Thesis Title:

Promotive Voice and Promotability Influence by Self-interest Under Role Ambiguity Climate
Promotive Voice and Promotability Influence by Self-interest Under Role Ambiguity Climate

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to empirically examine the impact of role ambiguity in influencing the relationship between self-interest and employees’ voice behavior – promotive voice as well as promotability from a multilevel perspective. Our analysis predicted the relationship between self-interest and the variables promotive voice and promotability results a curvilinear relationship. Promotive voice of an employee is higher and is likely to be promoted when self-interest is at lowest and highest. Further, we proposed role ambiguity moderates the relationship. Using data from 37 teams, we found that both curvilinear relationships is significant, but the moderator is not.

Keywords: self-interest, promotive voice, promotability, role ambiguity, nonlinear
1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking up in a team or organization is subject to ever increase in organizational effectiveness to innovate and adapt successfully in hypercompetitive business environments, giving leaders the space to learn about problems and perceptions for improvements (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003; Morrison, 2011). Previous research has increasingly regarded employee willing to speak up, to comment or to give suggestions as critical factors for a corporation’s performance and success (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Particularly, in any firms, knowledge intensive industries draw innovation among discussions and expressions as a voice behavior of individuals, teams and units (Carnevale, Huang, Crede, Harms, & Uhl-Bien, 2017). Having recognized the critical role of voice behavior, “the expression of constructive challenge with an intent to improve rather than merely criticize” (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), researchers have tried to interpret the motivational, social, and psychological factors that promote or inhibit employee voice behavior (Burris, 2012; Burris, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008; Liang, C. Farh & Farh, 2012; Van Der Vegt, Van De Vliert, & Oosterhof, 2003).

Voice is commonly classified as an extra-role behavior (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) and Graham and Van Dyne (2006) explained these voice behaviors can be proactive social behavior that benefit oneself, in an organizational, or in a society, but it can be different when the motivation varies in an environment. Other studies, Choi (2007) and Wong and Cong (2016) argued prosocial motivation of voice is different from that of other extra-role behaviors at different working environments. Thus, it becomes difficult for leaders to monitor and enforce voice behaviors with incentives (i.e., such as promotion, favorable performance evaluations, etc.) and external encouragements (Organ, 1988). In fact, there was a prospect that employee counterfeit such voice behavior to only pursue for their own personal utility in act of self-interest (Ferraro, Pfeffer, & Sutton, 2005; Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003).

Despite the acknowledgement the importance of voice, empirical work has yet to examine the relationship between voice and self-interest. There are two possible reasons for this absence. First, voice literature contained strong theoretical background since Hirschman (1970) work, yet empirical works of new antecedents on voice emerged rapidly (Burris, 2012; Chamberlin, Newton, & Lepine, 2017; Graham & Van Dyne, 2006; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). For instance, employee’s personality, sense of autonomy and perceive control or authority served as an antecedents of voice behavior (Lee, Diefendorff, Kim, & Bian, 2014). Hence, self-interest which undermines in the category of an intentional moral personality still has not been well explored (Frimer, Walker, Dunlop, Lee, & Riches, 2011). Second, the literature pertaining to self-interest (Collins, 2006; Grant & Patil, 2012; Liu & DeFrank, 2013) offered a negative relationship of people concerning, helping, or sharing with others respond to self-interest. Arguments of self-interest people expected other to work for their own goals at the risk of others (Deutsch, 1973). In other words, self-interest people hoped to achieve their independent goals with little regard for the goals of others. However, we draw from theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) to suggest that, in organizational settings, the effects of self-interest on voice may not follow a simple linear pattern but a curvilinear (i.e. U-shaped). This is because those employees who were self-interest may voice higher not only persisted the effort to benefit as a group but also for oneself for the status quo (Liang et al., 2012).
There are two different types of voice, specifically promotive voice and prohibitive voice (Carnevale et al., 2017). Promotive voice described employee giving out constructive ideas or future-oriented suggestions to improve overall function in their team or in their organization. On the other hand, prohibitive voice indicated pointing out current problem situation leading to negative evaluation by other people (Liang et al., 2012). Recently, voice research focused on the quality of voice identifying what type of voice is better. Further findings suggested social persuasion theory notes manager tend to give more positive evaluation (e.g., such as giving a promotion) to employee who speaks up (Xu et al., 2018). In this context, promotive voice presents a better measure than prohibitive voice as promotive voice presents a less risky or worthy behavior in a team or in an organization.

A promotion perhaps served as a motivation to work harder or personal goal for employees. Promotability evaluation through managers echoes employee current and future performance at higher organizational levels (De Pater, Van Vianen, Bechtold, & Klehe, 2009). In other words, climbing up to pursue high social value is usually perceived as fulfilling one’s value or desire, a role obligation and meeting manager’s expectation in a business network (Chen, Wang, Wei, Fwu, & Hwang, 2009). Indeed, Long, Baer, Colquitt, Outlaw, and Dhensa-Kahlon (2015) presented employees may be interested to make favorable impression to their supervisors through impression management motives, to impress others and provide a good image (Yun, Takeuchi, & Liu, 2007). To expand on this point, we proposed the conceptual framework of employee’s self-interest takes altruism or ambitious act in the team seen by his or her supervisor, signaling salient characteristics of employees. Conversely, some benevolent employees can be enthusiastic at their work and committed to their organization. Therefore, we theorized leaders cultivate those individuals who are extraordinary, those who strive to be better, and neglect those ordinary employees showing a curvilinear relationship.

Further, to provide depth to our investigation, we also examine a potential moderator of role ambiguity. The extent to which employees feel uncertain of clear instructions to reach the common goals may result in lower belongingness to the team (Rodriguez-Escudero, Carbonell, & Munuera-Aleman, 2010). However, recent studies depicted high role ambiguity may increase performance outcomes in some circumstances (Ellsberg, 1961; Yun et al., 2007). These circumstances can be intrinsic motivation or opportunity for individuals to focus more on their task and impress others in their team. Thus, role ambiguity can potentially affect both the degree to which employee voices in a team and a manager’s decisions on promoting an employee (Trautmann, Vieider, & Wakker, 2008). Consequently, we view role ambiguity as a team climate because employees may not take the risk to act because it can be a double-edged sword.

Taken together, the current study presented a multilevel framework to investigate whether self-interest affect voice behavior and promotability under role ambiguity. In so doing, we contribute to the voice literature by theorizing self-interest is an antecedent of voice but also considering a potential for nonlinear effects (i.e., curvilinear). Second, we draw from impression management motives employees to influence manager’s response for promotability. We argued that employee may take self-interest action that is motivated by intrinsic motivation or altruism action for the sake of the team. To the supervisor, these intentioned engagements may consider a promotion. Hence, both curvilinear relationships are tested moderating effect of role ambiguity. We tested the
proposed model using data from teams in Taiwan where self-interest is measured at Time period 1 whereas voice and promotability at Time period 2 using observer ratings.

2. THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Theory of Planned Behavior and Self-interest

Individuals may be motivated by the expected outcomes in their own act of self-interest (Collins, 2006). Researches and experiments on how self-interest individuals would react or behave found those who attempt to maximize their expected result under their own values or belief will either share information or help others. (Constant, Kiesler, & Sproull, 1994; Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004). Accumulating evidence suggests that self-interest is a powerful individual motive for human survival and success (Miller, 2001). Self-interest is used to describe an individual behavior of an act to do whatever it takes to achieve their own desires, ignoring other’s concerns or how their actions influence others (Adams, 1998). For instance, employees plan to take care, share knowledge if they believe doing so is beneficial for themselves. Moreover, following theory of planned behavior, individuals are defined more behavioral intentioned when the desire of one’s motivation factor is strong (Bagozzi, 1992), correspondingly to self-interest. In line with this reasoning, Armitage and Conner (2001) meta-analytic review of planned behavior provided a helpful theoretical framework for understanding how one’s self interest similarly act as an antecedent involve in such behavior. First, self-interest can cause a major issue toward attitudes on tangible or intangible things (a strong attitude) (Constant et al., 1994; Weeden & Kurzban, 2017). Second, the individuals must perceive the behavior to be just right under expectation of other without suspicion (subjective norms). Third, the individual must perceive that he or she can control over one’s behavior (perceived behavioral control) (Liang et al., 2012). Accumulated evidences in theory of planned behavior showed the performance of the behavior is formulated jointly to demonstrate effectiveness intentions, or a strong motive (Ajzen, 2001; Liang et al., 2012; Stone, Jawahar, & Kisamore, 2010).

By contrast, many studies find individuals help others because they are less self-centered or less calculative due to concern for the wellbeing of others or their organization (Moon, 2001; Tangirala, Kamdar, Venkataramani, & Parke, 2013). For example, such individuals committed to an organization or project and strived to help co-worker even at the risk of damage his or her personal interest or image (Moon, 2001), or he or she gets promoted not through unethical manners but through prosocial means such as helping others in the organization or team (Moon, Kamdar, Mayer, & Takeuchi, 2008). In this context, we argued there is divergence effect in self-interest. Individuals who have high self-interest and low self-interest will likely to behave the same or may result in similar outcomes. Voice, as a behavior, and promotability, as an outcome, are useful to highlight such divergence.

2.2 The relationship between self-interest and promotive voice

In Chamberlin et al. (2017) meta-analysis, voice has been categorized and understand significantly in promotive and prohibitive through different antecedents. Promotive voice is positively associated with job performance; on the contrary, it is also true for prohibitive voice (i.e, pointing current problems or concerns), but may be harmful and discrepancy manner (Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003; Liang et al., 2012).
Although voice behavior can be distinguished into many types of voice, it is commonly known as a unique extra-role performance that challenges the status quo of others (Liang et al., 2012; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Vandyne, Cummings, & Parks, 1995). Giving out constructive advice or suggestion may result prominent and indifference with others (Stamper & Dyne, 2001), positive evaluation on performance (Carnevale et al., 2017; Thompson, 2005), as well as possibility to be promoted (Xu et al., 2018). However, too much of a voice may result risks in a business network as bossiness, spontaneous conflicts, or trust among important stakeholders such as colleagues and managers; (Liang et al., 2012; Tepper, Duffy, Hoobler, & Ensley, 2004) typically in an Asia culture society where organizational hierarchy is consequential. Therefore, individuals may measure the risk to not to voice too much when it is an intention, or “planned behavior”, in an relational context (Dutton, Ashford, O’neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997; Kish-Gephart, Detert, Treviño, & Edmondson, 2009; Liang et al., 2012; Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003).

It is intuitive that self-interest should have a negative relationship with knowledge sharing (Liu & DeFrank, 2013) and helping behavior (Grant & Patil, 2012) or concern for others (Collins, 2006). As knowledge or helping others may be conducive to the performance of others and place the person who shared or helped at a disadvantage. However, we argued that the influence of self-interest on voice-behavior may perform differently. Logically, low or high self-interest should construct similar result of effective sharing and helping-behavior, but as self-interest further moves from moderate to high levels, we expect voice-behavior to increase once again. This is because we theorized high self-interest individuals do behave intentionally. High self-interest people help or voice to the team when it becomes prominent and these behavior helps to build their self-image and achieve their value purpose. As a result, high self-interest individuals may also behave kindly like those who are low self-interest, but intentional. Therefore, we expected that at high levels of self-interest, the voice-behavior associated with extra-role behavior would once again increase, promoting subsequent voice. Out of the two voice, we used promotive voice to provide a better measure for giving constructive ideas than prohibit voice because self-interest individuals will not take the risk to point out problems and ruin their self-image. In short, there is a U-shaped relationship between self-interest and promotive voice in which promotive voice dominates at low and high levels of self-interest. At low levels of self-interest, those employees engage in promotive voice particularly to help the team or supervisor arising from selfless act. At high levels of self-interest, employees engage in promotive voice particularly for their own benefit outcome. Thus, we hypothesized:

**Hypothesis 1**: The relationship between self-interest and promotive voice is U-shaped

2.3 The relationship between self-interest and promotability

In the voice literature, leader evaluations on employees recently has been widely used to reflect another measures motive for rewarding voice behaviors (Xu et al., 2018). Burris (2012) proposed that the relationship between the type of voice and performance endorsement was mediated by promotability. Through impression management motives, there is an existential flexibility where one individual served their own desire value at various needs, such as a reward or in this case promotion, can be a strong intentional factors to perform well and impress his or her supervisors (Gehman & Grimes, 2017; Yun et al., 2007). When promotion opportunity is given, people with high self-interest
may strive to act and be ambitious to prove they are qualified. Therefore, we expect leaders perceive to promote aggressive and enthusiastic employees because they take actions and are performance driven which will benefit the team or the organization. At the same time, leaders may promote those employees with low self-interest because they are not self-centered and well committed to their work. Although there may not be aggressive characteristics involved, supervisors seek low self-interest people have coordinating and supporting characteristics, thus worth promoted. Given discussion above:

*Hypothesis 2*: There is a U-shaped relationship between self-interest and promotability

### 2.4 The moderating role of role ambiguity

Role ambiguity was described “lack of the necessary information available to a given organizational position” (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970) and “degree of incongruity or incompatibility in the expectations or requirements communicated” (Rodríguez-Escudero et al., 2010). Ambiguity can be defined as a characteristic in organizational context that involves unclear probabilities to options and vague probabilities among business owners and managers under uncertainty climate (Trautmann et al., 2008). Studies have shown role ambiguity negatively influences employees’ attitude and behavior, such as less effective job performance, decreased job satisfaction, loss of self-confidence during the productivity process, and less psychological safe (Rizzo et al., 1970). When employees cannot have a clear goal or motive, their intention to help or share declines because they sense “danger” if everything is unclear; thus, afraid to act. Under ambiguity circumstances, the future becomes indistinct and obscure (Rizzo et al., 1970). Employees have no clear goal or motivation for getting promoted, salary increase, or cooperate vision when facing ambiguity. We argued that when individuals face high levels of ambiguity, high and low self-interest people will not take the risk and lower their behavior or intention to voice for others as they dislike the feeling of taking risk or effort to input in the organization. In other words, high role ambiguity climate weakens the intention and willingness of self-interest employee to give constructive advice or impress to others because there is much higher risk to take under this environment. In contrast, when ambiguity is at low level, employees experience “no danger” and is willing to voice for the sake of the team that they are in. Therefore:

*Hypothesis 3a*: Role ambiguity moderates the curvilinear relationship between self-interest and promotive voice, such that the U-shaped curvilinear relationship will be weakened for teams with higher levels of role ambiguity.

*Hypothesis 3b*: Role ambiguity moderates the curvilinear relationship between self-interest and promotability, such that the U-shaped curvilinear relationship will be weakened for teams with higher levels of role ambiguity.
3. METHOD

Figure 1 Research Framework

3.1 Sample and Procedures

Survey data were collected online targeting project teams consist within two to eight employees excluding team supervisors in Taiwan. The teams were obtained from multiple sources including EMBA, MBA program alumni lists and researchers’ personal contacts. Data were collected in two time periods where at Time 1, employees were asked to self-rate self-interest and role ambiguity. Control variables were also collected at Time 1. Two-month later, the researcher gave team supervisors questionnaire to collect rating of their employee in promotive voice and promotability because in a team, managers will know best when they confront self-interested employee as employees are responsible for carrying out the productivity and practices in an organization. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity of employee and supervisor responses, we e-mailed everyone separately and instructed employees and supervisor to reply directly to the researchers. Later each team questionnaires were matched by code numbers. Translations were made by one of the authors who was fluent in Chinese. Chinese version of questionnaire was pilot tested, revised again, and back to back translated (Brislin, 1986) after when one feels this question is unclear or is unable to understand.

We distributed surveys to 78 teams, 48 teams responded at Time 1 and 37 leaders followed up at Time 2. The average within-team response rate was 61.5% at Time 1 and 77% at Time 2 (conversion rate from Time 1). The final sample consisted of 137 employees within 37 teams ranging two to eight members (M = 7.89, SD = 3.27) from 24 different companies. In the sample, it consisted of 6 companies in semiconductor industry, 3 companies in information/network technology, 2 companies in electronics, 2 companies in photonics, 1 company in medical, 3 companies in traditional manufacture industry, and 7 companies in service sector. Of the team-member participants, 44.5% were male, 55.7% had a bachelor’s degree and 31.1% had master’s degree and higher, and 64.2% had organizational tenure of two years or more. Participants for leaders were 64.9% male, 41.7% had a bachelor’s degree and 54.2% had a master’s degree and higher.
3.2 Measures

*Self-interest.* To take the point in a business perspective, six items from career self-interest of (Collins, 2006) were adopted to measure self-interest ($\alpha = .85$). Responses were made on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item is “I will do whatever it takes to enhance my job security”.

*Promotive voice.* The six survey items were used to assess supervisors’ ratings of their employees’ promotive voice ($\alpha = .95$) from Van Dyne and LePine (1998). Responses were rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A sample item is “This particular co-worker develops and makes recommendations concerning issues that affect this work group”.

*Promotability.* The three items from Xu et al. (2018) with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) were used to measure promotability ($\alpha = .94$) of individuals rated by their team leader. A sample item is “If a position were available, I would recommend this person for a promotion”.

*Role ambiguity.* The four items ($\alpha = .90$) for measuring ambiguity were adopted from the prior studies of Rodriguez-Escudero et al. (2010) which responses were made on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A sample item is “Team members were uncertain about how much authority they had”.

The role ambiguity scores were derived by averaging individual ambiguity scores within each team. The viability of creating an aggregated measure of role ambiguity was held by the following method by Kozlowsky and Hults (1987) and James, Demaree, and Wolf (1984). The within-group agreement (rwg), intra-class correlation (ICC1) and reliability of the mean (ICC2) were calculated. The mean value of rwg for role ambiguity was 0.75 (p <0.05), ICC(1) and ICC(2) values were 0.17 and 0.43 respectively. The mean value of rwg and ICC(1) values were above acceptable levels (Bliese, 2000) and significant. Thus, role ambiguity climate was justified for aggregated measure.

*Control variables.* We controlled several individual characteristics at the individual level including gender, age, education and team tenure. We also controlled for team age and size at the group level. Team age was operationalized as the number of years that the group had been in the firm. Team size was operationalized as the number of employees in the work group. In this study, team leaders are not considered to be a part of the employees.

In the present study, the variable self-interest and role ambiguity were both self-reported measures at Time 1. Promotive voice and promotability were both leader-rated at Time 2 respectively. To reduce the concern of common method error variance (CMV), survey was distributed at two different time periods and data was examined by using Harman’s one-factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986): items at the individual level including self-interest, promotive voice and promotability were considered in a factor analysis through same method in Liu and DeFrank (2013) to determine whether the majority of the variance could be accounted for by one general factor. The results revealed two factors with Eigenvalues greater than one in the principle component factor analysis therefore our data did not suffer extensively from unacceptable degrees of common method bias.
4. RESULT

4.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Before we test our hypotheses, we examined our validity of our model by performing confirmatory analysis (CFA) at individual level, which included self-interest, promotive voice, and promotability. Results of the CFAs are presented in Table 1 and suggested that the three-factor model yielded a better model fit (comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.97, Tucker-Lewis index [TLI] = 0.96, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.07) than other models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>model</th>
<th>combined</th>
<th>χ²/df</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
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<tr>
<td>Three-factor</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-factor</td>
<td>promotive voice + promotability</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.07</td>
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<td>Two-factor</td>
<td>self-interest + promotive voice</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two-factor</td>
<td>self-interest + promotability</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.29</td>
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<td>One-factor</td>
<td>all combined</td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.19</td>
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</table>

The means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for the study variables are shown in Table 2. The correlation between leader-rated promotive voice and promotability are rather high (0.82). This may raise up a concern for collinearity between promotive voice and promotability.

4.2 Hypothesis tests

The hypothesized model was estimated using Mplus 7 (Heck & Thomas, 2015). Mplus provides a better appropriate estimate of standard errors than any other analytical methods because variable role ambiguity is nested in group and Mplus can also simultaneously evaluate the coefficient factors of the whole model while maintain appropriate analysis for the outcome. In performing the analyses, we originally controlled for several variables, including team age and size at the team level, employees’ gender, age, education and team tenure at the individual level. We reduce possible of multicollinearity problem and address the interpretation of intercepts, the variance of random intercepts across groups and the covariance of intercepts with random slopes of all variables by grand-mean centering in both analyses. The variance of random intercepts across groups and the covariance of intercepts (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998).

We predicted that self-interest would have a U-shaped relationship with promotive voice (Hypothesis 1) and promotability (Hypothesis 2). To test these hypotheses, we regressed promotive voice and promotability on self-interest and their squared term. Table 3 indicated that self-interest have a linear effect (β = -2.12, p < 0.05) and a stronger significant result of curvilinear effect (β = 0.31, p < 0.01) on promotive voice.
Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<td>Age</td>
<td>38.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>-0.44**</td>
<td>-1.8*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team tenure</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>0.57**</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.37**</td>
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<td>Self-interest</td>
<td>3.83</td>
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<td>0.08</td>
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<td>0.84</td>
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<td>Promotive Voice</td>
<td>5.51</td>
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<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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<td>Promotability</td>
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<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.82**</td>
<td>0.93</td>
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<td><strong>Group level variables</strong></td>
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<td>Group age</td>
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<td>Group size</td>
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<td>3.27</td>
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<td>Team role ambiguity</td>
<td>2.59</td>
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<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.89</td>
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Note. Cronbach’s alphas for each scale are underlined and shown in the diagonal.

* p <.05; ** p <.01; *** p <.001 (two-tailed significance)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Promotive Voice</th>
<th>Promotability</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M1</td>
<td>M2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Individual Level</strong></td>
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<td>0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employee gender</td>
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<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee education</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee tenure</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-interest</td>
<td>-2.12 *</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-interest²</td>
<td>0.32 **</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
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<td><strong>Team level</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group tenure</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group size</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role ambiguity</td>
<td>-0.32 *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-interest × Role ambiguity</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-interest² × Role ambiguity</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Predictor variables were standardized prior to analysis.
Table entries are beta coefficients. Individuals (N=137); Teams (N=37).
* *p < .05; ** *p < .01
The results indicated U-shaped relationships supporting Hypothesis 1. That is, the relationship between self-interest and promotive voice showed a negative trend at higher levels of self-interest and a positive trend at lower of self-interest. Further, there is an inflection point in both relationships near the center. Figure 2 shows this curvilinear graphics. As for promotability, results indicated that self-interest have a linear effect ($\beta = -2.47$, $p < 0.05$) and curvilinear effect ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.05$). The pattern of these results indicated the same U-shaped relationships supporting Hypothesis 2. The relationship between self-interest and promotability showed a positive trend at higher levels of self-interest and negative trend at lower levels of self-interest. Figure 3 shows its curvilinear graphics.

Next, we tested the moderating effect of role ambiguity climate on the curvilinear relationship between self-interest and promotive voice and promotability (Hypotheses 3a and 3b). To test these hypotheses, we entered the moderator role ambiguity, the squared interaction in regression equation. The results indicated that although team role ambiguity climate had main effect on promotive voice ($\beta = -0.32$, $p < 0.05$), it did not moderate the curvilinear relationship between self-interest and promotive voice ($\beta = 0.02$, n.s.). As for moderating effect on the curvilinear relationship between self-interest and promotability, team role ambiguity climate had main effect on promotability ($\beta = -0.44$, $p < 0.05$), but not the moderation effect ($\beta = -0.01$, n.s.). Thus, Hypothesis 3a and 3b were not supported.

![Figure 2. Relationship between Self-interest and Promotive Voice](image-url)
Figure 3. Relationship between Self-interest and Promotability

5. DISCUSSION

We examined the relationship between self-interest, an intentional altruism act that involves survival of the fitness, and independent variables promotive voice and promotability among project teams in Taiwan. Our study mainly highlights the importance of exploring nonlinearity in the relationship. As hypothesized, we find significant main curvilinear U-shaped effects of self-interest on promotive voice and promotability, but no results under role ambiguity climate.

5.1 Theoretical implications

By investigating the relationship between self-interest on promotive voice and promotability, we extended the self-interest literature by looking forward a U-shaped relationship. Further, we expanded voice literature context by looking self-interest as an antecedent and nonlinear results. Using voice to explain such divergences (nonlinear effect) were previously examined with other antecedents such as personal control and accountability in the voice literature (Hall & Ferris, 2011; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008; Xu et al., 2018). In the current study, we provided empirical evidence and suggested that high self-interest individuals in Taiwan do voice similarly to those who have low self-interest. The divergence, however, explains the mixed result of positive and negative reactions of voice reported from managers (Burris, 2012; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001; Whiting, Maynes, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2012). This indicated high self-interest employees may be a good thing in a team to raise promotive voice even though the reason behind the back is in his or her own self-interest.

Moreover, studies showed that supervisor’s promotability perception is through positive impression effect on those employees (Bolino, Varela, Bande, & Turnley, 2006; Harris, Kacmar, & Carlson, 2006). Such effect can be supportive behavior, excellent performance, close relational relationship or ambitious attitude that helped to
set up a good image (Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981; Long et al., 2015; Wayne & Liden, 1995). Based on the result between self-interest and promotability, managers have a slightly higher promotability score for high self-interest employees than low self-interest employees. One possible explanation for the result could be managers preferred the ambition and aggressiveness from high self-interest employees can lead to better performance since ambition is a key for goal setting and success (Judge, Erez, Johnson, Kennedy, & Washington, 1994; Mento, Steel, & Karren, 1987). Therefore, managers believed a good dose of ambition will help to be a leader in the long run.

Testing the moderating role of role ambiguity was a good attempt, even though it showed insignificant results. There are possible explanations that high or low role ambiguity does not provide consistent result of changing one’s voice behavior or manager’s view to promote an employee at a short period of time. First, ambiguity situations can be very complex and common in the reality; therefore, judging from their experience, employee or managers ignore ambiguity environment when completing a task or interacting with co-workers (Yun et al., 2007). Second, other psychological process such as power distance in an Asian culture may intervene the effect of role ambiguity climate (Brockner et al., 2001). Third, under role ambiguity climate, it opens opportunity for self-interest individuals to impress and be the super star in the team bringing inconsistent result within different groups.

5.2 Managerial implications

Overall, findings in this study also have some useful normative implication for team leaders or companies to perform better in teams. We do encourage leaders to be aware of proactive players that are high or low self-interest and motivate them in the team because they have the capability to be the next leader and bring value to the company. On the other hand, since employees cannot decide who should be in the team, it is good to understand that setting a goal or give out motivations to team members may compensate the negative role of self-interest.

5.3 Limitations and future research

In this study there are weaknesses, however. First, the sample size of our research is not enough. Second, we collected data from Taiwan, which has a large power distance culture (Hofstede, 2001) that employees may response silently in organizations and express deceitful answers in the questionnaire. Thirdly, this study primary limits the exploration promotive voice; suggesting that future research could further investigate the self-interest as a potential antecedent for prohibit voice. Finally, although our study shows that there is no moderation effect of role ambiguity climate, other team climate variables should be tested such as team collectivism. Future studies on self-interest can additionally compared through different data set under different cultural aspects.

Our results may suggest some new direction for studying self-interest and other variables under different culture. In our study, East Asian people such as the Taiwanese situated in the Confucian culture of relationalism, individuals will work together for the benefit of oneself because in the Chinese social network it is highly egocentric, all of their values serve to their own good like self-interest (Hwang, 2011; Hwang, 2000). These comparisons can be done with other project groups in Western countries, where hierarchy ladder is less dominant than in Asia and Confucianism concept does not exist.

5.4 Conclusions
In conclusion, our results investigated a huge progress among the curvilinear effect. Through our empirical study, we provided a theoretical framework for understanding why individuals voice even when he or she is a high self-interest person. The results of the study have contributed much not only in self-interest on promotive voice and promotability but also curvilinear relationship aspects. We encourage future research to continue expanding and clarifying more on these relationships at different kind of view.

6. References


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19


