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## Employee Perceptions about Improving Training Transfer in the Federal Workplace

Jayson Dunmore  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Jayson L. Dunmore

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Dr. Elizabeth Thompson, University Reviewer, Management Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Employee Perceptions about Improving Training Transfer in the Federal Workplace

by

Jayson L. Dunmore

MPhil, Walden University, 2020

MBA, DeVry University, 2006

BS, Regis University, 2004

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

May 2021

## Abstract

Organizations are spending billions of dollars annually on employee training and development. Training is only useful if employees transfer the new skills to the workplace and it leads to meaningful impacts. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single-case study was to explore employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization. The conceptual framework for this study was based on Baldwin and Ford's concept of training transfer. The research question was used to explore employee perceptions of how to improve training transfer in the federal government organization. Purposeful sampling was used to identify and select 20 participants who had graduated from the organization's midcareer leadership program. Qualitative data were collected using semistructured interviews. Data analysis involved using a systematic search for subthemes and themes. The findings revealed that from the employees' perspective, improving training transfer in the workplace requires: (a) organizations to provide employees with ample opportunities to implement their improved skills in the workplace, (b) the willingness of employees to self-direct and find opportunities on their own to use new skills in the workplace, (c) employees to have post-training sustainment support to help them achieve and maintain higher transfer rates, and lastly, (d) organizations to implement systems for tracking and monitoring its employees' usage of new skills to achieve the expected outcomes. Implications for positive social change include providing organizational leaders and managers with insights and strategies for improving training transfer outcomes, which might lead to improvements in employee productivity and organizational performance.

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## Dedication

In loving memory of my mother, Dianna D. Bright and to my wife, Ntombinde and our four children, Jordan, Dayna, Damiah, and Diana.

## Acknowledgments

Thank you to all of the people that helped me along the way on this journey.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Organizations rely on training and development as a means of enhancing employee productivity and organizational performance. Organizational training has become a strategic driver for improving individual and organizational performance (Sitzmann & Weinhardt, 2018). The intent is to maximize training effectiveness by providing employees with the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) necessary to improve their job performance to help their organizations achieve their goals (Sitzmann & Weinhardt, 2018). What becomes most critical is whether training transfer actually occurs (Johnson et al., 2018). Training transfer can only occur if employees can successfully apply newly acquired training from the training context to the job context (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Ford & Weissbein, 1997). Transfer estimates from earlier studies suggested less than 10% of training transferred to the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). In contrast, estimates from recent studies suggested that transfer rates drop from 60% immediately after completion of training to 35% a year after (Brown et al., 2016).

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single-case study was to explore employee perceptions of how to improve training transfer in the workplace within the context of a federal government organization located in South Carolina. The results might provide organizational leaders with the understanding and insight to improve the application, generalization, and maintenance of trained knowledge, skills, and abilities in the workplace. By taking into account employee views of training transfer, leaders and managers might develop an in-depth understanding of and insight into how to devise and

implement organizational changes to increase the chances of employees successfully applying and maintaining new learning in the workplace.

The findings from this study might contribute to positive social change by providing organizational leaders with a better understanding of employee perspectives about improving training transfer in the workplace. Leaders and managers might be able to use insight from the results of the study to develop and implement organizational strategies, policies, and procedures, and post-training transfer interventions to improve the transfer of training to the workplace. Implementation of the organizational changes might lead to increases in training transfer rates, which might lead to improvements in individual and team productivity and organizational performance.

Chapter 1 includes the background of the study, which includes a discussion of the gap in the literature that led to a need for the study. Chapter 1 also includes a discussion of the general management problem and the specific management problem that is addressed in the study. I also discuss the purpose statement that I used to connect the specific management problem being addressed to the rest of the study. I discuss the central research question and the conceptual framework that grounded the study. Chapter 1 also includes a discussion about the nature of the study, definitions, and assumptions. The chapter ends with a discussion on the scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study to theory, practice, and social change.

### **Background**

Organizations are utilizing training and development to promote employee productivity and organizational performance to remain competitive (Haemer et al., 2017).

Training and development allow organizations to remain flexible and adaptable to ever-changing environments (Bell et al., 2017). Training and development initiatives are mechanisms for enhancing individual capabilities, as well as improving team effectiveness and organizational performance (Noe et al., 2014).

In 2019, organizations spent \$370.3 billion globally on training and development (Mazareanu, 2020) to improve employee knowledge, skills, and abilities. That same year organizations in the United States spent an estimated \$166 billion on training and development expenditures (Freifeld, 2019) to equip their workforces with new KSAs for enhancing individual, team, and organizational performance, suggesting that training is a priority for most organizations (Ho, 2016). Despite the significant investments in and benefits of training, it is only useful if the training transfers from the training context to the workplace and leads to meaningful impacts within the organization (Blume et al., 2010; Blume et al., 2019).

Training transfer is the extent to which employees apply newly acquired KSAs from a training environment to their jobs in the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Training transfer is essential for enhancing individual, team, and organizational performance, in addition to ensuring a sufficient return on training investments (Huang et al., 2017; Yelon et al., 2014). Baldwin and Ford (1988) proposed a model of training transfer that consists of three categories: training input factors, training output factors, and conditions of transfer. Training input factors include trainee characteristics, training design factors, and workplace environment factors (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). In Baldwin and Ford's (1988) model, the training input factors enable learning and retention to



happen, which in turn, determines if newly acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities are generalized and maintained in the workplace. For positive training transfer to occur, the learned KSAs must be generalized to the job context and maintained over time in the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). The term *generalized* refers to the application of KSAs learned in the training context, to a different context, such as on the job in the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2010; Ford & Weissbein, 1997). The term *maintained* refers to the extent to which an employee manages to retain the learned KSAs and apply them to the workplace over time (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2010; Ford & Weissbein, 1997).

The overall goal is for employees to have a positive transfer outcome, resulting in the transfer of the learned KSAs from the training environment to the workplace (Blume et al., 2010; Ford et al., 2018; Shaari et al., 2016). However, past research studies have shown that employees tend to struggle with transferring new KSAs to the workplace. At the time of the seminal paper by Baldwin and Ford (1988), there was a growing concern for the “transfer problem.” That is, back in the 1980s, scholars ascertained that only 10% of new learning transferred back to the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). The training transfer problem remains acute, prompting calls for more research that can inform and improve employee training and development initiatives (Baldwin et al., 2017). Recent studies found that in most cases, an insignificant amount of learning transfers to the workplace, with estimates showing as much as 60 to 90% of the training failing to transfer to the workplace (Shaari et al., 2016). If training transfer does not occur, training alone will not lead to improvements in job productivity and organizational performance (Pham et al.,

2017). Thus, investments in training are of little value to the organization if employees do not apply the learning to the workplace (Baldwin et al., 2017; Sørensen, 2017).

Despite the recent increases in the transfer literature, few researchers have explored individual employee perspectives about improving training transfer in the workplace (Baldwin et al., 2017; Blume et al., 2019; Ford et al., 2018). Recent quantitative studies have been conducted to focus mainly on the factors influencing training transfer (Shaari et al., 2016; Sørensen, 2017; Tonhäuser & Büker, 2016). The individual perspective of training transfer has mostly been ignored in the literature; however, the decision to transfer training is a personal choice that ultimately resides with the employee (Blume et al., 2019; Ford et al., 2018). That is, employees ultimately decide what, when, and how to transfer learned KSAs from the training environment to the workplace (Blume et al., 2019). Employees are active participants in the learning and transfer process (Blume et al., 2019). Employees make the conscious choice of whether to apply, generalize, maintain, modify, or discard learned KSAs in the workplace (Blume et al., 2019). More studies are needed to shine a light on employee perspectives about improving training transfer (Ford et al., 2018; Poell, 2017) to provide organizational leaders with understanding and insight to develop strategies for enhancing training transfer in the workplace.

This research study might add to the body of knowledge by exploring employee perceptions of how to improve training transfer in the workplace. Organizational leaders might benefit from the results of this study by developing an understanding of employee perspectives of how to improve training transfer, which might provide them with insight

into how to increase employee training transfer rates in the workplace. Organizations might be able to use the findings from this study to develop and implement strategies, policies, and procedures to increase the odds of employees successfully using new learning in the workplace, which might lead to improvements in the performance of individuals, teams, and the organization as a whole.

### **Problem Statement**

Organizations invest billions of dollars on training initiatives to increase employee productivity and performance (Yelon et al., 2014). In 2019, organizations in the United States spent an estimated \$166 billion on employee training and development expenditures (Freifeld, 2019), suggesting that training is a priority for organizations (Ho, 2016). Despite the significant investments in and potential benefits of training, it is only useful if employees transfer training from the training context to the workplace, and it leads to meaningful impacts within the organization (Blume et al., 2019; Yelon et al., 2014).

The general management problem was that many employees do not transfer training to the workplace (Shaari et al., 2016). The specific management problem was that there are no set strategies based on employee input regarding how best to transfer training to the workplace (Baldwin et al., 2017; Blume et al., 2019). More studies are needed to explore employee perspectives about improving training transfer in organizations (Ford et al., 2018; Poell, 2017). Considering employee viewpoints on how to improve training transfer in the workplace is significant, given that training transfer is

the primary means by which employees influence individual-level outcomes and enhance organizational performance (Ma et al., 2018).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single-case study was to explore employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization. The findings might provide organizational leaders with insight to develop strategies to improve training transfer in the workplace. Employee perspectives on improving training transfer might provide leaders and managers with an in-depth understanding of and insight into how to devise and implement organizational changes to increase the chances of employees successfully applying and maintaining new learning in the workplace.

### **Research Questions**

The central research question that guided this study was: What are the perceptions of employees regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization?

### **Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework draws on concepts taken from various theories and findings and is used to underpin a study (Green, 2014). The conceptual framework for this study was the work of Baldwin and Ford (1988) on the concept of training transfer. Training transfer occurs when employees can apply newly acquired training from the training context to the job context (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Ford & Weissbein, 1997). Moreover, for positive training transfer to occur, the new learning must be generalized to

the job setting and maintained over time and lead to positive outcomes (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Baldwin and Ford (1988) developed a model to illustrate the concept of training transfer to understand the process by which employees learn, use, retain, generalize, and maintain knowledge, skills, and abilities in the workplace to improve job and organizational performance (Blume et al., 2019). Therefore, in this study I used the model by Baldwin and Ford (1988) as the conceptual lens.

The training transfer model consists of three categories: training input factors, training output factors, and conditions of transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Training input factors include trainee characteristics, training design factors, and workplace environment factors (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2019). In the training transfer model, the training input factors enable learning and retention to happen, which in turn, determines if newly acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities are generalized and maintained in the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Training output factors include the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired as a result of the learning and retention of the training content (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Ford & Weissbein, 1997). The conditions of transfer include the generalization of the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired in the training environment to the work environment and the maintenance of those KSAs over time in the work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Indicative of the training transfer model is the notion that training input factors, coupled with training output factors, directly influences the conditions of transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). In this study, I used Baldwin and Ford's (1988) concept of training transfer as the conceptual framework along with the qualitative exploratory single-case study approach to explore in-depth

employee perceptions to understand how to improve training transfer within the context of a single federal government organization.

### **Nature of the Study**

A qualitative exploratory single-case study is appropriate for answering “how and “what” research questions, to gain an in-depth understanding of a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2018). Therefore, I used a qualitative exploratory single-case study design for this study. According to Yin (2018), there are three conditions for using a case study design: the study is asking “how” or “why” research questions, about a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, and the researcher has little or no control over events. Researchers use the case study design to conduct in-depth investigations about contemporary phenomena by exploring them within a bounded system, in a real-world context, over time, involving multiple sources of evidence, for data triangulation (Yin, 2018). A qualitative exploratory single-case study design was appropriate for answering the central research question in this study. I used the qualitative exploratory single-case study design to gain an in-depth and contextual understanding of employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization.

Researchers use the case study design to explore contemporary phenomena within a bounded system (Yin, 2018). In this study, the bounded system was the employees of the federal government organization in South Carolina. The unit of analysis is the source of data in a case study (Yin, 2018). Individual employees were the unit of analysis for this study. Scholars use purposeful sampling in qualitative studies to identify and select

participants (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Patton, 2015). I used purposeful sampling to identify and select participants for this study, per the inclusion criteria. I used semistructured interviews as the primary source of gathering qualitative data. I used Microsoft Teams and the telephone to conduct the semistructured interviews. My objective was to interview 20 participant employees who had graduated from the federal government organization's Mid-Career Leadership Program (MCLP) or until reaching saturation. Researchers collect data from multiple sources for data triangulation (Flick, 2018; Yin, 2018). I collected data from graduates of the 2015–2019 MCLP cohorts to capture different dimensions and perspectives for data triangulation.

Data analysis in qualitative studies involves a systematic search for patterns, trends, categories, and themes (Bernard, 2011). My data analysis in this study consisted of a search for patterns and themes that cut across the entire data set. Thematic analysis is a standard method of data analysis used in qualitative research (Brooks et al., 2015) that aligns with the qualitative exploratory single-case study design. Researchers use thematic analysis to group, classify, and summarize qualitative data in a way to uncover essential concepts within the data set (Given, 2008). In this study, I used thematic analysis to organize and summarize the interview data to identify the emergent themes. In qualitative studies, researchers ensure trustworthiness by addressing creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981). I addressed creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in this study to ensure trustworthiness.

## Definitions

*Ability:* Ability refers to the extent to which trainees are capable of processing, learning, retaining, generalizing, and maintaining learned skills in the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Grossman & Salas, 2011).

*Conditions of Transfer:* Conditions of transfer include the generalization of the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired in the training environment to the work environment and the maintenance of those skills over time in the work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

*Far Transfer:* Far transfer happens when a set of skills generalizes across two or more loosely related areas (Sala et al., 2019; Sala & Gobet, 2017).

*Generalization:* Refers to whether the employee can apply newly acquired learning to contexts different than the training context (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

*Individual Characteristics:* Individual characteristics include ability, self-efficacy, and motivation factors (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Bhatti et al., 2013; Sahoo & Mishra, 2019).

*Maintenance:* Maintenance refers to maintaining and improving learned skills over time in the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

*Motivation:* Motivation refers to an employee's desire to apply and maintain newly acquired learning from the training environment back on the job in the workplace (Noe, 1986; Reinhold et al., 2018).

*Near Transfer:* Near transfer is the generalization of a set of skills across two or more related areas (Sala et al., 2019; Sala & Gobet, 2017).



*Opportunity to Perform:* Opportunity to perform is the extent to which a trainee is provided with or actively secures work experiences related to the tasks that he or she recently received training for and was trained to perform (Ford et al., 1992; Huang et al., 2017).

*Organizational Support:* Organizational support is those factors found in the workplace environment that trainees perceive as encouraging or discouraging their use of new skills and abilities on the job (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004).

*Peer Support:* Peer support refers to the extent that employees perceive that their co-workers and colleagues support their use of new training in the workplace (Reinhold et al., 2018).

*Perceived Utility:* Perceived utility refers to the degree in which employees regard the training as applicable, useful, or relevant (Grossman & Salas, 2011) to what they need to learn to perform their jobs better (Celestin & Yunfei, 2018a; Turab & Casimir, 2015).

*Personality Traits:* Five main types of personality traits, that include emotional stability, extraversion, openness to experiences, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Choi et al., 2015; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Holton, 2005).

*Self-efficacy:* Self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to coordinate and execute a specific course of action to achieve intended results (Iqbal & Dastgeer, 2017; Vignoli et al., 2018).

*Supervisor Support:* Supervisor support is the extent to which employees believe their first-line supervisors and managers are supportive about them using new learning back on the job in the workplace (Reinhold et al., 2018).

*Training Transfer:* Training transfer occurs when employees can apply newly acquired training from the training context to the job context and make meaningful impacts (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Ford & Weissbein, 1997).

*Training Design Factors:* Training design factors include the incorporation and integration of learning principles, strategies, methods, and techniques (Alias et al., 2019; Alshaali et al., 2018; Velada et al., 2007), the arrangement, and order of training material, and the applicability of the training content to the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

*Training Input Factors:* Training input factors include trainee characteristics, training design factors, and workplace environment factors (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2019).

*Training Output Factors:* Training output factors include the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired as a result of the learning and retention of the training content (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Ford & Weissbein, 1997).

*Workplace Environment Factors:* Workplace environment factors include organizational climate or support, social support from supervisors and peers, as well as opportunities and limitations to perform learned behaviors on the job in the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are aspects of a study that the researchers believe to be true but are somewhat outside of the control of the researcher (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Simon & Goes, 2018; Wargo, 2015). I based this study on four broad assumptions. My first assumption was that this study would yield results that would be beneficial to

organizations seeking more understanding and insight into how to improve training transfer in the workplace. Training transfer is essential for enhancing individual, team, and organizational performance, in addition to ensuring a sufficient return on training investments (Huang et al., 2017; Yelon et al., 2014). My second assumption was that the inclusion criteria of the sample would be appropriate for addressing the research question in the study. I used purposeful sampling to intentionally select participants for the interviews. My third assumption was that participants would provide honest and candid responses and willingly share their perspectives on how to improve training transfer in the workplace. I assured the participants that their confidentiality would be maintained at all times and informed in writing about the voluntary nature of participation. My fourth assumption was that participants would be representative of the population.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Delimitations result from the specific choices made by researchers to define the boundaries and scope of a study (Simon & Goes, 2018). I narrowed the study's scope to employees of the participating federal government organization in South Carolina. The period of the qualitative inquiry and the exploratory single-case study, which was the chosen design for this study, delimited the research. I used purposeful sampling to identify, select, and interview 20 employees from the federal government organization who had graduated from the 2015–2019 MCLP cohorts. The plan was to interview 20 participants or until reaching saturation. I used semistructured interviews to ask employees questions to stimulate insightful responses to gain an in-depth and

contextualized understanding of their perspectives on how to improve training transfer in the workplace.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are areas within a study that are outside of the control of the researcher (Roberts, 2010; Simon & Goes, 2018; Wargo, 2015). Participation in the study was voluntary. I did not have any control over those employees who decided to participate in the study. Participants might not have been representative of the population. Participants might have chosen not to be open and honest and provide insightful and truthful information during the semistructured interviews, given that I am going to share the findings from the study with the federal government organization. Before the semistructured interviews, I encouraged participants to be candid in providing insightful and sincere responses to the interview questions, as the objective of the research was to capture their perspectives about improving training transfer in their workplace. The small sample size, coupled with the peculiar nature of the federal government organization under study, might not allow for the transferability of the findings from this study to non-government organizational settings. The federal government organization is unique because it is staffed and operated by military service members and government civilian employees. I developed and maintained analytic memos to provide sufficient details about the study in terms of design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Readers of the study can use the analytic memos to determine whether they can apply the study and its findings to other organizational contexts. I used an audit trail and reflective

journaling to document all decisions made during the entire research process to maintain dependability in this study.

I was the primary instrument for data collection in this study. The participants and I work for the federal government organization. I was not in any power relationship with the participants to influence the outcome of the interviews. My biases might still have been reflected in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Researchers use bracketing to suspend or hold in abeyance any preconceived notions or experiences with a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Tufford & Newman, 2012). Reflexive journaling is a form of bracketing (Moustakas, 1994; Tufford & Newman, 2012). I used reflexive journaling in this study to disclose and manage my personal assumptions or biases.

### **Significance**

Scholars and practitioners might use this qualitative exploratory single-case study to develop a deeper understanding of employee perspectives on how to improve training transfer in the workplace. Employee perspective is especially relevant because they ultimately decide what, when, and how to transfer learned knowledge, skills, and abilities to the workplace (Blume et al., 2019). Organizational leaders might benefit from the findings of this study because the findings in this study might increase their understanding of employee perspectives of training transfer, which might provide them with insight into how to improve transfer conditions within the organization and increase employee training transfer rates in the workplace.

**Significance to Theory and Practice**

The results of this study might reinforce, complement, and extend previous studies by providing human resource development (HRD) and training scholars with better insights into employee perspectives about how to improve the application, generalization, and maintenance of new knowledge, skills, and competencies in the workplace. This study might contribute to the transfer literature because few or no studies have investigated employee perceptions about improving training transfer. Leaders and managers within organizations might be able to use the findings from this study to develop and implement strategies, policies, and procedures to increase the odds of their employees successfully using new learning in the workplace, which might lead to improvements in the performance of individuals, teams, and the organization as a whole.

**Significance to Social Change**

The findings from this study might contribute to positive social change by providing organizational leaders with a better understanding of employee perceptions about improving training transfer in the workplace. Leaders and managers might be able to use insights from the results of this study to develop and implement organizational strategies, policies, and procedures, and post-training transfer interventions to improve the transfer of training to the workplace. Implementation of the organizational changes might lead to increases in training transfer rates, which might lead to improvements in individual and team productivity and organizational performance.

## **Summary**

Chapter 1 included an introduction to the study with a background on training transfer and the research problem that I addressed in the study. Chapter 1 included a summary of the extant literature and presented the gaps in the literature that led to a need for this study. I also discussed the purpose, research question, and conceptual framework that grounded this study. Chapter 1 addressed the rationale for using a qualitative exploratory single-case study designed. Chapter 1 also included a discussion about the definitions, assumptions, and the scope and delimitations that defined the boundaries of this study. I ended the chapter with a discussion about the limitations of this study and the potential significance of the study to theory, practice, and social change. In Chapter 2, I provide a comprehensive review of the extant literature on training transfer. I also include in Chapter 2, research related to the chosen design and methodology, a discussion about the gaps found in the literature, and describe how this study addresses a specific gap in the literature.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The research problem that I examined in this study is that there are no set strategies based on employee input regarding how best to transfer training to the workplace. Additional studies are needed to explore employee perspectives about improving training transfer in organizations (Ford et al., 2018; Poell, 2017). Employee views on how to improve training transfer in the workplace are essential, given that training transfer is the primary means by which they influence productivity and enhance organizational performance (Ma et al., 2018). The findings from the literature review suggested that only a small percentage of learning acquired in the training environment transfers to the job in the workplace after training (Brown et al., 2016; Chauhan et al., 2016; Granado, 2019). Some estimates suggested that employees transfer less than 10% of new training back to their workplace (Ma et al., 2018; Shaari et al., 2016). The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single-case study was to explore employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization.

In Chapter 2, I discuss my literature search strategy and the conceptual framework that I used to ground this study. Chapter 2 also includes a discussion of the literature that contributed to understanding the research problem being studied. I discussed research related to the methods and design. Chapter 2 also includes a discussion about the gaps that I found in the literature and includes a discussion about how my study fills a specific gap in the literature.



### **Literature Search Strategy**

I used the following databases to identify peer-reviewed articles: Business Source Complete, Emerald Insight, Academic Search Complete, and the Human Resource Development Quarterly Journal, and Google Scholar. I used the key search terms *training transfer, learning transfer, transfer of training, and learning transfer*. I used the main Boolean search strings *individual characteristics AND training transfer, training design AND training transfer, and workplace environment factors AND training transfer*. Additionally, I used the Boolean search strings *ability AND training transfer, self-efficacy AND training transfer, motivation AND training transfer, personality AND training transfer, perceived utility AND training transfer, organizational support AND training transfer, supervisor support AND training transfer, peer support AND training transfer, and opportunity to perform AND training transfer*.

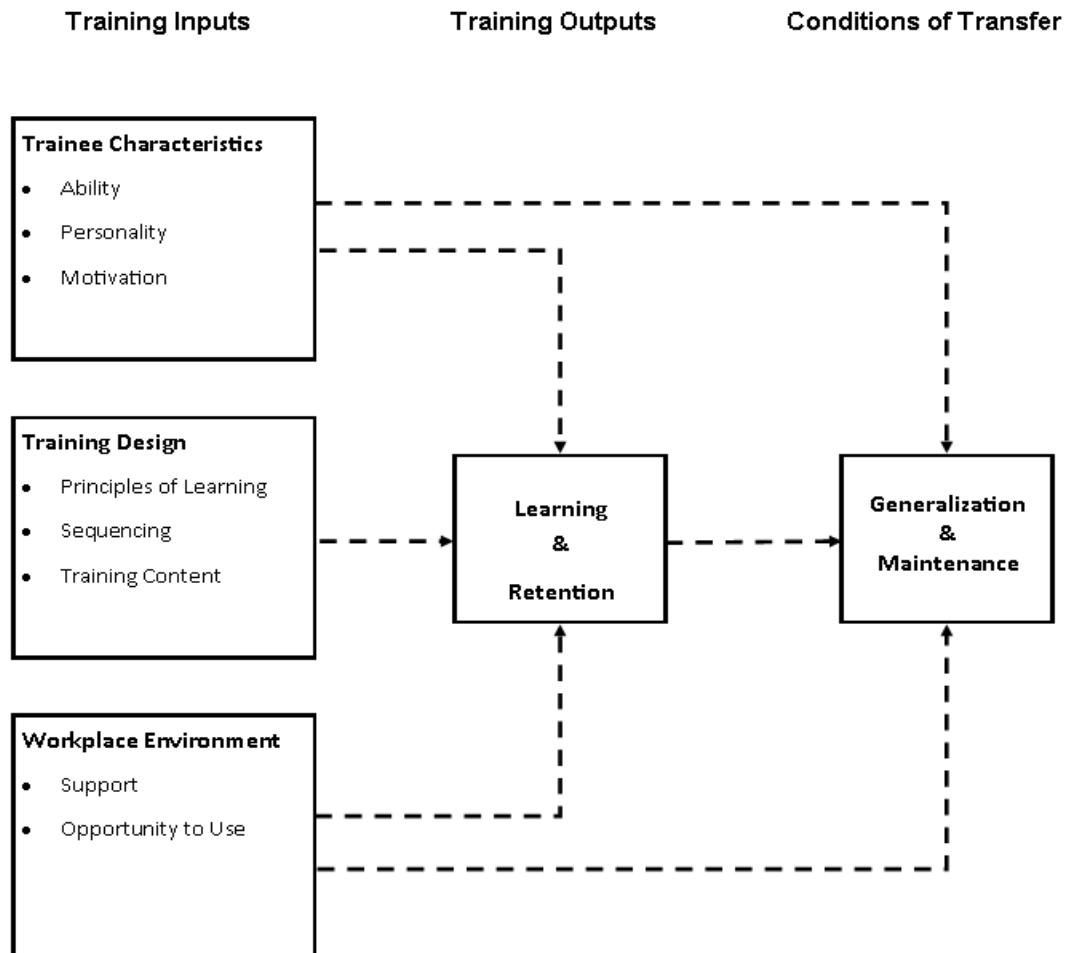
### **Conceptual Framework**

I used Baldwin and Ford's (1988) concept of training transfer as the conceptual framework for this study. Training transfer occurs when employees can apply newly acquired training from the training context to the job context (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Ford & Weissbein, 1997). Moreover, for positive training transfer to occur, the new learning must be generalized to the job setting and maintained over time and lead to positive outcomes (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Baldwin and Ford (1988) developed a model to illustrate the concept of training transfer to understand the process by which employees

learn, use, retain, generalize, and maintain knowledge, skills, and abilities in the workplace to improve job and organizational performance (Blume et al., 2019).

**Figure 1**

*A Model of the Training Transfer Process*



*Note.* This figure illustrates the training transfer process. Adapted from “Transfer of Training: A Review and Directions for Future Research,” by T. T. Baldwin and J. K. Ford, 1988, *Personnel Psychology*, 41, p. 65 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1988.tb00632.x>). Copyright 1988 by Personnel Psychology, Inc. Adapted with permission.

As the model in Figure 1 illustrated, training transfer consists of three categories: training input factors, training output factors, and conditions of transfer. Training input factors include trainee characteristics, training design factors, and workplace environment factors (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2019). In the training transfer model, the training input factors enable learning and retention to happen, which in turn, determine if newly acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities are generalized and maintained in the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Training output factors include the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired as a result of the learning and retention of the training content (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Ford & Weissbein, 1997). The conditions of transfer include the generalization of the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired in the training environment to the work environment and the maintenance of those KSAs over time in the work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Indicative of the training transfer model is the notion that training input factors, coupled with training output factors, directly influences the conditions of transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

In their seminal paper, Baldwin and Ford (1988) organized their review of the literature around a model of training transfer and provided a critique and analysis of the current transfer literature and offered suggestions for future research. At the time of the seminal paper by Baldwin and Ford (1988), many scholars had concluded that the majority of acquired training was not being applied to the job; however, there had not been a review or critique of the literature to support this claim.

Since the seminal paper by Baldwin and Ford (1988), there has been a significant increase in the training transfer literature. Ford and Weissbein (1997) provided an

updated review and analysis of the empirical articles published on the transfer of training. Cheng and Ho (2001) reviewed major studies on training transfer published in the 10 years following the paper by Baldwin and Ford (1988).

At the beginning of the 21st century, scholars and researchers continued to advance the literature on training transfer by expanding on Baldwin and Ford's (1988) seminal paper. Burke and Hutchins (2007) provided an integrated and analytical review of factors that affected the transfer of training, including individual characteristics, training design, and delivery, and work environmental factors since the 1988 review by Baldwin and Ford. Cheng and Hampson (2008) explored a new method that concentrated on the role of the individual trainee as the new focal point for training transfer research. Burke and Hutchins (2008) conducted a study to determine best practices in training transfer and proposed a new model of training transfer. Baldwin et al. (2009) followed up the initial review with a review and analysis of transfer research published since Baldwin and Ford's (1988) review, followed by a discussion of two conceptual advancements to simplify and expand on the understanding of transfer, and concluded with recommendations for future research. Blume et al. (2010) followed up the literature review by Baldwin et al. (2009) with a meta-analytic study to determine the predictors of transfer of training.

In the second decade of the 21st century, research on training transfer flourished. Researchers continued to conduct reviews and meta-analyses to take stock of advancements in the transfer literature and offered directions for future research. In their study, Yelon et al. (2014) defined and organized various types of applications into a

taxonomy of use to provide further clarification and anecdotal evidence about what it meant to put into practice, newly acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace.

Baldwin et al. (2017) conducted a review of the current state of training transfer research literature, covering the last 30 years since their last review in Baldwin and Ford (1988) and offered prescriptions for future research. Baldwin et al. (2017) offered recommendations such as adopting a more consumer-centric mindset with a focus on informing training interventions that are important and frequently used in contemporary organizations. In a recent review of the training transfer literature, Ford et al. (2018) reviewed and analyzed the transfer research to highlight what was reliably known and unknown about two critical conditions of transfer: the (a) generalization or application of knowledge, skills, and abilities learned in training and (b) the maintenance of that learning over a specific period in the workplace. Taken as a whole, the training transfer literature since Baldwin and Ford's (1988) seminal paper has mostly agreed that the three primary training input factors: trainee characteristics, training design factors, and work environmental factors, influence training transfer and training outcomes (Ford & Weissbein, 1997; Sørensen, 2017).

In this study, I used Baldwin and Ford's (1988) concept of training transfer as the conceptual framework along with the qualitative exploratory single-case study approach to explore in-depth employee perceptions to understand how to improve training transfer within the context of a federal government organization. Despite the recent increase in the training transfer literature (Baldwin et al., 2017; Ford et al., 2018) and leadership training literature (Day et al., 2014), there are only a few studies that have explored

employee's perspectives about training transfer from leadership training (Johnson et al., 2018) and its effectiveness in federal government organizations (Seidle et al., 2016). I used the concept of training transfer to acquire a rich, detailed, and contextualized understanding of the individual and personalized perspectives of employees who had graduated from a Mid-Career Leadership Program.

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of the literature review was to analyze and synthesize the training transfer literature to identify a gap to justify the need for this study. This chapter contains a review of the literature relevant to training transfer in the workplace. The chapter consists of concepts from the training transfer model by Baldwin and Ford (1988). I defined and operationalized the term training transfer. I discussed the training transfer problem. I reviewed and discussed the training input factors, including individual characteristics, training design factors, and workplace environment factors. After a review of the literature that situated the current study, I identify the gap in the training transfer literature that led to this research.

### **Training Transfer**

The term training transfer has been around for over 100 years (Thorndike & Woodworth, 1901). The first instance of this definition appeared in a journal article by Thorndike and Woodworth (1901), involving a study that tested the extent to which individuals learning how to respond to one task in one situation influenced their responses to another task in a different situation (Adams, 1987; Blume et al., 2010). By the end of the 20th century, several new definitions of training transfer emerged.

Georgenson (1982) who is credited for being one of the first to acknowledge in the literature the existence of the transfer problem, defined training transfer as the extent to which employees used effectively and continuously, the KSAs acquired in the classroom in the performance of their jobs back in the workplace. A few years later, Baldwin and Ford (1988) expanded on Georgenson's (1982) definition by emphasizing that for positive training transfer to occur, trainees must not only effectively apply the KSAs acquired in a training context to the job context (Ford et al., 2018), but must also be able to generalize and maintain the learned behavior over some time in the workplace (Sitzmann & Weinhardt, 2019; Yelon et al., 2014; Yelon et al., 2013). Thus, the transfer of skills is the result of generalizing learned KSAs across multiple, yet different work settings (Sala et al., 2019). Therefore, the transferability of learned KSAs is critical; if the new learning does not transfer to the job, the training expenditures are wasted (Barnett & Ceci, 2002). Dinsmore et al. (2014) contended that successful training transfer was largely dependent on an employee's ability to understand when and when not to apply learned KSAs to a specific situation. It is also worth noting that training transfer is not a single event; rather it is an ongoing process; thus, organizations need to take steps to ensure employees are applying and maintaining KSAs within the organization as planned (Ford et al., 2018). Therefore, in terms of operationalization, training transfer refers to the application, generalization, and maintenance of learned KSAs in the workplace that leads to impactful changes in individual and organizational behavior (Blume et al., 2019) and meaningful improvements in productivity and organizational performance (Ford et al., 2018; Laker & Powell, 2011).

## **Types of Transfer**

There are two types of transfer: near transfer and far transfer. Near transfer is the generalization of a set of skills across two or more related areas (Sala et al., 2019; Sala & Gobet, 2017). For instance, near transfer occurs when the learning gained in the training environment closely resembles the tasks to be performed back on the job in the workplace (Sørensen, 2017). The type of training resulting in near transfer includes instructions on specific concepts, procedures for problem-solving, and decision-making (Kim & Lee, 2001). Thorndike and Woodworth (1901) hypothesized that near transfer occurred most often and that the likelihood of training transfer taking place is largely dependent on the extent to which the source domain and target domain both share common features (Sørensen, 2017). Thorndike and Woodworth (1901) also ascertained that near transfer would likely occur in situations where similarities existed in the stimuli and responses in the learning and transfer environments (Blume et al., 2010). Kim and Lee (2001) found that for near transfer to occur, there needs to be close similarities between training and job content, close similarities between training and job outcomes, and the training must emphasize specific concepts and skills. The implications to practice are that near transfer requires more similarities between the training environment and the work environment (Kim & Lee, 2001) and as a result, direct transfer occurs when employees can apply learned KSAs gained from the training environment that is similar to settings in the workplace (Ismail et al., 2015).

For far transfer to occur a set of skills must be generalizable across multiple loosely related areas (Sala et al., 2019; Sala & Gobet, 2017). For example, for far transfer



to happen, there needs to be a general likeness between the training and job content, as well as comparable likeness between training and job outcomes, and the training must emphasize general concepts and skills (Kim & Lee, 2001). The type of training that results in far transfer includes instructions on general concepts, broad principles, problem-solving rules, decision-making rules (Kim & Lee, 2001). Sørensen (2017) concluded that far transfer happens in situations where the learning gained in the training environment is vastly different from the tasks performed back on the job in the workplace. Far transfer suggests that trainees learn more general KSAs that could be applied to a broader set of contexts than those found in the training environment (Kim & Lee, 2001). As a result, indirect transfer occurs when employees can apply learned KSAs gained in training environments that are dissimilar to the contexts found in the workplace (Ismail et al., 2015).

Sala et al. (2019) found that near transfer was often predicted to occur more often than far transfer, thus acknowledging that near transfer is more common than far transfer. Thorndike and Woodworth (1901), using theory, predicted that near transfer took place more often than far transfer. Findings in the extant literature support the idea that transfer is more likely to occur with near transfer tasks, such as those with a high degree of similarity between the learning tasks and the job tasks, and less likely to occur, as employees move on to performing far transfer tasks, in which there is little to no similarity between the learned tasks and environment and the actual tasks performed in the transfer environment (Blume et al., 2010).

## **The Transfer Problem**

Organizations have been dealing with the training transfer problem for many years. A recurring theme in the training literature is the existence of the transfer problem in organizations (Baldwin et al., 2017; Blume et al., 2019; Ford et al., 2018). The transfer problem is serious because it signals that employees are failing to apply learned KSAs to improve their behavior and job performance, which also indicates that training is unlikely to influence organizational performance and yield expected outcomes (Saks & Belcourt, 2006). Georgenson (1982) was one of the first scholars that recognized the transfer problem was a growing concern for many organizations, especially in times of budget constraints and when the return on investment (ROI) in training and development is paramount. A few years later, Baldwin and Ford (1988), in their critical review, acknowledged the growing concern of the transfer problem that organizations were experiencing at the time. At the time of the review by Baldwin and Ford (1988), estimates showed that organizations were spending as much as \$100 billion on employee training and development, with no more than 10% transferring to the job (Georgenson, 1982).

Organizations continued to invest billions of dollars on training initiatives to increase employee productivity and performance (Yelon et al., 2014). In 2019, organizations in the United States spent \$166 billion on employee training and development (Freifeld, 2019), suggesting that training was a priority for organizations (Ho, 2016). Despite the significant investments in and potential benefits of training, it is only useful if employees transfer training from the training context to the workplace, and

it leads to meaningful impacts within the organization (Blume et al., 2019; Yelon et al., 2014). Evidence from the extant literature suggested that regardless of the large investments in training and development, organizations were still uncertain about the extent to which employees transferred training and whether they saw improvements in their job and organizational performance (Khan et al., 2015).

Even though it is difficult to measure transfer and while many organizations do not measure the transfer of new learning to the job (Yelon et al., 2014), estimates since the 1980s suggested the rate of training transfer were abysmal with most studies touting that employees only transferred a small percentage of training back to the job in the workplace (Sitzmann & Weinhardt, 2019). Low transfer rates present a serious problem for organizations given that training transfer is the primary means by which training impacts organizations (Saks & Belcourt, 2006). Estimates suggested that between 52% and 92% of new learning diminished within the first year after employees completed training, resulting in suboptimal use of new training in the workplace and jeopardizing individual and organizational performance (Hughes et al., 2020). Other estimates suggested only 10% was transferred with 25% remaining six months after and only 15% a year (Khan et al., 2015).

There was little agreement at the beginning and end of the 20th century in regard to whether training transfer occurred (Barnett & Ceci, 2002). At the turn of the century, where Judd (1908) found it possible to generalize training to the job and workplace, Thorndike and Woodworth (1901) found it highly unlikely that transfer occurred. Similarly, at the end of the century, Halpern (1998) concluded that numerous studies

showed that critical thinking could promote training transfer to novel situations.

Detterman (1993) disagreed with such findings and concluded that the majority of researchers at the time mostly agreed that little to no transfer occurred.

There were legitimate concerns that the training transfer problem was still significant and continued to be a difficult, challenging, and frustrating endeavor for many organizations (Blume et al., 2019; Ford et al., 2018), even though US corporations continued to spend billions of dollars on employee training and development (Baldwin et al., 2017). There was considerable disagreement among those in the scholarly community about what constituted training transfer, the extent to which transfer occurred, and about the underlying factors that made up the transfer process (Barnett & Ceci, 2002). Scholars and practitioners alike continued to question how much if any, of what individuals learned during a training experience was transferred back to the job.

While scholars have substantially advanced the transfer literature, there is still an understandable concern that transfer remains a serious problem, and there is much more to be learned about the field (Ford et al., 2018). Ascher (2013) found that while the transfer research had increased over the decades, most of it was descriptive and did not identify ways to manage, change, or improve training transfer to improve individual and organizational performance. Despite evidence indicating that training is beneficial to both employees and organizations, there is still far less consensus about whether training at the individual level is effective for achieving organizational outcomes (Ford et al., 2018).

Consequently, training transfer continues to be a serious problem, and there are ongoing

calls for more empirical evidence to improve the training transfer into the workplace (Baldwin et al., 2017).

### **Individual Characteristics**

Individual characteristics are widely accepted as primary predictors of training transfer (Grossman & Salas, 2011; Nikandrou et al., 2009; Shaari et al., 2016). Individual characteristics includes ability, self-efficacy, and motivation factors, and perceived utility (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Bhatti et al., 2013; Sahoo & Mishra, 2019). Research has shown that the individual characteristics of employees directly affected their ability to learn, synthesize, connect, and apply newly acquired KSAs to the workplace (Nikandrou et al., 2009). Noe (1986) argued that training outcomes, such as training transfer, were the functions of an individual's ability to learn, beliefs, motivation, and perceptions of the work environment. Similarly, McCracken et al. (2012) concluded that impediments to training transfer included lack of goal setting, lack of individual confidence, and self-efficacy.

Studies have suggested that individual characteristics had a positive effect on training transfer in the workplace. Pham and Le (2019) used the quantitative method to collect data using a self-administered questionnaire, from 185 employees of seven Vietnamese manufacturing firms to determine the influence of individual characteristics on transferring technical training to the workplace. The findings from the study by Pham and Le (2019) confirmed that individual characteristics, including ability and the perceived utility of the training, played a significant role in determining whether employees were able to transfer training, such as technical training, to the workplace. In

another study, Ahmad (2013), used a survey to collect data from 198 participants who attended a training program, to determine if a relationship existed between individual characteristics and training transfer. The results from the study by Ahmad (2013) indicated that there were a positive and significant correlation between individual characteristics and training transfer, suggesting that individual characteristics are important factors that contribute to successful training transfer. Therefore, based on the findings by Pham and Le (2019) and Ahmad (2013), it might be argued that organizational efforts need to focus on individual characteristics to improve training transfer in the workplace.

### ***Ability***

Ability in the context of training transfer, refers to the extent to which trainees are capable of processing, learning, retaining, generalizing, and maintaining learned skills in the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Grossman & Salas, 2011). Ford et al. (1992) found that individuals with higher cognitive abilities performed more activities related to the training received. In a meta-analysis, spanning 20 years of literature on training, Colquitt et al. (2000) found that the corrected correlation coefficient between cognitive ability and training transfer was moderately high at .43. Colquitt et al. (2000) echoed earlier findings that suggested that in most cases, intelligence was exhibited through learning and took on an important role in applying, generalizing, and maintaining new learning on the job in the workplace. Similarly, Grossman and Salas (2011) concluded that cognitive ability played a crucial role in training transfer and that those individuals who possessed higher levels of cognitive ability were more likely to apply, generalize,

and maintain new learning in the workplace. In a recent meta-analysis, Huang et al. (2015) argued that ability factors were the most important determinants of the extent to which trainees could transfer and that cognitive ability was a significant predictor of maximum training performance outcomes, such as training transfer. Taking all of the findings as a whole, illustrates the need for organizations to consider that an individual's cognitive ability will play a significant role in whether they can transfer training to the workplace.

### ***Self-efficacy***

Self-efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to coordinate and execute a specific course of action to achieve intended results (Iqbal & Dastgeer, 2017; Vignoli et al., 2018). In the context of training, self-efficacy is a concern with one's confidence in their ability to learn successfully, and apply, generalize, and maintain targeted skills on the job in the workplace (Iqbal & Dastgeer, 2017). Employees' confidence in their ability to apply what they have learned during a training event relates to their personal beliefs about their feelings, behavior, and motivation (Iqbal & Dastgeer, 2017). Study results suggested that individuals high in self-efficacy had a higher likelihood of applying the new learning to perform more relevant, complex, and difficult tasks back on the job (Ford et al., 1992). In their meta-analysis, Gegenfurtner et al. (2013) used 29 studies to examine the longitudinal development of the relationship between self-efficacy and transfer before and after training. Consistent with social cognitive theory, Gegenfurtner et al. (2013) found positive population correlation estimates between self-efficacy and training transfer before ( $\rho = 0.31$ ) and after ( $\rho = 0.39$ ) training. Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017)

collected data from 215 employees working in the banking sector of twin cities of Pakistan to examine the mediating effects of motivation to transfer between self-efficacy, training retention, and transfer of training. Based on the results of their study, Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) concluded that self-efficacy had a positive and significant impact on training transfer. Furthermore, Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) found that employees with higher levels of self-efficacy and retention exhibited higher levels of motivation to transfer, followed by higher levels of training transfer. Thus, the findings in the study by Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) provided empirical evidence showing that the higher an employee's self-efficacy, the higher the rate of training transfer.

### ***Motivation***

Motivation refers to an employee's desire to apply and maintain newly acquired learning from the training environment back on the job in the workplace (Noe, 1986; Reinhold et al., 2018). Ascher (2013) and Lee et al. (2014) found that motivation to transfer was significantly related to training transfer. Huang et al. (2015) similarly found that motivation factors were most important as determinants of the degree to which trainees would actually transfer new learning to the workplace. In contrast, the results from the study by Homklin et al. (2013) found that motivation to transfer was not significantly related to training transfer. However, according to Hughes et al. (2020), an employee's motivation is essential throughout the entire training lifecycle, including before, during, and after training, proving that motivation is critical to influencing the degree and quality to which employees transfer training to the workplace. Noe (1986) found that there was a strong likelihood that trainees' motivation to use acquired learning



in the performance of their jobs daily was contingent on having supervisors and peers that were supportive and provided reinforcement and feedback. For instance, employees at all levels of the organization can provide support, such as enacting strategies to improve an employee's likelihood of transferring KSAs, including finding opportunities to provide feedback to trainees on the demonstration of new KSAs in the workplace (Hughes et al., 2020). As a consequence, Noe (1986) concluded that if employees did not perceive that the organizational climate was supportive, they would be less motivated and less likely to use the newly learned skills on the job.

Grohmann et al. (2014) and Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) conducted similar studies to examine the impact of motivation factors on the training transfer process. In their quantitative study, Grohmann et al. (2014) explored the critical role of motivation to transfer in the training transfer process. Grohmann et al. (2014) examined the mediating role of motivation to transfer between training characteristics and various measures of training transfer. Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) examined the mediating effects of motivation to transfer between self-efficacy, training retention, and transfer of training.

Grohmann et al. (2014) tested whether the variable motivation to transfer mediated the relationship between training characteristics and transfer. Grohmann et al. (2014) found that the overall results from their study showed that motivation to transfer was a link between training characteristics and training transfer. The findings from the study by Grohmann et al. (2014) also showed that the impact of motivation to transfer on transfer outcomes was very dependent on the individual; that is, motivation to transfer may have a more significant effect on individuals that are considered high transferrers.

Thus, motivation to transfer is key to getting employees who are already predisposed to transfer, to transfer more of their learning to the workplace (Grohmann et al., 2014).

Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) tested whether motivation to transfer and learning retention could explain the relationship between two trainee characteristics (self-efficacy and retention) and transfer of training. The results of the study by Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) confirmed the relationship between self-efficacy, retention, and transfer of training. Furthermore, Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) found support for all five of their hypotheses. Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) found a positive relationship between perceived self-efficacy, learning retention and transfer, and a positive relationship between self-efficacy, learning retention, and motivation to transfer. The findings in the study by Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) also suggested that employees with higher self-efficacy and retention levels were highly motivated to transfer, which might lead to higher transfer rates. An implication based on the findings by Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017) is that employees that are more confident and able to retain new material will be more motivated to transfer it, leading to higher transfer rates.

The results from the study conducted by Renta-Davids et al. (2014) were similar to the findings in the studies conducted by Grohmann et al. (2014) and Iqbal and Dastgeer (2017). The results in the study by Renta-Davids et al. (2014) showed that students who were motivated to participate in training had a stronger association with training transfer. Thus, Renta-Davids et al. (2014) concluded that students who attended training out of interest or perceived utility, perceived higher levels of transfer to the job. A similar implication is that participants who felt the training was going to benefit them

showed higher levels of transfer rates (Renta-Davids et al., 2014). Collectively, the findings from these studies showed that motivation is one of the trainee characteristics that has a significant impact on whether an individual possesses the drive and passion for transferring their newly acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities to the workplace.

### ***Personality Traits***

Various scholars, including Tonhäuser and Bükér (2016) have examined the association between the five elements of the Five-Factor Model (FFM) (Costa & McCrae, 1995) and the training transfer process, using Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) levels of training evaluation (Blume et al., 2010; Colquitt & Simmering, 1998; Hinrichs, 2014). The Five-Factor Model is a hierarchical categorization of five main types of personality traits that includes emotional stability, extraversion, openness to experiences, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Choi et al., 2015; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Holton, 2005). Individual differences, based on the FFM personality traits, might influence training transfer outcomes (Chiaburu et al., 2010). Herold et al. (2002) tested the effects of three dispositional variables (openness to experience, emotional stability, and conscientiousness) on training outcomes, across multiple stages of a training program. Herold et al. (2002) investigated the role of individual differences in explaining training transfer from multiple phases of a multistage, aviation training program. Herold et al. (2002) found mixed support for their hypotheses testing the effects of the three dispositional variables on training success across the three different phases of training. In particular, Herold et al. (2002) found that within the context of complex skills training, such as in-cockpit flight training, those individuals who scored high on openness to

experience and emotional stability, were able to obtain the critical skills needed at a faster pace than those individuals with lower scores. Although contrary to the results of previous studies, Herold et al. (2002) did not find that conscientiousness affected learning outcomes.

A significant amount of research supported the notion that personality traits affected training efficiency, job performance, and educational performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick et al., 1998; Colquitt & Simmering, 1998). Proactive personality is the extent that individuals are inclined to take action and make the necessary changes to their environments to realize their goals (Trifiletti et al., 2009; Vignoli & Depolo, 2019). Vignoli and Depolo (2019) found support for their hypothesis that proactive personality could influence training transfer. The results from the study by Vignoli and Depolo (2019) showed that the relationship between proactive personality and training transfer was fully mediated by the variables motivation to learn and motivation to transfer, which supported the hypothesized model. Based on the results of their study, Vignoli and Depolo (2019) concluded that proactive employees were likely to have higher levels of motivation to learn, which might influence their motivation to transfer, and might increase their chances of transferring the new learning back to the job in the workplace. Roberts et al. (2018) similarly, asserted that the proactive personality mindset might improve employees' commitment to transferring new learning back to the job, especially since proactive personality was believed to orient individuals toward taking ownership and responsibility for improving their job performance and work environments.

Naquin and Holton (2002) found the four personality traits assessed in their study to be antecedents of the variable motivation to improve work through learning (MTIWL), with 57% of the variance in MTIWL explained by positive affectivity, work commitment, and extraversion. Naquin and Holton (2002) thus concluded that employees with high positive affectivity scores were more likely to be more engaged in training, which might increase their chances of finishing the training, followed by transferring the training to the workplace. In a similar study as the one conducted by Naquin and Holton (2002), Ng and Ahmad (2018) collected quantitative data from 131 trainees in Malaysia to explore the role of MTIWL as a mediator linking personality traits (conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness) and social support to training transfer. Ng and Ahmad (2018) found in their study that the three personality traits, coupled with social support influenced training transfer via the mediating role of MTIWL. Ng and Ahmad (2018) also concluded that individuals who scored high on conscientiousness were more likely to use their new learning to improve their job performance, while those individuals who were highly extraverted were more motivated to use new learning to improve their job performance. The findings from the study by Ng and Ahmad (2018) showed that individuals who were either highly conscientious or highly extraverted had a higher chance of successful training transfer. Of the five personality traits, openness to experience (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Driskell et al., 1994; Gough, 1987), conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount, 1991; McCrae & Costa, 1991), and emotional stability (Herold et al., 2002) received the strongest support in the literature for having a

significant relationship with training outcomes, including training transfer outcomes (Holton, 2005).

### ***Perceived Utility***

Another important individual characteristic is perceived utility. Perceived utility refers to the degree which employees regard the training as applicable, useful, or relevant (Grossman & Salas, 2011) to what they need to learn to perform their jobs better (Celestin & Yunfei, 2018a; Turab & Casimir, 2015). Vansteenkiste et al. (2018) described perceived utility value as being an individual's personal belief that performing a specific task or activity will be beneficial for achieving short-term and long-term training goals and suggested that learners will place a high perceived utility value on a task or activity if it is personal, meaningful, and are more likely to be motivated to engage in it. Turab and Casimir (2015) argued that the value of training is predicated on the perception of the usefulness of what is taught with respect to improving job-related performance. According to Celestin and Yunfei (2018a), when employees perceive the training material to be useful, it increases the likelihood they will apply the acquired KSAs to their jobs in the workplace. Chiaburu and Lindsay (2008) ascertained that trainees developed an opinion or viewpoint that is dependent upon their understanding of the relationship between training and expected outcomes, such as its usefulness in enhancing their job or career (Clark & Mils, 1993). Factors influencing employees' perception of training utility include, finding value and credibility in using the training to improve job performance, a recognition of the need to improve job performance, the belief that applying the new KSAs will improve their performance, and the perception

that the new learning can be easily applied and maintain on the job in the workplace (Grossman & Salas, 2011).

The notion that perceived utility of training influences training transfer is well supported in the training transfer literature (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Grossman & Salas, 2011). Previous studies have shown that when individuals value a task or activity, and expect to be successful at completing it, they will be motivated to carry out the activity (McQuillin et al., 2015). The results of a quantitative study by Axtell et al. (1997) showed that trainees' perceptions of the relevance and usefulness of the learned skills, coupled with their motivation to apply the KSAs were critical variables in determining training transfer rates. In a study by Liebermann and Hoffmann (2008), in which they used a survey to collect data from 213 German bank employees who attended a quality training program, the results showed that the perceived utility of the training were found to have a strong influence on participants and their motivation to transfer, and actual transfer. In contrast, Ruona et al. (2002) administered the Learning Transfer System Inventory (LTSI) to 1,616 participants from various organizations and training programs to explore the relationship between trainee utility reactions (perceived utility) and predictors of training transfer and found limited correlations between the trainee measures and training transfer. Ruona et al. (2002) concluded that utility reactions, such as perceived utility would have limited value in diagnosing training transfer problems, analyzing training outcomes, and determining whether training transfer actually occurred.

In contrast to the findings of Ruona et al. (2002), Iqbal et al. (2018) found support for the relationship between perceived utility and training transfer. Iqbal et al. (2018) collected data from 215 employees in the banking sector to examine motivation as a mediator between the relationship of perceived utility of training and training transfer. The results from the study by Iqbal et al. (2018) suggested that a positive relationship existed between perceived utility of training and training transfer indirectly via motivation to transfer. Iqbal et al. (2018) concluded, based on the results of their study, that perceived utility of training was a significant predictor of whether training transfer actually occurs. In their study, Bjerregaard et al. (2016) showed that non-standard, generic training was less relevant and effective, and would result in a reduction of perceived utility of training overtime, however, standard, localized training would maintain or increase perceived utility of training. The study by Woolard and Hunt (2020) extended the body of training transfer research as it found significant, positive relationships between perceived utility of participation in the Social Issues Fair (SIF) and the political engagement learning outcomes. The results from a study by Celestin and Yunfei (2018b) showed that perceived content validity of the training material was observed and accounted for a significant amount of variance in motivation to transfer. Thus, extant research has demonstrated that perceived utility plays an essential role in training outcomes, as it is linked to motivation to transfer (Woolard & Hunt, 2020).

A conclusion drawn by Iqbal et al. (2018) was that perceived utility of training played a significant role in training outcomes. If trainees do not understand the value and relevance of the training, there is a strong possibility that the trainees will not view the



training as a way to improve their job and will not transfer it to the workplace (Iqbal et al., 2018). Consequently, trainers could promote perceived utility by helping trainees discover a personal and meaningful connection to the training material, to increase the chances that trainees will be motivated to learn and utilize the content back on the job in the workplace (Priniski et al., 2018).

### **Training Design Factors**

Training design factors impact learning and retention and ultimately influence the transfer of training to the workplace (Grossman & Salas, 2011). Training design refers to the extent which training was designed and delivered to provide trainees with the capabilities to transfer new learning to the job and includes training instructions that match the job requirements (Alias et al., 2019; Alshaali et al., 2018; Alvelos et al., 2015). Training design factors include the incorporation and integration of learning principles, strategies, methods, and techniques (Alias et al., 2019; Alshaali et al., 2018; Velada et al., 2007), the arrangement, and order of training material, and the applicability of the training content to the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988;). Training methods consists of materials and techniques trainers use in the delivery of learning to achieve the expected learning goals (Alias et al., 2019).

Trainees have a higher likelihood of transferring training to the workplace when they perceive the training was designed and delivered in a manner that is consistent with the expected learning goals and are thereby able to apply the training to the workplace (Velada et al., 2007). Training providers should identify intended training objectives beforehand because training design factors have a different effect on each outcome

(Lacerenza et al., 2017). Training content needs to meet the needs of participants by utilizing appropriate training design and methodologies (Alias et al., 2019).

Organizations should design training programs to include training design factors that increase the likelihood of transfer (Velada et al., 2007). Thus, it is prudent for organizations to identify the most efficient and cost-effective types of training design and delivery methods to meet both specific training needs of employees and the long-term goals of the organization (Arraya & Porfírio, 2017).

Multiple scholars have studied the influence of training design on training transfer because of the belief that it is one of the factors that has a significant impact on the effectiveness of individual employee training programs (Ahmad, 2013). Chauhan et al. (2017) examined the influence of training design on training transfer and the moderating role of supervisor support between these constructs. Chauhan et al. (2017) used data collected from 149 employees of a manufacturing unit in India to hypothesize and provide evidence of the impact of training design on training transfer. The results of the study by Chauhan et al. (2017) supported claims made in previous studies, that established the relevance of training design in enhancing the application of learned KSAs in the workplace (Alshaali et al., 2018). The findings from a quantitative study by Arraya and Porfírio (2017) showed strong support for the causal relationship between training design and methodology and training transfer, showing that training method had a direct effect on the transfer rates and the pace in which employees were able to apply new knowledge to the workplace. The results from Arraya and Porfírio (2017) further suggested the importance of training design in maximizing trainees' ability to transfer,

and the role of training design and methodology in enhancing training transfer (Velada et al., 2007). Muduli and Raval (2018) and Ibrahim et al. (2017) both conducted studies to determine the degree that training design and other related variables influenced training transfer. In their study, Muduli and Raval (2018) explored the relationship between work context, transfer design, and training transfer in an Indian insurance company. Muduli and Raval (2018) examined the mediating role of transfer motivation and the linkage between work context, transfer design, and training transfer. Ibrahim et al. (2017) investigated the impact of the acquisition of soft skills and training design and methodology used on work performance. Hutchins et al. (2013) took a different approach in their study. Hutchins et al. (2013) examined the relationship between the Learning Transfer System Inventory (LTSI) factors and a proximal transfer outcome score, as measured by transfer intentions. Ibrahim et al. (2017) and Hutchins et al. (2013) had similar findings. Based on the results of their study, Ibrahim et al. (2017) found significant support for the causal relationship between training design and methodology and employees' work performance. Thus, the results of the study by Ibrahim et al. (2017) showed that training design and methodology had a direct influence on the rate at which employees were able to transfer their newly acquired training from the training environment back to their workplace. Similarly, the results from the quantitative study by Hutchins et al. (2013) showed that training design was among the main variables that had the most substantial relationship with intent to transfer and motivation to transfer. The results from the study by Hutchins et al. (2013) also showed a positive and significant correlation between training design and performance expectations. Thus, a conclusion

drawn by Hutchins et al. (2013) was that when trainees thought the training was designed to be seamlessly applied to the workplace and that it would lead to improvements in job performance, they were more likely to be more committed to transferring the training. Interestingly, in their quantitative study, Muduli and Raval (2018) found that transfer design had a negative effect on training transfer. However, this finding by Muduli and Raval (2018) may be unique to their study because the results contrasted with previous findings that showed a link between training design and transfer of training.

### **Workplace Environment Factors**

In the training literature, there are three main workplace environment factors noted for their significant role in enhancing training transfer efforts, including organizational support, supervisory support, and peer support (Hughes et al., 2020). Grossman and Salas (2011) argued that workplace environment factors had a significant effect on training transfer outcomes. Workplace environment factors includes organizational climate or support, social support from supervisors and peers, as well as opportunities and limitations to perform learned behaviors on the job in the workplace (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Na-nan et al. (2017) gathered data from a sample of 220 business school students, using a 52-question questionnaire to investigate whether workplace environmental factors directly or indirectly influenced motivation to transfer and training transfer. Na-nan et al. (2017) found that peer support, opportunity to use, organizational support, technological support, and supervisor support significantly affected training transfer; and of these top five factors, peer support was the most critical, although organizational support played a major role in the transfer of training to the job.

The findings by Na-nan et al. (2017) supported previous studies showing that personal factors, along with workplace environmental factors, played a significant role in whether positive training transfer occurs (Aluko & Shonubi, 2014). Although not all studies came to the same conclusion. Ascher (2013) in a quantitative study, investigated the factors that either facilitated or hindered the training transfer process, and examined the influence of trainee characteristics, training design, work environment, and motivation to improve work through learning on training transfer. A major finding by Ascher (2013) was that workplace environment factors were not significantly related to training transfer.

Researchers continue to investigate the influence of workplace environmental factors on training transfer. Wei Tian et al. (2016), Chauhan et al. (2016), Aluko and Shonubi (2014) and Govaerts et al. (2017), all conducted studies to understand the influence of workplace environment factors on the training transfer process. Wei Tian et al. (2016) examined interpersonal support for training to understand the degree that perceived support encouraged the use of newly acquired training in the workplace. Wei Tian et al. (2016) hypothesized that employees would respond favorably to supervisor and peer support for training transfer to the workplace, which would lead to additional organizational benefits. Chauhan et al. (2016) assessed the effects of supervisor and peer support on the transfer of training post-completion of training. Chauhan et al. (2016) investigated whether transfer of training was affected by supervisor support and peer support. Chauhan et al. (2016) also tested the mediating role of motivation to transfer between the two variables and transfer of training. Aluko and Shonubi (2014) used a mixed-methods design consisting of two surveys. Aluko and Shonubi (2014) also created

a model by combining and using the work environment factors from Baldwin and Ford's (1988) training transfer model with the Kirkpatrick training evaluation model to explore the work environment factors. In essence, Aluko and Shonubi (2014) combined two training evaluation models to evaluate an educational program.

Wei Tian et al. (2016) and Aluko and Shonubi (2014) had similar findings suggesting that supervisor support and peer support were both significant influencers of the transfer of training process, thus playing an essential role in whether positive training occurred. The results from the study by Wei Tian et al. (2016) showed that higher levels of perceived support increased the likelihood of transfer and improvements in job performance. Thus, the findings by Wei Tian et al. (2016) suggested the importance of interpersonal support from supervisors and peers for training transfer and fostering positive employee behaviors. Wei Tian et al. (2016) furthermore confirmed the link between an employee's perceptions about social support for training transfer and job performance. In considering the results as a whole, these findings suggested that organizations need to take a step further by not only providing training opportunities but also fostering an environment for training to transfer. As a consequence, providing both training opportunities and social support for training is essential and should be considered vital for developing high performing organizations (Wei Tian et al., 2016). Based on the results of their study, Aluko and Shonubi (2014) concluded that peer support and supervisory support were directly linked to the constraints and opportunities for employees to use newly acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities in the workplace. Accordingly, the findings from the study by Aluko and Shonubi (2014) supported

previous studies showing that personal factors, along with workplace environment factors, played a significant role in whether positive training transfer occurs.

Interestingly, Chauhan et al. (2016) had different findings than Wei Tian et al. (2016) and Aluko and Shonubi (2014). The findings from the study by Chauhan et al. (2016) showed that peer support was a better predictor of training than supervisor support, which was similar to findings from previous research. An underlying rationale that might explain the finding by Chauhan et al. (2016) is that peers had the advantage of proximity, convenience, and closeness to their peers; also, they are more accessible and supportive to each other. However, like in previous studies, the findings by Chauhan et al. (2016) also showed that supervisors played an essential role and surmised that employees were more willing to apply newly acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities to the job if they have a supportive environment. Thus, in their study Chauhan et al. (2016) emphasized that employees still needed supportive supervisors to foster an environment where employees are encouraged to transfer training.

In contrast to the other studies above, Govaerts et al. (2017) took a different approach by investigating the meaning of supervisor support in practice by exploring how supervisors facilitated their employees' transfer of training. Govaerts et al. (2017) explored the lived experience of 16 first-line supervisors that facilitated their employees that applied newly acquired training back to the job and linked them to 24 categories of supervisor support. Govaerts et al. (2017) used a descriptive, exploratory research design to identify the various behaviors and attitudes used by supervisors and categorized the behaviors to validate the framework. The results of the study by Govaerts et al. (2017)

showed that the supervisors exhibited 23 of the 24 categories of supervisor support. The results of Govaerts et al. (2017) also found five common categories that supervisors demonstrated typically while supporting training transfer. Govaerts et al. (2017), furthermore, showed that supervisors were involved before, during, and after completion of training. Supervisors helped select training for participants, provided coaching and feedback during transfer; they were involved during the delivery of training, helped employees apply training to the job, and showed an interest in training content during the entire training session (Govaerts et al., 2017). Thus, an overall conclusion is that a supervisor's involvement before, during, and after was a significant predictor of whether employees transferred training to the workplace (Govaerts et al., 2017).

### ***Organizational Support***

Organizational support is one of the workplace environmental factors that influences training transfer. Cromwell and Kolb (2004) defined organizational support as those factors found in the workplace environment that trainees perceived as encouraging or discouraging of their use of new KSAs on the job. Perceived organizational support is the perception held by employees that work within an organizational climate that values their contribution to meeting performance goals and generally cares about their well-being (Reinhold et al., 2018; Zumrah, 2015). Burke and Hutchins (2008) characterized an organizational culture or climate that is supportive of training transfer as being committed to enhancing transfer in the workplace. Muduli and Raval (2018) concluded that organizational climate was the perception held by employees about whether their organization encouraged or discouraged the use of new learning on the job. Gyimah



(2015) concluded that organizations needed to provide adequate attention to the needs of its employees by creating an ideal organizational climate that fostered training transfer to ensure proper return on investment in training expenditures. Towler et al. (2014) similarly, suggested that organizations needed to emphasize the intrinsic value of training opportunities to less motivated employees to improve their experiences and increase the chances that these employees would actually transfer training to the workplace. McCracken et al. (2012) added that organizations needed to develop a clear training strategy that communicated how training met organizational goals and objectives.

Studies have shown that organizational support was significantly related to training transfer (Shariff & Al-Makhadmah, 2012). Chiaburu, Van Dam, et al. (2010) conducted a quantitative study that examined the extent to which two forms of organizations support predicted training transfer. The results from the study by Chiaburu, Van Dam, et al. (2010) showed that perceived organizational support was significantly related to training transfer. The results from the study by Hussain (2011) had similar findings to the study by Chiaburu, Van Dam, et al. (2010) in that their study showed that perceived organizational support was a strong predictor of training transfer. Reviews of the extant literature identified that among the work environment factors, transfer climate had the highest relationship with training transfer (Khan et al., 2015). Other studies had found mixed findings. In a quantitative study, Gyimah (2015) collected data from 189 participants from a savings and loans organization in Ghana to identify how organizational climate can affect transfer of training. The results from the quantitative study by Gyimah (2015) showed that elements of organizational climate significantly

influenced training transfer, which were consistent with other studies that concluded that organizational climate made a significant contribution to employees' ability to transfer training to the workplace. However, a study by Homklin et al. (2013) had different findings. Homklin et al. (2013) did not find support for their hypothesis that a positive relationship existed between organizational support and training transfer. Consequently, the results from the study by Homklin et al. (2013) did not find that organizational support was a predictor of training transfer, contrary to the findings from other studies.

### ***Supervisor Support***

Supervisor support is another factor within the workplace environment that influences training transfer. Supervisory support is viewed as the extent to which employees believe their first-line supervisors and managers are supportive about them using new learning back on the job in the workplace (Reinhold et al., 2018). For example, supervisor support refers to the types of support provided by supervisors to encourage and ensure employees are attending the appropriate training to improve their job performance and are transferring the KSAs gained to actually improve their job performance (Muduli & Raval, 2018). Specifically, common supervisor support behavior includes helping select training for employees, providing coaching and feedback during transfer, being involved during the delivery of training, helping employees apply learned KSAs to the job post-training, and showing an interest in training content during the entire training session (Govaerts et al., 2017).

The extant literature has shown that supervisor support had an effect on training transfer. The results from studies by Chiaburu, Van Dam, et al. (2010) and Hussain

(2011) showed that supervisory support was significantly related to training transfer. Lee et al. (2014) found that supervisory support was significantly related to motivation to transfer and training transfer in general. Pham et al. (2010) found that supervisory support, along with job autonomy were significantly related to training transfer. In a study by Aluko and Shonubi (2014) the results suggested that peer support and supervisory support were directly linked to the constraints and opportunities for employees to use newly acquired KSAs in the workplace. Govaerts et al. (2017) conducted a study to find out what supervisor support meant in practice by exploring how supervisors fulfill their role in employee training transfer. Govaerts et al. (2017) interviewed 16 supervisors to find out how they experienced and displayed support before, during, and after training transfer. Govaerts et al. (2017) found five common categories of behaviors that supervisors typically demonstrated while supporting employee training transfer. Also, Govaerts et al. (2017) found that supervisors that were supportive were typically involved before, during, and after employees had completed their training. Govaerts et al. (2017) concluded that a supervisor's involvement before, during, and after was a significant predictor of whether employees positively transferred training to the workplace.

Interestingly, some studies did not have similar findings as the above studies that found support for the relationship between supervisor support and training transfer. Several recent studies have found that supervisor support was not a predictor of training transfer, concluding supervisory support was not significantly related to training transfer (Madagamage et al., 2015; Manju & Suresh, 2011; Maung & Chemsripong, 2014).

Similarly, Ismail et al. (2010) found that supervisor support was not significantly related to motivation to transfer, although it was significantly related to training transfer.

### ***Peer Support***

Peer support is another workplace environmental factor that influences training transfer. Peer support refers to the extent that employees perceive that their co-workers and colleagues support their use of new training in the workplace (Reinhold et al., 2018). Peer support is understood to be the actions taken by co-workers and colleagues to encourage their fellow employees to apply new learning in the workplace (Muduli & Raval, 2018). In an organizational setting, peer support is provided by any stakeholders within the organization, such as a co-worker or colleague, who is heavily involved in helping the employee apply the learned KSAs to the job in the workplace (Burke & Hutchins, 2008). Peer support was found to have a significant influence on training transfer, more so than supervisor support (Muduli & Raval, 2018). This finding by Muduli and Raval (2018) was consistent with other studies, including Burke and Hutchins (2007). An explanation for this finding by Muduli and Raval (2018) was that employees are in closer proximity to their peers and are in more contact with their colleagues than their supervisor. Similarly, findings by Ng and Ahmad (2018) suggested that frequent contact between trainees and their co-workers could improve training and subsequent transfer because of the repeated dialogue and sharing of information and resources that were essential for positive transfer to happen.

Burke and Hutchins (2007) similarly found that a consistent finding within the literature was that peer support wielded more influence on employee training transfer

than supervisor support. In their study Burke and Hutchins (2007) tested a model of peer and organizational support for training transfer; peer support emerged as the only variable having a significant relationship with training transfer in the modeled relationship. Ng and Ahmad (2018) found that the findings from their study were consistent with previous studies that demonstrated the important role of peer support in enhancing training transfer through motivation to learn, followed by motivation to transfer. Cromwell and Kolb (2004) found that the findings from their study provided further evidence that the support of one's peers was influential in the training transfer process; findings showed that trainees who perceived more support from their peers were experiencing training transfer at a higher rate. The results from a study by Aluko and Shonubi (2014) suggested that peer support and supervisory support were directly linked to the constraints and opportunities to use newly acquired KSAs in the workplace. In contrast, the results from a study by Homklin et al. (2013) suggested that peer support rather than supervisory support should be emphasized to improve training transfer; therefore, HRD practitioners should find ways to provide a supportive environment to afford employees the ability to transfer learning to the workplace.

### ***Opportunity to Perform***

Opportunity to perform is another significant workplace environmental factor that might influence whether employees are able to transfer training to the workplace (Axtell et al., 1997; Huang et al., 2017). For positive training transfer to occur, employees need ample, relevant opportunities and applicable resources to use their newly acquired KSAs on the job in the workplace (Grossman & Salas, 2011). As a key factor influencing

training transfer, employees who are provided with the opportunity to apply what they have learned to the job in the long-term, have more autonomy over their work and might create more opportunities to perform the new KSAs than those with less autonomy in their jobs (Axtell et al., 1997). Absent of opportunities to perform, might make it difficult for employees to experience training transfer in the workplace (Huang et al., 2017).

Opportunity to perform involves all relevant work experiences that trainees receive after completion of training and is a significant factor that might affect the extent to which trainees can apply, generalize, and maintain new training on the job in the workplace (Ford et al., 1992). Opportunity to perform is characterized by the extent to which a trainee is provided with or actively secures work experiences related to the tasks that he or she recently received training for and was trained to perform (Ford et al., 1992; Huang et al., 2017).

Blume et al. (2019) and Ford et al. (1992) identified three dimensions that are necessary to the opportunity to perform, including the breadth, activity level, and the type of tasks performed. According to Ford et al. (1992) breadth relates to the number of trained tasks performed on the job; activity level refers to the number of times trained tasks are performed, and the types of tasks, refers to the different kinds of trained tasks performed by the trainee back on the job. In previous research, such as Blume et al. (2019), researchers have also discussed the importance of affording trainees the opportunity to perform newly acquired training KSAs soon after completion of training and returning to the job. Scholars, such as Ford et al. (1992) have demonstrated how the

lack of opportunity to perform was detrimental to training transfer and created individual and organizational performance issues.

### **Literature Related to the Methodology and Design**

The decision to use the qualitative research method in a study depends on several factors (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Qualitative research by design, is naturalistic, inductive, and holistic (Dasgupta, 2015). Researchers use the qualitative method to understand individuals or groups and phenomena in their natural context to develop a deep and rich understanding of a person's experiences, perceptions, and the meanings they apply to them (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Researchers conduct qualitative research to explore, understand, and interpret the meaning that individuals or groups of individuals attribute to a social problem (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Scholars use the qualitative method to obtain rich, detailed, and contextualized perspectives and understandings of real-world problems (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Qualitative research enables researchers to access the subjective beliefs, attitudes, and opinions (Percy et al., 2015) of research participants, for the purpose of developing an understanding of the meaning individuals ascribe to their specific experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Qualitative research is based on the belief that there are numerous explanations of reality and one of its many uses is for understanding how individuals construct reality to make sense of the world in which they live and work (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). The qualitative research method was appropriate for this study because its purpose was to explore and produce an in-depth and illustrative understanding of a given topic of interest.

A qualitative exploratory single-case study design was selected for this study. The qualitative exploratory single-case study design facilitates the exploration of a given contemporary phenomenon in its natural setting using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Harrison et al., 2017). Researchers use the exploratory single-case study design to conduct in-depth investigations about a complex, contemporary phenomenon by exploring it within a bounded system, in a real-world context over time, involving multiple sources of evidence, for data triangulation (Yin, 2018). Data are collected from multiple sources using semistructured interviews to triangulate the data (Flick, 2018), which strengthens the validity of the study (Yin, 2018). A qualitative exploratory single-case study design is useful for addressing the “how” of the situation (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Verner & Abdullah, 2012) to identify categories, patterns, and major themes associated with the phenomenon under study (Ogawa & Malen, 1991). Therefore, I decided to use the qualitative exploratory single-case study design to answer the central research question in this study. I was able to use the qualitative exploratory single-case study approach to gain an extended, in-depth and contextual understanding of employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

Despite the recent increases in the transfer literature, there is a paucity of research about employee perspectives on transferring learning from the training environment to the workplace (Baldwin et al., 2017; Blume et al., 2019; Ford et al., 2018). Recent studies have mainly focused on factors influencing transfer (Shaari et al., 2016; Sørensen, 2017;



Tonhäuser & Büker, 2016). The individual perspective of training transfer has mostly been ignored in the literature (Ford et al., 2018), even though the decision to transfer is a personal choice that ultimately resides with the employee (Blume et al., 2019). More studies are needed to shine a light on employee perspectives about transferring learning from the training environment to the workplace (Ford et al., 2018; Poell, 2017).

Employee perspectives about how to improve training transfer in the workplace is relatively underexplored in the literature (Baldwin et al., 2017; Blume et al., 2019; Ford et al., 2018). The employee's perspective is especially relevant since they ultimately decide what, when, and how to transfer learned KSAs to the workplace (Blume et al., 2019). There is a call for more targeted transfer research to investigate employee perceptions about training transfer (Grossman & Burke-Smalley, 2018) and how their perspectives effect training transfer outcomes (Chiaburu, Van Dam, et al., 2010). More research is also needed to consider training transfer as a personal choice (Ford et al., 2018). Scholars have recommended studies that might explore how an employee's individual perspectives and experiences influences their decisions about the value, utility, and need for the learned KSAs on the job in the workplace (Yelon et al., 2014; Yelon et al., 2013). Training transfer is a dynamic process that happens over a period of time, with subsequent attempts to transfer (Blume et al., 2019). More studies are needed to expand the perspectives for a more complete and nuanced understanding of the training transfer process (Blume et al., 2019). More empirical studies are needed to examine the various dimensions of learning, training transfer, and job performance to build on the existing knowledge base about training effectiveness (Bell et al., 2017). Additional studies are

needed to focus on how to improve or optimize training transfer in the workplace (Baldwin et al., 2017). Many studies have validated that training transfer can actually occur, but few studies have explored “when,” “why,” and “how” research questions to develop a better understanding of the training transfer process (Ford et al., 2018), to determine how to improve training transfer (Dyre & Tolsgaard, 2018). Future research needs to explore and understand employee’ perceptions, attitudes, and opinions about how they make sense of training experiences, before, during, and after training when they are back on the job (Baldwin et al., 2017).

There is an abundance of knowledge in the literature about the factors that influence training transfer. Although, less is known about employee perspectives about improving training transfer in the workplace. Employee perspectives about improving training transfer in the workplace has not been dealt with sufficiently in the literature. The literature has primarily ignored the voice of the individuals that are ultimately responsible for training transfer and their viewpoints about how to improve it in the workplace. Many of the studies since the 1980s have focused on the predictors of training transfer. Previous studies have taken a quantitative approach to examining the factors that might influence training transfer. Many of the previous studies have isolated and focused on specific variables to determine their relationships and the impact they might have on training transfer. Some of the recent studies have attempted to outline strategies or recommendations for enhancing training transfer. Although, many of the previous studies have only examined how to enhance training transfer from a quantitative perspective.

What is absent from the literature is a qualitative understanding of how to improve training transfer, as seen through the lens of the employee.

In this qualitative exploratory single case study, I addressed the gap in the current literature regarding employee perspectives about improving transfer outcomes in organizations. I addressed the aforementioned gap by exploring employee perceptions about improving training transfer in a federal government organization. In this study, I used Baldwin and Ford's (1988) concept of training transfer, as the conceptual framework, to guide my exploration of employees' perspectives about improving the use of newly acquired skills in a federal government organization. I focused on individual factors, training design factors, and workplace environment factors to explore the participants' perspectives about improving training transfer in the workplace based on their participation in a mid-career leadership development program.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

I demonstrated in the literature review that there was extensive evidence that illustrated that individual characteristics, training design factors, and workplace environment factors have a significant influence on training transfer in the workplace. I reviewed and discussed studies that showed that individual characteristics such as cognitive ability, coupled with self-efficacy, personality, and motivation are predictors of training transfer. Results from studies about training design, have suggested that factors such as training methods, training content, and training delivery are critical to whether the individuals receiving the training perceive it as useful and relevant to enhancing their job performance (Velada et al., 2007). Scholars have consistently investigated and

demonstrated with empirical evidence that workplace environmental factors, including organizational support, supervisor support, peer support, and opportunities to use, play a significant role in whether employees are able to successfully apply, generalize, and maintain newly acquired training in the workplace (Hughes et al., 2020).

There is a wealth of knowledge in the literature about the factors that influence training transfer. Most of the transfer studies since Baldwin and Ford's seminal article in 1988 have examined the predictors of training transfer. Many of the quantitative transfer studies have isolated and focused on specific variables to determine their relationships and the effect they might have on transfer outcomes.

The extant literature has mostly ignored employee perspectives about improving training transfer outcomes in the workplace. Employees are active learners, who must decide what gets transferred, when, and how. Nevertheless, employees' voices have gone unheard in the literature about improving training transfer outcomes in organizations. Thus, the current literature is lacking a qualitative understanding about employee perspectives regarding how to improve training transfer in organizations.

In this qualitative exploratory single case study, I addressed the gap in the current literature regarding employee perspectives about improving transfer outcomes in organizations. I addressed the aforementioned gap by exploring employee perceptions about improving training transfer in a federal government organization. The study's findings contributed to and expanded the literature by revealing employee perspectives about individual factors, training design factors, and workplace environment factors in relation to improving training transfer outcomes in a federal government organization.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the research design and rationale for using a qualitative exploratory single-case study. Chapter 3 also includes a discussion about my role as the researcher and the methodology used in this study. Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion about issues of trustworthiness.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single-case study was to explore employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization. This study might bridge the gap in the existing literature in the area of how to improve training transfer in the workplace from an exploratory perspective. Chapter 3 includes a discussion about the research design and rationale. Chapter 3 also includes a discussion on my role as the researcher and the methodology used in the study. Chapter 3 concludes with a discussion about issues of trustworthiness.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The central research question that guided this study was: What are the perceptions of employees regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization? I used Baldwin and Ford's (1988) concept of training transfer and a comprehensive review of the extant transfer literature to design the research question for this study. Training transfer happens when individuals can apply skills gained in a training environment to the job in the work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Ford & Weissbein, 1997). I designed and developed this research study to be qualitative based on its intended purpose and based on its primary research question. Researchers use the qualitative method to understand individuals or groups and phenomena in their natural context to develop a deep and rich understanding of a person's experiences, perceptions, and the meanings they apply to them (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Qualitative research is a method for exploring, understanding, and interpreting the meaning that individuals or groups of individuals attribute to a social problem (Merriam

& Grenier, 2019). The qualitative method provides rich, detailed, and contextualized perspectives and understandings of real-world problems (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Qualitative research is based on the belief that there are numerous explanations of reality, and one of its many uses is for understanding how individuals construct reality to make sense of the world in which they live and work (Moser & Korstjens, 2017).

The qualitative research method was appropriate for this study because its purpose was to explore in-depth, how to improve training transfer, from the perspective of employees. The quantitative and mixed-methods approaches were not appropriate methods for this study. Quantitative research is a highly structured (Park & Park, 2016) means for testing theories and using experiments and surveys to predict, deduce, understand, explain, and generalize cause-effect relationships between different variables and causal relationships (Allwood, 2012) among social phenomena (Sandelowski, 2004). The mixed-methods approach uses a combination or association of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to develop a better understanding of a phenomenon (Denscombe, 2008; Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

I used a qualitative exploratory single-case study design for this study. Researchers use the exploratory case study design to conduct in-depth investigations about contemporary phenomena by exploring them within bounded settings (Yin, 2018). Researchers conduct single, holistic case studies to focus on an issue within a bounded, real-world context (Percy et al., 2015). In case studies, researchers use semistructured interviews to collect data from multiple sources to capture different dimensions or different perspectives to develop a comprehensive understanding of the topic under study

and to triangulate the data (Flick, 2018), which strengthens the validity of the study (Yin, 2018).

The qualitative exploratory single-case study design was appropriate for this study. I used the qualitative exploratory single-case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of employee perspectives about improving training transfer within a single federal government organization. The qualitative exploratory single-case study design aligned with using Baldwin and Ford's (1988) concept of training transfer as the conceptual framework for this study. I collected data from multiple sources of employee participants using semistructured interviews to address the research question and corroborate the findings for data triangulation.

I considered four other qualitative research designs. Narrative inquiry studies focus on the stories told by the individual or group to capture the specific events and life stories of a person or group of people (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and how they make sense of those experiences (Blustein et al., 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The phenomenological approach is useful for understanding and describing an individual's ongoing, and subjective experiences and perceptions about a specific phenomenon (Lester, 1999; Moustakas, 1994). The purpose of grounded theory studies is to generate or uncover a theory to explain phenomena over a duration of time (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Ethnographic research examines the shared patterns, rituals, and beliefs of an entire cultural group over time (Agar, 1980; Angrosino, 2007).

The narrative inquiry approach would have been appropriate if the purpose of this study were to investigate how employees understand and make sense of their lived



experiences with training transfer. The phenomenological approach was not appropriate because this study did not focus on lived experiences or how employees experienced training transfer to understand the ongoing experience and meaning of applying the new learning to the workplace. The grounded theory design was not appropriate because this study was not designed to generate or uncover a theory. An ethnographic inquiry was not an appropriate design because I did not focus on an entire cultural group.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument (Patton, 2015). The researcher is responsible for accessing and collecting qualitative data about the perspectives and experiences of study participants (Clark & Vealé, 2018). As the researcher, I was responsible for conducting interviews, collecting, transcribing, analyzing, and interpreting data, and reporting the findings. I used semistructured interviews to collect data from the participants. I collected interview data from participants who graduated from the 2015–2019 MCLP cohorts to capture multiple perspectives to triangulate the data.

In qualitative studies, researchers need to disclose their biases and assumptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, I only explored how to improve training transfer in the workplace from the participants' perspective. I am employed as a supervisor at the federal government organization that was under study. I was not the supervisor of any of the employees that participated in the study. I had no personal or professional relationships with any of the prospective employee participants. Peers or coworkers were not recruited to participate in the study. I approached this study as an

outsider involved in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. Bracketing is a process in which researchers suspend or hold in abeyance any preconceived notions or experiences with a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Reflexive journaling is a form of bracketing (Clark & Vealé, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). I used reflexive journaling to disclose and manage my personal assumptions or biases throughout the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes.

### **Methodology**

I used the concept of training transfer as the conceptual lens in this study to explore employee perceptions of how to improve training transfer in the workplace within the context of a federal government organization in South Carolina. I employed a qualitative exploratory single-case study approach to collect data using semistructured interviews. I used Microsoft (MS) Teams and the telephone to conduct the semistructured interviews. I collected the interview data from participants who graduated from the 2015–2019 MCLP cohorts to obtain different and diverse perspectives of the issue that was under study to corroborate the findings for data triangulation.

### **Participant Selection Logic**

I used the study's intended purpose and its research question to determine the selection of participants. The target population was the employees of a single federal government organization located in South Carolina. The sample was made up of employees who had graduated from the federal government organization's Mid-Career Leadership Program. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research to intentionally select individuals that can provide rich and detailed accounts of their perspectives and

experiences with a specific phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Researchers use purposeful sampling to identify and select information-rich cases that could yield insights and an in-depth understanding of a topic of interest (Patton, 2015). In qualitative case study designs, researchers collect data from multiple sources to obtain different perspectives for data triangulation (Flick, 2018; Yin, 2018). In this study, I used purposeful sampling to identify and select participants who graduated from the 2015–2019 MCLP cohorts. I selected graduates from all five of the MCLP cohorts as participants to provide different and diverse perspectives to obtain an in-depth, and complete understanding about the topic under study and for data triangulation.

There are no set rules for sample size in qualitative research (Patton, 2015). Guest et al. (2006) argued that 15 participants is the smallest sample size that is acceptable for qualitative research. I used purposeful sampling to identify, select, and interview 20 employees per the inclusion criteria to reach saturation.

### **Instrumentation**

Interviews are a primary source of data in qualitative studies (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). In qualitative case study designs, data are collected primarily from multiple sources to obtain different perspectives for data triangulation (Flick, 2018; Yin, 2018). The data collection strategy used in a study is based on the research questions and by determining which data sources will produce the most relevant information needed to answer the research questions (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Researchers use interview protocols to facilitate semistructured interviews (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). In this study, I used an interview protocol (see Appendix A) as the primary data collection tool to

explore employee perceptions on how to improve training transfer in the workplace. I designed the interview protocol to ask participants a set of predefined, open-ended questions to provide me with the freedom and flexibility to ask follow-up questions, and probing questions to obtain in-depth and contextualized responses. Semistructured interviews can be digitally recorded and transcribed (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Sutton & Austin, 2015). I digitally recorded and transcribed the interview data simultaneously in real-time using the Otter.ai speech to text transcription software.

### **Field Test**

I conducted an extensive review of the extant training transfer literature to develop the interview questions for this study. I designed the interview questions to be open-ended to explore in-depth, employee perspectives on how to improve training transfer in the workplace. Field testing is used in qualitative studies to ensure the validity of the interview questions (Martinez et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I field tested the interview questions used in this study. Appendix B contains a letter that I emailed to several colleagues who met the criteria for the study to request their feedback on the appropriateness of the interview questions that would be asked and how the interview questions would be asked in relation to the purpose of the study and the central research question. The participants for the field test were acquaintances that I was familiar with. The participants for the field test were ineligible to participate in the main study. The participants of the field test included employees who are employed by the federal government organization and have graduated from the Mid-Career Leadership Program. The participants reviewed the interview questions for clarity and comprehensiveness. The

participants also checked whether the questions as presented would generate the data required to answer the central research question. I used the feedback from the participants to refine and improve the interview questions.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

I received permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the federal government organization to recruit participants and to conduct the study. My Walden University IRB approval number is 11-13-20-0443924. I initiated recruitment, participation, and data collection after the approval of the proposal by the Walden University IRB. After receiving approval from the Walden University IRB, I contacted the training manager at the federal government organization and obtained a list of employees that met the sample criteria. I emailed the prospective participants an invitation (see Appendix C) explaining the purpose and intent of the study. I included a copy of the consent form with the email invitation. The consent form included details about the purpose of the study, interview procedures, and the voluntary nature of the study. The consent form also included details about risks and benefits, privacy, and included contact information for follow-up questions.

The prospective participants that were interested in participating in the study were asked to indicate their consent by replying to the email invitation with the words, "I consent." I followed up via email with the first 20 employees who replied to the email consenting to participate in the study to schedule their interviews. I kept the remaining employees as possible replacements in the event of any withdrawals.

I was the primary instrument for data collection. I used the interview protocol to conduct the semistructured interviews with the participants. In qualitative studies, researchers use reflexive journaling and analytic memos during the data collection and analysis process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used reflexive journaling and analytic memos during this study. I used MS Teams and the telephone to conduct the semistructured interviews to collect data from the participants. I set aside 1 hour for each semistructured interview. I conducted the semistructured interviews over 3 weeks. I conducted the interviews at an agreed-upon date and time, using MS Teams or the telephone. I used the Otter.ai software, with the permission of the participants to digitally-record and transcribe the interviews in real-time. All of the participants agreed to be recorded during the interviews. My objective was to interview 20 participants who graduated from the 2015–2019 MCLP cohorts or until data saturation, to obtain multiple perspectives. Data saturation occurs when no new information, insights, or understandings are forthcoming (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I interviewed the participants until reaching data saturation. After each semistructured interview, I provided my contact information to the participants. I informed each participant that there might be a need to follow-up to ask additional questions or to clarify information. I emailed the participants a copy of their interview transcripts and requested verification that the transcripts were an accurate representation of their responses. All of the participants confirmed via email that their transcripts were an accurate representation of their responses.

## **Data Analysis Plan**

In qualitative research, data analysis is the process used to answer the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data analysis involves a systematic search for categories, patterns, and themes in the data (Bernard, 2011). The objective in qualitative research is to make sense out of the data by combining, reducing, and interpreting the findings from the data set (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data set for this study consisted of transcripts of interview data collected from the participants. I used the Otter.ai software to digitally-record and automatically transcribe the interviews in real-time. I analyzed the data from the transcribed semistructured interviews to explore employee perceptions on how to improve training transfer in the workplace. I simultaneously collected and analyzed the data set for this study. After each semistructured interview, I listened to the digital recording while reviewing the transcript. Afterward, I coded and categorized the interview data. Researchers write analytic memos about the data set during the collection and analysis process to reflect on assigned codes and categories, emerging ideas and patterns, and tentative themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldaña, 2016). I wrote analytic memos throughout the data collection and analysis phases of this study.

In this study, I used the Constant Comparative Method (CCM) for data analysis (Glaser, 1965). In qualitative studies, the CCM is an inductive data coding process used for categorizing and comparing data for analysis (Glaser, 1965). In this study, I used the CCM to systematically code, categorize, compare, and contrast the interview transcripts to answer the research question. I analyzed and compared the interview transcripts before

I collected more data. I used this iterative data collection and analysis process until reaching data saturation where no new categories, patterns and themes were emerging.

I created and used an MS Excel data analysis workbook to manually code and categorize the interview data. I used an inductive process to identify patterns and themes that cut across the data set. After the first interview, I listened to the digital recording of the interview while reading a hardcopy of the interview transcript to become familiar with the data. I reread the hardcopy of the interview transcript, made notes as I read through the transcript, and highlighted key phrases from the text. Afterward, I reread and assigned first-level codes to the highlighted text. I read the interview transcript again and assigned second-level codes to the highlighted text. Next, I copied and pasted the raw interview data that was coded into the MS Excel data analysis workbook. Then, I reviewed all of the assigned second-level codes and grouped the common codes into categories. Afterward, I analyzed the coded and categorized interview data and noted any emerging patterns and themes.

Following the second interview, I listened to the digital recording while reading and reviewing a hardcopy of the interview transcript to familiarize myself with the data. Afterward, I reread the interview transcript, jotted down notes, highlighted, coded and categorized the interview data and noted any emerging patterns and themes. I compared and contrasted the categories and emerging patterns and themes from the second interview with those identified in the first interview. I noted in an analytic memo the similarities and differences in the categories, patterns and themes identified in the first



and second interview. I repeated this iterative process with subsequent interviews until no new categories, patterns, and themes emerged from the data.

I used a systematic process to analyze the data set to enhance the creditability in the findings. I examined and checked the emerging patterns and themes against the data to validate the findings. In qualitative studies, researchers identify, review, and include any discrepant cases or nonconforming in the findings (Patton, 2015). I did not identify any discrepant cases or nonconforming data in this study.

Data triangulation involves using multiple sources of data to capture different and diverse perspectives (Flick, 2018). In qualitative studies, researchers perform data triangulation by comparing and cross-checking interview data collected from multiple individuals with diverse perspectives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, I triangulated the data by comparing and cross-checking the interview data that I collected from multiple participants who graduated from the 2015–2019 MCLP cohorts.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Guba (1981) identified four criteria for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative studies: creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Morrow (2005) contended that qualitative research must embrace multiple standards of quality to demonstrate rigor and trustworthiness in design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. In the following sections I describe the criteria and techniques that I used to improve the trustworthiness of this qualitative exploratory single-case study.

**Credibility**

Credibility entails ensuring rigor in the research process and communicating to others how one achieves rigor in the research process (Morrow, 2005). Researchers achieve credibility by triangulating the data, using peer debriefing, member checks, field tests, transcript verification, and reflexivity (Morrow, 2005). In this study, I ensured credibility by field testing the interview questions prior to data collection. I also ensured credibility in this study by collecting data from employee participants who graduated from multiple cohorts to capture different and diverse perspectives to triangulate the data. I sent all of the participants a copy of their interview transcripts and asked them to verify the accuracy of the transcripts. All of the participants verified their transcripts. I also demonstrated credibility in this study by using reflexive journaling while collecting and analyzing the data set.

**Transferability**

The second component of trustworthiness is transferability. The primary consideration for transferability is whether a qualitative study is transferable to other situations with other participants (Guba, 1981). Transferability is concerned with the extent that readers of the study can apply the findings to a different context (Morrow, 2005). Transferability is made possible by having a thorough description of the data and context for others to use and apply for comparison to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Researchers can achieve transferability in qualitative studies by creating analytic memos to provide sufficient details about the study in terms of design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation; to enable readers of the study to ascertain whether they can

apply the study and its findings to other contexts (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Shenton, 2004). I created and maintained analytic memos to ensure transferability in this study. In the analytic memos, I provided sufficient background data for a contextual understanding of this study and provided a detailed description of this study to enable other researchers to transfer specific aspects of this study's design and findings to other contexts.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is concerned with the reliability of the data (Guba, 1981). That is, dependability occurs when there are consistency and stability in the study data (Shenton, 2004). Researchers achieve dependability through the development of a methodological description of the study, that is explicit and enables other researchers to repeat the study (Morrow, 2005). Researchers demonstrate dependability by keeping detailed records, tracking all decisions made during the entire research process, and by keeping an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). In this study, I demonstrated dependability by using reflexive journaling and by developing and maintaining an audit trail to track all decisions made throughout the entire research process.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is the degree to which the data can be confirmed by someone else besides the researcher (Guba, 1981). Confirmability is the extent that readers can confirm the findings of the study (Morrow, 2005). Qualitative research must have confirmable data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Confirmability is based on researchers acknowledging the existence of the biases they bring to the study (Morrow, 2005). Researchers can achieve confirmability by first identifying their biases and assumptions (Shenton, 2004). The goal

of confirmability is to recognize that researcher bias exists and to seek ways to confront bias throughout the entire research process (Guba, 1981). Researchers can use data triangulation, audit trails, and reflexivity to ensure confirmability in qualitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). In this study, I collected data from multiple sources that was checked against each other. I also used reflexive journaling for this study to disclose and manage any personal assumptions.

### **Ethical Procedures**

I requested and received permission from the IRB at the federal government organization to conduct the study. I needed approval from the Walden University IRB before recruitment, participation, and data collection. Walden University's approval number for this study was 11-13-20-0443924. I did not recruit any vulnerable groups for participation in this study. I am currently employed as a supervisor at the federal government organization. I separated my professional role from my role as a researcher. I approached this study as an outsider and remained objective during the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. Since I was in a dual role, my biases might still have been reflected in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. I used reflexive journaling as a means of bracketing to disclose and manage my biases and assumptions. I purposefully selected individuals that I had no personal or professional relationships with to avoid any potential for creating conflicts of interest. I was not in a supervisory role or power relationship with any of the participants. I did not provide any compensation to participants for their participation in the study.

I attached the consent form to the email invitation that I sent to the prospective participants. I asked the prospective participants to indicate their consent by replying to the email containing the consent form with the words “I consent” before the interview indicating their permission to be part of the study. I explained to each potential participant that participation in the study was voluntary. I informed participants that they could withdraw from participation in the study at any time for any reason during the process of data collection. In the informed consent form, I provided background information, including the purpose of the study and details about the interview process. I also included in the informed consent details about privacy, risks and benefits, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of the study, and the right to withdraw from the study. I also included in the consent form contact information for follow-up questions.

I kept the identity of the participants confidential. I preserved the confidentiality of the participants by using alphanumeric codes during the data collection, analysis, and reporting of the findings. I used alphanumeric codes instead of the participant names to ensure confidentiality and to maintain the privacy of the participants. I assigned a five-digit, alphanumeric code (P0001 – P0020) to each participant before the interview. I conducted each interview individually during non-working hours in a private setting, using MS Teams or the telephone. Only the participant and I had access to MS Teams or the telephone during the interviews. I was the only person that conducted the semistructured interviews, and the only person able to match the identity of the participants and digital recordings. I was the sole recipient of the transcribed interviews. I added the assigned alphanumeric codes and the participants’ MCLP cohorts to the

electronic copies of the interview transcripts for data triangulation. I used the assigned alphanumeric codes in presenting the findings. I encrypted and password-protected the stored data. I used passwords to protect any information stored on my personal computing devices and in the cloud. I am storing hardcopies of the data in a secured filing cabinet in a secured room. I will store both written and electronic data from this study for five years. I stored the digital recordings from the interviews and the electronic copies of the interview transcripts on two USB flash drives. I used the BitLocker software to encrypt the two USB flash drives. I am storing the USB flash drives in a secured filing cabinet in a secured room. Once they are no longer needed I will destroy the digital recordings from the interviews and the electronic copies of the interview transcripts by reformatting the two USB flash drives. I will delete data stored on personal computing devices and in the cloud once they are no longer needed. I will use a cross-cut shredder to destroy hard copies of the data.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 included a discussion about the rationale for the chosen research design and an explanation of my role of the researcher. I discussed the logic for participant selection. I also included a discussion about the data collection instrument I used in the study and included a discussion about the field testing I conducted to ensure the validity of the interview questions. Chapter 3 included a discussion about the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. Chapter 3 concluded with a discussion about the plan for data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and the ethical procedures used in the study. Chapter 4 includes a discussion about the setting and participants’

demographics and characteristics relevant to the study. Chapter 4 also includes a discussion about data collection and analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and includes a presentation of the findings.

## Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, I present the results of this study. Training transfer remains an acute problem for many organizations. Few researchers have explored employee perspectives about improving training transfer outcomes. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single-case study was to explore employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization. In this study, I explored the primary research question: What are the perceptions of employees regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization?

Chapter 4 includes a discussion about the research setting and participants' demographics and characteristics relevant to the study. Chapter 4 also includes a discussion about data collection and analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness. Chapter 4 concludes with a presentation of the findings.

### **Research Setting**

I collected data from 20 individuals that are employed by the federal government organization located in South Carolina. I interviewed employees who graduated from the 2015–2019 MCLP cohorts. The employees were physically located in South Carolina, Virginia, and Louisiana. I conducted the interviews in a private setting using MS Teams and the telephone. I used MS Teams to conduct 17 interviews. I used the telephone to conduct three interviews.

### **Demographics**

The sample for this study included 20 men and women who worked for the federal government organization located in South Carolina. The participants had



graduated from the 2015–2019 MCLP cohorts. I used five-digit alphanumeric codes (P0001–P0020) to identify the participants instead of using their names. There were participants from all five of the MCLP cohorts. Participants were located in South Carolina, Virginia, and Louisiana. The participants held different types of job titles, including administrative specialist, information technology (IT) specialist, engineer, technician, and first-line supervisor. Table 1 identified the study’s participants demographics.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of Study Participants*

Participant #	Gender	Cohort	Job Title	Work Site
P0001	Male	2019	Technician	South Carolina
P0002	Male	2015	Engineer	South Carolina
P0003	Female	2015	Supervisor	Virginia
P0004	Male	2019	Engineer	South Carolina
P0005	Male	2016	Engineer	Virginia
P0006	Female	2018	Supervisor	Virginia
P0007	Male	2018	IT Specialist	Virginia
P0008	Male	2018	IT Specialist	Virginia
P0009	Female	2015	Engineer	South Carolina
P0010	Male	2019	Engineer	South Carolina
P0011	Female	2018	Administrative Specialist	South Carolina
P0012	Male	2017	Engineer	Virginia
P0013	Male	2015	Supervisor	South Carolina
P0014	Male	2016	Supervisor	Virginia
P0015	Male	2015	IT Specialist	Louisiana
P0016	Female	2018	Supervisor	South Carolina
P0017	Male	2019	Engineer	Virginia
P0018	Male	2019	Engineer	South Carolina
P0019	Male	2018	Engineer	South Carolina
P0020	Male	2019	Engineer	South Carolina

### **Data Collection**

I interviewed 20 participants for this study who had graduated from the federal government organization's 2015–2019 MCLP cohorts. I conducted interviews from 30 November 2020–18 December 2020. I conducted 17 interviews using MS Teams. I conducted three telephone interviews. Each interview lasted less than 1 hour.

I used Otter.ai software to digitally record and transcribe the interviews simultaneously, in real-time. At the conclusion of each interview, I downloaded and saved a copy of the digital recording and I exported and saved a copy of the transcript as an MS Word document. Afterward, I listened carefully to the digital recording while reading and rereading, line-by-line, the transcript, and made corrections to the transcribed data, based on any errors that I found while listening to the digital recording. I sent the participants a copy of the transcripts to verify their accuracy as a form of transcript verification. After receiving approval of the transcripts, I uploaded the participants' coded responses into a spreadsheet in the MS Excel data analysis workbook that I created for this study.

There were no variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3. My goal was to interview 20 participants or until reaching saturation. I accomplished data saturation by the 20th interview, so no additional interviews were necessary. I encountered no unusual circumstances during the data collection process.

### **Data Analysis**

I manually coded and categorized the interview data, following an inductive process, to identify patterns and themes that cut across the entire data set. I used a series

of steps to carry out the data analysis process. After the first interview, I listened to the digital recording of the interview while reading a hardcopy of the interview transcript to become familiar with the data. Next, I reread, made some notes, and highlighted key passages of text on the hardcopy of the interview transcript. Afterward, I assigned first-level, descriptive codes to the highlighted passages of text. I used the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the conceptual framework to develop the first-level codes. I wrote the assigned first-level codes in the right-hand margin on the hardcopy of the interview transcript. Then, I put the interview transcript aside so that I could reflect on my initial notes and the assigned first-level, descriptive codes. After a period of self-reflection and journaling, I made some additional notes and assigned second-level, pattern codes to the highlighted text. Pattern coding is a technique used in qualitative studies to identify emerging themes (Saldaña, 2016). I used pattern codes to develop the categories and to identify the emerging themes in the study. I jotted down the assigned second-level codes in the right-hand margin on the hardcopy of the interview transcript. Finally, I opened the MS Word version of the interview transcript and copied and pasted the coded interview data into a spreadsheet within the MS Excel data analysis workbook that I created for this study.

I added the assigned first-level and second-level codes to the MS Excel spreadsheet. Then, I reviewed all the assigned second-level codes and used MS Excel to sort, analyze, and group the common codes into categories. Afterward, I analyzed the coded and categorized interview data and annotated on the MS Excel spreadsheet any emerging patterns and themes.

Following the second interview, I listened to the digital recording while reading and reviewing a hardcopy of the interview transcript to familiarize myself with the data. Afterward, I reread the interview transcript, jotted down notes, highlighted, coded and categorized the interview data, and noted any emerging patterns and themes. I compared the codes, categories and emerging patterns and themes from the second interview with those identified in the first interview. I noted in an analytic memo the similarities and differences in the codes, categories, patterns, and themes identified in the first and second interview. I repeated this iterative process with the remaining 18 interviews until no new codes, categories, patterns, or themes emerged from the data.

I used MS Excel to create a data analysis workbook for this study. The data analysis workbook contained a separate spreadsheet for each participant's coded interview data. Each participant's spreadsheet contained their assigned participant number, the coded interview data, the assigned first-level and second-level codes, assigned categories, and any emerging themes. There was also a spreadsheet within the data analysis workbook that I used to consolidate and sort all the participants' interview data by second-level codes, categories, and themes. I used the consolidated spreadsheet to identify the emerging themes and subthemes that cut across the entire data set. I broke the data down further in the data analysis workbook by themes. Each theme had a separate spreadsheet to show the coded interview data, and the primary theme and subthemes that emerged from the data. I also used the data analysis workbook to track and maintain the list of codes and categories that were assigned to the participants' interview data.

I conducted a final round of data analysis by reviewing and analyzing a hard copy of each theme's spreadsheet. I read and reviewed hard copies of the themes' spreadsheets looking for opportunities to recode and recategorize the data. I annotated new second-level codes and categories that emerged from the data on the hard copies of the themes' spreadsheets. I also made notes of any changes to the primary themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. I updated the MS Excel data analysis workbook to incorporate the changes that resulted from the last round of data analysis.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

As indicated Chapter 3, I ensured credibility by field testing the interview questions prior to data collection. I also ensured credibility in this study by collecting data from employee participants who graduated from multiple cohorts to capture different and diverse perspectives to triangulate the data. I sent all of the participants a copy of their interview transcripts and asked them to verify the accuracy of the transcripts. All of the participants reviewed and confirmed their responses to the interview questions. I also demonstrated credibility in this study by using reflexive journaling while collecting and analyzing the data set.

#### **Transferability**

The second component of trustworthiness is transferability. I demonstrated transferability in this study by creating analytic memos. In the analytic memos I provided sufficient background data for a contextual understanding of this study and provided a

detailed description of this study to enable other researchers to transfer specific aspects of the study design and findings to other contexts.

### **Dependability**

Dependability is concerned with the reliability of the data (Guba, 1981).

Dependability occurs when there are consistency and stability in the study data (Shenton, 2004). I demonstrated dependability in this study by using reflexive journaling and by developing and maintaining an audit trail to track all decisions made throughout the entire research process.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability is the degree to which the data can be confirmed by someone else besides the researcher (Guba, 1981). In this study, I collected data from multiple sources that were checked against each other. I also used reflexive journaling for this study to disclose and manage any personal assumptions or biases throughout the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes.

## **Results and Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single-case study was to explore employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization. The central research question in this study was: What are the perceptions of employees regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization? I analyzed the participants' responses to the interview questions and identified the themes and subthemes that cut across the entire data set. Based on the data analysis, four themes and 17 subthemes emerged from the semistructured interviews. The

four themes were: (a) provide employees with more opportunities to use new skills after training, (b) employees need to be self-directed to use new skills after training, (c) provide post-training support to help employees sustain new skills in the workplace, and (d) implement systems for tracking and monitoring the use of new skills after training.

Table 2 identified the themes and corresponding subthemes that emerged from analyzing the study participants' responses to the interview questions.

**Table 2**

*Themes and Subthemes*

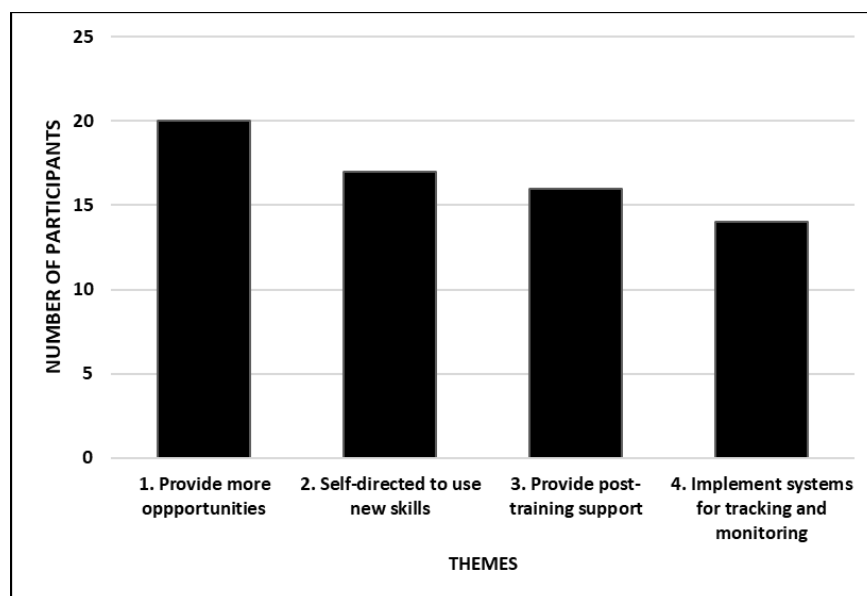
Interview Question#	Findings #	Themes	Subthemes
IQ4, IQ8, IQ9	1	Provided with more opportunities to use new skills	Job shadowing Increase responsibilities/different role Promotion opportunities Rotational assignments Special assignments/projects
IQ2	2	Self-directed to use new skills	Take initiative Have a plan Apply to current job Find other opportunities
IQ8, IQ9	3	Post-training support to sustain new skills	Follow-up Mentoring Networking opportunities Refresher training
IQ8, IQ9	4	Track and monitor use of new skills	Set goals/expectations Track usage Provide feedback Track/report ROI

The emergent themes and subthemes are a representation of the perception of the 20 employees participating in the study. The participants shared their collective perspectives about how to improve training transfer in the federal government

organization. Figure 2 displays the major themes that emerged in the study and the number of participants whose responses were aligned with each theme.

**Figure 2**

*Summary of Themes for Improving Training Transfer*



### **Theme 1: Provide Employees with More Opportunities to Use New Skills after Training**

All 20 of the participants (100%) agreed that the organization had an obligation to help employees secure opportunities to utilize their new training in the workplace. This theme emerged from the participants' responses to the interview questions regarding the role of enabling factors, first-line supervisors and the organization, as a whole, in helping employees apply new training to their jobs in the workplace. The data in this study shows that there are various ways that organizations can provide its employees with opportunities to use their new skills back in the workplace. For example, participants



agreed that giving employees more responsibilities or putting them in a different role was a way to improve their chances of using new KSAs in the workplace.

P0013 explained:

So, if I have, if I have an opportunity to fill a lead position I'm going to, I'm probably not going to look for an existing lead just to move over, unless that's available, but I would definitely be looking at my junior people, especially MCLP grads to fill roles or billets that they've never filled before.

Many of the participants agreed that providing employees with promotion opportunities was another way for them to utilize new skills and concepts back in the workplace.

P0011 discussed:

Your supervisors should be looking for, providing you opportunities to grow and to develop and to you know ultimately promote up and working with you to figure out, you know what, maybe is the next best path to take to achieve that. You know, showing you where opportunities lie. It's not always clear and easy to figure out how you navigate through promotional you know which way you can go to promote based off your current qualifications. And I would hope that my competency supervisor would be able to sit down and work with me and show me the path forward.

The majority of the participants agreed that providing employees with rotational assignments was another avenue for them to apply new KSAs back to the workplace.

P0011 stated:

Um, I mean, for me, the second part of the MCLP program is the rotation aspect of it. And I think if you truly needed to apply that I mean the whole point of the leadership program is to move those that are not necessarily in a leadership role, up and into a leadership role. Also, to me the step would not be to go back into doing the same job and applying it there it would be applying for the rotational positions and, and then being afforded the opportunity to where you are actually in a position where you can lead a team, lead an initiative, lead a project.

P0012 shared, “the rotation was a phenomenal idea, the forced rotation because then it kind of pushes people out of their comfort zone.” P0009 discussed how the rotational assignments helped employees to use new skills in the workplace.

Specifically, P0009 stated:

I would say the MCLP, the rotations are one thing they've done and I think that's really, really good. There are some challenges with it. But I would say keep making that available. the other thing would be when external rotations come. I think that should be where the MCLP candidates, graduates are thought about first and foremost for those, those external rotations. It's basically the perfect opportunity for them to go up and do more and be very out of their comfort zone.

P0016 shared their perspectives about the rotational assignments. Specifically, P0016 described:

I think the rotation program is the perfect example of what the command can do and we do. We provide those opportunities for people to be leaders and start

leading groups and projects and I would strongly encourage the command to keep those rotations going.

P0019 stated:

When I graduated, I went through one of the rotations. And I got to take everything that I learned in MCLP, and apply it directly to this rotation, rotation because it was it was kind of like a trial by fire, you're gonna be thrown in. We're gonna set you up as the lead over strategic efforts and so I had to start remembering all the stuff that I had learned and lean on that. To help lead my efforts through.

P0018 shared:

So, like my rotation right now, I'm an engineer, but I'm rotating to the to 2.0 competency with Contracts and I get to take what I've learned and apply it in a safe format to another competency, and see how these skills, how these leaders interact and take what I've learned.

## **Theme 2: Employees Need to be Self-Directed to Use New Skills after Training**

Seventeen of the 20 participants (85%) stated that the responsibility lies mainly with the employee to figure out ways of utilizing new learning once they are back in the workplace. This theme emerged from the participants' responses to the interview question regarding what employees can do to increase their chances of using recently acquired skills back in the workplace.

For example, P0019 explained the need to take initiative:

I think the biggest thing again that hopefully what everybody gets when they go

through MCLP is it's, it's your career, and you're the one driving it you know again, if you're not driving it somebody else is going to drive it for you. I think if someone's not feeling like they're using their training or they're not getting those opportunities they need to make sure that they're taking the necessary, necessary steps to, to get those opportunities.

P0004 explained the need to be proactive and take initiative to transfer new skills back in the workplace. Specifically, P0004 stated:

But we have, you know, as leaders, it's expected from this program that you're going to do more, you just don't go back to your old job, you know, I mean, that's great. But you're expected to do more, or more, as in, reach out and become a future leader.

P0014 discussed the importance of taking the initiative to apply new knowledge and skills back to the workplace. Specifically, P0014 stated:

You know, it's all base off of their character and their drive right. If somebody wants to if somebody, somebody wants to move up or move out. They have to want to do it, because MCLP only provides them, you know scratches the surface with leadership. You have to continue to build on that and, and educate yourself and step out and take those chances for different positions.

The participants in the study expressed that training transfer began with the individual employee. The participants' views were that employees are ultimately the ones that should be responsible for ensuring they are able to transfer new skills back to the workplace. The study findings showed that many of the participants believed that the

onus was on the employee to be willing to take the steps that are necessary to figure out how best to utilize the new skills back in the workplace. Many of the participants discussed the need for employees to be proactive and take charge to figure out how best to apply the new skills to their particular situation within the organization. As the study findings showed, participants felt that employees need to look both inwardly and outwardly within the organization to find ways to use the new skills. For example, the participants discussed that employees should look to their existing job and team settings or explore other avenues such as volunteering. Specifically, eight of the participants described the importance of employees identifying other opportunities to apply new skills back to the workplace.

P0001 stated:

I think that we have to create opportunities for ourselves, look for opportunities, like look for gaps and things like that, because we may not all be sitting in a seat that we could, that we can directly apply the skills that we're learning.

P0006 recommended that employees should, “do new things so that they can make more of an impact in other areas.”

P0007 stated:

If the graduate is not able to apply those skills in their current jobs, not necessarily spoon feed but, but have an open dialogue with that graduate to say okay you know what, how can we now have opportunities to allow you to apply those skills.

P0020 explained that employees should find other opportunities to get involved and utilize the new skills. Specifically, P0020 stated, “I would say getting involved in teams, or some of the community worked that the command does outside of their normal competency.”

### **Theme 3: Provide Post-Training Support to help Employees Sustain their New Skills in the Workplace**

Sixteen of the 20 participants (80%) articulated the need for the organization to provide its employees with post-training support to help them apply and maintain their new skills in the workplace. This third theme emerged from the participants’ responses to the interview questions regarding the role of first-line supervisors and the organization, as a whole, in facilitating employees’ use of new training in the workplace. The data suggested that employees need a way to follow-up with others within the organization after they have completed training to improve their chances of not only utilizing the new skills but also maintaining them within the workplace. Participants agreed that employees need a way to follow-up with others after the completion of the training. Many of the participants responded that employees need a way to follow-up with others post-training to increase their chances of using the new KSAs once they are back in the workplace. P0008 stated:

There should be some other outreach program that ensures that, that there is some follow up with MCLP graduates. I think there needs to be somehow that there's some follow through and maybe it's just within um, I don't know maybe it's just within the MCLP cohorts they do amongst themselves. I don't know that

necessarily if the competency can do it but I think there has to be some kind of follow up mentoring, that should be structured within, you know, within that group.

Participants discussed the need to have a way of knowing whether the use of their new skills were having the right effect on their jobs, teams, and the organization as a whole. The study findings also showed that employees need mentoring to continue developing and maintaining their new skills in the workplace. Participants discussed and described the need for continuous mentoring and continued development and maintenance of the acquired KSAs post-training. P0010 stated, "I'm doing this MCLP mentoring and coaching group, it keeps the MCLP graduates engaged with the program." P0014 stated, "you know, mentoring is got to be the number one key. Right. They learn these skills they need to share across the command." P0013 stated, "so, so I guess the answer to the question is that, yeah they need to look for opportunities to grow, to grow their individuals so that they can use the knowledge that they learned in the program.

Similarly, I inferred from the study findings that employees need to establish and maintain close networks post-training so that they can connect with others and establish working relationships with others to help them find and secure opportunities to transfer their new skills to the workplace. Participants explained that networking post-training was essential to employees being able to connect and maintain relationships with others and to find opportunities to utilize new skills and concepts in the workplace. P0006 stated, "I think the alumni meetings would be good." P0003 discussed the need to, "increase your networking with people." P0002 stated, "they've got like the MCLP

alumni group, where they request people, you know, to come and help kind of keep people involved. P0017 discussed, “I would say probably at least quarterly workshops where they can have a chance to interact with other individuals who may have acquired those same skills, and probably apply them through different scenarios, on a day-to-day basis.”

The study findings also showed that refresher training was critical to employees being able to maintain their newly acquired skills in the workplace. Participants agreed that refresher training was necessary for employees to be able to apply and maintain new KSAs in the workplace. P0014 stated, “so, it would be nice to see a follow on and, or, or something within each competency to go through and, and keep those skills that people learn, fresh and growing.”

P0010 explained:

Maybe, as we MCLP graduates, could stand up like a monthly, like refresher, and say hey, this week we're going over, you know, team conflict or this week we're going over team building or whatever you want to call it.

P0016 stated:

I think what is most important for our graduates, is to refresh themselves on what the MCLP program has taught them. So, if someone goes through the program, and they learn, and they sit in the class and they hear all this information but they don't actually absorb it, or go back and refresh on it, then it's really lost because then they'll just go back and operate how they did before.



#### **Theme 4: Implement Systems for Tracking and Monitoring the Use of New Skills after Training**

Fourteen of the 20 participants (70%) shared that the organization needs to track and monitor its employees' usage of new training in the workplace. This theme emerged from the participants' responses to the interview questions regarding the role that supervisors and others within the organization might play in helping employees apply new learning back to their jobs in the workplace. The study findings showed that organizations need to have processes, procedures, systems, and tools in place to ensure its employees are actually transferring new skills back to the workplace once they return from training. The study findings showed that employees recognize the importance of being held accountable to ensure they are actually using what they learned back in the workplace; provided that they have or is provided with the opportunity to do so.

P0012 described:

So, we should drive, we should drive, making the MCLP graduates accountable, not just during the program, not just for the rotation, but also in the long haul.

Right, three to five years because that was one thing that was emphasized what's your three-to-five-year plan. We'll have we achieved it? And I think that one, if you start having the, making them accountable. The results follow in with it.

Participants agreed that supervisors should engage with their employees to establish goals before, during, and after training to ensure they have a plan for utilizing the training back in the workplace. For example, participants agreed that employees and their immediate supervisors needed to set goals and expectations for how they would use

new skills back in the workplace. P0002, P0014, P0016, and P0019 had similar viewpoints regarding setting goals and expectations.

P0002 explained:

First line supervisors yes, they could absolutely help. Especially now that you've gone through this program. They should be aware of that. That you've gone through your, what's your intention of going through it, or, you know, what you're trying to get out of it.

P0019 described the role that supervisors should play in setting expectations for the use of new skills and concepts in the workplace. P0019 stated, “they need to challenge their employees and they need to sit them down and have that conversation about, you know, what are you looking to do within the next three to five years.”

Also, participants believed that there needs to be a way to track the application of new learning within the workplace to ensure employees are providing with or actively securing work that will afford them the opportunity to utilize the training. Participants responded that there needs to be a way to determine whether employees are actually utilizing the new skills once they are back on the job in the workplace.

P0008 stated:

What you know, what happens to the MCLP after you know after they graduate after they do a rotation and see how better the command can facilitate, you know, where those folks are and how they're helping to pay it back to the command and give back to the command. See if there could be a normal drumbeat of some type and tie that drumbeat into the graduate's supervisors, and their, also their IPT

leader whoever it is working with them at the day-to-day project level to somehow see if, if there is, you know, see if there's knowledge that they gained being utilized within the workforce.

Participants also saw the value in being able to track and report on the benefits or the impacts the new training has on the workplace. The participants recognized the importance of being able to understand and evaluate training outcomes to better understand whether the organization was seeing a return on its investment. Participants agreed that there needs to be a way to track and report how the use of new skills in the workplace has led to changes in job productivity and organizational performance. Several participants responded that there needs to be a mechanism in place for tracking and reporting on the return on investment.

P0008 described:

I think maybe it's at the command level they need to ensure that their tier ones are pushing down all the way through to the deck plate and divisions and IPTs, who their MCLP graduates are and maybe get a semiannually feedback as to how better the IPTs or competencies are using those folks. So, the command can see what quantitatively what they're getting the return on their investment of the MCLP class.

Participants also saw the value and importance in getting feedback. They saw the feedback as a way to determine whether the use of the new skills was leading to positive changes in the workplace. For instance, P0014 stated, "they also need to get feedback

right they need to get that, that returned feedback to make sure that that what they're doing is beneficial and they see that return so that they want to keep doing it.”

I used this study’s findings to answer the research question and to address the gap in the current literature regarding employee perspectives about improving transfer outcomes in organizations. The findings in this study are based on triangulated data that I collected from 20 participants from five different MCLP cohorts. The results from the five different MCLP cohorts were similar and added to the credibility of the findings. Table 1 showed the demographics and diversity of the participants from each of the cohorts. The key findings in this study represents the shared perspectives of the participants from the five different cohorts. Specifically, this study provided four key findings, based on shared employee perspectives for improving training transfer in a federal government organization. These findings might enhance the understanding of training transfer and might lead to positive impacts on job productivity and organizational performance.

- Finding 1: The participants acknowledged that if employees are provided with ample opportunities or different avenues after training to apply their new KSAs it would increase their chances of experiencing a positive transfer in the organization.
- Finding 2: The participants emphasized that if employees are self-directed and take the initiative to find ways on their own to either apply the new skills to their current job setting or proactively seek out other opportunities, it might lead to higher training transfer rates in the organization.

- Finding 3: The participants stated that if employees are provided with post-training support, it might result in the organization being able to sustain higher training transfer rates.
- Finding 4: The participants recognized that if the organization implements systems for tracking and monitoring its employees' usage of new skills after completion of training it might lead to meaningful impacts in their job performance and overall organizational productivity.

### **Discrepant Cases and Nonconforming Data**

In qualitative studies, researchers identify, review, and include any discrepant cases or nonconforming data in the findings (Patton, 2015). I examined all the data from the transcribed interviews to identify the shared perspectives of the 20 participants regarding how to improve training transfer in a single federal government organization. I did not identify any discrepant cases or nonconforming data in this study.

### **Summary**

In this qualitative exploratory single-case study I aimed to explore employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization. I interviewed and collected data from 20 individuals who graduated from the federal government organization's 2015–2019 MCLP cohorts to explore their shared perspectives towards improving training transfer outcomes in the federal workplace. I used MS Excel to manually code and categorize the interview data, following an inductive process, to identify themes, subthemes and findings related to the research question.

Based on this study's findings, the participants' responses could improve the understanding of how to enhance training transfer in the workplace and positively impact job productivity and organizational performance. The study resulted in four major themes and 17 subthemes. The findings showed that from the employees' perspective, improving training transfer in the workplace requires: (a) organizations to provide employees with ample opportunities to implement their improved skills in the workplace, (b) the willingness of employees to self-direct and find opportunities on their own to use new skills in the workplace, (c) employees need post-training sustainment support to help them throughout the process of utilizing their new skills and further development of those skills in the workplace, and lastly, (d) organizations need to implement systems for tracking and monitoring its employees' usage of new skills to achieve the expected outcomes. In the next chapter I discuss the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and implications for positive social change, research, and practice.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory single-case study was to explore employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization. In this study, I explored the primary research question: What are the perceptions of employees regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization? I interviewed 20 participants for this study who had graduated from the federal government organization's 2015–2019 MCLP cohorts. I used MS Excel to manually code and categorize the interview data, following an inductive process, to identify themes, subthemes and findings related to the research question.

Four key findings emerged from the data in this study: (a) organizations need to provide employees with more opportunities to use new skills after training, (b) employees need to be self-directed to use new skills after training, (c) organizations need to provide post-training support to help employees sustain new skills in the workplace, and (d) organizations need to implement systems for tracking and monitoring the use of new skills after training. Chapter 5 contains the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

#### **Finding 1: Provide Employees with More Opportunities to Use New Skills after Training**

All 20 of the participants (100%) agreed that the organization had an obligation to help employees secure opportunities to utilize the new training in the workplace. The participants' responses to IQ4, IQ8, and IQ9 led to the emergence of this finding. This

finding suggested that if the organization provides its employees with more opportunities, it increases the likelihood that they will take advantage of their new KSAs in the workplace. This finding revealed that if the organization increases the opportunities made available to its employees after they have completed their training it will increase their chances of experiencing a positive transfer in the organization. It could be concluded from this finding that much of the burden falls on the organization to ensure its employees are getting opportunities after completing their training to utilize their new skills in the workplace.

Participants shared their perspectives and examples of how their supervisors and others within the organization could help them secure different opportunities to apply their new skills in the workplace. These examples might be unique in some ways to this federal government organization. The participants provided real-world examples of how their organization made it possible for them to use their new skills after completing their training. Thus, this theme emerged as a way to improve training transfer in the federal government organization.

I expected this theme to emerge as a key finding because employees need opportunities to put their new KSAs to use in the workplace to experience positive transfer. In their article, Blume et al. (2019) argued the importance of providing employees with the opportunity to put their new skills into practice. However, in my study, this first key finding provided a deeper understanding of the different and diverse ways that organizations could provide employees with the opportunity to put their new skills into practice. The participants' responses subsequently lead to the emergence of



five subthemes based on examples of the ways in which the organization could provide them with opportunities to use their new skills. Thus, it made sense that this finding was echoed by all of the participants.

This key finding is supported in the literature in Chapter 2. In previous research, scholars have discussed the importance of employees being afforded the opportunity to perform newly acquired skills immediately following the completion of training and returning to the workplace (Blume et al., 2019; Grossman & Salas, 2011). Huang et al. (2017) found that providing employees with opportunities to perform is essential for them to experience positive training transfer in the workplace. Na-nan et al. (2017) found that opportunity to use was one of several factors that significantly affected training transfer. This major finding is also supported by the conceptual framework used in this study. In their model, Baldwin and Ford (1988) identified opportunity to use as a key workplace environment factor that is essential in the training transfer process.

### **Finding 2: Employees Need to be Self-Directed to Use New Skills after Training**

Seventeen of the 20 participants (85%) in this study shared that the onus was on the individual employee to determine how best to utilize their new skills after training completion. The participants' responses to IQ3 led to the emergence of this key finding. This second finding suggested that employees need to be self-directed, proactive, and take the initiative to find ways on their own to experience positive transfer in the workplace. It was revealed in this finding that if employees are willing to secure their own opportunities to utilize the new skills in the workplace it would help the organization achieve higher training transfer rates.

I was not surprised by this finding because the participants are highly competitive and motivated individuals that come from an organizational culture that promotes being proactive and driven to achieve one's personal and professional goals. Many of the participants are former military. The participants work for a military-centric, federal government organization. Therefore, it made sense that this finding resonated with the majority of the participants. Studies have found that an individual's level of motivation played a significant role in whether they experienced positive transfer (Huang et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2014; Reinhold et al., 2018). Participants shared that employees are expected to take the lead and take charge of their career growth and development. Several of the participants explained that employees should already be thinking and planning for ways to use their new skills upon their return to the workplace.

Personal agency is part of the federal government organization's culture. Employees have been empowered to take control of and shape their careers. Thus, it was not surprising that this finding emerged from the data set. Several of the participants expressed in their responses the desire to control their destiny to identify ways to utilize their new skillset to improve themselves and the organization. The idea of selflessness was reflected in many of the participants responses regarding the interview question about what employees could do to increase their chances of applying new skills in the workplace. It was evident in many of the participants' responses to IQ3 that they believed that to be successful at putting the new KSAs into practice largely came down to their individual intrinsic values or motives.

This second finding is corroborated in the literature in Chapter 2. Axtell et al. (1997) found that employees who are self-directed and have more independence over their work might create more opportunities to perform the new KSAs. In my study, several participants discussed the need for employees to exercise their autonomy and find or create opportunities for themselves to use their new skills back in the workplace. This key finding closely aligns with the concept of motivation to transfer, which is discussed in Chapter 2. Scholars, such as Ascher (2013), Hughes et al. (2020), and Lee et al. (2014) agreed that motivation to transfer was significantly related to training transfer. This key finding also aligns with this study's conceptual framework. In the training transfer model, motivation is one of the three individual characteristics that makes up the training input factors (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Baldwin and Ford (1988) used training input factors to understand how employees applied and maintained newly acquired KSAs in the workplace.

### **Finding 3: Provide Post-Training Support to help Employees Sustain their New Skills in the Workplace**

Sixteen of the 20 participants (80%) articulated the need for the organization to provide its employees with post-training support to help them apply and maintain their new skills in the workplace. This third finding emerged from the participants responses to IQ8 and IQ9. This finding showed the importance of providing employees with post-training support to help them not only use their new skills but build on them through continued professional growth and development. The participants shared the view that if employees are provided with post-training support, it might result in the organization

being able to sustain higher training transfer rates. This finding provided evidence regarding how providing post-training sustainment support could lead to improving training transfer in the workplace. Muduli and Raval (2018) found a linkage between post-training support and transfer outcomes. Similarly, in my study, I provided examples of how employees perceived the ways that organizational support could improve training transfer outcomes.

The participants responses identified various ways for them to sustain their new skills in the workplace. In many cases, the respondents shared how being able to sustain their skills through mentoring and networking would help them not only find opportunities to use them but also improve on them through further growth and development. The participants responded in many instances that there existed a need for them to continue learning and improving on their skills to position themselves for opportunities to apply them elsewhere within the organization. The participants self-identified with others that belonged to their training cohorts and expressed the importance of staying connected and continuing the development of their skills with their peers to improve the odds of utilizing those skills in the workplace.

Employees need long-term support after they have completed training so that they can continue to develop and grow their skills not only for the immediate application and maintenance of the skills but to find other ways of putting them into practice in the workplace as part of their longer-term career growth and development. Post-training support through avenues such as mentoring, and networking requires a longer-term commitment on the part of the organization. Organizations need to commit resources to

helping their employees after the completion of training to maximize their opportunities to enhance their ability to use and improve on their acquired skills in the workplace.

This third finding is confirmed by the literature review in Chapter 2. The literature has shown the linkage between supervisor support and peer support and their roles in enhancing training transfer, post-training. In their study, Govaerts et al. (2017) found that supervisor and peer support after training was a significant predictor of whether employees experienced positive training transfer in the workplace. Other studies have found a relationship between post-training support, such as supervisor support and peer support and transfer outcomes (Lee et al., 2014; Muduli & Raval, 2018; Reinhold et al., 2018). The findings in my study are consistent with previous studies. Participants in my study responded that post-training support from their supervisors and peers were essential to them being able to follow-up, receive feedback, mentoring and networking; all of which attributed to their ability to sustain their new skills in the workplace. This major finding is also supported by the conceptual framework used in this study. Baldwin and Ford (1988) considered support, such as post-training support provided by supervisors and peers, significant to employees' ability to generalize and maintain new training over time in the workplace.

#### **Finding 4: Implement Systems for Tracking and Monitoring the Use of New Skills after Training**

Fourteen of the 20 participants (70%) shared that the organization needs to track and monitor its employees' usage of new training in the workplace. The participants' responses to IQ8 and IQ9 also lead to the emergence of this finding. This finding

suggested that tracking and monitoring transfer outcomes is essential to understanding the effectiveness of the training. This finding revealed that if the organization tracks and monitors its employees' usage of new skills after completion of training it might lead to meaningful impacts in their job performance and overall organizational productivity.

This finding further suggested that there needs to be organizational processes, procedures, systems, and tools in place to ensure employees are actually transferring new skills back to the workplace once they return from training. In many instances, the participants responded with examples of what the organization should be doing to enhance training transfer in the workplace. Participants shared that it was in the best interest of both the employee and the organization to be able to understand and assess whether its employee training was leading to positive results. Curado and Teixeira (2014) argued that organizations need to implement training evaluation practices and systems as way to ensure a proper return on its investments. Participants' responses were an indication that to improve training transfer would involve having the ability to plan for, track, monitor, and provide feedback so that the organization could make any necessary adjustments for employees to effectively and efficiently apply the new skills in the workplace.

Employees need to know if they are succeeding or failing to utilize their new skills in a meaningful way. Employees need to know if their changes in behavior are leading to positive results for the organization. Organizations, likewise, need a way to evaluate and appraise their employees' learning and changes in on-the-job performance post-training (Curado & Teixeira, 2014). Supervisors, managers, and leaders need to be

able to assess whether the training is leading to expected outcomes for the organization. Training managers need to be able to obtain feedback to ascertain whether the training is meeting its intended goals and objectives. These are all valid reasons for instituting the means of tracking, assessing, and monitoring employee's use of new skills to improve training transfer in the workplace. Not only will organizations be able to determine the effectiveness of a given training program, but also it will enable them to develop a better understanding of its ability to build skill capacity and its ability to develop and grow its workforce. Therefore, tracking and monitoring the utilization of new skills post-training and providing continuous feedback post-training are essential strategies for achieving expected positive training outcomes.

This key finding is supported by the literature. The literature has shown the need for evaluating, assessing, tracking, and monitoring training transfer to better understand transfer outcomes (Curado & Teixeira, 2014; Sitzmann & Weinhardt, 2019). Towler et al. (2014) suggested that organizations need to emphasize the importance and value of training to improve the chances that employees will actually transfer at the appropriate time. In my study, the participants suggested ways for organizations to foster an environment to track and monitor training transfer to better understand transfer outcomes. Specifically, participants suggested setting training goals, tracking training usage rates, providing feedback, and tracking and reporting the ROI. McCracken et al. (2012) suggested that organizations need to develop a clear training strategy that communicates to employees how their training will be used to meet organizational goals and objectives. This finding is also in agreement with this study's conceptual framework. In their concept

of training transfer, Baldwin and Ford (1988) recognized the need for being able to evaluate training effectiveness. Baldwin and Ford (1988) included training output factors and conditions of transfer in their training transfer model as mechanisms for understanding the effectiveness of employee learning and retention and on-the-job performance after completion of training.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study sample consisted of 20 employees from a single federal government organization that is located in South Carolina. The small sample size, coupled with the peculiar nature of the federal government organization under study, might not allow for the transferability of the findings from this study to non-government organizational settings. This federal government organization is peculiar because it is military-centric and is staffed and operated by military service members and civilian employees.

The study was limited to self-reported data. The participants might have chosen not to be open and honest and provide insightful and truthful information during the semistructured interviews, given that I am sharing the findings from the study with the federal government organization. Before the semistructured interviews, I encouraged participants to be candid and provide insightful and sincere responses to the interview questions, as the objective of the research was to improve training transfer in their federal workplace.

Another limitation was the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis for this study was the individual employee. In future studies, researchers should explore other stakeholders' perspectives within the organization that play an essential role in whether employees are



successful at applying new KSAs to their jobs in the workplace. Aluko and Shonubi (2014) found that both supervisors and peers play a significant role in whether employees actually transfer training to the workplace. In future studies, researchers should collect qualitative data not only from employees but also from their supervisors, peers, and others within the organization. That way, researchers could develop a well-rounded perspective using multiple organizational stakeholders' viewpoints regarding how to improve training transfer in the workplace.

Data collection was limited to semistructured interviews. I relied solely on the interview protocol to collect data from the participants. Researchers must decide which data collection tool will answer the study's research question and which data sources will produce the most relevant information needed to answer the research questions (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I decided to use the interview protocol as the single source of data for this study. I used the interview protocol (see Appendix A) during the semistructured interviews to explore employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in the workplace.

Another limitation is that I work for the federal government organization that was under study. Participation in the study was voluntary. I did not have any control over those employees who decided to participate in the study. I was not in any power relationship with the participants to influence the outcome of the interviews. My biases might still have been reflected in data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

## **Recommendations**

This study has several limitations to be addressed by future research. One concern is the need for more qualitative studies regarding employee perspectives about training transfer in the workplace. Scholars have recommended more qualitative studies to explore employee perspectives about ways to enhance or optimize training transfer in the workplace (Baldwin et al., 2017). This current case study was a single case study about employee perspectives regarding how to improve training transfer in a single federal government organization located in South Carolina. More qualitative studies are needed to explore employee perspectives about improving training transfer in different organizational contexts, including public and private organizations.

Second, researchers should conduct quantitative studies to examine how employee perspectives effect training transfer or transfer outcomes. Researchers could also examine the impact of training input factors, such as training design factors and workplace environment factors and how they influence employee perspectives about training transfer.

Finally, this study relied solely on self-reported data from the individual employees. In future studies, researchers should collect data from employees, supervisors, peers, and others within the organization to corroborate the findings. That way, researchers could develop a well-rounded perspective using multiple viewpoints, from various organizational stakeholders regarding how to improve training transfer in the workplace.

## **Implications**

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings from this study might provide meaningful information to organizations that are interested in understanding how to improve training transfer within the workplace. This research study's findings might provide a better understanding of the importance of providing employees with ample opportunities to better position them to utilize their new skills to achieve higher transfer rates. This study's findings might provide more insight about the importance of employees being self-directed and motivated to use their new skills to improve their job, team, and organizational performance.

The findings might also offer organizations more insight into how the development and implementation of post-training interventions might provide employees with the additional support they will need to sustain and improve upon their skills to meet current and future needs within the workplace. Lastly, the findings in this study might provide leaders and managers with a better understanding of the significance of developing and implementing organizational processes, procedures, systems, and tools to track and monitor transfer outcomes to ensure the attainment of organizational performance goals.

### **Implications for Theory**

In the extant literature researchers acknowledge that training transfer continues to be a serious problem for many organizations. Employee perspectives about how to improve training transfer in the workplace is also relatively underexplored in the current

literature (Blume et al., 2019). Grossman and Burke-Smalley (2018) called for more targeted transfer research to investigate employee perceptions about improving training transfer in organizations. In this study I attempted to answer the call by Grossman and Burke-Smalley (2018), by exploring employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization. I used Baldwin and Ford's (1988) concept of training transfer for this research study. The findings from this research study showed that organizations can improve their transfer rates by providing their employees with more opportunities to put their new skills into practice. This study revealed that employees need to be self-directed and motivated to experience positive transfer in the workplace. The findings from this research study also revealed that organizations could achieve and maintain higher transfer rates by providing employees with post-training support afterward to help them sustain their new KSAs in the workplace. Lastly, the findings of this study also showed that implementing systems for tracking and monitoring training usage is critical to achieving expected transfer outcomes.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Training transfer or lack thereof, remains an acute problem for many organizations. The findings from this qualitative exploratory single-case study might contribute to positive social change by providing organizational leaders with a better understanding of employee perceptions regarding how to improve training transfer in the workplace. Leaders and managers within organizations might be able to use the insight from the findings of this study to develop and implement organizational strategies, policies, and procedures, and post-training interventions to improve their employees'

ability to put new skills into practice in the workplace. Implementation of the organizational changes might lead to increases in training transfer rates, which might lead to improvements in individual and team productivity and organizational performance.

### **Conclusion**

Organizations are steadily spending billions of dollars on employee training and development to enhance individual, team, and organizational performance. Despite the significant investments in training, it is only useful if employees transfer the training to the workplace and it leads to meaningful improvements within the organization. The overall consensus in the literature is that employees fail to transfer the majority of newly acquired skills back to the workplace. The current literature falls short of providing evidence, based on employee perspectives for how to improve transfer outcomes in organizations. In this qualitative exploratory single-case study I addressed the gap in the literature by exploring employee perspectives regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization based on their participation in a mid-career leadership development program. The study findings showed that first, the objective is to find ways to increase transfer by aligning employees with more opportunities in the organization that will provide them with the highest chance to use what they have recently learned. Next, the findings showed that organizations need to send highly motivated, self-directed individuals to training. These are the individuals who will most likely take it upon themselves after training to figure out how to apply their new skills to the workplace and increase their odds of experiencing positive transfer. Next, the findings showed that to increase transfer requires a longer-term focus and that organizations need

to offer their employees the ability to receive continued support as they develop, maintain, utilize and improve on their skills in the workplace. Lastly, the findings showed that there needs to be organizational systems in place to allow leaders and managers the ability to assess the benefits of the training so they can make adjustments to increase transfer to achieve the expected outcomes.

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## Appendix A: Interview Protocol

**Interviewee Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **MCLP Cohort:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Job/Position:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Work site:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interview Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer:** Jayson Dunmore

**Research Topic:** Employee Perceptions about Improving Training Transfer in the Federal Workplace

**I. Greetings**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview you.

**II. Start Recording**

If it is alright with you, I would like a digital recording of the interview. This will enable me to create a transcript of the interview.

**III. Background**

The purpose of this study is to explore employee perspectives about how to improve the use of newly acquired training in the workplace within the context of your federal government organization.

I am interviewing individuals that have graduated from the Mid-Career Leadership Program. I am interested in your perspectives about how to improve the use of newly acquired training in the workplace based on your participation in the MCLP.

**IV. Pre-Interview Questions**

Do you have any questions before we get started with the interview?

**V. Interview Questions**

1. Tell me about some of the knowledge and skills learned in the Mid-Career Leadership Program (MCLP).
2. What can employees do to increase their chances of using the skills learned during the training back in the workplace?

3. What are some barriers that employees might encounter when trying to use the new training in the workplace?
4. What are some factors that might enable or make it easier for employees to use the new training in the workplace?
5. How might employees use the training materials and other related resources to help them apply the new knowledge and skills to their jobs in the workplace?
6. What could instructors do during and after training to help employees apply the new knowledge and skills to their jobs in the workplace?
7. What could co-workers or peers do to help employees apply the new training to their jobs in the workplace?
8. What could first-line supervisors do to help employees apply the new training to their jobs in the workplace?
9. What could the organization, as whole, do to help employees apply the new training to their jobs in the workplace?
10. What else if anything could be done to ensure employees are able to apply the new training to their jobs in the workplace?

**VI. Closing**

Thank you for participating in the interview. I will contact you with any follow-up questions or if there is a need for clarification, and to verify the transcripts are an accurate representation of your responses.

**VII. End Recording**

Turn off digital recording device.

## Appendix B: Field Test Request Letter

Date:

Hello \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a doctoral student pursuing a PhD in Management at Walden University. For my doctoral dissertation, I am conducting a qualitative exploratory single-study to explore employee perceptions about how to improve training transfer in the federal workplace. Training transfer is the extent to which employees can apply knowledge and skills learned in a training environment back to their jobs in the workplace and make a meaningful impact.

I am seeking your support for providing feedback as to the appropriateness of the interview questions that will be asked and how the interview questions will be asked in relation to the purpose of the study and its central research question.

The purpose of my study is to explore employee perceptions of how to improve training transfer in the workplace within the context of a single federal government organization in South Carolina.

The central research question is what are the perceptions of employees regarding how to improve training transfer in a federal government organization?

The target population for my study consists of federal employees that work at \_\_\_\_\_. The sample will consist of employees who have graduated from the 2015-2019 Mid-Career Leadership Program (MCLP) cohorts.

Below is the list of open-ended questions I will be asking the participants.

**Interview Questions**

1. What can employees do to increase their chances of using the skills learned during the training back in the workplace?
2. What are some barriers that employees might encounter when trying to use the new training in the workplace?
3. What are some factors that might enable or make it easier for employees to use the new training in the workplace?

4. How might employees use the training materials and other related resources to help them apply the new knowledge and skills to their jobs in the workplace?
5. What could instructors do during and after training to help employees apply the new knowledge and skills to their jobs in the workplace?
6. What could co-workers or peers do to help employees apply the new training to their jobs in the workplace?
7. What could first-line supervisors do to help employees apply the new training to their jobs in the workplace?
8. What could the organization, as whole, do to help employees apply the new training to their jobs in the workplace?
9. What else if anything could be done to ensure employees are able to apply the new training to their jobs in the workplace?

After reviewing the interview questions, please respond to the following four field test questions:

1. Based on the purpose of the study are the interview questions likely to generate information to answer the central research question?
2. Do you think the participants are likely to find any of the interview questions objectionable? If so, why? What changes would you recommend?
3. Were any of the interview questions difficult to understand? If so, why? What changes would you recommend?
4. Do you have any additional thoughts or recommendations about the interview questions?

If you decide to participate in this field test, please do not answer the interview questions intended for the study participants.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Respectfully sent,

Jayson Dunmore

## Appendix C: Email Invitation

Subj: Recruiting MCLP Graduates to Participate in an Interview about Improving the Use of New Training in the Workplace

Good morning \_\_\_\_\_,

You are invited to take part in a one-on-one, semi-structured interview that is designed to explore MCLP graduates' perspectives on how to improve the use of new training (knowledge, skills, and abilities) back on the job in the workplace.

Your personal perspectives might lead to insights for developing strategies for improving the use of newly acquired training in the workplace, which could lead to improvements in employee productivity and organizational performance.

The interviews will consist of 10 open-ended questions and will take approximately 30-60 minutes.

I am conducting the interviews via MS Teams or telephone, Monday – Friday, 11:30 – 12:30PM, from 30 Nov – 30 Dec 2020.

I have been granted permission by the Commanding Officer (CO) to recruit employee participants and conduct the interviews. The interviews are being conducted as part of my doctoral study at Walden University.

I've attached a **consent form** that provides detailed information about the study and the interview process.

If you are interested in participating, please reply to this email with the words, "I consent," indicating your consent to participate in the interview.

I will contact you afterward to schedule the interview.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully Sent,

Jayson L Dunmore