ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	THE PARADOX OF THINKING ABOUT “PEOPLE” AS “RESOURCES”: A STUDY OF EMPLOYEE OBJECTIFICATION AND EMPLOYEE VOICE
	Yasha Spriha, Doctor of Philosophy, 2025
Dissertation directed by:	Professor Subrahmaniam Tangirala, Management & Organization

Employee voice is vital for organizations—it helps in error detection, drives innovation, and improves performance. Yet, managers are often reluctant to encourage employee voice. To address this, researchers and practitioners often urge managers to think of employees as valuable resources for better decision-making. I argue that this perspective presents a paradox. Drawing from research on employee voice and employee objectification, I argue that thinking of employees as resources has a dual effect: it motivates managers to encourage voice but also increases the likelihood of treating employees as objects for organizational gain. I further suggest that when objectified, managerial encouragement of voice loses its impact on employees—employees no longer feel responsible to engage in voice. As a result, urging managers to think of employees as resources ultimately backfires and does not lead to employee voice. I test this idea across five complementary studies: a pilot

archival study, three pre-registered experiments, and a field survey. I also highlight the theoretical and practical implications of my findings.

THE PARADOX OF THINKING ABOUT “PEOPLE” AS “RESOURCES”: A STUDY OF EMPLOYEE OBJECTIFICATION AND EMPLOYEE VOICE

by

Yasha Spriha

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2025

Advisory Committee:
Professor Subrahmaniam Tangirala, Chair
Professor Vijaya Venkataramani
Professor Rellie Derfler-Rozin
Associate Professor Jennifer Carson Marr
Assistant Professor Aneesh Rai
Professor Edward Lemay (*Dean’s Representative*)

Acknowledgements

"No man is an island,
entire of itself;
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main"
(Donne, 1624)

As I write this, I know that no words can fully capture the immense gratitude I feel for those who have unconditionally supported me throughout this journey. Completing my dissertation would not have been possible without the unwavering encouragement and guidance of my advisors, mentors, friends, colleagues, and family.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my advisor, Subra Tangirala, who has seamlessly taken on multiple roles in my life over the past five years—advisor, mentor, guardian, and friend. From our very first conversation, I knew I wanted him as my advisor. His belief in me—a naïve, overenthusiastic, terminally extroverted English Literature student with no background in Psychology—changed the course of my life. Throughout this journey, I cannot recall a single time he dismissed my research ideas or discouraged me from pursuing new directions. Thank you, Subra, from the bottom of my heart, for equipping me with the tools to succeed, encouraging me to persevere through failures, lifting my spirits with your characteristic humor, and most importantly, genuinely caring about my well-being and welcoming me into your academic family.

I am also deeply appreciative of my committee members for their insights and guidance. I am especially grateful to Vijaya Venkataramani for her mentorship, which has profoundly shaped the way I think about research. I owe an immense debt of gratitude to Jennifer Carson Marr and Rellie Derfler-Rozin for training me in experimental design. When I arrived at Maryland, I had no background in psychology or experimental methods, but their patience, feedback, and support led me to develop a deep appreciation for experimental research. I also extend my sincere thanks to Aneesh Rai, who, despite being in his first year as an Assistant Professor, generously agreed to be a member of my committee and offered his time and thoughtful feedback to help me refine my research. I am excited about our future collaborations. Lastly, I want to thank Ed Lemay for his insightful ideas, suggestions, and questions, that push me to think more critically about my dissertation.

Beyond my committee, I am grateful to the faculty and staff who have positively impacted by doctoral journey. I want to especially thank Hui Liao for treating me as a colleague. It has been a privilege to work together. Hui's resilience is nothing short of inspiring. I am also grateful to Trevor Foulk, whose encouragement and mentorship led me to turn a critique into a research idea, which is in the process of becoming a paper. I want to thank Gilad Chen, Myeong-Gu Seo, Debra Shapiro, and Kathryn Bartol, for their support, suggestions, and feedback as I navigated the doctoral program. I am deeply grateful to Justina Blanco for her patience and unwavering support throughout the doctoral program. I also thank Miloyka Wilson for her support and Tina Rollason for her kindness, her help throughout the program, and for always greeting me with a warm hug. Lastly, my heartfelt thanks go to my academic brother, Niranjan Janardhanan, who, during my time at the London School of Economics, said, "I think you should pursue a PhD," and worked with me to get me to Maryland, setting everything in motion. Ninja, I would not be here without you—thank you for being my mentor, friend, and colleague.

I want to also thank my friends for standing by me through thick and thin. To my work best friends (Hyunsun Park, Andy Li, Shaaref Shah, Tara Holmes) and cohort mates (Oguz Gencay and Jinyoung Sohn) thank you for your wisdom, for helping me refine my research, and for being incredible sounding boards for my ideas. As a deeply social person, moving to a new continent was challenging, but a group of friends made sure I never felt far from home. Thank you for enriching my life in Maryland and making this doctoral journey more meaningful. To Jui Shah, Apoorva Sahay, Kritika Kapoor, Najaf Zahra, Abhilash Prasann, Richi Shah, Ashesh Prasann, and Meenakshi Narayan, thank you for keeping me motivated and cheering me on every step of the way. Finally, thank you to Ryan Dillon, without whom none of this would have been possible. Your kindness and selfless support helped me in unfathomable ways. Thank you for being my pillar of strength, my loudest cheerleader, and my most dependable teammate.

Thank you to my family. To my mother, Mudita Chandra—thank you for being the wind beneath my wings. I have always admired your determination and ambition. Over the past five years, you have often reminded me to prioritize being a doctoral student before being a daughter, and I am so grateful for that. To my brother, Anshul Kumar—you walked so I could run. Thank you for always encouraging me to aim high, take risks, and work hard. Your quiet strength has been my constant support, and I am beyond grateful to be your sister. To my sister, Shikha Thaman—thank you for being my cheerleader and always believing in me. And finally, to my nephew, Dakshit Samved, who was born the year I started this doctoral program—it has been my privilege to be your aunt. I still cherish the early days of reading research papers out loud while you lay next to me. Even though I have been a virtual aunt for most of your life, your love and laughter lifted my spirits whenever I felt low. I am endlessly grateful for all of you.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

Organizations greatly benefit from employees' expression of work-related ideas, concerns, and suggestions, i.e., *employee voice* (Morrison, 2014). It helps organizations detect errors, innovate, improve resilience, and enhance performance (Detert, Burris, Harrison, & Martin, 2013; Lam & Mayer, 2014; Li, Liao, Tangirala, & Firth, 2017; Li & Tangirala, 2021; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011). Despite these benefits, seeking and incorporating employee voice can be taxing for managers. Due to the change-oriented nature of voice, doing so requires investment of time, effort, energy, and resources and can also cause some short-term disruptions (Sherf, Tangirala, & Venkatramani, 2019). As a result, managers are often hesitant to seek and implement employee voice unless they perceive it as highly valuable (Sherf, Croitoru, & McElroy, 2024). To highlight the value that employees bring to companies, companies often make the argument that employees are their "greatest assets" or "most valuable resources". For instance, Anne M. Mulcahy, former CEO of Xerox Corporation, described employees as a "company's greatest asset" and its strongest "competitive advantage" (Curry, 2020).

In the same vein, articles in leading business magazines like Forbes, also suggest that employees are an organization's greatest asset and resource (Hobson, 2019; Patton, 2021; Forbes, 2023). Ulrich (1998) highlights the value that employees bring to firms as intellectual capital and suggests that managers must involve employees in decision making to effectively use organizational resources and make better decisions. Managers, therefore, are typically encouraged to think of employees as vital resources of a company and use participative practices to fully utilize the knowledge that employees bring (Bassi & McMurrer, 2007). In my dissertation, I question the practice of urging managers to think of employees as resources by highlighting that, while well-intentioned, encouraging managers to do so is ultimately ineffective in enhancing employee voice.

Integrating research on employee objectification (Baldissarri, Andrighetto, & Volpato, 2014; Grant & Shields, 2002; Belmi & Schroeder, 2021) with research on employee voice (Sherf et al., 2019; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012; Morrison, 2014), I suggest that adopting this view can have some positive intended, but overwhelming negative unintended consequences. More specifically, I posit that thinking of employees as resources makes managers more participative by increasing their willingness to seek employee ideas and suggestions (i.e., it increases *voice solicitation*, Sherf et al., 2019). However, unintendedly, it also increases managers' tendency to treat employees as objects for organizational use (i.e., increases *employee objectification*, Baldissarri & Andrighetto, 2021). More importantly, when employees feel objectified by their managers, it reduces the positive impact of voice solicitation on employee voice. Specifically, I argue that when objectified, voice solicitation fails to make employees *feel responsible* to share their ideas and suggestions with their manager. Thereby, it makes them less likely to engage in voice, making voice solicitation futile. Figure 1A and 1B reflect the conceptual model.

By examining this phenomenon, I aim to make several contributions. First, I contribute to research on employee voice by extending our understanding of implications and boundaries of managerial voice solicitation. Past research has suggested that voice solicitation or manager's general consultative behaviors signal receptivity to employee voice, which makes employees more willing to speak up (Fast, Burris, & Bartel, 2014; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). Employees often see speaking up as risky because voice challenges the status quo and can be negatively interpreted by managers (Detert & Treviño, 2010; Grant, 2013; Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003). Past research has demonstrated that solicitation helps employees realize that the benefits of speaking up outweigh the costs (Morrison, 2014), i.e., it is safe for them to speak up (Edmondson, Kramer, & Cook, 2004) and that by doing so they can create an impact (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). While good for the cost-benefit calculus, I extend this research by demonstrating that in addition to the cognitive evaluation of costs and benefits of speaking up, solicitation must also fundamentally create a sense of responsibility in employees, by giving them a compelling reason to speak up. While solicitation can make employees feel safe and enhance the perceived impact of speaking up, I make the case that in the presence of objectification, it fails to trigger the fundamental sense of responsibility to speak up thereby ultimately hurting employee voice.

Second, this research deepens our understanding of the causes and consequences of employee objectification at work. Past research demonstrates that organizations are prime sites of objectification because the minute people are in organizational settings, they adopt a more calculative way of thinking (Belmi & Schroeder, 2021) and holding power in such settings (e.g., managers) can also lead to greater inclination to objectify of others (Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008). I extend these findings by focusing on how signals within the work environment can further exacerbate the level of objectification at work. Specifically, I argue that managers become even more likely to objectify their subordinates when environmental cues (e.g., speeches by CEOs, company value statements, etc.), validate or encourage thinking of employees as resources. I also extend past work on the consequences of objectification by focusing on how it impacts the employee-manager dynamic. While we know of the broader consequences of objectification, such as, negative ethical implications (Bowie, 2002; Wood, 1998; Green, 2001), reduced employee belongingness (Belmi & Schroeder, 2021), and reduced performance and well-being (Baldissarri et al., 2014; Baldissarri & Andrighetto, 2021; Baldissarri, Andrighetto, & Volpato, 2022; Valtorta & Monaci, 2023), this research specifically demonstrates how objectification breaks down the sense of reciprocity that an employee feels towards his/her manager. I focus on the reactions that the objectified (i.e., the employee) has towards the one who objectifies (i.e., the manager). When objectified, employees are less likely to respond to managers' encouragement of voice by speaking up as it erodes their sense of responsibility to do so.

Finally, this research highlights that currently prevalent ways of thinking about employees can ultimately have a negative downstream consequence on employees' participation at work. Managers may get multiple signals from their environment (e.g., from company value statements, CEO speeches, practitioner work) that portray employees as "resources," "capital," or "assets." For instance, as presented in my pilot study of S&P 500 companies, companies often highlight that "… employees – our human capital – are our most valuable resources as they are fundamental to our innovation…" (Akamai Technologies, see Table 1 for representative statements). This perception is often adopted to underscore the value and the benefits that employees' involvement in decision-making can generate for organizations (Hobson, 2019; Patton, 2021; Forbes, 2023; Rouen, 2019; Fey, 2008; Horibe, 1999). The intuitive idea being: if managers begin to adopt this purview, they will become more cognizant of the value employees bring which would make them more willing to seek employee inputs, consequently fostering greater employee voice. My research highlights that this may be an oversimplification of a complex phenomenon. When managers think of employees as resources, they can not only become more inclined to solicit voice but also to treat their employees as means to an end. For employees, such objectification nullifies the positive effects of voice solicitation, ultimately hurting employee voice. By exploring how a prevalent well-intentioned practice in the industry can be misinterpreted, influence managerial behavior, and subsequently impact employee actions, I address calls in past research to view employees as subjects and to investigate the effects of discursive practices in human resource management (HRM) on employees' attitudes and behaviors (Grant & Shields, 2002).

Chapter 2: Theory and Hypotheses

Employee voice or "communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, information about problems, or opinions about work-related issues" (Morrison, 2014, p. 174) is very valuable to organizations. It helps organizations reduce errors and increase learning, innovation, and performance (Detert et al., 2013; Lam & Mayer, 2014; Li et al., 2017; Li & Tangirala, 2021; MacKenzie et al., 2011). However, given that voice challenges the status quo and is change oriented, managers may find seeking and incorporating voice time, effort, and resource consuming. Incorporating voice could also cause temporary disruptions in work processes (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Sherf et al., 2019; Parke, Tangirala, Sanaria, & Ekkirala, 2022). For these reasons, despite the benefits, managers may be reluctant to seek, encourage, and incorporate employee voice when making decisions (Fast et al., 2014; Milliken et al., 2003; Sherf et al., 2024). One way in which organizations try to convey the value of including employees in decision making, is by suggesting that employees are an organization's "greatest assets" or "most valuable resources." In the next section, I discuss the intended and unintended consequences of encouraging managers to think of employees in such terms.

Employees as Resources and Voice Solicitation

The maxim— "employees are our most important asset"— is ubiquitous in organizations today. It is prevalent in statements made by company CEOs (Curry, 2020), in articles of leading business magazines (Forbes, 2023), practitioner outlets and in academic research (Bassi & McMurrer, 2007; Ulrich, 1988). For instance, practitioners often highlight the valuable outcomes that employees bring to work to the make the case that they are a company's most valuable asset (Hobson, 2019; Patton, 2021; Forbes, 2023). Researchers have also made the case that companies should report employee training as a capital investment rather than an expense, as it represents a long-term investment in their most valuable and appreciating asset—their employees (Rouen, 2019; Ulrich, 1998). I argue that promoting such mindsets in managers provides both an instrumental and a motivational reason to encourage employee voice at work.

When managers think of their employees as resources or assets, they are more likely to solicit employee input as they see it as instrumental to achieving organizational goals. A resource or asset is defined as "valued because it can be used for a particular purpose". It, therefore, highlights the potential of employees to help achieve organizations purposes. Past research on business case framing highlights that organizations often focus on practices based on their potential to enhance performance, efficiency, or competitive advantage (e.g., Hahn, Pinkse, Preuss, & Figge, 2015; Margolis & Walsh, 2003). Managers also tend to engage in behaviors they perceive as beneficial for organizational outcomes (e.g., Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). When managers receive signals from the environment that employees are valuable assets of the company due to their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and their potential to contribute to effective decision making, they may view employee voice as useful for the organization rather than as disruptions to extant processes. The perceived utility and instrumentality of voice in achieving goals is a strong driving factor in managerial decisions to explicitly seek employee inputs (Sherf et al., 2024). Thus, urging managers to think of employees as resources can help them see the instrumentality in encouraging voice.

Such thinking can also trigger managers' behavioral approach system (BAS) which increases goal-directed behavior, thereby making them more likely to solicit employee input. In the presence of an appetitive stimuli (Corr, 2013), BAS is neurobiological system that regulates goal-directed behavior because individuals believe that the behavior will be rewarding (Carver & White, 1994). Signals that suggest that employees are resources for the organizations can activate BAS as it associates employees and their inputs with potential gains for the organization and managers, making managers more likely to seek out opportunities to encourage inputs as it aligns with their goals (Carver, 2006). Together, these perspectives suggest that managers who see employees as assets could be more likely to encourage input because they perceive it as both valuable and goal relevant.

However, thinking of employees as assets or resources not only underlines the value that they bring to the company through their KSAs but risks overemphasizing of instrumental benefits and overlooking of interpersonal and social aspects of the employee-organization relationship (Shields & Grant, 2010). In the next section I argue that while on the one hand such thinking can lead to more voice solicitation, on the other hand, it can also lead managers to objectify employees at work.

Employees as Resources and Employee Objectification

Employee objectification or perceiving and treating employees "as mere instruments [or] useful tools for one's own purposes" (Baldissarri et al., 2014, p. 328; Dai, Jiang, Gaer, & Poon, 2023; Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006; Gruenfeld et al., 2008; Orehek & Weaverling, 2017) is common in organizations due to the mindset people apply in work contexts as compared to non-work contexts (Belmi & Schroeder, 2020). A prevailing perspective in business suggests that firms exist for profit— thus, to succeed within an organizational system, individuals must behave like rational actors. Additionally, strategic decision-making, based on analyses of costs and benefits, is not only rewarded in organizations but also embedded and ingrained in business education (Belmi & Pfeffer, 2015, Belmi & Pfeffer, 2018). Thus, work contexts often trigger calculative and strategic mindsets in individuals which makes them more prone to objectifying others (Belmi & Schroeder, 2020).

We know from past literature that power— "relative[ly higher] capacity to modify others' states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments" (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003, p. 265)— that comes with managerial positions, can also make people specifically susceptible to approach and treat others with lower power (e.g., employees) based on their relevance to one's own goals. I argue that in addition to their managerial role which engenders a calculative mindset, signals from the environment that legitimate thinking of employees as resources (e.g., company's value statement) can make managers even more inclined to objectify employees at work. Signals that encourage managers to view employees as resources or assets of the organization further reinforce a focus on how employees are means to achieve goals in organizations. For example, many company reports not only assert that employees are their greatest asset, but justify this claim by linking employees' value to "competitive advantage," "innovation," or "anticipat[ion of] key organizational needs" (see Table 1 for details). Practitioners also provide a list of reasons that make employees an organization's greatest asset: increase profitability, spur business growth, fill gaps in knowledge and skill, and so on (Hobson, 2019).

Managers often draw from such signals in the environment to determine what is valued at work and shape their behavior accordingly. They serve as linking pins between top management and employees by interpreting, translating, and disseminating the priorities of top management into operational realties for frontline employees (Yang, Zhang, & Tsui, 2010). Lukács idea of reification (thing-making) suggests that organizations' orientation towards people often gets reinforced in human relationships leading to a reification of individuals and relationships at work (Lukács, 1971; Vveinhardt, 2022; Burris, 1988). Drawing from this, I argue that when managers receive signals that employees should be seen as an organization's resource because they help achieve organizational goals, managers may begin to value employees for their organizationally relevant KSAs and overlook other social aspects of the employee-organization relationship due to normalization and legitimization of such treatment of employees.

Thus, integrating the two perspectives I posit that thinking of employees as resources has a dual impact on manager behavior: it can make managers more willing to solicit inputs from employees and make them more inclined to treat employees as means to an end.

Hypothesis 1: Thinking about employees as resources is positively related to managerial inclination to (a) solicit employee voice and (b) objectify employees at work.

Voice Solicitation and Employee Felt Responsibility

Past work on the effectiveness of voice solicitation has squarely focused on its impact on an employees' cost-benefit calculus of speaking up (Morrison, 2014). Employee voice is change-oriented and challenges the status quo which can cause managers to become defensive and feel threatened (Morrison, 2011; Sherf et al., 2019; Fast et al., 2014; Isaakyan, Sherf, Tangirala, & Guenter, 2020). Given that voice can result in a potential backlash from managers, employees can often feel intimidated and reluctant to speak up with their inputs and concerns. Thus, researchers recommend managers to actively solicit employee input (Fast et al., 2014; Morrison, 2014; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012; Carnevale, Huang, Uhl-Bien, & Harris, 2020) demonstrating an openness to employee ideas (Fast et al., 2014). Demonstrating such openness and receptivity can make employees feel that it is safe to voice (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012; Morrison, 2011) and that they can create an impact by voicing their inputs (Choi, Moon, & Chun, 2015; Tangirala, Kamdar, Venkataramani, & Parke, 2013).

While this cost-benefit calculus is an important motivator in employees' decision to speak up, drawing on the model of proactive motivation (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010), I argue that for voice solicitation to be successful, it must also give employees a compelling reason to speak up. The model of proactive motivation suggests that judgments about benefits of speaking up outweighing its costs comprises of a "can do" motivation (Parker et al., 2010)—making employees think about the feasibility and risks associated with engaging in proactive behavior. They need to feel that they can create an impact by speaking up and can do so without significant risks. While important, the "can do" motivation cannot alone spur voice unless people feel a sense of responsibility to speak up. "People might feel able to improve work methods, for example, but have no compelling reason to do so" (Parker et al., p. 836). The "can do" motivation manifests in proactive behavior when it is accompanied by the "reason to" motivation since the "*why*" is a stronger determinant of goal pursuit than the "how" or feasibility of goals (Liberman & Trope, 1998).

More specifically in the context of voice, managerial solicitation of inputs must also trigger a "reason to" motivation, i.e., employees should be able to find a compelling reason why they should step beyond the boundaries of their role and think about critical issues to make suggestions. Voice solicitation or managers' explicit encouragement of inputs should induce a sense of responsibility and make employees feel compelled to reciprocate to their manager by taking initiative and suggesting workplace improvements (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Thus, voice solicitation should trigger a "reason to" motivation or *felt responsibility*, i.e., "belief that [the employee] is personally obligated to bring about constructive change" (Morrison & Phelps, 1999, p. 407) in employees to engage in proactive behavior, like voice.

In the next section, I theorize that while urging managers to think of their employees as resources aims to ultimately increase employee voice, the two simultaneous outcomes it triggers counteract to reduce voice at the employee level. This is because objectification (unintended externality) erodes the link between managerial voice solicitation (intended outcome) and employees' felt responsibility negating the "reason to" motivation.

Voice Solicitation, Employee Objectification, Felt Responsibility, and Voice

Voice solicitation can make employees feel a sense of responsibility to engage in voice due to the social norm of reciprocity. When managers categorically encourage inputs at work, employees may feel obligated to think of inputs and suggestions and contribute to work conversations. However, it is important to contextualize managerial behavior when assessing its impact on employees. Voice solicitation does not occur in a vacuum. Thinking about employees as resources, causes managers to not only solicit voice but also objectify their employees which can undercut the positive impact of voice solicitation.

Employee objectification can manifest in a range of managerial behaviors that signal to employees that they are being treated as tools to achieve organizational ends rather than autonomous beings. For instance, when managers behave in an instrumental output-focused way, it can make employees feel objectified: an employee describes it as, “everything we do feeds into the scorecard that gives us points for performance and results in a total score… these statistical distribution exercises should not happen, they are inhuman” (Laaser & Bolton, 2017, pp. 222-223). When managers treat employees as means to an end, they may seek out employees only when the need arises, but otherwise remain inaccessible to them (Baldissarri et al., 2014), prioritizing productivity over an employee’s well-being. Consequently, employees may feel like their worth in the organization is only tied to what they can bring to the table in their roles (Moore & Robinson, 2016). Such managerial behaviors make employees realize that they are being objectified, i.e., their managers do not like them at a human level but merely for their productivity (Baldissarri et al., 2014). By focusing on this one-way utilization of employees for organizational goals, objectification fractures the social reciprocity that employees feel towards their managers breaking the link between voice solicitation and felt responsibility.

When the manager ties an employee solely to their KSAs, it signals that their worth only lies in what they bring to the table (Baldissarri et al., 2022; LaCroix & Pratto, 2015; Valtorta & Monaci, 2023). Treating people as means to an end at work signals that the relationship with one’s manager lacks mutuality and reciprocity, creating an atmosphere where employees may feel used and expendable, thereby destabilizing the reciprocal equation (Collett & Avelis, 2011). It turns employees into tools that are devoid of individual needs, desires, and autonomy (LaCroix & Pratto, 2015). Thus, employees see it as a reflection that managers are failing to acknowledge the reciprocal social relationship that they must uphold with their employees (Belmi & Schroeder, 2021).

Therefore, in the presence of objectification, which highlights the manager's predominant focus on how employees should benefit the company without an equal consideration of how managers or the organization can benefit the employee (Belmi & Pfeffer, 2015), employees may interpret solicitation more cynically. It may in fact be seen as a way in which managers try to extract discretionary ideas and inputs from employees to further improve their decisions without any social reciprocity towards them, reflecting a violation of reciprocity between human beings (LaCroix & Pratto, 2015; Axelrod, 1984). The violation of the norm of reciprocity has shown to erode trust and willingness to cooperate (Fehr & Schurtenberger, 2018; Diekmann & Voss, 2003; Perugini, Gallucci, Presaghi, & Ercolani, 2003) because it fractures the bi-directionality of social obligations (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2002).

The experience of objectification, therefore, fractures the relatedness aspect voice solicitation where employees feel like they have a reason to engage in voice by internalizing managerial goals and view the interaction as a positive exchange (Parker et al., 2010). In summary, I argue that voice solicitation fails to trigger the fundamental sense of responsibility in employees to share their inputs when they are objectified by their managers. Given the importance of felt responsibility as a predictor of employee voice, I argue that due to lower felt responsibility, the relationship between voice solicitation and employee voice will be weakened when employees feel objectified at work.

Hypothesis 2: Employee objectification weakens the positive relationship between managerial solicitation of employee voice and employees' felt responsibility.

Hypothesis 3: Employee objectification weakens the positive indirect relationship between managerial solicitation of employee voice and employee voice (via lower felt responsibility).

Chapter 3: Overview of Methods

I tested my theoretical model using a multi-method approach leveraging the strengths of field surveys and experimental studies. First, to establish the ubiquity of framing employees as resources, I conducted a word count analysis of 2022 Annual Reports of all S&P 500 companies. Having established the prevalence of the phenomenon, I tested my theoretical model using three pre-registered experimental studies and a cross-sectional field survey.

Study 1 was a pre-registered two-part experiment that examined how thinking about "employees as resources" impacts managerial voice solicitation and objectification of employees. Study 2 was a cross-sectional field survey of employees reporting to managers in a wide range of companies. This study tested the impact of voice solicitation and objectification on employees' felt responsibility and voice. Finally, pre-registered studies 3 and 4 replicated the findings from Study 2 using experimental between-subjects designs. While Study 3 utilized a vignette-based design, Study 4 utilized as stimulus sampling approach to constructively replicate my findings from Studies 2 and 3. All data, analysis codes, and study materials are available on a dedicated Open Science Framework (OSF) webpage: https://bit.ly/4bPdqro

Chapter 4: Pilot Study

This paper highlights the managerial behaviors that thinking of employees as resources triggers and its interactive impact on employee voice. Thus, it was important to examine the prevalence of the phenomenon itself before I focus on its impact. For this purpose, I collected and analyzed the 2022 Annual Reports of Standard and Poor (S&P) 500 companies for the prevalence of the idea that employees are resource or assets. S&P 500 companies are the 500 largest companies listed on stock exchanges in the United States that collectively employ over 30 million people globally.

Sample and Procedures

The study consisted of the annual reports of all S&P 500 companies. Since some companies did not have most recent reports publicly available, the reports utilized for this study were from the year 2022 to ensure consistency. Out of the 500 reports, 7 reports (1.4%) were in an unsupported format for text analysis, i.e., they could not be scraped for word count analysis. Thus, my final sample comprised of 493 reports. The average number of words in the reports were 93,033.78 (*SD* = 50,349.19 words).

I used the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) software to create a customized dictionary with words that reflect “employees as resources” framing. The words included were human resource, human resources, human capital, talent, people asset, people assets, people resource, and people resources. The complete sample of annual reports were uploaded on the LIWC software. I conducted a word count analysis to estimate the use of “employees as resources” framing by S&P 500 companies in their annual reports.

Results

Results indicate that 328 of the 493 companies (i.e., 66.53%) used such framing in their annual reports for their employees, i.e., the words in the customized dictionary were present in 66.53% of the sample. On average, words included in the customized dictionary appeared 17 times (SD = 28.89) in the annual reports. I, then, closely read the employee section of each of the annual reports to further validate the word count analysis. Some representative quotes from the annual reports are presented in Table 1.

Discussion

The pilot study highlights that thinking about employees as resources is common in organizations today. While text analysis has its limitations in terms of its inability to decipher the context in which the terms included in the custom dictionary were used in the reports, the study broadly suggests that a substantial number of organizations do use such framing for their employees. Thus, there is value in examining the impact of such thinking on managerial behaviors. In the next few of studies, I provide a stepwise test of the integrated theoretical model.

Chapter 5.1: Study 1A

Sample and Procedures

Study 1 is a pre-registered two-part experiment to test the impact of thinking about employees as resources on managerial behaviors: voice solicitation and employee objectification. In Study 1A (https://aspredicted.org/TKM_JBW), I recruited 302 full-time working adults in the United States through Prolific Academic. Consistent with the exclusion criteria that was mentioned in the pre-registration, I removed 12 participants who failed one or more of the comprehension-check questions. The final sample for Study 1A comprised of 290 participants (49.7% were men, 49.7% were women, and 0.7% identified as "other"). The participants had a mean age of 40.13 years (*SD* = 10.88) and work experience of 19.11 years (*SD* = 11.06). Among the participants, over 58.8% had some managerial experience, i.e., they had held or were currently holding a managerial or supervisory position. The sample was 67.2% White, 17.2% Black or African American, 4.8% Hispanic or Latino, 7.2% Asian, 0.7% Native American or Alaska Native, and 2.8% mixed race or ethnicity.

The participants (a) played the role of a manager, (b) read the value statement of their employing organization (employees as resources manipulation), (c) went through handling a customer complaint task with an employee where they could choose to either solicit employee input or make the decision themselves, and (d) responded to manipulation check measures and demographic questions. The details of the vignette are mentioned below:

First, the participants were told that they were playing the role of a manager at an online retail company, ShopAway:

> "You are a Customer Service Manager at an online retail company, ShopAway. Your company sells a variety of goods such as clothes, books, food, and other necessities online and delivers them to customers all over the United States. Your direct competitors include Amazon and eBay. As a Customer Service Manager, you oversee a team of customer service representatives, handle customer complaints and issues, and make sure ShopAway customers stay satisfied with the company. 3 Customer Service Representatives currently report to you. You manage their performance and their work on a day to day basis."

The participants, then, read the Value Statement of ShopAway through which I manipulated the language to prime managers to think about employees as resources.

Employees as resources manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to "employees as resources" or the control condition. Those in the "employees as resources" condition, read the following Value Statement of ShopAway:

> "At ShopAway, employees are our assets, integral to our success and growth. Just as technology, infrastructure, and financial resources are vital forms of capital, the workforce is equally instrumental in driving innovation and achieving goals. We harness the collective skillsets and talent of our workforce to deliver exceptional results. Through strategic investments in procuring and preparing the best talent, we enable the company to adapt to an ever-evolving competitive landscape. At ShopAway, employees are a strategic resource."

Those who were assigned to the control condition, read the following Value Statement:

> "At ShopAway, our primary focus is on driving sustainable growth and creating value for all of our stakeholders. We are committed to leveraging our strengths to achieve goals and drive innovation by exploring new opportunities. We aim to create impact in the industry by enhancing operational efficiency and investing in

innovation. Our goal is to sustainably grow our business while maintaining a strong commitment to our mission and values. We remain committed to providing value to our stakeholders. At ShopAway, our aim is to create business impact in the industry."

Solicitation scenario. Once participants had read the Value Statement, they were given a work situation where they handled a customer complaint with a putative employee, Alex, who they directly managed. Below are the details of the complaint task:

> "You and Alex, one of the customer care representatives you manage are working on a customer complaint case. This customer, Susan, is an avid user of ShopAway and has recently experienced several delivery issues with her orders. Below is the log of recent complaints raised by her:
>
> 12/27/2023: Ordered Christmas ornaments a week ago, and they arrived today – two days after Christmas!! Thanks A LOT! :(01/10/2024: When is my dress EVER gonna get delivered? Has it been shipped yet? 01/27/2024: I feel like I've been waiting on my shoes to be delivered for like FOREVER now.. seriously… 02/24/2024: OMG I've been waiting for my vitamins for over two weeks now.. this is ridiculous!!
>
> When customers have experienced frequent issues with their orders, the standard policy at ShopAway is: As a Customer Service Manager, you will write an apology email to the customer and can offer up to a $20 gift card that they can use the next time they place an order"

They were then given the option of choosing whether they would like to solicit inputs from their putative employee, Alex, before making the decision on how to proceed with the complaint case. Finally, they answered the manipulation check questions and some demographic related questions. Full study materials, measures, data, and syntax are available in Online Appendix A.

Measures

Voice solicitation. I measured voice solicitation through a single-item binary variable. After reading the customer complaint scenario, the participants were told: “Before sending it [i.e., complaint resolution email] to the customer, you have the option to get the opinion and input of your employee, Alex, on how the customer complaint should be handled.” “With all things considered, will you ask for your employee Alex’s opinion?” (0 = “No” and 1 = “Yes”).

Results

Manipulation check. To test the efficacy of the manipulation of employees as resources framing, I included a two-item manipulation check measure. The items were: The Value Statement of ShopAway states that… “... employees are assets of the company” and “... employees are resources of the company” (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α =.70). An independent samples t-test revealed that participants in the manipulation condition, i.e., the condition where the value statement reflected an employees as resources framing, responded to higher (M = 4.47, SD = 0.71) on the scale than those in the control condition ((M = 3.48, SD = 1.09), $t(288) = 9.87$, $p <$ .001). Thus, the manipulation was successful.

Main analyses. Means, standard deviations, and correlations are displayed in Table 2. Results of regression analysis were presented in Table 3. Hypothesis 1 suggests that thinking of employees as resources is positively related to (a) voice solicitation and (b) employee objectification. In this study, I tested the impact of priming managers to think of employees as resources on their willingness to solicit employee voice. Results indicated that thinking about employees as resources was positively related to voice solicitation (b = .20, SE =.05, $p < .001$). 79.0% of participants in the condition where the value statement primed them to think of employees as resources, answered “Yes” to the solicitation question, in comparison to 59.2% participants in the control condition (see Figure 2).

Chapter 5.2: Study 1B

Sample and Procedures

In this second part, I tested the impact of thinking of employees as resources on managerial objectification of employees. Study 1B (https://aspredicted.org/3XW_R1L) consisted of a sample of 300 full-time working adults in the United States recruited through Prolific Academic. As mentioned in the pre-registration, 6 participants who failed one or more of the comprehension-check questions were excluded from the analysis. In the final sample of 294 participants, 48.3% were men, 50.7% were women, and 1.0% identified as “other”. The mean age of participants was 38.90 years (*SD* = 11.12), and mean work experience was 18.36 years (*SD* = 11.36). 62.6% of the sample had managerial experience, i.e., were currently managing or had previously managed employees at work. The sample was 65.0% White, 14.3% Black or African American, 6.5% Hispanic or Latino, 8.5% Asian, 0.3% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 0.3% Native American or Alaska Native, 4.1% mixed race or ethnicity, and 1% “Other”.

In line with Study 1A, participants (a) played the role of a manager, (b) read the Value Statement (employees as resources manipulation), (c) responded to the scale measuring objectification of employees, and (d) responded to manipulation check measures and demographic questions. Participants were told that they were playing the role of a manager at an online retail company, ShopAway and were given the same role information as in Study 1A. They were then given the Value Statement of ShopAway,

Employees as resources manipulation. Same as Study 1A, participants in the "employees as resources" condition read the Value Statement mentioned below:

> "At ShopAway, employees are our assets, integral to our success and growth. Just as technology, infrastructure, and financial resources are vital forms of capital, the workforce is equally instrumental in driving innovation and achieving goals. We harness the collective skillsets and talent of our workforce to deliver exceptional results. Through strategic investments in procuring and preparing the best talent, we enable the company to adapt to an ever-evolving competitive landscape. At ShopAway, employees are a strategic resource."

Whereas those in the control condition read the Value Statement mentioned below:

> "At ShopAway, our primary focus is on driving sustainable growth and creating value for all of our stakeholders. We are committed to leveraging our strengths to achieve goals and drive innovation by exploring new opportunities. We aim to create impact in the industry by enhancing operational efficiency and investing in innovation. Our goal is to sustainably grow our business while maintaining a strong commitment to our mission and values. We remain committed to providing value to our stakeholders. At ShopAway, our aim is to create business impact in the industry."

They, then, responded to the employee objectification scale, the manipulation check measure, and some demographic related questions. Full study materials, measures, data, and syntax are available in Online Appendix A.

Measures

Employee objectification. I measured employee objectification through an adapted 5-item version of the objectification scale (Belmi & Schroeder, 2020). The items include: The employees I manage at ShopAway… "... could be instruments for accomplishing work- related things," "... could be tools to get things done at work," "... could be used to accomplish company goals," "... could serve as means to achieve company's goals," and "... could be put into roles and be substituted from roles to achieve the company's goals" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .85).

Results

Manipulation check. Same as Study 1A, I included a 2-item manipulation check measure: The Value Statement of ShopAway states that… "... employees are assets of the company" and "... employees are resources of the company" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .62). An independent samples' t-test revealed that participants who were given the "employees as resources" manipulation of the Value Statement responded to the manipulation check measure higher (M = 6.05, SD = 1.04) than those in the control condition ((M = 4.98, SD = 1.54), $t(292)$ = 6.92, $p < .001$). Thus, the manipulation was successful.

Main analyses. Means, standard deviations, and correlations are displayed in Table 4. Results of regression analysis were presented in Table 5. While Study 1A provided support for a part of the Hypothesis 1, i.e., when managers were primed to think of employees as resources, it led to higher managerial voice solicitation, I tested the second part through Study 1B. In line with Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 1, thinking about employees as resources was positively related to employee objectification (b = .27, SE =.09, $p < .01$). Specifically, a t-test revealed that participants, playing the role of a manager, responded to the employee objectification scale higher (M = 6.01, SD = 0.79) if they were in the "employees as resources" condition, than if they were in the control condition ((M = 5.75, SD = 0.82), $t(292)$ = 2.85, $p < .01$) (see Figure 3).

Discussion

Through Study 1 (A and B), I found support for the first part of my theoretical model (Hypothesis 1). At the managerial level, thinking of employees as resources led to higher solicitation of employee voice (Study 1A) and simultaneously also led to greater employee objectification (Study 1B). As an experimental study where I could experimentally manipulate thinking of employees as resources, Study 1 provided strong causal evidence for the dual impact of managerial thinking of employees as resource. Given that thinking of employees in such terms simultaneously triggers solicitation and objectification, in the next set of studies, I examine the interactive impact of these behaviors on employees.

Chapter 6: Study 2

Sample and Procedures

For Study 2, I collected survey responses from employees who worked in a diverse set of industries and organizations. The managers who these employees reported to were students enrolled in a part-time MBA class at a top-tier business school in India. It was through these students that I reached out to employees they managed at work as participants of this field survey study. As a result, the survey was sent out to 654 employees and 323 successfully completed the survey (50% response rate). Employees were duly informed about the confidentiality of responses to alleviate any concerns for social desirability. In the final sample for this study about 4 employees reported to a manger on average. Employees (M_{age} = 33.63, SD_{age} = 6.58) had an average of 10.88 years of work experience (*SD* = 7.25), with 58.1% of them holding a bachelor's degree and 39.1% holding a master's degree.

Measures

Voice solicitation. Employees rated the extent to which their manager had solicited their voice. I measured solicitation using a 3-item adapted measure (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). The items were: "My manager encourages me to express any concerns or doubts that I may have about a proposal under consideration," "My manager listens carefully to any concerns that I express about his/her plans without getting defensive," and "My manager consults with me to get my reactions and suggestions before making major changes that can affect me or the team" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .90).

Employee objectification. Employees rated the extent to which their managers had objectified them at work. I measured employee objectification using an adapted 4-item version of the perceived objectification at workplace scale (Crone, Brunel, & Auzoult, 2021). The items included: "At work, my manager gives me the impression that my work could be replaced by that of a machine," "My manager thinks more about what I can do for him/her than what he/she can do for me," "If I was no longer useful to my manager, my relationship with them would come to an end," and "My manager only seeks me out when he/she needs something" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .81).

Felt responsibility. Employees also rated felt responsibility using a 3-item measure of responsibility for taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). The items were: "I feel a personal sense of responsibility to speak up about work-related issues in my team," "I feel obligated to voice concerns about work-related issues in my team," and "It is my responsibility to suggest ideas on how to improve work methods or practices in my team" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .77).

Employee voice. Finally, employees also rated how often they engage in employee voice using a 5-item measure of constructive voice (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). The items included: "I make suggestions about how to do things in new or more effective ways at work," "I suggest changes to work projects in order to do them better," "I speak up with recommendations about how to fix work-related problems," "I frequently make suggestions about how to improve work methods or practices," and “I regularly propose ideas for new or more effective work methods” (1 = *Never* to 5 = *Frequently*) (α = .93).

Alternate mechanisms. To ensure the robustness of my findings, and rule out alternate explanations, I also measured variables that could provide alternate explanations for the effect. I wanted to ensure that felt responsibility was the mechanism that explained the interactive effect of voice solicitation and employee objectification on employee willingness to voice over and above other plausible explanations. There could be a possibility that psychological safety, i.e., the perceptions of risk or harm because of speaking up (Liang et al., 2012) could explain this relationship. Voice solicitation could make employees feel safer to speak up and this might be weakened by objectification. Alternatively, employees’ voice instrumentality could also be an alternative mechanism. Voice solicitation can make an employee feel he/she can have greater impact on organizational processes by speaking up (Sherf, Tangirala, & Weber, 2017), thereby, increasing employee voice. Since objectification specifically focuses on how employees can be better utilized for the organization’s ends, being objectified by one’s manager could further strengthen this effect. However, I theorize that employees feel a lower sense of responsibility to speak up in response to voice solicitation when they experience objectification. This leads to lower voice. To establish this erosion of sense of reciprocity as the key mechanism, I included psychological safety and voice instrumentality as alternate mechanisms. Psychological safety was measured using a 5-item adapted scale (Liang et al., 2012). The items included: “I can express my true feelings regarding my job in my team," "I can freely express my thoughts in my team," "My team welcomes employees expressing their true feelings," "In my team, I will not be picked on even if I have different opinions than others," and "I'm worried that expressing true thoughts in my team would do harm to myself (reverse coded)" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .64). Voice instrumentality was measured using a 3-item measure (Sherf et al., 2017) as rated by employees. The items included: "By speaking up in my team, I will make a difference," "My suggestions about work-related issues in my team will make an impact," and "By raising concerns in my team, I will influence what happens" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .85).

Analytical Approach

In the data, employees were nested within their groups reporting to the same manager, violating the independence of observations assumption. To account for this nesting, I used the group variable to cluster the data and conducted TYPE = COMPLEX regression analyses in Mplus version 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). The indirect effects were estimated with bootstrap-based analyses (5,000 replications). Data, measures, and syntax for these analyses are available on the OSF website (Online Appendix B).

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis. I conducted confirmatory factor analysis to establish the discriminant validity of the measures. The measurement model with items for voice solicitation, manager willingness to implement voice, felt responsibility, employee willingness to voice, and employee objectification loaded on separate factors, fit the data reasonably well ($\chi 2(84) = 247.46$, $p < .01$, comparative fit index; CFI = .94, standardized root-mean-square residual; SRMR = .05, root-mean-square error of approximation; RMSEA = .08). When I constrained latent variables to correlate at 1, the results suggested a significantly worse fit than the measurement model ($p < .01$), indicating their distinctiveness.

Main analysis. Table 6 reports correlation among key variables and Table 7 displays the results of the regression analyses. In support of Hypothesis 2, I found that employee objectification weakened the relationship between managerial voice solicitation and employees' felt responsibility ($b = -.22$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$) as shown in Figure 3. Simple slopes analysis (+/- 1 SD) revealed that when objectification was high the relationship between voice solicitation and employee felt responsibility was weaker ($b = .16$, $SE = .08$, $p < .05$) than when employee objectification was low ($b = .62$, $SE = .12$, $p < .001$) and the difference between the slopes was significant ($b = -.45$, $SE = .10$, $p < .001$).

In line with Hypothesis 3, voice objectification also weakened the indirect effect of voice solicitation on employee willingness to voice (via felt responsibility). A moderated mediation analysis revealed that the indirect relationship was weaker when employee objectification was high ($b = .05$, $SE = .03$, $p = .06$) than when it was low ($b = .19$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$) with a significant difference between the slopes (diff: $b = -.14$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$). Thus, Hypotheses 3 was also supported.

Robustness analysis. To ensure the robustness of these findings, I included relevant alternate mechanisms (psychological safety and voice instrumentality), and the results remained substantially unchanged. The interaction between voice solicitation and employee objectification on felt responsibility remained significant ($b = -.22$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$). Simple slopes analysis (+/- 1 SD) revealed that when the objectification was high, voice solicitation had a weaker relationship with felt responsibility ($b = .16$, $SE = .08$, $p < .05$) than when objectification was low ($b = .62$, $SE = .12$, $p < .001$). The difference between these slopes were significant (diff: $b = -.45$, $SE = .10$, $p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis 2. In line with Hypothesis 3, voice objectification still moderated the indirect effect of voice solicitation on employee willingness to voice (via felt responsibility). Indirect effects analysis highlighted that the indirect relationship via felt responsibility was not significant when employee objectification was high ($b = .02$, $SE = .02$, p = n.s.) but was positive when objectification was low ($b = .09$, $SE = .05$, $p = .05$) with a significant difference between the slopes (diff: $b = -.07$, $SE = .03$, $p < .05$). Thus, all the results remained substantially unchanged with or without the inclusion of alternate mechanisms.

Discussion

Study 2 provided for the employee's side of my integrated theoretical model. Consistent with my theory, employee objectification negatively impacted the relationship between managerial voice solicitation and employee felt responsibility (Hypothesis 2), and such reduction in felt responsibility explained why employee objectification weakened the relationship between voice solicitation and employee voice (Hypothesis 3). The robustness analysis also revealed that felt responsibility uniquely explained the interactive relation of voice solicitation and objectification with employee voice while accounting for other potential parallel mediators, i.e., psychological safety and voice instrumentality. This study provided external validity and generalizability since it was conducted with employees who worked in a diverse range of companies. But, due to the correlational nature of this study, I could not demonstrate the causality of the findings. Therefore, I conducted two pre- registered studies using a vignette-based design and a stimulus sampling approach to build on these findings and make stronger causal inferences (Grant & Wall, 2009; Spector, 1981).

Chapter 7: Study 3

Sample and procedures

In pre-registered Study 3 (https://aspredicted.org/D3X_M87), I tested the employee end of my theoretical model using an online experiment by recruiting full-time working professionals from the United States using Prolific Academic. I recruited 701 participants and as per the pre-registration removed those that failed any of the attention or comprehension check questions (i.e., 90 participants). Thus, my final sample was 611 participants (47.46% women, 51.71% men, and 0.82% non-binary people, M_{age} = 39.50 years, SD_{age} = 11.10 years). The sample had an average work experience of 19.10 years (SD = 11.23 years) and was 85.8% White, 6.7% Asian, 3.4% Black or African American, 0.8% Hispanic or Latino, and 3.3% “Other”.

In this study, participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (managerial voice solicitation: high versus low) x 2 (employee objectification: high versus control) between-subjects’ design. Participants (a) played the role of a Sales Associate, working with a manager, Riley Smith on the sales of a product, (b) read about a conversation that they overheard their manager, Riley, having with a manager from another team (employee objectification manipulation) and wrote about what they thought of the conversation, (c) read about a meeting with their manager, Riley Smith, (voice solicitation manipulation), and (d) completed the focal measures, manipulation check measures, and demographic questions.

Participants began the study by reading some information about their role, the manager they report to at work, and the product they were working on:

> "In this study, you will play the role of a Sales Associate in Accel Technologies. Accel Technologies is a technology firm that sells artificial intelligence enabled learning tools for toddlers and young kids. As a Sales Associate at Accel Technologies, you are responsible for devising sales strategies of the different products using customer data and market analysis. Your manager, Riley Smith, has been working at Accel Technologies for the last 3 years. As a manager, Riley leads a team of 4 associates including you. Your team, led by Riley Smith, is currently working on the sales plan of KidAI, a learning tool for children in pre-school."

Employee objectification manipulation. The participants were, then, told that they overheard their manager, Riley Smith, having a conversation with a manager from a different team. Those randomly assigned to the high employee objectification condition read:

> "Riley said: "Listen, employees in my team are just a means for me to achieve things at work. They are tools to help me with my work. If they are no longer useful, I will discard them just as I would discard obsolete and defunct company equipment. At the end of the day, they are called "human capital" for a reason, right?""

Whereas participants randomly assigned to the control condition read:

> "Riley said: "Listen, data analysis tools like sales dashboards are just means for me to achieve things at work. They are tools to help with me my work. If they are no longer useful, I will discard them just as I would discard obsolete and defunct company equipment. At the end of the day, they are called "tools" for a reason, right?"

Voice solicitation manipulation. The participants were, then, told that their manager had called for a meeting to discuss the recent decline in the sales of KidAI. Participants randomly assigned to the high voice solicitation condition read:

> "In the meeting, Riley said that he was very interested in the opinions that the team members including you have on declining

> sales. He said he was very curious about team members' ideas and concerns on the current sales plan and is very open to and wants to genuinely listen to them. He encouraged everyone in the team to speak up."

The participants who were randomly assigned to the low voice solicitation condition read:

> "In the meeting, Riley said that he had several opinions about the reasons for declining sales. Based on his own analysis, he said he has come up with ideas and concerns on the current sales plan and wants to tell them to the team. He then spoke up with his ideas and concerns."

Participants then responded to the focal measures, manipulation check measures, and demographic variables. The detailed vignette, manipulations, data, and syntax are available in Online Appendix C.

Measures

Felt responsibility. As per the pre-registration, I measured felt responsibility using a 3-item adapted measure from past research (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). The items included: "I will feel a personal sense of responsibility to provide my manager with ideas for sales improvement," "I will feel like it is my responsibility to speak up to my manager with suggestions to improve sales," and "I will feel a personal sense of responsibility to present new and improved sales plans to my manager" (1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *A great deal*) (α = .97).

Employee voice. Employee voice was measured using a 5-item adapted scale of constructive voice (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). The items included: "I will make suggestions to my manager about how to do things in new or more effective ways at work," "I will make suggestions to my manager on how to make sales plans better," "I will speak up to my manager with recommendations about how to fix sales problems," "I will make suggestions to my manager about how to improve our sales plans," and "I will propose ideas for new or more effective sales plans" (1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *A great deal*) (α = .98).

Alternate mechanisms. In line with the reasoning in Study 2, I also included the two main alternate mechanisms in the experimental Study 3. I hypothesized that objectification weakened the relationship between voice solicitation and employee voice due to reduced felt responsibility. To test whether felt responsibility explained this effect over and above other mechanisms, I included measures of psychological safety and voice instrumentality. I measured psychological safety using a 5-item adapted scale (Liang et al., 2012). The items included: "I can express my true feelings regarding my job to my manager," "I can freely express my thoughts to my manager," "My manager welcomes employees expressing their true feelings," "My manager will not pick on me even if I have different opinions than others," and "I'm worried that expressing true thoughts to my manager would do harm to myself (reverse coded)" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .87). I also measured voice instrumentality using a 3-item adapted scale (Sherf et al., 2017). The items included: "By speaking up to my manager, I will make a difference," "My suggestions about work-related issues to my manager will make an impact," and "By raising concerns to my manager, I will influence what happens" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .95).

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis. I conducted Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to establish the discriminant validity of the measures. The model was a good fit ($\chi 2(98) = 260.30$, $p < .001$, comparative fit index; CFI = .988, standardized root-mean-square residual; SRMR = .032, root-mean-square error of approximation; RMSEA = .052). When I constrained latent variables to correlate at 1, the results suggested a significantly worse fit than the measurement model ($p < .01$), indicating their distinctiveness.

Manipulation check. I conducted manipulation checks to ensure that the manipulations were effective. I included a 3-item measure of voice solicitation (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012) as a manipulation check measure. The items included: In the meeting... "Riley sought opinions that employees had on the decline of sales," "Riley was interested in employees' concerns and ideas to improve declining sales," and "Riley encouraged employees to give reactions and suggestions to improve the declining sales" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .96). An independent samples' test revealed that participants who were assigned to the high voice solicitation condition responded higher ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.77$) than those in the low voice solicitation condition (($M = 1.89$, $SD = 1.02$), $t(609) = 33.20$, $p < .001$) on the manipulation check measure. Thus, the voice solicitation manipulation was successful. Next, I conducted an independent samples' t-test to test the effectiveness of employee objectification manipulation. I included an adapted 5-item measure of employee objectification (Belmi & Schroeder, 2020) as a manipulation check measure. The items included: My manager, Riley Smith, will treat me like... "…I am an instrument for accomplishing things," "…I am a tool to get things done," "…I can be used to accomplish goals," "…I serve as a means to an end," and "I am disposable once I am no longer useful" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .94). Participants who were assigned to the high objectification condition responded to the measure higher (M = 4.64, SD = 0.84) than those in the control condition ((M = 3.80, SD = 0.92), $t(609)$ = 11.74, $p < .001$). Thus, the employee objectification manipulation was also successful.

Main analyses. Means, standard deviations, and correlations are displayed in Table 8. Results of regression analysis were presented in Table 9. Hypothesis 2 posited that managerial objectification of employees weakens the relationship between managerial voice solicitation and employee's felt responsibility to voice. I conducted an ANOVA with voice solicitation and employee objectification as factors and felt responsibility as the dependent variable. I found a significant interaction between the voice solicitation and employee objectification on felt responsibility (b = -.78, SE =.17, $p < .001$) ($F(3, 607)$ = 98.48, $p < .001$). The relationship between voice solicitation and felt responsibility was insignificant when objectification was high (+1 SD) (b = -.10, SE =.12, p = .38) and significant when it was low (-1 SD) (b = .88, SE =.12, $p < .001$). As represented in Figure 4, planned contrasts with Bonferroni correction indicated that when the objectification was high, voice solicitation led to lower felt responsibility (M = 1.72, SD = .94) than when objectification was low ((M

= 3.39, *SD* = 1.07), Mdiff (Bonferroni) = -1.67, $p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 stated that voice solicitation will lead to lower employee voice when employee objectification is high (due to lower felt responsibility). A moderated mediation analysis indicated that the indirect effect of voice solicitation on employee voice through felt responsibility was not significant when employee objectification was higher (*b* = .08, *SE* =.08, 95% CI [–.080, .242]) but was positive and significant when objectification was lower (*b* = .70, *SE* =.11, 95% CI [.487, .903]). The difference between these two indirect effects was also significant (*b* = -.62, *SE* = .14, 95% CI [-.875, -.347]). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Robustness analysis. Analysis with psychological safety and voice instrumentality as alternate mechanisms indicated consistent support for my hypotheses, i.e., the results remained substantially unchanged. Employee objectification weakened the relationship between voice solicitation and employees' felt responsibility to voice (*b* = -.78, *SE* =.17, $p < .001$) supporting Hypothesis 2. More importantly, voice responsibility continued to explain the indirect effect of voice solicitation and employee objectification on employee voice (*b* = -.52, *SE* = .12, 95% CI [-.751, -.301]). Specifically, the indirect effect via felt responsibility to voice was still insignificant when employee objectification was high (*b* = -.07, *SE* = .07, 95% CI [-.066, .202]) but was positive and significant when objectification was low (*b* = .15, *SE* =.04, 95% CI [.080, .241]). This established the robustness of my findings and the specificity of felt responsibility as the mechanism.

Discussion

Study 3 replicated the findings from Study 2 in an experimental setting. The two managerial behaviors that are triggered by thinking of employees as resources interacted to impact employee voice. Employee objectification nullified the positive effects of voice solicitation on employees' felt responsibility (Hypothesis 2), and this led to lower employee voice (Hypothesis 3). Due to its experimental design which allowed us to manipulate voice solicitation and employee objectification, Study 3 helped me make stronger causal attributions of the findings. Additionally, I was able to examine the mechanism (felt responsibility) over and above other predictors of voice. Despite the strengths of the study in terms of making causal claims, there are some weaknesses of this study. Using the vignette design, I manipulated employee objectification directly through an overheard conversation where the manager verbally expressed objectification of employees. However, managerial objectification of employees can manifest in different managerial behaviors. Thus, to enhance the realism, highlight the behaviors that reflect objectifications, and demonstrate that my findings are robust across different objectifying behaviors, I adopted a stimulus sampling method which has been used by prior research (e.g., Hussain, Tangirala, & Sherf, 2023) in Study 4.

Chapter 8: Study 4

Sample and Procedures

Study 4 was a pre-registered (https://aspredicted.org/FTG_ZQM) stimulus sampling study where I experimentally manipulated voice solicitation (high versus low) and used a stimulus sampling approach to manipulate employee objectification (high versus low), i.e., in the high employee objectification condition, I randomly presented participants with one of five managerial behaviors which reflected employee objectification (see Table 10 for details). Initial sample consisted of 501 participants from Prolific Academic out of which 31 participants who failed one or more of the attention-check questions were excluded. Thus, the final sample was 470 participants (199 women, 268 men, and 3 nonbinary people). The average age of the participants was 39.03 years (SD_{age} = 10.72 years). They had an average work experience of 17.93 years (*SD* = 11.00 years). The sample was 64.7% White, 11.1% Asian, 12.8% Black or African American, 9.1% Hispanic or Latino, 0.4% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 0.2% Native American or Alaska Native, and 1.7% "Other".

In this study participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (managerial voice solicitation: high versus low) x 2 (employee objectification: high versus control) between-subjects' design. Those in the high employee objectification condition, were randomly given one of five managerial behaviors that reflected high employee objectification. Participants (a) played the role of a Customer

Service Representative working with a manager, Riley Smith (b) read about an interaction they had with their manager, Riley (employee objectification manipulation) and wrote about what they thought of the interaction, (c) read about a meeting with their manager, Riley Smith, about a customer service issue (voice solicitation manipulation), and (d) completed the focal measures, manipulation check measures, and demographic questions. Below are some details of the vignette.

First, the participants were given a description of their role in the retail company, ShopAway:

> "You are a Customer Service Representative at an online retail company, ShopAway. Your company sells a variety of goods such as clothes, books, food, and other necessities online and delivers them to customers all over the United States. Your direct competitors include Amazon and eBay. As a Customer Service Representative, your work on handling customer complaints and issues. You currently report to Riley Smith, a Customer Service Manager. Riley manages your performance and work on a day to day basis. Riley has been a manager in the company for 2 years."

The five managerial behaviors that were used for high employee objectification manipulation were pre-tested to ensure that the behaviors reflected employee objectification. The details and results of the pre-test are available in Online Appendix D.

Employee objectification manipulation. The participants were randomly assigned into one of two conditions. Those in the high employee objectification condition, were further randomly assigned to receive one of five stimuli that described an incident they experienced with their manager, Riley Smith. Each of the five stimuli described a managerial behavior which was pre-tested as a high objectification behavior. The scenarios specifically reflected treatment of employees as tools to be used for organizational needs and efficiency. The high employee objectification manipulations are presented in Table 10. Participants who were randomly assigned to the control condition read:

> "You recently heard that your company, has purchased a new data analytics tool to help generate automatic reports. Your manager, Riley Smith, came into a meeting and said: "The company has purchased a new data analytics tool for us to generate automatic reports. Data analytic tools, like the one the company has purchased, can be helpful in making detailed reports. Let's try and use this tool as it may help us generate quick reports and also conduct some trend analysis about the progress we make over time. In a few months, we can revisit and see if data analysis tool is indeed useful for us, and then make a decision whether we'll use it in the next quarter or not.""

Voice solicitation manipulation. The participants were then told that their manager Riley Smith has called for a meeting of the team to discuss recent delays and increased response time for customer queries about children's clothing products sold by ShopAway. They were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Those in the high voice solicitation condition read:

> "In the meeting, Riley said that he was very interested in the opinions that the team members including you have on the increased delays. He said he was very curious about team members' ideas and concerns on the current customer service plan for handling children's clothing queries and is very open to and wants to genuinely listen to them. He encouraged everyone in the team to speak up."

In the low voice solicitation condition, participants read:

> "In the meeting, Riley said that he had several opinions about the reasons for the increased delays. Based on his own analysis, he said he has come up with ideas and concerns on the current customer service plan for handling children's clothing queries and wants to

tell them to the team. He then spoke up with his ideas and concerns."

The participants then responded to the focal measures, manipulation check measures, and demographic questions. The detailed vignette, manipulations, data, and syntax are available in [Online Appendix D.]

Measures

Felt responsibility. I measured participants' felt responsibility using an adapted 3- item measure (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). The items included: "I will feel a personal sense of responsibility to provide my manager with ideas for customer service improvement," "I will feel like it is my responsibility to speak up to my manager with suggestions to improve customer service," and "I will feel a personal sense of responsibility to present new and improved customer service plans to my manager" (1 = *None at all* to 5 = *A great deal*) (α = .96).

Employee voice. I measured employee voice using a 5-item adapted measure (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). The items included: "I will make suggestions to my manager about how to do things in new or more effective ways at work," "I will make suggestions to my manager on how to make customer service plans better," "I will speak up to my manager with recommendations about how to fix customer service problems," "I will make suggestions to my manager about how to improve our customer service plans," "I will propose ideas for new or more effective customer service plans" (1 = *None at all* to 5 = *A great deal*) (α = .98).

Alternate mechanisms. Consistent with Study 2 and 3, I included the measures of the two alternate mechanisms: psychological safety and voice instrumentality. Psychological safety was measured using a 5-item adapted measure (Liang et al., 2012) where the items included: "I can express my true feelings regarding my job to my manager," "I can freely express my thoughts to my manager," "My manager welcomes employees expressing their true feelings," "My manager will not pick on me even if I have different opinions than others," and "I'm worried that expressing true thoughts to my manager would do harm to myself (reverse coded)" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .91). Voice instrumentality was measured using a 3-item adapted scale (Sherf et al., 2017) where the items included: "By speaking up to my manager, I will make a difference," "My suggestions about work-related issues to my manager will make an impact," and "By raising concerns to my manager, I will influence what happens" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .95).

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis. I conducted Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to establish the discriminant validity of the measures. The model was a good fit ($\chi 2(98) = 254.40$, $p < .001$, comparative fit index; CFI = .985, standardized root-mean-square residual; SRMR = .026, root-mean-square error of approximation; RMSEA = .058). When I constrained latent variables to correlate at 1, the results suggested a significantly worse fit than the measurement model ($p < .01$), indicating their distinctiveness.

Manipulation check. To test the efficacy of the voice solicitation manipulation, I measured voice solicitation through a 3-item solicitation measure (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). The items included: "Riley sought opinions that employees had on the customer service plan," "Riley was interested in employees' concerns and ideas to improve the customer service plan," and "Riley encouraged employees to give reactions and suggestions to improve the customer service plan" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .97). The results of independent samples' t-test revealed that those in the high voice solicitation condition responded higher to the measure (M = 4.61, SD = 0.62) than those in the low voice solicitation condition ((M = 2.24, SD = 1.16), $t(468) = 27.41$, $p < .001$). Thus, the voice solicitation manipulation was successful. To test the efficacy of the employee objectification manipulation, I included an adapted 5-item measure of employee objectification (Belmi & Schroeder, 2020). The items included: My manager, Riley Smith, treats customer service representatives like… "... we are an instrument for accomplishing things," "... we are tools to get things done," "... we can be used to accomplish goals," "... we serve as a means to an end," and "... we are disposable once we are no longer useful" (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*) (α = .88). An independent samples t-test suggested that the manipulation was successful, i.e., those in the high objectification condition, responded to the objectification scale higher (M = 4.25, SD = 0.69) than those in the control condition ((M = 3.31, SD =

0.90), $t(468) = 12.83$, $p < .001$). Thus, the employee objectification manipulation was also successful.

Main analyses. Means, standard deviations, and correlations are displayed in Table 11. Results of regression analysis were presented in Table 12. Hypothesis 2 suggested that employee objectification weakened the effect of voice solicitation on employee felt responsibility to voice. I conducted an ANOVA with voice solicitation and employee objectification as factors and felt responsibility to voice as the dependent variable. The interaction between voice solicitation and objectification on felt responsibility to voice was significant ($b = -.44$, $SE = .21$, $p < .05$) ($F(3, 466) = 52.42$, $p < .001$). The relationship between voice solicitation and felt responsibility was weaker when objectification was high (+1 SD) ($b = .93$, $SE = .15$, $p < .001$) than when objectification was low (-1 SD) ($b = 1.36$, $SE = .15$, $p < .001$). Planned contrasts with Bonferroni correction suggested that for participants in the high employee objectification condition, high voice solicitation led to lower felt responsibility ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.23$) than for participants in the low objectification condition (($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.98$), Mdiff (Bonferroni) = -0.86, $p < .001$) (e.g., see Figure 5). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Next, I tested the indirect effect. Hypothesis 3 suggested that voice solicitation leads to lower employee voice when employee objectification is high (due to lower felt responsibility). I conducted a moderated mediation model analysis to test the indirect effect. In line with Hypothesis 3, I found that the relationship between voice solicitation and employee voice through felt responsibility was weaker when employee objectification was higher (*b* = .74, *SE* =.13, 95% CI [.496, .986]) than when objectification was lower (*b* = 1.09, *SE* =.12, 95% CI [.845, 1.324]). The difference between these two indirect effects was significant (*b* = -.35, *SE* = .17, 95% CI [-.684, -.010]). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was also supported.

Robustness analysis. As per the pre-registration, I included two additional parallel mediators: psychological safety and voice instrumentality along with the hypothesized mediator: felt responsibility to voice. With the inclusion of parallel mechanisms, my results remained substantially unchanged. Employee objectification negatively impacted the voice solicitation and felt responsibility relationship (*b* = -.44, *SE* =.21, $p < .05$) supporting Hypothesis 2. Employees' felt responsibility to voice was the only mediator that significantly explained the indirect effect of voice solicitation and employee objectification on employee voice, i.e., the indirect effect via felt responsibility to voice was weaker when employee objectification was high (*b* = .56, *SE* = .10, 95% CI [.364, .757]) in comparison to when it was low (*b* = .82, *SE* = .11, 95% CI [.623, 1.037]) and the difference between these two slopes was still significant (*b* = -.26, *SE* = .13, 95% CI [-.519, -.015]).

Second, I conducted some additional tests to ensure that the managerial behavior (stimulus) given to participants in the high objectification condition did not meaningfully impact the pattern of results. I first checked whether the stimuli meaningfully differed in participant ratings of employee objectification. An ANOVA with Bonferroni correction revealed two pairs of conditions to be significantly different from each other on participant ratings of objectification: (a) Use of an AI based scheduling system had higher objectification ratings (*M* = 4.43, *SD* = .65) than compulsory allocation to documentation project ((*M* = 4.04, *SD* = .72) Mdiff (Bonferroni) = .39, *p* = .049) and (b) Scheduling mandatory overtime had higher objectification ratings (*M* = 4.46, *SD* = .68) than compulsory allocation to documentation project ((*M* = 4.04, *SD* = .72) Mdiff (Bonferroni) = .42, *p* = .031). There were no differences in objectification ratings across other stimuli. Despite these two contrasts, the type of stimuli did not interact with voice solicitation to predict felt responsibility for voice (*p* = .84) or employee voice (*p* = .62). Thus, the type of stimuli (one of five) that participants in the high objectification condition randomly received, did not impact the relationship between voice solicitation and voice responsibility or voice solicitation and employee voice.

Discussion

Study 4 replicated the findings from Studies 2 and 3 using a stimulus sampling approach. I found that employee objectification negatively impacted the responsibility felt by employees to speak up in response to voice solicitation from managers. This in turn negatively impacted their voice intentions. Robustness checks revealed that felt responsibility was the only mediator that explained this relationship. I also demonstrated different managerial behaviors that reflected objectification impacted the relationship between voice solicitation and employee voice negatively. Thus, Study 4 constructively replicated the findings.

Chapter 9: General Discussion

In this research, I examine the paradoxical effects of urging managers to think of employees as organizational resources. Through a pilot study and four complementary studies using cross-sectional, experimental, and stimulus sampling designs, I demonstrate that thinking of employees as resources makes managers more inclined to soliciting employee voice and objectifying employees. In the presence of employee objectification, managerial voice solicitation fails to make employees feel responsible to speak up, thereby failing to enhance employee voice at work. By examining this phenomenon, this research makes several theoretical contributions to extant literature.

Theoretical Contributions

Employee voice at work. This research contributes to the employee voice literature by identifying unique mechanisms through which voice solicitation leads to voice and by outlining its boundary conditions. Prior research has largely focused on how solicitation influences employees' cost-benefit calculus. Because speaking up challenges the status quo, employees risk offending their managers when they voice concerns or ideas (Fast et al., 2014; Isaakyan et al., 2020). As a result, previous work has emphasized that voice solicitation signals managerial openness, fostering psychological safety and reinforcing employees' belief that their input can drive meaningful change (Morrison, 2014; Edmondson et al., 2004; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012).

While solicitation can indeed help shift the balance of perceived benefits over costs, I argue that its effectiveness in promoting voice depends on more than just reducing risk—it must also instill in employees a sense of responsibility to speak up. Even when employees feel safe and perceive their voice as impactful, they are more likely to engage in voice behavior when they feel a personal obligation to do so. Effective solicitation should not only provide employees with the "can do" motivation (the belief that they are capable of voicing) but also the "reason to" motivation, i.e., the sense that they have a compelling duty to step beyond their formal roles and proactively contribute to improving workplace processes and practices (Parker et al., 2010).

Furthermore, I highlight that voice solicitation does not occur in isolation; other managerial behaviors can weaken its positive effects. Specifically, when managers treat employees as tools for achieving organizational goals, employees may interpret solicitation as a transactional effort to extract their knowledge rather than a genuine interest in their perspectives. In such cases, employees are less likely to internalize managerial or organizational goals as their own, and consequently, feel no sense of responsibility to speak up. Thus, when objectification is present, voice solicitation loses its effectiveness in encouraging employee voice.

Managerial objectification of employees. This research also contributes to the emerging literature on employee objectification. Researchers have underlined that organizations often become prime spots for objectification of individuals. Being in a work setting tends to activate a calculative way of thinking in individuals which causes them to objectify others and view them in terms of the benefits they can generate (Belmi & Schroeder, 2021). Holding a position of power in organizations which affords people with greater control over valued resources also leads them to objectify others. For instance, researchers have demonstrated that holding a managerial position at work leads to greater objectification of subordinates (Gruenfeld et al., 2008). Building on these findings, this research demonstrates the important role that organizations play in influencing managerial objectification of employees. When organizations frame employees as resources, capital, or assets, and link their worth to the benefits they generate for organizations, it further exacerbates managerial objectification of employees because such framing signals that the organization sponsors the idea of using employees for organizational purposes.

This research also highlights a unique impact that objectification can have on manager-employee dynamic. While experiencing objectification negatively impacts general employee states and behaviors, like their level of belonging, wellbeing, citizenship behaviors and performance (Bowie, 2002; Wood, 1998; Green, 2001; Belmi & Schroeder, 2021; Baldissarri et al., 2014; Baldissarri & Andrighetto, 2021; Baldissarri et al., 2022; Valtorta & Monaci, 2023), my research contributes by focusing on how objectification impacts the voice dynamic between a manager (the one who objectifies) and the employee (the one who is objectified). By focusing on a one-way utilization of employees for organizational ends, objectification breaks down the reciprocity an employee feels toward the manager. Thus, despite managerial voice solicitation, when objectified, employees don't feel responsible to take charge and consequently don't speak up.

Thinking about employees as resources. I extend the research on the impact of prevalent organizational practices on employees. The idea that employees are a company's greatest asset is very common in organizations. It has not only been espoused by top management but also reflects in how organizations refer to their employees in their annual reports and label their employee management teams (see pilot study). This is further adopted by practitioners and researchers (Hobson, 2019; Patton, 2021; Forbes, 2023; Rouen, 2019; Fey, 2008; Horibe, 1999). While done with the positive intent of spotlighting how employees, as repositories of skills, bring value to companies in today's knowledge driven world, I demonstrate that such framing ends up harming employee proactivity and participation at work. In the process, I address calls from past researchers to make employees the core subjects of research and investigate how practices that are widely adopted by organizations and are prevalent in human resource management impact employees at work (Grant & Shields, 2002).

Additionally, through this research I extend the current discourse on the reification of employees in management. Extant work on reification of employees in work contexts has critiqued companies' tendency to quantify employees and view them as resources due to its negative implications with respect to human dignity and ethics (Lukács, 1971; Honneth, 2001; Honneth, 2008; Spencer, 2018; Vveinhardt, 2022). I extend this argument and demonstrate that the practice of tying employees to the benefits they bring to companies and presenting them as resources can have a negative impact on employee participation at work since it triggers managerial objectification of employees. Employee voice helps organizations innovate, detect errors, and perform better (see Morrison, 2014 for review). But thinking of employees as resources leads managers not only to solicit voice but also increases their tendency to objectify employees. Employee objectification undercuts the positive impact of solicitation as it reduces employee's willingness to speak up in response to managerial voice solicitation. Therefore, issues that could be detected and resolved through voice, or new ideas that could be implemented may go uncommunicated at work due to the negative experiences employees have when managers objectify them.

Limitations and Future Directions

This research has several limitations while also opening multiple avenues for future research.

First, my research argues that urging managers to think of employees as resources has both positive and negative effects. More specifically I argue and demonstrate that it makes managers more willing to encourage employee voice (i.e., enhances voice solicitation) and increases their inclination to treat employees as objects for organizational use (i.e., enhances employee objectification). While my research demonstrates two specific positive and negative outcomes, I acknowledge that such thinking could also lead to other managerial behaviors. For instance, managers may become more willing to adopt practices that they believe will enhance employee productivity and reject those that don't. Future research could explore other behaviors or inclinations that may stem from adopting the view that employees are resources or assets of the organization.

Second, this paper highlights that urging managers to think of employees as resources makes them more inclined to solicit voice and objectify employees. More specifically, when such cues are present in communications from top management, middle managers often reinforce those norms in their behaviors (e.g., Harding, Lee, & Ford, 2014). However, I acknowledge that individual differences and contextual pressures may moderate this effect. For instance, managers with higher emotional intelligence can create more conducive and productive organizational climate (Momeni, 2009) and managers with a long-term orientation or high perspective taking may be able to foresee the negative implication of objectification on employee proactivity (Sherf et al., 2019; Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997), therefore, be less likely to objectify their employees irrespective of signals in the environment. Additionally, under heavy workloads or time constraints, despite thinking of employees as resources, managers may not want to solicit more voice due to competing priorities (Sherf, Venkataramani, & Gajendran, 2019). Thus, future research can examine individual and contextual factors that may influence how employees as resources perspective impacts managerial behaviors.

Third, in my research, I explore the impact of thinking about employees as resources on specific managerial outcomes (i.e., voice solicitation and employee objectification) and the interactive downstream consequences of those outcomes on employee behaviors (i.e., felt responsibility and voice). In examining my research ideas, I use different studies to explore each of these outcomes. I test the manager outcomes using an experimental study (Study 1) and employee outcomes using field and experimental studies (Study 2 – 4). While this study package has its strengths—mixed methods providing internal and external validity— it presents some limitations as well. Empirically, I am unable to explore the indirect effects that thinking of employees as resources has on employee outcomes via managerial behaviors. Additionally, in the current study design, I present employees with direct manipulations of employee objectification via a vignette in Study 3 and multiple stimuli in Study 4. To ensure that the manipulations tapped into objectification, I pre-tested the stimuli in Study 4 and verified them through manipulation checks in Study 3 and 4. However, I recognize that such behaviors are not directly manager-rated behaviors from Study 1 and may risk conflating other perceptions like manager's disregard for employee welfare. Therefore, future work could utilize other ways to test my theoretical model and replicate my findings through a more integrated design, like through a field experiment (Eden, 2017) or an experimentally yoked study design where managerial behaviors are directly yoked as stimuli for employees as manipulations to measure indirect effects (e.g., Wee, Derfler-Rozin & Marr, 2023).

Fourth, I test the interactive impact of voice solicitation and objectification on employee psychological states and behaviors in a field survey of employees (Study 2). The cross-sectional nature of the study where all the focal variables were self-reported might not allow for causal inferences and could have introduced some common source bias. To attenuate some of these concerns, I also tested these effects in pre-registered experimental studies (Studies 3 and 4) using vignette and stimulus sampling designs. While the experimental studies allowed me to make strong causal inferences, I recognize that they compromise on external validity because employees and managers are embedded in more complex environments in organizations than can be presented through an experimental vignette. Thus, future research can use study designs that allow for a complete test of the integrated theoretical model in an organizational setting with both employee and manager reports.

Fifth, I focus on how objectification impacts the extent to which employees feel responsible to speak up in response to manager voice solicitation. Due to a violation of social reciprocity, I argue that objectification breaks the voice solicitation-voice relationship. I test these effects in an event-focused design. However, I recognize that experiencing employee objectification over an extended period can have further negative impact on the manager-employee relationship. Employees may become more cynical towards the manager. As a result, employees may not only reduce their voice behaviors but also other extra role behaviors and citizenship behaviors that go beyond their role requirements, e.g., helping behaviors. Furthermore, employees may psychologically detach from their workplace or leave the organization. Therefore, a longitudinal examination of this phenomenon can unpack the broader impact that this can have on the employee-manager and employee-organization dynamic over time.

Finally, my research recognizes the drawback of urging managers to think of employees as resources. I highlight that framing employee value only in terms of how they benefit organizations could be counterproductive. While this research recognizes the dual impact of such framing, it does not explore alternate frames that can help resolve this paradox by encouraging managers to solicit employee input without increasing their inclination to objectify employees. Perhaps, highlighting the value employees bring as independent stakeholders and the importance of understanding and incorporating diverse and unique perspectives that stem not only from their KSAs but also their unique lived experiences may be one way to resolve the paradox. Future research could explore alternative framing strategies that encourage managers to seek employee input without reducing employees' worth to their utility for the organization.

Practical Implications

Organizational failures often stem from employees' reluctance to communicate issues to their managers. For instance, in discussions surrounding Boeing 737 Max crashes, company workers informed Senate lawmakers that they had noticed problems but hesitated to speak up (Godlewski, 2024). This underscores the critical role of employee voice in organizations. While often well-intended, my research reveals that framing employees as resources can be counterproductive to fostering employee voice.

The findings from this research highlight the need for organizations to carefully consider how their stated values are interpreted by managers, influence managerial behavior, and, in turn, employee outcomes. Specifically, CEOs and top leadership should reassess how they portray employees in corporate communications.

Rather than urging managers to think of employees as assets or resources of the organizations, organizations may benefit from emphasizing the distinct value employees bring as individuals with unique perspectives and lived experiences. Cultivating a culture where managers genuinely respect and appreciate employees—as individuals and not just for their skills—may be essential for creating a workplace environment that nurtures better social reciprocity between managers and employees and encourages voice.

Appendices

Tables

TABLE 1

Representative Quotes that Reflect Thinking about Employees as Resources (Pilot Study)

Organization Name	**Representative Quotes**
Akamai Technologies *Cloud, Security, and Content Platform*	"Our employees – our human capital – are our most valuable resources as they are fundamental to our innovation, the operation and ongoing enhancement of the Akamai Connected Cloud, the fostering and maintenance of relationships with our customers and the management of our operations."
Albermarle Corporation *Chemical Manufacturing Company*	"Investing in talent is a critical process for Albemarle because it allows us to be proactive and anticipate key organizational needs for talent and capabilities. This enables us to efficiently and effectively ensure that we have the right talent pipeline to drive Albemarle's success into the future."
Alphabet Inc. *Technology Conglomerate*	"Our employees are among our best assets and are critical for our continued success."
Cintas *Business Services Company*	"Cintas' key human capital management objectives are to attract, retain and develop talent to deliver on the Company's strategy."
Honeywell *Multinational Conglomerate Corporation*	"We believe a commitment to and investment in human capital management enables better decision-making, helps us build competitive advantage, and furthers our long-term success… Human capital management is the key driver of our performance culture, which enables our workforce to respond to the fast- changing needs of our customers."
Tesla *Automotive Company*	"Our greatest asset is our people and we continue to attract the best and brightest with our competitive pay and benefits package which starts with ownership."

TABLE 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among the Variables (Study 1A)

Variables	Means	SD	1	2
1. Thinking about employees as resources (Low 0; High 1)	.49	.50		
2. Voice Solicitation	.69	.46	$.21^{**}$	

Note: $N = 290$; $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$ (2-tailed); The Cronbach's alpha coefficients are in parentheses along the diagonal.

TABLE 3

Results of Regression Analysis (Study 1A)

Variables	Voice Solicitation Model 1
Intercept	59***(.04)
Independent Variable	
Thinking about employees as resources (Low 0; High 1)	.20***(.05)
R^2	.05
ΔR^2	-
F	13.87

Note: $N = 290$; $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$ (2-tailed); R^2: R-squared.

TABLE 4

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among the Variables (Study 1B)

Variables	Means	SD	1	2
1. Thinking about employees as resources (Low 0; High 1)	.49	.50		
2. Employee objectification	5.88	.81	.17**	(.85)

Note: $N = 294$; $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$ (2-tailed); The Cronbach's alpha coefficients are in parentheses along the diagonal.

TABLE 5

Results of Regression Analysis (Study 1B)

Variables	Employee Objectification Model 1
Intercept	5.75***(.07)
Independent Variable	
Thinking about employees as resources (Low 0; High 1)	.27**(.09)
R^2	.03
ΔR^2	-
F	8.12

Note: $N = 294$; $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$ (2-tailed); R^2: R-squared.

TABLE 6

Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations (Study 2)

Variables	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Voice solicitation	4.50	0.73	(.90)					
2. Employee objectification	1.94	1.01	$-.44^{**}$	(.81)				
3. Felt responsibility	4.18	0.78	$.22^{**}$	$-.15^{**}$	(.77)			
4. Psychological safety	3.92	0.71	$.24^{**}$	$-.32^{**}$	$.39^{**}$	(.64)		
5. Voice instrumentality	4.10	0.81	$.17^{**}$	$-.20^{**}$	$.52^{**}$	$.40^{**}$	(.85)	
6. Employee voice	4.08	0.77	$.25^{**}$	$-.20^{**}$	$.35^{**}$	$.41^{**}$	$.34^{**}$	(.93)

Note: N = 323; *p < .05; **p < .01 (2-tailed); The Cronbach's alpha coefficients are in parentheses along the diagonal.

TABLE 7

Regression Results (Study 2)

	Felt Responsibility		Employee Voice		
Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	4.18^{***} (.05)	4.11^{***}(.06)	4.08^{***}(.05)	2.83^{***}(.22)	2.36^{***}(.35)
Independent variables					
Voice solicitation	$.20^{*}$(.09)	$.39^{**}$(.09)	$.21^{*}$(.08)	.15 (.08)	$.13^{*}$(.07)
Employee objectification	-.05 (.06)	-.04 (.06)	-.09 (.06)	-.07 (.05)	-.01 (.05)
Voice solicitation x Employee objectification		$-.22^{***}$(.05)			
Mediator					
Felt responsibility				$.30^{**}$(.05)	$.14^{*}$(.06)
Alternate Mediators					
Psychological safety					$.29^{***}$(.06)
Voice instrumentality					$.13^{*}$(.06)
R^2	.051	.096	.073	.159	.239
ΔR^2	-	.045	-	.085	.080

Note: N = 323; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (2-tailed)

TABLE 8

Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations (Study 3)

Variables	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Voice solicitation	.50	.50						
2. Employee objectification	.51	.50	-.01					
3. Felt responsibility	2.30	1.25	.20**	-.52**	(.97)			
4. Psychological safety	2.28	.96	.25**	-.44**	.58**	(.87)		
5. Voice instrumentality	2.66	1.16	.30**	-.29**	.59**	.64**	(.95)	
6. Employee voice	2.43	1.20	.28**	-.46**	.84**	.58**	.64**	(.98)

Note: N = 611; *p < .05; **p < .01 (2-tailed); The Cronbach's alpha coefficients are in parentheses along the diagonal.

TABLE 9

Regression Results (Study 3)

	Felt Responsibility		Employee Voice		
Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	2.71*** (.07)	4.11***(.06)	2.67***(.07)	.61***(.08)	.29**(.09)
Independent variables					
Voice solicitation	.48***(.08)	.39**(.09)	.65***(.08)	.29***(.05)	.19***(.05)
Employee objectification	-1.28***(.08)	-.89***(.12)	-1.10***(.08)	-.13* (.06)	-.10 (.06)
Voice solicitation x Employee objectification		-.78***(.17)			
Mediator					
Felt responsibility				.76***(.02)	.64***(.03)
Alternate Mediators					
Psychological safety					.06 (.04)
Voice instrumentality					.18***(.03)
R^2	.303	.327	.288	.722	.746
ΔR^2	-	.024	-	.434	.024

Note: N = 611; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (2-tailed)

TABLE 10

High Employee Objectification Stimuli for Stimulus Sampling Study (Study 4)

Stimulus Label	Excerpt
Compulsory allocation to a documentation project	You recently heard that two customer service representatives were needed for a sales best practice documentation project as the project demanded additional resources. Your manager, Riley Smith, came into a meeting and told your colleagues Rob and Laura: "The two of you currently have lower workloads in the team you can be allocated to that project." Riley knew that your colleagues would not be happy to work in documentation because they prefer front facing customer service roles as representatives. But Riley said: "To ensure effective utilization of human resources, I am allocating the two of you to the documentation project. I am unable to take your personal preferences into account."
Laying off representatives from Fast Delivery	The company you work for recently acquired Fast Delivery, a grocery delivery platform. Your manager, Riley Smith, came into a meeting and said: "I need to optimize human resource allocation across two companies." Riley knew that the customer service representatives at Fast Delivery had been working there for more than 20 years. Despite this Riley said: "To ensure effective utilization of human resources across the two companies, I have to lay off 4 customer service representatives of Fast Delivery."
Use of an AI based scheduling system	In the past, your manager, Riley Smith, used to manually create employee shift schedules. Now, your company come up with an AI-assisted system for managing employee schedules. Your manager, Riley Smith, came into a meeting and said: "This AI-assisted system can maximize the utilization of human resources in the team and ensure that all of the employee hours are best used to achieve team goals." You and some of your colleagues have expressed concerns that AI-based scheduling will not take their personal work-life balance into account. Despite this Riley said: "To ensure effective utilization of human resources, I will be implementing the AI-assisted employee scheduling system in the team. I am unable able to take your personal concerns into account."
Denial of a last-minute leave	On Monday, one of your colleagues who also reports your manager, Riley Smith, went and requested your manager for last minute 3-day leave starting Wednesday. Your manager, Riley Smith, said: "This leave request is coming very last minute and all customer service hour allocations for the week have already been made." Your colleague said that the last-minute leave due to personal reasons. Despite knowing this Riley said: "I cannot

Stimulus Label	Excerpt
	grant you a leave. If I do there will be financial repercussions and moving people around will lead to sub-optimal use of human resources."
Scheduling mandatory overtime	You recently heard that your company, ShopAway is going to start selling a new product category online: packaged grocery. Your manager, Riley Smith, came into a meeting and said: "There will be a higher volume of customer service queries due to the addition of this new product category, especially in the first two months." You and your colleagues worry that the mandatory overtime due to the higher volume of customer service queries will affect your work-life balance. Despite knowing this, Riley said: "I have to effectively utilize human resources to meet the company's new goals. So, everyone will have to work mandatory overtime till we get extra volume of customer queries. I am unable to take your personal concerns into account."

TABLE 11

Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations (Study 4)

Variables	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Voice solicitation	.50	.50						
2. Employee objectification	.51	.50	-.02					
3. Felt responsibility	2.69	1.33	.43**	-.25**	(.96)			
4. Psychological safety	2.97	1.12	.39**	-.32**	.71**	(.91)		
5. Voice instrumentality	3.09	1.20	.37**	-.23**	.74**	.76**	(.95)	
6. Employee voice	2.79	1.27	.42**	-.21**	.86**	.70**	.76**	(.98)

Note: N = 470; *p < .05; **p < .01 (2-tailed); The Cronbach's alpha coefficients are in parentheses along the diagonal.

TABLE 12

Regression Results (Study 4)

	Felt Responsibility		Employee Voice		
Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	2.46*** (.09)	2.35***(.11)	2.54***(.09)	.57***(.08)	.09**(.10)
Independent variables					
Voice solicitation	1.14***(.11)	1.36***(.15)	1.05***(.10)	.13* (.07)	.07 (.06)
Employee objectification	-.64***(.11)	-.42**(.15)	-.52***(.10)	-.01 (.06)	.06 (.06)
Voice solicitation x Employee objectification		-.44*(.21)			
Mediator					
Felt responsibility				.80***(.03)	.61***(.03)
Alternate Mediators					
Psychological safety					.10*(.04)
Voice instrumentality					.23***(.04)
R^2	.246	.252	.073	.749	.782
ΔR^2	-	.006	-	.533	.033

Note: N = 470; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 (2-tailed)

Figures

FIGURE 1A
Conceptual Model (Managerial Perspective)

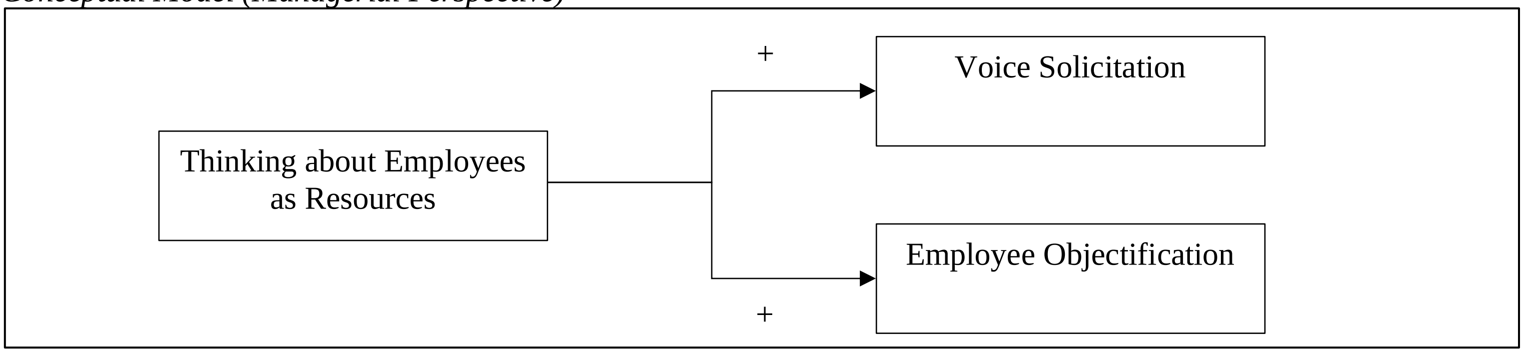


FIGURE 1B
Conceptual Model (Employee Perspective)

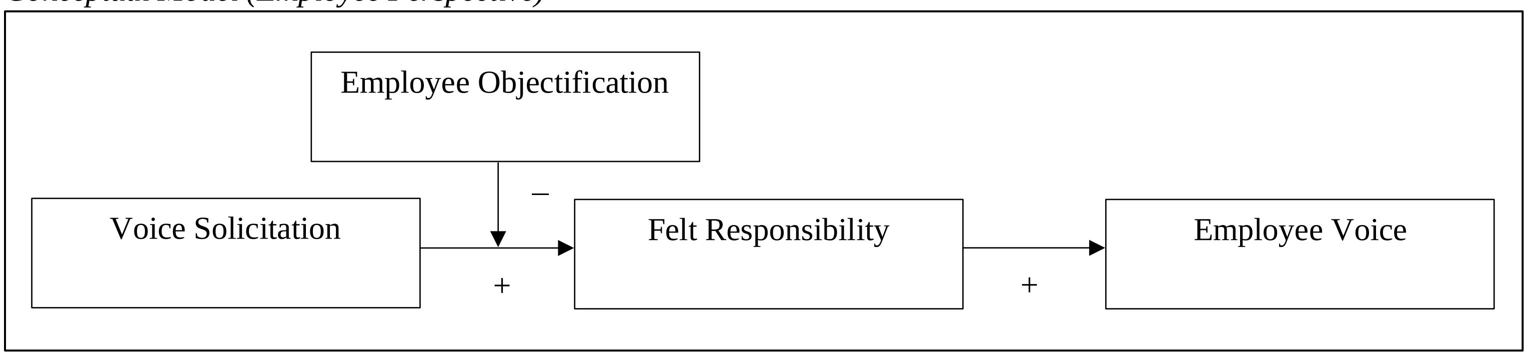


FIGURE 2A

Impact of Thinking about Employees as Resources on Voice Solicitation (Study 1A)

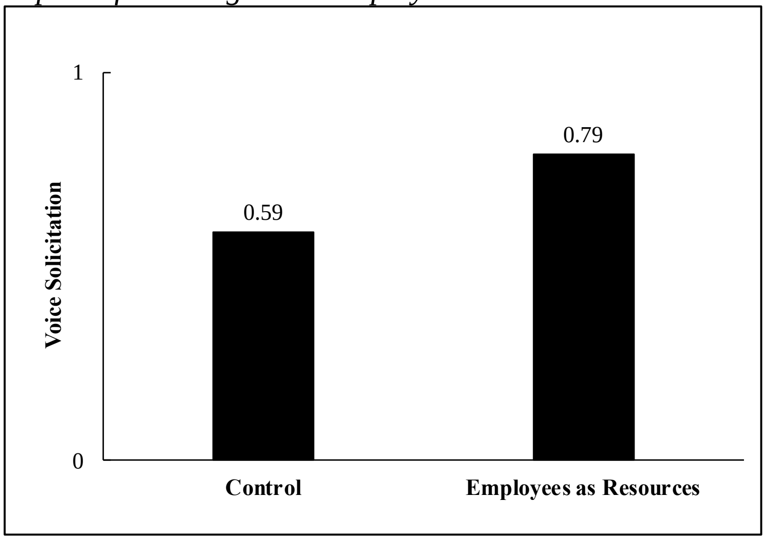


FIGURE 2B

Impact of Thinking about Employees as Resources on Employee Objectification (Study 1B)

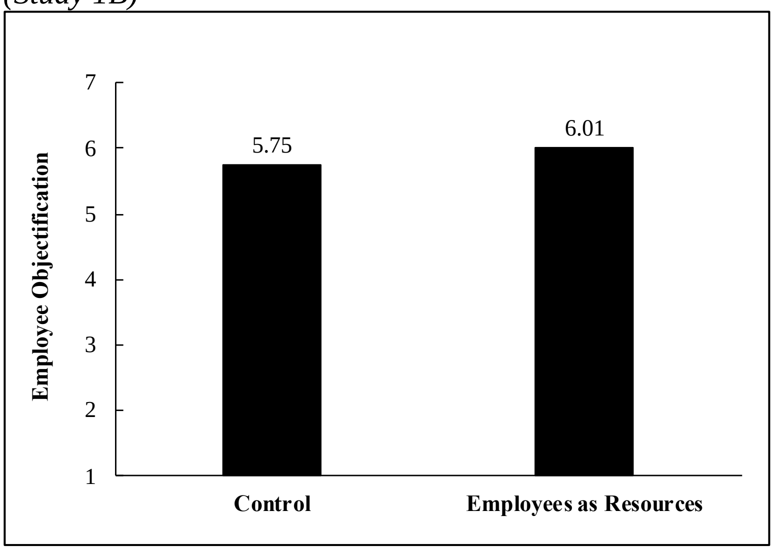


FIGURE 3

Interaction of Voice Solicitation and Employee Objectification on Felt Responsibility to Voice (Study 2)

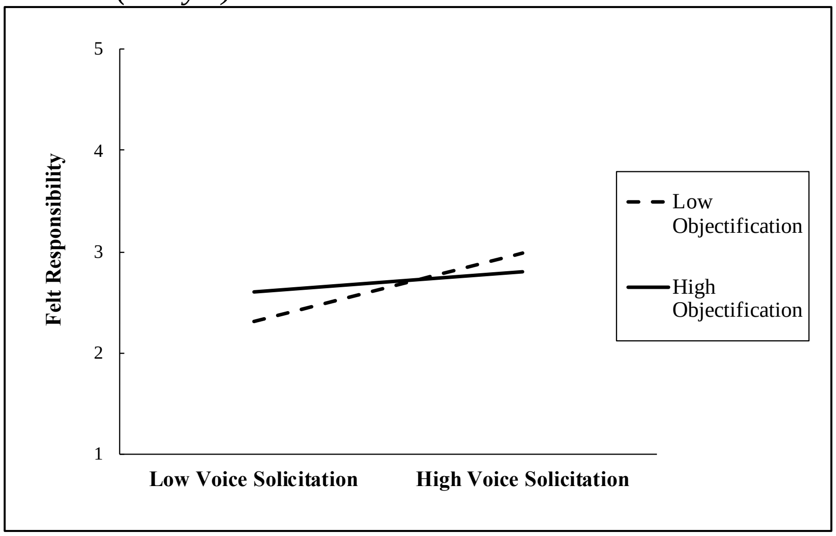


FIGURE 4

Interaction of Voice Solicitation and Employee Objectification on Felt Responsibility to Voice (Study 3)

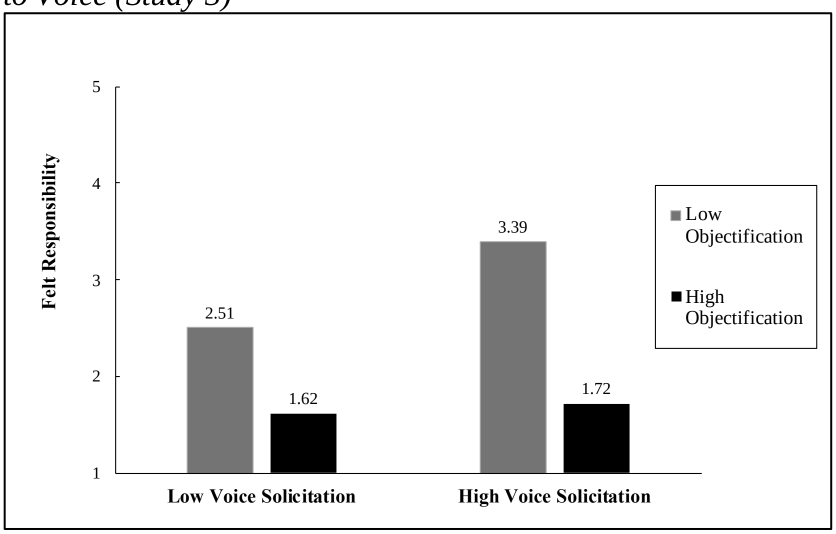
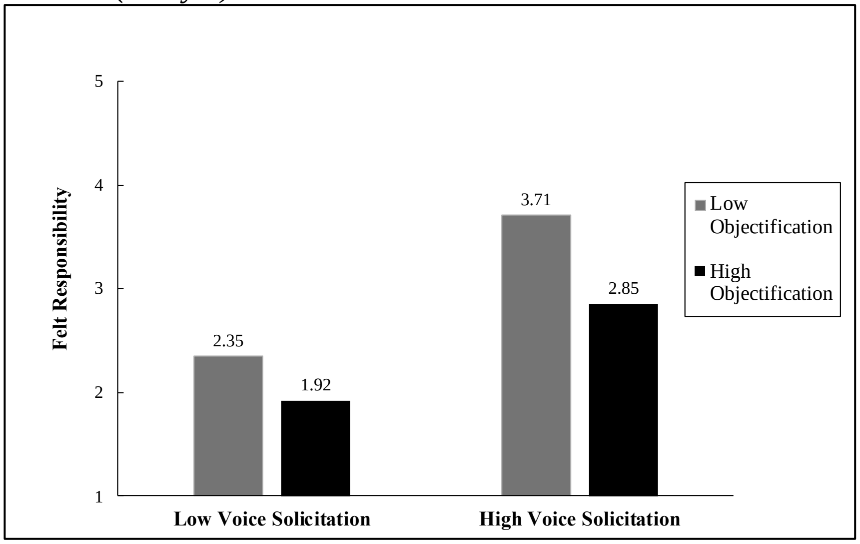


FIGURE 5

Interaction of Voice Solicitation and Employee Objectification on Felt Responsibility to Voice (Study 4)



References

Axelrod, R. (1984). The Robustness of Reciprocity. *AXELROD, R. The Evolution of Cooperation. Nova York: Basic Books*, 169-191.

Baldissarri, C., & Andrighetto, L. (2021). Being treated as an instrument: Consequences of instrumental treatment and self-objectification on task engagement and performance. *Human Performance*, *34*(2), 85-106.

Baldissarri, C., Andrighetto, L., & Volpato, C. (2014). When work does not ennoble man: Psychological consequences of working objectification. *TPM: Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology*, *21*(3), 327-339.

Baldissarri, C., Andrighetto, L., & Volpato, C. (2022). The longstanding view of workers as objects: Antecedents and consequences of working objectification. *European Review of Social Psychology*, *33*(1), 81-130.

Bassi, L., & McMurrer, D. (2007). Maximizing your return on people. *Harvard Business Review*, *85*(3), 115-125.

Batson, C. D., Early, S., & Salvarani, G. (1997). Perspective taking: Imagining how another feels versus imaging how you would feel. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 23*(7), 751-758.

Belmi, P., & Pfeffer, J. (2015). How "organization" can weaken the norm of reciprocity: The effects of attributions for favors and a calculative mindset. *Academy of Management Discoveries*, *1*(1), 36-57.

Belmi, P., & Pfeffer, J. (2018). The effect of economic consequences on social judgment and choice: Reward interdependence and the preference for sociability versus competence. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 39*(8), 990-1007.

Belmi, P., & Schroeder, J. (2021). Human "resources"? Objectification at work. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 120*(2), 384-417.

Bowen, D. E., & Ostroff, C. (2004). Understanding HRM–firm performance linkages: The role of the "strength" of the HRM system. *Academy of Management Review, 29*(2), 203-221.

Bowie, N. E. (2002). A Kantian approach to business ethics. *Ethical Issues in Business: A philosophical Approach*, *62*, 62.

Burris, V. (1988). Reification: a Marxist perspective. *California Sociologist*, *10*(1), 22-43.

Carnevale, J. B., Huang, L., Uhl-Bien, M., & Harris, S. (2020). Feeling obligated yet hesitant to speak up: Investigating the curvilinear relationship between LMX and employee promotive voice. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *93*(3), 505-529.

Carver, C. S. (2006). Approach, avoidance, and the self-regulation of affect and action. *Motivation and Emotion, 30,* 105-110.

Carver, C. S., & White, T. L. (1994). Behavioral inhibition, behavioral activation, and affective responses to impending reward and punishment: the BIS/BAS scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *67*(2), 319-333.

Choi, B. K., Moon, H. K., & Chun, J. U. (2015). Impression management motive and voice: Moderating effects of self-monitoring, self-efficacy, and voice instrumentality. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *18*(3), 225-235.

Collett, J. L., & Avelis, J. (2011). Building a life together: Reciprocal and negotiated exchange in fragile families. In *Advances in Group Processes* (Vol. 28, pp. 227-254). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Corr, P. J. (2013). Approach and avoidance behaviour: Multiple systems and their interactions. *Emotion Review*, *5*(3), 285-290.

Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. M., & Kessler, I. (2002). Exploring reciprocity through the lens of the psychological contract: Employee and employer perspectives. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *11*(1), 69-86.

Crone, L., Brunel, L., & Auzoult, L. (2021). Validation of a perception of objectification in the workplace short scale (POWS). *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 651071.

Curry, R. S. (2020, February 26). *Employees are Your Greatest Asset!* The Boca Raton Tribune. https://www.bocaratontribune.com/bocaratonnews/2020/02/employees-greatest-asset/

Dai, Y., Jiang, T., Gaer, W., & Poon, K. T. (2023). Workplace objectification leads to self-harm: the mediating effect of depressive moods. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 01461672231213898.

Detert, J. R., & Treviño, L. K. (2010). Speaking up to higher-ups: How supervisors and skip-level leaders influence employee voice. *Organization Science*, *21*(1), 249-270.

Detert, J. R., Burris, E. R., Harrison, D. A., & Martin, S. R. (2013). Voice flows to and around leaders: Understanding when units are helped or hurt by employee voice. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *58*(4), 624-668.

Diekmann, A., & Voss, T. (2003). *Social Norms and Reciprocity*. Universität Leipzig, Institut für Soziologie.

Donne, J. (1624). *Devotions upon emergent occasions and several steps in my sickness: Meditation XVII.*

Dutton, J. E., Ashford, S. J., O'neill, R. M., Hayes, E., & Wierba, E. E. (1997). Reading the wind: How middle managers assess the context for selling issues to top managers. *Strategic Management Journal*, *18*(5), 407-423.

Eden, D. (2017). Field experiments in organizations. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *4*(1), 91-122.

Edmondson, A. C., Kramer, R. M., & Cook, K. S. (2004). Psychological safety, trust, and learning in organizations: A group-level lens. *Trust and Distrust in Organizations: Dilemmas and Approaches*, *12*(2004), 239-272.

Fast, N. J., Burris, E. R., & Bartel, C. A. (2014). Managing to stay in the dark: Managerial self-efficacy, ego defensiveness, and the aversion to employee voice. *Academy of Management Journal, 57*(4), 1013-1034.

Fehr, E., & Schurtenberger, I. (2018). Normative foundations of human cooperation. *Nature Human Behaviour, 2*(7), 458-468.

Fey, C. (2008). Overcoming a Leader's Greatest Challenge: Involving Employees in Firms in Russia. *Organizational Dynamics*, *37*(3), 254-265.

Forbes Coaches Council. (2023, November 8) 20 Ways to Future-Proof A Company's Most Valuable Asset: Its People. *Forbes.* https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2023/11/08/20-ways-to-future-proof-a-companys-most-valuable-asset-its-people/

Galinsky, A. D., Magee, J. C., Inesi, M. E., & Gruenfeld, D. H. (2006). Power and perspectives not taken. *Psychological Science, 17*(12), 1068-1074.

Godlewski, M. (2024, March 18). Boeing workers reluctant to speak up, FAA panel tells Senate. *Flying Magazine*. https://www.flyingmag.com/boeing-workers-reluctant-to-speak-up-faa-panel-tells-senate/

Grant, A. M. (2013). Rocking the boat but keeping it steady: The role of emotion regulation in employee voice. *Academy of Management Journal, 56*(6), 1703-1723.

Grant, A. M., & Wall, T. D. (2009). The neglected science and art of quasi-experimentation: Why-to, when-to, and how-to advice for organizational researchers. *Organizational Research Methods*, *12*(4), 653-686.

Grant, D., & Shields, J. (2002). In search of the subject: Researching employee reactions to human resource management. *The Journal of Industrial Relations*, *44*(3), 313-334.

Green, R. M. (2001). What does it mean to use someone as" a means only": rereading Kant. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, *11*(3), 247-261.

Gruenfeld, D. H., Inesi, M. E., Magee, J. C., & Galinsky, A. D. (2008). Power and the objectification of social targets. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *95*(1), 111-127.

Hahn, T., Pinkse, J., Preuss, L., & Figge, F. (2015). Tensions in corporate sustainability: Towards an integrative framework. *Journal of business ethics, 127*, 297-316.

Harding, N., Lee, H., & Ford, J. (2014). Who is 'the middle manager'?. *Human Relations*, *67*(10), 1213-1237.

Hobson, K. (2019, December 12). *Five Reasons Employees Are Your Company's No. 1 Asset.* Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinessdevelopmentcouncil/2019/12/12/five-reasons-employees-are-your-companys-no-1-asset/?sh=8e4e1a125636

Honneth, A. (2001). Recognition or redistribution?. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *18*(2-3), 43-55.

Honneth, A. (2008). *Reification: A new look at an old idea*. Oxford University Press.

Horibe, F. (1999). *Managing knowledge workers: New skills and attitudes to unlock the intellectual capital in your organization.* John Wiley & Sons.

Hussain, I., Tangirala, S., & Sherf, E. N. (2023). Signaling legitimacy: Why mixed-gender coalitions outperform single-gender coalitions in advocating for gender equity. *Academy of Management Journal*, *66*(4), 1233-1262.

Isaakyan, S., Sherf, E. N., Tangirala, S., & Guenter, H. (2021). Keeping it between us: Managerial endorsement of public versus private voice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *106*(7), 1049-1066.

Keltner, D., Gruenfeld, D. H., & Anderson, C. (2003). Power, approach, and inhibition. *Psychological Review*, *110*(2), 265.

Laaser, K., & Bolton, S. (2017). Ethics of care and co-worker relationships in UK banks. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, *32*(3), 213-227.

LaCroix*, J. M., & Pratto*, F. (2015). Instrumentality and the denial of personhood: The social psychology of objectifying others. *Revue Internationale de Psychologie Sociale*, *28*(1), 183-211.

Lam, C. F., & Mayer, D. M. (2014). When do employees speak up for their customers? A model of voice in a customer service context. *Personnel Psychology*, *67*(3), 637-666.

Li, A. N., & Tangirala, S. (2021). How voice emerges and develops in newly formed supervisor–employee dyads. *Academy of Management Journal*, *64*(2), 614-642.

Li, A. N., Liao, H., Tangirala, S., & Firth, B. M. (2017). The content of the message matters: The differential effects of promotive and prohibitive team voice on team productivity and safety performance gains. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *102*(8), 1259-1270.

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

Liberman, N., & Trope, Y. (1998). The role of feasibility and desirability considerations in near and distant future decisions: A test of temporal construal theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*(1), 5-18.

Lukács, G. (1971). *History and Class Consciousness.* Cambridge: The Merlin Press Ltd.

Mackenzie, S. B., Podsakoff, P. M., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2011). Challenge-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors and organizational effectiveness: Do challenge-oriented behaviors really have an impact on the organization's bottom line?. *Personnel Psychology*, *64*(3), 559-592.

Margolis, J. D., & Walsh, J. P. (2003). Misery loves companies: Rethinking social initiatives by business. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *48*(2), 268-305.

Maynes, T. D., & Podsakoff, P. M. (2014). Speaking more broadly: an examination of the nature, antecedents, and consequences of an expanded set of employee voice behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *99*(1), 87-112.

Milliken, F. J., Morrison, E. W., & Hewlin, P. F. (2003). An exploratory study of employee silence: Issues that employees don't communicate upward and why. *Journal of Management Studies*, *40*(6), 1453-1476.

Momeni, N. (2009). The relation between managers' emotional intelligence and the organizational climate they create. *Public Personnel Management, 38*(2), 35-48.

Moore, P., & Robinson, A. (2016). The quantified self: What counts in the neoliberal workplace. *New Media & Society*, *18*(11), 2774-2792.

Morrison, E. W. (2011). Employee voice behavior: Integration and directions for future research. *Academy of Management Annals*, *5*(1), 373-412.

Morrison, E. W. (2014). Employee voice and silence. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *1*(1), 173-197.

Morrison, E. W., & Milliken, F. J. (2000). Organizational silence: A barrier to change and development in a pluralistic world. *Academy of Management Review*, *25*(4), 706-725.

Morrison, E. W., & Phelps, C. C. (1999). Taking charge at work: Extrarole efforts to initiate workplace change. *Academy of Management Journal*, *42*(4), 403-419.

Muthén, B., & Muthén, L. (2017). Mplus. In *Handbook of Item Response Theory* (pp. 507-518). Chapman and Hall/CRC.

Orehek, E., & Weaverling, C. G. (2017). On the nature of objectification: Implications of considering people as means to goals. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 12*(5), 719-730.

Parke, M. R., Tangirala, S., Sanaria, A., & Ekkirala, S. (2022). How strategic silence enables employee voice to be valued and rewarded. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *173*, 104187.

Parker, S. K., Bindl, U. K., & Strauss, K. (2010). Making things happen: A model of proactive motivation. *Journal of Management, 36*(4), 827-856.

Patton, J. L. (2021, February 1). Recognizing Your Company's Most Important Asset. *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2021/02/01/recognizing-your-companys-most-important-asset/?sh=1b3eb742593b

Perugini, M., Gallucci, M., Presaghi, F., & Ercolani, A. P. (2003). The personal norm of reciprocity. *European Journal of Personality*, *17*(4), 251-283.

Rouen, E. (2019) The Problem with Accounting for Employees as Costs Instead of Assets. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2019/10/the-problem-with-accounting-for-employees-as-costs-instead-of-assets

Sherf, E. N., Croitoru, N., & McElroy, T. (2024). A reinforcement sensitivity theory view of seeking behaviors at work: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology, 77*(2), 847-890.

Sherf, E. N., Tangirala, S., & Venkataramani, V. (2019). Why managers do not seek voice from employees: The importance of managers' personal control and long-term orientation. *Organization Science, 30*(3), 447-466.

Sherf, E. N., Tangirala, S., & Weber, K. C. (2017). It is not my place! Psychological standing and men's voice and participation in gender-parity initiatives. *Organization Science*, *28*(2), 193-210.
Sherf, E. N., Venkataramani, V., & Gajendran, R. S. (2019). Too busy to be fair? The effect of workload and rewards on managers' justice rule adherence. *Academy of Management Journal*, *62*(2), 469-502.
Spector, P. E. (1981). *Research designs* (No. 23). Sage.
Spencer, M. K. (2018). Perceiving the image of God in the whole human person. *The Saint Anselm Journal*, *13*(2), 1-18.
Tangirala, S., & Ramanujam, R. (2012). Ask and you shall hear (but not always): Examining the relationship between manager consultation and employee voice. *Personnel Psychology*, *65*(2), 251-282.
Tangirala, S., Kamdar, D., Venkataramani, V., & Parke, M. R. (2013). Doing right versus getting ahead: The effects of duty and achievement orientations on employees' voice. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *98*(6), 1040-1050.
Ulrich, D. (1998). A new mandate for human resources. *Harvard Business Review*, *76*(1998).
Valtorta, R. R., & Monaci, M. G. (2023). When workers feel like objects: A field study on self-objectification and affective organizational commitment. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, *19*(1), 15-26.
Vveinhardt, J. (2022). The dilemma of postmodern business ethics: Employee reification in a perspective of preserving human dignity. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 813255.
Wee, E. X. M., Derfler-Rozin, R., & Carson Marr, J. (2023). Jolted: How task-based jolts disrupt status conferral by impacting higher and lower status individuals' generosity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *108*(5), 750–772.
Wood, A. (1998). Humanity as end in itself. *Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: Critical Essays*, 165-188.
Yang, J., Zhang, Z. X., & Tsui, A. S. (2010). Middle manager leadership and frontline employee performance: Bypass, cascading, and moderating effects. *Journal of Management Studies*, *47*(4), 654-678.