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Speaking Up Effectively: How Perceived Constructiveness Links Voice Behavior and Idea Endorsement

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Dr. Joana Story

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Abstract

The present study takes a new perspective in analysing voice behavior from the receiver's point of view. The purpose of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the interplay between the supervisor's perception of voice (promotive and prohibitive), the employee's communication mode and the supervisor's decision of endorsement. First, the study explores whether the perception of constructiveness of an idea affects the relationship between employee voice behavior and supervisory idea endorsement. Second, it tests if supervisors' reactions to voice vary with different levels of politeness used by the employees. This is done through a moderated mediation analysis. From the data collected from 108 pairs of employees and supervisors in a cross-sectional research design, it was found that both promotive and prohibitive voice are positively related to idea endorsement. In line with my hypotheses, perceived constructiveness of the idea expressed by the employee is shown to mediate the relationship between voice behavior and idea endorsement. However, the findings contradict my predictions regarding politeness, since there is no support for its moderation effect nor for a moderated mediation model. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: voice behavior, perceived constructiveness, politeness theory, idea endorsement

Introduction

Among the mechanisms that spur organizational success, one factor has gained increasing importance over the past four decades, namely employee *voice – an extra-role behavior* by which a person engages in upward communication, generally challenging the status quo (Detert & Burris, 2007; Hirschman, 1970; LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Morrison, 2011; Van Dyne, Ang & Botero, 2003). Voice behavior is important for organizations because it allows top management to receive information from below that might otherwise be lost (Morrison, 2011). Such information enables on the one hand to increase the quality of decision making in organizations, and on the other to identify possible problems or issues that could harm the organization as a whole (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Although much research has been conducted regarding the antecedents of voice behavior and therefore in what ways it can be fostered, it is still relatively unclear what are the mechanisms and factors that influence whether voice behavior is endorsed or not by the supervisors (Burris, 2012). Starting from voice behavior itself, some scholars have distinguished among two kinds of voice, being promotive and prohibitive voice (Liang, Farh & Farh, 2012). It stands to reason that both kinds have different effects in terms of idea endorsement. Burris, Rockmann, & Kimmons (2017) provide an initial contribution in this direction by investigating the consequences of different contents of voice behavior. Hence, analyzing the specific effects of promotive and prohibitive voice behavior will shed further light on the topic.

Factors related to the supervisors have not been observed often in previous studies, which can explain the scarcity of information regarding voice behavior and its endorsement. Hence, since idea endorsement depends mostly on specific characteristics and perceptions of the supervisor (Burris, 2012), it is crucial to also study these factors. One factor in particular that could provide further explanation regarding the relationship is that of perceived

constructiveness of the idea (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). In fact, I expect that the perception of how much an employee's idea is constructive will play an important role in deciding whether or not a voiced idea is endorsed by the supervisor. Here, my study aims at extending the research of Whiting, Maynes, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff (2012) on the effects of perceived constructiveness, by differentiating between promotive and prohibitive voice, and linking it to idea endorsement.

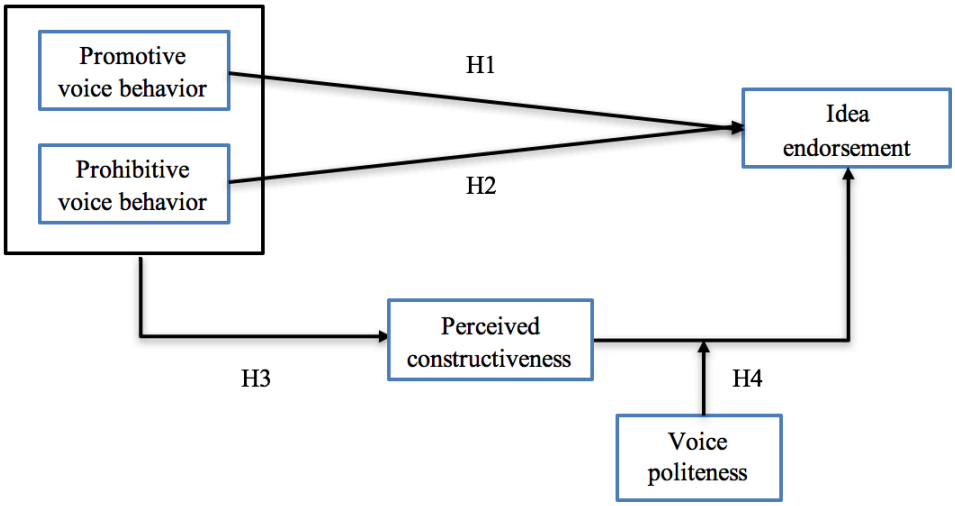
Moreover, some researchers have found that, despite voice behavior being constructive by nature, supervisors tend to base their decisions of endorsement on other factors that go beyond the content of voice behavior itself (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014; Burris, 2012). In particular, Burris (2012) mentions the need to further investigate the effects of communication styles and modes on supervisors' acceptance of an idea. One concept that can be of interest in this context is the employee's choice of expressing the message in a direct or indirect way. Indirectness in fact is one of the politeness tactics described by *Politeness Theory,* which states that when the message communicated could be perceived as a threat by the receiver, the messenger should use different voice tactics (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For these reasons, the following research will investigate the way in which communicating voice in a direct or indirect way may moderate the effect of perceived constructiveness on idea endorsement.

In sum, this study aims at outlining a broader range of the effects of voice behavior and how this can translate into an endorsement by the supervisors. This will be done by examining the moderating effect of politeness on the relationship between perceived constructiveness and idea endorsement. Hence, I will try to answer the following research question:

How does perceived constructiveness mediate the relationship between promotive and prohibitive voice behavior and the supervisor's decision of idea endorsement, and what role does politeness of the voicing employee play?

In order to answer this question, a moderated mediation study will be conducted. Here, perceived constructiveness will mediate the relationship between promotive and prohibitive voice, and idea endorsement, while politeness will function as a moderator of the relationship. The conceptual model is displayed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Conceptual model



Theory and Hypothesis Development

Voice Behavior

In order for organizations to grow and succeed, the ideas and suggestions of employees are a crucial asset, making it important for them to speak up in the working environment (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Morrison, 2011). Scholars have long analysed the relationships between employees and supervisors inside organizations studying how, when and why employees speak up. Such mechanism is referred to as *voice behavior* (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Landau, 2009; Chamberlin, Newton & LePine, 2017), and has been

described as a form of extra-role behavior by which a person engages in upward communication, generally challenging the status quo (Van Dyne et al. 2003).

In particular, Morrison (2014, p.174) describes *employee voice* as the "informal and discretionary communication by an employee of ideas, suggestions, concerns, information about problems, or opinions about work-related issues to persons who might be able to take appropriate action, with the intent to bring about improvement or change". This definition highlights the fact that voice behavior is a form of constructive extra-role behavior, meaning that it is not directly requested by the job role (Van Dine & LePine, 1998). However, despite the fact that voice behavior implies that it may not be formally expected or required from an employee, it is nonetheless considered as a key resource in an organization (Wright, George, Farnsworth, & McMahan, 1993).

In the specific context of this thesis, employee voice behavior is considered in its form of upward communication (Morrison, 2011), meaning the behavior an employee engages in when speaking up to his/her supervisor. In particular, the focus will be on the mechanisms that link the employee's voice behavior to the supervisor's evaluation of this voice behavior. Indeed, supervisors have the power and role to potentially implement the ideas voiced by employees and are therefore perceived as having the right authority to act (Milliken, Morrison & Hewlin, 2003). For this reason, in the employee-supervisor relationship investigated in this thesis, the concept of voice behavior is necessarily characterized by upward communication.

There is not complete consensus among scholars regarding the specific categorization of employee voice behavior, and various groupings exist in the literature (Van Dine & LePine, 1998; Maynes & Podsakoff, 2013; Liang, Farh & Farh, 2012; Burris, 2012). One categorization in particular offers a clear understanding of two faces of voice behavior, being promotive and prohibitive voice behavior (Liang et al., 2012). The authors analysed voice behavior in two of its distinctive aspects, pointing out that voice behavior is not only

represented by constructive suggestions, but also by expressions of concern regarding existing practices or behaviors that could harm the organization (Liang et al., 2012). More in detail, *promotive voice* represents a constructive behavior where the employee suggests improvements to current processes in the organization, whereas *prohibitive voice* represents a behavior that goes against certain practices or decisions, because the employee believes that they are harmful to the organization (Hassan et al., 2015). The impact of the two types of voice behavior will consequently be diverse, also leading to a different acceptance of the ideas expressed (Burris, 2012).

Detailed research has been made on the antecedents of employee voice behavior, investigating what conditions bring an employee to speak up, mainly based on individual differences and context (Hassan et al., 2015). However, it is interesting to investigate the other side to voice behavior, which is represented by what happens in the organization after the employee has spoken up and especially whether the idea is endorsed by the supervisor or not (Burris, 2012). In particular, considering the abovementioned two different forms of voice behavior - promotive and prohibitive - can help to clarify what are the possible consequences of each type of voice (Chamberlin et al., 2016) and therefore shed light on the complex relationship between voice behavior and idea endorsement.

Although research is still missing on the mechanisms that lead to idea endorsement after an employee engages in voicing, Burris (2012) highlighted in his study the fact that the type of voice behavior exhibited influences managerial response. This is an important starting point, because it shows that further investigations are needed in order to understand the elements that can affect the manager's decision. In fact, although it is important that employees engage in voice behavior itself, a crucial aspect is whether the content of voice behavior leads to positive outcomes for the organization (Chamberlin et al., 2016).

Voice behavior as a predictor of idea endorsement.

Distinguishing between promotive and prohibitive voice behavior can help in the analysis of the managerial response to voice, since the two types of voice behavior can alone lead to very different reactions of managers (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). Burris (2012) argues that there is a literature gap in the analysis of whether supervisors endorse the ideas voiced by employees, and what the motives for their decisions are, and findings related to this are mixed. On one hand, speaking up can have significant costs for those who engage in it (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001), but on the other, voice behavior is inherently intended to benefit the organization (Detert & Burris, 2007) and therefore can help managers succeed in their roles (Whiting, Mayne, Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2012). Such conflicting elements impede a clear understanding of the relationship between voice behavior and idea endorsement (Burris, 2012). However, distinguishing between promotive and prohibitive voice behavior assists in shedding light on the motives that lead a supervisor to endorse an idea or not.

Promotive voice behavior is ambivalent in that it is both regarded as a challenging and a pro-social behavior (Liang et al., 2012). This characterization could lead to a negative response, as employees "may encounter stronger resistance from managers, in terms of both the level of managerial endorsement given to the ideas voiced and the evaluation of the individuals suggesting the ideas" (Burris, 2012, p.853). However, in line with the belief that organizations need to pay attention to the ideas coming from below in order to keep innovating and thriving (Wright et al., 1993; LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Morrison, 2011), the pro-social aspect of promotive voice should be more evident to supervisors and therefore lead to a higher chance of managerial endorsement (Liang et al., 2012).

Promotive voice is by nature a type of proactive behavior that is "self-initiated, future-oriented, and aimed at improving the situation or oneself" (Morrison, 2011, p.375), and

therefore employees that engage in promotive voice will be interested in communicating suggestions and ideas that bring changes to the work environment with a future oriented outlook (Chamberlin et al., 2016). Therefore, since promotive voice behavior is usually expressed in messages that show the voicing employee's good intentions in terms of making the work environment better (Chamberlin et al., 2016), this type of behavior is more evidently read by supervisors as being pro-organizational. Promotive voice, thus, is likely to generate positive outcomes in terms of idea endorsement. Moreover, ideas and suggestions for constructive change are usually the ones that will put the manager in a position of power, because he/she can benefit positively from the implementation of such ideas (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). This is because supervisors can use the input from their employees to make improvements in the organization or implement new solutions, consequently improving their own performance in the organization.

Promotive voice behavior is associated with positive performance appraisals for a series of reasons. Firstly, in a dynamic business world, managers believe that voice behavior is a necessary part of an employee's performance. Moreover, an employee who voices an idea or a suggestion is seen as one who is committed to the organization (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998; Whiting et al., 2008). Since promotive voice is likely to be positively appraised by managers, chances are higher that it will be endorsed (Burris, 2012). Accordingly, I posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Promotive voice is positively related to idea endorsement.

For what regards the other mode of voice behavior, namely prohibitive voice, Liang et al. (2012) argued that prohibitive voice is a behavior that is both past and future oriented, by which the employee points out elements that could harm or actually do harm the organization, without per se providing solutions to the problems (Liang et al., 2012). Given this definition, prohibitive voice behavior could lead to negative results in terms of idea endorsement.

A compelling point highlighted by Burris (2012) is that supervisors tend to see negatively and refuse voice behavior when it is aimed at criticizing the status quo, especially because it may be seen as a personal attack. This means that a behavior such as prohibitive voice can lead the manager to think that he/she is being threatened by the employee. Such threat, which can also be identified as *ego threat,* leads the manager to refuse the employee's voice behavior (Fast et al., 2013). Moreover, this type of behavior can be seen as a threat to the unity of the group, and even a sign of non-commitment towards organizational goals (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

Furthermore, Ashford et al. (2009) described people in leadership positions, such as supervisors, as being particularly prone to cognitive biases. In fact, most individuals tend to have a *confirmation bias* by which they listen to information that supports their opinion and disregard information that goes against it (Nickerson, 1998). In the particular case of the relationship between supervisor and employee, both promotive and prohibitive voice elicit confirmation biases. However, while promotive voice tends to produce a positive cognitive reaction, due to its positively constructive nature, prohibitive voice more often induces negative reactions in the supervisors, as it does not confirm their thinking. In fact, when an employee engages in prohibitive voice behavior he/she does so by pointing out problems in the status quo, which might have been put in place by the supervisor (Liang et al., 2012). This means that the employee is in some way going against the opinion of his/her supervisor, who will therefore be less likely listen to that employee's opinion due to a confirmation bias (Ashford et al., 2009).

For the above reasons, I hypothesize that prohibitive voice behavior will have a negative impact on managerial endorsement:

Hypothesis 2: Prohibitive voice is negatively related to idea endorsement.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Voice Constructiveness

A crucial point in the study of the relationship between voice behavior and idea endorsement is to identify the underlying mechanisms between the two factors (Burris, 2012). One way to conduct such study is to understand firstly that promotive or prohibitive voice differ in their influence on how voice is perceived, which in turn defines whether the supervisor chooses to endorse voice or not. In this perspective, a factor that gains relevance is that of perceived voice constructiveness.

Gorden (1988) first described constructiveness as an attribute of voice that challenges the status quo in the sense that it brings improvement. This is in line with the abovementioned concept of voice behavior in general, but it further explains the underlying link between voice behavior, and supervisory responsiveness and endorsement. In fact, researchers have found that supervisors do not always welcome employee voice per se, but rather base their decision of endorsement on other factors (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014; Burris, 2012). Such factors can be identified, for example, in how the employee delivers the message, whether he/she provides a solution, and if the issue is believed to be challenging or supportive (Burris, Rockmann & Kimmons, 2017). Therefore, since it is in the hands of the supervisors to bring by change regarding the specific suggestion/issue that has been voiced, the perception of how much the idea of the given employee is constructive will be pivotal in relation to the reaction of the supervisor towards that suggestion/issue (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014).

Although voice behavior aims by nature at delivering constructive content for the organization (Van Dine & LePine, 1998; Morrison, 2014; Liang et al., 2012; Whiting et al., 2012), voice-receiving supervisors may not always see employee voice as a positive factor due to the consequences that endorsing such suggestions or ideas can have on their own work. For this reason, the perceived constructiveness of an employee's voice is key to understanding why a supervisor endorses voice or not (Gorden, 1988). Whiting et al. (2012)

explain that constructive behaviors bring about an improvement to the functioning of the work unit, thanks to which the supervisors and co-workers also achieve some benefits. As a consequence, a supervisor will endorse an employee's voice behavior based on the perception of constructiveness that the supervisor has of the idea given by the employee.

Based on the above reasoning and considering that voice behavior is by nature constructive (Hassan et al., 2015; Ng & Feldman, 2013; Liang et al., 2012; Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003), a supervisor should in theory be keen on endorsing the ideas of a voicing employee as they would bring by improvement. However, as discussed before regarding promotive and prohibitive voice, supervisors may not always view voice behavior as being positive for them or the organization. Whiting et al. (2012) argue that perceived constructiveness has an impact on the way in which a voice event is perceived and on how an employee is evaluated. In particular, the authors suggest that when the employee that engages in voice behavior is perceived as being constructive in his/her voice behavior, the observer will evaluate this employee more favourably and believe that he/she is moved by pro-social behaviors that are intended to benefit the organization (Whiting et al., 2012).

Since idea endorsement refers to the managers' decision to support, recommend, or implement a raised issue (Burris, 2012), it is important to consider the perception that the manager in question has about the voice raising the issue. Consequently, the second hypothesis in this model will be:

Hypothesis 3: Perceived constructiveness will mediate the relationship between (a) promotive and (b) prohibitive voice behavior, and idea endorsement.

Voice Indirectness as a Measure of Voice Politeness

As suggested by Burris (2012), an area that still needs further investigation is that regarding the mode of communication that employees adopt when voicing and the effects that this can have on idea endorsement. In the context of this research, it is a key element, because

the different modes used will modify the way in which the supervisor will receive the message, and ultimately even change the perception of the employee's idea and the way in which he/she is evaluated (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014; Morrison, 2011).

In fact, when an employee engages in voice behavior, the way in which the manager will interpret such behavior can vary based on different factors that do not necessarily depend directly on the behavior of the employee (Kelley & Michela, 1980). One of such factors is the mode in which voice is communicated (Sijbom, Jannsen & Yperen, 2015) and, in the case of upward voice behavior, how voice is perceived by the supervisor. In general, when employees speak up, their supervisors feel more or less threatened based on their perception of the employees' voice behaviors (Burris, 2012). Knowing this, employees do not typically raise issues such as the supervisor's competence or performance, problems with organizational processes, concerns about pay and equity or disagreement with company policies and decisions, because they believe that these issues would not be easily accepted by their supervisors (Milliken et al., 2003). Since voice behavior inherently challenges the status quo (Van Dyne et al. 2003), it can be argued here that both promotive and prohibitive voice behavior cause perceptions of threat to the manager's eyes.

Therefore, the question that arises is whether a person can communicate a challenging idea in a way that reduces the sense of threat experienced by the receiver. An answer to this issue can be found in communication research, which argues that when someone believes that the message could be perceived as threatening or negative, this person tends to adopt communication modes that reduce such threat (Norton, 1978; Lee, 1993; Sijbom et al., 2015).

In this context, of particular relevance is the concept of *face* as of something that needs to be maintained in every social interaction, and that can be lost or enhanced (Goffman, 1955). Moreover, the term *face* defines the social value that one attributes to oneself, based on the perceptions that others have of oneself in a specific situation of contact (Goffman, 1967).

Face is a concept that relates to the interactions between different people, and is not merely related to a single individual (Ho, 1976). In fact, when people engage in a social interaction, they are concerned both with their own face and with that of the person they are addressing (Goffman, 1955).

Brown & Levinson (1987) build on the concept of face for their *Politeness Theory*, in which they argue that any act of interpersonal conflict that can lead to a threat for one's face is called a face-threatening act. Given the preceding considerations on face, voice behavior will be considered here as a face threatening act. When speakers engage in face threatening acts, they use a multitude of different tactics to make sure that the threat perceived by the other person is lower, therefore showing higher consideration of the other's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Politeness is the measure of how much a speaker engaging in voice behavior is respectful, courteous, and mannerly (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holtgraves & Yang, 1990). Expressing voice in a polite way means that the speaker cares about the relationship with the listener and therefore does not want to threaten their face when engaging in voice behavior (Lam, in press). On the contrary, being impolite shows that the voicing subject disregards the receiver's feelings and sense of belonging (Lam, in press).

In particular, Brown & Levinson (1987) suggest that to mitigate the negative effect of a face threatening act, a person can choose one of four politeness tactics: on record, baldly; on record, positive politeness; on record, negative politeness and off record. The way in which these tactics differ can be seen mainly in the level of indirectness used (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For instance, when a person addresses another in a bold and direct manner, not mitigating the negative effect of the face threatening act, he/she does not take the other's face into account and is therefore communicating with a low level of politeness. Indirectness can therefore be used as a measure of how much a person decides to be polite when engaging in voice behavior.

Voice politeness as a moderator.

The concept of perceived constructiveness was described earlier as a behavior that brings by an improvement to the functioning of the work unit and that ultimately influences the final idea endorsement by the supervisor (Whiting et al., 2012). However, given that voice behavior is in itself a form of challenging behavior, and that managers tend to feel threatened by such behavior, the politeness of voice used will have an impact on the final decision of endorsement made by the supervisor. In fact, although an idea can be perceived as being constructive, the way in which it is communicate can still affect the final decision of endorsement. For example, if an employee engages in voice behavior and communicates his/her idea in an indirect way, the message will be perceived as being politer and consequently less threatening to the eye of the supervisor, who might then more willingly endorse the idea (Lam, in press).

Managers usually have to allocate time and effort to enact an idea, which means that they will evaluate closely whether or not they should even endorse such idea to begin with (Burris et al., 2017). Indirectness refers to the amount of effort that is needed by the hearer to understand the meaning of what the voicer is saying (Holtgraves, 1997), and can therefore highly influence the decision of the supervisor regarding that idea. Since voice behavior is a potentially face threatening act for the supervisor, the level of indirectness (and therefore of politeness) used will affect the relationship between perception of constructiveness and idea endorsement. Therefore, when the employee voices his/her idea, the communication mode chosen will have different effects on the perception of that employee. For instance, a polite mode of communication could convince the supervisor that the employee is truly concerned with the well-being of the work unit/organization thereby strengthening the effect of perceived constructiveness. Moreover, a very direct, and therefore impolite, mode could

lower the effect of perceived constructiveness, because the supervisor will feel as if the idea is being imposed thereby producing a greater sense of threat (Dutton & Ashford, 1993).

Given the above reasoning, I predict that voice politeness will moderate the link between perceived constructiveness of the employee and idea endorsement, because the mode of voice used by the employee will modify the relationship between perceived constructiveness and idea endorsement. Therefore, I formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4a: Voice politeness moderates the effect of perceived constructiveness on idea endorsement, such that the relationship will be more positive when voice politeness is higher.

In integrating hypothesis 3, which regards the mediation effect of perceived constructiveness between voice behavior and idea endorsement, and hypothesis 4a, which supposes a moderation effect of voice indirectness between perceived constructiveness and idea endorsement, I arrive at the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4b: The indirect relationship between voice behavior and idea endorsement depends on voice politeness, such that this indirect relationship is more positive when voice politeness is higher.

Method

Context

The general topic of this Master thesis was developed together with a group of master students at Maastricht School of Business and Economics. To investigate voice behavior and idea endorsement, the questionnaire design and data collection were carried out jointly by the group. In order to reach a greater number of respondents, each member of the group contacted their personal networks to spread the questionnaire. The questionnaire was made up of different items, constituted by a number of questions relevant to the specific research of each student.

Sample and Procedure

The research design used was quantitative and for this purpose, primary data was collected through a cross-sectional study. An online questionnaire was used to gather the data. The research group used non-probability sampling in order to reach a sufficient number of respondents in a time and cost-efficient manner. For this purpose, both convenience and snowball sampling (Burns & Burns, 2008) were used. The survey was constructed using the online tool Qualtrics, provided by Maastricht University. The link to the questionnaire was distributed starting from October 20th, 2017. The data collection phase was finalized November 24th, 2017, after a period of 35 days.

A total of 298 individuals were contacted by email to participate in the study, using personal contacts or cold emailing (see Appendix A). The purpose of this research was to investigate supervisor-employee dyads, so the thesis group requested the contacted individuals to invite their supervisor or employee to participate too. To convince participants to join the research, an executive summary of the research findings was offered to them in return. Separate e-mails were then sent out containing the respective links to the questionnaire. The invitation e-mails included information about the research and researchers, the purpose and objectives of the study, an indication of the time needed, a guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity and the links to the separate questionnaires.

Employees and supervisors both answered demographic questions, while employees were also asked to provide information about company size and industry, and also their own job tenure. Self-reports on voice behavior were assessed through employees, but supervisors also reported on the employees' voice behavior in order to have a robustness check and be able to reduce self-report bias. The other variables were measured either by employees or by supervisors separately. Specifically, employees were asked about their level of indirectness, because it refers to a personality facet and is therefore best rated personally. Supervisors on

the other hand provided information about the perceived trustworthiness of the employees and about their decisions of idea endorsement and performance appraisal. It is best to assess these variables from the supervisors' points of view, because they are related to personal perceptions and decisions of the supervisors themselves.

At the end of the data collection phase, 138 employees and 120 supervisors completed the questionnaire in total, meaning that a potential of 120 employee-supervisor dyads could be paired. A common code was assigned to each member of the pairs at the beginning of the data collection phase, in order to combine the results at a later moment. In total, after having deleted blank questionnaires and checked for unpaired ones, the sample was reduced to 108 dyads of employees and their supervisors: 90% of the 120 potential pairs, with a response rate of 84%.

Both supervisors and employees were mostly male (67%; 56%), Italian (37%), and held a university degree (55%; 49%). The average age range for supervisors was 45 – 54 years old, while for employees it was 25 – 34 years old. Organizational tenure was between 3 and 5 years for both supervisors and employees, and employees had generally a job tenure of 1 to 3 years. Other nationalities included 'other' (31%; 29%), German (26%; 28%), and Dutch (6%). Regarding education, 26% of supervisors had a post-graduate degree, 15% a college degree or equivalent, and 4% had a middle school or lower education. Employees recorded 23% of post-graduate degrees, 21% of college or equivalent, and 7% middle school or lower education.

In total, companies mostly (40%) employed more than 500 employees, while 27% employed 100 to 499, 21% 20 to 99, 7% five to nine, 4% 10 to 19, and 1% one to four employees. The pool of companies surveyed operated in a varied range of industries: 16% in chemicals, 15% in consumer goods and services, 14% in manufacturing, 12% in

transportation and logistics, 10% in financial services, and 17% in the industry sector named 'others'.

Measures

To increase participation rates, all questionnaire items were translated from English into Italian and German by bilingual speakers. A back translation was made by a second bilingual speaker, in order to make sure that the translated version would be comparable to the original English version with a high degree of accuracy. Back translation is the most commonly used technique to check the equivalence of translations in survey research, although it does not address in a complete way issues of meaning and comprehension (Gudmundsson, 2008). Overall, the comparison between the back translation and the original proved to be sufficiently equivalent. All scales are available in Appendix B.

Voice behavior. To measure promotive and prohibitive voice behavior of the employee, the ten-item voice questionnaire developed and validated by Liang et al. (2012) was used. We obtained measures from both supervisors and employees, by adapting the items in each scale accordingly. This scale showed fair internal consistency, as it reported a good Cronbach alpha. In the present study, the scale maintained good internal consistency. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for promotive and prohibitive voice rated by the supervisor were 0.92 and 0.82, respectively. The same coefficients as rated by the employee were 0.85 and 0.81, respectively. Sample items of the supervisor questionnaire include "This employee proactively develops and makes suggestions for issues that may influence the unit" (promotive voice) and "This employee advises other colleagues against undesirable behaviors that would hamper job performance" (prohibitive voice). Self-rated measures of employee voice were adapted from the supervisor survey, in order to have a cross-validation of the results. All ratings were on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Perceived constructiveness. Constructiveness was measured using a two-item scale developed in a research by Gorden (1988) and later used by other authors (Whiting et al., 2012). These items were used to measure the perceived constructiveness of employees according to their supervisors, in particular by tapping the extent to which supervisors view the voicing employee's comments as constructive. The two items that make up the scale are as follows: "This employee's comments were constructive" and "This employee's comments are likely to enhance the performance of her/his work team." Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and the scale reported a good internal consistency (Whiting et al., 2012). In this current study, the Cronbach alpha was of 0.86, also showing fair reliability.

Politeness. The moderating variable "politeness" was assessed using the 9-item indirectness measurement scale by Holtgraves (1997). Sample items such as "My remarks often have more than one meaning" and "Most of what I say can be taken at face value, and there is no need to look for a deeper meaning" (reverse scored) were included in the measurement. The items in the indirectness scale were measured with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The reported Cronbach alpha showed strong internal consistency. The present study has an alpha coefficient of 0.8, also implying good reliability.

Idea endorsement. The dependent variable, idea endorsement, was measured with a 7-item measurement scale. Supervisors were asked to keep in mind one specific employee while filling out the survey. Idea endorsement with respect to the chosen employee was measured with items adapted from measurement scales developed by Burris (2012) and Fast et al. (2013). Two items by Burris were measured with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 5 (extremely likely) and the rest with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The two items from Fast et al. (2013) were

measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The measurement for idea endorsement will use the combination of these two scales in the following analyses. However, for robustness purposes, all analyses will be re-run using only those items that made up the original scale from Burris (2012) in order to check that the main results are the same. The two scales had good internal consistency, and maintained it so also in this study with the combined scale, showing a Cronbach alpha of .84.

Organizational control variables. Employees were asked to provide information on the size of the organization (in number of employees; 1 = 1-4, 2 = 5-9, 3 = 10-19, 4 = 20-99, 5 = 100-499, 6 = >500) and type of industry (1 = agriculture, 2 = chemicals, 3 = consumer goods & services, 4 = education, 5 = energy, 6 = financial services, 7 = health care, 8 = manufacturing, 9 = pharmaceuticals & biotechnology, 10 = public administration, 11 = telecommunications & media, 12 = transportation & logistics, 13 = other). These factors were chosen as control variables since authors in voice behavior literature have found that they may affect decisions regarding voice endorsement and acceptance (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998).

Individual control variables. Demographic variables were included as control variables in the study. First of all, employee gender (1 = female, 2 = male) was used to check that there would not be differences in performance evaluation (Youndt et al., 2004). Then, we controlled for employee age (in years) as research has shown that it can be a factor that impacts both the willingness to speak up and the consequent perception of the supervisor (Youndt et al., 2004). Organizational tenure (in years) for both employee and supervisor and employee job tenure (in years) were two other control variables, since a longer tenure can affect factors such as the relationship between supervisor and employee (Youndt et al., 2004). Furthermore, it has been found that longer tenure, thanks to organizational socialization, can make it more likely for the employee to understand the social knowledge, values and expected behaviors necessary to succeed. This in turn enhances the possibilities of there being more

positive idea endorsement (Sturman, 2003). We then controlled for employee education (1 = middle school or below, 2 = college, 3 = university, 4 = post-graduate) as used by Liang, Farh, & Farh (2012). Lastly, the group controlled for nationality (1 = Dutch, 2 = German, 3 = Italian, 4 = Other - indicate). As known from many studies, culture is a main factor that affects the behavior and attitudes of individuals within organizations (Hofstede, 1994; Søndergaard, 1994), and cross-cultural differences can thus also impact idea endorsement by the supervisors.

Analytical Strategy

Once the data collection phase was closed, the two data sets were exported into excel and screened for blank items and errors. The next step was the merging phase, in which the two data sets were put together by means of their common code: dyads of supervisor-employee respondents were thus obtained. During this screening, some results were deleted due to incomplete pairs or incorrect codes, although where possible clearly associated codes were edited and therefore kept in the sample.

This merged sample was then further sorted by computing each set of items into its relevant variable (e.g. all items for “promotive voice” into one single variable), by calculating the total mean. All reverse coded items were computed anew, so as to have a consistent direction for every scale. It was checked whether items were missing at random, but since all responses were fully complete, no further action was needed. The variables obtained through this process were promotive and prohibitive voice (both self and other-rated), perceived constructiveness, indirectness, voice endorsement and performance appraisal.

The control variables in the data set were assessed in a regression analysis to verify the relationship with idea endorsement and to choose the significant ones to include in the regression. The predictor variables were grand mean centered, to decrease the multicollinearity among variables and create a meaningful zero point (Frazier, Tix, & Barron,

2004; Field, 2009) and to increase the interpretability of the results (Hayes, 2012). A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was then run to be able to assess how much incremental variance was explained by each variable.

To test the mediation effect of perceived constructiveness and the moderation effect of indirectness, the add-on tool PROCESS for SPSS, developed by Hayes (2012), was used.

Results

This chapter will discuss the results of the data analysis. First of all, the underlying assumptions of parametric tests will be checked, in order to be able to proceed with the analysis. Then, I will report descriptive results to provide information on the variables under investigation and the relationships between them. In the third part, I will present the results of the regression analysis, which will include additional robustness checks.

Assumptions checks

It is important to first assess the underlying assumptions of parametric tests, before beginning to analyze a research model (Field, 2009). Such tests are based on the four assumptions for normal distribution, namely *independence*, *normality*, *homoscedasticity*, and *linearity*. These will be tested in order to proceed with an accurate model analysis.

Independence. The assumption of independence is not violated when the observations in the data set are independent from each other (Field, 2009). This means that in the dyads, the responses need to come from different subjects. Since the online survey was filled in by singles couples of employees and supervisors, the assumption of independence holds. Moreover, the Durbin-Watson test was performed to check for the independence of the observations. The test reported a score of 1.624, which is good given that a value of 2 means that the observations are uncorrelated. In fact, any value between 1 and 3 can be taken as showing no concern for the assumption of independence (Field, 2009).

Normality. The assumption of normal distribution was assessed by verifying skewness and kurtosis values and by analyzing histograms and P-P plots (Appendix C). For the distribution to be normal, the values of skewness and kurtosis should be zero, therefore the further these values are from zero, the more likely it is that the assumption is not met (Field, 2009). Moreover, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests (Appendix C) were checked giving particular attention to the significance of the last test as it better predicts the validity of the assumption (Field, 2009).

The independent variable promotive voice (M = 5.60, SD = .996) shows a skewness value of -1.063, which means that there is a clustering of values at the high end. The kurtosis value is of 1.283, a positive value and not very close to zero. This means that the distribution is relatively peaked with relatively long thin tails. These values are confirmed by the histogram, which shows that the distribution is indeed negatively skewed. The P-P plot (Figure 6) also shows a deviation from the normal line, which suggests a moderate violation of normal distribution. The S-W test is statistically significant, indicating non-normal distribution, too ($p < .001$). Since extreme scores do not seem to have a strong influence on the mean (5.63 versus 5% trimmed mean of 5.70), the outliers were retained in the data set.

For prohibitive voice (M = 5.02, SD = 1.03), the skewness value of -.559 shows a slight clustering of values at the high end. The kurtosis of .465 means that the distribution is slightly peaked and light-tailed. The histogram also shows that the distribution is slightly negatively skewed, with a concentration of values to the right. The P-P plot (Figure 7) indicates a very moderate deviation from the expected values, showing that normality is only slightly violated. The S-W test does not report a statistically significant result ($p = .03$), meaning that normal distribution can be assumed for the data. The outliers were retained, as the 5% trimmed mean (5.05) was not far from the mean.

The mediating variable perceived constructiveness (M = 5.78, SD = 1.00) has a skewness value of -1.106 and a kurtosis value of 2.309, indicating clustering of values towards the high end with a peaked and long tailed distribution. This is confirmed by the histogram. The P-P plot (Figure 8) indicates that some outliers differ from the expected line, but the 5% trimmed mean of 5.86 suggests that the outliers should be kept as their scores do not have a strong influence on the mean. The S-W test is significant ($p < .001$), meaning that the distribution is non-normal.

For the moderating variable indirectness (M = 3.22, SD = .95), the skewness level is of only .249 and the kurtosis of -.097. These values are very close to zero and result in a very slight positive skew and with a rather flat and light-tailed distribution. This is also confirmed by the histogram and the P-P plot (Figure 9), from which it is already possible to assume that the distribution is very close to normal. In fact, the S-W test records a non-significant result ($p = .55$), meaning that normality can be assumed for this distribution. Given a 5% trimmed mean of 2.20, the outliers are kept in the sample.

Lastly, the dependent variable, idea endorsement (M = 4.09, SD = .54), reports a slight negative skewness of -.651 and kurtosis of 1.080. The data is therefore slightly concentrated towards the high end and shows a peak with a rather long tail towards the left. This can be seen from the histogram, too. The P-P plot (Figure 10) shows only slight differences from the normal line and the 5% trimmed mean of 4.11 suggests that outliers can be kept without them affecting the mean. The S-W test is significant ($p < .005$) and therefore indicates non-normal distribution.

From the analysis above it can be seen that only two variables meet the assumption of normality. Nonetheless, the results indicate that there is only a mild violation of normality and for this reason the data can still be used for parametric tests (Field, 2009). A limitation will be that the results might not be fully generalizable (Burns & Burns, 2008)

Homoscedasticity. Homoscedasticity means that the variance of residuals along different levels of the independent variable are stable (Field, 2009). It can be noted from the scatter plot of idea endorsement (Appendix C) that the points are randomly and rather equally dispersed, which means that the assumption of homoscedasticity might be just slightly violated. The scatter plot of the mediator perceived constructiveness also appears to be quite randomly and equally dispersed, indicating only a slight possible violation of the assumption (Field, 2009). To have a further check, a linear fit line was added to both scatter plots. These show that the assumption of homoscedasticity is met, since the points appear to be in a flat distribution along the line.

Linearity. The relationships between independent and dependent variable are assumed to be linear in order to be able to perform parametric tests for further analysis (Field, 2009). This last assumption can be checked by looking at the scatter plots (Appendix C). Since a straight line can be drawn through the main cluster of points and no apparent shape can be detected among the points, the assumption of linearity can be considered met.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

The descriptive statistics, variable intercorrelations and scale reliabilities of the present study can be found in table 2 below. Promotive voice is significantly correlated with idea endorsement ($r = .38$, $p < .01$), which means that there is a potential for hypothesis 1 to be supported. Prohibitive voice is also significantly correlated with idea endorsement ($r = .21$, $p < .05$), but the correlation is positive and therefore could predict that hypothesis 2 might not be supported. Moreover, only promotive voice ($r = .44$, $p < .01$) is significantly correlated with the mediator, perceived constructiveness, which is in turn significantly correlated with idea endorsement ($r = .59$, $p < .01$), indicating that hypothesis 3a might be supported. Before undergoing further analysis, it is checked that no multicollinearity is present among variables, as this could lead to biased results (Field, 2009). Since no variables show high levels of

correlation (r = 0.9 or above) and the variance inflation factors are far from 10, there is no indication of multicollinearity (Field, 2009). Finally, all of the variables report reliable internal consistency.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations

Variables	Mean	SD	2	3	4	5	
1. Promotive voice	5.60	0.96	(.85)				
2. Prohibitive voice	5.02	1.03	.17	(.81)			
3. Perceived constructiveness	5.78	1.00	.44**	.11	(.86)		
4. Indirectness	3.22	0.95	-.07	.16	-.10	(.75)	
5. Idea endorsement	4.09	0.54	.38**	.21*	.59**	-.14	(.84)

Note. Internal consistency coefficient statistics (Cronbach's alpha) are on the diagonal in parentheses.
N=108
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
All scales were measured on a 7-point Likert type scale, apart from voice endorsement which was measured on a 5-point Likert type scale.

Hypothesis Testing

The initial regression analysis shows no significant results for all of the assessed control variables. Having a model with control variables that are not significantly related to the dependent variable can reduce the statistical power of the analysis, therefore they were excluded from the model (Becker, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Tables 3 and 4 in Appendix C report their descriptives.

The first hypothesis in this research is that promotive voice is positively related to idea endorsement. Since no control variables were significant, only promotive voice was entered in the regression as the first and only step. The linear regression model shows a significant fit of $R^2 = .15$, which means that the model explains roughly 15% of the observed variance in the variable idea endorsement ($p < .001$). The adjusted R^2 is of .14, showing that the cross-validity of the model is good (Field, 2009). It can therefore be stated that promotive voice has

a significant positive effect on idea endorsement (β = .21, t = 4.24, p < .001), meaning that hypothesis 1 is supported[1]. Table 5 below summarizes the results for promotive voice.

Table 5

Regression Promotive Voice on Idea Endorsement (Hypothesis 1)

	Unstandardized Coefficients	
	β	Std. Error
Step 1 (Constant)	4.09***	.05
Promotive Voice	.21***	.05
R^2	.15***	

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.
One-tailed.

The second hypothesis proposed that prohibitive voice negatively influenced idea endorsement. To test this, another regression was run but this time with prohibitive voice only ad a predictor. The linear regression model shows a fit or R^2 = .04, with significance of p < .05. Stein's formula reveals an adjusted R^2 = .03, which is close to the R^2 value and therefore indicates good cross-validity of the model (Field, 2009). However, contrary to the hypothesis, in this model prohibitive voice shows to have a significant *positive* effect on idea endorsement (β = .11, t = 2.18, p < .05). Hypothesis 2 is thus not supported[2].

Table 6

Regression Prohibitive Voice on Idea Endorsement (Hypothesis 2)

	Unstandardized Coefficients	
	β	Std. Error
Step 1 (Constant)	4.09***	.05
Prohibitive Voice	.11*	.05
R^2	.04*	

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.
One-tailed.

[1] Repeating the analysis with the scale of idea endorsement by Burris (2012) did not significantly alter the results. The model fit is slightly better with this scale (R^2 = .17, F = 14.0, p < .001).

[2] Repeating the analysis with the scale of idea endorsement by Burris (2012) did not significantly alter the results. The regression shows that prohibitive voice is not significantly related to idea endorsement (p = .11).

Hypothesis 3 regarded the mediation effect of perceived constructiveness between promotive (3a) and prohibitive (3b) voice, and idea endorsement. To test this hypothesis, model 4 of the PROCESS tool by Hayes (2012) was used. Model 4 tests for simple mediation effect and its results can be found in table 7 below. Regarding hypothesis 3a, promotive voice is found to be positively and significantly related to perceived constructiveness, when controlling for prohibitive voice ($\beta = .48$, $t = 3.64$, $p < 0.001$). In the second step, when analyzing the total effect on idea endorsement, hence controlling for perceived constructiveness, promotive voice was not significant anymore ($\beta = .06$, $t = 1.02$, $p = .31$). PROCESS uses the bootstrapping method to assess mediation, which is better than using the Sobel test in cases when the sample is not very large and normality assumptions might be violated (Field, 2009; Hayes, 2012). By assessing the confidence intervals of the indirect effect of promotive voice on idea endorsement, via the effect of perceived constructiveness, it can be seen that the intervals are positive and do not contain zero as a value (indirect effect = .14, 95% CI = .07 to .23). This indicates that the population value of this indirect effect is larger than zero. Lastly, also the standardized indirect effect of promotive voice on idea endorsement is positive (indirect effect = .24, 95% CI = .11 to .38). Therefore, a mediation effect does in fact exist and hypothesis 3a can be supported.

Table 7

Regression Results for Simple Mediation (Hypothesis 3a)

Predictor	Dependent Variables	
	Perceived Constructiveness	Idea Endorsement
Intercept	-.00	4.09***
Promotive Voice	.48***	.06
Perceived Constructiveness	-	.29***
Prohibitive Voice	-.09	.06
F	6.97**	7.67***
R	.45	.61

Total Effect of Promotive Voice on Idea Endorsement

Total Effect	SE	t	Confidence Interval
.19	.06	3.07**	[.07 ; .32]

Direct Effect of Promotive Voice on Idea Endorsement

Direct Effect	SE	t	Confidence Interval
.06	.05	1.02	[-.05 ; .16]

Bootstrap Result for Indirect Relationship

Indirect Effect	SE	Confidence Interval
.14	.04	[.07 ; .23]

Note. N = 108. Results adopted from Model 4 (Hayes, 2012).
Number of bootstrap samples = 5000. 95% confidence intervals.
SE = estimate of standard error. Regression coefficients are unstandardized.
* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

To test hypothesis 3b, the procedure was repeated with prohibitive voice as predictor (results in table 8). Controlling for promotive voice, prohibitive voice was negatively, but not significantly related to perceived constructiveness (β = -.09, t = -.90, p = .37). When controlling for perceived constructiveness, prohibitive voice predicted idea endorsement at a slightly more significant level (β = .06, t = 1.02, p = .31). By using the bootstrapping method, the confidence intervals of the indirect effect included zero (indirect effect = -.02, 95% CI = -.08 to .03). For these reasons, hypothesis 3b is not supported[3].

Table 8

Regression Results for Simple Mediation (Hypothesis 3b)

Predictor	Dependent Variables	
	Perceived Constructiveness	Idea Endorsement
Intercept	-.00	4.09***
Prohibitive Voice	-.09	.06
Perceived Constructiveness	-	.29***
Promotive Voice	.48***	.06
F	6.97**	7.67***
R	.45	.61

[3] Repeating these analyses with the scale of idea endorsement by Burris (2012) shows results in the same direction. Hypothesis 3a was again supported, with an increased model fit of R = .60 (F = 11.20, p <.001). Hypothesis 3b was not supported even with this different scale, as the indirect effect included the value zero (95% CI = -.02 to .12).

Total Effect of Prohibitive Voice on Idea Endorsement

Total Effect	SE	t	Confidence Interval
.03	.06	.51	[-.09 ; .15]

Direct Effect of Prohibitive Voice on Idea Endorsement

Direct Effect	SE	t	Confidence Interval
.06	.05	1.02	[-.05 ; .16]

Bootstrap Result for Indirect Relationship

Indirect Effect	SE	Confidence Interval
-.02	.03	[-.08 ; .03]

Note. N = 108. Results adopted from Model 4 (Hayes, 2012).
Number of bootstrap samples = 5000. 95% confidence intervals.
SE = estimate of standard error. Regression coefficients are unstandardized.
* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

The last part of this analysis regards the effect of indirectness as a moderator. Hypothesis 4a stated that indirectness moderates the relationship between perceived constructiveness and idea endorsement. Model 1 in the PROCESS tool was used to test this hypothesis, results can be found in Table 9. From the results, it can first of all be noted that perceived constructiveness is a highly significant predictor of idea endorsement ($\beta = .30$, $t = 4.40$, $p < .001$), whilst indirectness is not ($\beta = -.04$, $t = -.96$, $p = .34$). Moreover, the results show that indirectness is not a significant moderator of the relationship between perceived constructiveness and idea endorsement ($\beta = .08$, $t = 1.70$, $p = .09$). This is also confirmed by the bootstrapped intervals, since they contain zero as a value (95% CI = -.01 to .18). Therefore, these results do not provide support for hypothesis 4a.

Hypothesis 4b was tested using the conditional process analysis through model 14 of the PROCESS tool. The macro ideated by Hayes (2015) calculates an index for moderated mediation, by bootstrapping the difference of two conditional indirect effects. A moderated mediation exists when the confidence interval of the index excludes zero (Hayes, 2015). The results of this test can be found in Table 10.

First of all, promotive voice was used as the independent variable. In this model, both indirectness and the interaction term (perceived constructiveness x indirectness) are not

significantly related to idea endorsement (p = .34 and p = .21, respectively). The confidence intervals for the indirect effect exclude zero for low (95% CI = .03 to .17) and high (95% CI = .06 to .26) levels of indirectness. Nonetheless, the indirect effect of the moderator does not vary with different levels of the moderator, indicating that there is no significant moderated mediation effect (Muller, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2005). Moreover, the index of moderated mediation proves to be not significant in this model (95% CI = -.01 to .10). For these reasons, there is no significant support for a moderated mediation effect.

Secondly, prohibitive voice was used in the model as the independent variable. In this case, the confidence intervals include zero for both low (95% CI = -.01 to .09) and high (95% CI = -.02 to .13) levels of indirectness. Here too, the indirect effect of the moderator did not vary with different levels of the moderator (Muller et al., 2005). Moreover, the index of moderated mediation was not significant (95% CI = -.03 to .18). Therefore, there is no support for a moderated mediation effect with prohibitive voice either. Hence, hypothesis 4b is not supported[4].

Table 9

Regression Results for Simple Moderation (Hypothesis 4a)

Variable	Idea Endorsement	
	β	SE
Constant	4.10***	.04
Indirectness	-.04	.04
Perceived Constructiveness	.30***	.07
PCxI	.08	.05
F	8.87***	.19
R^2	.38	

Note. N = 108. Results adopted from Model 1 (Hayes, 2012).
Number of bootstrap samples = 5000. 95% confidence intervals.
PCxI = interaction term. SE = estimate of standard error. Regression coefficients are unstandardized.
* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

[4] Repeating the analyses with Burris' scale for idea endorsement did not significantly alter the results.

Table 10

Regression Results for Moderated Mediation (Hypothesis 4b)

Variable	Idea Endorsement	
	Promotive	Prohibitive
Constant	3.75***	3.73***
Indirectness	-.04	-.05
Promotive Voice	.06	-
Prohibitive Voice	-	.07
Perceived Constructiveness	.27***	.29***
PCxI	.07	.07
F	5.87***	8.28***
R^2	.39	.40

Note. N = 108. Results adopted from Model 14 (Hayes, 2012).
Number of bootstrap samples = 5000. 95% confidence intervals.
PCxI = interaction term. SE = estimate of standard error. Regression coefficients are unstandardized.
* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

Robustness Check

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, data on voice behavior was collected from both employees and supervisors, in order to be able to check whether these would lead to different results in the analysis and control for common method bias. To assess whether the study results remain unchanged if supervisor ratings are used, all the analyses were run again with promotive and prohibitive voice behavior as reported by supervisors as the independent variables. The regression analysis shows that both promotive and prohibitive voice significantly predict idea endorsement ($\beta = .35$, $t = 7.8$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .30$, $t = 7.0$, $p < .001$). These results support hypothesis 1, in line with my previous findings, and again do not provide support for hypothesis 2, since prohibitive voice is not negatively related to idea endorsement.

Regarding hypothesis 3a, the bootstrapped samples for the indirect effect of promotive voice on idea endorsement via perceived constructiveness do not include zero (95% CI = .01 to .20). Moreover, when controlling for prohibitive voice, promotive voice significantly predicts perceived constructiveness ($\beta = .50$, $t = 5.61$, $p < 0.001$). Hypothesis 3a is thus supported again, in alignment with my earlier results. Assessing hypothesis 3b, the results of the regression reveal that prohibitive voice also predicts perceived constructiveness ($\beta = .30$, t

= 3.50, $p < 0.001$). The indirect effect of prohibitive voice on idea endorsement through perceived constructiveness is also significant, with bootstrapped samples that do not include zero (95% CI = .01 to .11). For these reasons, a mediation effect can be assumed, providing support for hypothesis 3b, which is contrary to my previous findings.

In line with the findings of voice behavior reported by employees, neither hypothesis 4a nor 4b were supported.

Discussion

Based on the growing importance that the concept of voice is gaining in today's business world (Morrison, 2011), the aim of this thesis was to shed further light on the relationship between voice behavior and idea endorsement. In order to accomplish this, perceived constructiveness was studied as a possible mediator of the relationship between promotive and prohibitive voice, and idea endorsement. Furthermore, since research so far has neglected the role of communication modes in the abovementioned relationship (Burris, 2012), a goal was to understand how employees can communicate better in order to foster the final endorsement of an idea. Overall, the purpose of this thesis was to advance past findings related to how employees' promotive and prohibitive voice behaviors can foster idea endorsement. More specifically, I predicted that promotive voice is positively and prohibitive voice is negatively related to idea endorsement. I then hypothesized in this model that perceived constructiveness of the idea would mediate that relationship. Then, based on politeness theory, I expected that indirectness of voice would moderate the relationship between perceived constructiveness and idea endorsement in a such a way that, with higher levels of voice indirectness, there would also be higher chances of idea endorsement.

In accord with my prediction, the analysis of the questionnaire data revealed that promotive voice is positively related to idea endorsement. However, prohibitive voice proved to also be positively related to idea endorsement, and not negatively as my hypothesis

suggested. The mediating role of perceived constructiveness was also confirmed by the analyses. Finally, there was no evidence to support the hypothesis that indirectness could be a moderator between perceived constructiveness and idea endorsement.

The main analyses of this study were conducted using self-reports of voice behavior by employees. After conducting a robustness check with voice behavior measured by supervisors it was found that the results were almost identical for all hypotheses. The only difference was in the result for hypothesis 3b, which proved to be supported when using supervisor-rated voice behavior. Given such finding, I believe that the two ratings of employee voice behavior are generally consistent and provide strong results for the analyses.

Theoretical Implications

This study offers a few important theoretical contributions. First of all, it advances the research on the consequences of voice in organizations, since there have still not been many studies on how voice behavior leads to idea endorsement (Burris, 2012; Chamberlin et al., 2016). Promotive voice behavior has been associated with positive performance appraisals by many researchers (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2013; Thompson, 2005; Whiting et al., 2008; Whiting et al., 2012), yet this study provides a new contribution by proving that promotive voice is also positively related to idea endorsement. At the same time, it also shows that prohibitive voice too can be positively associated with idea endorsement. An explanation for this can be found in Liang et al.'s (2012) study, where they found that the strongest antecedent of prohibitive voice is psychological safety. This means that employees are encouraged to engage in prohibitive voice when they feel that their immediate social context (including their supervisors) will not punish them for speaking up (Liang et al., 2012). A consequence of such finding is that when employees do not think they are safe to speak up, they will simply not do so, hence the negative relationship between prohibitive voice and idea endorsement would not be measured. It could be that this present study captured a majority of

cases in which employees only engaged in prohibitive voice in presence of psychological safety, therefore leading to a positive relationship between prohibitive voice and idea endorsement.

The present study also contributes to the findings by Whiting et al. (2012) on the effects of message, source and context on performance evaluations. In fact, it was found that perceived constructiveness of the idea/message is a mediator between both promotive and prohibitive voice behavior and idea endorsement. This shows that not only perceived constructiveness can lead to positive performance evaluations, but it is also crucial for the idea/message itself to be endorsed. Such result is important because voice behavior is not only important for personal performance appraisals, but also for organizations as a whole: when a message is endorsed by a supervisor, this can bring general improvements or solve problems for a wider group in the organization (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Morrison, 2011; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Furthermore, distinguishing between promotive and prohibitive voice as antecedents of perceived constructiveness makes it possible to have a broader theoretical understanding of the effects of voice behavior.

The present findings contradict my predictions regarding politeness. In the model examined, it was found that voice politeness did not influence the relationship between voice constructiveness and idea endorsement. This seems incongruent with politeness theory because supervisors' decision of endorsement seemed to be unaffected by whether employees spoke up in more or less polite ways (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Politeness theory would suggest that, since voice behavior is itself a face-threatening fact, the level of politeness used by an employee when communicating a message can influence the supervisor's reaction. This mechanism was not found in my analysis, and it can be due to the fact that when a supervisor has already perceived a message as being constructive, the way in which that message is communicated will not interfere with his/her decision of endorsement. Although it goes in the

opposite direction from my initial idea, such result is theoretically interesting because it gives more importance to the perception of the message from the supervisor compared to the way in which that message is communicated (Sijbom et al., 2015). It is an unexpected finding, but it starts to answer the call for research made by Morrison (2011) and Burris (2012) regarding a need for further understanding of how the styles, modes and tones used to communicate voice can influence idea endorsement.

Practical Implications

Some valuable practical implications can be derived from this research. First of all, the fact that prohibitive voice is positively linked to idea endorsement is relevant because knowing this can encourage employees to speak up also about controversial topics. Creating a work environment where it is clear that even controversial topics can be raised is beneficial to the organization as a whole, as employees will feel more at ease in bringing up solutions but also critical issues (Burris, 2012; Burris et al., 2017; Landau, 2009; Morrison, 2011). Since both types of voice behavior lead to positive outcomes in terms of endorsement, and given that previous responses to voice is a key antecedent of voicing behaviors, this positive response will lead to an increase in speaking up (Milliken et al., 2003).

Another valuable application of these findings regards the perception of constructiveness of a message. As seen from my analysis, perceived constructiveness mediates the relationship between voice and idea endorsement. This is a factor that is important for employees to consider when deciding to voice an idea, because it has to do both with the message that they are delivering and with the way in which their supervisors will perceive it. Whiting et al. (2012) provide a list of factors that can be useful to leverage on in order to give a better perception of a message/idea: presence of a solution, voicer expertise, voicer trustworthiness, and early timing. On a broader scale, organizations can modify their training and hiring strategies so as to acquire and maintain employees that have the right

competencies and skills for the specific job, but also to make sure that employees understand the organization's processes fully and are therefore able to make timely decisions. Furthermore, team-building activities could be put in place to foster stronger bonding between group members and increase their respective trust. At the same time, if employees are made aware of these important factors, they can make better decisions regarding their voicing behavior. For instance, since timing is crucial, employees should pay attention not to deliver the message when it is too late and hence have the courage to deliver it when appropriate (Whiting et al., 2012).

A further practical application relates to the analysis on politeness. Since no moderation effect was found, no link can be made between speaking in a politer way and consequent idea endorsement. This means that employees should be encouraged to speak up in a way that is more adherent to their own communication style, but also to the specific situation. For instance, if the matter at hand is urgent, they should not be worried about communicating it in a polite, and therefore indirect, way, but rather more directly in order to express the urgency (Lam, in press).

Potential Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although the present study offers some valuable theoretical and practical contributions, it also presents some conceptual and methodological limitations, which need to be addressed in order to be able to find directions for future research.

First, since the study's design is of cross-sectional type, it was possible to analyze only the differences *between* people and not *within* them. This is a limitation in the fact that people can change their attitudes and decisions over time and based on different situational factors. For example, employee voice behavior and supervisor's idea endorsement could be subject to different influences and lead to different outcomes in different moments in time. Person-specific differences are not depicted by a cross-sectional study and therefore in future

research it would be valuable to conduct longitudinal studies too. Such a design would enable to capture those intra-individual differences that are otherwise ignored (Molenaar & Campbell, 2009).

Second, the study could be subject to biases due to the composition of the sample used. Although people from different countries participated, the main nationalities were Italian, German and Dutch, which therefore makes it difficult to generalize the findings to other nationalities. For instance, Asian countries are rather collectivistic than individualistic (Hofstede, 1994), which could mean that supervisors are less prone to accepting voice behavior given its challenging nature. The results regarding politeness could also be biased due to cultural differences, since a more direct tone of voice can be perceived differently by people coming from one country or another (Hofstede, 1994).

Third, even though measures were adopted in order to avoid it, common method bias could be present in this study and therefore have led to measurement errors and consequently misleading findings. Voice behavior was measured both as self-report by employees and as other-report by supervisors, then analyses were run twice to see if the two measures gave results in the same direction. Although both analyses yielded very similar results, it is still possible that some biases are present. For example, the indirectness measure was assessed as a self-report by employees. This can pose an issue of social desirability, because the measure may be subject to the tendency of people to present themselves in a more favorable way (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). Future research should find a way to measure indirectness from multi-source ratings, for example by employees, supervisors and peers.

Fourth, the measure for idea endorsement was created by merging the scales used in two different studies (Burris, 2012; Fast et al., 2013). This could create problems of reliability of the scale, since it was based on decisions inherent to the present study and not supported by psychometric reliability and validity. However, the analyses were re-run using the scale by

Burris (2012) alone, and the results were the same, which should reduce concerns related to the measurement of idea endorsement used in this study.

Since the moderating effect of politeness was found to be not significant on idea endorsement, future research should focus on different types of communication modes to see how these could influence the relationship between voice behavior and idea endorsement (Burris, 2012; Morrison, 2011). An example could be to study the effect of diplomatic versus aggressive voice modes on supervisors' idea endorsement. Nonetheless, further and more detailed research could be done in line with Lam's (in press) work on voice politeness, trying to spot the mechanisms by which indirectness of voice can be relevant for voice behavior.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain deeper insights into the mechanisms binding voice behavior and idea endorsement. The results prove to be interesting and were able to contribute to previous literature. Both promotive and prohibitive voice proved to be positively related to idea endorsement. Furthermore, this dissertation highlights the importance for employees of making sure that their ideas or comments are such that their supervisors will perceive them as being constructive. The perception of constructiveness is not per se granted by the fact that they are engaging in voice behavior, but rather can depend on the timing, situation, expertise and trust of the particular voicing act and people involved. Contrary to the expectations of this research, politeness did not moderate the relationship between perceived constructiveness of voice and idea endorsement. Future research will be needed in order to expand the knowledge regarding the effects of politeness on idea endorsement. In conclusion, I believe that these findings provide additional information regarding voice behavior and leave open several paths to follow for future research.

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Tables

Table 1

Tests of normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
Variables	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
1. Promotive voice	.163	108	.000	.919	108	.000
2. Prohibitive voice	.111	108	.002	.974	108	.030
3. Perceived constructiveness	.160	108	.000	.892	108	.000
4. Indirectness	.054	108	.200*	.989	108	.551
5. Idea endorsement	.100	108	.010	.962	108	.004

* This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a Lilliefors Significance Correction

Table 3

Descriptives of Categorical Control Variables - Employee

	Frequency	Percent
Age		
18-24	17	15.7
25-34	44	40.7
35-44	25	23.1
45-54	15	13.9
55-64	7	6.5
>65	-	-
Female	48	44.4
Male	60	55.6
Company tenure		
Less than 1 year	20	18.5
1-3 years	32	29.6
3-5 years	15	13.9
Over 5 years	41	6.5
Dutch	7	6.5
German	30	27.8
Italian	40	37.0
Other	31	28.7
Middle School or below	7	6.5
College	23	21.3
University	53	49.1
Post-graduate	25	23.1
Job tenure		
Less than 1 year	29	26.9
1-3 years	40	37.0
3-5 years	14	13.0
Over 5 years	25	23.1

Descriptives of Categorical Control Variables - Supervisor

	Frequency	Percent
Age		
18-24	1	0.9
25-34	24	22.2
35-44	32	29.6
45-54	33	30.6
55-64	17	15.7
>65	1	0.9
Female	36	33.3
Male	72	66.7
Company tenure		
Less than 1 year	5	4.6
1-3 years	10	9.3
3-5 years	20	18.5
Over 5 years	73	67.6
Dutch	7	6.5
German	28	25.9
Italian	40	37.0
Other	33	20.6
Middle School or below	5	4.6
College	16	14.8
University	59	54.6
Post-graduate	28	25.9

Descriptives of Categorical Control Variables - Company

	Frequency	Percent
Agriculture	-	-
Chemicals	17	15.7
Consumer Goods & Services	16	14.8
Education	4	3.7
Energy	-	-
Financial Services	11	10.2
Health Care	1	.9
Manufacturing	15	13.9
Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology	3	2.8
Public administration	7	6.5
Telecommunications & Media	3	2.8
Transportation & Logistics	13	12.0
Other	18	16.7
Company Size 1-4	1	.9
Company Size 5-9	8	7.4
Company Size 10-19	4	3.7
Company Size 20-99	23	21.3
Company Size 100-499	29	26.9
Company Size >500	43	39.8

Table 4

Regression with Control Variables

	Unstandardized Coefficients	
	β	Std. Error
Employee Age	.11	.08
Supervisor Age	-.04	.06
Supervisor company tenure	.03	.07
Employee company tenure	-.10	.08
Employee job tenure	.08	.08
Supervisor education	.03	.11
Employee education	.02	.12
Supervisor nationality	.04	.21
Employee nationality	-.26	.22
Supervisor gender	-.12	.12
Employee gender	.05	.11
Company size	-.09	.11
Company industry	.08	.16
R^2	.16	

Note: none of the variables show significance.
* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

Figures

Histograms

Figure 2. Histogram of Promotive voice

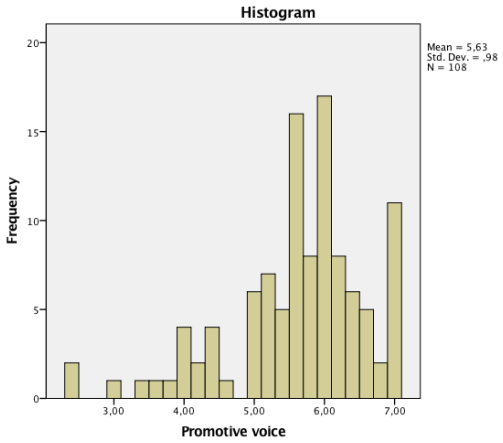


Figure 2. Histogram of Prohibitive voice

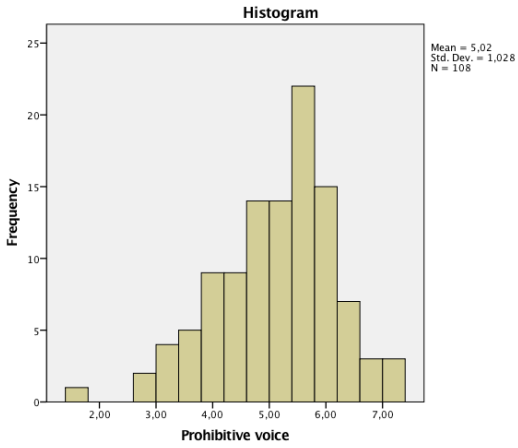


Figure 3. Histogram of Perceived constructiveness

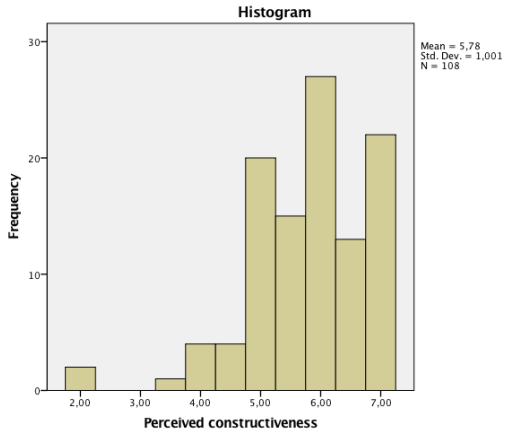


Figure 4. Histogram of Indirectness

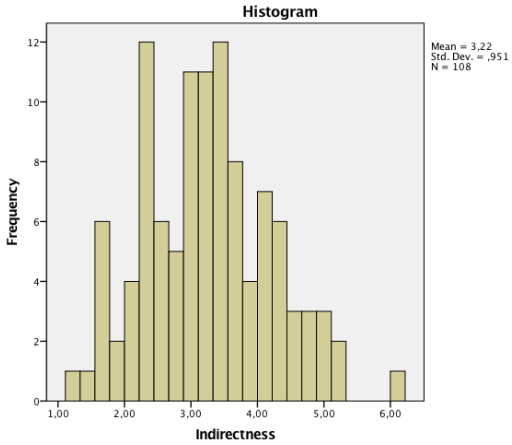
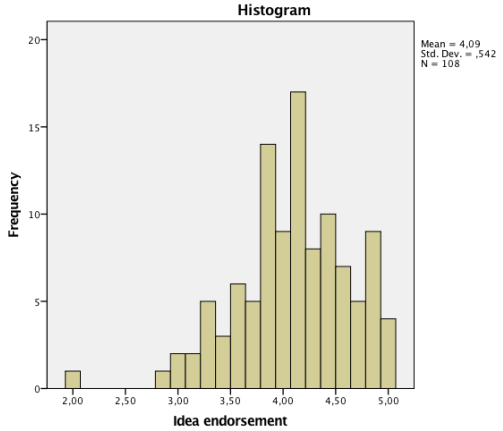


Figure 5. Histogram of Idea endorsement



P-P Plots

Figure 6. P-P Plot of Promotive voice

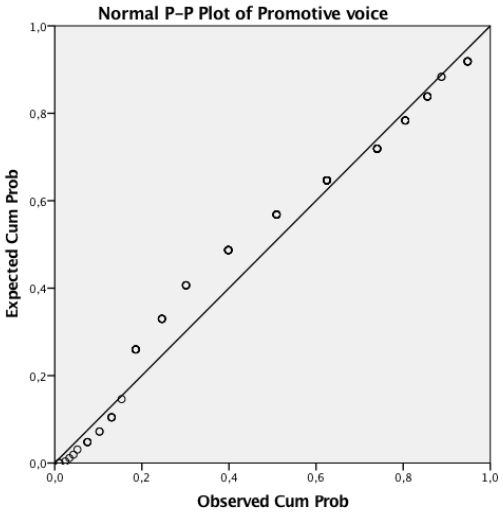


Figure 7. P-P Plot of Prohibitive voice

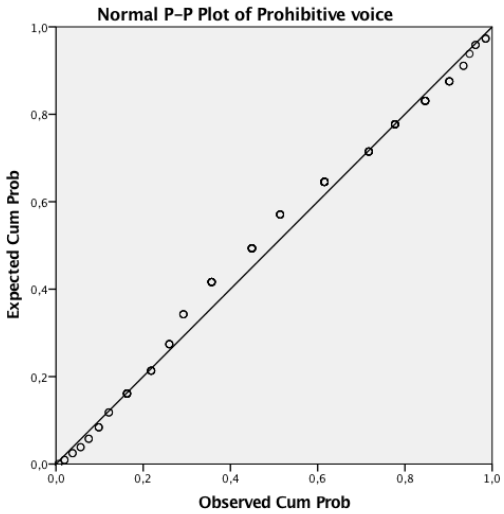


Figure 8. P-P Plot of Perceived constructiveness

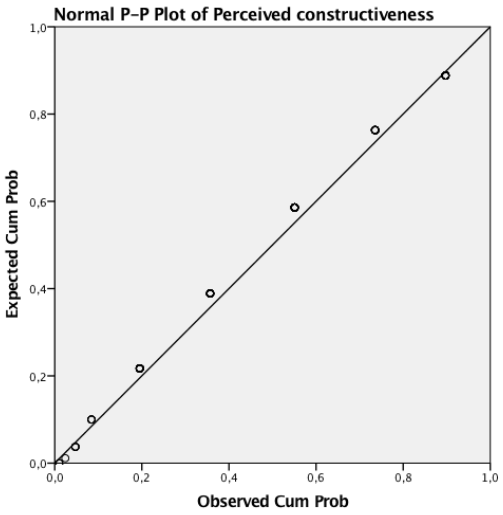


Figure 9. P-P Plot of Indirectness

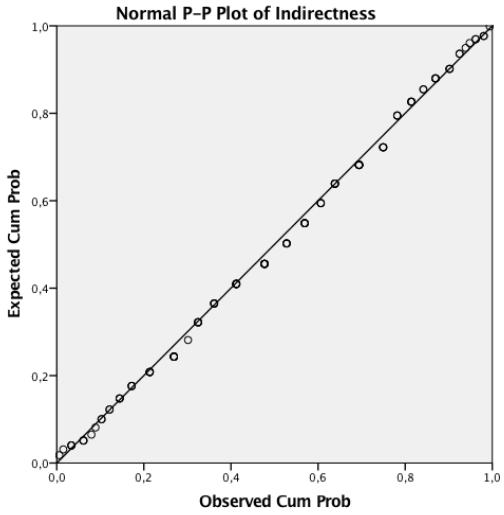
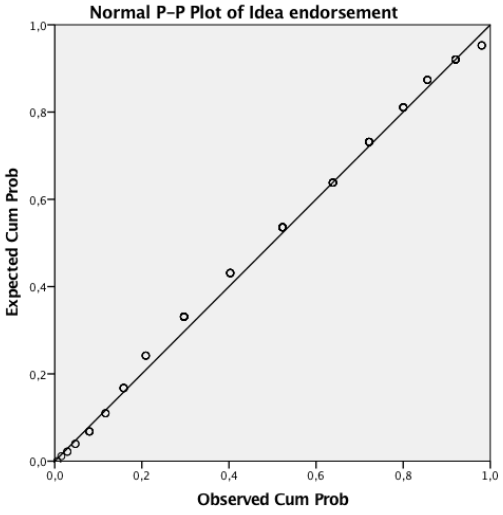


Figure 10. P-P Plot of Idea endorsement



Boxplots

Figure 11. Boxplot of Promotive voice

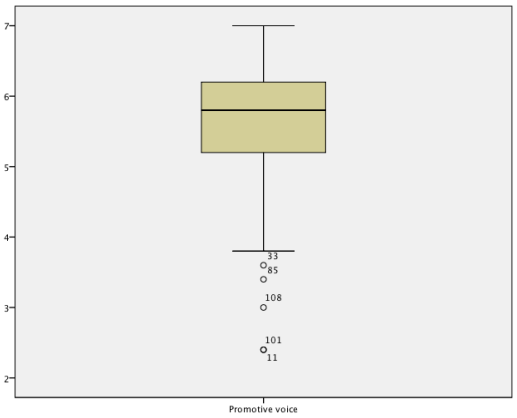


Figure 12. Boxplot of Prohibitive voice

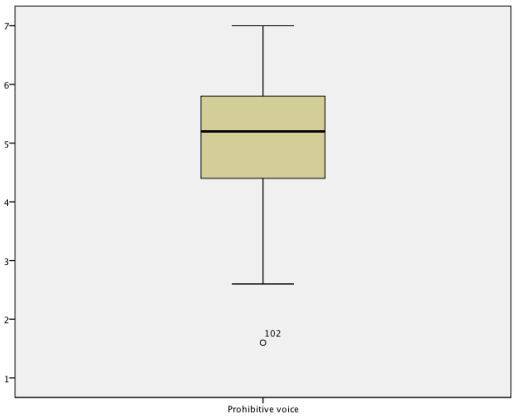


Figure 13. Boxplot of Perceived constructiveness

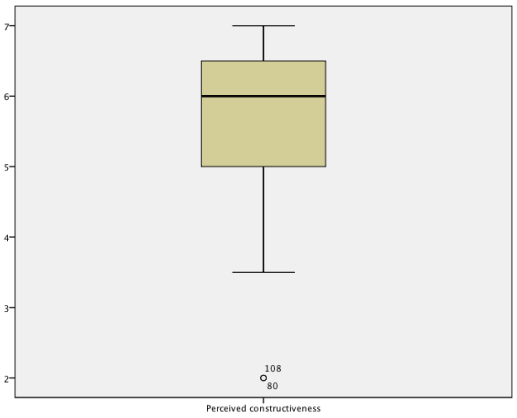


Figure 14. Boxplot of Indirectness

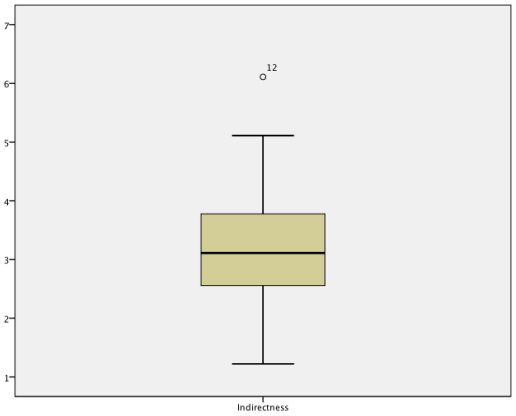
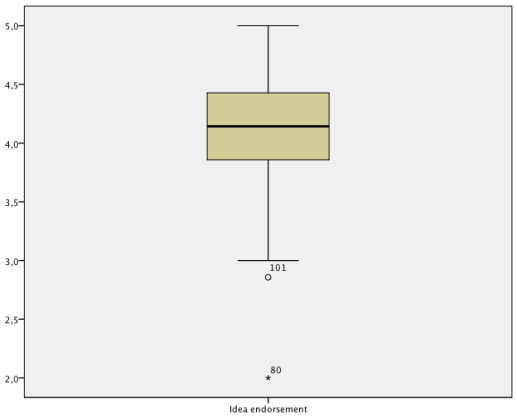


Figure 15. Boxplot of Idea endorsement



Scatterplots

Figure 16. Scatterplot of idea endorsement

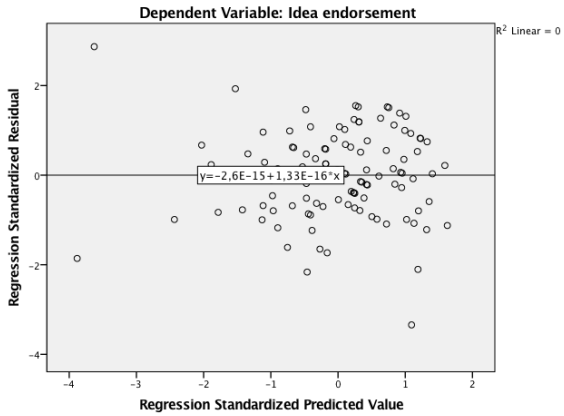


Figure 17. Scatterplot of Perceived constructiveness

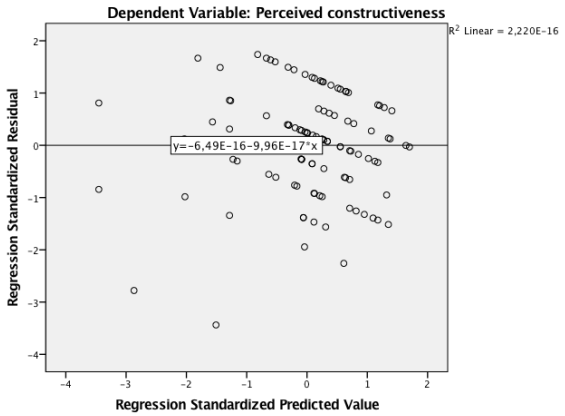


Figure 18. Scatterplot of promotive voice on idea endorsement

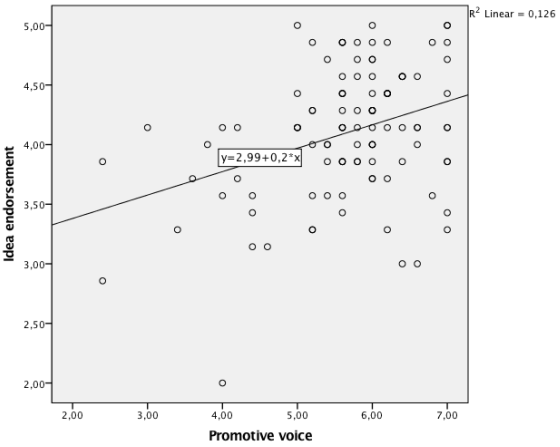


Figure 19. Scatterplot of prohibitive voice on idea endorsement

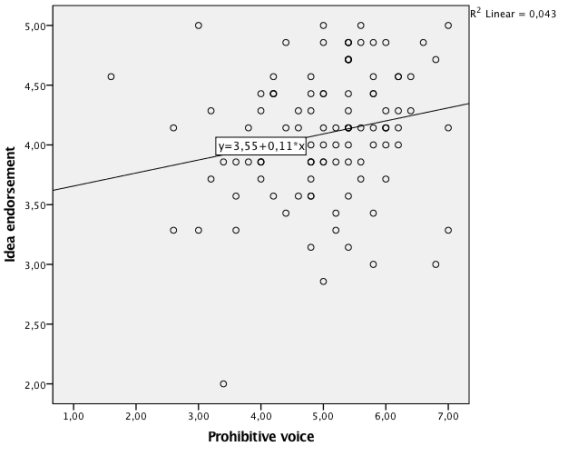
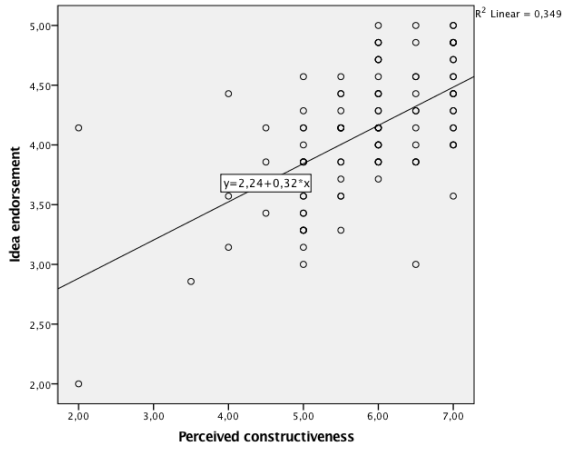


Figure 20. Scatterplot of perceived constructiveness on idea endorsement



Appendix A

Cold Calling Letter

Dear [Name],

Supervisors often learn last about issues and problems in the organization. Does this sound familiar to you?

We, a group of Master students of International Business at Maastricht University (supervised by Dr. Hannes Guenter), want to help answer this question by researching the drivers of open communication at the workplace. To this end, we kindly ask you to participate in a 10 minutes survey.

In return, you would be receiving an executive report with actionable advice on how to improve communication at the workplace.

In order to obtain useful results, we need the questionnaire to be filled out by pairs of employees and supervisors. Therefore, we have created a unique code to pair your results with those of your supervisor / employee.

Please copy and paste the following code where asked in the survey: _____ (CODE)

Confidentiality is a matter of highest priority to us. Therefore, we ensure to preserve your anonymity with no chance of back-tracing any information to the particular participants. The collected data will not be disclosed to third parties and only reported in aggregated form in our findings for this project.

The link to the survey is the following: _____

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at:
+49 160 896 3836 (Katrin Rulands).
Thank you very much for your participation!

Kind regards,
Chiara Serra, Katrin Rulands, Yasin Kilic

Appendix B

Survey Items

Variable	Item
Employee Prohibitive Voice[a]	1. I dare to point out problems when they appear in the work unit, even if that would hamper relationships with other colleagues. 2. I dare to voice out opinions on things that might affect efficiency in the work unit, even if that would embarrass others. 3. I advise other colleagues against undesirable behaviors that would hamper job performance. 4. I speak up honestly with problems that might cause serious loss to the work unit even when/though dissenting opinions exist. 5. I proactively report coordination problems in the workplace to the management.
Employee Promotive Voice[a]	1. I proactively voice out constructive suggestions that help the unit reach its goals. 2. I proactively develop and make suggestions for issues that may influence the unit. 3. I proactively suggest new projects, which are beneficial to the work unit. 4. I raise suggestions to improve the unit's working procedure. 5. I proactively report coordination problems in the workplace to the management.
Supervisor Prohibitive Voice[a]	1. This employee speaks up honestly with problems that might cause serious loss to the work unit, even when/though dissenting opinions exist. 2. This employee dares to voice out opinions on things that might affect efficiency in the work unit, even if that would embarrass others. 3. This employee proactively reports coordination problems in the workplace to the management. 4. This employee advises other colleagues against undesirable behaviors that would hamper job performance. 5. This employee dares to point out problems when they appear in the unit, even if that would hamper relationships with other colleagues.
Supervisor Promotive Voice[a]	1. This employee proactively develops and makes suggestions for issues that may influence the unit. 2. This employee proactively suggests new projects, which are beneficial to the work unit. unit, even if that would embarrass others. 3. This employee raises suggestions to improve the unit's working procedure. 4. This employee makes constructive suggestions to improve the unit's operation. 1. This employee proactively voices out constructive suggestions that help the unit reach its goals.
Perceived	1. This employee's comments were constructive

Constructiveness[b]	2. This employee's comments are likely to enhance the performance of his/her work team
Indirectness[c]	1. There are many times when I prefer to express myself indirectly. 2. Most of what I say can be taken at face value, and there is no need to look for a deeper meaning. (R) 3. My remarks often have more than one meaning. 4. Many times, people are not totally sure what I really mean when I say something. 5. Often times there are many different ways in which my remarks can be interpreted. 6. There is usually no need for people to look below the surface to understand what I really mean. (R) 7. Often there is more to what I say than what appears on the surface. 8. People have to spend time thinking about my remarks in order to understand my real meaning. 9. What I mean with a remark is usually fairly obvious. (R)
Idea Endorsement[d]	1. How likely is it that you will take this person's comments to your supervisors? 2. How likely is it that you will support this person's comments when talking with your supervisors? 3. I think this person's comments should be implemented. 4. I agree with this person's comments. 5. This person's comments are valuable. 6. I would revise my plan and incorporate this employee's comments. 7. This employee's comments would cause me to have second thoughts about my plan.

[a] Liang, Farh, & Farh (2012)

[b] Whiting, Maynes, Podsakoff & Podsakoff (2012)

[c] Holtgraves (1995)

[d] Burris (2012); Fast, Burris & Bartel (2014)