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Joseph A. Allen Michael A. Yoerger Nale Lehmann-Willenbrock Johanna Jones

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# Would you please stop that!?

## The relationship between counterproductive meeting behaviors, employee voice, and trust

Joseph A. Allen and Michael A. Yoerger

*Department of Psychology, University of Nebraska at Omaha,  
Omaha, Nebraska, USA*

Nale Lehmann-Willenbrock

*Department of Experimental and Applied Psychology,  
VU University Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and*

Johanna Jones

*Department of Psychology,  
University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska, USA*

### Abstract

**Purpose** – Meetings are ubiquitous in organizational life and are a great source of frustration and annoyance to many employees in the workplace, in part due to counterproductive meeting behaviors (CMBs). CMBs include engaging in irrelevant discussion, complaining about other attendees, arriving to the meeting late, and other similar, disruptive behaviors. Consistent with conservation of resources theory, the purpose of this paper is to examine the potential resource draining effect of CMBs on two key workplace attitudes/behaviors, employee voice, and coworker trust.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The authors used Amazon's MTurk service to recruit a sample of full-time working adults from a variety of industries who regularly attend meetings. Participants completed a survey with items relating to CMBs, trust, voice, and meeting load.

**Findings** – The authors found that CMBs were indeed negatively related to both employee voice and coworker trust. Further, both of these relationships were even more negative for those who had fewer meetings (i.e. meeting load as a moderator).

**Research limitations/implications** – The results of this study suggest that behavior in meetings may spill over and impact employees in other areas of their work life, perhaps harming other important work-related outcomes (e.g. performance). The cross-sectional nature of the sampling strategy is a limitation that provides opportunities for future research as discussed.

**Practical implications** – The practical implications are rather straightforward and poignant. Managers and meetings leaders should seek ways to reduce CMBs and promote good meeting processes generally.

**Originality/value** – The current study is the first to overtly investigate CMBs in workplace meetings and connect them to meaningful, non-meeting-related, outcomes. Further, the study shows the usefulness of conservation resources theory for explaining the dynamic processes that occur for meeting attendees.

**Keywords** Trust, Voice, Workplace meetings, Counterproductive meeting behaviors, Meeting load  
**Paper type** Research paper



The study of meetings is of critical importance to organizations because of the role they can play in an organization's overall effectiveness, as well as the wellbeing of its employees (Rogelberg *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, employees engage in activities in meetings that cannot easily be done in other workplace settings (e.g. collaboration, decision making, problem solving, etc.). Being able to investigate solutions to problems, discuss information, and come up with new ideas, all while building community, makes

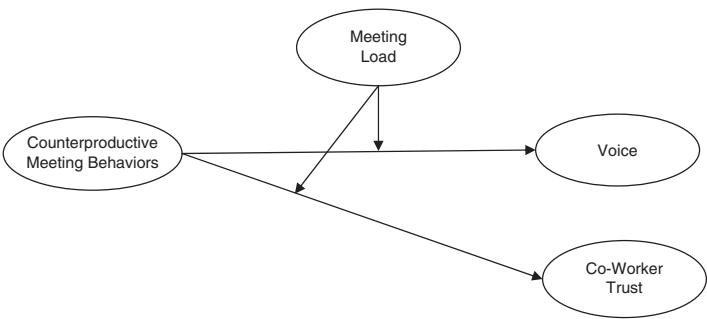
meetings a vital part of any organization (Elsayed-Elkhouly and Lazarus, 1997; Green and Lazarus, 1991). It is perhaps because of these unique interactions that meetings hold such potential to affect work relationships, attitudes, and behaviors long after the meeting has ended (Rogelberg *et al.*, 2010).

Meetings are a common workplace activity with an estimated 11 million meetings every day, in the USA alone (Newlund, 2012). However, research suggests that as many as half of these meetings are considered poor in quality (Schell, 2010), and more meetings are often called to accomplish objectives that were supposed to be achieved in previous meetings (Allen *et al.*, 2008). In order to identify factors that may contribute to negative outcomes of meetings, researchers have begun to focus on the impact of counterproductive meeting behaviors (CMBs), which include but are not limited to counteractive behaviors as studied by others (Kauffeld and Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012; Schulte *et al.*, 2013). Empirical findings from organizational meetings show that CMBs are dysfunctional and obstructive toward accomplishing meeting goals. For example, one commonly observed CMB is the late arrival of one or more meeting attendees (Rogelberg *et al.*, 2014). The occurrence of this CMB may perturb attendees who arrived on time, participated, and took notes. Another form of CMB includes employees engaging in other behavior that can be interpreted as selfish, disrespectful, and/or rude, such as attendees engaging in side conversations or discussing topics that are not relevant to the meeting group as a whole (e.g. Kauffeld and Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012). Moreover, attendees who spend time complaining or denying their responsibilities can convey self-centeredness and a lack of concern for the organization's wellbeing. CMBs can also take a more aggressive form; for instance, when some attendees place blame on others in a non-constructive manner, this behavior can detract from the psychological safety of the meeting environment and possibly result in some attendees feeling too intimidated to participate as fully as they otherwise would. These CMBs have shown significant negative relationships not only with meeting satisfaction but also with performance outcomes beyond the meeting (Kauffeld and Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012).

In this study, we suggest that CMBs negatively impact perceptions of the meeting and perceptions of others in the meeting. We draw from conservation of resources (CoR) theory to explain why these relationships may exist. CoR theory suggests that individuals tend to place considerable effort into acquiring and protecting both cognitive and material resources. Threats to these resources result in stress that can impact employee perceptions of others within the organization and the organization itself (Hobfoll, 1989). CMBs detract from the meeting purpose and good meeting processes thereby potentially introducing a threat to the acquisition of and protection of much needed work-related psychological resources (e.g. employee voice and trust in co-workers).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between CMBs and two meaningful employee attitudes/behaviors likely impacted by their experiences in meetings: employee voice and trust in co-workers (Figure 1). Employee voice includes communication and behavior that is intended to improve aspects of the work environment (LePine and Van Dyne, 1998). Thus, voice does not simply criticize the status quo; rather, it seeks to offer positive alternatives to benefit the work environment, employees, or both. Trust in co-workers refers to employees having established a relationship with others in the work environment and becoming comfortable relying on others (Mach *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, one implication of the increasingly team-oriented work environment (Chi *et al.*, 2009) is that relationships among co-workers have become even more important than in the past (Lovelace *et al.*, 2001); the ability for co-workers to

Figure 1.  
Proposed model



be able to place faith and trust in each other has even stronger implications for organizational wellbeing than it has in the past (Chi *et al.*, 2009). In this study, we use the CoR theory to explain how CMBs in meetings drain employees' generally and make them less able to engage in voice behaviors and question their trust in their colleagues generally. Further, we investigate the extent to which meeting load may be a moderator of these relationships. A core argument of CoR theory is individuals pursue resources that they perceive as valuable; we will make the argument that less-frequent meetings are considered relatively more valuable. That is, the salience of the meeting experience for some employees may make the meetings they have more or less important to the development of their attitudes and subsequent behaviors.

CMBs

In this study, our working definition of CMB is action(s) taken by one or more attendees that cause dysfunction or in some way hinder the progress made in a meeting (Lehmann-Willenbrock *et al.*, 2013). These behaviors include placing blame on other attendees, engaging in irrelevant discussion, and complaining, among other behaviors (Kauffeld and Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012; Lehmann-Willenbrock *et al.*, 2013). For example, an attendee talking about his or her plans for the weekend during the official meeting time is an example of a CMB. These counterproductive behaviors likely have implications for the development of and maintenance of good job-related attitudes/ behaviors that serve as resources to effective employee function. One such job attitude/ behavior is employee voice, to which we now turn.

CMBs and voice

In the most basic sense, voice in the context of work organizations may be described as the extent to which employees feel encouraged and able to express thoughts and ideas, as well as the degree to which employees feel that they are given sufficient freedom and time to share their opinion (Allen and Rogelberg, 2013). When employees are encouraged in this manner, they may feel that organization leaders have a genuine interest in what employees have to say and the employees feel valued as a result.

Accordingly, research has shown that the encouragement of voice is associated with organizational effectiveness and high-quality decision making (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Nemeth, 1997), as well as team performance (Dooley and Fryxell, 1999). However, perceptions of the environment play a key role in the degree to which employees feel comfortable enough to demonstrate voice without fear of negative treatment. For example, previous research suggests that employees are much more willing to communicate their

thoughts and ideas when they consider their managers to be open and fair (Ashford *et al.*, 1998; Burris *et al.*, 2008).

As work environments have become more team focussed (Chi *et al.*, 2009), researchers have given greater attention to studying interactions among employees in the work setting that would benefit from increased voice (Detert *et al.*, 2013). One relevant theory that may explain why voice is desired, but also threatened, is CoR theory (e.g. Hobfoll, 1989), which suggests that employees who are not provided with sufficient levels of support tend to feel overburdened and that their resources are overtaxed. Because of this, stressed employees are less able or less inclined to feel that they have sufficient support and motivation to persevere amid hardship and continue providing high-quality contributions in the work environment.

CoR theory originated as an attempt to develop a new model of stress that would serve as a more parsimonious, comprehensive, and directly testable alternative to existing models of stress (Hobfoll, 2001). According to Hobfoll (1989), humans have become sensitized to the loss of valued group resources over the course of evolution. Groups who achieved more success in securing and protecting resources were more favored in the process of natural selection, due to the benefits of recognizing threats to resources and taking action to effectively alleviate the source of stress. In applying the core tenets of CoR theory to the contemporary context of workplace meetings, we argue that meeting attendees experience others' CMBs as draining the finite amount of time and resources they have, and this perception results in reduced feelings that their thoughts and ideas they communicate are seriously considered. Given the increased emphasis on interdependence in fulfilling work responsibilities, workplace meetings provide key opportunities for employees to articulate the thoughts and feelings they most want to share with others in the organization. Therefore, the effective use of these meetings allows for the fruition of the many rewards associated with voice; at the same time, a failure to ensure that all attendees are heard and shown respect may result in some of the more negative outcomes that have previously been associated with a lack of voice. Furthermore, we believe that the negative impact of CMBs may decrease feelings of voice in the work environment long after the meeting has ended. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

*H1. CMBs are negatively related to voice.*

#### *CMBs and trust*

CMBs may have implications to other desirable workplace attitudes/behaviors essential to effective team and organizational functioning. Specifically, when others in a meeting engage in CMBs, thereby making the meeting less effective at achieving other co-workers' aims, we argue that trust between co-workers may be hampered, and those individuals committing CMBs are perceived as less trustworthy. In this context, we utilize a relational definition of trust provided by Mayer *et al.* (1995) that describes trust through trustee and trustor characteristics, as well as the perceptions of risk involved, regardless of particular trust antecedents, outcomes, or related constructs. Specifically, Mayer *et al.* (1995) define trust as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the action of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (p. 712). In line with the argument of Mayer *et al.*, we consider trust to be fundamentally unique and not entirely synonymous with reliability, predictability, or confidence. This definition of trust has also been advocated by McEvily *et al.* (2003), who suggest that trust occurs when one party has certain

expectations about the likely behavior and intentions of another party and is willing to assume a certain degree of vulnerability. When considering a person's appraisal of the trustworthiness of others, there are three primary factors: the abilities of the person or persons, the degree of benevolence that they seem to possess, and the extent to which they demonstrate integrity ([Mayer et al., 1995](#)). It seems likely that CMBs may impact any one of these factors, depending on the given CMB. For example, an employee who fails to show up on time could potentially be considered to possess low ability, among other negative attributes, and an attendee who demonstrates a clear lack of interest in the contributions of others may be perceived as low in benevolence. When any one of the three factors is lacking in a relationship, trust may not be established.

When studying meetings in organizations, trust in co-workers as a particular facet of workplace trust should be considered (e.g. [Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2013](#)). Trust in co-workers is based on the belief that one's co-workers are competent and can be expected to act fairly, reliably, and ethically. Employees who trust their co-workers expect that their co-workers will support them and will not behave strategically by withholding information. Co-workers who trust each other act on the basis that they can have faith in the words and actions of their peers ([Ferres et al., 2004](#), p. 610). [Ferres et al. \(2004\)](#) argue that trust in co-workers functions as a "social catalyst" for constructive employee attitudes. They found that trust in co-workers was linked to perceived organizational support, increased affective commitment, and decreased turnover intentions. Trust in co-workers has been linked to an improved use of team resources ([McEvily et al., 2003](#)), more positive expectations about each other's acts and skills ([Ladebo, 2006](#)), less relationship conflict ([Lehmann-Willenbrock et al., 2011](#)), increased group cohesion (e.g. [Ladebo, 2006](#); [Lehmann-Willenbrock and Kauffeld, 2010a](#)), team satisfaction and relationship commitment ([Costa et al., 2001](#)), constructive employee attitudes ([Ferres et al., 2004](#)), an increase in organizational citizenship behavior (for an overview, see [Lavelle et al., 2007](#)), and improved team effectiveness ([Chou et al., 2008](#)).

In terms of CMBs, there is considerably less research on the link between negative workplace behaviors and trust ([Bennett and Robinson, 2003](#); [Thau et al., 2007](#)). As previously suggested, CMBs may harm coworker trust because they likely derail meeting processes and effectiveness which can make goal accomplishment of other workers in the meeting less possible. Consistent with CoR theory, CMBs may threaten coworker trust as a resource for employees in the workplace and within their meetings by calling into question co-workers motives for frustrating the accomplishment of meeting goals. Put differently, when attendees engage in CMBs, the meeting no longer reaches expectations, and participants may not extend their vulnerability as freely in subsequent meetings because they have been let down. For all these reasons, it is believed that CMBs negatively related to coworker trust by calling into question their motives for such behavior within the meeting context. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

*H2. CMBs are negatively related to co-worker trust.*

### Meeting load as a moderator

Although we believe there will be a direct relationship between CMBs and both voice and coworker trust, these relationships may also depend upon an important contextual factor, specifically employees amount of meetings or meeting load ([Luong and Rogelberg, 2005](#); [Rogelberg et al., 2006](#)). In the present study and consistent with previous studies ([Luong and Rogelberg, 2005](#)), meeting load refers to the frequency in which an employee is



required to attend organizational meetings. Although meetings can be an effective way to share information through face-to-face communication, Luong and Rogelberg (2005) found evidence that efforts to encourage communication through meetings can also be taken to the extreme and lead to detrimental outcomes. Specifically, they found a positive relationship between meeting load and reported workload and fatigue. We seek to expand on this research by examining how individual meeting load affects the relationship between CMBs and trust, as well as between CMBs and voice.

Although it is expected that under all levels of meeting load CMBs will continue to have a negative effect on both trust and voice, we believe that the negative effect of CMBs on trust and voice respectively will be stronger among those employees who have fewer meetings (i.e. low meeting load). There are a couple interrelated reasons for this seemingly counterintuitive moderation effect. First, when employees have fewer opportunities to engage in meetings, the value of these rare meetings will be relatively greater and others engaging in behavior that threatens the meeting will be considered more serious. Therefore, the most negative effects may be seen when CMBs occur during the less-frequent, more important meetings. It is not only those performing CMBs who are affected by them, but in fact the entire meeting to a certain extent; the loss in contributions of those engaging in CMBs and those who are distracted by CMBs reduce the effectiveness of the meeting as a whole.

Second, infrequent meeting may serve as sensemaking episodes for the work group or organization (Lampel *et al.*, 2009). Lampel *et al.* (2009) argue that such rare events can foster organizational learning if managed correctly. In the case of infrequent meetings, when effectively run, goals may be accomplished and learning may occur. However, in the case of CMBs, infrequent meetings may disproportionately impact meeting attendees attitudes/behaviors in a negative way. If, for example, attendees only meet once per month and during this meeting they not only report on project status, but make decisions about work tasks and goals for the coming month, time wasted managing CMBs may inhibit the effectiveness of the meeting and the subsequent month-long work cycle.

Given these explanations that include both logical and theoretical arguments, we believe that the negative impact of CMBs on voice and trust will be more strongly felt when meetings are few and far between. Thus, the following moderation hypotheses are proposed:

- H3a.* Meeting load moderates the relationship between CMBs and voice, such that the negative relationship is stronger when meeting load is low.
- H3b.* Meeting load moderates the relationship between CMBs and co-worker trust, such that the negative relationship is stronger when meeting load is low.

## Method

### *Participants and procedure*

Researchers recruited participants via Amazon's Mechanical Turk, a service that enables individuals to complete surveys and other forms of research online in exchange for small monetary incentives (Buhrmester *et al.*, 2011). Compared to the use of undergraduate participants, the participants who use Mturk tend to be more diverse and more representative of the general public (Minton *et al.*, 2013). In order to be eligible for participation, respondents were required be full-time employees of organizations within the USA who attended a minimum of one work-related meeting per week. A total



of 443 participants responded to the survey and received the incentive (\$0.50). In the sample ( $n = 443$ ), the participants were 50.3 percent female. The mean age of the participants was 37.2 years old ( $SD = 12.15$ ), and the average tenure was 5.9 years ( $SD = 5.48$ ). A total of 51 percent supervised others, and the majority (82.6 percent) reported that they work as part of a team or group.

Measures

Counterproductive meetings behaviors were assessed by utilizing a 22-item measure adapted from Odermatt *et al.* (2013). Participants were asked, “To what extent do you observe the following in the meetings you regularly attend at work?” A sample item is “Meeting attendees arrive late to meetings.” Items were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 being “never” to 5 being “always.”

Voice was assessed using a seven-item measure adapted from Gorden and Infante (1980). Participants were asked to think of meetings at work and were asked how frequently their supervisor engages in certain behaviors. A sample item is “Gives employees time to express concerns about company policies.” Items were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 being “never” to 5 being “always.”

Trust was assessed by a nine-item measure developed by Lehmann-Willenbrock and Kauffeld (2010b). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with each item. A sample item is “My co-workers are considerate of my interests.” Items were rated on a six-point scale ranging from 1 being “completely disagree” to 6 being “completely agree.”

Meeting load was assessed utilizing a scale by Kirmeyer (1988). Participants were asked how many meetings, on average, they attend each week (Luong and Rogelberg, 2005). Items were rated on a scale from 1 to 40+ meetings a week.

Demographic control variables were assessed to rule out potential individual difference confounds, including participant age, gender, and job level within their current organization. Correlation analyses indicated that job level was the only one of these variables significantly correlated with the outcome variable. Following the recommendations of Becker (2005) to take such confounding variables into account, researchers controlled for job level in the analyses.

Results

Table I contains the means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and  $\alpha$  reliability estimates for all measures (see Table I). Of note is that participants indicated they attended between three and four meetings per week ( $M = 3.64$ ).

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Counterproductive meeting behaviors (CMBB)	2.50	0.70	(0.95)						
2. Voice	3.42	0.84	−0.42*	(0.93)					
3. Co-worker trust	4.34	0.88	−0.46*	0.59*	(0.93)				
4. Meeting load	3.64	8.80	0.12*	−0.04	−0.03	−			
5. Age	37.22	12.15	0.02	0.03	−0.01	−0.08	−		
6. Gender	1.50	0.50	−0.07	−0.03	−0.03	−0.01	0.08	−	
7. Job level	3.48	0.91	0.01	−0.15*	−0.08	−0.13*	−0.06	0.10*	−

**Notes:**  $n = 443$ . Diagonal values are the internal consistency reliability estimates for each scale. \* $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed).

**Table I.**  
Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all measures

To test *H1*, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. First, job level was entered, with the result accounting for a significant amount of variance ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Next, CMB was included and found to significantly relate to voice ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.18$ ;  $\beta = -0.42$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, *H1* was supported.

To test *H2*, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. First, job level was entered, with the result not accounting for a significant amount of variance ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $p = 0.09$ ). Next, CMB was included and found to significantly relate to co-worker trust ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.21$ ;  $\beta = -0.46$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, *H2* was supported.

To test this *H3a*, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted (see Table II). First, job level was entered, with the result accounting for a significant amount of variance ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Next, CMBs and meeting load were included and found to significantly relate to voice ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.18$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Finally, the interaction term was included, and meeting load was found to moderate the relationship between CMBs and voice ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ;  $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The graph of the interaction was also in the form expected (see Figure 2), therefore, *H3a* was supported.

To test this *H3b*, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. First, job level was entered, with the result accounting for a significant amount of variance ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Next, CMBs and co-worker trust were included and found to significantly relate to co-worker trust ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.21$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Finally, the interaction term was included, and meeting load was found to moderate the relationship between CMBs and co-worker trust ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$ ;  $\beta = 0.11$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The graph of the interaction was also in the form expected (see Figure 3), therefore, *H3b* was supported.

## Discussion

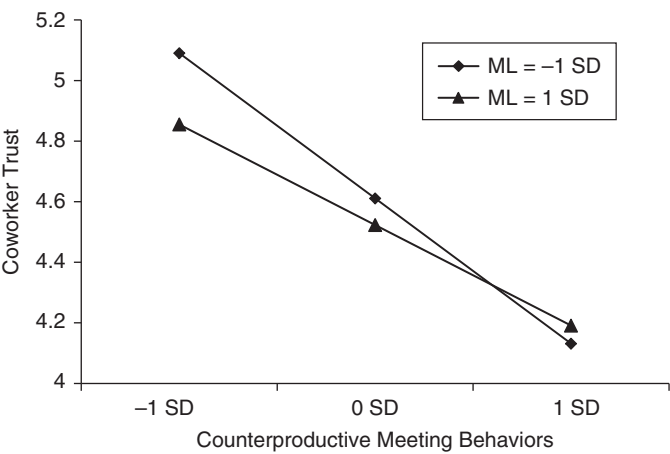
In an effort to understand the negative outcomes of so many workplace meetings, we examined the relationship between CMBs, co-worker trust, and employee voice as potentially moderated by meeting load. Our first finding was that CMBs are negatively related to voice. Although the directionality of this effect cannot explicitly be tested with the present data, the findings, and theory suggest that as CMBs increase, voice appears to decrease. In terms of the meeting, when people see others engage in

**Table II.**  
Effects of CMBs on  
voice and co-worker  
trust moderated by  
meeting load

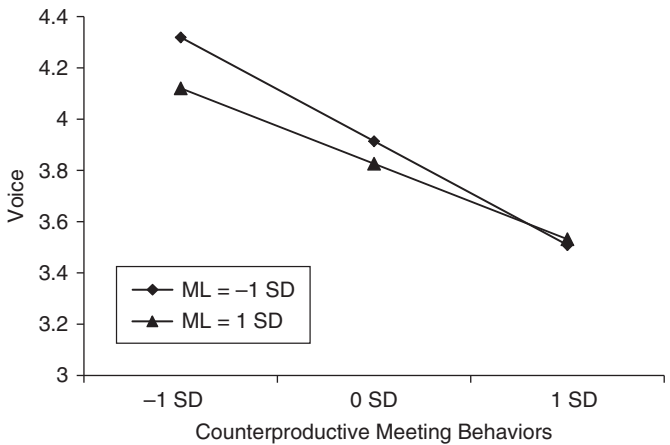
Model	Voice		<i>B</i>	SE <sub>B</sub>	$\beta$	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Co-worker trust			
	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$					$\Delta R^2$	<i>B</i>	SE <sub>B</sub>	$\beta$
Step 1	0.02*	0.02*				0.01*	0.01*			
Constant			3.90	0.16				4.61	0.17	
Job level			-0.14	0.04	0.15*			-0.08	0.05	-0.08
Step 2	0.20*	0.18*				0.22*	0.21*			
Constant			3.88	0.14				4.58	0.15	
Job level			-0.13	0.04	0.14*			-0.07	0.04	-0.07
CMB			0.51	0.05	0.42*			-0.58	0.05	-0.46*
Meeting load			0.00	0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00	0.01
Step 3	0.21*	0.01*				0.23*	0.01*			
Constant			1.56	0.14				4.57	0.15	
Job level			0.13	0.04	0.14*			-0.07	0.04	0.07
CMB			0.07	0.05	0.42*			-0.58	0.05	-0.46*
Meeting load			0.32	0.01	-0.06			-0.01	0.01	-0.05
CMB $\times$ ML			0.15	0.01	0.10*			0.01	0.01	0.11*

**Notes:**  $n = 443$ . CMB, counterproductive meeting behavior; ML, meeting load. \* $p < 0.05$

**Figure 2.**  
Meeting load as a  
moderator of the  
relationship between  
counterproductive  
meeting behaviors  
and trust



**Figure 3.**  
Meeting load as a  
moderator of the  
relationship between  
counterproductive  
meeting behaviors  
and voice



CMBs, they may be less likely to express their thoughts, opinions, and feelings. For example, when someone shows up late to the meeting or engages in unrelated side conversations, meeting participants may want to voice their frustration, but think better of it and therefore voice behaviors do not occur. This finding is consistent with the notion derived from CoR theory that CMBs drain resources (Hobfoll, 1989). If someone is working hard not to voice their frustration, then they are not likely to be able to simultaneously pay attention and voice their ideas/opinions related to the meeting's aims.

Our second finding of this study is that CMBs are negatively related to co-worker trust. Similar to voice behaviors, as CMBs increase, co-worker trust appears to decrease generally. Consistent with the tenets of CoR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), when individuals show up late or engage in distracting behaviors during the meeting, meeting participants may question their loyalty to the organization and to them personally, thereby making them less willing to be vulnerable to them and count on them. Thus, the CMBs drain the trust from the relationship one meeting at a time.

Both of these two direct relationships appear to be somewhat dependent upon the amount of meetings employees have. Although CMBs negatively related to both employee voice and co-worker trust at all levels of meeting load, it was counterintuitive to find that at low levels of meeting load, these negative relationships appear to be stronger. The moderation effects suggest that those with fewer meetings appear to be more impacted by the CMBs in terms of both their attitudes/behaviors associated with coworker trust and employee voice. One possible explanation for this finding is the salience of the fewer meetings that do occur (Yoerger *et al.*, 2015). Specifically, when an individual has fewer meetings, those meetings take on more meaning and the interactions in them are more salient, perhaps due to a lack of continuous interaction with those in the meeting. As such, the meeting becomes a microcosm for their relationships with the other attendees and when they only have a few meetings, each one has a greater influence on their overall attitudes compared to those who have many meetings.

### *Research and theoretical implications*

The forgoing study and findings have implications for several areas of research and theory. First, CoR theory appears to be a meaningful framework for the study of CMBs in the workplace. The negative relationship between CMBs and voice may likely due to feelings of disrespect and a decline in the employees' expectations of how much contributions they make will be valued by others. Likely consequences of this decline may include a greater risk of conflict and misunderstanding and increased levels of intentions to quit, as well as decreased levels of productivity (Detert and Burris, 2007). These results would be in line with prior research on CoR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), as the threat to the meeting as a resource could negatively impact employees' perception of others and the organization as a whole.

Second, in terms of research on trust, organizational leaders must realize that it is not only their actions that influence the development of trust, but also the actions of every other coworker who an employee interacts with in meetings. Specifically, a few instances of deviant behavior, even if small compared to more positive and constructive behavior, can do much to damage feelings of coworker trust, a key component in effective working relationships. This line of reasoning can be further justified by social exchange theory and provides another important theoretical implication. Just as social exchange theory can explain how employees can create positive relationships with reciprocation, it also explains how the misdeeds of a single individual can contaminate the work atmosphere and cause a downward spiral into mistrust and revenge (Boddy, 2014; Gouldner, 1960). When individuals feel a need to become defensive and feel as if they are less a part of a unified team in the meeting setting, this carries implications for the overall environment of the organization.

Third, the counterintuitive findings that meeting load more strongly impacts the relationships between CMBs and voice/trust at low levels of meeting load has implications for sensemaking episodes among teams and organizations (Lampel *et al.*, 2009). Specifically, the meeting environment itself becomes a sensemaking context for teams that translates into the enactment of the organizational culture (Scott *et al.*, 2013). For example, the meeting environment comprises both co-workers and leaders in many instances (Allen and Rogelberg, 2013). While there is an abundance of evidence that the actions of leaders are of great importance and the actions of a leader are generally more influential in forming perceptions of the work environment than those of a given coworker (Shanock and Eisenberger, 2006), the occurrence of CMBs among co-workers

indicates considerable disrespect, a disregard for other employees and the value of their contributions, and an unwillingness to communicate.

Fourth, with meeting load as a moderator and CMBs having a time component to them (e.g. arriving late to the meeting), another implication is the issue of time management and time courtesy relative to meetings (Allen and Rogelberg, 2013; Macan, 1994). Specifically, meeting load focusses on the number of meetings and arriving on time would eliminate one CMB that can frustrate people (Rogelberg *et al.*, 2014). In fact, previous research found that one of the most important things a manager can do to improve meetings and help the meeting environment engage employees is to manage the meeting effectively from a time perspective; start and end on time and run the meeting efficiently in terms of time (Allen and Rogelberg, 2013). Further, building on the process model of time management by Macan (1994), future research can begin to investigate additional aspects of time relative to meetings, meeting processes, and meeting outcomes.

#### *Practical implications*

There are a few practical implications of this study for managers. First, managers and meeting leaders should do what they can to discourage CMBs and encourage positive meeting behaviors (e.g. Allen *et al.*, 2014). Further, if CMBs begin to occur in an organization, they may be a manifestation of a larger problem, and leaders must assess the motivations and causes of the CMBs in order to have as much of an effective prevention system as possible. For example, given that there is an association between certain personality traits and employee attitudes and behaviors (Mount *et al.*, 2006), it may be in the organization's best interest to consider personality as part of the selection process.

Second, engaging in efforts to promote an organizational culture that fosters voice and trust is ideal as the culture of a workplace can work to either facilitate or inhibit counterproductive behaviors (Boddy, 2014). For example, employees seeking to facilitate voice would be wise to take one or more of the following strategies: adhering to an open door policy under which employees may feel free to speak to influential leaders within the organization and provide feedback that is not filtered by excessive layers of filtering that diminish voice (Ruiz-Quintanilla and Blancero, 1996); establishing a grievance process that ensures careful consideration will be given to any employee who believes he or she has been treated unfairly (Walker and Hamilton, 2011); and ensuring all supervisors are committed to willing to discuss employee ideas in person or via electronic forms of communication.

#### *Limitations and future directions*

While this study has helped to shed light on the nature of CMBs and voice and trust, there are also limitations that must be mentioned. First, this study is based primarily on surveys and may be subject to common-method bias (Conway and Lance, 2010; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). The assessment of variables occurred simultaneously through use of a common, single instrument, self-report ratings on an electronically administered survey. It is not possible to definitively rule out these limitations as confounding factor, but there are factors that mitigate this concern. For example, the hypothesized relationships were significant in the expected direction. Also, we needed methodological recommendations by Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) to reduce common-method bias. We tried to create proximity and psychological separation by assessing the factors independently of each other. Social desirability tendencies are known to act

as a precipitating agent of common-method bias. Individuals can tend to over-report positive descriptions of their thoughts and behaviors and under-report any thoughts and behaviors that could lead them to be perceived more negatively by others. Therefore, we instructed participants not to include identifying information on the survey because of Podsakoff *et al.*'s (2003) suggestion that the participants be provided with anonymity. According to Evans (1985), find a moderation effect suggests that common-method bias is likely not present.

Second, the sample consisted of working adults from the USA and therefore is culturally biased. Thus, generalizing the findings to other cultural contexts may be problematic. For example, in a comparison of US and German meetings, researchers found that behaviors defer greatly (Lehmann-Willenbrock *et al.*, 2014). Specifically, they found that there is more of a focus on problem analysis, as well as complaining, in German teams than in US teams. As such, future research should broaden the sampling frame to consider different cultures and how CMBs may have a greater or lesser impact on the development of workplace attitudes/behaviors.

The present study also has implications for future research. For example, one future direction for research on employee voice is to investigate whether or not the negative impact of CMBs on voice holds after taking into consideration good meeting practices. Another direction could be to look into whether it would be more worthwhile for organizations to focus their efforts on preventing CMBs or if it would take less time and effort to preserve voice through additional formal and informal mechanisms. Perhaps maintaining a suggestion box that organizational leaders take time to respond to or showing appreciation for employees who express their constructive thoughts and ideas, both inside and outside of the meeting setting would promote voice behaviors generally. Further research is needed to determine the effects of such interventions, perhaps in an experimental setting first and then in an applied setting.

## Conclusion

Meetings are crucial to an organization's success. When designed and implemented effectively, they can be a powerful tool to allow employees to come together, interact, and share information, as well as build rapport that can facilitate organizational functioning long after the meeting has ended. However, the achievement of these outcomes is not inevitable, but largely dependent on what occurs during the meeting. This study suggests that any organization interested in maximizing the effectiveness of its meetings and optimizing the wellbeing of the work environment (specifically voice, trust, and the benefits that accompany each) must take measures to reduce, if not eliminate, CMBs.

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### About the authors

Dr Joseph A. Allen, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in Industrial and Organizational (I/O) Psychology at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Before he completed his Doctorate (PhD) in Organizational Science at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) in 2010, he received his Master of Arts Degree in I/O Psychology at the UNCC in 2008 and his Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology from the Brigham Young University in 2005. Dr Allen's main areas of research include the study of workplace meetings, emotion management, and volunteer management. Dr Joseph A. Allen is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: josephallen@unomaha.edu

Michael A. Yoerger is a Graduate Student in the Industrial/Organizational Psychology Program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Prior to attending UNO, Michael Graduated Summa cum Laude from the University of Northern Iowa where he earned Bachelor of Arts Degrees in Public Administration, Political Science, and Psychology, as well as certificates in both state and local government and industrial/organizational psychology. Michael's primary research interests include meeting effectiveness and the role of personality in meetings.

Dr Nale Lehmann-Willenbrock, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social and Organizational Psychology at the VU University Amsterdam. She has published research on trust in the workplace, meeting effectiveness, and dynamic behavioral processes in teams. Further research interests include emergent social influence and methodological advances in team interaction analysis. In addition, she has consulting expertise in team training and development, survey design, and organizational change processes.

Johanna Jones is an Undergraduate pursuing Bachelor of Arts Degrees in Psychology and Criminology/Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She is heavily involved in the University Honors Program by serving as an Officer in the Honors Student Association. Johanna's research interests include meeting satisfaction, workplace violence, delinquency, crime prevention, and risk assessment.

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