

## RESEARCH REPORT

# The Dispositional Antecedents of Promotive and Prohibitive Voice

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We propose that promotive voice, or the expression of suggestions for improving work practices in the organization, and prohibitive voice, or the expression of warnings about factors that can harm the organization, are differentially influenced by employees' dispositional inclination to be approach and avoidance oriented. Drawing on multisource survey data from 291 employees and their managers, we found that approach orientation had positive relationship with promotive voice and negative relationship with prohibitive voice. By contrast, avoidance orientation had positive relationship with prohibitive voice and negative relationship with promotive voice. Further, voice role expectations, or employees' beliefs about the extent to which a particular form of voice is expected from them in their daily work, moderated the effects of approach and avoidance orientations. Highlighting the unique nature of voice as a behavior that is especially sensitive to situational cues, the effects of approach and avoidance orientations on promotive and prohibitive voice were stronger when role expectations for that form of voice were weaker. The theoretical implications of these findings are discussed.

*Keywords:* employee voice, approach and avoidance orientation, role conceptualization

Employees' voice, a behavior that can positively impact overall effectiveness of work units (e.g., Mackenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011), is a multifaceted construct (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014) that can be differentiated in terms of whether it is promotive or prohibitive (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012). *Promotive voice* is the expression of new ideas to improve the status quo; it involves suggesting ways in which organizations can perform better in the future. *Prohibitive voice* is the expression of concerns about harmful practices in the organization; it is directed at avoiding failure as it highlights factors that adversely impact work processes.

We seek to extend research on voice antecedents, via this article. First, we highlight the divergent nomological networks of the two forms of voice by examining their association with approach and

avoidance orientations. *Approach orientation* represents individuals' disposition to improve their situation by seeking new opportunities for demonstrating success; *avoidance orientation* reflects individuals' disposition to reduce harm to themselves by monitoring possible threats in the environment (e.g., Carver, 2006). We propose that approach orientation heightens the salience of work-related opportunities over threats and enhances promotive voice at the cost of prohibitive voice, whereas avoidance orientation heightens the salience of work-related threats over opportunities and enhances prohibitive voice at the cost of promotive voice.

Second, we constructively challenge prevailing views on the effects of avoidance and approach orientations on voice. Avoidance orientation because of its potential to make people fearful of threats in the environment is assumed to be negatively associated with a challenge-oriented behavior such as voice (e.g., Morrison & Rothman, 2009). Similarly, approach orientation is considered an essential precursor to employee proactivity, represented by behaviors such as voice, because it is associated with approaching ideal future states (cf., Grant & Ashford, 2008; Morrison & Rothman, 2009). We propose that, in certain circumstances, avoidance orientation can enhance voice and approach orientation can reduce voice and, thereby, highlight how current assumptions on the effects of approach and avoidance orientation might not hold when voice is differentiated by its *content* (i.e., prohibitive vs. promotive).

Finally, using approach and avoidance orientations as exemplars, we examine how traits interact with situational characteristics to affect voice. Role theory presents a useful lens to examine

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situational effects on voice (Tangirala, Kamdar, Venkataramani, & Parke, 2013). Depending on factors such as their personal attributes, their informal or formal positions in the organization, and the nature of people they interact at work, employees face differing situational reinforcements (social rewards or punishments) to engage in behaviors such as voice (cf., Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991; Katz & Kahn, 1978). These situational expectations, or *role expectations*, channel and guide their actions at work (Biddle, 1986). Hence, role expectations regarding promotive and prohibitive voice represent psychological presses exerted by the environment on employees. We set up a contrast between two competing conceptual perspectives on how approach and avoidance orientation interact with role expectations to influence voice and examine the empirical support for each. By doing so, we highlight how Person  $\times$  Situation interactions can unfold in complex ways in the context of voice.

### Theory and Hypotheses

Approach oriented people pursue positive goals in the environment and are sensitive to opportunities and rewards (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Avoidance oriented people are driven by aversion to dangers in the environment and seek to protect their current conditions from such dangers (Carver & Scheier, 1998). That is, people with approach orientation work toward reducing the discrepancy between their current state and a desired future state (a positive goal); whereas, people with avoidance orientation work toward increasing the discrepancy between their current state and a potential threat to that state (an antigoal; see Carver, 2006).

The initial scholarly view was that approach orientation is more closely associated with risk-taking because it makes positive aspects (rewards) rather than negative aspects (punishment) of the environment salient (e.g., Friedman & Förster, 2001). However, recent research has noted that just as approach oriented people take risks to attain positive outcomes, avoidance orientated people can take risks when they feel their current state is in jeopardy (Scholer, Zou, Fujita, Stroessner, & Higgins, 2010). Accordingly, we argue that an interpersonally risky behavior such as voice can be associated with both approach and avoidance orientations, but that its content will vary as a function of approach and avoidance orientations.

We operationalize approach and avoidance dispositions as performance-prove goal and performance avoid goal orientations, respectively. Performance-prove goal orientation reflects a disposition to demonstrate competence (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). People with performance-prove goal orientation approach the positive state of gaining favorable judgments about their competence. Performance-avoid goal orientation reflects a disposition to avoid disproving of competence (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). People with performance-avoid orientation find negative judgments about their competence aversive and seek to thwart such judgments. Hence, performance-prove and -avoid goal orientations represent approach-avoidance distinctions applied to how individuals “interpret, experience, and act in their achievement pursuit” at work (cf., Elliot & Church, 1997, p. 218; also see Vandewalle, 1997).

We utilized this operationalization for several reasons. First, voice involves public expression of ideas or concerns by employees and is often interpreted as an indicator of their competence (Whiting, Podsakoff, & Pierce, 2008) and is associated with their performance evaluations (Burris, 2012). Performance goal orientations deal with

motivations regarding external or public demonstration of competence and gaining (or not losing) favorable performance evaluations (Vandewalle, Cron, & Slocum, 2001). Hence, we reasoned that achievement (performance) goals are an appropriate domain to examine approach and avoidance in the context of voice. Second, “goal concepts are conceptualized as midlevel constructs, structurally situated between global motivational dispositions and specific behaviors” (Elliot & Church, 1997; p. 219; also see Kanfer & Heggstad, 1997). Thus, by focusing on (performance) goal orientations, we sought to capture most proximal manifestations of approach and avoidance at the workplace. Finally, historically, the distinction between performance-prove and -avoid goal orientations is rooted in social psychological literature on approach and avoidance (e.g., Atkinson, 1957; McClelland, 1951) and prior research has empirically confirmed that indeed performance-prove and -avoid goal orientations closely map on to other temperaments that are associated with approach (e.g., Behavioral Activation System [BAS], extraversion, positive emotionality) and avoidance (e.g., Behavioral Inhibition System [BIS], neuroticism, negative emotionality; Elliot & Thrash, 2002). In the remainder of the article, we refer to performance-prove and -avoid goal orientations as approach and avoidance orientations, respectively.

### Positive Effects of Approach and Avoidance Orientations on Voice

Promotive voice is aimed at improving work practices and allows organizations the possibility of demonstrating stronger performance in future by uncovering new pathways for success (Liang et al., 2012). Approach oriented employees are attentive to rewards in the environment and opportunities to demonstrate success (e.g., Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). Hence, they are likely cognitively attuned to imagining ideal future states at work and might think about and formulate opinions on achieving such future states. Hence, when approach orientated employees speak up, their voice will likely have promotive content—that is, involve expression of ideas on improving the status quo. By contrast, prohibitive voice is aimed at avoiding deterioration of work practices and at reducing harm to organizational performance (Liang et al., 2012). Avoidance orientated employees are vigilant about demonstrations of poor performance and are sensitive to factors that can cause performance failures (e.g., Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). Hence, they are likely cognitively attuned to identifying dangers at work and should likely think about and formulate thoughts on avoiding such dangers. Therefore, when employees with avoidance orientation speak up, their voice will likely have a prohibitive content—that is, involve expression of warnings about potential threats to work practices.

*Hypothesis 1a (H1a):* Approach orientation will be positively associated with promotive voice.

*Hypothesis 1b (H1b):* Avoidance orientation will be positively associated with prohibitive voice.

### Negative Effects of Approach and Avoidance Orientations on Voice

Approach-oriented employees are predominantly focused on opportunities and rewards (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996) and this can interfere with their ability to recognize and reflect on threats at

work. Similarly, avoidance-orientated employees are predominantly focused on threats and dangers (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996) and this can interfere with their ability to recognize and reflect on opportunities for attaining an ideal future at work. There are two potential reasons for this. First, attention is a limited cognitive resource (Simon, 1994) and a focus on positive (negative) aspects in the environment such as opportunities (dangers) by approach-oriented (avoidant-oriented) individuals might prevent them from attending to potential dangers or harmful factors (rewards or possibilities) in that environment. Second, the exploration (inhibitory) mind-set induced by approach (avoidance) orientation is often not conducive to inhibitory (exploratory) mind-set needed to identify threats (opportunities; cf., Carver, 2006). Taking such arguments into account, Atkinson (1957) makes a case that the two orientations likely have antagonistic relationships with each other such that the behavioral choices that are likely to be maximally motivating to approach-oriented individuals are precisely those that are likely to be maximally demotivating to avoidance-oriented individuals resulting in a situation where the relationship that approach orientation has with any behavior is often similar in magnitude but *opposite* in direction to that avoidance orientation has with that behavior. Hence, we propose that avoidance orientation will be negatively related to promotive voice that involves articulating ideas for improvement to work processes and approach orientation will be negatively related to prohibitive voice that involves expression of concern about threats to work processes.

*Hypothesis 2a (H2a):* Approach orientation will be negatively associated with prohibitive voice.

*Hypothesis 2b (H2b):* Avoidance orientation will be negatively associated with promotive voice.

## Role Expectations

The predictive validity of dispositions improves when they are considered in conjunction with situational factors on employees (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001). We examine how the effects of approach and avoidance orientations on promotive and prohibitive voice vary as a function of role expectations imposed on employees by the social environment. According to the role theory, role expectations emanate from a "role-set" or a set of people that the role holder interacts with or observes at work (e.g., supervisors, coworkers; Biddle, 1986). Employees get a sense of expectations about appropriate behaviors at work when directly communicating with peers and superiors or by observing others occupying similar work positions (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Such communications/observations help employees understand social reinforcements and punishments that are associated with various behaviors (Biddle, 1986; Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Role expectations specifically regarding promotive or prohibitive voice can develop for various reasons. When members of the role-set are concerned about threats to current performance, they might signal to employees that prohibitive voice is valued at work. By contrast, when members of the role-set are focused on pushing a team toward previously unattained performance goals, they might signal to employees that promotive voice is valued. Alternatively, for employees holding certain offices (e.g., accountants), ensuring stability and reliability in performance might be the foremost concern. For such employees, the role-set might reward

behaviors that avert harm and ultimately set higher expectations for prohibitive voice. For employees holding other offices (e.g., sales managers), achievement of constantly increasing targets might be critical. For such employees, the role-set might reward behaviors that allow for innovation and consequently set higher expectations for promotive voice.

## Competing Perspectives on Person $\times$ Situation Interactions in the Context of Voice

Prior literature has indicated that traits such as approach and avoidance can combine in multiple ways with situational features to influence behavioral outcomes (e.g., Lau & Nie, 2008; Linnenbrink, 2005). We present two contrasting theoretical perspectives on how approach and avoidance orientations can interact with role expectations to influence voice: (a) the *situational-congruence perspective* that draws from research on regulatory fit (e.g., Higgins, Cesario, Hagiwara, Spiegel, & Pittman, 2010) and person-environment fit (e.g., Edwards, 1996) and predicts that when there is congruence between a trait and situational cues, trait expression is enhanced and when there is a lack of congruence, situational cues are less effective in evoking compliance; and (b) the *situational demands perspective* that draws from research that has established unique nature of voice as an interpersonally risky behavior (e.g., Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) and predicts that situational pressures are very salient to employees engaging in voice. Hence, traits would likely have stronger influences on voice when situational pressures on individuals are weaker. We test two competing sets of hypotheses (H3 and H4), each in consonance with one of these two perspectives.

**Situational-congruence perspective.** Congruence between the context and a trait can facilitate trait-relevant behavior due to various processes (e.g., Cesario, Higgins, & Scholer, 2008; also see Edwards & Cable, 2009): First, context provides cues about appropriate behavior. Individuals with certain mind-sets are cognitively more attuned to understanding or processing those cues and hence better able to respond to them. That is, it is possible that employees with an avoidance (approach) orientation *better comprehend* role expectations regarding prohibitive (promotive) voice and hence becomes more likely to respond to situational requirements for such voice. Second, cues from the context can be more cognitively appealing to some individuals. That is, employees with an avoidance (approach) orientation are likely *better convinced* by messages from the environment about the need for prohibitive (promotive) voice and might engage in higher levels of such voice in response to such role expectations. Third, some individuals are more likely to derive stronger positive affective responses to messages emanating from the context. For instance, employees with an avoidance (approach) orientation likely feel *positive affect* in an environment that encourages prohibitive (promotive) voice, which is in consonance with their personal orientation, and such positive affect might enhance the expression of the behavior demanded in that environment. These three processes often occur automatically without conscious awareness or recognition of the self-situation congruence on part of individuals (e.g., Cesario et al., 2008). In short, from this perspective, two predictions can be made: (a) when there is congruence between the trait and the situation cues, trait expression is enhanced; and (b) when there is a lack of congruence between the trait and the situational cues, situational cues are less effective in evoking compliance.

Table 1  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations

| Variables                               | M     | SD   | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8     | 9     | 10    | 11    | 12    | 13    |
|---|-------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. Work tenure (Years)                  | 9.58  | 4.77 | —    |      |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 2. Age (Years)                          | 30.42 | 4.66 | .97* | —    |      |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 3. Education <sup>a</sup>               | .78   | .42  | .09  | .11  | —    |      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 4. Gender <sup>b</sup>                  | .58   | .49  | .01  | -.01 | -.10 | —    |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 5. Psychological safety                 | 4.56  | 1.25 | .01  | -.02 | .02  | -.08 | (.92) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 6. Voice efficacy                       | 4.58  | 1.22 | -.02 | -.03 | .02  | .04  | .14*  | (.85) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 7. Learning orientation                 | 4.50  | 1.36 | -.03 | -.02 | .09  | .04  | .14*  | .17*  | (.86) |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| 8. Approach orientation                 | 4.49  | 1.35 | -.02 | -.02 | .07  | .05  | .12*  | .14*  | .42*  | (.89) |       |       |       |       |       |
| 9. Avoidance orientation                | 4.38  | 1.51 | -.02 | -.03 | -.02 | .01  | .02   | .11   | .10   | .10   | (.94) |       |       |       |       |
| 10. Promotive voice role expectations   | 4.85  | 1.31 | .07  | .08  | .04  | -.02 | .14*  | .13*  | .43*  | .29*  | .22*  | (.90) |       |       |       |
| 11. Prohibitive voice role expectations | 4.80  | 1.40 | .04  | .03  | .05  | .02  | .08   | .13*  | .11   | .09   | .24*  | .27*  | (.92) |       |       |
| 12. Promotive voice                     | 4.72  | 1.21 | -.05 | -.04 | .07  | .11  | .13*  | .34*  | .42*  | .47*  | -.07  | .31*  | .13*  | (.88) |       |
| 13. Prohibitive voice                   | 4.66  | 1.32 | -.03 | -.03 | -.03 | .03  | .03   | .28*  | -.10  | -.07  | .28*  | .08   | .31*  | .21*  | (.93) |

Note. N = 291; Internal consistency reliabilities appear in parentheses along the diagonal.  
<sup>a</sup> Dummy coded: 1 = no college degree, 0 = college degree. <sup>b</sup> Dummy coded: 1 = female, 0 = male.  
 \* p < .05.

*Hypothesis 3a (H3a):* Approach orientation and promotive voice role expectations positively interact such that the positive effects of approach orientation on promotive voice are enhanced when such role expectations are higher.

*Hypothesis 3b (H3b):* Avoidance orientation and prohibitive voice role expectations positively interact such that the positive effects of avoidance orientation on prohibitive voice are enhanced when such role expectations are higher.

*Hypothesis 3c (H3c):* Approach orientation and prohibitive voice role expectations negatively interact such that the positive effects of such role expectations on prohibitive voice are weakened when approach orientation is higher.

*Hypothesis 3d (H3d):* Avoidance orientation and promotive voice role expectations negatively interact such that the positive effects of such role expectations on promotive voice are weakened when avoidance orientation is higher.

**Situational demands perspective.** Voice is a unique behavior that is distinct from other forms of citizenship (Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995). Voice involves challenging the status quo with new ideas, contrary opinions, or expression of concerns about harmful behaviors; hence, voice can elicit negative or defensive reactions such as ridicule, sanctions, or accusations of incompetence from supervisors and coworkers who often feel threatened by it (cf., Morrison, 2011). Therefore, more than for other work behaviors, employees closely watch their environment (i.e., “read the wind”) for cues when deciding on whether or what to speak up about (e.g., Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Dutton, Ashford, O’Neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997; Liu et al., 2015). For instance, research has indicated that the content and frequency of employees’ voice is influenced by even minor situational cues such as the mood of their interaction partners (Liu et al., 2015).

In other words, situational demands become salient to employees making a choice to speak up. When situational demands,

especially in the context of social rewards or punishments, are so salient, they tend to override dispositional factors in predicting behaviors (Mischel, 2013; Tett & Burnett, 2003). Hence, from a situational demands perspective, for behaviors such as voice that are interpersonally risky, social expectations can act as powerful guides as well as constraints on behaviors; therefore, dispositions should be weakly associated with voice when employees perceive strong situational demands. Consequently, when expectations for a particular form of voice are high, employees, irrespective of their dispositions, should feel a strong situational pressure to engage in that form of voice. When expectations for a particular form of voice are low, employees have a greater discretion in engaging in that form of voice (cf., Tepper, Lockhart, & Hoobler, 2001) and their disposition to be approach or avoidance orientated will likely have a stronger influence on whether or not they take up that form of voice.

*Hypothesis 4a (H4a):* Approach orientation and promotive voice role expectations negatively interact such that the positive effects of approach orientation on promotive voice are weakened when such role expectations are higher.

*Hypothesis 4b (H4b):* Avoidance orientation and prohibitive voice role expectations negatively interact such that the positive effects of avoidance orientation on prohibitive voice are weakened when such role expectations are higher.

*Hypothesis 4c (H4c):* Approach orientation and prohibitive voice role expectations positively interact such that the negative effects of approach orientation on prohibitive voice are weakened when such role expectations are higher.

*Hypothesis 4d (H4d):* Avoidance orientation and promotive voice role expectations positively interact such that the negative effects of avoidance orientation on promotive voice are weakened when such role expectations are higher.

## Method

### Sample and Procedure

We collected data from a firm in Malaysia that is involved in the manufacturing and sales of detergents and home cleaning products. Surveys were disbursed to 324 employees and we received responses from 291 employees and their supervisors (response rate = 90%; 42% male, average age = 30.42 years, average tenure = 4.73 years, 78% college graduates). The supervisors ( $N = 35$ ) managed day-to-day work of the employees and were well suited to report employees' voice behaviors. Employees provided self-reports of their dispositions and role expectations.

### Measures

Table 1 provides the summary statistics of the measures in our study. A 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*) was used.

**Voice.** Supervisors rated employees' promotive voice ("This particular employee proactively suggests new projects, which are beneficial to the organization") and prohibitive voice ("This particular employee advises other colleagues against undesirable behaviors that would hamper job performance") using 5-item scales for each voice type from Liang et al. (2012).

**Approach and avoidance orientation.** Employees reported on their approach orientation using Vandewalle's (1997) 5-item performance-prove scale ("I like to show that I can perform better than my coworkers") and their avoidance orientation using Vandewalle's (1997) 4-item performance avoid scale ("Avoiding a show of low ability is more important to me than learning a new skill").<sup>1</sup>

**Role expectations.** Following the lead of prior research (e.g., Van Dyne, Kamdar, & Joireman, 2008), employees rated the extent to which each behavior in the promotive and prohibitive voice scales used above (from Liang et al., 2012) is an expected part of their job and the extent to which that they socially (punished) rewarded for (not) engaging in that behavior.

**Control variables.** We controlled for age, gender, education, and tenure. We also controlled for prior voice antecedents: six items of psychological safety scale ("If I make a mistake in this organization, it is often held against me;" Edmondson, 1999) and the three-item voice efficacy scale ("I am confident in my ability to speak up on work-related issues in my organization;" Tangirala et al., 2013). Given that we were operationalizing approach and avoidance using performance-prove and -avoid orientations, we controlled for a four-item scale of mastery (learning) goal orientation that is a distinct approach-oriented goal orientation in an achievement setting ("I often look for opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge;" Vandewalle, 1997). Finally, we controlled for one form of voice when examining the other form of voice as the dependent variable to rule out any other common antecedents of those forms of voice that might be acting as omitted variables.

## Results

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the following: promotive voice, prohibitive voice, approach orientation, avoidance orientation, promotive voice role expectations, prohibitive voice role

expectations, voice efficacy, psychological safety and mastery orientation. The nine-factor model demonstrated good fit to the data (CFI = .94, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .05[.04, .05];  $\chi^2 = 1323.94$  ( $df = 783$ )). Wald tests indicated that this model where correlations among all factors was freely estimated was a superior fit to models where the correlation between the two forms of voice, the two forms of role expectations, approach and avoidance orientations was constrained to be one ( $p < .05$ ).

Our hypotheses were at an individual level of analysis. However, supervisors rated multiple employees on voice (average number of employees = 8.31), causing nesting in our data. Hence, we used random coefficient modeling using Mplus 6.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2010) where all our variables were treated as level-1 variables nested within supervisors at level 2.<sup>2</sup> All substantive variables were grand-mean centered. Tables 2 and 3 describe our analysis.

### Test of Main Effects Hypotheses

Approach orientation was positively related to promotive voice ( $b = .34$ ,  $p < .05$ ) but negatively related to prohibitive voice ( $b = -.19$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Avoidance orientation was positively related to prohibitive voice ( $b = .28$ ,  $p < .05$ ) but negatively related to promotive voice ( $b = -.19$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b were supported.

### Test of Competing Hypotheses

Approach orientation and promotive voice role expectations interacted to predict promotive voice ( $b = -.08$ ,  $p < .05$ ), avoidance orientation interacted with prohibitive role expectations to predict prohibitive voice ( $b = -.07$ ,  $p < .05$ ), avoidance orientation interacted with promotive voice role expectations to predict promotive

<sup>1</sup> To confirm that performance-prove and -avoid as measured in our study map on to alternative scales of approach and avoidance motivations, we collected additional data using a panel of 175 working adults in the U.S. via Amazon Mechanical Turk. The participants responded to measures of performance-prove and -avoid used in our study and to other alternative measures of avoidance and approach motivations (Carver & White, 1994)—Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS; "If I think something unpleasant is going to happen I usually get pretty 'worked up'") and for two dimensions of Behavioral Activation System (BAS) that have relevance to work settings—that is, reward responsiveness ("When good things happen to me, it affects me strongly") and drive ("When I want something, I usually go all-out to get it"). Performance-prove correlated strongly with BAS (.56,  $p < .01$ ) and -avoid correlated strongly with BIS (.50,  $p < .01$ ). Further, we performed a second-order confirmatory factor analysis to show that performance-prove along with two components of BAS—that is, reward responsiveness and drive, loads on to a higher order factor of approach motivation and -avoid along with BIS loads on to a higher order factor of avoidance motivation. Two-factor second order model was a reasonable fit to data ( $\chi^2 = 602.50$ ,  $df = 269$ , CFI = .91, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .08) indicating that performance-prove goal orientation shared common variance with the two components of BAS and -avoid goal orientation shared common variance with BIS. This confirmed evidence from earlier research (Elliot & Thrash, 2002) that performance-prove and -avoid are close empirical correlates of other alternative measures of approach and avoidance motivations.

<sup>2</sup> ICC1 values for all the variables (including the manager rating of the two voice forms) were low ( $< .03$ ) and one-way ANOVA indicated limited between-groups variance those variables ( $p > .05$ ). Hence, as a robustness check, we reverified our results using single-level OLS regression and the results remain substantively unchanged.

Table 2  
Results of Random Coefficient Modeling for Promotive Voice

| Variables   | Promotive voice |              |              |                  |                  |                  |
|---|-----------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|   | Model 1         | Model 2      | Model 3      | Model 4          | Model 5          | Model 6          |
| Intercept   | 4.61 (1.72)*    | 4.57 (1.48)* | 4.60 (1.38)* | 4.62 (1.36)*     | 4.63 (1.38)*     | 4.64 (1.32)*     |
| Control variables                                   |                 |              |              |                  |                  |                  |
| Age (Years)   | -.14 (.07)*     | -.12 (.06)   | -.11 (.06)   | -.11 (.06)       | -.12 (.06)*      | -.11 (.06)       |
| Work tenure (Years)                                 | .12 (.07)       | .10 (.06)    | .09 (.06)    | .09 (.06)        | .09 (.06)        | .09 (.05)        |
| Education <sup>a</sup>                              | .11 (.11)       | .05 (.12)    | .07 (.11)    | .04 (.11)        | .07 (.11)        | .05 (.11)        |
| Gender <sup>b</sup>                                 | .15 (.12)       | .12 (.11)    | .14 (.11)    | .13 (.11)        | .13 (.11)        | .11 (.11)        |
| Psychological safety                                | .00 (.05)       | -.02 (.05)   | -.02 (.04)   | -.03 (.05)       | -.03 (.04)       | -.04 (.04)       |
| Voice efficacy                                      | .18 (.06)*      | .16 (.05)*   | .16 (.05)*   | .16 (.05)*       | .13 (.05)*       | .13 (.05)*       |
| Learning orientation                                | .34 (.05)*      | .23 (.04)*   | .19 (.04)*   | .18 (.05)*       | .25 (.05)*       | .24 (.05)*       |
| Prohibitive role expectations                       | .01 (.05)       | .03 (.04)    | .00 (.04)    | .00 (.04)        | -.01 (.05)       | -.02 (.05)       |
| Prohibitive voice                                   | .14 (.06)*      | .22 (.05)*   | .22 (.05)*   | .21 (.05)*       | .21 (.05)*       | .20 (.05)*       |
| Independent variables                               |                 |              |              |                  |                  |                  |
| Approach orientation                                |                 | .34 (.04)*   | .32 (.03)*   | .30 (.03)*       | .30 (.03)*       | .28 (.03)*       |
| Avoidance orientation                               |                 | -.19 (.03)*  | -.20 (.03)*  | -.20 (.03)*      | -.22 (.03)*      | -.21 (.03)*      |
| Moderator   |                 |              |              |                  |                  |                  |
| Promotive role expectations                         |                 |              | .13 (.05)*   | .14 (.05)*       | .14 (.04)*       | .14 (.05)*       |
| Interaction terms                                   |                 |              |              |                  |                  |                  |
| Approach orientation × Promotive role expectations  |                 |              |              | -.07 (.03)*      |                  | -.08 (.04)*      |
| Avoidance orientation × Promotive role expectations |                 |              |              |                  | .14 (.03)*       | .15 (.03)*       |
| R <sup>2c</sup>                                     | .26             | .41          | .43          | .43              | .46              | .48              |
| ΔR <sup>2c</sup>                                    |                 | .15          | .01          | .01 <sup>d</sup> | .04 <sup>d</sup> | .05 <sup>d</sup> |

Note. Level 1 *N* = 291; Level 2 *N* = 35. Unstandardized regression weights; Substantive variables grand mean-centered.  
<sup>a</sup> Dummy coded: 1 = no college degree, 0 = college degree. <sup>b</sup> Dummy coded: 1 = female, 0 = male. <sup>c</sup> Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> values represent the total within-group variance explained by the models. <sup>d</sup> ΔR<sup>2</sup> represents the incremental variance explained over Model 3.  
 \* *p* < .05.

voice (*b* = .15, *p* < .05), and approach orientation interacted with prohibitive voice role expectations to predict prohibitive voice (*b* = .10, *p* < .05). We examined simple slopes for each of the four interactions (Table 4; Aiken & West, 1991) as well as graphical representations of the interactions (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4). All four

interactions demonstrated a consistent trend where the relationship between dispositions (approach vs. avoidance) and voice was weaker when situational demands (role expectations) were higher. Hence, results supported the situational demands hypotheses (H4a–d) but not the situational congruence hypotheses (H3a–d).

Table 3  
Results of Random Coefficient Modeling for Prohibitive Voice

| Variables   | Prohibitive voice |              |              |                  |                  |                  |
|---|-------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|   | Model 1           | Model 2      | Model 3      | Model 4          | Model 5          | Model 6          |
| Intercept   | 4.66 (1.73)*      | 2.94 (1.61)* | 4.64 (1.71)* | 4.64 (1.69)*     | 4.64 (1.71)*     | 4.64 (1.70)*     |
| Control variables                                     |                   |              |              |                  |                  |                  |
| Age (Years)   | -.04 (.07)        | .01 (.06)    | -.06 (.07)   | -.07 (.07)       | -.06 (.07)       | -.07 (.07)       |
| Work tenure (Years)                                   | .03 (.06)         | -.01 (.06)   | .05 (.06)    | .06 (.06)        | .05 (.06)        | .06 (.06)        |
| Education <sup>a</sup>                                | -.07 (.20)        | -.04 (.20)   | -.08 (.19)   | -.09 (.18)       | -.11 (.19)       | -.12 (.18)       |
| Gender <sup>b</sup>                                   | .02 (.15)         | .01 (.15)    | -.03 (.14)   | -.03 (.14)       | -.04 (.15)       | -.04 (.14)       |
| Psychological safety                                  | -.02 (.06)        | .00 (.06)    | -.02 (.06)   | -.02 (.06)       | -.02 (.06)       | -.02 (.06)       |
| Voice efficacy  | .26 (.08)*        | .21 (.07)*   | .19 (.07)*   | .18 (.08)*       | .18 (.07)*       | .18 (.08)*       |
| Learning orientation                                  | -.27 (.06)*       | -.24 (.05)*  | -.24 (.05)*  | -.21 (.05)*      | -.23 (.05)*      | -.21 (.06)*      |
| Promotive role expectations                           | .11 (.07)         | .04 (.05)    | .00 (.05)    | .00 (.05)        | .01 (.05)        | .01 (.05)        |
| Promotive voice                                       | .23 (.08)*        | .38 (.08)*   | .35 (.09)*   | .37 (.09)*       | .36 (.08)*       | .38 (.09)*       |
| Independent variables                                 |                   |              |              |                  |                  |                  |
| Approach orientation                                  |                   | -.19 (.05)*  | -.18 (.05)*  | -.17 (.05)*      | -.16 (.05)*      | -.15 (.05)*      |
| Avoidance orientation                                 |                   | .28 (.04)*   | .23 (.05)*   | .21 (.05)*       | .23 (.04)*       | .21 (.04)*       |
| Moderator   |                   |              |              |                  |                  |                  |
| Prohibitive role expectations                         |                   |              | .21 (.05)*   | .19 (.06)*       | .19 (.05)*       | .17 (.06)*       |
| Interaction terms                                     |                   |              |              |                  |                  |                  |
| Approach orientation × Prohibitive role expectations  |                   |              |              | .11 (.04)*       |                  | .10 (.04)*       |
| Avoidance orientation × Prohibitive role expectations |                   |              |              |                  | -.08 (.02)*      | -.07 (.02)*      |
| R <sup>2c</sup>                                       | .15               | .26          | .30          | .32              | .32              | .33              |
| ΔR <sup>2</sup>                                       |                   | .11          | .15          | .02 <sup>d</sup> | .02 <sup>d</sup> | .04 <sup>d</sup> |

Note. Level 1 *N* = 291; Level 2 *N* = 35; Unstandardized regression weights; Substantive variables grand mean-centered.  
<sup>a</sup> Dummy coded: 1 = no college degree, 0 = college degree. <sup>b</sup> Dummy coded: 1 = female, 0 = male. <sup>c</sup> Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup> values represent the total within-group variance explained by the models; <sup>d</sup> ΔR<sup>2</sup> represents the incremental variance explained over Model 3.  
 \* *p* < .05.

Table 4  
Simple Slopes Tests

| Independent variable  | Moderator                           | Simple slope (Conditional effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable at the specified level of the moderator) |                                       |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
|                       |                                     | Dependent variable: Promotive voice   |                                       |
| Approach orientation  | High level of the moderator (+1 SD) | .17 (.07)*  | Dependent variable: Prohibitive voice |
|                       | Low level of the moderator (-1 SD)  | .40 (.06)*  |                                       |
| Avoidance orientation | High level of the moderator (+1 SD) | -.01 (.06)  | Dependent variable: Promotive voice   |
|                       | Low level of the moderator (-1 SD)  | -.42 (.05)*   |                                       |
| Approach orientation  | High level of the moderator (+1 SD) | -.03 (.08)  | Dependent variable: Prohibitive voice |
|                       | Low level of the moderator (-1 SD)  | -.28 (.06)*   |                                       |
| Avoidance orientation | High level of the moderator (+1 SD) | .12 (.05)*  | Dependent variable: Promotive voice   |
|                       | Low level of the moderator (-1 SD)  | .30 (.05)*  |                                       |

Note. Unstandardized regression weights with standard errors in parenthesis.  
\*  $p < .05$ .

## Discussion

We examined how promotive and prohibitive voice are influenced by approach and avoidance orientations. Results indicated that approach orientation had positive relationship with promotive voice and negative relationship with prohibitive voice. Avoidance orientation had positive relationship with prohibitive voice and negative relationship with promotive voice. Further, in support of the situational demands argument that situational presses are very salient to employees engaging in voice, the effects of approach and avoidance orientations on promotive or prohibitive voice were weaker when the role expectations for that form of voice were stronger.

## Theoretical Contributions

**Implications of our main effects findings.** We extend research on dispositional influences on voice (e.g., Grant & Mayer, 2009; LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Tangirala et al., 2013). This work has indicated that voice, which can be interpersonally disruptive, is negatively related to agreeableness (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001) and that employees with stronger duty orientation speak up more (Tangirala et al., 2013). We add to this work by showing that a given disposition (e.g., avoidance orientation) can have a positive relationship with one form of voice (prohibitive voice) but a negative relationship with another (promotive voice). Hence, we underscore the utility of examining voice as a multidimensional construct whose content can critically determine the nature of its relationship with a particular disposition.

dimensional construct whose content can critically determine the nature of its relationship with a particular disposition.

In the process, we challenge prevailing views on the effects of avoidance orientation. For instance, Morrison and Rothman (2009, p. 129) conclude that, “mechanisms that strengthen avoidance or inhibition tendencies may increase [employee] silence.” Their logic is that voice is a socially risky behavior that involves challenging the status quo; hence, voice can elicit negative reactions such as ridicule or sanctions from managers and peers who feel threatened by it. Therefore, employees with avoidance orientation, who are averse to failure, remain silent to avoid adverse personal consequences associated with voice (also see Morrison, See, & Pan, 2015). Similar consensus exists in the goal orientation research that avoidance orientation only has negative effects on work behaviors as it can make employees inhibited by fear of failure to constructively act in their social environment (Payne, Youngcourt, & Beaubien, 2007). We show that avoidance oriented employees do speak up but on prohibitive issues; that is, when such employees perceive factors in their work environment that can lead to failures, they can overcome their personal inhibitions about voice and speak up to prevent such failures.

Similarly, approach orientation is said to be key to employee proactivity, an aspect of which is voice (Parker & Collins, 2010), because it is associated with approaching ideal future states (e.g., Morrison & Rothman, 2009). Our findings indicate that employees with approach orientation, in their pursuit of new opportunities for improvement of practices, might actually not have sufficient mo-

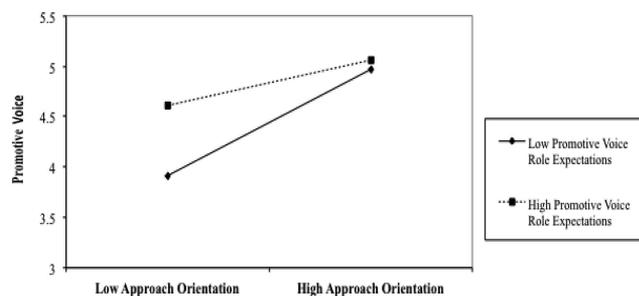


Figure 1. Interactive effects of approach orientation and promotive voice role expectations on promotive voice.

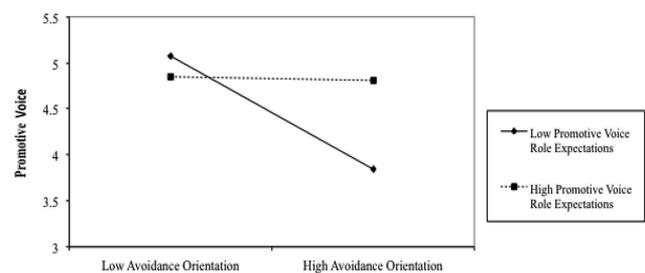


Figure 2. Interactive effects of avoidance orientation and promotive voice role expectations on promotive voice.

tivation to explore threats and dangers that might cause failure in organizations. Hence, such employees might fail to speak-up on such threats and dangers.

**Implications of our moderation findings.** We bring together contrasting theoretical arguments (situational congruence perspective vs. the situational demands perspective) about how dispositions might influence voice and set up a test of those arguments to understand empirical support for each. Our results support the situational demands perspective that employees are especially sensitive to situational cues (i.e., likely seek to “read the wind”) when engaging in voice. That is, dispositions such as approach and avoidance orientation more strongly influenced voice when situational presses (i.e., role expectations) were weaker.

This brings up the question of why we likely found support for the situational demands perspective and under what circumstances would there be support for the situational congruence perspective. Here, it is useful to examine evidence for Person × Situation interactions in the context of other citizenship behaviors. For instance, behaviors such as interpersonal helping are known to increase when the situation (e.g., team structure) is consonant with or matches the regulatory focus of the employees (Dimotakis, Davison, & Hollenbeck, 2012). In our study, voice as a dependent variable is acting contrary to such findings. One possible conclusion is that citizenship behaviors that are not challenging the status-quo and hence less risky (including helping; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) are likely enhanced when there is a match between individuals and the situation whereas voice, an interpersonally risky behavior, is likely to follow a pattern in which situational demands potentially have an overriding effect on regulatory traits, an aspect that future studies need to keep in mind and more directly test.

**Limitations and Future Research**

First, due to our study’s cross-sectional nature, we cannot conclusively establish causality. Research can use longitudinal designs to overcome this issue. Second, employees whose traits were not congruent with their role expectations might have left the organization; this might have led to selection biases in our sample. Studies can rule out such selection biases by experimentally manipulating role expectations. Third, the two forms of voice were positively correlated. This is to be expected because although they vary in their content and have distinct relationships with approach and avoidance orientations, they also have common attributes (e.g., both are challenge-oriented behaviors) and hence, connected similarly with other antecedents (e.g., efficacy). This overlap in

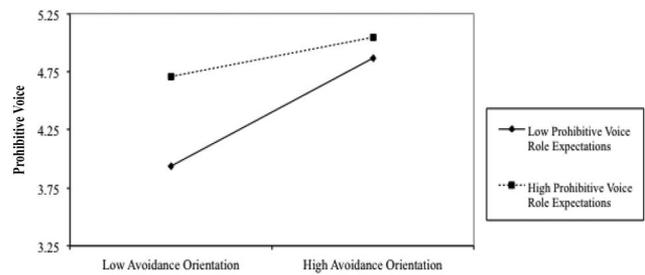


Figure 4. Interactive effects of avoidance orientation and prohibitive voice role expectations on prohibitive voice.

antecedents between the two voice forms might have suppressed some bivariate correlations in our data (e.g., between approach orientation and prohibitive voice). Raw correlations provide only limited information about a relationship, compared with regression estimates that provide more precise estimates—controlling for the noise caused by other factors—and can, thereby, unpack interesting theoretical dynamics underlying it (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). However, studies should examine the extent to which the differential effects of approach and avoidance on voice have practical significance via replication (cf., Aguinis et al., 2010). Finally, we examine approach and avoidance motivation in the domain of performance goals. Our results indicated (Tables 2 and 3) that, consistent with our theory, mastery orientation, an approach-oriented trait, is positively (negatively) related to promotive (prohibitive) voice. It will be useful to examine effects of approach and avoidance in domains other than achievement goals. For instance, scholars have noted that approach versus avoidance temperaments can also be manifested as extraversion versus neuroticism or as positive versus negative emotionality (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). Replications using such alternative operationalizations of approach and avoidance orientations and comparing results across such operationalizations will add greater confidence about our findings.

**Managerial Implications**

Our findings indicate that managers can use selection as a tool to enhance voice. They can hire approach-oriented employees when teams need innovative ideas and avoidance-oriented employees when teams need members to raise alarm about potential failures. Managers, who cannot influence the composition of their teams via selection, can still communicate expectations about the desirability for a particular form of voice. Such communications can often enhance that form of voice irrespective of their employees’ personal dispositions.

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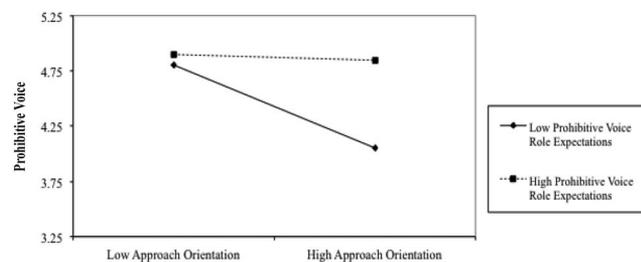


Figure 3. Interactive effects of approach orientation and prohibitive voice role expectations on prohibitive voice.

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