

## WHEN DOES VOICE LEAD TO EXIT? IT DEPENDS ON LEADERSHIP

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**We examine the unit-level relationship between employee voice and exit with multi-source data collected over two time periods in 136 restaurants. We find that three managerial characteristics that signal the ability and willingness to engage in change—management team change orientation, manager participation in decision making, and manager access to organizational resources—moderate the unit-level relationship between voice and exit: Employee voice is positively related to turnover when each of these factors is low and negatively related to turnover when each is high. Implications for research on voice, leadership, and turnover are discussed.**

When employees experience problems or observe opportunities for improvement at work, do they engage in improvement-oriented voice—that is, speak up in ways that challenge the status quo to someone with the perceived power to act (Detert & Burris, 2007)? Or do they exit their organization in response to these suboptimal situations? Questions such as these about employee *voice* and *exit* have been of interest to organizational scholars at least since Hirschman (1970), in his exit-loyalty-voice (ELV) framework, laid the groundwork for examination of these responses to dissatisfaction with some aspect of an organization's functioning or product line. In the subsequent decades, scholars have attempted to understand why employees speak up or exit by treating these behaviors as discrete, mutually exclusive choices that each individual employee makes because of his or her dissatisfaction (Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainous, 1988; Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982). Because voice can lead to examination of underlying causes and cures of employee dissatisfaction, in contrast to exit or silent loyalty, it is seemingly the response most likely to contribute directly to organizational learning (Withey & Cooper, 1989). It is therefore not surprising that scholars and practitioners alike have become increasingly focused on understanding the antecedents and outcomes of discretionary, improvement-oriented input by employees (Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison, 2011; Van

Dyne & LePine, 1998). Simultaneously, understanding of the dynamics underlying employee turnover (i.e., exit) continues to develop on the basis of several decades of focused theory and research (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

As noted first by Barry (1974), by suggesting that voice and exit are directly inversely related, Hirschman may have misspecified the model by combining into one what is actually two distinct choices for employees: (1) choosing voice or silence and, (2) choosing to stay or exit their organization. Taking Barry's arguments seriously would imply that, in line with Hirschman's arguments, employees may sometimes speak up and remain in their organization irrespective of how much or how quickly things change. Or, contrary to Hirschman's model, employees may speak up and subsequently exit the organization because of what happens (or fails to) in response to voice. Yet these possibilities remain largely unexplored in organizational research (Burris, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008; Morrison, 2011), despite the costliness of turnover for organizations. Thus, we examine the relationship between voice and exit to begin to understand the conditions under which employee voice leads to higher or lower rates of exit.

We further depart from prior research in the Hirschman tradition, and some of the logic on which it rests, by examining the relationship be-

tween voice and exit at the unit, rather than individual, level. We do so for two reasons. First, the very nature of voice as a *prosocial* behavior in the organizational literature (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006) suggests that the improvements stemming from the input of any one employee should have spillovers that affect a broader work environment. That is, voice is a "discretionary expression of change-oriented comments" intended to "to benefit others, such as the organization" (Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003: 1370–1371; see Detert and Burris [2007] and Morrison and Milliken [2000] for similar definitions). To be *prosocial*, and thus meet organizational scholars' definition of voice, an employee's input about needed improvements does not primarily benefit just the one individual who speaks up, but instead has the possibility of bettering the situation for a broader set of employees around the speaker (Grant & Mayer, 2009). Despite the fact that managers form in-groups and out-groups among their subordinates (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997) and primarily attend to suggestions made by only those in their in-group (Burris, Rodgers, Mannix, Hendron, & Oldroyd, 2009), the changes that do or do not occur in a unit as a result of voice are not readily allocated only to favored members. Organizational scholars have long recognized this collective aspect of voice in noting its potential positive outcomes for a unit (versus only individuals who spoke up); these outcomes include learning (Edmondson, 2003), better error detection (Argyris & Schön, 1978), innovation (Nemeth, 1997), and change effectiveness (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Likewise, many or all of a unit's employees—not just those who spoke up—should continue to experience dissatisfaction and associated negative outcomes when voice is ignored or disregarded. Thus, both the nature of employee voice behavior through its focus on collective improvement, and decades of organizational theory and research indicating that employee attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes in a defined unit are socially influenced and interdependent (e.g., Ibarra & Andrews, 1993; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), suggest the importance of moving beyond the implied assumption in Hirschman's model that each employee's satisfaction, voice, and relationship status with an organization can be considered independently and devoid of the larger social context.

Second, voice in itself does not automatically make things better or worse for those who speak up or anyone else. Instead, the potential value of voice

rests on what someone with the power to take action—which usually means "management"—does with the suggestions made. The next steps taken by a manager can result in improvement for many in a unit, in no meaningful change at all, or in a situation actually getting worse in employees' minds. When managers have the ability and motivation to take action based on the *prosocial* suggestions of their employees, voice should improve the morale and decrease the rate of exit of employees in a unit or an organization, including both those who spoke up and the many others who did not. Likewise, employees of all types should collectively feel that employees, as a group, have some control over outcomes (Barry & Shapiro, 2000; Greenberg, 2000), be more satisfied with outcomes (Shapiro, 1993), and thus be more likely to remain with their organization because managers consider employees' opinions and make subsequent changes. Even if changes are not always made as a result of their own or others' input, employees should be more likely to choose to stay and less likely to be fired in environments where management demonstrates a general responsiveness to employee input (Tyler, 1987).

But not all managers are able and motivated to take action on the suggestions made by their employees. The level of responsiveness and subsequent action taken by management to address issues raised by employees varies (Detert & Burris, 2007), making the prospect of voice directly influencing employee turnover contingent rather than certain. When managers are not able or motivated to address *prosocial*, improvement-oriented issues raised, the broader set of employees, in addition to the speaker(s), continues to experience the conditions that prompted voice by some. This, in turn, should lead more members of that unit to conclude that it is futile to speak up (Detert & Trevino, 2010; Morrison & Milliken, 2000), to lose faith that managers will make necessary improvements (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003), and, thus, to leave the firm. To regain a sense of perceived control and equity, employees who feel impotent in the face of nonresponsive, nonimproving conditions may begin to give less of themselves to their organization, perform less well (Blader & Tyler, 2009), or even engage in deviant behaviors (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). As a result, managers may take steps to remove employees who passively or actively undermine the attainment of the goals of the managers' units (Giocalone & Greenberg, 1997; Litsky, Edlestone, & Kidder, 2006; Parilla, Hollinger, & Clark, 1988). Thus, voice may increase the level of subse-

quent turnover in a unit if managers are not responsive.

In this article we therefore examine the unit-level relationship between voice and exit among groups of employees who share a work environment and argue that this relationship is contingent on managerial responsiveness to voice. More specifically, we argue that the relationship between unit-level voice and exit depends on three characteristics of managerial responsiveness: whether the managers who receive it (the targets of voice) have access to organizational resources to implement change; whether they are able to participate actively in organizational decision making; and the change orientation of the management team. These proposed moderators reflect whether management is able and motivated to respond to employee suggestions for improvement in ways that affect subsequent turnover.

In what follows, we begin by explaining in detail why the proposed unit-level relationship between employee voice and employee turnover is contingent on the responsiveness of managers. Then, before testing the three proposed moderating hypotheses, we directly examine the premise that employees in general, not just speakers or favored employees, share improvements stemming from managerial responsiveness to voice. We do so through an analysis of 3,388 open-ended suggestions for change from employees of a national restaurant chain wherein coders considered whether managerial responsiveness to a suggestion would benefit primarily the individual who provided the input or, as argued here, multiple employees in the same unit. Finally, we test our hypotheses using multisource, longitudinal perceptual and objective data from 5,200 employees, 372 managers, and 136 general managers in the same organization.

Our work makes three primary contributions. First, we demonstrate the clear value of attending theoretically and empirically to the inherently prosocial, collective nature of voice and its outcomes in work settings. We extend Hirschman's (1972) framework by focusing on the social context in which employee voice takes place, arguing that the benefits of successfully addressing employee voice extend beyond the focal individual speaking up; voice can affect the rate of turnover for others in the individual's unit whose performance or well-being are likewise affected by the issues raised. Second, our study extends scholars' understanding of the complex relationship between voice and exit by showing how voice can increase or decrease

employee turnover depending on the degree to which managers display characteristics reflecting the motivation and ability to respond. We also demonstrate the importance to theory and practice of considering management behaviors not only as antecedents to voice behavior (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 1999) but also as moderators of its effects. Third, our study contributes to the unit-level turnover literature by considering how and why improvement-oriented voice, and managerial responsiveness to it, help explain this critical organizational outcome.

### VOICE, MANAGERIAL RESPONSIVENESS, AND EXIT: THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Many voice scholars have argued that voice is good for work units and organizations (e.g., Morrison, 2011). High levels of voice can be indicative of a learning environment in which employees and managers actively engage in activities to continuously reduce errors, improve organizational routines, and produce innovations (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Edmondson, 2003; Moscovici & Nemeth, 1974). Employees in strong learning environments should be more likely to stay (i.e., turnover should be lower) because their situation likely improves as a result of the implementation of improvement-oriented ideas and because they likely feel invigorated by membership in an innovative environment in which their input is regularly considered (Shapiro, 1993). Voice scholars have also acknowledged, though, that not all such "high-voice" environments are likely to experience positive outcomes. Continued managerial inability or unwillingness to respond effectively to voice can result in widely shared futility perceptions among employees (Detert & Trevino, 2010; Dutton & Ashford, 1993) and a broad climate in which employees feel impotent, not valued, and no longer willing to put forth high levels of effort. In these environments, employees should be more likely to voluntarily remove themselves from the organization or be forced to exit as a consequence of their deteriorated attitude and work performance.

We argue that the responsiveness of unit managers will play an important role in determining when voice will lead to less or more exit in a unit. After all, employees speak up because they cannot fix problems or pursue opportunities by themselves, needing instead someone with more formal power to address the issues they have identified (Detert & Burris, 2007). Managerial responsiveness

can be captured by two dimensions. First, the ability to respond to voice may enable or impede managers (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Kotter, 1996). Such ability may stem from access to organizational resources necessary to investigate, implement, and institutionalize organizational changes (Damanpour, 1991; Kraatz & Zajac, 2001; Singh, 1986). Without access to resources, managers will be less able to experiment with changes and thus be limited to a focus on efficient execution of current policies and practices (March, 1991). And, because most managers are not in a position to unilaterally decide on changes, responsiveness to voice from below also likely hinges on a manager's influence on decisions made by more senior leaders (Detert & Trevino, 2010; Glauser, 1984). Second, managers' overall motivation or orientation toward change may affect how they respond to voice (Beer, 2009). This managerial orientation involves a proactive identification of problems and opportunities and a proclivity to take action to address what has been surfaced (Detert & Burris, 2007; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Saunders, Sheppard, Knight, & Roth, 1992).

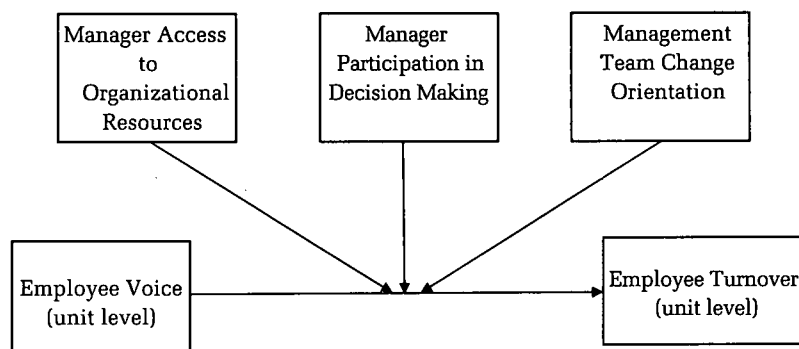
We examine below three specific factors that signal managers' ability and motivation to respond to voice and therefore affect the likelihood of subsequent turnover in a unit. We begin by examining managers' perceived access to the organizational resources needed to respond to employee input as a factor influencing the unit-level voice-exit relationship. Next, we examine managers' level of participation in higher-level decision making as a reflection of their ability to enact change in their own units. Finally, we examine the change orientation of the management team that must address employee voice. Figure 1 summarizes our theoretical model.

### Unit Manager Access to Organizational Resources

Organizational resources, such as those used for training and development programs, marketing, or new process implementation, are necessary for improvement and adaptation in organizations (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Kraatz & Zajac, 2001; Nohria & Gulati, 1996). These resources, however, are often unequally distributed throughout an organization (Pfeffer, 1981), and accessing them is at least partially a function of manager proactivity and skill (Graen, Cashman, Ginsburgh, & Schiemann, 1977; Molm, 1990). Managers who are able to acquire resources will be more capable of making changes (Levinthal & March, 1993; March, 1991) because they will have the necessary capital, whether human or financial, to devote to improvement activities (Kraatz & Zajac, 2001). Without the slack created by additional resources, managers are less able to experiment with changes and are confined to a focus on efficient execution of current policies and practices (March, 1991).

The extent to which managers garner access to resources should affect the voice-exit relationship because resources give managers the ability to act on or at least seriously consider employees' input. When a unit manager can access resources from elsewhere in her or his organization, the support that the manager gets in the form of these resources trickles down to lower-level employees (Erdogan & Enders, 2007), who are thus likely to view both their manager and the organization she/he embodies as supportive and responsive (Eisenberger et al., 2010). For example, if employees speak up about an issue that is detrimental to their work unit (such as insufficiently trained new hires performing

**FIGURE 1**  
**Theoretical Model**



poorly), managers need resources to invest in more or better training programs and to keep their units appropriately staffed during the training. When a unit's manager can obtain the necessary resources and properly train new hires, others in the unit who were negatively affected by the performance of new hires—not just the one or few who spoke up—should feel better about the unit. Specifically, because the manager was able to obtain resources to respond to voice, employees should feel that the organization's agents care about their well-being and experience a heightened sense of organizational support (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). The decision to stay in the organization is one way employees who benefit from managerial responsiveness can demonstrate reciprocity for organizational support (Erdogan & Enders, 2007; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Conversely, where managers lack access to resources needed to address upward input, employees will grow increasingly frustrated by the lack of responsiveness and feel that an organization is less supportive (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). Because managers are seen as embodiments of an organization's values (Eisenberger et al., 2010), managerial inability to respond to employees' voice because of lack of resources is likely to be experienced by employees as organizational disinterest in them and their ideas for improvement (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). When employees reach the conclusion that they are not being supported by their organization, they are more likely to quit (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003). Or they may withdraw from the organization in more indirect ways (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). As is well known from equity theory, when employees perceive an imbalance between what they give and what they receive, they often attempt to restore equity by engaging in counterproductive work behaviors, being absent, or underperforming (Adams, 1965). In this way, employees' legitimate frustration about work conditions and lack of satisfying managerial response can lead to inappropriate responses that ultimately get employees fired (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997; Litsky et al., 2006; Parilla et al., 1988). For example, employees who do not get promised raises or necessary support through additional hiring or training because a manager lacks access to resources may end up being terminated for the shirking, stealing, or other unacceptable behavior that they resort to.

Taken together, these arguments suggest that when employees speak up and managers do not

have access to resources to address their ideas and concerns, employees will develop attitudes and engage in behaviors that lead to increased voluntary and involuntary exit.

*Hypothesis 1. A unit manager's access to organizational resources moderates the unit-level relationship between employee voice and exit: The relationship between voice and exit is negative when the manager's access to organizational resources is high and positive when the manager's access to organizational resources is low.*

### Unit Manager Participation in Decision Making

The structure of most organizations of even modest size is such that most managers are subordinate to other managers—that is, most bosses also have bosses. Thus, most middle managers serve as “linking pins” between organizational levels, working to synchronize operating activities at one level with broader strategic imperatives at higher levels (Likert, 1967). From a top-down perspective, this linking role may be seen as managers at one level implementing the decisions made at higher levels. However, middle- and lower-level managers often have their fingers on the pulse of their organization in such a way that effective linking also means they participate in decision making by helping higher-level leaders understand what is needed to successfully implement strategic directives and which directives do not fit the reality faced by lower-level employees (Dutton & Jackson, 1987; Nonaka, 1988).

Managers who influence the decision-making process of senior-level managers have the ability to advocate for issues that employees raise. Having input from their ranks considered in higher-level decision making should increase employees' sense of procedural justice (Avery & Quiñones, 2002; Thibaut & Walker, 1975) because it reaffirms that their proximal manager and those higher in their organization value employees and their ideas (Lind & Tyler, 1988). For example, if some employees speak up with ideas for improving customer service routines that repeatedly lead to customer complaints, participation in higher-level decision making increases the likelihood that a local manager can make the changes needed to address employees' input. Because employees discuss among themselves how their managers respond to their input and recognize that they are collectively affected by any changes that result (Leung & Li, 1990; Nau-

mann & Bennett, 2000), they often develop a shared sense of procedural justice (Colquitt, Noe, & Jackson, 2002). Thus, when a manager is able to successfully advocate for rank-and-file ideas for improvement to higher-level leaders, a greater number of employees within the manager's unit should feel that decisions made in their work environment are just and should thus be more likely to stay in the organization (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Simons & Roberson, 2003).

In contrast, if managers have limited ability to make changes in their own units because they are unable to influence higher-level decision making, employees will be less likely to feel that the organization considers problems and ideas of people at their level (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). In this case, employees will view the organization as less fair and will be more likely to exit (Masterson et al., 2000). For example, if their manager is unable to influence higher-level leaders to make improvements to a particular food preparation process that is cumbersome, wasteful, and potentially dangerous, a restaurant's employees are more likely to feel disgruntled and disappointed and to subsequently leave the organization. When managers cannot participate in and influence decision making, some employees (whether they spoke up about an issue or not) may also respond to the perceived unfairness of their situation, and the feelings this evokes, by taking action directly against the organization (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). Counterproductive work behaviors (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001), underperformance (Bagozzi, 2003), and absenteeism (Hausknecht, Hiller, & Vance, 2008) are all potential responses to the frustration and negative emotions employees experience when they feel they are being treated unfairly or they are unable to control their own environment. When employees engage in these types of behaviors, they are more likely to get fired (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997; Litsky et al., 2006; Parilla et al., 1988). Therefore, when employees speak up to the manager of a unit who does not participate in higher-level decision making, employees in that unit will collectively be more likely to leave the organization either voluntarily or involuntarily.

*Hypothesis 2. A unit manager's participation in decision making moderates the unit-level relationship between employee voice and exit: The relationship between voice and exit is negative when the manager's participation in decision making is high and positive when the*

*manager's participation in decision making is low.*

### Management Team Change Orientation

Despite popular deification of single leaders, strategic interpretation and decisions to make improvements are usually not made exclusively by just one person (Burgelman & Sayles, 1986; Chandler, 1962; Drucker, 1974; Mintzberg, 1973). Instead, management teams, often comprised of leaders and their direct reports, share collective responsibility for interpreting strategic issues and creating change. Specifically, management teams will be effective at creating change and signaling to employees that they are willing to make changes to the extent that members work well together to spot issues, make improvement plans, and commit collectively to implementing decisions (Chandler, 1962; Hackman, 1987; March & Simon, 1958; Yukl, 2002).

When employees speak up and a management team is more change oriented, employees will view their managers as willing to experiment and as not overly committed to the status quo (Hambrick, Geletkanycz, & Fredrickson, 1993; Kanter, 1983). Given that one of the roles of those in charge is to direct and control change in an organization (Mintzberg, 1973) and that such an orientation fits most people's "implicit leader theory" (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Schyns & Meindl, 2005), employees likely expect "good" managers to be motivated to identify and work together to address opportunities to improve their organization (Porter & Steers, 1973). When this occurs, employees will feel that their organization (through its management team) has met its obligations to respond to their ideas for improvement (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). For example, if a group of workers is having trouble serving customers quickly enough, the management team comprised of shift supervisors and the general manager will need to work together in a coordinated fashion to identify the underlying issues, make an improvement plan, and successfully implement it. If management teams can routinely do these things, employees should, as a group, be more likely to feel that managers have fulfilled their obligations to address employees' concerns (Ho, 2005), and thus be more likely to stay.

But not all managers are equally open-minded about or committed to change (Hambrick et al., 1993). When employees speak up and their local management team is less change oriented, em-

employee expectations about good management will be unmet (Mintzberg, 1973; Porter & Steers, 1973). Because local managers are seen as embodiments of their larger organization (Eisenberger et al., 2010; Levinson, 1965), employees will likely also conclude to some extent that the organization as a whole is not responsive to employees' needs or ideas for improvement. Such beliefs can lead to employees' conclusion that their implicit or psychological contract with the organization is being breached (Robinson, 1996; Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993). Employees may respond to this unsatisfactory state by quitting (Rousseau, 1995) or by expressing their frustration and disappointment through organizational deviance (Bordia, Restubog, & Tang, 2008; Kidwell & Bennett, 1993). Counterproductive work behaviors, such as theft or sabotage, often stem from unaddressed dissatisfying work conditions (Robinson & Bennett, 1997) and from employees' perception that the organization has failed to live up to obligations and expectations (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Alternatively, employees may engage in less severe, yet still disruptive, behaviors such as skipping work (Hausknecht et al., 2008) or withholding effort (Kidwell & Bennett, 1993; Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003) in response to a lethargic management response. Regardless of the specific means, most employee responses to their frustration and disappointment are likely to be undesirable from management's perspective and thus increase employees' likelihood of being fired (Giacalone & Greenberg, 1997; Litsky et al., 2006; Parilla et al., 1988). Taken together, the above arguments suggest that employee voice targeted to less change-oriented management teams will lead to a higher incidence of overall exit by those management teams' employees.

*Hypothesis 3. A unit management team's change orientation moderates the unit-level relationship between employee voice and exit: The relationship between voice and exit is negative when management team change orientation is high and positive when management team change orientation is low.*

## METHODS

We collected both qualitative and quantitative data from employees of 136 restaurants in four divisions of a corporation-owned chain located in 21 states throughout the United States. Each restaurant

employs three types of workers: one general manager (GM) per restaurant, restaurant shift supervisors (approximately 2–7 per restaurant), and hourly employees (e.g., cooks and servers; approximately 20–80 per restaurant).

We obtained 3,388 qualitative responses from (58 percent of) the hourly employees who completed our entire survey in the 136 restaurants. The comments reflect written responses to the open-ended question, What is the one thing that would improve this restaurant as a place to work? We coded these employee suggestion data to assess whether, in fact, most employee voice can rightfully be considered prosocial—that is, whether suggestions have the potential for broad benefit rather than just improvement in the speaker's well-being. If employee suggestions have the potential to benefit many employees (and an organization itself) through actions taken by managers, this finding would lend support to the contention that it is appropriate and important to examine the unit-level outcomes of voice.

We followed a rigorous process for coding the open-ended comments to determine whether voice is inherently prosocial—that is, likely to affect multiple employees if leaders take action on the suggestions made. First, we used approximately 10 percent of the open-ended comments to hone a coding scheme that categorized the comments into three categories: (1) "speaker only": comments that, if responded to, would only affect the one employee speaking up; (2) "multiple people": comments that, if responded to, would affect multiple employees in the speaker's work unit; (3) "unclear": comments for which the scope of beneficiaries could not be clearly determined. To be conservative, we also included "split cases," (when an employee provided multiple ideas for improvement, at least one of which could affect multiple employees and at least one other of which would only affect the speaker) in the third ("unclear") category. Next, the first author and a research assistant (not otherwise involved in this research) worked independently to code the remaining 3,028 employee comments. Interrater agreement on the classification of these 3,028 employee improvement suggestions was high, as evidenced by a Cohen's kappa of .92 (Landis & Koch, 1977). In a subsequent discussion, the coders reached agreement on the best classification for each of the small number of comments they had initially coded differently.

The results of this coding overwhelmingly support organizational scholars' definition of voice as a prosocial behavior—that is, as one with the potential to benefit more than just the speaker if acted upon: Approximately 94 percent of employees' comments were coded as affecting the well-being of more than just the speaker, with just 3 percent being coded as affecting only the speaker and the remaining 3 percent being coded as unclear in regard to potential breadth of benefit. Sample comments from each of these categories are shown in Table 1. This result lends support to the notion that an employee's exit can be affected by managerial responsiveness, or lack thereof, to the input provided by coworkers in the same unit as the employee.

To test our three unit-level moderator hypotheses, we used quantitative survey and objective data from the 136 restaurants in our sample. We used four different sources to avoid common method and single source problems. We collected our independent variable (voice) from questionnaires asking the shift supervisors to rate each employee's level of voice. We assessed the moderator variables (unit manager access to organizational resources, unit manager participation in decision making, and local management team change orientation) using survey responses from GMs. Control variables were

collected from a survey given to all employees and from the GM surveys. The survey data come from 5,200 employees, 372 managers, and the 136 restaurant general managers. The average survey response rate per store was 74 percent, with a range of from 24 to 100 percent. Objective turnover data were provided by the corporate HR department.

## Measures

**Unit-level voice.** We measured employees' voice expressed to their supervisors using three items ( $\alpha = .95$ ) rated by their shift supervisors on a frequency scale ranging from 1 ("almost never") to 5 ("almost always"). In most cases, multiple supervisors rated an employee's level of voice (on average, 1.85 shift supervisors rated each employee, with a maximum of 7 raters). We adapted items from Van Dyne and LePine's (1998) prosocial voice scale. The items (prefaced by the words "This employee") were, "develops and makes recommendations concerning the restaurant," "speaks up and encourages others to get involved in issues that affect the restaurant," and "speaks up with ideas for new projects or changes in procedures." We then aggregated the ratings for employee voice to the restaurant level and calculated aggregation statistics to test for significant differences between restaurants. Specif-

TABLE 1  
Qualitative Data Analysis Coding Examples

Code	Example	Percent
Impact broader than input provider	"Not paying your workers that have been here for 3+ years \$7–\$8. Yet new hires sometimes walk through the door making \$8.50 and \$9 and up—so this isn't right. We as a company need to work on paying our old hires more money for their jobs. Let's make a change."	94%
	"Better training for new associates. Our store has recently hired a bunch of new people but without the adequate number of trainers available to train them. The results have been poorly trained and uninformed new employees and less than adequate service."	
	"The place needs to be better organized. There are too many mistakes, the rules aren't followed strictly. We run out of things (such as straws) and people leave without doing their sidework."	
	"We need better service and faster food preparation. There are days where it takes 20 minutes for all our food and drinks to come up. This makes our servers look bad."	
Impact on provider only	"I have been trying for the last 6 months to be cross-trained and the last 3 months to be a trainer and neither has happened. I feel like I am being held back. I would like to be paid more for the work I do."	3%
	"I have worked for the company for 3 years. I make \$7.25 an hour and I do EOD, inventory, and deposits. Why is this? I feel that I am not important to this company and what I do here means squat."	
	"I would like to have flexible hours so I could have the days off that I want."	
	"This place would be most improved as a place to work if I got off on time."	
Unclear or mixed	"There should be two people in the dish room. One to wash and one to put away. I want more hours."	3%
	"I think the guest count should be determined on those using the daily ACE."	
	"I hate server side work! We should have a kickball team. I hate throwing away good food when someone could eat it but we have to throw it away."	
	"Seating charts."	

ically, we computed ICC1, which reveals the extent to which group membership predicts variability in individual level responses, and ICC2, which estimates the reliability of between-group differences in a measure. Aggregation statistics indicated that significant differences existed between restaurants and that the unit-level voice construct was measured reliably ( $ICC1 = 0.11$ ,  $ICC2 = 0.76$ ,  $p < .01$ ) (Bliese, 2000).

**Unit managerial access to organizational resources.** We measured managerial access to organizational resources using six items ( $\alpha = .93$ ). Because the measurement of resources varies considerably across studies (Crook, Ketchen, Combs, & Todd, 2008), which highlights the context specificity of this construct, we developed the items through extensive interviews with senior leaders from multiple levels of the studied organization. These leaders identified the specific resources that they deemed necessary to make improvements and changes affecting the restaurants. For instance, restaurant GMs often need access to resources from higher in the organization for staff training or to successfully make improvements to operating policies or procedures in a specific restaurant. Thus, in conjunction with these senior leaders, we developed items tapping the specific resources that GMs could use to make material changes internal to their restaurants: "The DM provides the necessary support for . . . "training," "marketing," "new process implementation," "growth/development programs," "evaluation and planning," and "communication to crew members." The items were rated by GMs on a scale ranging from 1 ("never") to 5 ("always").

**Unit manager participation in decision making.** We measured managerial participation in decision making using three items ( $\alpha = .91$ ) based on Siegel and Ruh's (1973) five-item measure. The GM of each restaurant rated his/her participation in decision making at the division level (i.e., the management level above him/her). The items were, "I have influence on division managers' (DM) decisions affecting the restaurant"; "I participate in DM decisions about my job"; and "I have influence on DM decisions affecting me and my job." GMs rated these items on a scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

**Management team change orientation.** We developed the items for management team change orientation on the basis of the specific behaviors that the organization's leaders identified as critical to creating change at the restaurant level. Before we

created these items, we scoured the literature for appropriate items tapping improvement-oriented management team behaviors. However, we did not find a suitable measure. Most leadership measures tap specific styles (behaviors) (e.g., relational or task-oriented leadership [Yukl & Nemeroff, 1979]), personality-driven behaviors (e.g., charismatic leadership theories [Conger & Kanungo, 1998]), or broad sets of behavior that encompass but do not directly measure specific behaviors that promote changes (e.g., transformational leadership theories [Bass & Avolio, 1994]). We thus developed a measure to assess specific behaviors that tap a management team's motivation to act upon and follow through with improvement opportunities. We measured local management team's change orientation using two items ( $\alpha = .68$ ) rated by the GM associated with a focal team. The GM is the most appropriate respondent to measure a restaurant management team's change orientation because he or she leads the team and is familiar with the functioning of the entire team. The items were, "The management team (including yourself). . . "spots issues quickly and does something about them" and "makes improvement plans and sticks to them." GMs rated these items on a scale ranging from 1 ("never") to 5 ("always").

**Unit-level turnover.** We measured employee turnover as the rate at the restaurant level for the six months after employee voice ratings were collected. We used a six-month period because we learned from discussions with the restaurant's executive team (e.g., CEO, CFO, VP of operations) that the restaurants operate in quarters and that they believed that if employees spoke up with an idea for improvement, most likely it would take one to two quarters for the issue to be heard, vetted, and addressed to the extent that improvement (or lack of) could be assessed. Second, the average annual turnover rate in this restaurant chain is 180 percent per year, which means that a high percentage of the employees who answered our surveys would no longer be employed after six months (two quarters) had passed. Thus, using a period shorter than six months risked having insufficient time pass to assess the potential impact of managerial responsiveness, but using a longer one would lead to using survey responses (i.e., independent and control variables) from employees who were predominantly no longer employed in the restaurant. Turnover data for each restaurant were captured from the human resource records cleaned (i.e., stripped of identifying personal information) and trans-

ferred to us by the sponsor organization. Turnover was measured as the number of employee exits as a percent of the average number of employees between time 1 (beginning of month 1) and time 2 (end of six months after voice ratings were collected). We used the average number of employees across the six months to account for fluctuations in employee number; this measure is consistent with previous computations of turnover (Price, 1977).

**Control variables.** Recent meta-analyses suggest several antecedents that promote or inhibit turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). To account for these mechanisms, as well as those that might influence the relationship between voice and exit, we used a variety of control variables. We first controlled for several characteristics of each restaurant's employees. We controlled for average employee tenure in each unit, which is one of the strongest demographic predictors of turnover, because longer-tenured employees are less likely to quit in subsequent periods (Griffeth et al., 2000). Given that minority groups in the U.S. are more likely to quit (Hom & Griffeth, 1995), we also controlled for minority racial groups, measured as the percentage of African American and Hispanic employees in each unit.

Second, we controlled for several different employee attitudes—job satisfaction and justice perceptions—as these can influence turnover. Job satisfaction is the best job attitude predictor of turnover; when employees are more satisfied, they are less likely to leave or engage in actions that lead to involuntary termination (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom & Griffeth, 1995). We used one item ("Overall I am satisfied with this restaurant as a place to work") to measure job satisfaction, as global measures are appropriate to measure an employee's satisfaction with her/his overall position within a company (Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989). We controlled for interactional justice perceptions, which refer to interpersonal treatment received at a workplace, using items adapted from Bies and Moag (1986). Those employees who feel that they are not treated in a polite manner or with respect are more likely to voluntarily or involuntarily exit an organization (Aquino, Griffeth, Allen, & Hom, 1997).

Third, we controlled for two leader characteristics (Griffeth et al., 2000). We controlled for abusive supervision because previous research has shown that employees who work under abusive leaders are more likely to exit an organization (Tepper, 2000). We therefore used items adapted from Tep-

per's (2000) abusive leadership scale to account for this alternative explanation of turnover. Note that each of these three individually measured perceptual control variables (overall satisfaction, justice, and abusive leadership) also met commonly recommended statistical thresholds for aggregation (e.g., all *F*-test values for ICC1 significantly different from zero at  $p < .01$ ). Second, we also controlled for each GM's tenure at the company to account for experience managing a restaurant and its employees. New GMs may also have not yet developed the political capital in the organization needed to obtain resources for making improvements or to be influential in decisions affecting their restaurant.

Fourth, we controlled for other restaurant characteristics that can affect work environment and subsequent turnover rates, including size, age, date of most recent store remodel, and being a training restaurant. We controlled for restaurant size (measured as number of employees) because size has been shown to be related to administrative complexity and turnover in previous studies (Shaw, Delery, Jenkins, & Gupta, 1998). Restaurants were considered new by senior leaders, and therefore not yet comparable to established restaurants, if they had been open for less than 18 months. We thus included a dummy variable (0 = "open for more than 18 months," 1 = "open for less than 18 months") to account for restaurant newness. We also controlled for the number of months since each restaurant had last been remodeled because (as learned through interviews in the company), this could affect work environment and subsequent exit behavior. This association is consistent with aspects of socio-technical systems theory (Trist, Higgins, Murray, & Pollock, 1963) noting the importance of the physical work environment to employee attitudes and behavior. Finally, we also found that several restaurants were used for training new employees. New employees placed in these restaurants for training purposes do not count as full members of the training restaurants; they are counted as members of their home restaurants. Nonetheless, these training restaurants are chosen because of their exceptional performance and, thus, the turnover rate for these restaurants should be lower than those for others. Given their unique purpose, we included a dummy variable (0 = "not a training restaurant," 1 = "training restaurant") to control for this condition.

Fifth, we accounted for external labor market conditions, which have been recognized to affect turnover rates (Griffeth et al., 2000). We measured

both the number of blue-collar laborers and the average household income within a three-mile radius of the restaurant. We obtained these statistics from the marketing department of the chain's corporate headquarters, which drew them from publicly available economic data (e.g., from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics). Each of these variables controls for differences in the external labor market that could affect opportunities for alternative employment. For example, employees in areas with fewer blue-collar laborers and higher average income may have differential opportunities for alternative forms of similar employment, which could affect individuals' decisions to quit or to engage in risky behaviors that might get them fired.

### Analysis Strategy

Our analyses are conducted at the restaurant level. Each restaurant is embedded in a district and, further, in a division containing multiple districts. Such groupings call into question whether the restaurant-level data are independent. Therefore, prior to conducting our analyses, we employed multi-level analyses to explicitly model the nonindependence resulting from restaurant division ( $n = 4$ ) and district ( $n = 32$ ) groupings (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). The between-division and between-district variance are not statistically different from zero, meaning that the variance attributable to each higher level is insignificant in explaining variance in our restaurant-level dependent variable. Therefore, we used ordinary least squares regression at the restaurant level in the analyses reported here (Gelman & Hill, 2007). The pattern and significance of our results are unchanged if we employ multi-level models.

## RESULTS

We conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the discriminant validity of our three moderator variables. Fit indexes from a CFA model (e.g., RMSEA = 0.06, CFI = 0.98, NFI = 0.94) indicate that the hypothesized three-factor structure fits the data well. We also estimated three two-factor models (one combining managerial participation in decision making and managerial access to organizational resources, one combining managerial participation in decision making and management team change orientation, and one combining managerial access to organizational resources and management team change orientation) and a one-factor model (all three moderators loading on the same factor) to assess more parsimonious models. All indexes from the more parsimonious models indicate that each had a significantly worse fit to the data than did the hypothesized three-factor model. We conducted a chi-square difference test for each model (relative to the hypothesized model) and found that the more parsimonious models were significantly different (worse-fitting) at  $p < .001$ . This analysis provides statistical support for construct differentiation. See Table 2 for all results.

Table 3 shows the correlations, means, and standard deviations for the study variables. The patterns of the raw correlations are consistent with past research. For instance, employee satisfaction ( $r = -.23, p < .01$ ) and interactional justice ( $r = -.14, p < .05$ ) are negatively related to turnover. Additionally, restaurant remodeling date is positively related ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ) to turnover, and training status is negatively related to turnover ( $r = -.20, p < .01$ ). One might also expect that the managerial responsiveness behaviors would be related to turnover directly. However, although management

TABLE 2  
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results<sup>a</sup>

Factor Structure	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	CFI	RMSEA	RMSEA CI	NFI	NNFI	AIC	$\Delta\chi^2 (\Delta df)$
1. Three-factor model	62.76	41	1.53	0.98	0.06	(0.02–0.09)	0.94	0.97	–19.24	
2. Two-factor model: PDM + CO	130.99	43	3.05	0.91	0.12	(0.09–0.15)	0.87	0.88	44.99	68.23(2)**
3. Two-factor model: PDM + AOR	322.19	43	7.49	0.72	0.22	(0.19–0.24)	0.69	0.64	236.19	259.43(2)**
4. Two-factor model: CO + AOR	99.25	43	2.31	0.94	0.09	(0.07–0.12)	0.90	0.92	13.25	36.49(2)**
5. One-factor model	358.52	44	8.15	0.68	0.23	(0.20–0.25)	0.66	0.61	270.62	295.76(3)**

<sup>a</sup> "AOR" is unit manager access to organizational resources; "CO" is local management team change orientation; "PDM" is unit manager participation in decision making.

\*\*  $p < .01$

TABLE 3  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations<sup>a</sup>

Variable	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Employee tenure	1.60	0.72																	
2. Percent African American	0.10	0.13	.14																
3. Percent Hispanic	0.07	0.09	-.14	-.25**															
4. Employee satisfaction	3.88	0.31	.00	-.12	.28**														
5. Justice perceptions	3.81	0.32	-.11	-.08	.17*	.62**													
6. Abusive leadership	1.51	0.26	.00	.12	-.19**	-.32**	-.47**												
7. GM tenure	5.90	4.00	.41**	.13	-.10	-.03	-.06	-.01											
8. Number of employees	47.92	13.68	-.04	-.20**	-.06	.05	.05	.05	.05										
9. New restaurant	0.03	0.16	-.23**	-.11	.16*	.09	.13	-.12	-.08	.33**									
10. Months since last remodeling	125.85	124.70	.57**	.17*	-.13	-.05	-.13	.04	.31**	-.19**	-.16*								
11. Training restaurant	0.23	0.42	.11	-.14*	.13	.09	.08	-.12	.16*	.21**	-.01	-.14*							
12. Blue-collar workers within 3 miles	986.98	753.75	.26**	.15*	.11	-.04	-.01	.02	-.06	-.08	.04	.28**	-.08						
13. Average household income within 3 miles	62,295.45	1,730.13	-.06	-.19**	.38**	.09	.06	.06	.04	.26**	.23**	-.01	.11	-.07					
14. Employee voice	3.17	0.42	-.07	-.05	-.12	.11	.19*	-.11	-.05	-.06	-.06	.00	-.08	-.10	-.02				
15. Management team change orientation	3.75	0.63	.02	.11	.03	.01	.06	.08	.02	.08	.00	.05	.13	.05	-.07	-.07			
16. Managerial participation in decision making	3.43	1.03	.01	.24**	.02	.13	.02	.18*	.03	-.18*	-.11	.00	-.07	.06	-.15	.01	.20*		
17. Managerial access to organizational resources	3.88	0.79	.18*	.15	.07	.12	.06	.07	-.06	-.05	.08	.02	.05	.08	-.15	-.10	.36**	.44**	
18. Turnover	0.86	0.32	-.12	.04	-.25**	-.25**	-.14*	.05	-.03	-.31**	-.04	.16*	-.19**	.09	-.19**	-.02	-.20*	-.11	-.10

<sup>a</sup>  $n = 136$ .

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

Two-tailed tests.

team change orientation is negatively related to turnover ( $r = -.18, p < .05$ ), both managerial participation in decision making and access to organizational resources are not significantly associated with unit turnover at the bivariate level. Additionally, unit-level voice is not significantly directly related to employee turnover ( $r = .004, n.s.$ ).

We conducted four regression analyses to assess the interaction between voice and each variable of interest (see Table 4); the first three include one interaction term only, and the final model includes the three interaction terms simultaneously. To enhance the interpretation of the main effects and reduce multicollinearity concerns, we centered all variables involved in the interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). First, we examined the relationship between the control variables and unit-level turnover. As model 1 shows, collectively these vari-

ables significantly contribute to the model's explanatory power ( $\Delta F = 5.05, df = 136, p < .001$ ) and explain 35 percent of the variance in lagged turnover. Several individual control variables remain significantly related to turnover in the regression, such as average employee tenure ( $\beta = -0.34, p < .01$ ), percent African American employees ( $\beta = -0.22, p < .01$ ), percent Hispanic employees ( $\beta = -0.24, p < .01$ ), number of employees ( $\beta = -0.32, p < .01$ ), months since the restaurant had been remodeled ( $\beta = 0.21, p < .05$ ), and number of blue-collar workers within a three-mile radius of the restaurant ( $\beta = 0.20, p < .05$ ).

Second, we entered the variables for employee voice, managerial access to organizational resources, managerial participation in decision making, and local management team change orientation. Results are presented in models 2–4 of Table

**TABLE 4**  
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results for the Six-Month Unit-Level Turnover Rate<sup>a</sup>

Variables <sup>b</sup>	Control Model	Main Effects			Moderation			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
<i>Control variables</i>								
Average tenure	-0.34*	-0.34**	-0.36**	-0.35**	-0.36**	-0.35**	-0.39**	-0.43**
Percent African American	-0.22**	-0.22**	-0.18*	-0.19*	-0.23**	-0.20*	-0.24*	-0.21**
Percent Hispanic	-0.24**	-0.24**	-0.23**	-0.23**	-0.21**	-0.20*	-0.18*	-0.16*
Employee satisfaction	-0.17	-0.17	-0.12	-0.17	-0.13	-0.14	-0.19*	-0.13
Justice perceptions	0.05	0.05	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.08	0.03
Abusive leadership	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.02	-0.01	0.00
GM tenure	0.08	0.08	0.09	0.07	0.08	0.09	0.04	0.08
Number of employees	-0.32**	-0.33**	-0.34**	-0.30**	-0.31**	-0.35**	-0.28**	-0.28
New restaurant	-0.05	-0.05	-0.07	-0.05	-0.05	-0.06	-0.07	-0.28**
Months since last remodeling	0.21*	0.21*	0.21*	0.24*	0.26*	0.25*	0.30**	0.32**
Training restaurant	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00
Blue-collar workers within 3 miles	0.20*	0.20*	0.21*	0.20*	0.19*	0.18*	0.24**	0.22**
Average household income within 3 miles	-0.09	-0.09	-0.12	-0.11	-0.14	-0.15	-0.14	-0.18*
<i>Main effects</i>								
Employee voice		-0.04	-0.02	-0.04	-0.04	-0.03	-0.11	-0.05
Manager AOR		0.01			0.03			0.16
Manager PDM			-0.19*			-0.17*		-0.17*
Management team CO				-0.16*			-0.15	-0.16*
<i>Interactions</i>								
Voice × manager AOR					-0.19*			-0.12
Voice × manager PDM						-0.17*		-0.06
Voice × management team CO							-0.26**	-0.16*
R <sup>2</sup>	0.35	0.35	0.38	0.37	0.38	0.40	0.42	0.46
$\Delta R^2$		0.00	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.05	0.07	0.11
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.28	0.27	0.30	0.29	0.29	0.32	0.34	0.37
F	5.05**	4.33**	4.94**	4.76**	4.56**	5.05**	5.50**	4.97**

<sup>a</sup>  $n = 136$ . Standardized coefficients are reported.

<sup>b</sup> "AOR" is unit manager access to organizational resources; "CO" is local management team change orientation; "PDM" is unit manager participation in decision making.

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

4. Employee voice is not significantly related to turnover at the unit level. Both unit manager participation in decision making and management team change orientation are significantly related to turnover ( $\beta = -0.19, p < .05$ , and  $\beta = -0.16, p < .05$ , respectively).

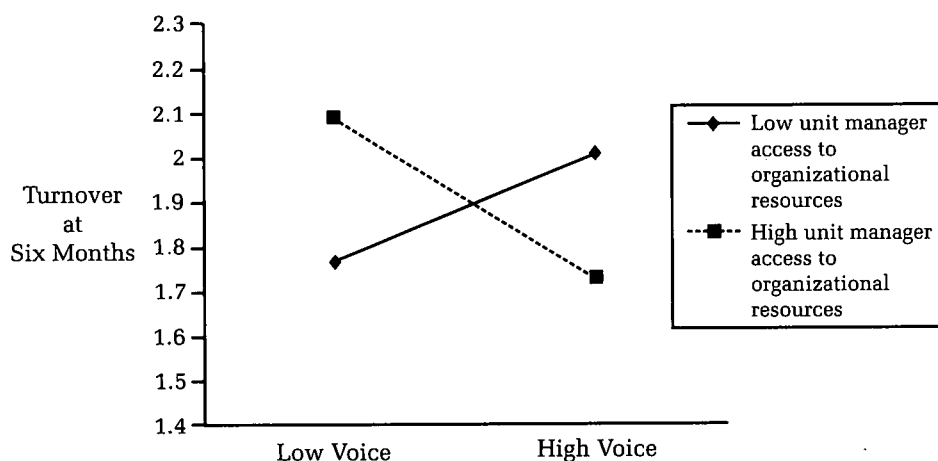
Finally, we examined the relationship between voice and turnover as moderated by our three leadership variables in models 5–8. We proposed in Hypothesis 1 that manager access to organizational resources would moderate the relationship between employee voice and exit at the restaurant level. As shown in model 5 of Table 4, the interaction term between voice and manager access to organizational resources is significantly related to employee turnover ( $\beta = -0.19, p < .05$ ) and explains a significant amount of variance over and above the control variables and main effects of the moderator variables ( $\Delta F^2 = 5.60, df = 136, p < .05$ ). To assess whether the form of this, and the other, interactions is consistent with our hypotheses, we plotted the interactions according to the guidelines provided by Aiken and West (1991), plotting results at high and low levels of each variable (one standard deviation above and below the mean). As shown in Figure 2, the relationship between voice and turnover when manager access to resources is high versus low is in the predicted direction. We followed the approach of Preacher, Curran, and Bauer (2006) to compute the region of statistical significance of the simple slopes of the interaction in Z-score units. Specifically, we found that when Z-scores are higher than 0.88, (i.e., high access to organizational resources), the negative relationship

between voice and turnover is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). When the Z-scores are lower than  $-2.00$  (i.e., low access to organizational resources), the positive relationship between voice and turnover is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). These results are consistent with Hypothesis 1.

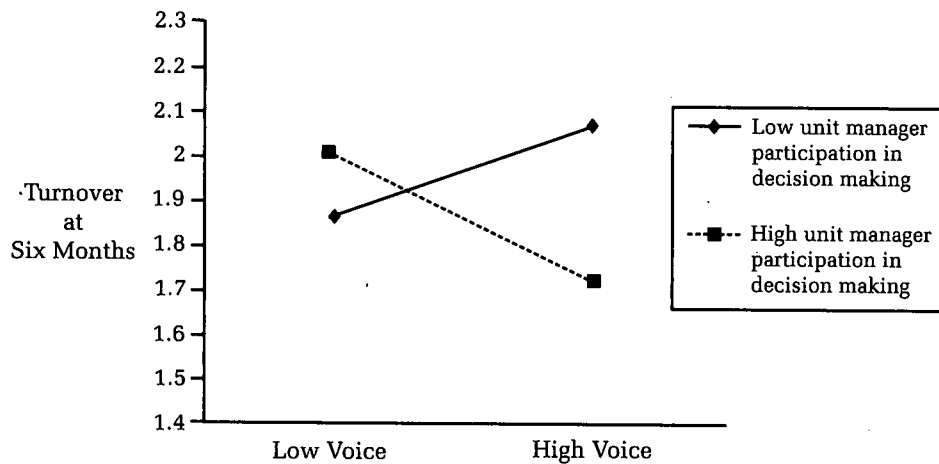
We propose in Hypothesis 2 that managerial participation in decision making moderates the relationship between employee voice and exit at the unit (here, restaurant) level. As shown in model 6 of Table 4, the interaction term between voice and managerial participation in decision making is significantly related to employee turnover ( $\beta = -0.17, p < .05$ ) and explains a significant amount of variance over and above the control variables and main effects of the moderator terms ( $\Delta F = 4.62, df = 136, p < .05$ ). As shown in Figure 3, the relationship between voice and turnover when manager participation in decision making is high versus low is in the predicted direction. Specifically, using Preacher et al.'s (2003) regions of significance method, we found that when Z-scores are higher than 1.77, (i.e., high participation in decision making), the negative relationship between voice and turnover is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). When the Z-scores are lower than  $-2.68$  (i.e., low access to organizational resources), the positive relationship between voice and turnover is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). These results are consistent with Hypothesis 2.

We proposed in Hypothesis 3 that the management team change orientation moderates the relationship between unit-level employee voice and exit. As shown in model 7 of Table 4, the interac-

**FIGURE 2**  
Interaction between Unit-Level Voice and Unit Manager Access to Organizational Resources



**FIGURE 3**  
**Interaction between Unit-Level Voice and Unit Manager Participation in Decision Making**



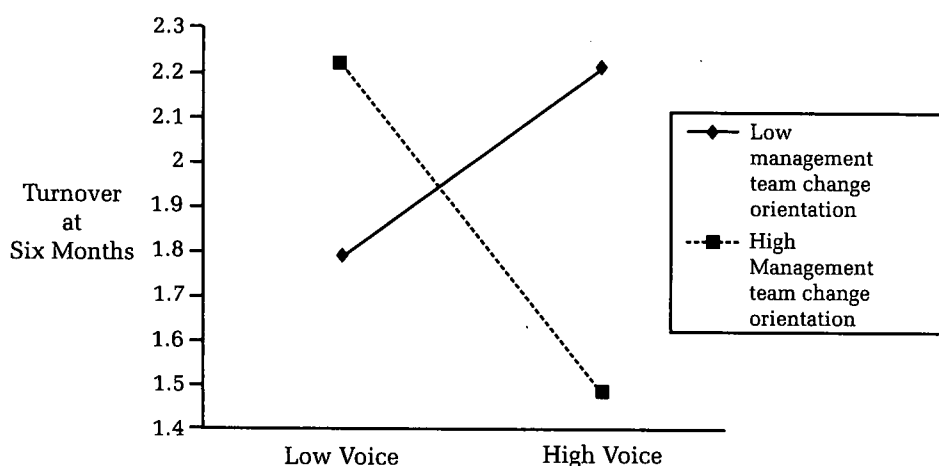
tion term between voice and management team change orientation is significantly related to employee turnover ( $\beta = -0.26, p < .01$ ) and explains a significant amount of variance over and above the main effects ( $\Delta F^2 = 10.77, df = 136, p < .01$ ). Figure 4 displays the interaction pattern supporting our prediction. Specifically, we found that when Z-scores are higher than 0.13, (i.e., high management team change orientation), the negative relationship between voice and turnover is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). When the Z-scores are lower than  $-0.84$  (i.e., low management team change orientation), the positive relationship between voice and turnover is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). These results offer support for Hypothesis 3.

Last, to test their relative strength we entered all three interactions into the regression model simultaneously. As shown in model 8 of Table 4, the interaction between voice and management team change orientation remains significantly related to employee turnover ( $\beta = -0.16, p < .05$ ), but the other two interactions do not. We consider these results further in the Discussion section.

### Robustness Checks

We conducted additional analyses to ensure the robustness of the results presented above. First, despite our attempts to control for many different alternative explanations for turnover and for factors

**FIGURE 4**  
**Interaction between Unit-Level Voice and Management Team Change Orientation**



that might affect the relationship between unit-level employee voice and turnover, there is a reasonable possibility that other explanations might remain unaccounted for. We therefore ran three additional models in which we also controlled for each prior year's turnover rate in each restaurant to account for other sources of unobserved heterogeneity. All interactions remained significant and the pattern of results stayed the same (manager access to organizational resources  $\times$  voice:  $\beta = -0.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ; manager participation in decision making  $\times$  voice:  $\beta = -0.11$ ,  $p < .05$ ; management team change orientation  $\times$  voice:  $\beta = -0.25$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Second, because our turnover data are slightly skewed, we reran all models using a log transformation of turnover to account for nonnormality. Again, all interactions remained significant and the pattern of results stayed the same (manager access to organizational resources  $\times$  voice:  $\beta = -0.17$ ,  $p < .05$ ; manager participation in decision making  $\times$  voice:  $\beta = -0.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ; management team change orientation  $\times$  voice:  $\beta = -0.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Finally, to reduce concerns that spurious suppression could affect our results, given the number of control variables that we included in our analyses (Becker, 2005), we reran the analyses taking out one control variable at a time to examine the effects on the significance levels of the interactions. Of the 39 regressions run in this manner, 97 percent of the interactions stay significant ( $p < .05$ ) or marginally significant ( $p < .10$ ) when one control variable is removed. Although these results alone cannot completely rule out the possibility of suppression, along with the theoretical rationale for each control variable's inclusion, they bolster confidence in the robustness of our results.

## DISCUSSION

In this study, we used theory from the organizational sciences and empirical evidence to reconsider and build upon several aspects of Hirschman's (1970) seminal framework about voice and exit in organizations. First, we challenged the notion that the outcomes of voice, including employee turnover, should be generally conceptualized at the individual level (i.e., the level of the speaker). Instead, we argued and demonstrated through findings from analysis of 3,388 employee instances of improvement-oriented input that the very nature of voice is prosocial and thus voice has the potential to affect outcomes for not just the speaker but also for others whose performance or

well-being are likewise affected by the issues raised. Second, instead of considering voice and exit as mutually exclusive alternatives, we theorized the importance of examining the relationship *between* employee voice and exit and, in particular, argued and demonstrated empirically that the relationship between the amount of speaking up by employees and subsequent turnover in an appropriately defined unit is contingent on the ability and motivation of that unit's management to address the issues raised.

Our empirical results not only speak to long-standing theoretical frameworks, but are also of significant practical import, given the costly and vexing problem that turnover represents for organizations. In the food service industry, the context of this study, turnover rates generally exceed 100 percent annually, with employees citing poor management as a key reason for leaving (Kacmar, Andrews, Van Rooy, Steilberg, & Cerrone, 2006; Zuber, 2001). Though turnover rates range significantly, and are obviously lower in other industries, turnover is disruptive and expensive everywhere (Mueller & Price, 1989; Staw, 1980) because it inevitably raises labor costs related to recruiting, selecting, and training new hires (Oi, 1962; Sagie, Birati, & Tziner, 2002) and lowers organizational performance (Kacmar et al., 2006; Shaw, Gupta, & Delery, 2005). This study highlights yet another significant and ironic cost of turnover: places with high levels of employee voice and thus many improvement-oriented ideas can be the same places that lose the most employees when management is unwilling or unable to respond. Even at a conservative estimate of \$500 to replace an employee in this context (Kacmar et al., 2006), the annual savings associated with, for example, a management team that is one standard deviation higher than the mean on change orientation compared to one that is one standard deviation lower would exceed \$1,600,000 for an organization with the same number and size of restaurants as investigated here.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To obtain the cost value, first we calculated the predicted turnover from the regressions. We then multiplied this coefficient by two to obtain the predicted annual turnover rate (recall that our dependent variable was the turnover for six months). Then, using the average number of employees at each store (48), we calculated the number of employees to be replaced when the moderator is high and low using the annual rate calculation. We then calculated the cost per store using an average cost of \$500 per employee (Kacmar et al., 2006). To do this, we mul-

## Contributions

Our theory and findings extend Hirschman's framework by acknowledging the social context for voice and the collective impact of suggestions made by employees. Our research seeks to align some of Hirschman's initial insights with the contemporary understanding among voice scholars that voice in work contexts is a prosocial behavior—that is, to qualify as voice, the raising of an issue should have the potential to benefit a larger collective such as a work group or organization (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Whereas most prior research has focused on individual-level antecedents to voice (Burris, Detert, & Chhabra, 2008; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008), we examined the unit-level outcomes of voice, explicitly theorizing that the benefit or harm of different levels of management responsiveness to employee input extend to many employees in a unit. Upon systematic examination of open-ended employee improvement suggestions, we found that the overwhelming majority of employee comments were indeed consistent with the “would benefit more than just me if addressed” criterion that defines voice as a prosocial behavior (Grant & Mayer, 2009; Van Dyne et al., 2003). This finding highlights the importance of considering the outcomes of managerial responsiveness to employee voice among groups of employees, rather than just those who speak up about certain issues or just those who managers are more likely to be responsive to.

Prior studies have often treated voice as the end result, usually suggesting rather than testing any downstream relationships between voice and desirable or undesirable outcomes. Research building on Hirschman's (1970) framework has characterized voice as replacing need to exit because it inevitably brings about improvements that address the sources of employee dissatisfaction if given enough time (e.g., Withey & Cooper, 1989). Such logic extends beyond turnover, as scholars have argued that voice should affect other group-level outcomes such as change effectiveness (Morrison & Milliken, 2000) and performance (Morrison, 2011). These ar-

guments rest largely on the assumption that actual learning occurs and that substantive changes take place. We explore this view theoretically and empirically by acknowledging that managers often have limited latitude and ability to initiate substantive change and that, as a result, they are often constrained in addressing employee concerns. Our results show that a high level of voice alone is not a sign that employees are more likely to stay; instead, the relationship between voice and exit within work units is dependent on whether managers are willing and able to do something with employees' ideas for improvement. Thus, our research highlights the importance of considering management responsiveness as an important determinant of whether voice leads to positive or negative outcomes for a work unit.

Our research also makes several important theoretical contributions to the leadership literature. At a broad level, our results add to contingency perspectives on leadership. Much recent leadership research has predominantly focused on direct relationships between aspects of leadership and effectiveness outcomes (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996), including employee turnover (Graen, Liden, & Hoel, 1982). Our research fits with a recent resurgence in the leadership literature that examines the contingencies, rather than main effects, of leadership on unit-level outcomes (Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2011). For example, Grant and colleagues (2011) found that the relationship between leader extraversion and unit effectiveness is contingent on the proactivity of employees. Our study demonstrates how the value of specific leadership behaviors for reducing exit depends, in part, on the level of voice activity by subordinates. More specific to the phenomenon of voice, our treatment of leadership represents a significant departure from the focus on leadership characteristics as *antecedents* to voice behavior. Past research shows, for example, that specific leader behaviors or styles like transformational characteristics or leader openness (Detert & Burris, 2007) stimulate more voice. Complementing this research, our results show the implications of managerial actions when voice is already present. Namely, our findings suggest that leader responsiveness to voice also affects the choices of employees after speaking up has occurred.

Finally, our findings are also theoretically and practically relevant for those interested in minimizing turnover. Our study explicitly acknowledges and demonstrates that turnover decisions are likely

multiplied the number of employees to be replaced by the \$500 value for both the low and high moderator situations. To obtain the total cost for the company, we multiplied the cost per store value times 139, the number of units in this particular company. To obtain the cost savings value, we then subtracted the value calculated from the high moderator situation from the low moderator situation.

to be predictable at meaningful aggregate levels based on social factors—such as managerial responsiveness to voice—that are similarly experienced by defined groups of employees (Krackhardt & Porter, 1986). Further, by examining when unit-level voice affects turnover rates, we uncover potential levers for leaders to use to minimize turnover, such as providing managers with resources to make changes or hiring managers who are more oriented toward change. Also, beyond our focal variables, the set of control variables we included explained fully 35 percent of the variance in lagged turnover. Of these alternative explanations, several, including the percentages of African American and Hispanic employees and the number of months since a restaurant was last remodeled, are significantly related to exit. Collectively, our findings extend understanding of unit-level factors that influence employee turnover and thus offer important avenues for future research.

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions**

Several features of this study bolster confidence in our results. First, we collected data from multiple sources, including observer ratings of employee voice. Second, we used objective turnover data for the six months after the assessment of voice, rather than concurrent turnover statistics or turnover intention reports (which may or may not result in actual exit). Third, we found support for our hypotheses about the relationship between unit-level voice and exit after first controlling for an extensive set of theoretically meaningful alternative explanations of turnover. Fourth, our results are robust to multiple additional analyses, including models that control for prior turnover, models that use log-transformed turnover as the dependent variable, and models that check for suppression effects.

Despite these strengths, several limitations of our study should be addressed in future research. First, we tested our hypotheses in a particular context—one where turnover is high and factors such as organizational commitment are relatively low. Understanding the generalizability of our results thus requires additional research in other contexts. For instance, the relevant size of the group or unit of people that managerial responsiveness to voice will affect likely varies. We used single restaurants as the unit of aggregation in this study because they fit the nature of the types of issues raised; however, in other contexts, such as scientific research groups or product development teams, the types of issues

raised may make the appropriate level of analysis much smaller. For example, in academia, we might expect the appropriate level of aggregation to be the department rather than school level. Second, future studies could benefit from additional and more precise measures. For example, the use of objective measures of access to resources and other-source ratings of manager participation in decision making and management team change orientation would reduce the potential biases of self-report measures. Additionally, in arguing that our moderators are proxies for managerial responsiveness to employees' concerns, we suggested that reduced turnover is likely the result of actual improvements resulting from employees' voice and/or that employees feel sufficiently satisfied by managers taking their concerns seriously even when substantive changes do not always occur. In this study, we were not able to empirically assess each of these potential mediators between managerial responsiveness and subsequent employee exit. We were also unable to disentangle the voluntary from the involuntary turnover rates for each unit and thus determine more precisely to what extent when employees speak up, leader responsiveness is related to employee decisions to quit, leader decisions to fire, or both.

Future research could also more robustly examine both individual- and group-level effects by collecting individual-level responses for the moderators and individual-level turnover data. Such data would allow for a multilevel analysis that more precisely disentangles the extent to which employee exit is an individual decision made in reaction to leader behaviors directed to each employee who speaks up or predominantly influenced by the larger social context, including whether improvements were made (or not made), irrespective of who raises specific issues. Researchers might also use other designs and data analysis approaches to examine whether employees exit after they or others have spoken up because they were bothered by a lack of response to a single, specific issue or by a more general pattern of unresponsiveness to an array of work issues. Ballinger and Rockmann (2010), for example, suggested that relationships can change quickly, with the outcome of a particular event dramatically and permanently altering the state of a relationship. Similarly, the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994) identifies shocks, or particularly jarring work-related events, as antecedent to voluntary exit. We suspect that—in contrast to the picture painted by

Hirschman (1970)—turnover usually results from an ongoing and building sense of frustration, dissatisfaction, and change in performance rather than from a single issue or event, but the matter is an empirical question still open for adjudication. Future researchers should also consider measuring exit at different time periods. We chose a six-month turnover window because interviews with senior managers suggested this was an appropriate length of time in this context for assessing whether changes were attempted and succeeding (Mitchell & James, 2001). However, by collecting turnover rates at multiple time intervals, researchers would be able to test more precisely how managerial responsiveness affects subsequent employee behavior.

Beyond addressing the limitations of this study, future research could build upon our study and explore some of the unexpected findings. For example, we were surprised to find that when employee voice was low and managerial access to organizational resources was low, employees were more likely to stay with the organization (as they were under conditions of high voice and high managerial access to resources). One possible explanation for these findings is that when employee behavior matches manager ability to make changes, employees are more likely to stay with an organization than they are when employees' behavior is mismatched to their manager's orientation and ability to make changes. Additionally, several of our focal variables (voice, manager access to organizational resources, and manager participation in decision making) are not directly related to turnover. We have already explained our perspective on these findings (i.e., that the relationships between voice and outcomes depend on what managers do next) but recognize the need for future research in this area given the practical importance of such relationships. We were also surprised to find that abusive leadership did not have a significant impact on turnover in this study. This could stem from the low incidence of (and variance in) abusive leadership captured here. Or, it could be that, as with other aspects of leadership, the relationship between abusive leadership and turnover is contingent on factors such as norms in a given environment and employee mobility options (Tepper, 2000).

Last, we note that all three interactions are significant when estimated independently (models 5–7), but when all are included in one equation, only the interaction between voice and manage-

ment team change orientation remains significant (model 8). Statistically, this pattern of results may be due to the lack of power that results from simultaneously testing the significance of three interactions with a sample of the size of our sample. The results may also be due to shared variance among our predictors, given that each interaction includes a common variable (voice). When predictors include a common variable, it is harder to tease out the individual effects of each (Aiken & West, 1991). A more substantive reason for these results may be that modeling multiple interactions together is a very conservative test that speaks to the relative impact of each interaction when the others are controlled for. In our case, the test is more conservative because the three variables—managerial access to organizational resources, participation in decision making, and management team change orientation—co-occur at a relatively high level in the majority of our restaurants. For example, in 81 percent of the restaurants at which managers have above the mean level of participation in decision making, they also have above the mean level of access to resources (even though the raw correlation between participation in decision making and access to resources is .44). This fact—that our sample does not include many instances of all permutations of high versus low levels of each of our three moderators—makes it difficult to tease out unique effects in a single model. So although model 8 provides an opportunity to examine the relative magnitude of each interaction's effect, models 5–7 provide a clearer picture of the independent effect of each.

## Conclusion

Our findings suggest that the outcomes of employee voice rest, to a nontrivial extent, in the hands of managers; their responsiveness impacts whether voice proves beneficial or detrimental for the work unit and beyond. At the same time, our results emphasize a potential disadvantage of encouraging employee voice: if leaders are not able and prepared to act on problems identified and opportunities suggested, employees may look to find employment where their input has more impact or even engage in behaviors that provoke managers to remove them. Given the significant cost of turnover, as well as the other losses associated with the failure to respond to employees' knowledge and ideas, managers would be wise to enhance their, and their management teams', ability and motivation to take action when employees speak up.

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