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Enhancing Employee Voice in Government: Transparency, Trust, and Cognitive Empowerment

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Enhancing Employee Voice in Government: Transparency, Trust, and Cognitive Empowerment

Abstract

For organizational change to take root, develop, and realize the desired goals and benefits, employees are increasingly asked to be an integral part of the change process, to speak up and use their voice to point out areas to improve and ways to be more efficient. Organizations and managers must create a climate where this employee voice, a multidimensional construct comprised of promotive and prohibitive voice, is encouraged and heard, and where the employee is empowered to effect change and make improvements. Both types of voice are potent mechanisms for improving public services, and government organizations in particular, as compared to private and other businesses. This quantitative study investigates transparency, a multidimensional view of trust with cognition-based and affect-based trust, and cognitive empowerment and their relationships with both types of employee voice. The setting is a government organization that trains employees to see issues in the workplace and make changes to improve outcomes for citizens, save time and money, and improve the utilization of resources. Trust and transparency matter, until the climate supports psychological safety. Transparency and cognitive empowerment are found to be significantly related to different types of employee voice after controlling for various factors, including propensity to trust, social desirability, and psychological safety.

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Jomarie Phelan Honcoop

August 2023

Advisor: Andrew Schnackenberg, Ph.D.

Abstract

For organizational change to take root, develop, and realize the desired goals and benefits, employees are increasingly asked to be an integral part of the change process, to speak up and use their voice to point out areas to improve and ways to be more efficient. Organizations and managers must create a climate where this employee voice, a multidimensional construct comprised of promotive and prohibitive voice, is encouraged and heard, and where the employee is empowered to effect change and make improvements. Both types of voice are potent mechanisms for improving public services, and government organizations in particular, as compared to private and other businesses. This quantitative study investigates transparency, a multidimensional view of trust with cognition-based and affect-based trust, and cognitive empowerment and their relationships with both types of employee voice. The setting is a government organization that trains employees to see issues in the workplace and make changes to improve outcomes for citizens, save time and money, and improve the utilization of resources. Trust and transparency matter, until the climate supports psychological safety. Transparency and cognitive empowerment are found to be significantly related to different types of employee voice after controlling for various factors, including propensity to trust, social desirability, and psychological safety.

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"It is good to have an end to journey toward, but it is the journey that matters in the end" Ernest Hemingway.

Thank you for being part of my journey – my husband Jeff, son Bennett, mother Ellie, grandparents Wahle and Jo, parents in law David and Kathleen, Shaun, uncles and aunts Bill and Debbie, Wahle and Sue, John, Bill and Teri, Dan and Betty, friends Tracy, Stephanie, Lisa, Crystal, Michon, Heather, Jen, Erika, Jean, Scott, Monica, Amy, Keri, Astrid, Jane, Jack, cousins Katy, Molly, Carey, Lacey, and numerous other family and friends. I have appreciated their support and care through different phases of life.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Organizations thrive on the ideas and suggestions of their employees, and a commonly held view is that employees need to speak up, using their voice, to be seen as active contributors to effect positive change (Chamberlin et al., 2017). From scholars and business leaders alike, the collective wisdom is generally that voice is good, and its absence is problematic (Detert et al., 2013) and employees are often reluctant to share information that could be interpreted as negative or threatening to those above them in an organizational hierarchy (Milliken et al., 2003). Many employees often do not share information unless the climate is right (Madan et al., 2021). There are powerful forces in many organizations that cause widespread withholding of information about potential problems or issues by employees (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Managers are compelled to create environments in which speaking up to them and others is routine because voice aids in the discovery of new products and better services, enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of task processes, address problems in work systems, and leads to many other positive learning and performance outcomes (Detert et al., 2013). This includes an understanding of the importance of people in the change process and the multidisciplinary idea of employee engagement (Tichy, 1982).

Employees in all organizations must develop and then seek to maintain relationships and interactions during the course of their everyday work in these specially

created environments, such that both strategy formulation and implementation are supported (Hambrick, 1995) where employees are able to synthesize the contradictory forces of dissent and consensus (Dooley & Fryxell, 1999). Given the optimal environment, this suggests that employees can effectively judge whether ideas or suggestions are appropriate for their particular organization and that their authentic voice behaviors are chosen to contribute to the organization (Shin et al., 2022).

Prior research has shown that voice could be a potent mechanism for improving public services and government organizations in particular, as compared to private and other businesses (James & Moseley, 2014), but more research is needed. Public government employees are asked to have a greater say in how to organize and perform their work (Saner, 2001). This greater say in implementing changes stems from employee voice, where the employee is given permission and empowerment to effect change and make improvements (Hassan, 2015).

This voice of the employee is the discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning and impact (Morrison, 2011). Employee voice is behavior that emphasizes the expression of constructive challenges intended to positively impact the work and organization, rather than merely criticize without a path to improvement or a solution (Van Dyne & Lepine, 1998). Voice includes pointing out negative issues that can spark change, where employees have been recognized as an invaluable source of suggestions for addressing and solving work critical problems and issues (Gao et al., 2011).

Organizational environments are becoming increasingly complex, dynamic, and interdependent, especially in government contexts as this study investigates. This is largely because government has become an active and influential participant in modern market economies, from local to state to federal levels, with a vastly expanded size, scope, and enormous impact on the lives of every citizen (Li & Maskin, 2021). The setting of this study is the City and County of Denver, Colorado, and their Peak Academy team that focuses on making government more efficient and empowering the employees to make positive changes in the workplace. It is hard to escape the headlines about issues with government and the lack of transparency and trust. This includes government at the federal level, state, county, and city and local governments. There has been progress at many of those levels with some government organizations, and Peak Academy is a shining example of government support for efficiency and process improvement. They support government services performing at a high level to maximize resources and cut out wasteful processes and negative impacts to citizens. Resonant is the idea that organizations and government differ in many respects in important ways, highlighted by the negative views of bureaucracy, different levels of goal complexity and ambiguity, lack of transparency, structural characteristics and operations, and the perception that private or business organizations are inherently superior in efficiency and effectiveness compared to government (Rainey & Bozeman, 2000).

Accordingly, it is difficult for managers in government to detect, interpret, and handle challenges all by themselves, and employees have been recognized as an invaluable source of comments and suggestions for addressing and solving work critical

problems and issues (Holley et al., 2019). This is even more true in government organizations that are under increased pressure to reduce costs and find more efficient ways of providing public services (Hassan, 2015), where managers and employees shape outcomes of government work (O'Toole & Meier, 1999). Governments must better understand how and when voice is most influential and the importance of exploring factors that may impact voice (Holley et al., 2019). Emphasis on innovation in government has perhaps never been stronger (Fernandez & Pitts, 2011). As government organizations have grown, this has become a critical imperative. The latest data shows that there were 23.7 million full-time and part-time employees of the US government, including: 4.0 million federal employees, 5.5 million state employees, and 14.2 million local government employees, the subject of this research (www.usafacts.org, 2021).

This idea of innovation and efficiency in government is not new. Progressives began efforts in earnest in the late nineteenth century to make government more efficient and to better benefit citizens. There were significant strides made and government divisions created that did help address issues of inefficiency, corruption, and government overreach, with a focus of making government work for everyone with benefits that citizens could see and that impacted their daily lives (Berman, 2019). Many progressives hoped to make government better able to serve the citizens' varied needs by making governmental framework, outcomes, and services more efficient and accountable and based on science and data with the goal of reducing bureaucracy (Haverman et al., 2007). This also included efforts to be more transparent and not to do work behind closed doors where decisions were private and not subject to public scrutiny (Sullivan & Onion, 2023).

Change remains one of the few constants in an increasingly unpredictable and complex environment and leaders and employees need to better understand how to adapt given their environment (Waddell et al., 2017), learn how to improve organizational performance (March, 1991), and create a climate that cultivates innovation (Shanker et al., 2017). Today's dynamic business environments have rendered continuous improvements through learning, change, and innovation imperative to organizational success (Frazier et al., 2017). These processes develop across multiple levels of the organization as individuals and groups engage in behaviors such as speaking up using their voice (Grant, 2013), collaborating, and experimenting (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Voice can be a differentiator for an organization, leveraging the best insights of employees close to the work, and it is known that there are factors that foster or inhibit employees' voice behavior in organizations (Detert et al., 2013). What is not well known is information about these factors in a government setting with the recognition that there is more work to be done to understand what voice means and how to use it to innovate and empower (Fernandez & Pitts, 2011).

Part of the challenge in identifying these critical factors to better support voice is the fact that there is a paucity of research and literature that distinguishes types of voice and their particular impact on the operations and workings of government. This includes how to best harness ideas, opinions, and suggestions voiced by employees to improve the quality of decision-making and efficiency and better consider and use positive and negative information voiced by employees (Shin et al., 2022).

The conceptualization of voice led to further developments to a multi-dimensional view that includes voice as promotive and prohibitive (Liang et al., 2012). Promotive voice is an employee's expression of new ideas or suggestions for improving the overall functioning of their work unit or organization. Promotive voice mobilizes the pursuit of ideal and aspirational goals where it can facilitate performance gains and the introduction of beneficial changes to processes (Li & Tangirala, 2021) and it is motivated by the desire to improve the organization (MacMillan et al., 2020).

Prohibitive voice describes an employee's expression of concern about work practices, incidents, or employee behaviors that are harmful to their organization (Liang et al., 2012). Prohibitive voice can prevent performance losses by managing errors (Li & Tangirala, 2021) and it expresses concerns about organizational problems and issues (e.g., complaints and grievances), but some voice behaviors are destructive in nature (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014) and can undermine interpersonal relationships without other factors present, such as trust or open and clear communication, in the workplace (MacMillan et al., 2020). Research shows that prohibitive voice can be threatening to the receiver and thus is less effective than promotive voice for initiating organizational change, but in the presence of these other factors, it can play a role in an organization's communication or culture strategy (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014).

As the evidence shows that employee voice is impactful in promoting and supporting change and benefiting organizational outcomes (Li & Tangirala, 2021), employees are thus expected to take a more active role at work. This has resulted in researchers attempting to identify the factors that foster the willingness by employees to

take interpersonal risks and invest their energies into work (Kahn, 1990), with organizational outcomes showing evidence that employee voice enables these public or private organizations to learn from their mistakes, facilitating the correction and prevention of financially and socially costly errors (Edmondson, 1999; Grant, 2013).

A critical enabler of a higher level of organizational success is trust, seen as something that results in support for employee voice (Gao et al., 2011), higher performance, and better workplace behaviors (Kramer & Cook, 2004). The significance of trust in the workplace has been recognized for decades and scholars have offered different explanations about the complex processes through which trust forms, the processes through which trust affects workplace outcomes, and the nature of the construct itself (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). This research will support understanding these factors in a government context. The literature on employee voice has primarily looked at the effect of trust on a general conception of voice. It has not looked at the effect of different types of trust on different types of voice, through a multidimensional view. As governments are dynamic environments with varying relational dynamics and characterizations of employee voice, examining the specific types of trust that enhance different types of voice is important.

Another enabler of a higher level of organizational success is cognitive empowerment. This is a process by which people, teams, organizations, and communities gain mastery over issues of concern to them, where employees are provided knowledge and guidance that enhance their skills and support change in the workplace (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). A growing challenge facing most governments and public services is

the quest for innovation and change-oriented behaviors among employees and the

creation and maintenance of a dynamic workplace and a proactive public sector (Vigoda-

Gadot & Beeri, 2012). Hence, improving the performance and achievements of

governmental organizations depends upon reinventing old procedures and changing

conservative paradigms and conventional work practices, where it can be a complex task,

but one that is crucial for a better understanding of government organizations, their

effectiveness, efficiency, and general performance (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007).

This includes infusing creative managerial practices into public systems and in

service of demanding citizens, practices that must involve a comprehensive set of

change-oriented behaviors among public employees (Saner, 2001). One of the most

significant elements that these changes entail is employing an increasingly large

percentage of highly skilled and knowledge-based employees (Yuvaraj, 2011) who are

committed to disseminating change, especially change that affects the services provided

to citizens (Vigoda-Gadot & Beeri, 2012).

Government differs sharply from private organizations on formalization,

operations, and red tape in processes subject to various rules and the authority of

oversight agencies, influenced by a host of factors, including organizational size,

technology, and work processes that impact why employees contribute value or

suggestions (Rainey & Bozeman, 2000), necessitating a climate that drives engagement

from employees to support the change and innovation processes (Cordery et al., 2015).

By harnessing the best of the two types of voice in the right climate, research has

shown in government in a variety of areas, as with regulatory protections or strong

employee participation, for example (McCall, 2001), that promotive voice practices intended to provide ideas and suggestions for improvement are likely to foster innovation (Liang et al., 2012), but there is more work to do to better understand this. Even prohibitive voice practices may be positively, rather than negatively, associated with organizational innovation (Shin et al., 2022), due to an ability to separate the content of prohibitive voice from the individuals who might feel threatened by it (MacMillan et al., 2020). Therefore, formalizing the prohibitive voice process minimizes negative and defensive responses to news about problems (Burris, 2012; Morrison, 2014). In a prohibitive voice process, managers and employees influence the decision about responding to information, largely if is it provided through clear communication and an effective information flow with managers and employees (Shin et al., 2022). This research study looks at these practices in government and why employees in government organizations, impacted by declining trust in government (Citrin & Stoker, 2018) and problems voicing issues or opportunities in the workplace (Hassan, 2015) may or may not use promotive and prohibitive voice.

Over the last few decades, the public sector and governments have been compelled to perform more efficiently and there is pressure on public organizations to shift from traditional, bureaucratic processes to become faster-paced, more customer-friendly entities (Abaidoo & Blankenberger, 2022), but that does not mean that research in government is easy, or that applying research findings in a practical way to effect change are widely done (Schwarz & Vakola, 2021). The complexity and knowledge intensity of contemporary government organizations means that employees often know

information that leaders need to leverage in order to make sound decisions, but they may feel it is too risky to be vulnerable to share their knowledge and opinions with leaders (MacMillan et al., 2020).

Managers and organizations would do well to minimize that level of risk and provide a psychologically safe space to encourage employees to speak up with such information as the expression of ideas and suggestions intended to stimulate positive changes, as it may enhance empowerment, employee task performance, learning, and group or organizational performance (Edmondson, 1999, 2019; Mackenzie et al., 2011). Some researchers believe employee voice can be encouraged where there are high levels of trust and clear communication between employees and managers, where employees stop suppressing prohibitive voice if they feel that it will not impose an undesired cost (Fast et al., 2014).

The reason it is important to distinguish between these forms of voice is because they have different drivers and outcomes and, I argue, rely on the foundational concepts of transparency and trust. Employees or groups that already have a high level of one driver of interpersonal trust are likely to be capable of tolerating much higher levels of issues and accept disagreements at face value. They are less likely to misinterpret conflict behaviors by inferring hidden agendas or personal attacks as the driving force behind the behavior. However, the opposite is true in low trust situations where employees interpret the ambiguous and unclear behavior of others negatively and infer relationship conflict (MacMillan et al., 2020).

At present, however, the literature has struggled to explain the drivers of this multi-dimensional view of voice with promotive and prohibitive voice. This is problematic because government organizations in particular are more vulnerable to red tape that can slow down or inhibit employee voice (Pandey et al., 2007). Hence, voice is crucial to ensuring that the competence and expertise of employees are put to appropriate use and when they must cope with disruptions that impact their environment, it becomes especially important for them to draw on their knowledge and insights. But how to best prepare that knowledge in employees? I argue that cognitive empowerment impacts the two types of employee voice. Voice does become an important factor that determines success in times of change (Li & Tangirala, 2021). Promotive and prohibitive voice can both enhance resilience, but for different reasons and at different times during the change process (Li & Tangirala, 2021) and cognition-based and affect-based trust turn on these different drivers or applications for cooperation, as discussed later, depending on the presence and growth of each type of trust (McAllister, 1995).

Another supporting idea with this multi-dimensional view of voice is cognitive empowerment as theoretical grounding for these constructs, as it is a particular challenge to impart knowledge and realize positive outcomes from employees cutting through bureaucracy and red tape, as are often found in government organizations (Bozeman, 1993; Rainey & Bozeman, 2000). Cognitive empowerment is an active, participatory process through which individuals, organizations, and communities gain greater control and efficacy. It refers to the belief in one's own strengths and the power to influence the environment around them for increased effectiveness and goal achievement (Rothman et

al., 2019). Cognitive empowerment is a process by which people, teams, organizations, and communities gain mastery over issues of concern to them that includes processes and structures that enhance members' skills and effect change (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Cognitive empowerment includes critical awareness, decision-making, training, resource mobilization, and relational processes to bring about change through relationships (Lardier et al., 2020).

The City and County of Denver, Colorado and their quality improvement organization Peak Academy are devoted to continuous process improvement and training with government employees with process support and services that support citizens of the local area. Peak Academy is a government division started in 2011, a rare support system embedded in a local government, devoted to the idea that successful innovation and efficiency improvements must start with the people who do the work, using these government employees to solve their own problems and improve services for citizens through training, as well as independent and team process improvement projects (Elms & Wogan, 2016).

Morrison (2011) suggests that there needs to be more of a focus on the type of message and information that is being conveyed to employees and the creation of an atmosphere or climate that encourages government employees to go the extra mile in daily job routines such that it might compensate for bureaucratic red tape and slow and unbendable procedures (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). As government agencies tend to have more red tape than other organizations, this too hinders performance (Boyne et al., 2006)

and impacts trust in governments, where trust is considered one of the critical

components of good governance (Albaladejo, 2019).

     There are two types of trust: cognition-based and affect-based. Cognition-based

trust is based on individual beliefs about peer reliability and dependability based on

knowledge of that peer's skills, competence, and reliability. Affect-based trust is based

on reciprocated interpersonal care and concern (McAllister, 1995). These two types of

trust are omnipresent in government organizations. The research shows that trust as a

unidimensional construct supports voice overall, yet the literature has yet to examine the

influence of different types of trust on different types of voice. Thus, we need to examine

the influence of a multidimensional view of trust to bolster an understanding of how to

better foster voice in government organizations. It is important to look at these two types

of trust, as this construct is complex and nuanced (Colquitt et al., 2007). Trust develops

in a variety of ways, acknowledging that competence and responsibility are central

elements (McAllister, 1995), taking into account the integrated and vast fabric of

experiences in relationships (Rempel et al., 1985), and importantly, doing this in

governmental organizations where there is a pressing need for greater understanding.

     This is because research has shown that it is possible to build trust. Through

careful measurement and considered action, government can build trust. However, the

mechanisms of transparency, trust, and accountability have not kept pace with the

complexity of governments today, and the invisible nature of trust can lead government

organizations to pay it too little attention, but it is critical to reverse this and address ways

to effectively build and sustain trust (Goldhammer et al., 2021).

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As building and sustaining trust in government is a critical goal, it is necessary to learn more about these two types of trust, as they are omnipresent in government organizations. Although we know that trust (as a unidimensional construct) supports voice overall, academic literature has yet to examine the influence of different types of trust on different types of voice. Thus, we need to examine the influence of this multidimensional view of trust to bolster our understanding of how to foster both promotive and prohibitive employee voice in government organizations.

I claim that transparency is important for government and leaders and its impact resonates with employees, where they feel safe to voice their suggestions and concerns to make improvements. If organizations can develop a positive climate that allows for transparency and trust, it is more likely to result in higher levels of motivation, commitment, and employee engagement (Shanker et al., 2017). Transparency enables employees to clearly see the progress and challenges faced by the organization. Without such clarity, how can employees be expected to raise their voices? I predict that transparency will enhance promotive and prohibitive voice, because it enables employees to accurately understand the landscape of ideas and hurdles affecting the organization. This enables the employee to develop clear perspectives, resulting in enhanced idea generation (promotive voice) and problem identification (prohibitive voice). This idea underscores the importance of both transparency and trust with an increased focus on impacting these ideas to better support employee voice and a recognition of the critical role of voice in achieving organizational impact (Liang et al., 2012) through efficiency and better government outcomes (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017).

How to promote transparency where it is an important component of good government (del Sol, 2013) and why people trust and how that trust shapes social relations (Lewicki et al., 1998) are fundamental ideas to explore. The ideas necessarily go together, as trust by itself may not always be sufficient to promote employee voice (Gao et al., 2011).

Governments must find ways to build trust, and empower employees to speak up, highlighting the importance of cognitive empowerment as an important aim for employees where government organizations should create the right conditions to strengthen levels of empowerment (Ozpamuk et al., 2023). Governments must also support the development of trust in ways that note an employee's competence and the positive and emotional bonds of trust, cognition-based and affect-based trust, while taking risks that challenge the status quo (Hassan, 2015) and encouraging this extra-role behavior of prohibitive and promotive voice (Liang et al., 2012; Van Dyne & Lepine, 1998). These dynamics are uncovered when a multidimensional view of trust and employee voice are adopted.

Research Question

Given the challenges outlined above, I ask the following question:

How do transparency, cognition-based and affect-based trust, and cognitive empowerment impact employee voice in governmental organizations?

I approached this question through a deductive, quantitative study with two surveys of the government employees from the City and County of Denver. The surveys were separated in time by three weeks and consisted of a range of questions on the focal constructs using validated scales, supported by an email introduction and reminders from the staff at Peak Academy. The statistical analysis of the data was completed with regression testing to test significance with the hypotheses.

This research question will drive a better understanding of how multidimensional constructs of transparency and trust, as well as cognitive empowerment, impact both promotive and prohibitive voice. This information can better support the Peak Academy team drive strategies to reach more employees with cognitive empowerment and process improvement training after first setting the right type of environment where voice is best supported to bring about organizational change and performance.

Contributions

This research makes three primary contributions. The first contribution is an examination of employee voice in a governmental organization, something that has not been well studied (Drew, 2020; Hassan, 2015; Raadschelders et al., 2015). Governmental organizations suffer from a lack of employee voice, so there is a need to better understand how it is produced.

The second contribution is an examination of a multidimensional view of voice in government, something not well understood or studied (Ertas, 2015; Li et al., 2020; Liang et al., 2012; Schnell, 2020). This is a more holistic way to assess the determinants of voice in governmental organizations, as they face unique dynamics that do not always

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include support for promotive ideas or the ability or understanding of how to harness prohibitive voice that is not harmful.

The third contribution is an examination of the drivers of promotive and prohibitive voice that are known to be challenges within governmental organizations (Citrin & Stoker, 2018; Drew, 2020; Edmondson & Besieux, 2021; Raadschelders et al., 2015). These include transparency, cognition-based and affect-based trust, and cognitive empowerment. There is a need to better understand the relationship between public employees and their complex workplaces (Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2020). This contribution includes a multidimensional view of both transparency and trust impacting a multidimensional view of employee voice, something that has not been well explained in the literature.

A supporting contribution includes the research–practice gap that can be bridged by researchers and managers cocreating knowledge, such as the case of the University of Denver researchers, Peak Academy, and city government employees (Hoffman, 2021; Sharma & Bansal, 2020; Spencer et al., 2022).

Paper Organization

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Chapter Two: Literature Review and Hypothesis Development follows where I highlight the main body of literature on the constructs along with the theoretical framework. I weave the six research study hypotheses into the supporting literature and set up the statistical analysis framework. Chapter Three: Methodology includes details about the study methodology, procedures, survey details, and survey respondents. I outline the main constructs and

validated scales used in the survey, as well as statistical controls and those validated scales. I also detail the demographic information from the surveys. Chapter Four: Analysis and Results includes detailed statistical review and analysis of the data and hypothesis testing. I outline the main results and discoveries with statistical significance from the regression analyses and key findings. Chapter Five: Conclusions is the summary of the theoretical framework and study findings. I discuss theoretical and practical implications from the research, as well as study limitations. Given the rich data set from a local government organization across a range of important constructs, future opportunities for further research based on the findings are also included with several significant areas that can be developed for further study and more advanced research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Employee Voice

Employee voice has been studied across a diverse range of disciplines, with different and wide-ranging conceptualizations (Mowbray et al., 2015). Early researchers and practitioners attempted to present a unified framework for interpersonal relations, organizational structures, and stability and change in society (Blau, 1964). Others, including Jane Jacobs, inspired paradigm-level changes with work with local governments and valuing participation by and empowerment of people, relationship development, and supporting collective voice to effect change (Norgaard, 2022). Interest in the academic study of employee voice began decades ago, defined by Albert Hirschman as any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs with the intention of forcing a change (Hirschman, 1972).

Not long after this definition, researchers noted that employee voice contains two elements, an expression by employees to management of their complaints in a work-related context and the participation of employees in the decision-making processes of business organizations (McCabe & Lewin, 1992). With the idea of the importance of behavior that goes beyond normal role expectations or job requirements and that benefits or is intended to benefit the organization, voice is speaking out and challenging the status quo with the intent of improving the situation (van Dyne & Lepine, 1998). Employee voice is a critical area to better understand, as it is of fundamental importance to the

effective operation of any organization and if employees are valued and their voices are heard, they will be much more willing to provide their full commitment and be more engaged (Kwon et al., 2016). The likelihood of employees exercising their voice is influenced by many things including their individual personalities and the organizational culture, where that can be powerful enough to override the significant role of personality and other factors in shaping employee voice and speaking up (Madan et al., 2021). For employees who may be more unlikely to express their ideas, if they are given an optimal culture and climate, they may be more inclined to speak up and share their suggestions for changes or improvements.

Constructive forms of voice, or discretionary expressions of organizationally relevant content intended to affect the work context (i.e., policies, practices, procedures, work methods, and goals) and targeted explicitly at someone within the organization, are highly relevant to organizations and employees (Chamberlin et al., 2017) such as Peak Academy. An integrated conceptualization of voice encompasses both voice that is directed to one's manager or another leader, as well as voice directed to members of one's team. The interconnectedness across job and organizational attitudes and perceptions, supervisor and leader behaviors, and individual dispositions includes safety in interpersonal risk taking and job performance (Chamberlin et al., 2017).

With this interconnectedness, educators in the voice and ethics disciplines support an approach called Giving Voice to Values, a cross-functional concept that supports cognitive empowerment of people, discussed in detail in this literature review, to better voice their perspective or their values (Gentile, 2017). This is a values-driven leadership

development in business education and the workplace that seeks to support people to become more aware of the psychological, emotional, and cognitive patterns that they themselves and others are likely to experience. This includes becoming more aware of the impact of choices, and to actively use their voice to consider short and long-term costs and ethical considerations for speaking up to make changes that lead to more positive outcomes. Speaking out using voice after this educational development can also prompt and invite others to be part of the change process (Goodstein & Gentile, 2021).

Researchers honed the broader conceptualization of employee voice (Van Dyne & Lepine, 1998) in order to achieve a multi-dimensional and more nuanced and complete understanding of why and how employees speak up (Van Dyne et al., 2003). This is important in organizations where continuous process improvement and change management are driving activities to improve performance, engagement, and efficiency. Voice is particularly important today given the emphasis on flexibility, innovation, and continuous improvement (van Dyne & Lepine, 1998). This includes different types of employee voice that can have important consequences for employees and organizations (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). Employee voice behaviors are pro-social, voluntary, and even risky occurrences, which do not always naturally occur as expected (Bai et al., 2019). This leads to the identification of two types of voice (Van Dyne & Lepine, 1998) in a multi-dimensional view: promotive and prohibitive (Liang et al., 2012).

Promotive voice is an employee's expression of new ideas or suggestions for improving the overall functioning of their work unit or organization. Promotive voice proposes ways of changing the status quo, and thus is challenging (Liang et al., 2012). As

it is accompanied by innovative solutions and suggestions for improvement, this type of voice is promotive in the sense that it is focused on a future ideal state, or what could be.

In contrast, prohibitive voice describes an employee's expression of concern about work practices, incidents, or employee behaviors that are harmful to their organization. Prohibitive voice serves an important function for organizational health, primarily because such messages place previously undetected problems on the collective agenda to be resolved or prevent problematic issues or situations from taking place (Liang et al., 2012), but they are not always conveyed in a constructive way to suggest improvements (Viveros et al., 2018). Some employees may use prohibitive voice more when under stress or limit their use of voice, because making suggestions and attempting to change the status quo is socially risky and costs time and energy (Ng & Feldman, 2012).

Both forms of voice, promotive and prohibitive, challenge the status quo and are aimed at benefiting organizations and impacting performance (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Voice is challenging and can be a riskier behavior for those who intend to be helpful by speaking up, but may instead be viewed as unacceptably challenging authority, rocking the boat, merely complaining and wasting time. Voice is now understood to be more frequent when employees believe that it is psychologically safe to speak and when doing so is not futile (Detert et al., 2013) and trust is believed to play a role with that safety. Risk is mitigated where employees who feel trust are then motivated to do more than they are normally expected to do (Podsakoff et al., 1990).

Within organizations, employees continually confront situations that put them face to face with the decision of whether to speak up (i.e., voice) or remain silent when they have potentially useful information or ideas. The extent to which employees communicate upward with suggestions, ideas, information about problems, or issues of concern can have tremendous implications for an organization's performance and even its survival.

The ways in which they resolve these choices can have significant implications for organizational and team performance (Morrison, 2011). Encouraging employees to speak up with improvement-oriented ideas to those with the power to initiate change is one of the most potent ways in which organizational leaders can promote learning, effectively implement change, and ensure superior individual and group performance (Fast et al., 2014).

Part of the challenge in identifying these critical factors to better support voice is the fact that more research is needed for promotive and prohibitive voice and their particular impacts on the operations and workings of government. This includes how to best harness ideas, opinions, and suggestions voiced by employees to improve the quality of decision-making and efficiency and better consider and use positive and negative information voiced by employees (Shin et al., 2022). It also includes how to remove a reluctance to speak up, and the silence or information withholding that it gives rise to, as this has the potential to undermine organizational decision making and error-correction and to damage employee trust and morale (Milliken et al., 2003).

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As noted earlier, by harnessing the best of the two types of voice in the right climate, research has shown in government in a variety of areas, as with regulatory protections or strong employee participation, for example (McCall, 2001), that promotive voice practices intended to provide ideas and suggestions for improvement are likely to foster innovation (Liang et al., 2012), but there is more work to do to better understand this.

Given the benefits of critical employee information, one might assume that managers are naturally highly motivated to encourage employee voice and the climate would encourage it. However, a close inspection of managers' behavior in organizations shows that a large number of managers engage in actions that indicate an aversion to soliciting, rewarding, and implementing voice (Milliken et al., 2003). Taking note of this phenomenon, researchers say we need to better understand this (Fast et al., 2014).

Why some government organizations and managers welcome and purposely seek out employees' improvement-oriented ideas, while others do not, is not well understood. Employees who speak up with constructive, yet change-oriented, suggestions can be seen as particularly threatening (Burris, 2012). Research has shown that employees have a general reluctance to voice negative information because of the discomfort associated with being the conveyer of bad news and employees are especially uncomfortable conveying information about potential problems or issues to those above them, so more research is needed on how to encourage a supportive environment where this type of prohibitive voice can be heard (Milliken et al., 2003).

Transparency

Governments and large institutions are criticized for a lack of transparency and credibility and researchers focused on these areas have recommended that organizations create a process for transparency that applies to all areas of the business, not just financial ones (Rawlins, 2008). Transparency can exist across contexts and domains of research (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016) and is a long-discussed concept, as the eighteenth-century European philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's discussions of transparency in the government and political context were described by him to be a state in which citizens understand each other immediately, unambiguously, and without distortion (Marks, 2001). From Aristotle's Lyceum and Politics stressing the common interest, to St. Thomas Aquinas' idea of the common good as a worthy goal of government, to Locke's idea of the public good as good government policy, striving for the common good in government is a worthy ideal (Bozeman & Crow, 2021). However, there is a balance to be achieved with critical components of good governance where citizens benefit from the outputs that impact their environments and where transparency is a powerful solution to protect against the increasing distrust of citizens towards the government (Albaladejo, 2019).

Increasing transparency, achieving better efficiency and better government outcomes are more important now than ever, and scholars believe this approach can provide evidence about what should be done to improve perceived performance (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017). Few studies have examined transparency at the local

government level and more effort can be devoted to improving transparency (del Sol, 2013) to effect change and bring about better efficiency and government outcomes.

Transparency can be defined as the perceived quality of intentionally shared information from a sender (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016). This idea of quality, added to quantity, of the information transmitted stands out in transparency research according to some researchers (Albu & Flyverbom, 2019) where they believe that over the last forty years, transparency origins include a conduit model of communication. This includes communicators who inevitably communicate unintended meanings, so there must be an environment created with vigilance to communication, grounded by the assumption that most people are interested in understanding others and in being understood by others as clearly as possible (Axley, 1984) or the extent to which representations are designed in ways that are understandable to focal audiences (Schnackenberg, 2011). Schnackenberg (2011) also notes that transparency has an empirical relationship with organizational buy-in and information usefulness where transparency significantly predicts these constructs.

An emerging consensus is that transparency is about information, and it is seen as a critical element of knowledge sharing (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016) and it is a three-dimensional construct comprised of disclosure, clarity, and accuracy (Schnackenberg et al., 2021). This research study will look at the multi-dimensional view of transparency and its impact on local government and Peak Academy.

By measuring transparency in this multi-dimensional way, it advances practical knowledge about how to construct truly transparent messages and how non-transparent messages might negatively affect organizations (Schnackenberg et al., 2021).

Schnackenberg, Tomlinson, and Coen (2021) note that researchers have documented various attributes of received information quality that indicate if a source is acting transparently, including whether information is seen as accessible, truthful, or comprehensible. Transparency may enhance innovation and an attitude of openness (Dubbink et al., 2008).

Transparency has been tied to several concepts, including corporate social responsibility where organizations are finding that there are solid bottom-line benefits to having the reputation of being open and gaining loyalty of key stakeholders such as employees and customers (Rawlins, 2008). As such, transparency is valued in a wide range of areas and is seen as a fundamentally positive feature of relations (Albu & Flyverbom, 2019) due in part because of the positive benefits of the disclosure of information (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016).

With this grounding idea that transparency is the perceived quality of intentionally shared information from a sender (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016), it is seen as a critical element of knowledge sharing such that increased transparency brings increased awareness, coherence, and comprehensibility to information exchanged between two parties and it is required to ensure that information about organizational conduct can be used by employees to modify or adjust their behaviors (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016). With the three dimensions of perceived disclosure, clarity, and

accuracy, it includes the extent to which information is released rather than hidden, the extent to which information is understandable rather than obfuscated, and the extent to which information is reflective of reality rather than exaggerated or biased (Schnackenberg et al., 2020). Nonetheless, information disclosure alone is not sufficient to form transparency (Rawlins, 2008) and it should include an acknowledgement of the audience, education to understand the information, thus relating to the audience's ability to process and interpret the information (Jiang & Luo, 2018).

Transparent organizational communication is characterized by involving stakeholders (e.g., employees) into decision making, holding organizations and managers accountable for their actions and words, and providing substantial, accurate, and useful information (Rawlins, 2008). When leaders engage in transparent communication, employees are likely to perceive the consistency between the leaders' beliefs and actions, and thus feel more comfortable and safe speaking up about ideas or suggestions (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009).

Transparency has a long history as a central principle for public government management, and for democratic and corporate accountability more generally. Transparency has become pervasive as a prescription for better governance and accountability (Hood, 2007; Hood & Heald, 2006). Indeed, employees are often the face of government for citizens. From visiting the local department of motor vehicles office to interacting with law enforcement or navigating airport security, to using the nearest post office, citizens continuously interact with government employees. The employee-employer (in this case, the government) relationship has a large role in employee

engagement, retention, and motivation (Goldhammer et al., 2021) and support to citizens. Research shows that employees who believe their employer is transparent are more motivated by their work (Mackenzie et al., 2011) and it strengthens the organization's ethical culture (Kuang et al., 2022). Organizational policies that promote transparency and employee voice (Ertas, 2015) may lead managers to focus on employees' needs, thereby influencing their trade-offs between long-term and short-term interests. This includes a focus on dimensions of transparency with the clarity and openness of the organization's internal information policies, an attentiveness to the perceived quality of information shared, and disclosure and open communication between employees and managers (Kuang et al., 2022).

There is persistent academic interest in the attitudes and behavior of public servants working in government and researchers acknowledge a difference in many areas that contrast public servants working in government with private-sector employees. Ideas such as civic mindedness and civic behaviors are particularly important for public employees, since attentiveness and engagement will make them both better citizens and better public servants. While attentiveness and engagement can lead to more knowledge, and more knowledge to more participation, participation also increases knowledge and attentiveness. Research has found that knowledge matters and leads to increased attentiveness as well as efficacy, tolerance, and formal and informal participation (Ertas, 2015).

Trust

Trust has many definitions, conceptualizations, and applications. It is a very old concept that Baier (1986) notes is a phenomenon we are familiar with, one that comes in various forms across the ages. This includes the great philosophers who have given it explicit attention, from the fourth century, they noted that the first result of lawfulness is trust that greatly benefits the people. The ideas continue from John Dunn, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, who were interested in trust in governments and the grounds for such trust and that the relationship of citizens to government is one of trust, not contract (Braithwaite & Levi, 2003).

Indeed, whenever philosophers, poets, statesmen, or theologians have written about man's relationship to his fellow man, the significance of the phenomena of trust and associated concepts such as responsibility have been discussed (Deutsch, 1958). One of the most important lessons we can learn from an examination of economic life is that a nation's well-being, as well as its ability to compete, is conditioned by a single, pervasive cultural characteristic: the level of trust inherent in the society (Fukuyama, 1995). Trust as a foundational concept has been talked about in the literature as an enveloping concept, one that takes into account the fabric of experiences in relationships (Rempel et al., 1985).

Trust is seen as a core or foundational piece of the understandings of social order, and conditions for trusting government and its agents are expressions of shared social values (Braithwaite & Levi, 2003). Most trust relations are interpersonal, yet systems and institutions also play an important role. These institutions, such as government

organizations, are the object of trust relations and they are also instrumental in facilitating

the emergence of interpersonal, societal, political, and economic trust relationships (Bodó

& Janssen, 2022). Trust in the government and its public institutions is a valuable

resource, with often far-reaching impact on culture, social cohesion, and economic

performance (Fukuyama, 1995). Yet, it is exactly this public trust that has been under

significant stress in recent times. There is a complex, multidimensional set of forces at

play where trust evolves in organizational climates. Even good government intentions can

lead to bad outcomes for employees and citizens if attention is not paid to underlying

supporting frameworks such as trust (Bodó & Janssen, 2022).

One of the most salient factors of our present complex social organization is the

willingness of one or more individuals to trust others, along with the notion of

motivational relevance and predictability (Rotter, 1967). Intentional trusting does require

awareness of one's confidence that the trusted will not harm one, although they could

(Baier, 1986). The composition of trust, the fundamental elements of its definition, are

comparable across research and theory, focusing on parties both inside and outside

organizations and investigating trust relations from different disciplinary vantage points

(Rousseau et al., 1998).

Employees are most likely to practice innovation when they perceive strong

organizational support, and the willingness to risk speaking up, the foundational idea of

trust resulting from risk taking (Colquitt et al., 2007) and being vulnerable (Mayer &

Davis, 1999). One of the grounding theoretical ideas is that interpersonal trust is the

extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of, the words,

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actions, and decisions of another. Trust has emerged as a prominent construct in research predicting individual-level outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors, organizational commitment, and job performance (Lewicki et al., 2006).

At its core, trust means willingly ceding a measure of control to another, and although we often trust with an expectation that others will respond in kind, vulnerability is the psychological hallmark of trust and there is risk involved (Peterson & Covey, 2016). Trust can be developed and increased, and doing so will have a significant impact on the results that can be achieved, where there is confidence in others and transparency in messages (Covey & Merrill, 2006). A culture of trust is one of the most powerful predictors for success and leverage for increased organizational performance. It can be enhanced over time, and it provides the foundation for effective teamwork and processes and intrinsic motivation for employees (Zak, 2017).

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) define trust as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action. They note that the importance of trust has been cited in a wide range of areas (Mayer et al., 1995). It is a willingness to accept vulnerability or risk based on expectations regarding another person's behavior, and is a vitally important concept for human behavior, affecting interactions with adversaries and competitors, as well as with allies and friends (Borum, 2010). Trust has also been defined as the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of another person's actions (Colquitt et al., 2007).

The study of trust has led to many things in the journey to better understand the dynamics of cooperation and competition and the resolution of conflicts and the facilitation of economic exchange. Trust has emerged as a prominent construct in research predicting individual-level outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviors, and organizational commitment and performance, including positive benefits to organizational revenue and profit (Lewicki et al., 2006). Research has also shown that organizations can withstand certain types of conflict if an appropriate basis of trust has been established, and this can be a remedy to groupthink and other organizational ills (Simons & Peterson, 2000).

Rousseau et al. (1998) suggested that trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another. Lewicki et al. (2006) continue this idea and believe that as a psychological state, trust is composed of two interrelated cognitive processes. The first entails a willingness to accept vulnerability to the actions of another party. The second is that, despite uncertainty about how the other will act, there are positive expectations regarding the other party's intentions, motivations, and behavior.

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) discuss in detail the antecedents of trust. They distilled three characteristics of a trustee as central to trustworthiness that explain the major portion of it, including ability, benevolence, and integrity. In this study, the focus is on the multi-dimensional view of trust for the independent variables, as outlined by McAllister (1995), including cognition-based and affect-based trust. Cognition-based trust is based on individual beliefs about peer reliability and dependability based on

knowledge of that peer's skills, competence, and reliability. Affect-based trust is based on reciprocated interpersonal care and concern (McAllister, 1995).

With a setting of local government employees, this supporting idea has great strength from past academic research and practical applications. The importance of trust in government organizations has long been considered crucial to innovation and performance. There are many factors that come to play in the weakening respect for and trust in government (Braithwaite & Levi, 2003). If trust must be earned, the combination of rising expectations, value conflict, and increasingly intractable problems makes higher levels of trust challenging. In addition, partisan polarization, both affective and ideological, is a formidable barrier to the rapid restoration of trust. Researchers have noted that a potential remedy is for citizens to trust the institutions that they interact with most closely, including the police, the tax collector, the street cleaner, the school board, permitting officials, and so forth, and their confidence in these close-to-home representations of government might mitigate distrust of the other, more remote state and federal institutions (Citrin & Stoker, 2018).

Trust in governmental settings is as complex as other settings (Braithwaite & Levi, 2003) and McAllister (1995) notes that research on affect and cognition in close relationships has highlighted the development of interpersonal affect upon a cognitive base where the ideas are complex and intertwined. Cognition-based trust, or the ability to be reliable, is seen as more superficial and less special, and emotional or affect-based trust is characterized by a greater investment of time and emotion than dependability and reliability. For working relationships, some level of cognition-based trust may be

necessary for affect-based trust to develop; people's baseline expectations for peer

reliability and dependability must be met before they will invest further in relationships.

Accordingly, the two ideas are needed to go together in order to elucidate this

multidimensional view of trust (Lewicki et al., 1998; McAllister, 1995).

Cognitive Empowerment

Cognitive empowerment, or a cognitive model of empowerment, is a process by

which people, teams, organizations, and communities gain mastery over issues of concern

to them that includes processes and structures that enhance members' skills and effect

change (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Cognitive empowerment includes critical

awareness, decision-making, training, resource mobilization, and relational processes to

bring about change through relationships (Lardier et al., 2020).

This idea of empowerment represents a strengths-based, non-expert driven

approach that emphasizes the ability of people facing challenging circumstances or

conditions to define and actively engage in solutions to the problems confronting them

(Peterson, 2014). Empowerment is rooted in a social action framework that includes

community change, capacity building, and collectivity. It includes beliefs that goals can

be achieved, awareness about resources and factors that hinder or enhance one's efforts to

achieve those goals, and efforts to fulfill the goals (Zimmerman, 1995).

Empowerment is defined in terms of motivational processes in workers,

explaining organizational effectiveness and it is both a relational and motivational

construct. Empowerment is a relational construct to describe a level of control people can

have over situations and the ability to impact change. It is a motivational construct

connected to expectancy theory beliefs where people feel power and a sense of self-directedness to influence their environment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Empowerment is a higher order multi-level framework to understand and evaluate individuals, groups, organizations, and communities as they engage in the practice of participatory change (Lardier et al., 2020). It includes a theoretical model of organizational conditions and culture, strategies, and information where people have self-efficacy (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Empower means to give power to, and power can mean energy, the sense used here where being empowered means to energize. Research has shown that employees can be energized to accomplish meaningful goals and a commitment to tasks that effect change. Empowerment is connected to increased intrinsic task motivation where there are four cognitions as the basis for worker empowerment: a sense of impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Empowering is enabling, and it implies raising employee's convictions in their own effectiveness to successfully execute desired behavior rather than just raising their hopes for favorable performance outcomes. Even under conditions of failure to gain desired outcomes, individuals may feel empowered if their efficacy belief is reinforced by leader or organizational recognition of their performance (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

The idea of cognitive empowerment has been widely studied, linking education or training with change and organizational outcomes, suggesting that a key component that can hinder an individual's ability to support those outcomes is trust. Trust is a key link between individuals' efforts in obtaining desired organizational outcomes and without it,

employees will not engage, thus frustrating organizational change efforts (Jordan, 2021). Without trust, change efforts will not be set up for success. Noel Tichy spent decades researching the development of a sustainable change framework grounded in scholarly research and presented to a practitioner audience. His work was based on a philosophy of empowering individuals to be the leaders of their own change efforts and to have trust as a foundational concept (Tichy, 1982), to educate, empower, and enable change leaders, translating theory to practice (Tichy, 1989).

Much is to be gained by empowering employees in key areas, including technical (training and standard operating procedures), political (power and speaking up), and cultural (creating a climate that supports change in ethical ways) (Devanna & Tichy, 1992). In the current competitive environment, changing customer needs have made it imperative for organizations to find ways to promote innovation for the long-term success of the organization where employees use their competencies and demonstrated discretionary behavior where they create, promote, and implement novel ideas that shape work behavior that helps organizations meet new challenges and changes (Javed et al., 2019).

In recent years, the term empowerment has become part of everyday management language and has been associated with popular management movements such as human resource management and total quality management (TQM). Empowerment is regarded as providing a solution to the problem of bureaucratic workplaces where creativity is stifled and workers become alienated, showing discontent through individual or collective means (Wilkinson, 1997).

There are many supporting and similar ideas and theories that play a part with the idea of empowerment, including strong support from Albert Bandura's decades of research (Bandura, 1977) and theory on the determinants of thought and action that highlight people's capacity for agency with the ability to exert control over one's actions and the course of one's development through self-efficacy (Bandura, 2023). Max Weber helped set the foundations of social theory (Weber, 1958, 1978). As such, Weber notes ". . . the two polar opposites in the field of educational ends are to awaken charisma, that is, heroic qualities or magical gifts; and to impart specialized expert training.... Between them are found all those types which aim at cultivating the pupil for the conduct of life" (Weber, 1978, p. 426). Weber's social theory, incorporating the idea of bureaucracy and a person's sense of responsibility, informs educational theory and research and contributes to our thinking about the purposes of education today (Fantuzzo, 2014).

Government organizations must encourage cognitive empowerment (Braithwaite & Levi, 2003) that has impact, purpose, and best develops knowledge that can be applied by employees (Zimmerman, 1990, 1995). In turn, employees can use this developed empowerment and speak up to support change efforts, effectively using their voice as a vital means of impacting organizational performance (Dong et al., 2020).

Hypothesis Development

Transparency and employee voice

With an increased demand from citizens for more responsive, transparent, and accountable government, employees working in government organizations need to play a proactive role. Specifically, they need to go above and beyond their formal job roles and

requirements through engaging in extra-role behavior (Hassan, 2015). Hassan notes that one behavior that has drawn considerable attention and has been shown to improve organizational performance is voice. It includes speaking up about critical work issues and problems, providing constructive ideas and suggestions, and taking personal initiatives to get others involved in addressing the issues and problems that affect the organization (Morrison, 2014).

With this increased demand for more transparent and accountable government, many efforts to improve the effectiveness of government organizations target so called bureaucratic red tape, a well-known metaphor for public sector inefficiencies. This red tape has a salient and negative effect on perceived organizational effectiveness and can impede timely information exchange between managers and employees (Pandey et al., 2007) and impact voice considerations such as sharing information about addressing work issues or inefficiencies or expressions of concern about work practices, or promotive and prohibitive voice (Liang et al., 2012). Lack of government transparency can impact this exchange of information (Hope et al., 2022).

Through the dimensions of providing or sharing information, being clear with ideas and expectations, and accurately conveying information, the foundational dimensions of transparency, a shared vision is created where there is agreement and expectations set, avoiding trust issues later when these things are not in place (Covey & Merrill, 2006) and it impacts employee voice.

With voice, the expression must be openly communicated, organizationally relevant, and focused on influencing the work environment (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014).

Employee voice involves an employee verbalizing improvement-oriented information and ideas to another employee or their manager (Burris, 2012), who then must cognitively process this information in deciding on how to respond to it.

Government organizations are prone to discourage voice, often just by their very nature with complex structures, so much bureaucracy, and red tape that leads to inefficient processes and dissatisfied citizens (Bozeman, 1993; Rainey & Bozeman, 2000). This structure can obscure a more full and complete picture of the workplace, and if employees are never even given information (disclosure), or not provided with information that is clear and accurate (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016), the ability to meaningfully speak up and provide insights and constructive suggestions (promotive voice) and identify areas of safety or concerns in a helpful way (prohibitive voice) is significantly curtailed (Li et al., 2020; Liang et al., 2012).

As disclosure, clarity, and accuracy and an overall sense of transparency increases, these two voice dimensions correspondingly increase, such that increasing voice is an integral component of government, a fundamental way through which employees communicate, provide knowledge, and information given the right conditions (Ertas, 2015).

Promotive voice is expressed as employees sharing new ideas or suggestions for improving the overall functioning of their work unit or organization. The more they know about the work unit or organization, the more insightful their suggestions can be to addresses issues, so an increase of knowledge or information in the form of transparency

(Hood & Heald, 2006) leads to an increase in levels of voice, both in a positive direction, or higher level.

Prohibitive voice describes an employee's expression of concern about work practices, or other complaints and grievances. What employees do not know can lead to speculation that is not grounded in facts. When organizations increase their levels of transparency, employees can feel safer to voice concerns that could cause significant problems for the organizations. Both are thus expected to go up together with open and clear communication and optimal organizational climates (MacMillan et al., 2020).

Government differs sharply from private organizations on formalization, operations, and red tape in processes subject to various rules and the authority of oversight agencies. This is influenced by a host of factors, including organizational size, technology, and work processes that impact why employees contribute value or suggestions (Rainey & Bozeman, 2000), necessitating a climate that drives engagement from employees to support the change and innovation processes (Cordery et al., 2015).

Supporting both forms of voice in the workplace is important with more understanding with transparency and safer environments to address pain points that can inhibit greater performance. An inconsistency produces issues for other employees and managers (Burris et al., 2022) unless the expression is clear and openly communicated, organizationally relevant and accurate, and focused on influencing the work environment (Mackenzie et al., 2011).

This is the foundational multi-dimensional view of transparency where messages or communications are disclosed, clear, and accurate (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016).

This leads to the first two hypotheses of this research study:

Hypothesis 1: Transparency is positively related to promotive voice.

Hypothesis 2: Transparency is positively related to prohibitive voice.

Hypothesis Development

Trust and employee voice

With the emerging consensus that trust is a foundation for social order (Lewicki et al., 1998), researchers have noted that it is the generalized expectancy that others will do as they say (Rotter, 1967) and it is a functional necessity for society (Lewis & Weigert, 1985) which is represented in government organizations. Researchers note there are two broad outcomes of trust: risk taking and job performance (Colquitt et al., 2007). Some researchers view the impact of organizational changes on trust where context is critical to understanding trust. This includes a psychological state composed of the psychological experiences of individuals, dyads, and organizations (Rousseau et al., 1998).

The grounding idea is that trust is the extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another and there are two types of trust: cognition-based and affect-based. Cognition-based trust is based on individual beliefs about peer reliability and dependability based on knowledge of that peer's skills, competence, and reliability. Affect-based trust is based on reciprocated

interpersonal care and concern and there is a relationship between trust and performance (McAllister, 1995).

Employees or teams that already have a high level of trust are likely to be capable of tolerating much higher levels of challenge-oriented behaviors, such as prohibitive voice, because they will be more resistant to the negative effects of relationship conflict. If employees or team members trust each other, they will be more likely to accept stated disagreements at face value and less likely to misinterpret conflict behaviors by inferring hidden agendas or personal attacks as the driving force behind the behavior. When there is not trust between and among members, they are likely to interpret the ambiguous behavior of others negatively (Mackenzie et al., 2011).

Ambiguous or unclear behavior is interpreted as being more negative in intent and trust plays a critical role in that interpretation process in order for voice to realize beneficial outcomes (Simons & Peterson, 2000). Further, if trust is present, employees can generally believe that using a promotive voice will result in being heard (Gao et al., 2011) and that their workplace suggestions could be put into place given the organization or manager feeling of knowing they are competent where reliability and dependability expectations are met (McAllister, 1995).

Employee input can play a key role in enhancing organizational functioning. However, employees often feel unsafe to express their opinions because they believe that voicing comments and recommendations for change is risky behavior that may challenge the status quo and upset their leader (van Dyne & Lepine, 1998).

Given the significance of employee voice and the potential for the feeling of risk associated with it (Gao et al., 2011), trust as a multi-dimensional construct with cognition-based and affect-based trust is tied with the multi-dimensional view of voice as promotive or prohibitive.

This multi-dimensional view of trust as cognition-based and affect-based is a foundational concept with the connection between trust and employee voice in governmental organizations, because employees who trust their leader are likely to feel safe and comfortable about the ways in which the leader will respond to their voice (Edmondson, 1999), thereby increasing the likelihood that they will actively engage in expressing their opinions and ideas about workplace issues, actions of others, or needed changes.

However, if employees have low trust in their leader, they may believe that coming up with their concerns and suggestions about critical work affairs is too risky, which may lead them to choose to remain silent on the subject in the workplace (Gao et al., 2011).

This leads to the next two hypotheses of this research study:

Hypothesis 3: Cognition-based trust is positively related to promotive voice.

Hypothesis 4: Affect-based trust is positively related to prohibitive voice.

Hypothesis Development

Cognitive empowerment and employee voice

As modern organizations realized that their employees are a valuable force that could help achieve goals and realize high performance, they put emphasis on developing competencies, moving employees to a stage of knowledge through self-efficacy and education or training. Cognitive empowerment is the path to make this knowledge accessible where organizations support these employees and foster an environment that encourages trust and shares knowledge, making it accessible to all members of the organization (Al-Rahahleh, 2020). In this study, cognitive empowerment is operationalized by training on Lean Six Sigma continuous process improvement ideas.

Viewing employee voice as a multi-dimensional construct with promotive and prohibitive (Liang et al., 2012), one focus of previous research has been relationships between managers and employees where managers can provide employees more opportunities to speak up, exchange information or ideas, and use more communication channels.

Cognitive empowerment has a role to play in developing voice, as research notes that it has long been considered (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995) to be able to effectively stimulate employee behaviors and practices that affect employee knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes and ultimately improve employee and organizational performance (Miao et al., 2020).

Theories of work motivation (Vroom, 1964), self-efficacy (Lawler & Jenkins, 1992), and motivating the right type of performance (Lawler & Suttle, 1973) imply that this recognition of an employee as an invaluable source of information makes the connection between work efforts and outcomes more salient and lead to greater expectancies about the likelihood of success or goal attainment (van Eerde & Thierry, 1996), especially if the employee is empowered to make those connections (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

Employee voice is linked to these salient outcomes through employee empowerment with organizational information disclosure, upward problem solving and job performance, and task autonomy (Viveros et al., 2018). This includes job and organizational attitudes, perceptions, and leader behavior (Morrison, 2011), where voice is influenced by knowledge (Grant, 2013).

There are many things that can impact employee performance, driving the skills, knowledge, behaviors, and motivations associated with success in a job (Gangani et al., 2008). This includes applying a framework to support employees and better understand their motivations, improving performance management and training. Vroom (1964) believed that employee job performance is connected to the interaction between performance or motivation and ability. Researchers noted that it is critical to better understand the factors that impact employees to perform better in an organization and to thus have more efficient utilization of employees (Heneman & Schwab, 1972).

At the core are employees who feel empowered to make innovative suggestions for change and recommend modifications to standard procedures, even when others may

disagree or react negatively to change (Vigoda-Gadot & Beeri, 2012). Employee voice is intentionally expressing relevant ideas, information, and opinions about possible improvements, suggesting change and future-focused on how things could be better in the organization (Van Dyne & Lepine, 1998). Organizational scholars note that employee voice enables organizations to learn from their mistakes, facilitating the correction and prevention of costly errors (Grant, 2013).

The idea that innovation and better efficiency can help improve government performance is widely embraced, but in practice, many government employees are often reluctant to voice their ideas within their workplace (Williams & Yecalo-Tecle, 2020). Due to the pressing need and issues with developing voice in governmental entities (Hassan, 2015), the public sector has been compelled to perform more efficiently and effectively and determine the ways to better support voice (Abaidoo & Blankenberger, 2022).

As such, quality improvement and knowledge building programs have increasingly been called on to support this reinvention of old procedures and address the challenges of an increasingly complex government organization (Braunscheidel et al., 2011). However, the efficacy of these programs has yet to be examined in detail (Sreedharan et al., 2018) and there is a significant gap in the literature around whether any governments have led either effectively or ineffectively in this area and how that has influenced the holistic success of attempts to improve public sector services (Rodgers & Antony, 2019) and develop empowered employees who use their voice to make changes in the workplace.

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Organizations and managers are confronting issues in the workplace where they struggle to find ways to better support employee voice, where the mechanisms of voice and the implementation of work process innovations have remained understudied, resulting in a limited understanding of why and how government employees choose to voice new ideas—or not (Williams & Yecalo-Tecle, 2020).

A feature that differentiates speaking up with voice or not is the motivation to withhold versus express ideas, information, and opinions due to a lack of clarity about stated organizational goals, the ability to take a risk and express those ideas, or disclosure from management or efforts to keep employees uninformed (van Dyne et al., 2003).

While leaders or organizations can encourage employees to give voice to their suggestions to make changes, it is important to note that challenge-oriented behaviors, such as prohibitive voice (Liang et al., 2012), can create interpersonal conflict, especially if it is perceived by other members of the group as a personal attack or if it focuses on the poor performance of specific group members. Indeed, many types of employee voice are thought to result from a cognitive calculus of costs and benefits (Li et al., 2020).

Leaders or organizations may need to encourage group members to focus on how the group as a whole or individually can improve the performance of its required tasks, while giving voice to their suggestions for change. To move helping behaviors away from challenge-oriented behaviors, these changes must involve more than simply complaining or pointing out problems that need to be solved; they must also include recommendations about how those problems can be addressed. Providing effective knowledge development

to employees should help to maximize the benefits and minimize the detriments of challenge-oriented behavior (Mackenzie et al., 2011).

Empowerment shares some of the same ideas with Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory of human functioning, emphasizing an agentic or agency perspective toward self-development, adaptation, and embracing change (Ozer, 2022). There is a connection between learning and problem solving that is needed to identify new and improved solutions to problems that, if repeated over time, become embedded in organizational routines. Employees can increase their capacity to construct and combine knowledge, share their opinions, identify opportunities for improvements, then eventually, these employees can drive organizational learning (Furlan et al., 2019).

Working, learning, and innovating are closely related forms of human activity that researchers have long noted are interrelated, and education is an important part of these activities from a practice-based standpoint. By empowering employees doing their everyday work, they have the capacity to learn to recognize problems that need to be solved to improve the workplace (Brown & Duguid, 1991). As these employees are empowered, they have the ability to make changes, where innovations can occur, and in the words of former GE CEO Jack Welch, it supports a culture where innovation occurs consistently and is shared broadly (GE's "boundaryless company" idea) (Zak, 2017).

Work-integrated and work-centered learning is considered increasingly important for the promotion of quality and innovation management in organizations, in comparison to other forms of learning (Heene & Sanchez, 2010). Many quality and performance management experts, including Joseph Juran, stressed the need to engage employees in

quality efforts, and empowering the workforce to speak up to support change, and to participate in planning and improvements (Juran & De Feo, 2012). This includes understanding how to meet customer needs, keeping the processes working well, and learning, optimizing, refining, and adapting in a continuous improvement loop (Best & Neuhauser, 2006).

Peak Academy is trying to remove the impact of government red tape that lingers in many areas of government by the nature of its very structure. Government red tape usually implies excessive or meaningless paperwork, a high degree of formalization and constraint, unnecessary rules, procedures and regulations, and inefficiency, where the sum of excessive government guidelines, procedures, and forms are perceived as negative and hindering the common good and citizen benefits (Bozeman, 1993).

Their efforts to cognitively empower the employees and support their ability to speak up in the workplace are meant to note that problems can be inherent in the system, but not in the people, as they can be empowered to change with a focus on "wildly important goals" connected to accountability, execution, and action by employees on lead measures that can be influenced (McChesney et al., 2021).

Cognitive empowerment can address approaches to change in government to support improved service efficiency, transparency, and accountability, including a clear focus on expressly stipulated performance goals and measured results, where employees in government could deliver those goals and results more efficiently and effectively (Bolivar, 2018).

Cognitive empowerment can support promotive voice, as employees who feel more knowledgeable about the workplace and processes will be more likely to speak up with new ideas. Cognitive empowerment can also better equip employees to understand professional dynamics and deviations from best practices.

Both areas lead to a focus on what customers value and what might be paths to better performance (Womack & Jones, 2005). Value must be maximized on the front lines of organizations (Womack et al., 1990), closest to the customers where employees have the skills to identify what is needed to deliver value (Martin, 2022) and employees can be energized to accomplish meaningful goals and a commitment to tasks that effect change (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

This leads to the final two hypotheses of this research study:

Hypothesis 5: Cognitive empowerment is positively related to promotive voice.

Hypothesis 6: Cognitive empowerment is positively related to prohibitive voice.

Supporting Constructs

Psychological safety

Researchers have found that there are certain factors that must be present in the organizational climate or with leaders in order for employees to feel psychologically safe to speak up and use their voice. As voice is a discretionary activity, it is critical to organizational well-being, yet insufficiently provided by employees, who see the risks of

speaking up as outweighing the benefits. These risks can be mitigated when there is a safe space to acquire knowledge and use it (Detert & Burris, 2007). Learning is said to happen in an environment of psychological safety where leaders can give direct feedback to employees (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009).

A growing reliance on employees and teams in changing and uncertain organizational environments creates the need to understand the factors that enable learning. This includes where organizational effectiveness is enabled by structural features such as a well-designed task and the availability of information. It includes a climate where employees feel safe to express suggestions and concerns related to their work. This idea is psychological safety, which refers to shared beliefs among work unit members that it is safe for them to engage in interpersonal risk taking (Edmondson, 1999).

According to Edmondson, psychological safety includes perceiving and experiencing high levels of interpersonal trust; it also describes a work climate characterized by mutual respect, one in which people are comfortable expressing their differences and where leaders are pivotal for removing the constraints that often discourage followers from expressing their concerns and other ideas (Edmondson, 1999).

Employee voice can be supported by psychological safety as it concerns the bottom-up process of employees making innovative suggestions for change and recommending modifications to standard procedures. Voice behavior is an important component of this type of extra-role behavior (positive and discretionary behaviors that

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facilitate effective organizational functioning) and trust in the work situation (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009).

Managers and organizations create an environment in which people can work to the best of their abilities, giving agency to employees to apply learning and training and help create a better culture, one where respectfully talking and "ostentatious listening" can correlate with success, where it is essential that employees are willing to work hard, push boundaries, take action, and, crucially, work together harmoniously (Simon, 2020; Sinek, 2014).

When employees trust their organizations, they will feel safe in their work environment and can confidently contribute and make a meaningful difference in the workplace (Sinek, 2014), feeling inspired every morning, safe when at work, and fulfilled at the end of each day (Hill, 2019). Researchers have noted important linkages with learning behaviors and outcomes in the work of teams and it is a critical factor in understanding phenomena such as voice, teamwork, team learning, and organizational learning (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Psychological safety has been well researched, and it is a significant means of mitigating anxiety during times of uncertainty and change (Higgins et al., 2022). Edmondson and Lei (2014) note that a central theme in research on psychological safety, across decades and levels of analysis, is that it facilitates the willing contribution of ideas and actions to a shared enterprise. For example, psychological safety helps to explain why employees share information and knowledge, speak up with suggestions for organizational improvements, and take the initiative to develop new products and services.

Research Model

The concepts introduced for this research paper include employee voice as the dependent variable of interest and transparency, trust, and cognitive empowerment as the independent variables. The simplified research model with the directions of the hypotheses is as follows:

Figure 1 Simplified Research Model

Below is the summary of measures and scales showing the theoretical connections, operationalizations, and controls:

Research Question	How do transparency, cognition-based and affect-based trust, and cognitive empowerment impact employee voice in governmental organizations?

Grounding Theory	Cognitive Empowerment Model of Organizational Behavior and Change and Interpersonal Trust

Theoretical

IV: Transparency
IV: Cognition Based Trust
IV: Affect Based Trust
IV: Cognitive Empowerment

→

DV: Promotive Employee Voice
DV: Prohibitive Employee Voice

Operationalization

IV: Transparency measured using Schnackenberg, Tomlinson, Coen (2020) 12 item scale
IV: Trust measured using Mayer and Davis (1999) 4 item scale
IV: Trust measured using McAllister (1995) 11 item scale affect/cognition trust
IV: Continuous Process Improvement Training

→

DV: Employee Voice measured using Van Dyne and Lepine 6 item scale and
Liang, Farh, and Farh 10 item promotive and prohibitive scale

Figure 2 Summary of Measures

Controls

age, gender, race/ethnicity, organizational tenure, hourly or salaried, people manager or individual contributor, social desirability, propensity to trust, psychological safety

Scales

-Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44(2), 350–383.

-Liang, Farh, C. I. C., & Farh, J.-L. (2012). Psychological antecedents of promotive and prohibitive voice: a two-wave examination. Academy of Management Journal, 55(1), 71–92.

-Mayer, R. C., & Davis, J. H. (1999). The Effect of the Performance Appraisal System on Trust for Management: A Field Quasi-Experiment. Journal of Applied Psychology, 84(1), 123–136.

-McAllister, D. J. (1995). Affect- and Cognition-Based Trust As Foundations for Interpersonal Cooperation in Organizations. Academy of Management Journal, 38(1), 24–59.

-Schnackenberg, A. K., Tomlinson, E. C., & Coen, C. A. (2020). The dimensional structure of transparency: A construct validation of transparency as disclosure, clarity, and accuracy in organizations. Human Relations, 1–33.

-Strahan, R., & Gerbasi, K. (1972). Short, homogeneous versions of the Marlow-Crowne social desirability scale. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 28(2).

-Van Dyne, L., & Lepine, J. A. (1998). Helping and voice extra-role behaviors: evidence of construct and predictive validity. In Academy of Management Journal (Vol. 41, Issue 1).

Figure 3 Controls and Scales

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Context

As noted earlier, the research setting is local government with a division of the City and County of Denver, Colorado, called Peak Academy. The research setting is a blend of dynamic forces with which to study pressing needs and issues with developing employee voice in governmental organizations. The core offering of Peak Academy is training on Lean ideas and continuous process improvement methodologies to deliver value to the customer by implementing solutions driven by the people who do the wo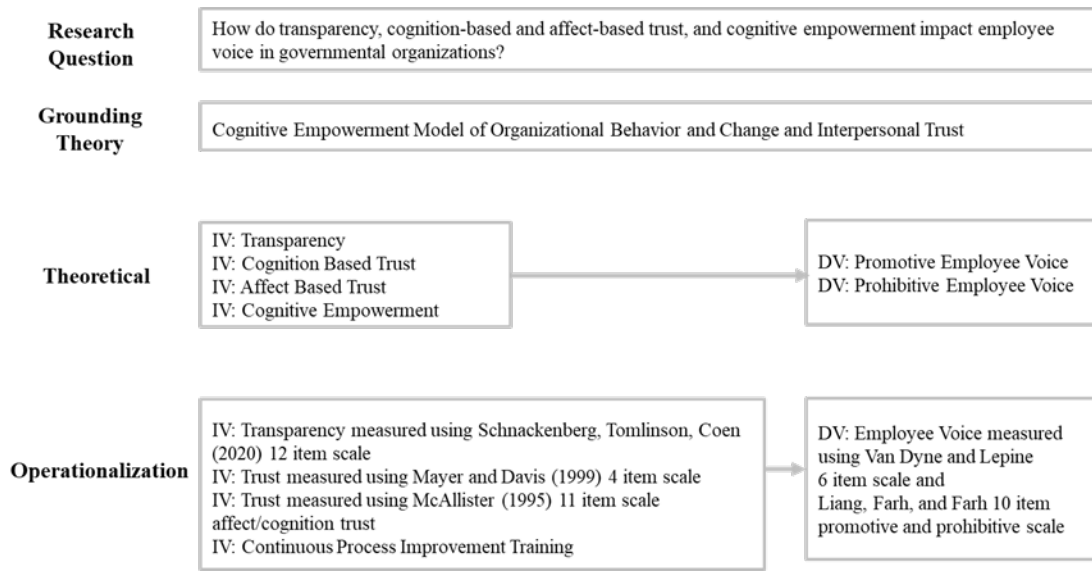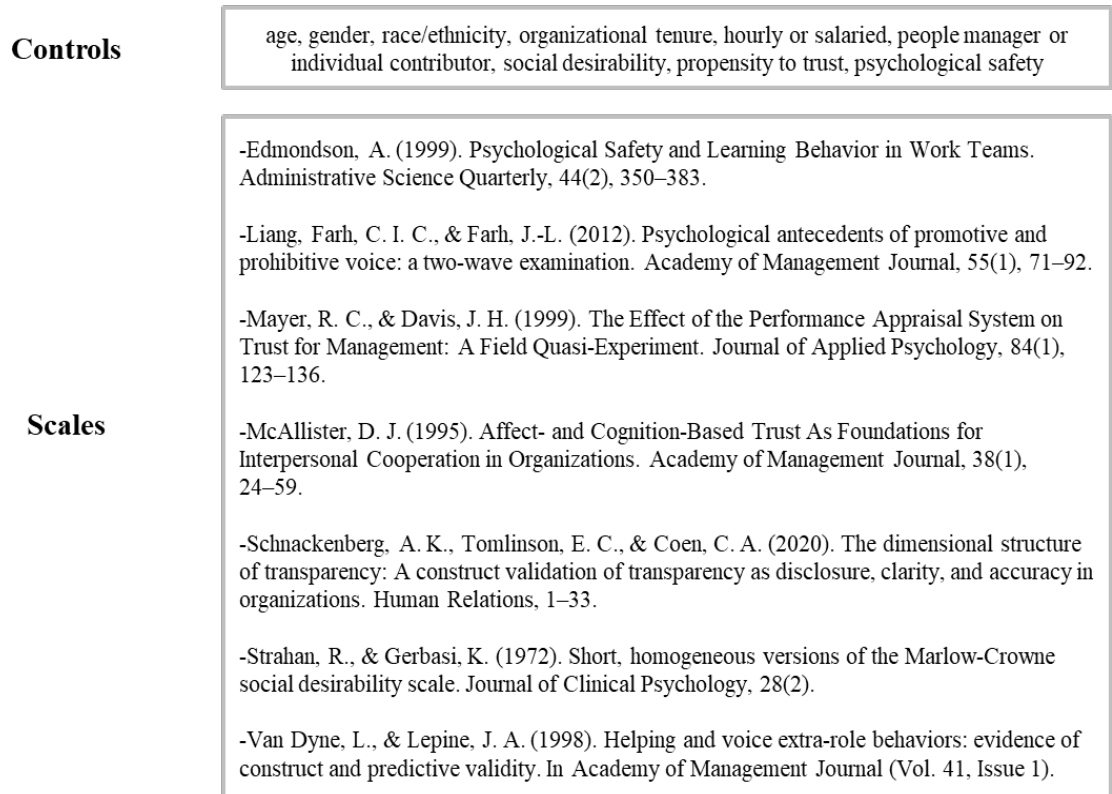rk (bottom up rather than top-down). It also includes an emphasis on investing in employees through training and empowerment (Elms & Wogan, 2016). This research has important applications. The gap between research and practice in government and public administration has been intensively debated with scholars and practitioners agreeing that the theory–practice relationship needs to be improved where government should support the development of usable knowledge through research on topics that are valuable for practitioners and highlight the performance of public institutions (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017).

Started in 2011, Peak Academy has grown to include a dedicated team of process improvement experts who train city employees at all levels on the principles of Lean, emphasizing an understanding of how to eliminate waste, improve efficiency, make

process changes, and ultimately create benefits for citizens with the hundreds of projects each year (Elms & Wogan, 2016).

Peak Academy reached out to the University of Denver and asked if a researcher could work with them who had quality and process improvement expertise and was interested in researching trust. The University connected us together, and I attended several meetings, as well as a one-week session of Black Belt training. This was important to better understand what was included in the training and project support and compare it to my experience conducting this training as a General Electric Lean Six Sigma Black Belt and project manager. I held several meetings with Peak Academy to do prework to understand their work and operations, understand and set expectations, discuss desired goals, understand how their project teams integrated into departments for projects, and how they conducted their different types of training. Peak Academy shared some ideas and areas to explore, including a desire to know more about trust and how to show it matters in the training and for employees, including what might be the factors that best support a growth of trust. They want to show from an academic perspective that trust is a key indicator or guidepost of the likelihood of the ability to make change stick with people and what that means for the day-to-day work and how their training impacts process improvements. Psychological safety is an idea that they wanted to explore in relation to their work and how this might impact employees. Finally, Peak Academy wants to share this information on trust with other governments, highlighting the rigorous research that is grounded in literature. This includes the supporting framework and ideas

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that might best achieve an understanding for how Lean ideas and process improvements have an impact in a government setting.

The impact of competency-based training, or training on important knowledge and skills relevant to the work, includes quality tools such as Lean and Six Sigma (Khanna & Gupta, 2014). These tools have become popular business strategies (Laureani & Antony, 2018) for deploying continuous improvement in organizations, helping to achieve quality and operational excellence and to enhance performance (Albliwi et al., 2015). Lean is a dynamic process of change, driven by a set of principles and best practices aimed at continuous improvement (Womack & Jones, 2005). Six Sigma is a statistical methodology that aims to reduce variation and defects in any process and seeks to identify and eliminate defects, mistakes, or failures in business processes or systems (Antony, 2008). A process improvement could be any number of different activities that impact or improve operations or an organization or team's performance.

Though widely employed in the private sector, implementation of Lean Six Sigma and continuous improvement principles is a relatively new phenomenon in the public sector, and even more so at the state level (Abaidoo & Blankenberger, 2022). Through Peak Academy, trainees learn techniques and strategies for implementing these Lean ideas throughout their department, taking personal investment in the city's continuous improvement initiatives. Since the program's inception, savings have exceeded $75 million. (Williams, 2022).

Researchers have noted the basic idea that knowledge has to be acquired by employees and managers alike and the role of experience in increasing productivity is an

important one (Arrow, 1962). So how best to support employees to gain knowledge and increase productivity is an important idea to better understand, particularly how governments could achieve this increased level of productivity and efficient allocation of resources with a view to a balance between managers as decision makers and employees who bear a lot of responsibility to achieve these goals (Arrow, 1974).

This feeds into the role that Peak Academy plays as the leading training division for the local City and County of Denver government teams. Organizations need to ensure that employees' knowledge and skills remain up to date (Gerpott et al., 2021), and they spend considerable resources on developing their employees. For example, over $100 billion was spent on training in the United States in 2021 (Statista, 2022). Thus, maximizing training effectiveness is important, especially in government where resources are more limited. Peak Academy uses a training model that is a blend of several quality improvement ideas, including Lean, Six Sigma, total quality management, and continuous process improvement (Elms & Wogan, 2016). This foundational model for training on continuous process improvement can help organizations optimize performance and reduce errors and waste (Laureani & Antony, 2019).

Participants

Peak Academy's mission is to bring change and innovation to local government by training and empowering the employees of the city government to see inefficiency, poor processes, or negative impacts to customers, which are some other employees and the citizens of the Denver area (Williams, 2023). The survey gathered insights and feedback from employees across a randomly chosen range of departments within the City

and County of Denver. This sample included employees who have taken the process improvement training and those who have not taken the training. The survey participants had to be 18 years or older and a current employee of the City of Denver.

Procedures

Surveys and field studies are important research avenues to bridge this theory-practice divide and applied change activities, as Mintzberg (1993) noted that field studies are useful to directly observe what is being studied, that theory alone is no better than practice alone. This includes assessing the relevance of theory in practice that is a resonating framework for research that combines both theory and practice with direct observation (Mintzberg, 1993). Survey research is a widely used methodology that enables researchers to collect data on an array of issues surrounding the behavior, thoughts, and feelings of people or groups (Buchanan & Hvizdak, 2009).

This research study adopted a deductive, quantitative approach to study the hypotheses outlined in Chapter 2. Two waves of data were collected to mitigate the effects of common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The first wave was used to collect data on the controls and independent variables, and the second wave was used to collect data on the dependent variables.

I relied on regression analysis to test the hypotheses. Regression analysis, along with a strong survey sample with statistical validity, should support the ability to see statistical significance with the constructs and test the hypotheses.

Regression analysis is a versatile statistical method that is used to predict values of an outcome or dependent variable from one or more predictor variables or independent

variables, allowing inferences of the relationships (Field, 2017). Surveys are useful to analyze psychological dispositions such as those represented in transparency perceptions, trust, and employee voice and they are an efficient method for collecting data from a broad spectrum of individuals, often used because of their research versatility, efficiency, and generalizability (Schutt, 2011).

The overall procedures included using two surveys given at two different times that were developed for use with Qualtrics. The surveys were developed using validated scales to test the independent variables, dependent variables, and certain controls. Questions were a mix of 5-point Likert scales, 7-point Likert scales, true or false, and open-ended responses. Participants were sent an email with a link to the Qualtrics survey that opened with a landing page introduction for the purpose of the survey. The next page was the detailed informed consent that contained the required information from the University of Denver Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants had a choice to select "yes, I consent" or "no, I do not consent." If a participant selected yes, they moved on in the survey. If a participant selected no, the next page was the end of the survey with the notification that the survey ends if consent was not given.

There were multiple pages in the surveys to break up the questions and instructions. Participants were allowed as much time as they needed to complete the survey and to come back and pick up where they left off. As each question was meant to be answered in that order, participants were not allowed to go back to the previous page on a survey. Each question was a forced response to reduce the likelihood of not responding to the question in order to get complete surveys. In testing, survey 1 took

approximately 10 minutes to complete and survey 2 took approximately 4 minutes to complete. Providing longer, more in-depth responses to the open-ended questions would increase the survey time. These open-ended questions were categorized and summarized separately from this analysis and provided rich, qualitative feedback for Peak Academy.

The final survey numbers included surveying 3,636 non-trained employees and 3,616 trained employees of the City of Denver each time for survey 1 and for survey 2. Both groups were given the exact same survey, distributed at the same time. The response rates are as follows prior to data clean up and response review (including attention check, spam, incomplete responses, consent or age issues, and blank responses):

Table 1: Survey Response Rates

	Responses		
	Trained	**Not Trained**	**Total**
Invited	3616	3636	7252
Survey 1	1180	538	1718
Survey 1 Response Rate	33%	15%	24%
Survey 2	1013	464	1477
Survey 2 Response Rate	28%	13%	20%
Matched	363	125	488

The surveys were anonymous, so there were several survey matching questions included to be able to connect surveys 1 and 2 since the surveys were sent out at two different time periods. This time difference was necessary to separate the independent and dependent variables to help reduce the effects of common method variance. Common method variance is a concern for researchers, or variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures represent, and such bias

can threaten the validity of the conclusions for the construct relationships (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This study considered several potential causes of biases and employed mitigation strategies outlined in well-supported literature and empirical tests for the attenuation of common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

The survey introductions and emailed invitations were worded so as not to bias the resulting responses. Participants were reminded that their answers were anonymous and not attached to a specific employee and that there were no right or wrong answers. This was important to reduce the risk of social desirability bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Due to the importance of acquiring an adequate response rate across the two surveys, there are some methods that can be used to better support survey completion, including targeting a specific population with a personalized appeal, persuading respondents of the importance of the research topic and their candid answers, and free gifts or incentives for completing the surveys (Randall & Gibson, 1990). This survey included many of those suggestions with the goal of a higher response rate.

With approval from the University of Denver IRB and Peak Academy, a Qualtrics survey was emailed to the city employees. The first survey was sent out February 2023 and the second survey was sent three weeks later, following along with best practices to separate the focal variables in time to reduce common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The first survey included focal independent variables, control variables, demographics, and survey matching questions. Peak Academy staff emailed the employees informing them of the survey and the importance of their feedback. The employees had approximately one week to respond to the first survey. Roughly halfway

through the survey response window, Peak Academy staff again emailed employees, reminding them of the survey.

The second survey included focal dependent variables, control variables, demographics, and survey matching questions. The second survey was supported in the same way with the same reminder emails from Peak Academy. The employees had approximately one week to respond to the second survey. Roughly halfway through the survey response window, Peak Academy staff again emailed employees, reminding them of the survey and the importance of their feedback.

To encourage participation, there was a separate drawing of multiple Starbucks gift cards for all employees who completed the surveys. To protect the participants' identities, this incentive took the form of a separate, optional survey not connected with the formal research survey. At the conclusion of each survey, participants were asked to click on a link to provide their email addresses to be entered into the drawing for the gift cards. This was voluntary and optional. There was no connection between the research survey and the incentive survey. This survey included a password to ensure that only City employees could respond.

The surveys followed all IRB procedures, including an informed consent, and the surveys were anonymous, sent under the University of Denver name as a research partner to the local government Peak Academy. The informed consent was based on the IRB language and allowed participants to opt out of the survey. No identifying information was asked for or recorded from the respondents from the original Qualtrics survey for the main study. Respondents received multiple emails from the staff at Peak Academy

encouraging them to respond and share their opinions, as the program is constantly evolving with employee input.

The first and second surveys were connected by the survey matching questions and demographics. If it was unclear if two surveys matched, those surveys were discarded so only matched samples by employee were kept in the analysis.

An attention check was also added to the survey. This is a question designed to help improve data quality and explicitly to detect inattentive responses through direct queries of attention or through questions designed to catch inattentive respondents (Abbey & Meloy, 2017). The attention check embedded in the survey served as a gatekeeper and if participants failed the check, their survey responses were not used in the study. There were 81 participants who failed the attention check, and their survey responses were discarded as per the literature guidance to help improve data quality.

The first survey measured the independent variables of transparency and trust, as well as various controls including propensity to trust, psychological safety, questions from Peak Academy, and key demographics. The second survey measured the dependent variables promotive and prohibitive employee voice, control for social desirability, questions from Peak Academy, and key demographics.

Data Clean Up and Survey Matching Procedures

Survey 1 and Survey 2 had five specific matching questions. These matching question responses formed the basis for the matching process to connect survey 1 and survey 2 to capture responses for each survey by participant. Surveys were captured in Qualtrics and converted to Excel. The data review included removing responses in

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several areas, including the selection of "do not consent" for the survey, Qualtrics

identified items marked as spam where responses were empty, failed attention check, age

under 18 years old, not completing the demographics or matching questions, and

duplicates from the query matching questions.

In Excel, the data was connected by query with the survey matching items after

the queries were combined and inner matching rows flagged together. The final matched

survey list totaled 488 surveys.

Measures

The independent and dependent variables in the surveys used validated scales

from the literature. The measures are as follows:

Transparency

Transparency was measured using a 12-item scale developed by Schnackenberg,

Tomlinson, and Coen that measures disclosure, clarity, and accuracy (Schnackenberg et

al., 2021). Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .92. The scale has 12 questions with four

each focused on the areas of disclosure, clarity, and accuracy. All questions utilize a 5-

point Likert Scale where 5 = Agree strongly, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree,

2 = Disagree, and 1 = Disagree strongly. An example of a disclosure question is "A

sufficient amount of information is presented by management about the continuous

process improvement training program." The clarity questions included "The information

from management about our continuous process improvement training program is

comprehensible." Accuracy questions included questions such as, "The information from

management about our continuous process improvement training program appears accurate."

Trust

Trust was measured in the survey as an overall construct using the Mayer and Davis 4-item scale (Mayer & Davis, 1999). The scale was refined from an earlier study on measures of organizational trust (Schoorman et al., 1996) to focus on management level trust with a Cronbach's alpha of .82. An example of a trust question is "I would be willing to let management have complete control over my future in this company." The questions utilize a 5-point Likert Scale where 5 = Agree strongly; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 2 = Disagree and 1 = Disagree strongly.

Trust was measured as a multi-dimensional construct in the survey and for regression analysis using the McAllister 11-item trust scale for cognition-based and affect-based trust (McAllister, 1995). Cronbach's alpha for cognition is .91 and affect is .89. There are six questions on cognition-based trust. An example of one such cognition question is "Given top management's track record, I see no reason to doubt his/her/their competence and preparation for the job." There were five questions focusing on affect based trust, such as "With top management I have a sharing relationship. We can both freely share our ideas, feelings, and hopes." All questions utilize a 7-point Likert Scale where 7 = Agree strongly, 6 = Agree, 5 = Somewhat agree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 3 = Disagree somewhat, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Disagree strongly.

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Employee Voice

Employee voice was measured as an overall construct using the Van Dyne and Lepine 6-item scale (van Dyne & Lepine, 1998). Cronbach's alpha is .88. An example of a question is "I develop and make recommendations concerning issues that affect this work group." All questions utilize a 7-point Likert Scale where 7 = Agree strongly, 6 = Agree, 5 = Somewhat agree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 3 = Disagree somewhat, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Disagree strongly.

Employee voice was measured as a multi-dimensional construct using the Liang, Farh, and Farh 10-item scale (Liang et al., 2012). There are five questions for promotive voice and an example of a question is "I proactively develop and make suggestions for issues that may influence the unit." There are five questions for prohibitive voice and an example of a question is "I advise other colleagues against undesirable behaviors that would hamper job performance." Cronbach's alpha for promotive voice is .87 and for prohibitive voice it is .86.

Cognitive Empowerment

Empowerment is connected to expectancy theory beliefs where people feel power and a sense of self-directedness to influence their environment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Employees can develop competencies, moving to a stage of knowledge through self-efficacy and education or training. Cognitive empowerment is the path to make this knowledge accessible where organizations train these employees and foster an environment that shares knowledge (Al-Rahahleh, 2020). In this study, cognitive empowerment is operationalized by training on Lean Six Sigma continuous process

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improvement principles. Survey participants were asked if they have ever taken the process improvement training. To provide details for Peak Academy, participants were asked if they had taken Green Belt training, Black Belt training, or if they had taken both types of training. The content is similar, with the Green Belt training lasting approximately one day, while the Black Belt training contains more information and lasts for one week. There is a statistical difference in the means of the employees who are trained and those who are not trained.

Demographics and Controls

Demographic information is captured with six controls, including age, gender, race/ethnicity, length of time with the organization, role in the organization (leader/supervisor or individual contributor), and hourly or salaried employee.

Demographics from the final matched survey responses for gender are 61.9% women, 35.3% men, and less than 3% non-binary. For race/ethnicity, 71.9% white, 12.3% Hispanic or Latino, 7.2% Two or More Races, 4.9% African American, and less than 3% for Not Listed, American Indian or Alaska Native, or Asian or Asian American. The average employee age is 43.6 years old.

The average tenure working for the City of Denver is 7.7 years. Individual contributor is 63.9% and supervisor or leader is 36.1%.

Peak Academy asked some qualitative questions to add richness and depth to resulting analysis and for insight into potential future customizations to the program. Two example questions include "In your opinion, what factors are key to a work environment where open and honest discussion can occur between staff and management?" and "If

you have been able to successfully implement a change in process at work, what do you think contributed to that success? If not, what do you think is needed for a change to be successful?"

The seventh control utilizes a validated scale for propensity to trust with an 8-item scale from Mayer and Davis (1999). As trust often requires a leap beyond the expectations that ability and benevolence inspire (Lewis & Weigert, 1985), trust propensity may drive that leap (Colquitt et al., 2007) and is an important control to determine how a respondent's propensity to trust comes to bear with each question or situation. This scale uses a 5-point Likert Scale where 5 = Agree strongly; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 2 = Disagree and 1 = Disagree strongly. An example of a question is "Most people can be counted on to do what they say they will do."

The eighth control is social desirability, using the 10-item validated scale from Strahan and Gerbasi with responses of true or false (Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972). This control is important because research has shown in surveys that some respondents provide answers that differ from their actual attitudes, values, or behaviors. If subjects change their answers for impression management (to look better to others), self-deception (to feel good about themselves), or identity definition, social desirability bias can occur (Larson, 2019). This control can help mitigate this concern. An example of a question is "I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake."

The ninth control is psychological safety with a 7-item scale from Edmonson (Edmondson, 1999). Psychological safety holds that whenever you are trying to get people on the same page, it is important to set common goals and a shared appreciation

for what they are up against in the workplace. This includes doing so within a framework that includes reframing failure and clarifying the need for voice where the leader is obliged to set direction, to invite crucial, relevant input to clarify and improve on that direction, and to create conditions for continued learning to achieve excellence (Edmondson, 2019). This scale utilizes a 5-point Likert Scale where 5 = Agree strongly; 4 = Agree; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 2 = Disagree and 1 = Disagree strongly. An example of a question is "Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues."

Chapter 4 Analysis and Results

As noted earlier, the purpose of this research was to study the impacts of employee voice and the interactions of transparency, trust, and cognitive empowerment through the research question:

How do transparency, cognition-based and affect-based trust, and cognitive empowerment impact employee voice in governmental organizations?

Data Analysis

The data analysis started with pulling the completed Excel file of 488 survey responses into SPSS for statistical analysis. Items were adjusted for the proper SPSS format as needed and computing composite variables was completed.

The next step included tests reviewing descriptive statistics and scales. These were analyzed to see if items conform to assumptions of normality and met the desired criteria of Skewness < |3| and Kurtosis < |10|. All items passed within the acceptable range. Power was tested and all items were acceptable with power > 0.8. Reliability was tested and Cronbach's Alpha was 0.82, within the acceptable range.

Factor correlations were examined, and no unusual correlations were found. The structural relationships of the data and variables were reviewed to make sure controls

were coded correctly and assessed for multicollinearity. All items passed with a variance inflation factor (VIF) in the acceptable range < 5.0.

Looking at the constructs directly comparing trained versus not trained employees, there is a statistical difference in the means of the employees who are trained and those who are not trained. Reviewing descriptive statistics for the focal variables and controls, all means are higher for trained employees compared to not trained employees for each survey question that comprised transparency, psychological safety, promotive voice, and prohibitive voice.

For the variables of cognition-based trust, affect-based trust, propensity to trust, and social desirability for each survey question as a composite, the mean was higher for trained employees compared to not trained employees.

For employees who were trained, the mean was higher for a salaried employee compared to an hourly employee when compared to employees who were not trained. For employes who were trained, the mean was higher for leaders or managers compared to employees who were not trained.

For employees who were trained, they had higher tenure with the City and County of Denver compared to employees who were not trained. The mean age of employees was almost exactly the same for trained compared to not trained employees.

The following table details the descriptive statistics and correlations for the data.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Correlations	Mean	Std Deviation		IV Transparency	IV Cognition Trust	IV Affect Trust	Trained	Age	Years/ Tenure	Gender	Paid	Org Role	Race	Prop To Trust	Social Desirability
IV Transparency	43.08	8.793	Pearson Correlation												
			Sig.												
IV Cognition Trust	29.12	8.524	Pearson Correlation	.741**											
			Sig.	0.000											
IV Affect Trust	22.77	7.732	Pearson Correlation	.699**	.851**										
			Sig.	0.000	0.000										
Trained	0.72	0.452	Pearson Correlation	0.070	0.027	0.063									
			Sig.	0.121	0.553	0.162									
Age	43.63	11.143	Pearson Correlation	-0.086	0.008	-0.003	-0.011								
			Sig.	0.058	0.853	0.955	0.808								
Years/Tenure	7.66	6.486	Pearson Correlation	-.174**	-.187**	-.170**	.172**	.391**							
			Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000							
Gender	1.64	0.481	Pearson Correlation	-.122**	-0.059	-0.027	.101*	0.006	-0.010						
			Sig.	0.008	0.199	0.552	0.028	0.890	0.823						
Paid	0.64	0.482	Pearson Correlation	.168**	.165**	.139**	.239**	0.007	0.080	-0.028					
			Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.881	0.079	0.545					
Org Role	1.64		Pearson Correlation	-0.073	-0.055	-.102*	-.181**	-.103*	-.204**	-0.008	-.392**				
			Sig.	0.107	0.228	0.024	0.000	0.023	0.000	0.865	0.000				
Race	0.72	0.450	Pearson Correlation	0.053	0.046	0.037	-0.041	-0.010	-0.054	-0.080	.161**	-.127**			
			Sig.	0.240	0.314	0.418	0.370	0.827	0.233	0.080	0.000	0.005			
Prop To Trust	25.09	3.119	Pearson Correlation	.148**	.122**	.170**	0.017	0.054	0.015	0.034	0.009	-0.075	-0.024		
			Sig.	0.001	0.007	0.000	0.701	0.233	0.737	0.463	0.849	0.097	0.601		
Social Desirability	7.01	1.969	Pearson Correlation	0.080	0.080	0.032	0.010	.160**	0.019	0.053	-.094*	0.086	-.146**	.144**	
			Sig.	0.078	0.078	0.474	0.833	0.000	0.675	0.247	0.037	0.059	0.001	0.001	
Psychological Safety	27.12	5.344	Pearson Correlation	.516**	.524**	.535**	0.086	-.090*	-.168**	-0.032	.128**	-0.072	0.079	0.065	0.088
			Sig.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.057	0.046	0.000	0.492	0.005	0.112	0.082	0.151	0.052

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analysis

Using regression analysis, two hypotheses were supported and four were not

supported, as shown in Figure 4 below.
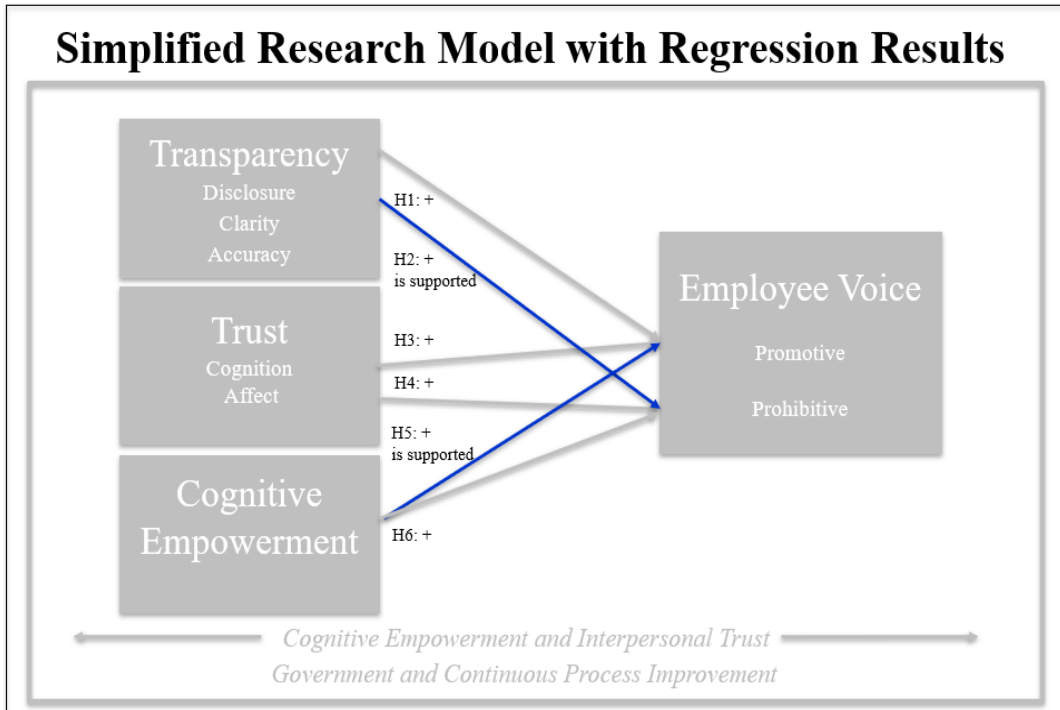
Figure 4: Simplified Research Model with Regression Results

I used α: significance at the ≤ 0.10 level throughout the testing, thus relaxing the

threshold that one would observe an effect. This makes the test more sensitive to

detecting differences given the robust number and type of controls used.

Regarding Hypothesis 1, that transparency was positively related to promotive

voice. I found that regression shows non-significance after accounting for the influence

of all the control variables, p = 0.85. This result indicates that transparency does increase promotive voice in absence of consideration to psychological safety (p = 0.02), but that it does not increase promotive voice after controlling for psychological safety. With nine controls, Hypothesis 1 is not supported.

Regarding Hypothesis 2, that transparency was positively related to prohibitive employee voice. I found that regression shows significance after accounting for all of the control variables, p = 0.08. This result indicates that transparency does increase prohibitive voice in absence of consideration to psychological safety (p = 0.02), and that it also increases prohibitive voice after controlling for psychological safety. With nine controls, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Regarding Hypothesis 3, that cognition-based trust was positively related to promotive employee voice. I found that regression shows non-significance after accounting for the influence of all the control variables, p = 0.57. This result indicates that cognition-based trust does increase promotive voice in absence of consideration to psychological safety (p = 0.01), but that it does not increase promotive voice after controlling for psychological safety. With nine controls, Hypothesis 3 is not supported.

Regarding Hypothesis 4, that affect-based trust was positively related to prohibitive employee voice. I found that regression shows non-significance after accounting for the influence of all the control variables, p = 0.35. This result indicates

that affect-based trust does increase prohibitive voice in absence of consideration to psychological safety (p = 0.10), but that it does not increase prohibitive voice after controlling for psychological safety. With nine controls, Hypothesis 4 is not supported.

Regarding Hypothesis 5, that cognitive empowerment was positively related to promotive employee voice. I found that regression shows significance after accounting for all of the control variables, p = 0.02. This result indicates that cognitive empowerment does increase promotive voice in absence of consideration to psychological safety (p = 0.01), and that it also increases promotive voice after controlling for psychological safety. With nine controls, Hypothesis 5 is supported.

Regarding Hypothesis 6, that cognitive empowerment was positively related to prohibitive employee voice. I found that regression shows non-significance after accounting for the influence of all the control variables, p = 0.48. This result indicates that cognitive empowerment does not increase prohibitive voice in absence of consideration to psychological safety (p = 0.39), and that it also does not increase prohibitive voice after controlling for psychological safety. With nine controls, Hypothesis 6 is not supported.

The regression analysis information is shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Predictor	Transparency with Promotive Voice (R² = .193)		Transparency with Prohibitive Voice (R² = .153)		Cognition Trust with Promotive Voice (R² = .194)		Affect Trust with Prohibitive Voice (R² = .149)		Cognitive Emp with Promotive Voice (R² = .203)		Cognitive Emp with Prohibitive Voice (R² = .148)	
	b	β	b	β	b	β	b	β	b	β	b	β
Age	0.013	0.047	0.003	0.009	0.012	0.044	0.001	0.003	0.015	0.057	0.003	0.010
	0.012	0.306	0.014	0.847	0.012	0.340	0.014	0.947	0.012	0.216	0.014	0.839
Years/Tenure	-0.020	-0.045	-0.012	-0.024	-0.019	-0.041	-0.013	-0.026	-0.030	-0.066	-0.020	-0.039
	0.021	0.340	0.024	0.620	0.021	0.384	0.024	0.586	0.021	0.165	0.024	0.420
Gender	0.007	0.001	-0.484	-0.072	0.009	0.001	-0.547	-0.081	-0.068	-0.011	-0.576	-0.086
	0.260	0.978	0.292	0.098†	0.258	0.972	0.290	0.06†	0.257	0.792	0.292	0.049*
Paid	0.679	0.111	0.509	0.076	0.663	0.108	0.553	0.082	0.565	0.092	0.535	0.080
	0.286	0.018*	0.322	0.114	0.287	0.021*	0.321	0.086†	0.287	0.05*	0.325	0.1†
Org Role	-1.902	-0.312	-2.155	-0.322	-1.906	-0.312	-2.148	-0.321	-1.850	-0.303	-2.144	-0.320
	0.285	<.001**	0.320	<.001**	0.285	<.001**	0.321	<.001**	0.284	<..001**	0.322	<.001**
Race	-0.345	-0.052	-0.617	-0.085	-0.342	-0.052	-0.617	-0.085	-0.305	-0.046	-0.622	-0.086
	0.285	0.227	0.321	0.055†	0.285	0.232	0.322	0.056†	0.284	0.283	0.322	0.054*
Prop To Trust	0.048	0.051	0.027	0.026	0.047	0.050	0.031	0.030	0.050	0.052	0.038	0.037
	0.040	0.234	0.045	0.549	0.040	0.244	0.046	0.491	0.040	0.214	0.045	0.397
Social Desirability	-0.059	-0.040	0.028	0.017	-0.059	-0.040	0.038	0.023	-0.060	-0.040	0.033	0.020
	0.065	0.366	0.073	0.704	0.065	0.365	0.074	0.611	0.065	0.353	0.074	0.651
Psychological Safety	0.104	0.190	0.018	0.091	0.099	0.180	0.029	0.049	0.102	0.185	0.042	0.032
	0.027	<.001**	0.019	0.079†	0.028	<.001**	0.022	0.348	0.024	<.001**	0.027	0.475
Transparency	0.003	0.009	0.034	0.091								
	0.017	0.853	0.019	0.079†								
Cognition Trust					0.010	0.029						
					0.018	0.565						
Affect Trust							0.021	0.049				
							0.022	0.348				
Cognitive Emp									0.690	0.105	0.233	0.032
									0.288	0.017*	0.327	0.475

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses below b. Exact p-values in parentheses below β.
N = 488
†p < .10
*p < .05
**p < .01

Controls Discussion

To set the context of the regression analysis, a more detailed discussion of the controls is warranted. This study used nine controls, as discussed earlier, in order to see a purer impact of the variables of interest in this setting. The most significant control is psychological safety, and this is known to predict employee voice across several contexts

and conditions (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Higgins et al., 2022).

Taking into consideration all nine controls, including psychological safety, the regression analysis as noted above shows two hypotheses were supported and four were not supported. Reviewing the data to determine the influence of the independent variables in the absence of psychological safety, this was removed as a control to determine the effect. After its removal as a control, psychological safety had a significant effect.

With eight of nine controls in the regression analysis, not including psychological safety, there were five of six hypotheses that were statistically significant at the 0.05 and 0.1 levels with the independent variables of trust, transparency, and cognitive empowerment tested with the dependent variables of promotive and prohibitive voice. All hypotheses were significant except for Hypothesis 6 Cognitive Empowerment and Prohibitive Voice.

The regression analysis information for the study after removing psychological safety as a control is shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Regression Analysis without Psychological Safety as a Control

Predictor	Transparency with Promotive Voice (R²=.168)		Transparency with Prohibitive Voice (R²=.152)		Cognition Trust with Promotive Voice (R²=.171)		Affect Trust with Prohibitive Voice (R²=.147)		Cognitive Emp with Promotive Voice (R²=.172)		Cognitive Emp with Prohibitive Voice (R²=.144)	
	b	β	b	β	b	β	b	β	b	β	b	β
Age	0.011	0.042	0.022	0.008	0.008	0.029	-9.315	0.000	0.013	0.049	0.002	0.007
	0.012	0.362	0.014	0.859	0.012	0.535	0.014	0.995	0.012	0.291	0.014	0.886
Years/Tenure	-0.027	-0.059	-0.013	-0.026	-0.023	-0.050	-0.014	-0.029	-0.045	-0.099	-0.026	-0.052
	0.021	0.211	0.024	0.586	0.022	0.299	0.024	0.552	0.021	0.036*	0.024	0.280
Gender	0.043	0.007	-0.478	-0.071	0.008	0.001	-0.552	-0.082	-0.116	-0.019	-0.596	-0.089
	0.263	0.872	0.292	0.102†	0.261	0.976	0.290	0.057†	0.262	0.658	0.292	0.042*
Paid	0.733	0.119	0.518	0.077	0.705	0.115	0.572	0.085	0.693	0.113	0.588	0.087
	0.290	0.012*	0.321	0.107	0.290	0.016*	0.320	0.075†	0.291	0.018*	0.324	0.07†
Org Role	-1.948	-0.319	-2.163	-0.323	-1.964	-0.041	-2.156	-0.322	-1.907	-0.313	-2.167	-0.324
	0.289	<.001**	0.319	<.001**	0.288	0.351	0.321	<.001**	0.289	<.001**	0.322	<.001**
Race	-0.267	-0.040	-0.604	-0.083	-0.269	-0.041	-0.592	-0.082	-0.222	-0.034	-0.587	-0.081
	0.289	0.356	0.320	0.059†	0.288	0.351	0.320	0.065†	0.288	0.442	0.322	0.069†
Prop To Trust	0.045	0.047	0.027	0.026	0.046	0.049	0.030	0.029	0.058	0.062	0.042	0.040
	0.041	0.276	0.045	0.557	0.041	0.257	0.046	0.513	0.040	0.152	0.045	0.355
Social Desirability	-0.038	-0.025	0.032	0.019	-0.036	-0.024	0.046	0.028	-0.026	-0.018	0.047	0.029
	0.066	0.567	0.073	0.667	0.066	0.587	0.073	0.525	0.066	0.687	0.073	0.518
Transparency	0.035	0.103	0.039	0.106								
	0.015	0.022*	0.017	0.02*								
Cognition Trust					0.041	0.119						
					0.015*	0.008*						
Affect Trust							0.031	0.074				
							0.019	0.101†				
Cognitive Emp									0.800	0.122	0.279	0.039
									0.292	0.006*	0.326	0.393

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses below b. Exact p-values in parentheses below β.
N = 488
†p < .10
*p < .05
**p < .01

Controls can have a significant impact on focal constructs of interest. There is a spirited debate and various opinions in the literature for pros and cons of using or not using certain statistical controls and the various parameters and methodologies to follow (Becker et al., 2016). The inclusion of control variables can increase the likelihood of finding a significant relationship between a predictor and outcomes, and the use of statistical control is prevalent and well supported in research (Carlson & Wu, 2012). A limitation of some types of research is that extraneous or third variables may exist and

produce distortions in observed relationships, or influence measures of interest. There are also cases where control variables substantively change the meaning of the relationship under investigation (Bernerth et al., 2018).

Bernerth et al. (2018) also note that control variables can relate to a criterion variable even if a researcher is interested in studying the unique relationship between a predictor and criterion above a third variable, or that a control variable may have an explanation based on the statistics such that a focal predictor may appear unrelated to study outcomes (Breaugh, 2006). Thus, ambiguous or conflicting research findings can legitimately result from the inclusion or exclusion of statistical control variables and researchers note the importance of justifying why a control is used or kept in the analysis (Breaugh, 2006).

In formulating my theoretical model and grounding constructs, I valued two important ideas. The first is a well-supported academic and theoretical foundation that acted as an over-arching explanation and connection for my constructs of interest. The second is business experience pointing to a strong sentiment that in this type of setting involving process improvement training, trust and transparency were important and had a substantial effect on how employees spoke up, voiced their opinions, and shared ideas to improve processes. Accordingly, the framework and controls were carefully selected and supported for this study and distilled the findings to give a clear view of the independent variables and their impact on employee voice.

The constructs of interest for this dissertation and study are trust, transparency, and cognitive empowerment. As Carlson and Wu (2012) noted regarding the inclusion of control variables, the intent was to analyze these constructs and take away the impact of certain variables, in order to see more pure relationships. From the results, transparency and cognitive empowerment are important with the theoretical framework and contribute to the academic literature in a way that has not been explored with effective disclosure, clarity, and accuracy (the multi-dimensional view of transparency), cognitive empowerment, and employee voice.

Given the importance of determining the effect on my constructs of interest, psychological safety was kept as the ninth control due to its important role in cognitive empowerment where learning is often said to happen in an environment of psychological safety (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009) and where this construct may have either a mediating effect on voice (Ge, 2020) or a moderating effect on voice (Miao et al., 2020), as noted in some recent research. These are all interesting future areas of exploration. This research based on those ideas and support for the nine controls offers some fascinating results for my constructs of interest, as well as my controls and future research based in this government setting.

Results Discussion

The research has provided insight into the research question of How do transparency, cognition-based and affect-based trust, and cognitive empowerment impact employee voice in governmental organizations?

Higher levels of transparency, trust, and cognitive empowerment are increasing promotive employee voice, setting the stage for employees to voice their opinions and suggestions for issues and inefficiencies in the workplace. An interesting finding is that once psychological safety is added as a control, some of the relationships are no longer significant.

Transparency is discussed in Peak Academy training, but only on a limited basis as defined here. A grounding idea of continuous process improvement is to broadly share areas of improvement, informing others with clear and accurate communications, and to put forth solutions to address issues or inefficiencies. This also includes an organizational environment that supports this disclosure, clarity, and accuracy in general. Increasing transparency and achieving better efficiency with government outcomes are critical to improve performance (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017), and few studies have examined transparency at the local government level (del Sol, 2013) such as with Peak Academy. Transparency gives people self-efficacy to use their voice in a climate that supports disclosure, clarity, and accuracy.

Transparency and promotive and prohibitive employee voice are statistically significant until psychological safety is added as a control. Then there is no significance with prohibitive voice, which merits future research. In the presence of psychological safety, transparency and prohibitive voice are not significantly connected with one another, and this is a fascinating finding, as discussed later. From the literature, increasing disclosure, clarity, and accuracy does not raise prohibitive voice in the

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presence of psychological safety. It is known that a lack of government transparency can impact an exchange of information where issues are not pointed out and improvements are not suggested (Hope et al., 2022). The results show that transparency is statistically significant with promotive voice, until the presence of psychological safety. Training provides the ability for people to be able to spot problems in the workplace, and consequently feel empowered to speak up and make suggestions. These are foundational concepts from the Peak Academy training. When the employees feel a level of psychological safety, they feel supported and safe to voice their opinions.

Interestingly, transparency and prohibitive voice are statistically significant, regardless of controlling for psychological safety. The research is not clear on the predictors of prohibitive voice. Transparency has a unique effect on prohibitive voice. That an employee can raise issues is good, and it needs to be encouraged. Where there is disclosure, clarity, and accuracy, it leads to an increased ability to raise issues regardless of the climate of psychological safety. Even if it is unsafe, employees are raising grievances or voicing more negative communications. This is perhaps because, without transparency, people cannot even see the problems. Psychological safety does not matter if we do not know the issues – this is why transparency is an important focal variable here because people need to be able to see problems regardless of psychological safety.

Research shows that employees who believe their employer is transparent are more motivated by their work (Mackenzie et al., 2011) and it strengthens the organization's ethical culture (Kuang et al., 2022). Organizational policies that promote

transparency and employee voice (Ertas, 2015) will more successfully support employees to see issues in the workplace and lead with suggestions to make changes. This can be addressed in developing cognitive empowerment and creating training modules that discuss perceptions of transparency and at the employee, team, and organizational level. Coupled with this, it will be important to encourage discussions and a review of the organizational climate to focus on information and communications that are shared and disclosed, clear, and accurate.

Cognition-based and affect-based trust are statistically significant for promotive and prohibitive employee voice with eight of nine controls. Cognition-based and affect-based trust matter until there is psychological safety added as a control, then it becomes non-significant in the presence of psychological safety. But trust is important in the absence of psychological safety, so it will be important to encourage high levels of trust to continue in parallel with psychological safety. Trust has significant impacts on a variety of outcomes relevant to government organizations (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). This can be addressed in developing cognitive empowerment and creating training modules that focus on trust and including it in the regular process improvement training.

Cognitive empowerment with the type of training that Peak Academy conducts is statistically significant with promotive voice, but not prohibitive voice. Cognitive empowerment and prohibitive voice are not significantly connected, and this is not a surprise given the training content focusing on quality and continuous process improvement and Lean applications. This includes the different ways that promotive

voice supports change, recognizes inefficiencies, and helps employees speak up and suggest paths towards improving processes. If perceptions of the risk of prohibitive voice make it less likely to be expressed by employees, the likelihood of problems being recognized and dealt with may be reduced even further by the limited nature of leader attention (MacMillan et al., 2020). The nuances of prohibitive voice are not well understood in some organizations, and this is an area of future study. Cognitive empowerment and employee voice together have important implications for Peak Academy. Results show that this training matters to impact organizational performance with the continuous process improvement approaches and projects.

Looking at the results of the regression analysis with eight of nine controls included, statistical significance is seen for five of the six hypotheses. This means that transparency, trust, and cognitive empowerment are all important constructs to support and encourage employee voice. This includes taking out the impact of a range of factors that could have an influence, including age, gender, race/ethnicity, tenure with the City of Denver, organization role as a leader or individual contributor, paid hourly or salary, propensity to trust, and social desirability. With all nine controls, statistical significance is seen for two of the six hypotheses.

Some reasons for including these specific controls include that longer tenured employees might have had more opportunities to take training classes; age might be a factor in the context of being unsure if one has permission to make changes or point out inefficiencies in the workplace; leaders may feel a different level of responsibility to

make changes that impact an entire group, and they may miss individual changes that an individual contributor might feel or see in the workplace; and individual contributors or shorter tenured employees may not feel as comfortable speaking up as longer tenured employees or managers. It is unknown whether there are diversity challenges or differences with the range of races/ethnicities or whether job types (hourly or salaried) or positions might predispose an employee to more opportunities to take training.

Someone's propensity to trust comes into play if a person might be more predisposed to trust, their trust levels will go up. As trust often requires a leap beyond the expectations that ability and benevolence inspire (Lewis & Weigert, 1985), trust propensity may drive that leap (Colquitt et al., 2007) and is an important control to determine how a respondent's propensity to trust comes to bear with each question or situation.

Social desirability research has shown that some respondents provide answers that differ from their actual attitudes, values, or behaviors, so to better control for this bias, these validated survey scale questions regarding social desirability are important (Larson, 2019). Finally, psychological safety is a construct that Peak Academy was interested in better understanding how its direct or supportive presence in the workplace might impact operational activities and performance goals. The literature supports direct connections between work motivation, improvements, and a feeling of safety at work to speak up and voice opinions (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Besieux, 2021; Higgins et al., 2022; Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Thompson & Klotz, 2022).

The final chapter to follow outlines the implications of this research and future areas of opportunity to explore. It offers some final conclusions given the literature and theoretical grounding with the focal constructs.

Chapter 5 Conclusions

Transparency, trust, and cognitive empowerment matter and impact employee voice. Psychological safety plays a key role with employees where its presence can adjust the need for trust and transparency. In a setting of psychological safety, transparency is important for prohibitive voice, a construct whose drivers are less well known (MacMillan et al., 2020). Psychological safety significantly regulates the establishment and development of optimized workplaces where needed messages are told and heard, such as through prohibitive voice, where the otherwise high costs of speaking up can have negative consequences and managers cannot always receive this information (Miao et al., 2020).

Governments must better understand how and when voice is most influential and the importance of exploring factors that may impact voice (Holley et al., 2019) as this study has shown. By speaking up to those who occupy positions that are hierarchically higher than their own, employees can help stem illegal and immoral behavior, address mistreatment or injustice, and bring problems and opportunities for improvement to the attention of those who can authorize action (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Organizations are compelled to create climates that encourage employee voice, as its absence may produce norms of silence that can be costly for organizational success. Ensuring an optimal climate to encourage voice has some assumptions,

including that employees can clearly see the benefits to them, they have the information they need to make the decision, and the information provided is accurate (Li et al., 2020).

The two types of voice, promotive and prohibitive, impact people differently (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Liang et al., 2012). These results show that trained employees show higher levels of transparency and trust in their environment and speak up to identify changes at work. When controlling for psychological safety, the relationship between cognitive empowerment and promotive voice is statistically significant. This makes sense given the content of the training is to speak up and see inefficiencies, then to develop solutions to address them. Researchers have shown that an increase in promotive voice does ultimately lead to wider benefits for organizations. An area of opportunity with training is to better address prohibitive voice, including the climate and managerial abilities to hear and receive these messages. Prohibitive voice brings attention to harmful aspects of a situation, but it can cause negative emotions and conflict (MacMillan et al., 2020), so adjusting training to change behaviors will be helpful.

Employee voice has been used to reveal the formation mechanism of organizational performance as discussed here, a foundational concept in quality or continuous process improvement training. This includes the positive extra-role interpersonal communication behavior which expresses constructive opinions about workplace issues, where speaking up is a concrete manifestation of individual participation in organizational decision-making, and an important form of employee

contribution to the organization where innovation and performance are increased, and intrinsic task motivation is higher, along with job engagement and creativity (Miao et al., 2020).

Empowerment is especially felt in the quality movement and in training content and this research shows that government employees can enjoy empowerment through the content and guidance of the process improvement training. Continuous improvement introduces elements of bottom-up issue identification and problem solving by the people doing the work (Siha & Saad, 2008). As a result, employees are empowered and use their knowledge of work processes to introduce innovations (Wilkinson, 1997). Managers also have a role to play with helping to set the climate for these innovations, and organizations need to create and support this climate and understand that innovative behaviors challenge the development status of organization, inducing risks, uncertainty, and potential failure (Miao et al., 2020). Since voice is a citizenship behavior that is not necessarily a part of the employee's core job responsibilities, it takes additional knowledge to recognize and understand problems and then to propose constructive suggestions, as through empowerment and training (Liu et al., 2022).

Theoretical Implications

This research makes three primary contributions. The first contribution is an examination of employee voice in a governmental organization, something that has not been well studied. Governmental organizations suffer from a lack of employee voice, so there is a need to better understand how it is produced. The second contribution is an

examination of a multidimensional view of voice in government, something not well understood or studied. This is a more holistic way to assess the determinants of voice in governmental organizations, because they face unique dynamics that do not always include support for promotive ideas or the ability or understanding of how to harness prohibitive voice that is not harmful. The third contribution is an examination of the drivers of promotive and prohibitive voice that are known to be challenges within governmental organizations. These include transparency, cognition-based and affect-based trust, and cognitive empowerment. This includes a multidimensional view of both transparency and trust impacting a multidimensional view of employee voice, something that has not been well explained in the literature.

When organizations better understand how their employees see transparency and trust in the workplace, and how to increase employee voice, their performance can increase (Podsakoff et al., 1990) and reflect what researchers note is a fundamental and urgent issue to be able to support a diverse workforce with members from different backgrounds and motivate them to speak up (Chen et al., 2023). It takes effective training in order to see inefficiencies and opportunities for improvements (Elms & Wogan, 2016). Thus, through empowerment and training on the right type of skills and competencies, and encouraging employee voice, employees can experience autonomy and meaning while contributing to the success of an organization (Javed et al., 2019). There is a recognition that people can use varying degrees of their selves, physically, cognitively, and emotionally, in work role performances, which has implications for both their work

and experiences. The result of supporting employee voice is that engaged employees express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally, allowing for persistence and adaptability that can be leveraged for the good of the organization (Kahn, 1990) and one could suggest, for the greater good.

Other supporting contributions include determinants of local government transparency where transparency is an important component of efficiency, good governance, and organizational quality, known drivers of economic growth and citizen welfare (del Sol, 2013). Answering the call from some streams of literature and academics to summarize the contributions of theory and application, and academic researchers to also benefit society and business (Hoffman, 2021), this research does that and offers some interesting future theoretical and practical ideas to explore. It offers the opportunity to bridge the research–practice gap (Sharma & Bansal, 2020) by researchers and managers cocreating knowledge, such as the case of the University of Denver researchers, Peak Academy, and city government employees. Finally, these other opportunities include incorporating scholarly grounded work with a practitioner lens, as from Noel Tichy, the prolific scholar-practitioner whose work embodies bridging the gap between theory and application (Jordan, 2021).

Practical Implications

In addition to its implications for theory, this paper also suggests important practical implications and directions for organizations and employees, in particular for Peak Academy. This includes adjustments to continuous process improvement training to

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better speak to trust in the workplace and how to encourage employee voice that motivates change. The current training content can focus more on trust building behaviors and what it means when employees use their voices to bring about transformative change. Training content can be enhanced, and culture can be supported with the knowledge that strong relationships encourage employee voice. This will have to include employees and managers, as their effect on one another can move different levers of employee voice as discussed in this study (Chen et al., 2023; Liang et al., 2012). This would include adding trust and psychological safety components to Green Belt and Black Belt training. This includes adding the key ideas as discussed in this study to the current segments on change management and how to manage and adapt through change, emotional intelligence, connection, and growth mindset. This would include information in training on what trust and psychological safety are, how to promote an organizational climate for them, how to develop and support them, and how to ensure a focus on the ideas with every project or encounter.

The training content can also be reviewed to determine if information and communications are being properly shared or disclosed, that they are clear and not confusing, and they are accurate based on the most up to date information. Government in general has come a long way in this area, and there is more work to be done to ensure that employees and customers, or citizens, feel that information they receive has gone through this process to ensure transparency, avoiding information voids, and optimizing efficiency (Hope et al., 2022). Supporting transparency for Peak Academy will include a

review of the messages and communication between and among individuals, manager and employee dyads, and teams. This will include encouraging conversations about organization level transparency and how this filters down to departments, teams, and employees. It is known that transparency typically works for the betterment of the company, and an understanding of how this can be supported in the government context will be important. It should also include a review of the organizational climate relative to transparency, to ensure that perceptions of transparency are addressed. This is a longer-term opportunity, as changing climates can take time, but one that this research has shown is important (Hand et al., 1973).

When employees feel that the climate supports speaking up, it allows for change related behaviors and seeing opportunities to improve processes, and all of this involves trust and transparency (MacMillan et al., 2020). The literature has shown in the trust and employee voice areas that managers and organizations are important and impact the employee experience too. Peak Academy could adapt manager specific training on communication and leadership strategies that encourage and support employee voice, and training for employees on how to speak up with different types of voice.

Peak Academy is already doing many things right and their work and efforts have transformed the government in the City and County of Denver. The incredible results, impact, and reach speak for themselves. They answered the call to make the government adopt public/private corporation activities in the areas of change, waste removal, spotting inefficiencies, and saving taxpayers time and money. Their process improvement training

is excellent and largely has the content needed to provide understanding about the concepts and set up employees for success with improvement projects. Their approach to change management is integrated and supports many foundational ideas to accelerate and accept change in the workplace. In their training, they discuss how people can feel connected to the work that is done and increase self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, factors that are found in the theoretical ideas of empowerment and trust as discussed earlier. Peak Academy asks how the people in the training class can create connection and bring together career, community, and cause – ideas that can connect with work motivation, self-efficacy, connection, and ideas of ability, benevolence, and integrity, trustworthiness perceptions, or the antecedents of trust.

This research provides some insightful areas to improve or adjust, and it does not take into consideration the rich qualitative feedback that may well point to other future improvements.

Limitations and Future Research

Some limitations to discuss include the boundary conditions of this research where the setting is government. Some of the ideas and resulting statistical significance may not be as apparent or respond in the same way given public or private organizations or settings. While the constructs and training can be applied at publicly traded and private companies, there is a potential that not all sentiments expressed by employees, or results, would be shared or viewed the same by employees in a publicly traded or private

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corporation or business compared with government employees. I believe these results can be extended to companies outside of government, and future research in enhancing employee voice across different domains and organization types is called for in the literature, as researchers believe disciplines diverge significantly in how they conceptualize and study voice, and the research on voice remains largely within self-contained siloes and needs to be better integrated, including with the particular mix of constructs as discussed here that would help add value and information across disciplines and organization types (Barry & Wilkinson, 2022).

This study has highlighted many interesting options for future research. Leadership has been found to be an important situational factor that promotes employee support of innovation and change (Javed et al., 2019) and such leadership types as transformational (Besieux et al., 2018) and ethical (Brown & Treviño, 2006) could be studied in this government setting to determine their impacts and interactions with the focal constructs. Some research has been done (Lee et al., 2017), but not as much in a local government setting such as with Peak Academy. Some scholars note that there are limited studies available that provide information on the relationships between ethical leadership and its consequences and there is a need to have more longitudinal studies so researchers can see the impact over time. This could include the impact of these focal constructs that examine the antecedents and consequences of ethical leadership at the team level of analysis (Bedi et al., 2016).

As another future research direction, researchers have noted that a multidimensional view of transparency will predict trust (Tomlinson & Schnackenberg, 2022) and there is a need to know more about the specific antecedents of transparency (Schnackenberg et al., 2021). This is especially true in a government setting, where the current research has shown that in the absence of psychological safety, there is more understanding needed for support and development of employee voice, along with impediments to increasing transparency.

In addition, trust researchers have identified the transparency-trustworthiness (antecedent to trust) relationship as a gap in the literature that can inform our understanding of how messages are used to engender trusting relationships (Schnackenberg et al., 2021). Better information about that gap between transparency to trustworthiness would add depth to the overall support of a multidimensional view of trust. Better understanding the antecedents of trust would be important information for Peak Academy managers. More research on trust in this local government setting would be insightful, including looking at how higher trust can increase the ability of employees or workgroups to tolerate higher levels of challenge-oriented behaviors, such as prohibitive voice, where that solid foundation of trust increases the willingness of group members to overlook or endure relationship conflict, thus minimizing its negative effects (Mackenzie et al., 2011).

Another future area of opportunity is to look at climate at the organizational and team levels, in order to have a better understanding of its impact on performance and

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employee voice, through the lens of transparency, trust, and employee voice. It is possible that ethical work climates and training for managers (Wittmer & Coursey, 1996) would better create conditions to nurture employee voice, but more research needs to be done here at the local government level. There has been some current research into individual and team-level mechanisms that mediate the effect of ethical leadership on employee voice (Bai et al., 2019), but more work can be done. Researchers have also noted a need to look across a range of organizations in a longitudinal study. According to Barry and Wilkinson, employee voice literature has largely been studied with self-contained siloes, where a lack of integration impedes progress toward a more comprehensive understanding of employee voice, as well as an appreciation of its different purposes, dimensions, and manifestations (Barry & Wilkinson, 2022). Future studies could look across company types and research areas to integrate learning, as Shin et al. (2022) note that there are no studies that have examined whether voice practices contribute to organizational innovation across different types of firms.

The current data set is rich with information on a variety of constructs where there could be important nuances to better understand regarding the composition of the workforce and their views. A future opportunity could include more statistical testing or survey methodology adjustments in a new research endeavor. This could include a deeper longitudinal design with three waves in order to fully test the effects and dynamics of the focal constructs and controls model presented here or a mediated or moderated model with psychological safety. A relative importance analysis could also offer some

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additional insights, as well as a deep review of the themes and feedback from the multiple

qualitative questions asked of the employees.

Finally, relationship dynamics, including the idea of power (MacMillan et al.,

2020), socio-emotional barriers (Shin et al., 2022), and employees who take an active

part in the learning processes and interpret the same learning mechanisms differently

(Furlan et al., 2019) can be better studied in this government context. This interplay of

the focal constructs and the relationship dynamics would be interesting areas of future

study. This includes where there are opportunities to learn more about the concrete

effects of these intangibles in the workplace, as research shows that simply cultivating

close relationships with employees does not necessarily create an environment in which

those employees feel comfortable speaking up, as there are nuanced factors at play,

depending on the workplace and employee composition (MacMillan et al., 2020).

Final Conclusions

Peak Academy has been and will continue to share their learnings and the benefits

of continuous process improvement and education to work on areas to improve in the

organization. Other government organizations come to them for insight and practical

guidance to train and empower their workers. Supported by empirical evidence and

insights as to the factors that can help make a difference in their government workplaces,

they can effect real-world change and benefit employees and citizens alike.

Developing and leveraging employee voice and capturing the optimal mix of

change behaviors are important goals for organizations. For solutions, facts and analysis

are cornerstones and critical components of academic research and rigor (Hoffman, 2021), as well as the understanding of contexts that enhance or undermine people's motivation and sense of meaning at work (Kahn, 1990). This research has blended facts, analysis, and rigor, highlighting an understanding of employee voice factors to tell a story where this information can be put to use in many ways to benefit employees and government organizations.

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