morrison (2011). The TM survey provided insights into TM's individual perspectives of voice climate, voice theories and self-reports of their voice behavior. Scales for 'group voice climate' used a referent shift approach by asking the TM about beliefs of 'members of the team in general' (Morrison et al., 2011; Frazier & Bowler, 2012). Their collective level beliefs were measured for safety and efficacy

of voice, following Morrison et al. (2011), and for how much voice is expected, supported and rewarded, following Frazier and Bowler (2012) and Frazier and Fainshmidt (2012). Implicit voice theories in the team were measured with Detert and Edmondson's (2011) scale. Finally, TM were asked to report the sequence of their own voice behavior and behavioral intentions for 15 voice-events, derived from a scale of Lebel, Morrison and Wheeler-Schmidt (2011) for suggestion-, problem- and opinion-focused voice-events. For translation of the existing scales from English to Dutch, a translation and back-translation procedure was employed (Brislin, 1986).

Table 1: Research outline

Phase	Research Instrument	Intervention for	Data collection
Baseline phase	Researcher observation and informal conversations with TM & TL (2 weeks)	Group (TL &TM)	Field notes about group voice, voice episodes and general team characteristics
	TL observation of TM voice behavior (2 weeks) by using an observation protocol daily	TL	Observation protocols filled in by TL (voice message, type, TL's reaction & opinion)
	TL survey about employee voice behavior	TL	*
	TM survey about voice climate, voice theories and voice behavior	TM	*
Group Exchange Phase	Focus group interview about voice climate, voice theories, and group voice behavior	Group (TL &TM)	Videotape and transcript of the group's interpretation of TM survey results (Video) observation of group interaction during the interview
Follow-up phase	Researcher observation and informal conversations with TM & TL, between TM & TL or between TM (2 weeks)	Group (TL &TM)	Field notes of voice episodes, group dynamics, informal conversations, individual viewpoints
	TL observation of TM voice behavior (2 weeks) by using an observation protocol daily	TL	Observation protocols filled in by managers (voice message, type, manager's reaction & opinion)
	TM diaries for voice or silence choices & thoughts and actual voice episodes & reactions (2 weeks)	TM	Diaries filled in by TM (voice or silence choices & thoughts and actual voice episodes & reactions)
	Repeat of TL survey about employee voice behavior	TL	*
	Repeat of TM survey about voice climate, voice theories and voice behavior	TM	*
Reflection phase	Focus group interview to reflect on group voice, individual behavior, team situation and intervention effects	Group (TL &TM)**	Videotape and transcript of the group's interpretation of intervention effects (Video) observation of group interaction during the interview
	Interview with TL to reflect on group voice, individual behavior, team situation and intervention effects	TL	Transcript of TL's interpretation of intervention effects

* Surveys did not provide data for statistical analysis due to low statistical power, survey data was only used as input for (focus group) interviews

** In the 'Water'-case only TM participated in the second focus group interview

Group Exchange Phase. Baseline phase data, especially data from the TM survey, provided input for discussion in the focus group interview of the group exchange phase. Focus group interviews lasted approximately two hours and were undertaken in the comfortable work locations of the participating teams. The interviews were video-recorded and transcribed in full.

During the focus group interview with TL and TM, group means and variance of answers in the TM survey were presented. TM were asked to interpret and discuss the survey results, thereby revealing individual and shared perceptions or beliefs about (different types of) voice and voice outcomes,

explaining and clarifying group voice climate or behaviors and illustrating the general team situation through examples of concrete (voice) events. Using knowledge of group processes, the focus group facilitator aimed to avoid premature consensus, but create an environment in which every TM could contribute and where emergent issues could be explored in depth (Barbour, 2008).

Every focus group interview started by asking TM to think individually about voice and silence motives of employees in general, and by discussing the answers collectively, thereby introducing the topic of work group voice. Then, survey means for the values of voice climate were presented (for safety and efficacy of voice, and for how much voice is expected, supported and rewarded). TM were asked to explain in concrete examples 'why' they thought that people in this particular team might perceive voice as safe, effective, expected, supported and rewarded, but also 'why not' sometimes. Furthermore, survey outcomes for voice theories of Detert and Edmondson (2011) were discussed, especially those theories which TM collectively agreed with (which means that the particular voice theory might cause TM to remain silent instead of expressing voice), or the theories with highly contrasting answers between TM. TM were again asked to explain why they thought TM in this team might either 'agree' or 'disagree' to a proposition representing the voice theory, and the team discussed if the implicit beliefs underlying the theory might hold them back from expressing voice in certain situations. At last, the team collectively discussed in which situations it might be difficult within this team to express voice, thereby addressing other possible silence motives within the group.

Voice and silence motives, shared beliefs, habits, norms and values for the teams' group voice (climate) and general team situation became evident when analyzing the focus group results and baseline phase data from observations and informal conversations. Based upon these insights, I determined for every team some specific topics or issues worthy of extra attention in the next research phases. For every team, I noted (i) possible silence motives and implicit beliefs, holding back TM from expressing voice; (ii) behaviors of TL or other TM that in this team might influence TM perception that expressing voice is safe, effective, expected, supported and rewarded; (iii) possible sensitive issues, about which TM might feel reluctant to speak up; and (iv) contradictory findings, for differences statements of several TM, or differences between observations and statements of TM in the group discussion. These topics specifically remained under attention during further researcher observations and informal conversations with TM, and provided input for a second focus group interview and TL interview later on in the action research process.

Follow Up Phase. After TL, TM and I as a researcher gained some initial understanding of the group's voice beliefs and behaviors I sought some deeper understanding of group characteristics and dynamics in a follow-up phase. During two weeks, I again paid some visits to the workplace and/or team meetings to observe TM and TL behavior. Informal conversations with TM and TL provided me with extra insights, especially for topics TL or TM did not feel comfortable to share in the focus group interview. In that case, informal conversations in private or in a small group provided a safer environment for sharing thoughts, perspectives and feelings. Through observation and informal conversations I identified behaviors and beliefs either confirming or contrasting with survey and focus group data. Issues and motives to remain silent also became more evident and provided input for the reflection phase.

Meanwhile, I gained more insight about individual voice behaviors and perceptions of TL and TM. TL observed and registered voice episodes of TM again for two weeks. Besides, TM were asked to keep a diary of voice and silence events by registering choices, thoughts and actual voice episodes plus reactions of TM or TL for their expressed suggestions, concerns or opinions. TM did not fill in their diary forms daily, but the assignment made them more attentive of their own behavior and eventually, almost every TM filled in a diary form at least once in this period of two weeks. TM diaries and

observations by TL and researcher not only provided data, but also forced TM and TL to keep thinking about 'voice' after the group interview and resulted in informal conversations about voice between TM or between TL and TM.

At the end of the follow-up phase, both TM and TL filled in their survey again, to check if their beliefs, perceptions or behaviors might have changed during the research process. Follow-up rates compared to baseline rates also provided input for the reflection phase. Differences in TM survey results provided input to discuss possible changes in TM voice beliefs and behaviors. Subsequently, differences in TL evaluations of TM voice behavior in the TL surveys provided input to discuss changes in TM behavior and developments in work group voice with the TL.

Reflection Phase. The final research phase had a dual goal: (1) to interpret the effects of research instruments as interventions together with TM and TL; and (2) to reflect upon group voice, individual voice behavior and team situation together with TM and TL. All remarkable, contrasting or characteristic points in the data from TM and TL surveys, diaries, TL observation and researcher observation provided input for the interviews.

In the second focus group interview and in an interview with TL, I asked TM and TL to look back at the previous research phases and the effects of participating in the research. By asking TL and TM's interpretation of the data, they explained effects from their perspective as a participant. They reflected upon the effects of different research instruments upon their own individual beliefs and behaviors, and group beliefs and behaviors. Besides, I asked them to reflect upon their group (voice) situation and to identify points of improvement for TL and TM individual and the group as a whole. I provided them with my findings about possible issues or motives to remain silent and let them discuss these topics. At last, I asked them to think about practical advice to create an encouraging voice climate and to facilitate group voice for TL and TM of work teams in general. With this design, both the second focus group interview and TL interview intended to stimulate reflective thinking about group (voice) behaviors and beliefs as well.

Adjustments in the research procedure. When conducting action research, a researcher has to be flexible and make adjustments in the research procedure when required by the team situation (Eden & Huxham, 1996; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). For this sample of teams, only some adjustments had to be made for the team in the 'water'-case.

As the TM in this team felt a lot of resistance towards participating in the research, felt uncertain about what was expected of them and feared negative consequences when telling how they felt about their team, I needed to spend a lot of extra time introducing myself, explaining the research goals and confirming the confidentiality of research data during the baseline phase of the research. After that, I also had to spend more time building rapport and trust with the TM in this team before they opened up and shared feelings and perspectives. This was reached by spending at least a couple of hours with every single TM, visiting their work activities, and by asking them about their work, their work history and their subsequent personal team experiences. By providing them with a lot of understanding for their individual perspectives and feelings, they started opening up. Furthermore, together with the TL I decided to exclude the TL from the second focus group interview in the reflection phase, as TM had sent out some clear messages they were held back to talk freely with his presence in the first focus group interview.

Lastly, TM in this team turned out to have a low concentration level, difficulties reading complex texts, difficulties understanding abstract concepts. Therefore, I decided to slightly adjust some of the research instruments. I assisted the TM during the TM surveys, by walking them through all

survey questions and giving an explanation for difficult words. Also, I simplified the questions of focus group interviews and asked about concrete experiences and examples instead of abstract concepts. At last, I assisted the TM to fill in their diaries or I just let them tell their about experiences instead of filling in a diary form.

Data exploration and analysis

Both during and after the interventions in the research process data and insights were gained, thereby '*developing and elaborating theory from practice*' (Eden & Huxham 1996, p.80). Data exploration and analysis was typically inspired by van Manen (1997), who describes a method of phenomenological reflection to grasp the essential meaning of phenomena 'as they happen', in this case the dynamics of group voice and their corresponding beliefs and behaviors. Consequently, data exploration and analysis was led by questions such as 'What is going on here?' and 'What is the essence?' (Van Manen, 1997).

In this process, I was aware of not being an objective and outside observer of the situation, but also a participant in and subject of the research itself, which might cause interpretation biases (Eden & Huxham, 1996). Therefore, I checked as much as possible for interpretation effects, by specifically asking for TM and TL interpretation of team developments and contributions of interventions; and by comparing my own interpretations and observation field notes with data from TL observations, TM diaries, and (focus group) interview transcripts.

During the action research process. Data exploration during the action research process included a reflective reading of field notes, TL observation protocols, TM diaries, TL and TM survey outcomes and focus group interview transcripts, thereby identifying tentative themes within every case and providing input for following research phases, by determining (i) possible silence motives and implicit beliefs, holding back TM from expressing voice; (ii) behaviors of TL or other TM that in this team might influence TM perception that expressing voice is safe, effective, expected, supported and rewarded; (iii) possible sensitive issues, about which TM might feel reluctant to speak up; and (iv) contradictory findings, for differences statements of several TM, or differences between observations and statements of TM in the group discussion.

After the action research process. Data analysis after the action research process focused more specifically on answering the research question '*How can interventions contribute to the development of work group voice?*'. To familiarize with all data in every case, data analysis started with reading and re-reading all data from field notes, TL observation protocols, TM diaries, and (focus group) interview transcripts. Subsequently, three phases of data analysis followed, studying (i) the team characteristics of the work group voice (starting) situation and the specific research process for every team (ii) general tendencies across cases and within every case for 'what happened' during the action research and how this contributed to developments in work group voice; and (iii) the importance of different interventions for a contribution to development.

Team characteristics. First, I analyzed all data for specific team characteristics of the work group voice (starting) situation. From the data, specific characteristics emerged for voice climate, TM (voice) behaviors and beliefs, TM voice and silence motives, and subsequent TL behaviors, all of which correspond to several important topics in current (work group) voice literature. Besides, I analyzed how TM and TL reacted towards the research in every participating team, by studying field notes, group dynamics in focus groups and statements in (focus group) interviews.

Contributions to developments in work group voice. Second, I studied work group voice developments and development processes in every team. As I reflectively read and re-read the data,

while asking myself ‘What happened during the research process and interventions?’, ‘What did TL and TM do?’, ‘How did that affect them both as individuals?’ and ‘How did it affect the team as a group?’, some general patterns emerged. Those general patterns showed that interventions contributed towards several types of development in work group voice, leading to more ‘awareness’, ‘insights’, ‘reflection’ and ‘changes in behavior or behavioral intentions’.

In the next step of analysis, I studied development processes across cases. I defined how specific elements in the action research process contributed to developments in work group voice. Eight different ‘occurrences’ were found to contribute to work group voice development in their own way: (i) explicating general team situation and voice climate; (ii) explicating different perspectives and behaviors; (iii) uncovering silence motives; (iv) exploring points of improvement; (v) explicating TM voice behavior as suggestions, concerns and opinions; (vi) bringing TM’s attention to TM (voice) behavior; (vii) bringing TL’s attention to TM (voice) behavior; and (viii) bringing TL’s attention to own TL behavior (reaction towards voice). A detailed description and illustration of those ‘occurrences’ as elements of the development process is given in the findings-chapter. After those ‘occurrences’ were found with an analysis ‘across cases’, I again read data for every single case, to study how these ‘occurrences’ were reflected within the data of every single case: thereby gaining more insights into the differences between cases for developments in work group voice, and contributions of interventions.

Important interventions. At last, the importance and effects of all different interventions for the contributions to developments in work group voice was explored. Especially data from the (focus group) interviews in the reflection phase, where TL and TM reflected upon the research process and the effects and importance of interventions, provided important insights. By comparing statements of both TM and TL with data from researcher observations and informal conversations, the importance of different interventions was examined from several perspectives. This resulted in an overview of intervention effects in general, differences across cases, and differences between perceptions of TM and TL, for which interventions were most important for a contribution to developments in work group voice.

FINDINGS

The main goal of this study was to explore the contribution of interventions to developments in work group voice. For a clear understanding of developments and contributions in different cases, an illustration of *'team characteristics for work group voice'* and of the *'research process'* is provided first. This provides some insights into the starting position of work group voice in every case and helps to understand the findings about developments and contributions of interventions in every team. After those illustrations per case, findings about *developments in work group voice, contributions of combined interventions* and *the development process* are presented. This provides insight into how combined interventions can contribute to work group voice in general, and specifically in different sorts of teams. At last, the *effects and importance of different interventions* for contributions towards development are described and illustrated.

The findings in this chapter are illustrated with examples and quotes from either (focus group) interviews, TL observation protocols, TM diaries, or field notes of the researcher observation. For all quotes is indicated if they were expressed by either TM [TM, ...] or TL [TL, ...], and if they were found in either a focus group interview [..., FG], a TL interview [..., INT], a TM diary [..., DIA], a TL observation protocol [..., T-OBS], or field notes of the researcher observations [..., R-OBS]. When quotes of different cases are presented next to each other, an additional letter -C, -B or -W indicates that the specific quote comes from a TM or TL in the City-, Bank- or Water-case. For example, when a quote was expressed by a TM in the city-case, during a focus group interview, this is indicated as [TM-C, FG].

An illustration of team characteristics for work group voice and research process

Combined data from surveys, observations, (focus group) interviews, and diaries provided insights into general team characteristics for work group voice, including the team's voice climate, TM (voice) behaviors and beliefs, TM voice and silence motives, and TL behaviors. As these characteristics help to understand the contribution of interventions to developments in work group voice per case, and differences and similarities across cases, they are shortly illustrated for every team. Additionally, characteristics of the research participation for every team are described, to illustrate the specific research process for every team.

'City'-case: Expressive voice and a possibility of relational silence. In this team, group voice behavior is characterized by expressing almost everything to each other. When TM talk about voice climate and behavior in their team, a TM summarizes *"I think we are quite a boring team for this research, because we express almost everything to each other. It is just very positive."* [TM, FG]. It appears that TM share both relevant and irrelevant suggestions, concerns or opinions, ask a lot of questions and seek for confirmation with each other or the TL, and they often think out loud when making decisions in their work. In summary, expressing themselves seems the most important motive for TM to express voice.

The only motive for TM to remain silent might be a relational motive. They would not risk harming a positive relationship or hurting someone. A TM explains *"If you have an opinion of which you know it might hurt people when you express it, then you know that you can say it, but that would be quite insensitive. So then it depends if you do express it or not."* [TM, FG]. Besides this, TM cannot think of any situation in which they would not express voice.

The TL of this team evaluates all types of voice behavior very positively. In the TL observation protocol, she for example writes: *“Nice of them to think along.”*, *“Good idea.”*, and *“It is a difficult situation, so it’s good we talk this through together.”* [TL, OBS]. She clearly welcomes all types of expressions and input, also more irrelevant or unnecessary types of voice. Besides, she always takes time to listen to TM suggestions, concerns and opinions; she thinks along with all questions and dilemmas about their work; and shows her understanding for the perspective of every TM. A TM explains that this helps to express voice: *“Because of her open attitude, everything is laid out on the table. She never makes you feel that you did something wrong.”* [TM, DIA].

In the action research, this team participated in a highly collective and collaborative way. For example, TM together discussed their experienced difficulties after filling out the survey. Besides, they strongly agreed with each other in the focus group interviews, they had fun together making jokes, and were very eager to share both relevant and more irrelevant examples and experiences. Subsequently, during work, they talked together about topics of the focus group interviews and they helped each other to fill out their diaries. Summarized, both the characteristics of this team’s work group voice, and the way they participated in the action research, fit their general team characteristics being ‘a collective and social oriented open team’, as presented in the case introduction.

‘Bank’-case: Functional voice and some diffident, defensive or relational silence. In this team, TM also express most of their suggestions, concerns and opinions to each other and the TL. A TM explains: *“If there is any question, difficulty, concern or whatever, we can easily reach each other for help. And of course we can always call our TL.”* [TM, FG]. However, they try to limit their expression only to relevant and functional suggestions, concerns and opinions. As there is not much time in meetings, efficiency is important and TM often think about the necessity of expressing a voice signal before actually speaking up and consider to whom the message is important before choosing their voice target. TM highlight: *“We have an agreement that we at least have to think about a solution for a problem, before addressing the problem in a team meeting. <.....> Also, we always try to underpin new ideas and check on support from colleagues, before submitting them in a meeting with the group.”* [TM, FG].

Although TM do not remain silent often, some of them feel reluctant to speak up because of diffident, defensive or relational silence motives. Sometimes, they hesitate to express their personal difficulties in dealing with targets or time pressure, for fear of weakening their position in the group (and eventually losing their job), and because they do not want to complain or disturb colleagues which are also very busy. In his diary, a TM explains: *“I am worried about my own work speed. As colleagues are checking up to 6 dossiers a day, I only manage to check 3 or 4 with large effort. Sometimes, this results in a backlog. However, when planners in the daily ‘start-call’ ask about feasibility of the amount of dossiers for the day, I often do not express my concerns. I do not want to complain and I work as hard as possible to increase my working speed.”* [TM, DIA]. Other TM find it difficult to speak up with feedback to their colleagues, because they do not want to hurt their feelings. A TM for example writes *“I find it difficult to confront a colleague with negative feedback. <...> I do not know how this person will take my feedback or how he or she will feel about it.”* [TM, DIA]

In this team, TL’s reaction towards TM voice is strongly based upon his own perception of necessity and functionality of expressed voice. When he evaluates voice as a justified expression, he reacts very thoughtful, helpful, and shows understanding for feelings and perspectives of TM. When on the other hand he views TM voice as unnecessary, irrelevant or non-constructive, he sometimes also reacts less understanding or moves on without providing a satisfying answer or reaction, especially when under high time pressure. For example, when a TM expressed a negative opinion about higher management policies, the TL writes in his observation protocol *“This is not the first time. His message*

appears quite negative to me." [TL, OBS]. As a researcher, I observed this specific situation in which the TM disagreed with management policies. I watched how the TL only shortly explained the reason behind the policy, but then simply continued, without really answering the question of the TM or directly addressing his concern. However, the TL mostly takes TM feelings and perspectives into account, and mostly reacts in a positive way towards expressed voice.

TM and TL of this team participated in the action research in a very efficient and quite individual manner. Because they were very busy, TL and TM found it difficult to spend enough time on every intervention. As they are used to working individually, they did not often speak together about the research interventions and everybody filled in their surveys and diaries without asking for help. Additionally, this team had a strong focus on improvement points and efficiency during the action research. In group conversations they for example provided clear and short answers and they were quickly bored when parts of the interview only focused on discussing the current team situation instead of improvement points. Altogether, both the characteristics of this team's work group voice, and the way they participated in the action research, fit their general team characteristics being 'a business- and improvement-oriented quite open team', as presented in the case introduction.

'Water'-case: Expressive voice and disengaged, ineffectual, diffident, defensive and relational silence. The third team's group voice climate and behavior is more complicated. Expression seems the most important motive for voice and TM do express many of their thoughts, feelings and opinions to each other and to the TL. They therefore thought to be quite open as a team: "*We are quite direct. According to me, our male-dominated culture is quite open.*" [TM, FG]. However, they often fail to express suggestions, concerns or opinions in a constructive, well-motivated, or non-offensive way, which makes others experience their voice behavior as a negative expression or as complaining. Besides, reactions of TL or other TM towards voice are also quite blunt and non-constructive. When a TM for example expresses a concern, another TM reacts "*Why would you even bother. You never remember my answer anyway, so better don't say anything.*" [TM, R-OBS]. In summary, TM and TL find it difficult to really listen to each other and to empathize with someone else's perspective. Therefore, quite often, both parties do not feel heard or understood.

In such a voice climate, together with many frustrations about organizational change and difficulties in meeting new organizational demands, TM have developed several motives to remain silent instead of expressing voice. They remain silent because of disengaged, ineffectual, diffident, defensive or relational silence motives. In informal conversations with the researcher, TM for example told that they sometimes 'do not bother voicing suggestions, concerns and opinions anymore', which reflects a disengaged silence motive. They seem to have disengaged from their work roles after difficulties with organizational change or because they are already waiting for their retirement age. Ineffectual silence motives also have developed as TM sometimes do not feel heard or their voice does not result in actual change. Besides, defensive silence motives impede TM voice, as some TM either fear more work, difficult questions or negative reactions as a consequence of voicing suggestions. Additionally, some TM feel uncertain about how to express voice and remain silent for diffident motives. A TM explains "*You need quite some verbal skills right? <...> But verbally, I am not so strong. I often don't know what to say or how to react. And then I have a problem, so I rather don't say anything at all.*" [TM, FG]. At last, TM sometimes hesitate to speak up for relational silence motives, when they do not want to harm or hurt colleagues whom they like.

The TL's reaction towards TM voice seems to depend strongly upon his own perception of functionality of TM voice. Thereby he often does not take the perspective of the TM into account. When he evaluates voice as a constructive and useful suggestion, concern or opinion, he reacts by providing

help. In this case, helping mostly means asking questions or providing tips, to help the TM implement an idea or solve a problem. TM often experience this as extra work or difficult questions “*Because he reacts by asking three questions, it takes you more time to deal with it.*” [TM, FG]. When the TL evaluates voice as non-constructive or non-useful though, his reaction can be quite negative and harsh. For example, TM explain how the TL reacted when they voiced their opinions and concerns about a changed procedure “*He stated, ‘I don’t care what you think, you just have to do it’. <...> So the organization demands it, that’s that... but what we think about it? He said ‘I don’t care’. <...> Then you just as well keep your opinion to yourself.*” [TM, FG]. This illustrates how the TL often seems to forget to show understanding for TM feelings and perspectives. The TL himself also demonstrates this, by explaining how he deals with feelings of TM: “*..then they are upset for a while. Whatever. That just the way it is. In the group I said ‘You also have the right to lie awake at night’. Not only me.*” [TL, INT].

The way this team participated in and reacted towards the action research reflects their general team characteristics as presented in the case introduction, and the characteristics of their work group voice. The TL decided to participate in the research without consulting his TM. TM first felt a lot of resistance towards participating, as they were uncertain about the consequences and about what was expected of them; they did not feel competent enough to fill in a survey, answer questions in the focus group interview or fill in a diary. Also, some of them feared negative consequences when telling how they felt about their team. During the action research, both TM and TL found it difficult to reflect upon the perspective of others, and to reflect upon their own behaviors and beliefs. Altogether, this illustrates the complicated relationships within the team, as described in the case introduction.

Contributions of interventions towards developments in work group voice

After providing insights into work group voice characteristics for every participating team, findings of this study show ‘that’ and ‘how’ interventions contribute towards developments in work group voice. Indeed, in every participating team was found that the interventions contributed towards a positive development in work group voice. Subsequently, findings show and illustrate how the specific combination of interventions in this action research can contribute to work group voice development in general, and for specific teams. Below, those findings are described in four separate sections.

The first section describes ‘*general contributions towards development*’ of the interventions. Interventions contributed to development by creating more awareness, insights, reflection or change. Next, the second section illustrates how those general ‘contributions towards development’ resulted in *specific overall positive developments for different cases*. Consecutively, the third section describes crucial ‘occurrences’ in the action research as *specific elements of the development process* resulting from the interventions. After a general description of those ‘occurrences’, the last section illustrates their *specific contributions towards development within every case*.

Awareness, insights, reflection and change as ‘general contributions towards development’.

During the action research, interventions raised attention for the topic of voice within a team. They stimulated TM and TL to actively observe their behavior and their team situation and to think and talk about the topic of voice. Consequently, interventions were found to stimulate individual and collective sensemaking and learning processes for both TM and TL. Thereby, they contributed in several different ways towards development.

From an analysis of general patterns for ‘how interventions contributed towards development’, four different categories emerged for ‘general contributions towards development’:

- *More awareness:* TM and TL were becoming more aware of group voice, their team situation and different individual perspectives within the team;
- *More insights:* TM and TL gained more insights into group voice, their team situation and different individual perspectives within the team;
- *Reflection:* TM and TL reflected upon their (voice) beliefs and behaviors;
- *Change:* TM and TL consequently changed their (voice) behaviors or behavioral intentions.

In every team, the interventions somehow resulted into more awareness, more insights, reflection and change at some point in the action research. Thereby, the interventions contributed to several positive developments in work group voice for every team. Specific developments in work group voice, group dynamics in the development process and specific contributions of interventions differed per team though. They depended on the team’s work group voice characteristics and characteristics of TM and TL at the starting point of the action research. Therefore, it is interesting to look at differences and similarities between developments and development processes in the participating teams.

Overall positive developments per case. Before describing more specific elements in the development process of work group voice, a description is given of the overall positive developments that were found for every participating team. Those overall positive developments in work group voice shortly summarize the most important outcomes of the interventions in the action research for every team.

Positive developments in the ‘city’-case, an already open team with a positive voice climate, were mostly found in emphasizing the already positive situation, and creating more awareness, insights and small behavioral changes for individual behaviors of TL and TM. The TL explains “*Interventions even provided our already open team with some food for thought.*” [TL, INT].

In the ‘bank’-case, with an already quite open team as well, the positive team situation was highlighted too, but the team also focused on some very specific points of improvement by reflecting upon specific silence motives and issues in the team. “*Group sessions provided time, space and a safe environment to discuss difficulties and issues.*” [TL, INT], does the TL explain. Besides, TM and TL became more aware of their individual behaviors and consequently changed some behaviors or behavioral intentions, as in the ‘city’-case.

Within the ‘water’-case, with a less positive and more complicated starting position in work group voice, the most important development was found in building foundations for a more positive voice climate. TM and TL got more insights in and understanding for different individual perspectives and feelings and subsequently changed some of their behaviors or behavioral intention. A TM says “*We better understand each other’s viewpoints now.*” [TM, FG] and the TL noticed that TM better listen to each other and (re)act more constructively. The developments and contributions of interventions in this team were less focused on specific silence motives or issues, which is not very surprising as a proper foundation for work group voice is built upon more general values and beliefs of a voice climate.

The descriptions above show that in every participating team, the interventions indeed somehow contributed to positive developments, as they resulted in more awareness, insights, reflection or changes in behavior or behavioral intention. The next sections provide more insights into specific elements in the development process for work group voice during the action research, and show more specifically how the combination of interventions contributed to specific developments in work group voice.

Crucial ‘occurrences’ in the action research as specific elements of the development process. From a detailed analysis across cases for ‘what happened in the development process of the teams’, I found how in every team specific elements in the action research process contributed to developments in work group voice. This resulted in an identification of eight crucial ‘occurrences’ in the action research process, all contributing to development: (i) explicating general team situation and voice climate; (ii) explicating different perspectives and behaviors; (iii) uncovering silence motives; (iv) exploring points of improvement; (v) explicating TM voice behavior as suggestions, concerns and opinions; (vi) bringing TM’s attention to TM (voice) behavior; (vii) bringing TL’s attention to TM (voice) behavior; and (viii) bringing TL’s attention to own TL behavior (reaction towards voice). Those eight ‘occurrences’ all contribute towards the overall positive development in work group voice in their own way:

- (i) *explicating general team situation and voice climate;*
TM and TL observe, think and talk about their team situation with specific TM and TL behaviors and think and talk about their voice climate (does it feel safe, effective, expected, supported and rewarded to express voice and why or why not?). Because of this, elements of the general team situation and voice climate are made explicit.
- (ii) *explicating different perspectives and behaviors;*
TM and TL think and talk about differences between their own individual thoughts, feelings, perceptions and behaviors and those of others. Because of this, some specific differences between individuals are highlighted.
- (iii) *uncovering silence motives;*
TM share or discover why and when they are sometimes held back to express voice. Because of this, important silence motives in the team are brought to light.
- (iv) *exploring points of improvement;*
TM and TL think and talk about how they might improve their group voice behavior, by changing behaviors of TM and TL. Because of this, points of improvement are identified.
- (v) *explicating TM voice behavior as suggestions, concerns and opinions*
The concept of TM voice behavior and three different types of voice behaviors is explained. TM and TL think and talk about what it means to express suggestions, concerns or opinions. Because of this, TM voice behaviors are identified as being voice behavior.
- (vi) *bringing TM’s attention to TM (voice) behavior;*
TM observe, think and talk about their own voice behaviors or more general behaviors (e.g. how they communicate and work together with others in the team). Because of this, specific TM behaviors and effects of those behaviors become more salient for TM.
- (vii) *bringing TL’s attention to TM (voice) behavior;*
TL observe, think and talk about TM voice behaviors or more general behaviors (e.g. how they communicate and work together with others in the team). Because of this, specific TM behaviors and effects of those behaviors become more salient for the TL.
- (viii) *bringing TL’s attention to own TL behavior (reaction towards voice).*
TL observe, think and talk about their own behavior as a TL (TL behavior in general or specifically TL reaction towards TM voice). Because of this, specific TL behaviors and effects of those behaviors become more salient for the TL.

In every team, each of those eight occurrences was found to result in more awareness, insights, reflection or changes in behavior or behavioral intention. Thereby, they contributed to the overall positive developments in work group voice. Consequently, the eight ‘occurrences’ are considered to be important elements of the work group voice development process. As the specific development process and overall positive developments as an outcome of this development process differ per team, the next section addresses the specific development process, crucial occurrences and subsequent contributions to development per team.

Development process and specific contributions towards development within every case. Because every team’s work group voice characteristics and characteristics of TM and TL differed at the starting point of the action research, their development process also differed. Although the action research resulted in a positive development for each of the participating teams, and each of the ‘crucial occurrences’ was reflected in their development process, specific outcomes of every ‘occurrence’ as a specific element of the development process were different. To provide more insights into those differences, the development process of every team is described, by illustrating ‘what happened’ during each of the crucial occurrences in the action research, and summarizing the consequent contributions to the overall development process in Table 2.

At the top of the table, an overall characterization of every team’s development process is presented. The development process in the ‘City’-case is summarized as *‘Enhancing positive behaviors and emphasizing gratitude and contentment in an already open team with a positive voice climate’*; the ‘Bank’-case as *‘Identifying and working on very specific points of improvement within an already quite open team situation with a positive voice climate’*; and the ‘Water’-case as *‘Building the foundations for a more positive voice environment and voice climate, through more insights in and understanding for different individual perspectives and feelings’*. The contents of the table provide a more specific description of the development process and contributions towards development per team.

Each cell in Table 2 illustrates a specific element in the total development process and the specific contribution of every ‘occurrence’ in the action research towards the overall development process per team. For every crucial ‘occurrence’ in the action research, a summary is provided of ‘what happened’. Also, a summary is provided of the consequent contributions towards development of that ‘occurrence’, which are described as *‘more awareness of’*, *‘insights in’* and *‘reflection upon’* several topics, and as *‘changes in behavior or behavioral intention’*.

In total, Table 2 provides a general description of the development process for work group voice in every case. It also illustrates how each of the ‘occurrences’ in the action research, that resulted from the interventions, provided a contribution towards an overall positive development in the participating teams. However, descriptions in Table 2 remain quite abstract. To provide more insights into the details of ‘what happened’ during an important element in the development process of every team, a more detailed illustration for one important ‘occurrence’ per team is presented in text after Table 2. For the ‘city’-case, the occurrence of *‘Bringing TL’s attention to own TL behavior’* is illustrated for its important contribution towards the total development in this team. For the ‘bank’-case, this is the occurrence of *‘Uncovering silence motives’* and for the ‘water’-case *‘Explicating different perspectives and behaviors’*.

Table 2: Development processes and specific contributions towards development of crucial ‘occurrences’ in the action research

	‘City’-case: Enhancing positive behaviors and emphasizing gratitude and contentment in an already open team with a positive voice climate.	‘Bank’-case: Identifying and working on very specific points of improvement within an already quite open team situation with a positive voice climate.	‘Water’-case: Building the foundations for a more positive voice environment and voice climate, through more insights in and understanding for different individual perspectives and feelings
Explicating general team situation and voice climate	Positive image and perceptions of the team situation and group voice climate are confirmed, highlighted and emphasized. The team realizes and expresses their contentment and gratitude for their current positive team situation. By explicating the team’s voice climate through norms, values and behaviors, implicit shared beliefs become more salient, making the team realize why their voice climate is so positive.	The team stresses positive voice climate and explicates norms, values and behaviors contributing to their positive voice climate and team situation. Because the TL has already explicated general team values often, this confirms what the team already knows about their team situation. However, taken for granted aspects of their team situation are more highlighted and compared to other, more negative team situations, making the team more aware of their contentment with the current situation.	The team’s group situation and voice climate with both positive and negative aspects become more salient by discussing voice and silence events. TM discover that their team is less open than they thought. TM and the TL both blame negative aspects of their voice climate on each other.
	<i>Contributions: More awareness of, insights in and reflection upon current team situation/voice climate and contributing factors</i>	<i>Contributions: More awareness of, insights in and reflection upon current team situation/voice climate and contributing factors</i>	<i>Contributions: More awareness of, insights in and reflection upon current team situation/voice climate</i>
Explicating different perspectives and behaviors	Individual differences of perspective, behavior and personality within the team are highlighted and compared. Team respects and accepts differences and acknowledges the strength of having different personalities and different types of voice behavior within the team.	The team gets to know each other a little better by conversing about different perspectives, behaviors and personalities in the team. Differences in personalities and perspective are accepted, but some differences in perspective are also called into question and discussed for a critical reflection.	Individual differences of perspective, behavior and personality within the team are explicated. Sharing personal difficulties, individual experiences, feelings (e.g. experiences with TL/TM behavior or organizational change, personal insecurity) with the researcher or in a small group of TM helps TM to share their perspective with other TM or TL too. Sharing inspires other TM to share as well. Partly, individual feelings, perspectives and behaviors of TM and TL are more understood, respected and acknowledged. Some behaviors and perspectives are also criticized or questioned. Also, other TM represent or defend the position or perspectives of other TM or TL, thereby bringing perspectives closer together or creating more understanding. *
	<i>Contributions: Reflection upon individual differences in perspective and behavior</i>	<i>Contributions: More insight in and reflection upon individual differences in perspective and behavior</i>	<i>Contributions: More awareness of, insights in and reflection upon differences in perspective and behavior</i>
Uncovering silence motives	It becomes apparent that there are no issues or silence motives in this team. Only fictitious examples of relational silence are mentioned.	Current team issues and silence motives are discussed. Although the team initially thinks they express everything, they discover that TM sometimes are held back by insecurity or fear to voice concerns about dealing with targets or time pressure, or providing colleagues with feedback. *	Current team issues and silence motives are uncovered. When TM share negative voice experiences, their insecurity for expressing voice, and explicate their feelings about TL’s or other TM’s reactions towards voice, it becomes more salient that TM are held back to express voice sometimes because of diffident, defensive, relational and disengaged silence motives.
	<i>Contributions: Reflection upon possible silence motives</i>	<i>Contributions: More awareness of, insights in and reflection upon silence motives and current team issues</i>	<i>Contributions: More awareness of, insights in and reflection upon silence motives and current team issues</i>
Exploring points of improvement	Team is content with current group voice climate and behavior. Although they do not see points of improvement themselves, the team is open to feedback. They discuss the inefficiency of oversharing as a possible reverse side of such an open team, but decide that advantages of sharing everything overbalance disadvantages. They do not intend to change anything about their group voice situation.	Although the team is content with the current group voice climate, they have a strong focus on improvement. They identify several points of improvement according TM silence motives and team issues and intend to continue working on these improvements.	TM and TL both wish to improve the team situation, but mostly hold each other responsible for improvement. However, they also reflect upon their own role as TM and TL in creating a positive voice climate by explicating how they might contribute to a more positive (voice) environment by taking each other’s feelings and perspectives into account and by showing each other more respect and understanding.
	<i>Contributions: Reflection upon possible points of improvement for group voice</i>	<i>Contributions: Reflection upon possible points of improvement for group voice and behavioral intention to improve as a team</i>	<i>Contributions: More awareness of, insights in and reflection upon possible points of improvement for group voice</i>

Explicating TM voice behavior as suggestions, concerns and opinions	The team becomes more aware of the fact that TM express voice. During work, the team together observes, discusses and jokes about (the different types of) voice and identifies voice events more often as a suggestion, concern or opinion.	The team becomes more aware of TM voice and different types of TM voice behavior. They individually think about what suggestions, concerns or opinions are and discuss this together shortly.	Although the team has difficulties to understand and talk about voice in the concept of suggestions, concerns and opinions, they become more aware of TM behavior in general and of voice behaviors as ‘expressing thoughts and feelings’.
	<i>Contributions:</i> More awareness of TM voice behaviors and insights in different types of voice	<i>Contributions:</i> More awareness of TM voice behaviors and insights in different types of voice	<i>Contributions:</i> Little more awareness of TM voice behaviors
Bringing TM’s attention to TM (voice) behavior	As TM are paying close attention to voice behaviors in the team and discuss the topic of voice together during work, unconscious choices and acts of expressing voice become more conscious. Some TM think more consciously about the outcomes or effects before expressing voice. Although the total amount of group voice does not seem to change much in this already very open team, some TM express voice differently or a little more often.	TM become a little more aware of their own voice behavior and some TM start thinking more consciously about what to voice and how to express it, considering the outcomes. Some TM with a more introvert personality become more aware of their involvement in total group voice and intend to express their voice more often. In total, the amount of group voice in this open team does not seem to change much though.	As TM see other TM share their feelings and perspectives within the team, they are encouraged to share theirs as well. As TM gain more insights into each other’s perspective, they observe and interpret behaviors of other TM differently and realize more how their own reactions can affect their colleague TM. TM start listening better to each other and enter into dialogue more often instead of only expressing their own opinions. They also correct other TM negative behaviors more frequently, as they realize more how those negatively affect the team.**
	<i>Contributions TM:</i> More awareness of TM voice behaviors and small changes in TM voice behavior	<i>Contributions TM:</i> More awareness of TM voice behaviors and small changes in TM voice behavior	<i>Contributions TM:</i> More awareness of TM behavior, insights how TM behavior affects team situation and voice climate and consequent changes of TM behavior
Bringing TL’s attention to TM (voice) behavior	The TL notices TM voice more consciously and more often and better remembers which TM voiced a suggestion, concern or opinion. She also spots more (mostly positive) aspects of TM behavior in general. The TL positively adjusts her image of individual TM and intends to write down more (positive) aspects of TM (voice) behavior and intends to include those in TM evaluations.	The TL notices voice events more consciously and becomes more sensitive to implicitly expressed voice (e.g. issues expressed through jokes). When TL notices such implicit expressions of TM voice, he actively examines the meaning and importance of this expression for TM by discussing the issue in private with the TM it concerns. As the TL is observing and reflecting upon TM voice behaviors, he positively adjusts his image of individual TM.	The TL puts on a different ‘antenna’ for TM voice. He notices TM voice behavior more often and also considers the perspective of TM when listening to TM voice, For example, he thinks about which suggestions, concerns and opinions TM perceive as important. However, the TL evaluates many TM voice episodes negatively, which might explain why he sometimes reacts quite negatively towards TM voice behavior.
	<i>Contributions TL:</i> More awareness of and reflection upon TM (voice) behavior and intention for change in TL behavior	<i>Contributions TL:</i> More awareness of and reflection upon TM voice behavior and change in TL behavior	<i>Contributions TL:</i> More awareness of and reflection upon TM (voice) behavior
Bringing TL’s attention to own TL behavior (reaction towards voice)	The TL observes and evaluates her own reaction to TM (voice) behavior more consciously and realizes more how this affects TM. She becomes aware that she often forgets to take action immediately after expressed voice and intends to act faster in the future by putting issues on the agenda. While discussing positive elements of voice climate with TM, the TL becomes more aware of the positive effects of TL appreciation and compliments for TM (voice) behavior. As she notices that she not always shows her appreciation for (little) positive aspects in TM (voice) behavior, she intends to give more credit for positive TM (voice) behavior in the future.*	Although the TL was already very much aware of how TL behaviors can affect TM, he specifically reflects upon his own reaction towards voice now. The TL explicitly asks for feedback from TM and researcher, listens attentively to suggestions for improvement, checks and reflects upon the need for change from different perspectives of TM and TL and consequently changes or intends to change his behavior. He realizes for example that he sometimes forgets to show understanding for TM perspectives or feelings when under high time pressure or when he does not see the importance of a voice message for TM. He intends to change this, by providing more understanding towards his TM.	The TL more consciously observes his own reaction towards voice, especially for voice events which he sees as valuable. He realizes that TM’s expressed voice often does not result in concrete action agreements or appointments and starts providing more concrete follow-up and feedback for TM voice. However, this only seems to be the case for TM voice of which TM directly sees practical value (not for voice important to TM). The TL finds it difficult to reflect upon his own behavior and to understand how his behavior affects (feelings of) TM. Although the TL wants to improve group voice, he does not seem very open to feedback and mostly sticks to his own view of ‘how things should best be managed as a TL’, reflecting the way he has always been managing his team (which has not always proved to be effective though).
	<i>Contributions TL:</i> More awareness of, insights in and reflection upon TL behavior (reaction towards voice) and its effect upon TM and intention for change in TL behavior	<i>Contributions TL:</i> More awareness of, insights in and reflection upon TL behavior (reaction towards voice) and its effect upon TM and intention for change in TL behavior	<i>Contributions TL:</i> More awareness of and reflection upon TL behavior (reaction towards voice) and intention for change in TL behavior

* Note: For this team, this specific occurrence in the action research and its contributions to the overall developments are described and illustrated in detail in the text below Table 2.

** Note: These changes might have been caused not only by the interventions, but also by other team developments

An illustration of development in the 'City'-case: 'Bringing TL's attention to own TL behavior'. At the start of the action research, the overall behavior of the TL in this team already encourages voice behavior and she facilitates a positive voice climate. When the TL's attention is brought to her own behavior and her own role in facilitating a positive voice climate though, she realizes more 'that' and 'how' her behavior affects TM and their voice behaviors. Because of that, she is still able to find some small improvement points for her own already positive behavior as a TL. Therefore, this 'occurrence' is an important element in the total development process of this team, in which TM and TL only enhance their already positive behavior and emphasize gratitude and contentment, because they already are an open team with a positive voice climate.

During the first focus group interview, the TL becomes more aware of her own role in facilitating a positive voice climate. TM express how they appreciate her leadership, and how this helps them to express voice. When a TM explains why this team is so open, she says *"That has a lot to do with our team leader."* [TM, FG]. Although TM talk very positive about their TL, their explanations still help the TL to discover some small improvement points for her behavior as a TL. For example, the TL becomes more aware of how showing appreciation for positive (voice) behaviors of TM, contributes to a positive voice climate. Therefore, she intends to show her appreciation more often. The TL explains *"This was a learning moment for myself. Someone said 'It is nice to get a compliment once in a while', and I have to force myself to do that more often. I am someone that easily says 'this or that is not good', but now I am thinking 'How often do I actually value someone for doing its best?'. I do that in large projects, <...> but towards small things, I need to be more appreciative. <...> Sometimes, I take things too much for granted."* [TL, INT].

Subsequently, when the TL makes notes about specific TM behaviors during her observation of TM (voice) behavior, she also becomes aware that she does not always notice and remember TM (voice) behaviors very consciously. As a result, she forgets to take those small positive TM behaviors into account in TM evaluations, *"Things I note down on the observation form right know, I normally do not remember at the time of summer evaluations, I have to admit that."* [TL, INT]. She also easily forgets who came up with important ideas or concerns *"...then we implement the idea, and that's that. <...> Half a year later, I hardly remember who was the inventor of the idea."* [TL, INT]. Besides, she realizes how often she forgets to take immediate action after someone expresses a suggestion, concern or opinion *"At the moment I filled in those forms, I thought 'Ai, they express many things where we should actually start working on' <...> Now, there are more things about which I think 'Ok, this should be discussed together'."* [TL, INT].

All those insights make the TL reflect upon her own behavior as a TL. Consequently, she wants to change her behavior. In the TL interview, she explains *"Now, I am starting to approach small events (voice behaviors) more positively, and I will take them into account in evaluations <...> Before, I would only say, 'good idea', or 'let's do this', but now I might also say 'how good of you to think along'."* [TL, INT]. Specifically, she intends to keep on registering TM (voice) behaviors, as she did during the TL observation *"Now I think 'When someone does something, either small or big, I have to make a note of it.'" [TL, INT]. At last, she intends to act faster when the expressed voice concerns an urgent matter "Now I might choose to send an email to everyone, because we have to act immediately."* [TL, INT].

Altogether, the above illustrates how different interventions brought the attention of the TL towards her own behavior, and how this resulted into more awareness, insights, reflection and changes in behavior or behavioral intention of the TL. Thereby, this occurrence in the action research contributed to the overall positive development in work group voice for this team.

An illustration for the 'Bank'-case: 'Uncovering silence motives'. At the start of the action research, TM thought they could express everything towards the team leader or towards each other. However, during the interventions they discover 'that', but also 'why' and 'when' some TM still feel reluctant to speak up sometimes. This helps both TM and TL to gain awareness and insights as an important input for reflection and (intentions for) behavioral change. Therefore, this 'occurrence' is an important element in the total development process of this team, in which TM and TL identify and work on very specific points of improvement within their already quite open team with a positive voice climate.

In the first focus group interview, when TM are asked to explain why it might sometimes not feel effective to express voice, they are thinking hard but shrug their shoulders and shake their heads as a 'no', because they cannot think of any situation. When questioning them why it might not feel safe to express voice sometimes, they can only come up with some fictitious examples, like "*Maybe when it concerns highly personal information?*" [TM, FG], but when asking specific situations in which that might hold them back from expressing voice, they cannot think of anything again and a TM reacts "*I don't know, but it might be a reason?*" [TM, FG]. Another TM explains that the examples they give are not really reasons for them to remain silent "*From our indifferent reactions you might notice that it is not really perceived as a problem.*" [TM, FG] and "*When I want to say something, I just express it.*" [TM, FG]. At last, a more open question about things that might be difficult to express, again results only in fictitious examples like "*When it has a negative consequence for myself, like losing my job*'." [TM, FG] but also for those examples they cannot think of actual situations in which this might occur.

During the action research, several silence motives are uncovered and discussed though. Most salient are defensive and relational silence motives, which are reflected in the fact that some TM hesitate to express their personal difficulties in dealing with targets, for fear of weakening their position in the group (and eventually losing their job), and because they do not want to complain or disturb colleagues which are also very busy. This issue is first noticed in the registration form for the observation of the TL. He writes "*When in the daily start-call I asked the TM to raise our production level from 3 dossiers towards 4 dossiers a day conform the agreements, it became totally 'quiet'. <...> Later that day, one of the TM called me and told that another TM told her that she was concerned about the feasibility of this new target.*" [TL, T-OBS]. Furthermore, the issue and the related silence motives come forward in the TM diaries, where a TM writes "*I am worried about my own working speed. As colleagues are checking up to 6 dossiers a day, I only manage to check 3 or 4 with large effort. Sometimes, this results in a backlog. However, when planners in the daily 'start-call' ask about feasibility of the amount of dossiers for the day, I often do not express my concerns. I do not want to complain and I work as hard as possible to increase my working speed.*" [TM, DIA]. In my own observations of team meetings, I noticed similar events. When the targets of production levels are discussed, TM with concerns about feasibility seemed to remain silent sometimes instead of expressing their concerns. Their body language expresses they do not agree, but they do not express what they think.

When in the second focus group TM are asked to think about improvements in work group voice for the team, the issue is discussed with the whole team. One of the TM says "*Something has changed, I think since January, which has shifted our focus more towards production. And we do talk about that among colleagues, but it has not really been discussed yet. It has not yet come to the table in a team meeting.*" [TM, FG]. The TL reacts with "*It is so good of you to express this right know.*" [TL, FG] and thanks her for being so honest. The topic is further discussed as the TL asks what TM think about the production level. TM express their concerns about reduce in quality "*From a quality desk we start shifting towards a quantity desk. <...> When you have difficulties reaching the*

targets, you might think 'It has to be quick, it has to be quick' and you might overlook important items." [TM, FG]. Another TM disagrees and explains that it does not matter if you do not reach the target of 4 dossiers every day, if you do not make it, the next day you have to do one less so you can keep up "You should dare to say 'I cannot make it, I cannot manage this, can somebody help me' <...> You should not keep that to yourself, because then the pressure only rises." [TM, FG]. Another TM again expresses his concern "But that will show on your dashboard statistics at the end of the month." [TM, FG] and he explains that it does not feel good to score much lower than a colleague on the dashboard. Thereby, it becomes even clearer 'why' some TM feel reluctant to speak up about difficulties reaching the targets in their work and a defensive silence motive is uncovered.

The above illustrates how different interventions in the action research contributed towards the uncovering of several silence motives and how they provided the opportunity to discuss some current issues which the TM remain silent about. This resulted in more awareness of and insights in silence motives and current team issues. Subsequently, those were reflected upon by TM and TL. TM reflected upon their own feelings and beliefs underlying their motives to remain silent, as those were discussed in the group, and their beliefs were challenged by asking critical questions or providing contradictory beliefs or evidence. The TL reflected upon where the silence motives of TM stem from. Also he tries to convince TM that they for example do not need to be afraid of negative consequences "It is not about the amounts <....> the production level of 4 dossiers a day might be our aim, but is not the norm <...>. For me there is no judgment upon numbers." [TL, FG]. Altogether, this awareness of, insights in and reflection upon silence motives and current team issues contributed to the overall positive development in work group voice for this team, because it helped to identify specific points of improvement, which they could work on in the total development process.

An illustration for the 'Water'-case: 'Explicating different perspectives and behaviors'. At the start of the action research in this not very open team, both TM and TL often feel frustrated and misunderstood. When TM express their thoughts and feelings (often in a non-constructive way), other TM or TL tend to react quite blunt. Both TM and TL find it difficult to empathize with the perspective of others. Explicating different perspectives and behaviors during the action research, helps both TM and TL to become more aware and gain more insights into 'what' and 'how' others think and feel, and how this differs from their own perspective and feelings. This helps them to take other perspectives into account when expressing voice, or to provide more understanding when reacting towards someone else voicing suggestions, concerns and opinions. Therefore, this 'occurrence' is an important element in the total development process of this team, in which they are building foundations for a more positive voice climate.

In the first focus group interview, TM start expressing their perspectives and feelings about recent organizational changes. When a TM tells about changes towards more computer work, he says "In this change, we have been well supported and we got enough time to learn." [TM, FG]. However, other TM are still having a hard time working with computers and disagree "I still get stomach aches because of that thing (the computer)." [TM, FG]. Like this, many examples follow, in which some TM feel that organizational changes have helped them, and others still feel frustrated or insecure.

In the group discussion, TM also share some of their personal feelings about expressing voice, for example "For me, it is quite difficult anyhow. I was the last to join the team and well, who should I address then? <...> Also, I am afraid that my idea is bad, I guess." [TM, FG]. Others explain for example that they find it difficult to express voice towards the TL, as he mostly reacts by asking difficult questions. At this point, a TM starts defending the perspective of the TL, "He isn't doing that to bother us, and we all know that. He does that to make us think about it ourselves, it is not that... We

all know that it is only meant to help us learn.” [TM, FG]. Besides defending the TL’s perspective, some TM also defend or represent each other’s feelings or perspectives. However, they question each other’s viewpoints and criticize each other’s behavior too. A TM for example describes how other TM expressed their concerns about an unsafe situation, and both defends and criticizes them “Then someone said ‘It’s not that bad’. Too soon, I guess, because I am 100% sure the boys are right. But then they immediately react very negative, like ‘Now they want us to report such things, but they don’t do anything!’, ‘I won’t report anything anymore!’.” [TM, FG].

The examples above illustrate how perspectives, feelings and behaviors are shared, defended, criticized and discussed already in the first focus group discussion. The TL says “*Some things have been said that TM normally would not express*” [TL, INT]. However, many TM still remain silent about deeper feelings of frustration, insecurity and fear, because the TL attends the discussion and they fear the consequences of expressing themselves in his presence. Several TM admit this. A TM for example says “*No, I am not going to say anything <...> because I will pay for that later*” [TM, FG]. Nonetheless, this group discussion in which I as a researcher and some TM try to acknowledge and provide understanding for different feelings and perspectives of TM and TL, seems to open up the conversation about feelings and different perspectives for the further action research process.

In the further action research process, during my observations as a researcher, TM start sharing more and more feelings and perspectives in informal conversations with me alone or in a small group of TM. For example, a TM expresses his frustrations about working together with another TM, but he does not dare to express his concerns towards the TL, because he thinks it will only become worse. Other TM express how they feel misunderstood, or how they experience the TL’s or other TM’s behaviors and reactions towards expressed voice as very negative. A TM for example tells about the reaction of the TL “*He often reacts by offending or blaming you, when there is a discussion or you express something.*” [TM, R-OBS]. Another TM tells about the negative reaction of a TM “*His reaction is way too harsh. <...> He just burns him down to the ground.*” [TM, R-OBS]. Therefore, they do not want or do not dare to express voice. TM also defend or explicate the perspectives or feelings of others again, during informal conversations with me as a researcher or in a small group of TM. For example, a TM tells how others remain silent instead of expressing voice because of their fear for the TL “*They see him much more as ‘the boss’ and therefore, they fear his reaction.*” [TM, R-OBS], but also defends the TL’s perspective and behavior “*I think he does the right thing though. He provides them with chances to learn and I think that’s positive. By the way, I think it wouldn’t even matter (when he changed something) because that won’t change their attitude.*” [TM, R-OBS]. Altogether, the informal conversations help TM to further discover and explicate differences in perspectives and behaviors in the safe environment of a one on one conversation or in a small group.

TM explain how seeing other TM express their feelings or perspectives in a small group or with the whole team, helps them to share their feelings and perspectives as well “*You hear some stories right now, then you can also express yourself more easily, if you know how others think about it. I speak about my feelings easier now, I guess.*” [TM, FG]. The TL noticed this as well “*I think something already changed in those weeks, especially because they shared things with you. I noticed that they also wanted to share those things with each other. <...> I think they opened up towards each other. As the sender of the message, but also as a receiver they became more open.*” [TL, INT].

Therefore, in the second focus group discussion (without the TL), TM again share, defend, criticize and discuss different perspectives, behaviors and feelings of themselves, other TM and the TL. Even more than they did in the first focus group discussion. This results in a very open group conversation, in which TM reflect upon different perspectives, feelings and behaviors together. Also, they reflect upon ‘why’ their feelings, behaviors or perspectives differ. They for example talk about

differences in personality or education level as a reason for differences. For example, a TM says “*You are a good speaker, but I.*” [TM, FG], and the other reacts “*Indeed, you are right, I never avoid discussions, with no one.*” [TM, FG]. Others admit how they sometimes do not know how express themselves, or how they sometimes react in emotion “*...then I throw it out before thinking about it.*” [TM, FG]. Altogether, this helps the TM to reflect upon differences in perspective, behavior and feelings “*Because you were here, people also think about it from another perspective now.*” [TM, FG]. Also, it helps them to provide more understanding and acknowledgement for each other’s feelings and perspectives. For example, a TM states “*You can’t blame those boys <...> The way they deal with it is, well, negative... But that is understandable. <...> They feel as if they are forced to change.*” [TM, FG], when he explains their point of view. Another TM shows his understanding for when the TL reacted by providing wrong information “*Everyone makes a mistake once in a while.*” [TM, FG]. Some TM even express their wishes and intentions to keep on taking each other’s perspective into account “*We should listen to each other before reacting.*” [TM, FG], and to keep on showing understanding “*We should provide understanding for each other’s situation. Whatever situation that is.*” [TM, FG].

In summary, the above illustrates how different perspectives and behaviors were explicated during the action research and how this resulted in more awareness of, insights in and reflection upon differences in perspective and behavior. Additionally, it shows how this occurrence in the action research helped to bring different perspectives closer together, and to create more understanding between TM and TL. Because of that, explicating different perspectives and behaviors was an important element in the total development process, in which the team was building the foundations for a more positive voice climate.

Effects and importance of different interventions in the development process

The chapter above has shown ‘that’ and ‘how’ the combined interventions in the action research contributed to positive developments in work group voice for every participating team. This provides insights into the contributions towards development of the whole ‘package of interventions’ in the action research. It has not yet provided insight into the effects and contributions of different sorts of interventions towards development though. This last chapter therefore describes (i) *the effects of the different sorts of interventions in the action research for both TM and TL*; and (ii) *their importance for the overall development process* in every participating team.

Effects of specific interventions for TM and TL. Observations, (focus group) interviews, diaries, surveys and informal conversations are all different sorts of interventions. They make TM and/or TL either think, talk, listen or observe and intervene either individually or collectively. Therefore, every intervention has its own specific effect and specific way to contribute towards development. When looking back at the action research, both TM and TL described the effects of every single intervention.

In every case, TM described: (i) how the TM survey made them think about the topic of voice and about their team situation; (ii) how group interviews and informal conversations let them exchange thoughts or beliefs and think about different perspectives; and (iii) how diaries forced them to observe and think about specific voice events. All of the TL described: (i) how their observation of TM voice behaviors made them more attentive towards TM voice and forced them to think about specific voice events and their own reaction; (ii) how the TL survey made them think about voice behavior in general for every TM; and (iii) how focus group interviews, informal conversations and the TL interview made them think about the team situation, different perspectives and their own role in facilitating voice. Table 3 illustrates those findings across cases with exemplifying quotes from every team.

Table 3: The effect of different interventions for TM and TL

	Intervention	Effects	Examples
TM	TM survey	Think about employee voice and about the team situation	<p>“During the survey, I thought ‘what is this about actually?’ and ‘how is our situation then?’, so yes, it makes you think about it.” [TM-B, FG]</p> <p>“Then you start looking at it differently. <...> You are forced to think about it. <...> Then you unravel in pieces what is now said and expressed.” [TM-W, FG]</p>
	Focus group interviews and informal conversations	Exchange thoughts or beliefs about employee voice and the team situation and think about different perspectives	<p>Focus group interviews: “You hear some stories right now <...> then you know a little better how everyone thinks about it.” [TM-W, FG]</p> <p>Focus group interviews: “In the group session things are clarified and you notice everyone’s viewpoints and sentiments.” [TM-B, FG]</p> <p>Focus group interviews: “They got the assignment to write their own view on a paper and really had to think about it individually <...> because of that, the sessions really made them consider their image of the team, their view of who we are, how we work together, what we should or should not do.” [TL-C, INT]</p> <p>Informal conversations with the researcher: “Then you can explain yourself more detailed than on paper. <...> By telling it to the researcher, you also think about it yourself again. You reflect upon ‘how you tell it’ and ‘what you actually think about it’. <...> Afterwards, you can also share more easily with each other.” [TM-W, FG]</p>
	TM Diaries	Observe and think about specific voice events	<p>“The diary form forces you to think about a specific event more thoroughly.” [TM-B, FG]</p> <p>“Because we got that assignment (to fill in a diary), I started thinking if I need to share things with the team or not. <....> Now I might share important things earlier, because I think ‘it is useful for others to know as well’.” [TM-C, FG2]</p>
TL	TL observation	Become more attentive towards TM voice, think about specific voice events and think about TL’s own reaction	<p>“You already have a ‘signaling’ function, and you hear and see something now and then, but now, because of the questions (in registration forms for TL observation), you more reflect upon it. And, yes, you do become more attentive.” [TL-B, INT]</p> <p>“I have been observing people more in their daily activities than I did before. <...> You notice more how someone ‘is’.” [TL-C, INT]</p> <p>“You start forcing yourself to observe things more closely. After filling in the first form, you see those questions, and you start looking at things differently. <...> Opinions, well... those at least are quite obvious, but ‘a concern’? ‘What is a concern’? And, is it a concern to me, or to them? For the person expressing it, it can be much more of a concern, while I think ‘whatever’ <....> You put on a different ‘antenna’ for ‘what input do I receive?’ and ‘what do I signal?’, so that immediately made me reflect. <....> Especially because of the questions. Those taught me to provide more concrete follow-up and action points.” [TL-W, INT]</p>
	TL survey	Think about voice behavior in general for every TM	<p>“First time I had to score TM (on the TL survey), I had to dig deep into my memory. I made me think about what happened and when, but further.. I did not know. But from that moment on, the questions somehow remained under my attention. <...> You become more aware and attentive... (towards TM voice). The second time (of filling in the TL survey) a two-week period ends, in which you have been more aware. That results in a different outcome.” [TL-B, INT]</p> <p>“You have to think thoroughly about filling in these scores. <....> Which TM do I put where? <....> It is no daily job, though I do think it should be. [TL-W, INT]</p> <p>“It makes you reflect upon how to evaluate someone. <...> You start thinking ‘how often does someone express voice?’ and recall their behavior from a certain period of time. <...> That makes you reconsider your own image of how everyone acts and behaves. <...> First time, you fill in the survey, and you’re done. But after the conversations you had, you start thinking differently about it. <...> About some TM, I thought ‘They are just the way they are’, and I know them quite well already, but for others I noticed ‘Ok, he or she expresses voice more often than I thought’.” [TL-C, INT]</p>
	Focus group interviews, informal conversations and TL interview	Think about the team situation, different perspectives and TL’s own role in facilitating voice	<p>Focus group interview: TL tells how a TM mentioned that it is nice to get compliments. This made the TL realize that she often forgets to show her appreciation for small positive TM behaviors and how important that is for a TM. She says “In those small things, I should be a bit more appreciative.” [TL-C, INT]</p> <p>Focus group interview: “You provided space for everyone to express themselves, by dropping silence moments. Some TM expressed things they normally would not say. <...> It was interesting to see what happens when I for once do not say anything.” [TL-W, INT]</p> <p>Informal conversation with a TM after the focus group: “It was nice to hear of a TM that she is very happy with me as a team leader.” [TL-B, INT]</p> <p>TL interview: When in the TL interview the researcher provides feedback to the TL about how his reaction might possibly affect a specific TM, TL says: “I was not aware of how my reaction might affect that TM. Thank you for noticing. I will check with this TM how he feels.” [TL-B, INT]</p>

Importance of different interventions for the development process. Findings about the different effects of different interventions, as described above and illustrated in Table 3, indicate that the overall development in work group voice is the result of all the interventions together. Every single intervention stimulated individual or collective learning- or sensemaking processes in its own way. Thereby, each intervention had its own specific effect for TM or TL and contributed in its own way towards overall development. In sum, findings show that all the interventions in this action research were important for the total development process of work group voice.

TM and TL in the participating teams highlight this importance of every single intervention in the action research. When for example TM in the ‘bank’-case are asked to explain which interventions were most important for their developments in work group voice, they state *“It has been a combination of all elements that took place.”* [TM-B, FG]. The TL in the ‘City’-case highlights that all the interventions have their own strength and their own effect upon the total development in the team, and she says *“You cannot consider any of them separate from the others.”* [TL-C, INT]. The TL in the ‘Bank’-case agrees and even states *“Any one intervention does not function without the others.”* [TL-B, INT]. Although TM and TL of every participating team agree that all the interventions together contributed towards development, TM and TL in each of the participating teams did perceive some of the interventions as ‘most important’ for developments in their work group voice. Those interventions considered to be ‘most important’, differed per team. Table 4 summarizes which interventions TM and TL perceived as ‘most important’ for contributions towards development, for every participating team.

Table 4: Most important interventions for contributions towards development in work group voice

	‘City’-case: Interventions for collective reflection upon voice	‘Bank’-case: Interventions for individual thinking and collective reflection upon improvement	‘Water’-case: Interventions for building trust and exchanging perspectives
According to TM	Focus group interviews and informal conversations between TM or TM and TL	TM survey and diaries	Focus group interviews and informal conversations with researcher or between TM
According to TL	Focus group interviews and informal conversations between TM or TM and TL	Focus group interviews (especially the part in the reflection phase focusing on improvement points)	Focus group interviews and informal conversations with researcher or between TM

In the ‘City’-case, both TM and TL describe focus group interviews and informal conversations as ‘most important’ interventions in their development process. When looking back at the action research, TM unanimously state that ‘talking together in focus group interviews’ affected them most. The TL agrees, but adds that also informal conversations between focus group discussions were very important for their total development process, as it helped them reflect and keep the topic of voice in mind. *“Everyone kept the topic in their attention. It was not like ‘Well, we have discussed it together, and now we just continue working as usual’. No. Everyone kept it in their minds with everything they did. <...> Every day, someone would say ‘Is this a suggestion, concern or opinion?’”* [TL, FG]. TM agree with her that also those informal conversations between TM or TM and TL on the topic of voice have been important, next to the focus group interviews. Most important interventions for this team are therefore summarized as ‘interventions for collective reflection upon voice’.

In the 'Bank'-case, TM and TL have a different perception of interventions being 'most important'. TM perceived the interventions that made them 'think individually' as most important. When talking about the importance of different interventions, a TM for example says *"I think the survey and diary forms had the strongest effect... the group interview is a very good addition, because then you have to explain things, 'how do you see things' and 'how do others see those', <...> but it is the survey and the diary forms that really make you think and reflect."* [TM-B, FG]. On the other hand, the TL perceives the group discussions as most important for the development process *"I think the group sessions contributed most, eventually, when looking back at the process."* [TL-B, INT]. He adds that especially the second focus group interview was important, because TM and TL then collectively reflected upon improvement points. The interventions perceived as most important in this team are therefore summarized as 'interventions for individual thinking and for collective reflection upon improvement'.

At last, in the 'Water'-case, both TM and TL perceived the focus group interviews and informal conversations as the 'most important interventions', just like the team in the 'City'-case. Here, those interventions were important for a different reason though. The TL explains why those interventions were important to build trust and make TM share their feelings and exchange perspectives *"Because they said things to you, they also shared with each other. <...> I think the group conversation has caused quite something within the individual minds."* [TL-W, INT]. TM agree that seeing others share their feelings, helped them to share theirs as well. Besides, they explain that talking to the researcher and talking to each other, both in the group and during informal conversations gave them more insights into their own and into each other's perspective. Most important interventions for this team are therefore summarized as 'interventions for building trust and exchanging perspectives'.

In sum, findings show that every intervention has its own specific effect and is therefore in its own way important for a contribution towards development in work group voice. Although specific interventions are perceived as more or less important for development in different teams, every single intervention was important for the total development process of the teams participating in this action research.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore how employee voice can be encouraged and facilitated. In particular, it aimed to examine ‘how interventions can contribute to developments in work group voice’. Therefore, I conducted an action research in three different teams. As interventions, I used observations, diaries, surveys and (focus group) interviews. Those interventions all raised attention for the topic of voice in some way and thereby aimed to stimulate individual or collective sensemaking and learning processes. In order to fully understand ‘if’ and ‘how’ those interventions can help to encourage and facilitate work group voice, I studied in three different ways ‘what happened’ during the interventions in participating work groups. First, I studied overall positive developments in work group voice. Second, I explored development processes in every team and I studied how interventions together contributed towards this development process. At last, I studied the specific effects and importance of different sorts of interventions. Altogether, the findings of this study provide insight into how interventions can facilitate a positive change in group voice behavior and beliefs. Besides, results enrich our understanding of how work group voice develops and changes in a real-world organizational setting. According to my knowledge, this study was the first to empirically investigate the process of work group voice development or change. Thereby, it was a first attempt to answer Morrison’s (2011) call to explore the group dynamics of employee voice and to study how voice behaviors, individual beliefs and collective beliefs in a voice climate develop and change over time. In sum, findings of this study add important insights for both theory and organizational practice. Most important findings and their implications for theory are discussed, followed by their practical implications, a reflection upon study limitations with directions for future research and a final conclusion.

Discussion of findings

One of the major findings of this study is that a combination of interventions in work groups can indeed help to encourage and facilitate work group voice. Interventions helped both TM and TL to become more aware of and gain more insights into several topics concerning their work group voice. Also, interventions helped them both to reflect upon, and to change specific voice beliefs or behaviors. The interventions thereby contributed towards an overall positive development in work group voice for every team participating in the action research. With this finding, the current study shows that it is possible to encourage and facilitate voice in work groups by using interventions.

Furthermore, the results show that interventions in this action research contributed to a development process consisting of eight crucial ‘occurrences’: (i) explicating general team situation and voice climate; (ii) explicating different perspectives and behaviors; (iii) uncovering silence motives; (iv) exploring points of improvement; (v) explicating TM voice behavior as suggestions, concerns and opinions; (vi) bringing TM’s attention to TM (voice) behavior; (vii) bringing TL’s attention to TM (voice) behavior; and (viii) bringing TL’s attention to own TL behavior (reaction towards voice). Those findings about crucial ‘occurrences’, as important elements in the development process for work group voice, provide important insights and contributions to current literature. They illustrate how both collective and individual sensemaking processes can contribute to changes in work group voice, which is consistent with notions of several scholars highlighting the importance of sensemaking and social interaction in developing and changing (shared) perceptions, beliefs and behaviors (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Schneider & Reichers, 1983; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Those sensemaking processes are especially reflected in the occurrences ‘*explicating general team situation and voice climate*’, ‘*explicating different perspectives and behaviors*’ and ‘*uncovering silence*’.

motives', as those represent events in which team members both individually and collectively think about, talk about and observe the objective features of their work environment. Thereby, they interpret and discuss different perceptions and feelings concerning their work environment, and expectations and beliefs concerning voice beliefs and behaviors. Findings show that because of this, TM and TL's individual or shared beliefs can be actively challenged and possibly changed. Thereby, the findings of this study provide convincing evidence for the suggestion of Detert and Edmondson (2011) that it is possible to change socially assimilated or implicit beliefs about voice by making them explicit, acknowledging their existence and by explicitly providing evidence that contradicts overgeneralized or exaggerated beliefs. In sum, findings of the research show that interventions contribute to positive developments in work group voice, by stimulating individual and collective sensemaking processes, which help both TM and TL to become more aware, gain more insights, and reflect upon and change their voice-related beliefs and behaviors.

Another important insight was found when looking at the specific developments per team. Although interventions contributed to an overall positive development for every team participating in the action research, I found that their specific positive developments in work group voice differed. Results indicate that interventions help a team to make a small step towards becoming more open, from a starting position ranging somewhere between 'being very open' until 'not being open at all' as a team. Based upon those findings, I consider developments in work group voice as '*taking a positive step along the continuum of work group voice*'. This conceptualization of work group voice ranging along a continuum, builds further upon Morrison's (2011) notion that voice and silence behaviors 'exist along a continuum'. She argues that people do not always express voice or always remain silent, but people choose to express voice in some situations and remain silent in others. Additionally, Morrison et al. (2011) and Frazier and Bowler (2012) argue that voice climates can be placed along a continuum ranging from extremely positive to extremely negative. As the total concept of work group voice encompasses both the sum of individual voice and silence behaviors and the individual and collective beliefs underlying a voice climate, I argue that work group voice should also be considered to range along a continuum.

Since work group voice consists of different elements, I suggest that a work group voice continuum also consists of several elements. Current literature shows that both objective features of an employee's environment (e.g. organizational structure, managerial behavior) and individual or shared perceptions of that environment, affect beliefs about expressing voice and motives to remain silent, and thereby result in certain voice and silence behaviors (e.g. Brinsfield, 2013; Detert & Edmondson; Morrison, 2011; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Based upon this, I argue that a work group voice continuum consists of three different elements, all affecting work group voice and developments in work group voice: (i) *environmental factors* supporting or non-supporting for voice; (ii) *individual and shared beliefs* about voice, possibly resulting in *silence motives*; and (iii) *actual voice behaviors* of employees. Taken together, such a work group voice continuum ranges from 'a non-supportive voice environment, negative individual and shared voice beliefs (voice climate), lots of silence motives and no voice behavior' towards 'a supportive voice environment, positive individual and shared voice beliefs (voice climate), no silence motives and lots of voice behavior'.

From the findings of this study, I conclude that work group voice can develop or change in each of the three elements in the work group voice continuum, to make a step towards the positive side of this continuum. Results show that interventions contribute to work group voice development through either (i) *positive changes in environmental factors*; (ii) *positive changes in (shared) voice beliefs or reduced silence motives*; or (iii) *positive changes in voice behaviors*. For example, I found that the environment for voice positively changed, because of changes in the behavior of the TL or

colleague TM (e.g. listening better to voice signals, show more appreciation for voice, show more understanding for TM perspective). Other scholars have also shown that such behaviors are important environmental factors to facilitate voice (Detert & Burris, 2007; Detert & Trevino, 2010; Frazier & Bowler, 2012). Also, I found positive changes in (shared) voice beliefs and reduced silence motives. TM explicated and collectively discussed their silence motives and individual or shared beliefs about expressing voice, and therefore realized that the expectations underlying those motives or beliefs not always correspond with actual negative outcomes of expressing voice or actual expectations of others (e.g. TM believe that expressing concerns about difficulties to reach targets might disturb others, but those others oppose that it does not matter and that TM should never hesitate to express such concerns). This again illustrates that it is possible to change socially assimilated or implicit beliefs about voice by making them explicit, acknowledging their existence and by explicitly providing evidence that contradicts overgeneralized or exaggerated beliefs through a process of individual and collective sensemaking (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). At last, I found positive changes in voice behavior, resulting from the interventions. As TM became more aware of their own voice behaviors and the underlying beliefs or motives to express voice or remain silent, some chose to change their own voice behavior, by expressing voice more often or in a more constructive way. Expressing voice in a more constructive way can also positively change work group voice, as the type and tone of the expressed message determines how a voice message is received (Morrison, 2011). Summarized, findings of this study show that interventions can help teams to ‘take a positive step along the continuum of work group voice’ in three different ways.

Findings also indicate that the amount of development possible in each of the three elements of the work group voice continuum, depends on a team’s starting position in work group voice. From the results I conclude that it is important to develop at least an average positive environment for employee voice, in which TM mostly feel safe to express themselves and in which TL (and other TM) show understanding for TM’s perspective, listen and positively react towards voice. Only after that, TM might be willing to reflect upon and change their beliefs, silence motives or behaviors and only then it is possible to have an open group discussion during the interventions. This is in line with findings of Frazier and Bowler (2012), showing that supervisor undermining has a strong effect on group voice behavior, but also on group performance in general. When teams already have this average positive environment, it again depends on their specific situation if they need to reflect or change specific beliefs first, or if they should focus on behaviors. When a team has a very negative voice climate with many collective and individual voice beliefs or silence motives impeding voice behavior, those beliefs and silence motives need to change first, before voice behaviors can develop and change, just like Detert and Edmondson (2011) showed in their study. However, when most collective level beliefs are quite positive and only some individual silence motives are in place, specific voice and silence behaviors can be reflected upon and can be changed, so that TM start expressing more voice or express voice in a more constructive way. In sum, study results show that teams can always develop and change upon each of the three elements of the work group voice continuum, but the main focus of development will always be first on developing environmental factors, second on a positive change of beliefs, and last on changes in specific TM voice behaviors.

All findings mentioned above add important insights to current literature about employee voice, silence and voice climates. The results of this action research confirm the importance of environmental factors to facilitate voice and show that both individual and collective sensemaking processes are important for the development of voice beliefs and behaviors. Also, this study provides important new insights about the development process of work group voice. It shows that work group voice development can be defined as ‘taking a positive step along a work group voice continuum’, and

distinguishes three elements in which work group voice can develop. At last, it shows how specific developments depend on a team's starting position of work group voice.

However, the main goal of this study was to explore how different interventions can contribute to development, and how they can help to encourage and facilitate voice. Therefore, I also discuss my findings about the effects and the use of different interventions used in this action research. Overall, findings show that the combination of interventions used (observations, diaries, surveys, interviews and focus group interviews) helped to constitute positive changes and developments in work group voice. Results also provided important insights about the effects and importance of every single intervention for TM and TL (e.g. making them think, talk, observe). Findings show that interventions are not perceived equally important by TM and TL in different teams. On the other hand, findings also indicate that every intervention was in its own way important for either TM or TL, to constitute a positive change either in the team's voice environment, beliefs about voice, or specific voice behaviors. Besides, results show that interventions strengthen each other's effects.

Findings show that *TL observations* and *TL surveys* are very useful to make TL more aware of TM voice behaviors, of their own reaction towards voice and how this reaction affects TM. *Focus group interviews* and a *TL interview* provide them with more insights about how TM perceive the team situation, and therefore help them to reflect upon their TL behavior and their own role in facilitating a positive environment for voice. Thereby, TL interventions mostly help to facilitate a more positive environment for employee voice, by helping TL to change their behavior. On the other hand, findings about the effects of TM interventions show that TM interventions can contribute to development in more different ways. First, they can help TM to change their behavior towards other TM. Thereby, they can help to facilitate a more positive voice environment. Second, they can help TM to reflect upon and change their current voice beliefs and silence motives. At last, interventions can help TM to become more aware of their own voice behavior (when, how, why they express voice) and to change the amount or the way they express voice. Findings show that a *TM survey* makes TM more aware of their team situation and their own voice behavior. A TM survey also provides useful input for the focus group interview, to discuss the team situation and different perspectives of TM. Those *focus group interviews* help TM to reflect upon their voice beliefs and behaviors. Subsequently *TM diaries* help them to reflect upon their own voice behavior for a specific voice event. At last, *observations of the researcher* provide TM with the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings in informal conversations and in a safe environment, which can help them to share more in a group discussion, and can stimulate individual reflection upon beliefs and behavior. In sum, findings about intervention effects show how different interventions can all contribute in their own way towards development and how they can help teams to take a positive step along the work group voice continuum.

Furthermore, findings show that every intervention provides useful input for next interventions and thereby strengthens the effect of those next interventions. It starts with TL observations that provide TL with input to fill in their TL survey about TM voice behavior. Subsequently, TL observations, TL surveys, and TM surveys provide input for a focus group discussion. During the focus group discussion, this helps to discuss different perspectives of TL and TM and beliefs or silence motives that might impede TM voice behavior. The results of this group discussion help TL to observe TM behavior and their own reaction towards voice more closely further on in the process. Also, the insights from a group discussion help TM to observe specific voice events in their TM diaries. Altogether, the focus group interview, the TL observations and TM diaries, help TM and TL to fill in their survey again, now with a more complete image of the team situation and specific voice behaviors. At last, all the aforementioned interventions provide input for the final focus group discussion and for the TL interview. They contribute to another fruitful discussion and a deeper reflection upon very

specific behaviors and voice beliefs, silence motives and improvement points for that specific team. Summarized, findings show that interventions contribute towards development in a sort of ‘chain reaction of interventions’. This explains why every single intervention was perceived to be important for the total development process of work group voice. Altogether, this study shows that especially a combination of interventions can help to encourage and facilitate voice, which is another important insight for theory, and even more for practitioners trying to encourage and facilitate employee voice.

Practical implications

This study provides several useful insights for organizational practitioners trying to open up communication lines and encourage employee voice. It appears that interventions can help to encourage and facilitate employee voice within teams, when they let both employees and their managers observe, think, and talk about voice. Because employee voice is highly beneficial and important for the success of teams, and for the success of organizations in general (e.g. Greenberg & Edwards, 2009; Morrison, 2011), I strongly encourage managers or consultants in the field of HR or internal communications to consider using such interventions in work groups, especially when employees sometimes remain silent about issues important to share. When practitioners indeed choose to use such interventions, results of this study can help them to choose specific interventions and a specific focus in those interventions, for an effective approach.

Findings indicate that it is most effective to combine several different interventions for both TM and TL in a work group, as was done during this action research (e.g. using observations, diaries, surveys, interviews and focus group interviews). However, in organizational practice, it might not always be possible to use the exact combination of interventions as used in this action research. From the results of this study, one might expect that other combinations of interventions can also be effective. However, results imply that for an effective approach to encourage work group voice, interventions should always stimulate both individual and collective sensemaking and learning processes. Therefore, it helps when interventions interchangeably make TM and TL individually think and observe, and collectively talk about different voice related topics (team situation, specific voice beliefs and behaviors), to strengthen each other’s effects. When using such a set of interventions, every intervention can in its own way provide TM or TL with more awareness and insights, let them reflect upon their team situation, voice beliefs and behaviors, or make them change certain beliefs, silence motives or behaviors. With those insights in mind, practitioners can choose their own interventions, based upon available time and resources.

Furthermore, practitioners should be aware of the fact that work group voice ranges along a continuum, and that it can positively develop in three different ways to ‘take a positive step along this continuum’. As the findings of this study imply that specific opportunities for development are based upon a team’s starting position of work group voice, I recommend practitioners to try and determine this starting position in work group voice (e.g. by observing the team situation and talking to TM and TL). Thereby, I would encourage them to try and find out how much the environment supports voice, try to uncover (implicit) voice beliefs and silence motives and to study voice and silence behaviors. Based upon that, specific interventions and a specific focus within interventions can be chosen. For example, when a team is not very open yet and the environment seems non-supportive for voice, I would suggest interventions to focus on helping TL and TM to facilitate a more positive voice environment, before focusing on specific beliefs and behaviors. In that case, interventions could help both TM and TL to become more aware of their team situation, gain more insights in different feelings and perspectives, reflect upon their team situation and their own behaviors, and subsequently try to

change those behavior (e.g. start showing more understanding for each other, better listen to each other, react more positively towards TM voice).

At last, findings indicate that especially in situations where the environment is non-supportive for voice, it is important to provide a safe environment for everyone to express their feelings and perspectives. Therefore, I recommend using a professional in a neutral position as facilitator for the interventions, who can talk to both TM and TL in private or small groups, and subsequently facilitate group discussions in which everyone's perspective can be discussed.

Altogether, the findings of this study, together with specific examples of different cases and the occurrences in their development process, can help practitioners to choose a successful approach for helping both TM and TL to develop or change, thereby contributing towards positive developments in work group voice.

Study limitations and opportunities for further research

This action research, focusing on how interventions contribute towards developments in work group voice, has provided some important first insights about the development and development processes of work group voice. Also, it shows how interventions can help to encourage and facilitate voice. However, this study has only been a first attempt to explore the concept of work group voice development, and like every research, it has some shortcomings and limitations that need to be discussed. Taking those limitations into account, opportunities and directions for further research are described.

According to Eden and Huxham (1996), the best way of learning about processes in organizations, is by trying to change it and by challenging the status quo. As the subject of this study was the development (process) of work group voice, which has never been studied empirically before, an action research with interventions proved to be a very useful method. However, doing an action research meant that interventions were actively trying to constitute change, and that the developments and development processes studied, were caused by those interventions. To gain a more complete understanding of how work group voice develops in more natural situations, I recommend studying natural development processes of work group voice in further research as well. That might be done by focusing on the individual and collective sensemaking process occurring naturally in work groups, and to interpret findings with the insights from this study, describing the development process caused by interventions.

Because this action research was a first attempt to study work group voice developments, it was very challenging to collect data on very specific elements in the development process. In such an explorative and qualitative study, a researcher can only collect as much data as possible on the overall process, to gain understanding of the process 'as it happens' (Van Manen, 1997). Only afterwards, by reading and rereading of data, I was able to reflect upon this process and grasp the essential meaning of 'what happened'. This means that I gained more understanding of the overall development process in every team, but I was not yet able to dig deep into certain elements of the process. To gain more insights into the development process, it would be very interesting for future research, to focus on specific sensemaking and learning processes of TM and TL during this development process. I suggest to study more closely how both TM and TL experience the work group voice development process, and to study mental processes underlying developments (e.g. developments and changes in their mental frameworks), during changes in their work group voice environment, voice beliefs, silence motives and behaviors. Such research would ask for the use of different research instruments, for example, using more individual interviews.

As this action research had such an explorative nature, it also could only provide some general insights into the effects of each intervention used, based upon a reflection on the total action research process in a focus group interview with TM and TL. It would also be interesting to gain more insights into the specific effects of every intervention. This would help to understand how every specific intervention contributes to either individual or collective sensemaking processes, by making TM or TL observe, think or talk about voice, and would therefore provide more insights into how specific interventions contribute to individual or collective sensemaking, and to specific elements of the development process for work group voice. That would add some important insights for theory, and would help to develop more specific guidelines for practitioners, about when and how to use specific sorts of interventions. Such insights could be gained during a future action research, by observing intervention effects more closely and asking TM and TL more often about the effects they experience during the intervention process. In such future research focusing on specific effects of interventions, it might also be useful to examine the effect of other, different combinations of interventions, as the current research could only provide insights into the effects of a very specific combination of interventions.

At last, findings of this study indicate that it might be important to reconsider some of the quantitative instruments currently used to measure voice and silence related constructs, when conducting future research in the field of employee voice. Although I did not conduct a quantitative study, I did use some survey instruments as an intervention in my action research. Scales used in the survey were very useful to provide input for a group discussion in my action research. However, I noticed that some TM did not understand scale items or interpreted items very differently. Because of that, I think it might be important to reconsider the validity of some scales used in employee voice research. Especially for Detert and Edmondson's (2011) scale to measure implicit voice theories, I found that TM interpreted items in different ways. For example, TM reported that they found the item 'Pointing out problems or inefficiencies in front of others is likely to embarrass the boss' confusing. TM did not know how to interpret 'problems or inefficiencies'. Some interpreted those as 'small problems that the TL was already trying to solve', others were thinking about 'severe problems or inefficiencies', or 'problems that have been reported, but the TL is not trying to solve'. TM also interpreted 'others' differently, either as team members, colleagues from other departments, higher management, or people outside of the organization. Altogether, the items of Detert and Edmondson's (2011) scale were useful input for a discussion, especially because of those different interpretations, but the survey results on implicit voice theories did not provide an accurate image of the implicit voice theories in the team, as everyone interpreted scale items differently. For this reason, I recommend re-evaluating the 'implicit voice theories'-scale, before using this scale in future research. Second, I suggest reconsidering the scales currently used to measure voice climate. In future research, I encourage researchers to combine scales of Morrison et al. (2011), Frazier and Bowler (2012) and Frazier and Fainschmidt (2012), thereby measuring both the safety and efficacy of voice and how much voice is expected, supported and rewarded. The combination of those scales in the current study seemed to provide much more insights into the different beliefs underlying a voice climate than using either of them. Besides, I recommend introducing the constructs 'safety and efficacy of voice' and 'how much voice is expected, supported and rewarded' with a very clear definition before measuring them, as I found that some TM misinterpret the meaning of those constructs. For example, some TM interpreted the construct 'voice safety' much more severe than described in its definition as 'a lack of negative consequences expected for expressing voice'. Some TM thought that feeling 'unsafe' to express voice means that voice is experienced as 'life-threatening'. Similar misinterpretations were found for the concept of 'rewards'. Some TM interpreted 'rewards' as a financial reward, while voice

behavior can also be rewarded by positive reactions of colleagues or a team leader. Those examples illustrate how the items measuring voice climate can easily be misunderstood. To strengthen the validity and reliability of quantitative measures for voice climate, I therefore recommend defining and introducing every concept used to measure its underlying voice beliefs.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how employee voice behavior can be encouraged and facilitated, by examining how interventions can contribute to developments in work group voice. As this was the first study focusing on the actual development of work group voice in a real-world organizational setting, results of this study are unique and findings made important contributions to both theory and organizational practice. Results show that and how interventions can contribute to work group voice development. They provide more insights into the different elements of the work group voice development process and show that work group voice develops by ‘taking a step towards the positive side of a work group voice continuum. Hopefully, those first insights can already help practitioners to encourage and facilitate employee voice in their organizations. Besides, the results from this study hopefully inspire and stimulate other scholars to further examine how work group voice develops and how employee voice can be encouraged and facilitated. Only when the processes of work group voice development are more understood, organizations can keep on encouraging and facilitating voice behaviors, trying to reach the utopian situation in which every employee shares all suggestions, concerns and opinions considered important to share. It is therefore that research on the development of work group voice has made and keeps on making important contributions towards organizational success.

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