

SUPERVISORS' RESPONSES TO EMPLOYEES' POOR PERFORMANCE:
THE ROLE OF SITUATIONAL AND PERSONAL FACTORS

By

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`To hope is to risk despair, and to try is to risk failure.'
But risks **must** be taken, because the greatest risk in life is to risk **nothing**. The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing, and becomes nothing. He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he simply cannot learn and feel and change and grow and love and live. Chained by his certitudes, he's a slave. He's forefeited his freedom. Only the person who **risks** is truly free. Try and see what happens.

Leo Buscaglia

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General Overview

This research develops and tests portions of a model that seeks to explain the response of supervisors to poor performing employees. The model depicts this supervisor/employee interaction in two phases which allow for a distinction between (1) the cause of the subordinate's behavior and (2) the formation of the supervisor's response. The model specifies the subordinate's behavior, knowledge of the subordinate's behavioral history, and an attributional schema as relevant variables influencing supervisor's attribution of the cause of poor performance. The first part of the model, which is the creation of Green and Mitchell (1979) has been tested in several studies that will be discussed later.

For the second part of the model, the formation of the supervisor's response, the predictor variables are the supervisor's causal attribution formed in the first step, the visibility of the situation, the seriousness of the consequence of the poor behavior, and the subordinate's behavioral history. Seriousness of the behavior, the causal attribution formed by the supervisor, and visibility of the subordinate's behavior are the factors influencing the supervisor's perception of the impact of the situation on him or herself. The purpose of the present analysis is to test the second part of the model.

The intent of this model is to explain the relationship between supervisors and poor performing subordinates more effectively than models used in previous research, e.g. Mitchell and Green (Reported in Mitchell and Wood, 1979); and Arvey and Jones (1985). The enhanced effectiveness of this model is a result of the unique combination of variables included in it. Some of the variables have been used in previous studies, although in a different context, e.g. seriousness of the behavior (Mitchell, Green, and Wood, 1981), while other variables have not been used in studies addressing the interaction between supervisors and subordinates, e.g. visibility of the behavior.

Importance of the Issues Addressed in this Study

The first major issue of interest is the notion of the supervisor's perception of the impact of the situation on him or herself. The major assumption made here is that supervisors are responsible for the performance of their work units. If group performance is above average, then the supervisor should appear to be an effective supervisor to other people in the organization, e.g. superiors, peers, and subordinates. On the other hand, when group performance is low the image of the supervisor will be affected, and he or she will not be perceived by others in the organization as an effective supervisor. This perceived impact constitutes a major contribution to the study of the supervisor/subordinate interaction.

It is argued that supervisors will perceive a greater personal impact under three conditions: (1) when the consequence of poor

performance is serious (e.g. a person was injured or died as a consequence of subordinate's behavior), (2) when the supervisor makes an external attribution of an employee's behavior (e.g. the behavior was due to inadequate training), (3) when the behavior is highly visible to other people in the organization. This is in contrast to situations where (1) the behavioral consequences are not serious, (2) the attribution made is internal, and (3) few people are aware of the poor performance.

Based on the contention that people are aware of the effects of other's behavior on themselves (Heider, 1958; Jones and Davis, 1965), the model developed in the present research addresses the impact that a subordinate's poor performance has on the supervisor's image as an effective manager. This question has not been studied before within the context used in the present study. For example, Tjoslvold (1985) examined the effects of subordinates' behavior on supervisors but made questionable assumptions which might not fully explain supervisors' reactions. He viewed the relationship between supervisor and subordinates as being either cooperative, competitive, or individualistic (Tjoslvold, 1985). The coordination and integration of tasks in any work unit should not allow for competitive or individualistic behavior between supervisors and subordinates.

The second important issue is the supervisors' knowledge of the subordinate's work environment, including the knowledge of the abilities and skills required for effective job performance. Supervisors are expected to know the extent to which subordinates possess such skills and abilities, however, most studies seem to overlook this factor. Generally, such studies seem to imply that supervisors do not have a good

understanding of the subordinate's working conditions. The present study takes into account the supervisor's knowledge of subordinates' work environment, their abilities and skills. The present research also argues that knowledge of the work situation and of subordinates' abilities may prevent the application of attributional models in their natural form in supervision studies.

A third issue is the use of experienced supervisors from similar organizations as subjects for study. It is important to have a sample of supervisors that (1) can relate to the same performance problem and (2) have an awareness of pressure from both subordinates and superiors. This latter notion that the supervisor is a "middle man" is a very important view of the interaction being examined, which has generally been overlooked by most of the previous studies (e.g. Mitchell et al., 1981). The present study allows supervisors to express their perceptions about subordinates and superiors as they relate to the performance problem.

In summary, these three important considerations make the present research different from previous studies in supervision. It is expected that the inclusion of these factors will represent a more realistic view of the interaction between supervisors and subordinates.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This review focuses on concepts of organizational behavior that describe the processes by which supervisors respond to poor performing employees. The chapter first presents a broad overview of approaches to the study of the interaction between supervisors and subordinates (e.g. Podsakoff, 1982). Attention is then devoted to attributional concepts which have been widely applied in the study of the interaction (e.g. Mitchell et al., 1981). Factors that limit the application of attributional models to studies of the interaction between supervisors and subordinates are also discussed. Similar discussions will be presented for the model suggested by Arvey and Jones (1985). The chapter concludes with a summary discussion of the methodological issues associated with previous studies and the present research.

Approaches to the Study of the Interaction

Between Supervisors and Subordinates

It is not uncommon to find that research in the area of supervision is incomplete in that it stops short of some of the important

contributions it should be making to our understanding of behavior. Most studies in the area rely on dependent variables such as attitudes, expectations, intentions, etc., but very few of them use actual behavior as the dependent variables (Mitchell, 1982). Other studies that use behavior as the dependent variable fail to consider mediating variables that might have an important effect in the relationship between supervisors and subordinates (Podsakoff, 1982). Little attention has been directed to the question of how supervisors utilize rewards and punishments, or the variables that affect these supervisor behaviors (Podsakoff, 1982).

Studies considering the impact of mediating variables are relatively more complete (James and Brett, 1984) than those examining less complex relationships. Models containing mediating variables should be applied to research on the interaction between supervisors and subordinates (e.g. Arvey and Jones, 1985; Podsakoff, 1982; Mitchell et al., 1981; Mitchell, 1982), because the interaction is mediated by a number of variables, including contextual factors, personality, and behavioral characteristics of both supervisors and subordinates (e.g., Podsakoff, 1982; Mitchell et al., 1981).

Furthermore, some studies exhibit a tendency to view only a part of the supervisor/subordinate interaction. Most of the earlier research efforts have treated this interaction as if it were unidirectional; from the supervisor to the subordinate (Podsakoff, 1982). More recently, a few studies have viewed this interaction as one where communication travels both ways, downward and upward, and where the actions of either party affect the other (e.g., Lowin and Craig, 1968; Mitchell et al., 1981).

Although the more recent approaches are somewhat more realistic, they are still only a partial representation of the situation. Supervisors and subordinates do not exist in isolation, which is the implication of the dyadic approach used by the great majority of researchers (e.g., Arvey, Davis, and Nelson, 1984; Ilgen, Mitchell, and Fredrickson, 1981; Mitchell et al., 1981). Studies of the relationship between supervisors and subordinates should benefit through consideration of the supervisor as a "middle man", whose actions are influenced by the demands from his subordinates and demands from above, e.g. the supervisor's own boss. Figure 2.1, below, shows the different interactions previously considered in studies of supervision (A) and (B), and the ones suggested in the present study (C).

FIGURE 2.1

**DIFFERENT SUPERVISOR/SUBORDINATE INTERACTIONS
CONSIDERED IN SUPERVISION RESEARCH**

- A. Supervisor -----> Subordinate
- B. Supervisor <-----> Subordinate
- C. Supervisor's <-----> Supervisor <-----> Subordinate
Boss

Of the studies using a more complete model approach (James and Brett, 1984), a few have dealt with supervisors' responses to poor performing subordinates (e.g. Green and Mitchell, 1979; Mitchell et al., 1981; Mitchell and Wood, 1979, 1980). In these studies the supervisor's response to the subordinate's poor performance has been seen as mediated

by the supervisor's attributions of the subordinate's behavior (Green and Mitchell, 1979).

Supervisor's Response to Poor Performing

Subordinates: Current Research

Most studies dealing with discipline in organizations have emphasized the effects of punishment on employees, although the literature in this area is not extensive (Arvey and Jones, 1985). The emphasis of these studies is on the effects of disciplinary actions on employee satisfaction and performance (Arvey and Jones, 1985; Podsakoff, 1982; Sims and Szilagyi, 1979). In addition, most research in this area has looked at the interaction between supervisors and subordinates from the point of view of the subordinate, giving little or no attention to supervisors' perceptions of the interaction (Arvey et al., 1984; Greene and Podsakoff, 1981; Mitchell, Larson, and Green, 1977; Phillips and Lord, 1981; Podsakoff and Todor, 1985; Podsakoff, Todor, and Skow, 1982; Podsakoff, Todor, Grover, and Huber, 1984; Sims and Szilagyi, 1979).

Of the studies examining the relationship between supervisors and subordinates from the point of view of the supervisor, a few have dealt with the supervisor's response to poor performing subordinates (e.g. Green and Liden, 1979; Green and Mitchell, 1979; Ilgen et al., 1981; Knowlton and Mitchell, 1980; Mitchell et al., 1981; Mitchell and Kalb, 1982; Mitchell and Wood, 1979, 1980; Wood and Mitchell, 1981). These studies have been guided by a model first presented by Green and Mitchell (1979), and somewhat modified in later studies (e.g. Mitchell et al.,

1981).

The Green and Mitchell model, shown in Appendix A, depicts a two-step process. In the first stage, the supervisor diagnoses the cause of the subordinate's behavior through the application of an attributional schema. In the second step, the supervisor chooses a response to the subordinate's behavior. The primary purpose of the studies applying this model has been to show how attributions affect actions. Causal attributions have been viewed as the mediating variable between the independent variables (e.g., subordinate's behavior) and the dependent variable (e.g., supervisor's reaction).

Various aspects of the relationship have been examined by these studies, which have been guided by the Green and Mitchell model (1979). For instance, Mitchell and Wood (1979) examined questions such as (1) how past work history influences attributions, (2) how attributions and responses are related, (3) how the seriousness of the outcome affects attributions, (4) whether apologies diminish the severity of the response, (5) how the perceived responsibility (perceived by the subordinate) influences the response of the supervisor, and (6) whether supervisors in general use internal attributions for subordinates' poor performance. Knowlton and Mitchell (1980) investigated the influence of internal attributions to either effort or ability on supervisors' evaluation of subordinates' performance. They found that an attribution to effort, as opposed to ability, generated higher evaluations when subordinates' performance was high and lower evaluations when performance was low (Knowlton and Mitchell, 1980).

The influence of organizational policies and attributions upon the

supervisor's response to poor performance have been examined (Green and Liden, 1979). Supervisors were seen as directing their responses more to subordinates in the internal attribution condition than in the external condition. Furthermore, supervisors' responses were seen as more punitive in the internal condition than the external condition and company policy was most likely to be followed in the internal than the external condition (Green and Liden 1979; and Mitchell et al., 1981).

In addition to the studies based on the Green and Mitchell model mentioned above, a few others that have examined supervisors' responses to subordinates' poor performance from the supervisor's perspective. In an investigation of how supervisors evaluate performance and provide feedback to subordinates Ilgen, Mitchell, and Frederickson (1981) manipulated four variables: the supervisor's power over subordinate pay, the degree of interdependence between supervisors and their subordinates, the nature of feedback to subordinates, and the level of subordinate performance reported to the supervisor. Ilgen et al. found support for the findings of others indicating that the responses of supervisors are strongly influenced by the effectiveness of their subordinates (Lowin and Craig, 1968; Mitchell and Wood, 1980).

In a somewhat different vein, Ilgen and Knowlton's (1980) replication of Fisher's (1979) work found that supervisors tend to inflate the evaluation of poor performing employees when the evaluations must be fed back to them. Fisher's original study found that individuals who were required to give feedback rated poor performers higher than those not required to give such feedback. Support for this hypothesis was also found by Ilgen and Knowlton (1980) who were able to determine that

supervisors recognized poor performance but inflated this perception and communicated higher performance.

In a study using faculty members, Liden and Mitchell (1982) found that faculty may develop and apply personal policies in dealing with common, recurring poor performance. They also noted that these policies are most likely to be applied when information about the low performer is inadequate or unavailable, which led the researchers to the conclusion that full attribution processes may be by-passed (Liden and Mitchell, 1982). Liden and Mitchell (1982) concluded that such responses to poor performance were a result of the application of a personal policy and were not based on an attributional process. In their discussion, Liden and Mitchell (1982), implied that their conclusion would be true also for leaders of organizations, which raises questions of external validity.

How supervisors identify and manage poor performing employees has been the subject of a study by O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) who identified four "supervisors style facets" relevant to the handling of marginal employees. These four styles are (1) confrontation, (2) difficulty with firing, (3) employee orientation, and (4) complete documentation. O'Reilly and Weitz found some indication that supervisory styles and the punitive orientation of supervisors may be correlated. As supervisors change from style four to style one, they tend to be more formal and punitive when dealing with problem employees. Furthermore, O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) suggested that organization tenure is associated with a more confrontive style and a concern for complete documentation, implying that experienced supervisors tend to adopt these styles over time or that they are more likely to be retained by the company.

An important finding in the O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) study was that performance ratings for the different work units were found to be associated with the style used by the unit supervisor. They found that supervisors who indicated more frequent application of informal warnings, formal warnings, and dismissal received higher performance ratings. O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) explained this by stating that other employees in the work group may perceive the use of sanctions by supervisor as an effective way of dealing with "those individuals whose attitudes and behaviors are in violation of group norms" (p. 408). An alternative explanation could be that supervisors are fully aware of how they are evaluated by higher level managers and they use sanctions to prevent themselves from receiving low performance ratings.

A final study is Tjosvold's (1985) research on the effects of attributions and social context on supervisors' interactions with poor performing employees. Attributions were manipulated by the use of two conditions, low effort and low ability, while social context was operationalized by the use of three conditions; cooperative, competitive, and individualistic. Tjosvold (1985) found that both attribution and the social context between superiors and subordinates affected supervisors' interactions with poor performing subordinate. Supervisors' responses were significantly more favorable to poor performing subordinates under cooperative rather than competitive conditions (Tjosvold, 1985).

Summary. Of the supervision studies reviewed, few deal with supervisors' responses to poor performing employees; the most important of which have been reviewed in this section. The great majority of studies on supervisors' responses to low performers have been related to

an attributional model developed by Green and Mitchell (e.g. Mitchell et al., 1981). Others have used causal attributions as the major moderator of the interaction between the supervisor and the poor performer (Ilgen et al., 1981; Liden and Mitchell, 1982; Heerwagen, Beach, and Mitchell, 1985; Tjosvold, 1985). The one study that did not use attributions, focused more on supervisors' styles of dealing with low performers (O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980).

Aside from examining the role of attributions, the studies reviewed in this section have dealt with other variables as well. Some of these variables have been employee's work history, seriousness of outcome, subordinates' use of apologies (Mitchell and Wood, 1979, 1980; Mitchell et al., 1981), the cost associated with the implementation of the action (Heerwagen et al., 1985), and the degree of interdependence between the supervisor and subordinate (Ilgen et al., 1981; Tjosvold, 1985). Also examined has been the supervisor's style or approach in handling poor performers and his or her willingness to use negative sanctions, such as informal warnings, formal warnings, and dismissals (O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980). One very recent study of supervisors' causal attributions examined the effect of the number of people performing poorly in a group and the degree of task interdependence (Brown and Mitchell, 1986).

Although indirectly implied in some of the studies examined (Ilgen et al., 1981; O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980; and Tjosvold, 1985), a variable that has been overlooked is the supervisor's perceptions of how a subordinate's poor performance will affect his or her image as an effective supervisor. Most of the studies reported here have used students in role playing situations as supervisors, a factor which might

have made it more difficult to examine such perceptions. The perception of the potential impact of subordinates' poor performance on a supervisor's own career within the organization is viewed as a potentially important variable in the present research, because it may have a significant effect on a supervisor's response. It is also believed that a supervisor's response to poor performers will be greatly affected by how supervisors perceive that such performance will affect the ratings of their work units.

The Role of Attributions

Attribution theory has become widely applied in studies of the interaction between supervisors and subordinates. This may be so because the theory deals with questions about how people make causal explanations of their own and other people's behavior (Kelley, 1973; Mitchell, 1982). The attribution construct refers to cognitive processes used by individuals in inferring causation from observed behavior (Calder, 1977). Kelley (1973) affirms that attribution theory has developed primarily as a means of "social perception", a condition that has contributed to its increased popularity, because the theory matches the cognitive type of psychology currently in vogue (Mitchell, 1982).

Most of the theories of attribution advanced by different researchers (e.g. Jones and Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967, 1972, 1972a, 1973) can be seen as products of Heider's (1958) discussion of interpersonal relations theory and its underlying concepts. Heider summarizes these underlying principles as follows:

...According to naive psychology people have an awareness of their surroundings and the events in it (the **life space**), they attain this awareness through **perception** and other processes, they are **affected** by their personal and impersonal environment, they **cause** changes in the environment, they are able to (**can**) and **try** to cause these changes, they have wishes (**want**) and **sentiments**, they stand in unit relations to other entities (**belonging**), and they are accountable according to certain standards (**ought**). All these characteristics determine what role the other person plays in our own life space and how we react to him. (1958, p. 17).

Most studies have used some form of attributional analysis to examine the relationship between group performance and factors such as leader behavior and situational factors (Mitchell, Larson, and Green, 1977), as well as group cohesiveness (Taylor, Doria, and Tyler, 1983). Also investigated has been the impact of impression management on leaders' attributions and actions (Wood and Mitchell, 1981). Some research has been performed on the effect of the type of situation on the causal attribution (Anderson, 1983) and on the consistency of causal attribution with the actors' personality traits (Monson and Hesley, 1982). Some authors have even used attributions to examine the reasons given by chief executive officers to explain their firms' performance (Salancik and Meindl, 1984) and the influence of attributions on employees' reactions to feedback (Liden and Mitchell, 1985). Investigators have applied attribution theory in other areas as well. In a series of studies, Mitchell et al. (1981), and more recently Tjosvold (1985) have used attribution theory to explain supervisors' responses to poor performing subordinates. It is important to note that the studies mentioned here by no means constitute an exhaustive list. There are

probably thousands of studies using attribution theory.

The Formation of Attributions

For purposes of the present study, certain formulations within attribution theory will not be used to explain supervisors' responses because they are inappropriate. For instance, Kelley (1973) has said that the variance model which suggests three parameters (consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus) on which causal attributions are made is somewhat idealistic. Another formulation for which problems have been reported is the causal schemata approach proposed by Kelley (1972a). In this approach it is assumed that individuals apply a "complete analysis of variance" to make interpretations of different pieces of information about a certain effect.

Kelley (1973) and Langer (1978) have suggested that only when dealing with rare and new situations would observers make use of a complicated thought process to come up with a causal inference. Langer adds that when the events are somewhat common to the observer, he or she would apply pre-set rules to make causal explanations of others' behavior. Calder (1977) also suggests that observers may ignore complicated approaches when determining the causes of others' behaviors. Some additional support for this contention can be found in findings reported by Liden and Mitchell (1982). They found that faculty members tend to by-pass attributional models and use personal policies when handling poor performers (Liden and Mitchell, 1983).

Mitchell et al. (1981) have indicated that one causal schema most

appropriate for the "leader-member interaction" is the one proposed by Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed, Rest, and Rosenbaun (1972). In this model, Weiner et al. described causal explanations for success and failure in task outcomes. Extending Heider's (1958) theory, Weiner et al. (1972) proposed the use of four factors to determine causal attributions for task outcomes. These four factors are ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. The four factors have been organized to represent two dimensions: locus of control and stability (see Figure 2.2). The effort and ability factors represent an internal locus of control while task difficulty and luck represent an external locus of control within the attributional framework.

Mitchell et al. (1981) have commented on problems with the dimensions used by Weiner et al. (1972). They made particular reference to the fact that "the classification of ability as stable and effort as unstable is not clear" (Mitchell et al., 1981, p. 200). They used the example of the lack of effort, which can be seen as unstable, e.g. the result of the person being tired, or it could be seen as stable, e.g. the person is lazy. Anderson (1983) also says that the Weiner et al. (1972) model may not be appropriate for many situations, contrary to the generalized assumption that the model could be applied to all situations.

Weiner et al. (1972)'s model, depicted above, has been applied in recent studies dealing with causal explanations for success and failure in task accomplishment (e.g. Arvey, Davis, and Nelson, 1984; Ilgen, Mitchell, and Fredrickson, 1981; Mitchell and Wood, 1979, 1980; Mitchell et al., 1981; Tillman and Carver, 1980; Tjosvold, 1985). Although the results reported are somewhat mixed, the model has received some

support.

FIGURE 2.2

CLASSIFICATION FOR THE PERCEIVED DETERMINANTS
OF ACHIEVEMENT BEHAVIOR

Stability	Locus of Control	
	Internal	External
Stable	Ability	Task Difficulty
Unstable	Effort	Luck

Source: Weiner et al., 1972, p. 96.

The results of these studies indicate that supervisors may not employ uniformly all the elements of the model (Arvey et al., 1984; Mitchell et al., 1981). It seems that supervisors tend to rely more on some informational dimensions than on others. Even considering these outcomes attribution research seems to provide some support for the attributional models mentioned above and for others not discussed here. An example is the Jones and Nisbett's (1972) actor-observer phenomenon, which proposes that actors attribute their behavior to situational factors while observers attribute the behavior to dispositions of the actor.

To summarize, most of the causal attribution models reviewed in this paper may not be appropriate for the study of the interaction between a supervisor and his or her subordinates. The causal schemata proposed by Kelley (e.g. 1973) is too complex; the proposition of correspondence presented by Jones and Davis (1965) seems to be incomplete because it considers only behavior actually observed (Calder, 1977) and

the notion of intentionality of others' behavior, which may not be true in the interaction of interest; and the Weiner et al. (1972) model seems to be inappropriate because some of the assumptions made in the model may not apply to all situations. All this will become clearer as different aspects of these models are discussed in the next sections.

Supervisors' Reactions to Subordinates' Poor Performance:

New Considerations

Most of the discussion that follows supports the importance of the notion of supervisors' perceptions of the impact of the situation on themselves. This notion should constitute a very important factor to be included in studies examining the interactions between supervisors and subordinates, because both theoretical considerations (e.g. Heider, 1958; Jones and Davis, 1965) and empirical findings (Ilgen et al., 1981; Tjosvold, 1985) seem to indicate that these supervisors' expectations should influence their responses to poor performers. However, this factor has not been included in the research reviewed, and the model proposed is intended to fill this gap.

It is argued that supervisors may face limitations when trying to make causal attributions of subordinates' behavior. First, they may be facing time limitations and may not be willing to spend too much time in analyzing subordinates' behavior in accordance with some of the complicated approaches mentioned above (e.g. Kelley, 1973). Second, supervisors may be facing situations which are very familiar because they deal with them on a daily basis. The latter condition may make

supervisors rely more on their own set of rules when determining causal attributions for subordinates' behavior (e.g. Langer, 1978; Feldman, 1981; Liden and Mitchell, 1982). Such sets of rules, which constitute shortcuts to causal attributions, are derived from the observers' (supervisors) own experience with the situation (Kelley, 1973; Langer, 1978; Feldman, 1981; Liden and Mitchell, 1982).

Supervisors' responses to poor performing employees have been empirically investigated in several studies, e.g. Arvey et al. (1984), Caldwell and O'Reilly (1982), Green and Mitchell (1979), Ilgen et al. (1981), Knowlton and Mitchell (1980), Mitchell et al. (1981), Mitchell and Wood (1979, 1980), Tjosvold (1985), and Wood and Mitchell (1981). However, researchers have also addressed some of the conceptual implications of the interaction between supervisors and poor performing employees (e.g. Arvey and Jones, 1985; Mitchell, 1982).

Supervisors are not Impartial Observers

Most of the empirical studies reviewed above have applied an attributional model to explain the interaction of supervisors and subordinates. They have used models such as the causal schemata (Kelley, 1972a), where observers look at multiple sufficient causes or multiple necessary causes. Other studies have used the analysis of variance approach (Kelley, 1967), where observers analyze actor's behavior in terms of consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus. Finally, studies have applied the Weiner et al. (1972) model to determine causal explanations for success and failure in task achievement, where the

observers' attributions of others' behavior is determined by four factors: ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck.

However, most of these studies have ignored important factors in the supervisor/subordinate relationship. As indicated earlier, one of these factors is related to the treatment of the supervisor as an independent element in the interaction; an element with no interest in the situation. Thus, most researchers have treated the supervisor as a neutral observer. This seems to be a flawed approach to the problem; the supervisor is someone who has personal interest in the situation (e.g. Arvey et al., 1984; Knowlton and Mitchell, 1980; Mitchell et al., 1981).

Subordinates' poor performance can have great impact on the supervisor's future behavior (e.g. Ilgen et al., 1981; Podsakoff, 1982; Tjosvold, 1985). Their poor performance can be highly detrimental to the supervisor's image with the firm or it can be mild. The effect that other's behavior can have on people has been addressed by Heider (1958) in his interpersonal interaction theory, and by Jones and Davis (1965) in their theory of correspondent inferences, specifically the "hedonic relevance of the action to the perceiver." (p. 237). Thus, supervisors are observers very much interested in and even partially responsible for the subordinate's behavior.

Although the supervisor's personal interest in a subordinate's behavior is a potentially important variable, no studies were found that take this interest into account. Most studies have treated the supervisor as a neutral or impartial observer. However, Ilgen et al. (1981) have included the degree of interdependence between the supervisor and subordinates who are performing poorly. Although their results were not

strong, these researchers found support for the hypothesis that supervisors in the high interdependence condition tend to respond more positively toward the poorly performing employee (Ilgen et al., 1981).

TABLE 1.1
EVALUATION OF POOR PERFORMANCE AS A FUNCTION OF
HIGH/LOW INTERDEPENDENCE

Items	High Interd. mean	Low Interd. mean	t	p
Attributions				
Ability	3.10	2.65	1.82	.04
Effort	4.05	4.05		n.s.
Task difficulty	5.19	5.30		n.s.
Luck	2.48	2.45		n.s.
Feedback				
More training	6.48	5.95	1.58	.06
Watch closely	5.05	5.30		n.s.
Attitudes				
Pleasant	3.75	3.58		n.s.
Willing to work with	3.14	2.55	1.44	.08
Performance				
Quality	2.95	2.45	1.74	.04
Quantity	3.05	2.65	1.52	.07
Job Knowledge	3.91	3.85		n.s.
Compensation				
Bonus	20.95	-13.75	1.60	.06
Pay more	2.57	2.35		n.s.

Source: Ilgen et al., 1981, p. 402.

Table 1.1 shows the results obtained by Ilgen et al. (1981). These results provide evidence to support the contention that supervisors cannot be considered as independent observers when they evaluate subordinates' performance. There are also indications that supervisors,

not only tend to distort the feedback they give subordinates, but they may also provide other people with distorted information about subordinates' performance, whenever supervisors have more to lose in the situation. Thus as a means of personal protection or self-defense supervisors may distort the information they give to superiors, when reporting subordinates' performance.

The findings by Ilgen et al. (1981) show that supervisors tend to evaluate poor performing subordinates, with whom they have high interdependence, more positively than those with whom they have low interdependence. Similarly, Tjosvold (1985) has found that the influence methods used by supervisors are affected by the type of attribution made and the social context. Tjosvold (1985) found also under cooperative conditions that supervisors expect more cooperation and mutual assistance, communicate more supportively, and feel more open to subordinates. Likewise, under cooperative conditions, low ability subordinates receive more encouragement and better treatment than low effort subordinates. Conversely, under competitive conditions, the attribution of poor performance to lack of effort intensifies the supervisors' use of threats, assertion of power, and refusal to help or give assistance.

Low and high interdependence have been used to differentiate levels of relationship between supervisors and subordinates (Ilgen et al., 1981). Ilgen et al. have assumed that there are supervisors whose job outcomes are highly dependent on subordinates' performance and others whose are not. More specifically, this relationship may be depicted as one where the subordinate's actions will sometimes have a positive effect

on the supervisor and in other situations a negative impact.

Tjosvold (1985)'s manipulation of the interdependence between supervisors and subordinates is questionable. He used three different conditions: first where both the supervisors and the subordinates perceive their goals as being cooperative, a second situation where they perceive individualistic goals, and a third condition where the two parties perceive their goals as being competitive (Tjosvold, 1985). Particularly problematic is Tjosvold's inclusion of goal conflict as a type of interdependence. Goal conflict of various forms may be acceptable between employees from different organizational subunits, but when an organization faces goal conflict between a supervisor and his employees there is a serious problem. This latter form of conflict is highly dysfunctional, creates inefficiencies and hinders organizational effectiveness. This is the type of conflict implied by Tjosvold (1985) in his study.

Considering this arrangement of organizational goals, it should be more appropriate to assume that supervisors are very much interested in their subordinates' performance. If subordinates perform well, the goals of the unit will be accomplished more efficiently and effectively, and the supervisor will appear to be an effective supervisor. On the other hand, if one or more employees within the unit perform poorly, then the goals of the unit may not be accomplished, and the supervisor could be rated as ineffective.

So far the discussion has covered how supervisors tend to evaluate more positively those poor performers with whom they have high dependency, than when dependency is low (Ilgen et al., 1981). Also, there

are indications that supervisors are more willing to help poor performers when the cause of such behavior is attributed to lack of ability, than when it is attributed to low effort (Tjosvold, 1985). Furthermore, it has been found (Tjosvold, 1985) that supervisors are more willing to support and assist poor performers under cooperative conditions, than under competitive situations.

These findings indicate that supervisors are totally aware of their surroundings. They generally know when an employee is not making a contribution to the group. They know also how to handle the situation such that they minimize potential negative effects on themselves of the subordinate's poor performance. Supervisors may take different actions to handle poor performers and at the same time maintain the image of an effective supervisor. For instance, if the reason for poor performance is seen as low ability, the supervisor should be willing to help the subordinate (Tjosvold, 1985). This may be so because ability could be viewed as external, e.g. ineffective training or low task clarification, which could make the supervisor appear ineffective; conversely, ability may be considered to be an internal factor (Weiner, et al., 1972). However, when poor performance is attributed to low effort the supervisor is less supportive or less willing to help (Tjosvold, 1985). In this case, it is more difficult to associate the subordinate's low effort to poor supervision, at least on the surface. But it could be said that the supervisor is a poor motivator or that he or she cannot relate to others very effectively.

This discussion implies that supervisors may distort information related to their subordinates' performance when they perceive that such

poor performance can have a negative effect on themselves. The distortion of such information serves the objective of protecting the supervisor's image. Although neither study directly addressed this point, the findings of Ilgen et al. (1981) and Tjosvold (1985) seem to imply that the distortion occurs when the subordinate's poor performance can be attributed to an external cause which can be blamed on the supervisor (e.g. the supervisor did not provide the appropriate training).

Supervisors' Knowledge of the Subordinate's Work Situation

Most studies seem to ignore a second factor which is the supervisor's knowledge of the conditions under which the work is being done. It is often assumed that supervisors do not have a good understanding of the employee's working environment and that they have to search for information every time there is some occurrence, such as poor performance. According to these studies this search for and the analysis of information is required for a supervisor to be able to explain a subordinate's behavior.

This assumed ignorance may be the reason for some of the results reported in the research studying supervisors' responses to poor performance (e.g. Mitchell et al., 1981). For instance, Mitchell et al. (1981) viewed causal attributions for the subordinate's behavior as a mediator between subordinate's poor performance and supervisor's response. Although they found some support for the hypothesis, their results were mixed. Mitchell (1982) later concluded that attributions were not as important a determinant of the supervisor's response as it

was previously seen. The results reported by Mitchell et al. (1981) and Feldman (1981) lead to the conclusion that there is nothing wrong with the attribution models, but with their application.

The supervisor's knowledge of the work situation may prevent application of attributional models in their natural form. As a result, models that have been proposed to explain interpersonal interaction may not be appropriate for the interaction between supervisors and subordinates. Attribution models generally assume that the observer is not related to the actor and that he or she has no knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the observed behavior. This implies that the observer should engage in information seeking activities and analysis of such information before making a causal attribution of the actor's behavior.

The existence of an actor-observer bias (noted earlier) has been proposed (Jones and Nisbett, 1972) where actors are said to attribute their behavior to situational factors while observers are said to attribute the same behavior to dispositions of the actor. The major explanations for this bias have been that the information available to actors and observers is different and that actors and observers have important information processing differences (Jones and Nisbett, 1972). While these ideas may hold true for some aspects of the interactions between two individuals, they may not always be appropriate for the supervisor-subordinate relationship. For example, the supervisor is generally knowledgeable of the task that is being performed, which is frequently a reason for the person being a supervisor. Also supervisors often have fairly good knowledge of their subordinates in that they are

aware of subordinates' work behavior and personal characteristics such as attendance records, abilities, and individual performance records. They may also know about family problems and other personal and work problems that determine fluctuations in group performance.

Thus supervisors may have ample information about the conditions under which subordinates perform their jobs and about external and internal forces that may affect their performance. They are expected to develop and use three basic skills required of managers: conceptual or planning-related skills, human-related skills, and technical skills (e.g., Hitt, Middlemist, and Mathis, 1986). Supervisors interact directly with subordinates and rely on human and technical skills. However, the constant interaction of supervisors with subordinates may lead researchers to conclude that both supervisors and subordinates possess similar information and process such information in similar ways. A problem may be that personal biases can affect the causal attributions made about employee performance (Brown and Mitchell, 1986; Feldman, 1981; Tjosvold, 1985).

The major personal factor that affects the interaction between supervisor and subordinate may be self-defense. Both subordinates and supervisors may be looking for self protection when they have to explain poor performance. Self-defensive behavior was implied in the Tjosvold (1985) study, in that supervisors tended to be more supportive and willing to help under cooperative conditions than under competitive conditions. O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) have suggested that supervisors tend to revise their methods of dealing with problem employees over time. It seems that managers learn through experience not only how to deal with

marginal employees, but also to identify the strategy of supervision that provides the greater payoff in terms of the manager's own success (O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980).

While managers may be searching for protection of their own image as effective supervisors (O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980; and Tjosvold, 1985), subordinates may be searching for better ways to protect themselves when their performance is low. They may then use external factors, apologies, etc. to justify their low performance (e.g. Caldwell and O'Reilly, 1982; Jones and Nisbett, 1972; Mehlman and Snyder, 1985; Wood and Mitchell, 1980). There are indications that Jones and Nisbett's (1972) actor observer phenomenon could be applied to the interaction between supervisors and subordinates for reasons other than those expressed. The major reason for the difference in each party's attributions of the same behavior could be self-defensive behavior.

Supervisor's Experience on the Job Situation

Because attribution theory has so many forms and is such a critical component of the model proposed in the present analysis, it is necessary to examine briefly several forms of attribution theory for possible utilization in the model. The supervisor's knowledge of the employee's working conditions and the job situation may make some other attributional models inappropriate for explaining the interaction between supervisors and subordinates. For instance, some of the problems with Weiner et al. (1972)'s model were mentioned earlier. Mitchell et al. (1981) discussed the ambiguity of the stable-unstable dimension. In the

previous section the findings of Tjosvold (1985) were also discussed which lead to the conclusion that supervisors react differently to two internal causes of behavior, e.g. they are willing to help more those subordinates that perform poorly due to low ability than those who do so due to low effort.

It should be recalled that Weiner et al. (1972)'s model suggests that success and failure in task achievement can be explained by any of four different factors: ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck. Figure 2.2, presented earlier, shows the two dimensions used to classify the four factors. The factors ability and effort represent the internal locus of control and the factors task difficulty and luck represent the external locus of control. Likewise, the factors ability and task difficulty represent the stable side of the second dimension, and the factors effort and luck represent the unstable side.

Objections to this model are based along lines suggested in the previous section and the supervisor's knowledge of the job situation. The attribution that task achievement can be due to luck, or the lack of it, does not seem to agree with some of the basic managerial principles of planning and organizing. Tasks are designed to be performed by individuals with the skills and abilities appropriate for success in task performance, and the objectives of selection and training is to match individuals' skills and abilities with task requirements.

Although mismatches between individuals and tasks occur, managers and organizations attempt to avoid them. Basic selection processes are performed in order to assure that the organization will have the right people, in the right jobs, and the right time. Middlemist, Hitt, and

Greer (1983) have explained that the overall objective of recruiting and selection is to identify and choose individuals whose skills match job requirements. They also say that since perfect matches are difficult to obtain in the hiring process, managers should develop effective training programs to eliminate skill deficiencies (Middlemist, Hitt, and Greer, 1983).

The same rationale presented above for the luck factor is also applicable to the task difficulty factor. These two factors of the Weiner et al. (1972) model are generally subject to control by management. As explained, managerial functions such as planning, organizing, hiring, and training are directed towards the elimination of skill differentials between individuals and task requirements. By performing these functions managers reduce the likelihood that the task is either too difficult or too easy.

The other two factors of the Weiner et al. model, ability and effort, are more appropriate for the present analysis of the interaction between supervisors and subordinates, but they should not be treated as being only internal to the individual subordinate, as suggested by Weiner et al. (1972). For instance, low ability could be the result of the individual's inability to learn or acquire a skill (an internal condition), or it could be the result of poor training (an external condition). This implies that what Weiner et al. (1972) classified as internal locus of control could be considered external, depending upon the origin of the problem. Thus, this locus of control dimension has little utility for the study of the interaction between supervisors and subordinates because it implies that when the behavior of the actor is

classified as internally controlled, the actor is to be blamed for such behavior. On the other hand, if the behavior is viewed as externally controlled, then the actor is discharged of any responsibility. This effect would not be seen in the interaction between supervisors and subordinates where there is a shift of responsibility. For example, the subordinate is at fault when his behavior is attributed to an internal cause but the supervisor will be at fault if the subordinate's behavior is attributed to an external cause.

Another attributional schema potentially inappropriate for the supervisor-subordinate interaction is the analysis of variance schema proposed by Kelley (1967). Kelley theorized that there are three primary informational dimensions which may be used to explain others' behavior. These informational dimensions are: (1) distinctiveness, or whether the behavior is shown in response to that particular task but not other tasks; (2) consistency, which concerns the extent to which the same behavior has been shown in other times; and (3) consensus, which refers to whether the behavior is unique to the person, or it is common to other people in the group.

Taking into consideration the earlier discussion of supervisors' knowledge about the job situation and workers, supervisors would not need to seek and analyze information on Kelley's (1967) dimensions. For instance, when a worker performs poorly, supervisors should already know that such performance is not usually a common behavior. It is assumed that organizational units should be operating ideally under conditions of low consensus for poor performance and high consensus for effective performance.

Supervisors generally possess information related to the historical performance of their subordinates. This information relates to what Kelley (1967) calls the consistency dimension. Such information tells the supervisor whether the worker behaves the same way at other times. Supervisors know also whether the subordinate exhibits the poor behavior only when performing a particular task (high distinctiveness) or the same way in all tasks (low distinctiveness).

A conclusion drawn from Kelley's analysis of variance model is that in job situations, supervisors faced with poor performing subordinates will search for information only when they have not had any previous experience with the person, e.g. the employee is new in the unit. This has been suggested by various theoretical works and empirical studies (e.g. Feldman, 1981; Kelley, 1973; Langer, 1978; Liden and Mitchell, 1982). When supervisors seek information, it should tend to be related only to the distinctiveness and the consistency dimensions.

Supervisors will not need information on the other dimension, consensus, because that situation should generally be very obvious to them. In fact, when they perceive that poor performance is common to many subordinates (high consensus), they are likely to take corrective actions to prevent unit performance from falling far below company expectations.

Effects on Supervisors of Subordinates' Poor Performance

A discussion of the effects of subordinates' work behavior on the supervisor's success has already been presented. It is important to keep in mind the previous discussion of the research findings supporting the

hypothesis that supervisors tend to react differently to poor performers when the subordinate's behavior affects the supervisor's job outcomes (Ilgen et al., 1981; O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980; and Tjosvold, 1985). In his discussion of naive psychology, Heider (1958) recognized that people are affected by events in their environments. Heider stated that every individual "is the recipient of the acts of others and of impersonal presses... The most important characteristics of events that affect us are, first whether or not they are positive, pleasant, and satisfying, and second their causal sources." (Heider, 1958, p.16). Although of potential interest, the analysis is not concerned with the attributions made by subordinates and their behavioral responses to supervisors' actions. The central focus of the analysis is to study the reactions of supervisors to poor performers from the supervisor's point of view.

One of the factors affecting supervisors' responses might be the effect of the subordinate's behavior on the supervisor's own success. This effect would be determined by the supervisor's own perceptions about the repercussions of the subordinate's poor performance on the supervisor's own image.

Heider (1958) stated that a person's life space is enhanced by his perception of the potential benefit or harm of other's actions. This could be interpreted by saying that if a person holds this perception, then he cannot be considered as a neutral observer of another's behavior. Heider seemed to suggest that the formation of attributions of others' behavior will be different when the person perceives some benefit or harm from the others' behavior, than when this perception does not exist. This seems to describe the situation of supervisors in terms of the

interaction with their subordinates and superiors.

The findings reported by Ilgen et al. (1981), O'Reilly and Weitz (1980), and Tjosvold (1985) tend to support Heider's (1958) contention. These studies have noted how supervisors rated more positively those poor performers whose job outcomes affected the supervisors than those whose job outcomes had no effect (Ilgen et al., 1981). Supervisors tend to be more open and more willing to help poor performers under the cooperative goals condition than under the competitive condition (Tjosvold, 1985). Furthermore, managers learn through experience not only how to deal with problem employees, but also to identify the supervisory strategy that offers greater payoff in terms of the supervisor's own success (O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980). This idea may be in line with Chapman's (1974) discussion of the norm of reciprocity, both positive and negative. According to this norm, we do good to those who we perceive as doing good to us, and harm those who we perceive as harming us.

The rationale behind the idea of supervisory strategies is that work units are set up to accomplish specific goals through the contributions of individual members of the group. Thus within any unit, everyone should ideally be working toward the accomplishment of the same goal. The behavior of those not making the right contribution becomes dysfunctional to the rest of the group, including the supervisor whose effectiveness may be measured by the performance level of his unit (e.g., Knowlton and Mitchell, 1980).

Based on O'Reilly and Weitz's (1980) analysis, it may be assumed that subordinates' poor performance can be considered as a threat to the group in general and to the supervisor in particular. The rest of the

group members may see as functional any punitive sanction that the supervisor takes against the poor performer (O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980). Supervisors may perceive that by directing some response at the poor performer, they are protecting not only the performance of their work groups, but they will also be protecting themselves.

Supervisors are generally expected to prevent subordinates' poor performance or to correct it promptly when it occurs as part of their duties. The discussion in the previous section established why task difficulty and luck cannot be used as usual factors to explain employees' success or failure in task achievement (Weiner et al., 1972). Task difficulty and luck correspond to exceptional cases, e.g. faulty equipment, which may make the task more difficult and which should last only temporarily, until the supervisor corrects the situation.

Factors such as ability and effort may deserve greater emphasis as major determinants of success and failure in task achievement. Contradicting Weiner et al.'s (1972) contention, these two factors may be viewed as being either internal or external depending on the circumstances surrounding the situation. For example, if the worker demonstrates low ability in a specific task it may be due to lack of appropriate training (an external cause), or it may be due to the individual's physical or mental limitations to master the required skills (an internal cause). Likewise, if the individual worker shows low effort, it may be due to lack of effective motivation (an external cause), or it may be due to the individual being lazy (an internal cause).

In any case, the supervisor may be blamed for subordinates' poor performance, regardless of whether the poor work behavior is due to

internal causes or to external ones. When the causes are external it is obvious that the supervisor may be blamed, because he or she should have motivated or trained the worker properly. If the causes are determined to be internal, the supervisor may also be blamed if the situation is not promptly corrected, e.g. transferring the worker to a job where he or she can succeed or punishing him or her for being lazy.

Thus the literature leads to the conclusion that a subordinate's poor performance will generally be perceived as a threat to the supervisor's own image. This also may imply that supervisors may try to deal with the situation in such a way that they minimize or eliminate the negative effects of the situation on themselves. In some occasions, supervisors may benefit when dealing with poor performing employees. For instance, the action taken by the supervisor may give the impression to his or her superiors that he or she is an effective supervisor that knows how to deal with such types of situations.

Along the same line of reasoning, it may be concluded that a variable influencing the action taken by the supervisor is the visibility of the subordinate's poor work behavior. This visibility may be defined by whether or not other people witnessed the subordinate's behavior or became aware of it. This notion of the effects of the presence of others or the awareness of others has been mentioned as one of the many variables of a comprehensive model of discipline in organizations (Arvey and Jones, 1985).

A second variable influencing supervisors' actions is the seriousness of the outcome (e.g. Mitchell et al., 1981). The results reported by Mitchell and Wood (1979) indicate that the more serious the

outcome the more severe the response of the supervisor. The third variable is the causal attribution made of the subordinate's performance. Previous studies have shown that internal attributions are associated with more severe or punitive supervisory responses than external attributions (e.g. Mitchell et al., 1981).

Thus, the literature indicates that the visibility of the subordinate's behavior, the seriousness of the outcome, and the attribution made by the supervisor should affect the impact perceived by the supervisor. For example, when visibility is high, the outcome of the behavior is serious, and the attribution is external, the supervisor's perceived impact of the situation on him or herself may be high. On the other hand, in the case of low visibility, a nonserious outcome, and an internal attribution the perceived impact may be low. The difference in perceived impact should produce different supervisors' reactions to poor performing subordinates.

Other Factors Affecting Supervisors' Reactions

In a discussion of other variables that affect the way supervisors use rewards and punishments, Podsakoff (1982) divided them into three major groups: (1) contextual variables, such as span of control, task structure and complexity, nature of the supervisor's reinforcement power, situational stressors, organizational policy, and the amount of supervisor-subordinate interaction; (2) the subordinate's behavior, which considers factors such as performance level and competence, sex, likableness, ingratiating behavior, and physical disabilities; and (3)

characteristics of the supervisor, including the supervisor's personality, sex, and his or her causal attributions.

Arvey and Jones (1985) extended these three sets of variables by adding a fourth set related to the situation and the task, in addition to task structure and task complexity (Podsakoff, 1982). Variables such as the nature and importance of the task, time pressures, and the presence or absence of others are mentioned as part of this fourth set of variables (Arvey and Jones, 1985).

Other studies have examined the relationship between leader reward and punishment behavior and subordinate responses (Arvey et al., 1984; Podsakoff, Todor, Grover, and Huber (1984)). The major area of concern in these studies is the response of subordinates to leaders' use of discipline in organizations. The direction of these studies goes from the leader to the employee. They have not examined the relationship between subordinate behavior, the one which may trigger the disciplinary action, and the leader's use of discipline.

In a more comprehensive review of the use of discipline in organizations, Arvey and Jones (1985) have suggested a model of punishment that depicts the possible sequence of a disciplinary episode. This model views the organizational discipline process as formed by four different stages. The first stage is the detection of some undesirable behavior. The second stage defines a process of determination of the actor's level of responsibility for the behavior. The third stage covers a series of events associated with the observer's decision to act and the choice of a strategy to follow in handling the situation. In the final stage the supervisor selects a response and evaluates the consequences of

the disciplinary action.

The Arvey and Jones model is comprised of multiple steps and variables which suggest that the supervisor goes through a very complex process of information seeking and analysis every time he is faced with a poor performing subordinate. However, the earlier discussion of the topic indicates that, when faced with poor performing subordinates, supervisors may use a process that is much simpler than most of the approaches previously suggested (e.g. Kelley, 1973; Langer, 1978; Liden and Mitchell, 1982; Feldman, 1981).

Summary

Most of the discussion in this chapter has been concerned with the factors influencing supervisors' responses to poor performing subordinates. The major variables that have been identified as having important influences on supervisors' responses are (1) the causal attribution made by the supervisor, whether the subordinate is at fault or the supervisor perceives him or herself as being at fault; (2) the visibility of the behavior; whether other people are present when the behavior occurs or whether others are aware of the behavior; (3) the seriousness of the outcome; (4) the behavioral history of the subordinate or whether the worker has a poor or a good work history; and (5) the supervisor's perceived impact of the situation (subordinate's poor performance) on him or herself.

This chapter has discussed the contention that supervisors are not impartial observers of subordinates' poor performance and that they are

affected by the behavior of such subordinates. It should be clear that employee poor performance can have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the work group and the supervisor. The literature indicated also that supervisors are aware of such situations and that they are able to perceive the impact of employee behavior on themselves. Several variables were identified as contributing to supervisors' perceptions of the impact of the situation on themselves. One of these variables is whether the attribution of employee behavior is internal (the subordinate is responsible) or external (the supervisor is responsible for the poor performance).

Also contributing to supervisors' perceptions of the impact on themselves of subordinates' poor performance may be the seriousness on the outcome and the visibility of the behavior. The seriousness of the outcome has been examined in previous studies (Mitchell et al., 1981) and has been found to influence supervisors' identifications of the subordinates as the possible cause of the poor performance. The other variable, visibility, has not been tested within this context, but it seems to have similar effects as those observed for the seriousness of the outcome. Visibility of the behavior describes whether the instance of poor performance has been witnessed by or has come to the attention of other people within the organization.

CHAPTER III

THE PROPOSED CONTINGENCY MODEL

A Contingency Model of a Supervisor's Response to a Subordinate's Poor Performance: A Description

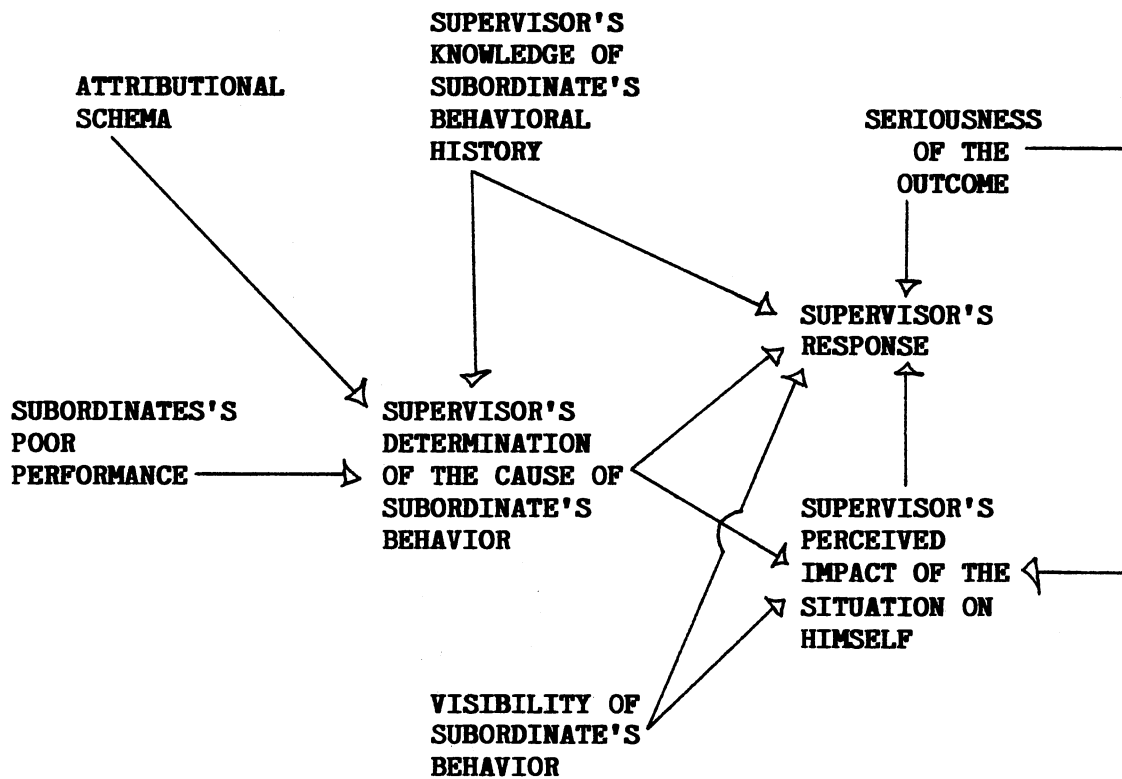
The Green and Mitchell (1979) model serves as the basis for the proposed contingency model of a supervisor's response to poor performing employees. This new model also allows for the same two steps described in the Mitchell and Green model (See Figure 3.1 below), but it differs by placing greater emphasis on the view that the response of the supervisor will be contingent upon situational and personal factors.

To explain the contingency view, some of the variables used in Mitchell and Green's model are rearranged and most importantly, a new variable is introduced. This new variable is the perceived impact of the situation on the supervisor. In other words, it relates to the supervisor's perception of the effect that the subordinate's poor performance is going to affect his or her image as an effective supervisor (e.g. Heider, 1958; Jones and Davis, 1965; Beach and Mitchell, in press).

The objective of including the supervisor's perceptions of the impact on him or herself may help extend the traditional approach used in supervision studies to a three-person interaction (Part C in Figure 2.1).

This new approach implies that the actions a supervisor can take will be influenced, among other things, by the fact that he or she is also being

FIGURE 3.1
CONTINGENCY MODEL OF SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSE
TO SUBORDINATE'S POOR PERFORMANCE^a



^a Arrows indicate sequencing of events, but do not imply causality.

observed by his or her own boss. It further implies that the supervisor is aware that his or her actions are being observed and evaluated. One of these actions being evaluated could very well be how effectively the supervisor is handling poor performers and how effective he or she is in preventing these poor performances from re-occurring.

By including the supervisor's perceptions of the impact of the situation on him or herself as one of the dependent variables in the model, there should be a more wholistic picture. In other words, the model focuses on situations where the subordinate's behavior affects the supervisor's. And at the same time, the supervisor's behavior will also be affected by his or her perceptions of what his or her own boss expects, e.g. the correction and prevention of employees' poor performance. It should be noted that the supervisor's perceived expectation may not be the actual expectation of the supervisor's boss.

Such an expectation may be comparable to those discussed by Heider (1958) who said that individuals are affected by their personal and impersonal environments. This notion was extended by Jones and Davis (1965) who added that when individuals are affected by others' behavior they tend to look for the intentionality of that behavior.

Furthermore, the supervisor's perception of the impact of the situation on him or herself could be associated with the concept of projected image offered by Beach and Mitchell (in press), where it is stated that the decisions individuals make in organizations will be influenced by the perceptions of the effect of the outcomes of these decisions on the achievement of personal career goals. This expectation could also be tied to the findings reported in previous studies (Ilgen et al., 1981; and Tjosvold, 1985), which indicated that supervisors' responses to poor performing employees were affected by the amount of interdependence between supervisors and subordinates.

The general idea here is that the supervisor is viewed as being aware of the impact that most situations within his or her surroundings

or "life space" (Heider, 1958) might have on him or herself. If the supervisor perceives that the employee's poor performance is due to an external reason, such as poor training, and represents a threat to his or her own position (e.g. negative impact), he will try to protect him or herself and react differently than when the situation is not perceived as a threat (e.g. subordinate's poor performance was caused by internal reasons). Similar reasoning can be made with respect to the visibility of subordinate's behavior and with the seriousness of the outcome, because they both should have similar effects on the supervisor's response.

In summary, the proposed model presents a two-step approach to supervisors' reactions to subordinates' poor performance. The first step is the determination of the cause of the undesirable behavior, in which case the most relevant independent variables are the supervisor's knowledge of the subordinate's behavioral history and some attributional schema. According to the model the supervisor's application of the attributional schema is moderated by the supervisor's knowledge of the subordinate's work history. In the second step of the model the supervisor perceives the impact of the subordinate's poor performance on him or herself and generates a response. The independent variables in this stage are the attribution made about subordinate behavior, the visibility of the behavior, the seriousness of the outcome, and the supervisor's knowledge of the subordinate's behavioral history (see Figure 3.1). It is believed that these four independent variables influence both the perceived impact and the supervisor's response. It is also believed that the perceived impact of the situation on the supervisor will have an effect on the type of response generated.

The major difference between the proposed model and the Green and Mitchell model is the introduction of the supervisor's perceptions of the impact of the situation on him or herself. It is theorized here that these perceptions are affected by the combination of three factors: (1) whether the behavior has been attributed to an internal or an external cause, (2) the seriousness of the outcome of that behavior, and (3) the visibility of the behavior, whether or not there were other employees present when the behavior occurred or other people became aware of the behavior. The introduction of this notion will provide additional information on how supervisors react and select their responses to poorly performing employees.

The Domain of the Study

The contingency model of a supervisor's response to the poor performance of a subordinate is introduced in this chapter. As indicated earlier, this model consists of two major stages. The first stage corresponds to the supervisor's determination of the cause of the subordinate's behavior. In this stage, the determination of the cause of the undesirable behavior is viewed as a process through which the supervisor uses information related to the distinctiveness and the consistency of the behavior.

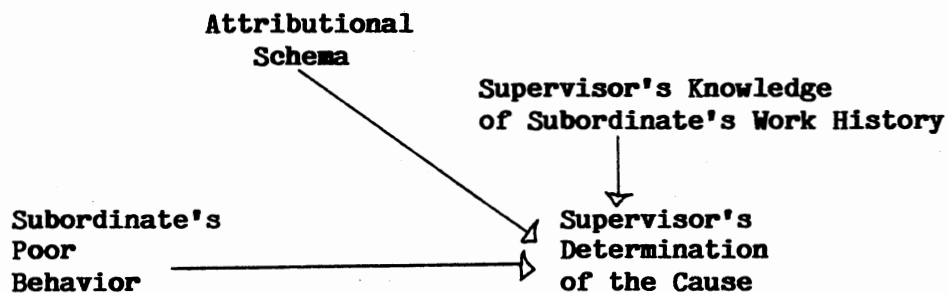
Distinctiveness will tell the supervisor whether the subordinate behaves the same way in all tasks or only when performing this task. Consistency indicates whether the poor performer shows this behavior every time (occasion) he or she performs the same task. Information on

these two parameters will be required only when the supervisor does not have a good knowledge of the subordinate's work history, e.g. the employee is new.

The supervisor's knowledge of the subordinate's behavioral history is then seen as a moderator variable, which determines whether the supervisor will engage in information seeking behavior when faced with a poorly performing employee. When the supervisor already possesses information related to the subordinate's characteristics, such as past disciplinary history, performance records, skills or abilities to perform, or whether the employee has been a "trouble maker," then the supervisor will use this information as the basis for his causal attribution of the subordinate's behavior (e.g. Feldman, 1981; Kelley, 1973; Langer, 1978).

FIGURE 3.2

**FIRST STEP OF THE CONTINGENCY MODEL OF SUPERVISOR'S
RESPONSE TO SUBORDINATE'S POOR PERFORMANCE^a**



^a Arrows indicate sequencing of events, but do not imply causality.

Figure 3.2 above depicts the first part of the proposed contingency

model. This part of the model is based on theoretical formulations by Kelley (1973) and Langer (1978). Various hypotheses developed from this stage of the model have already been empirically tested (Green and Liden, 1980; Liden and Mitchell, 1982; Mitchell et al., 1981). The general proposition of this first part has received considerable support in empirical studies (e.g. Liden and Mitchell, 1982; Mitchell et al., 1981). This proposition maintains that supervisors will apply an attributional schema to make causal attributions of subordinate behavior only when they do not possess information about employee work history, otherwise the causal attribution will be based on the information already known to the supervisor. This research support sets some boundaries in the scope of the present research, because testing this part of the model would be redundant. Thus the domain of this study will be limited to test the second stage of the model. It is in this second step where major changes have been made from what was proposed in previous models (e.g. Green and Mitchell model in Appendix A).

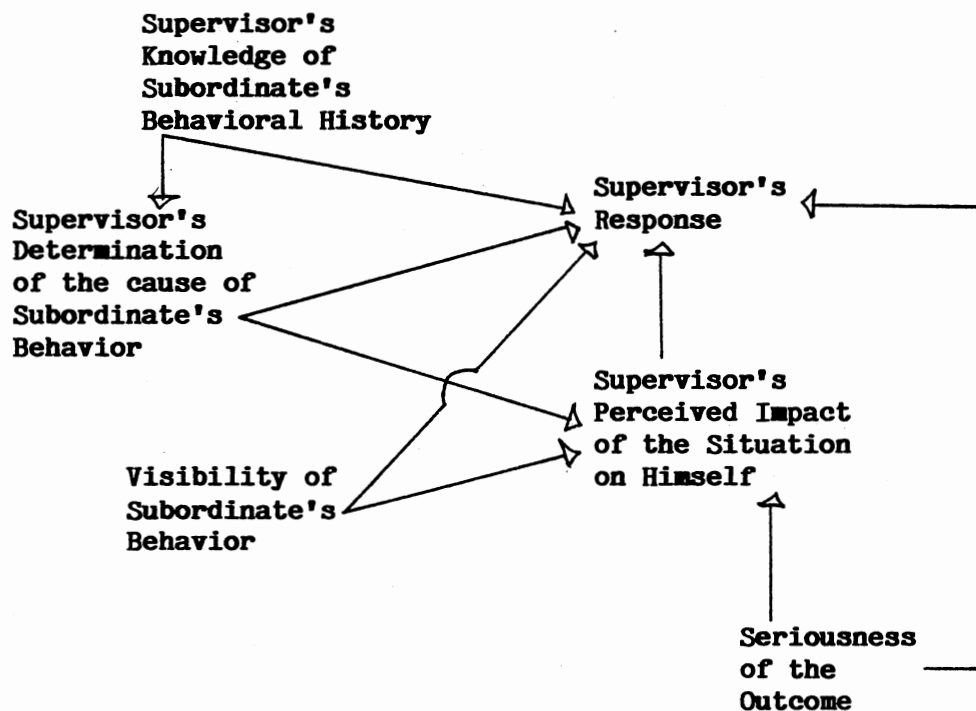
Specification of Relationships

The second stage of the model relates to the response that the supervisor gives to the poor performer. Also in this second part, the supervisor's perception of the impact of the situation on himself is considered. Thus, both the supervisor's perception and his response constitute the dependent variables of the model (see Figure 3.1), which are hypothesized to be determined by the combination of several independent variables. The following were the most relevant variables

identified in the literature for the perceived impact of the situation on the supervisor: (1) the causal attribution made of the subordinate's behavior, (2) the visibility of the behavior, and (3) the seriousness of the outcome. For the supervisor's response to the poor performer, the following were the most relevant variables identified in the literature: (1) the causal attribution made of the subordinate behavior, (2) the visibility of the behavior, (3) the seriousness of the outcome, (4) the supervisor's knowledge of the subordinate's work history, and (5) the perceived impact of the situation on the supervisor.

FIGURE 3.3

SECOND STEP OF THE CONTINGENCY MODEL OF SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSE TO SUBORDINATE'S POOR PERFORMANCE^a



^a Arrows indicate sequencing of events, but do not imply causality.

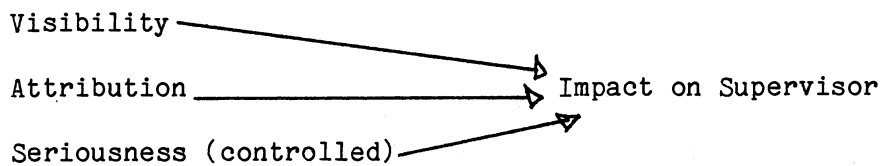
Figure 3.3 above depicts the second stage of the proposed contingency model. As indicated in the model it is suggested that the two dependent variables are positively correlated with each other. This relationship is seen as one where the greater the negative impact perceived by the supervisor, the more severe the supervisor's response should be. This expected relationship, that supervisors may show a self-defensive behavior when they perceive subordinate's behavior as a threat, is suggested by the findings reported by Ilgen et al. (1981), Brown and Mitchell (1986), O'Reilly and Weitz (1980), and Tjosvold (1985). Thus, the model implies that there are two levels of analysis, and that the perceived impact needs to be considered as both a dependent variable at one level, and as an independent variable in the next level where supervisor's response is the dependent variable.

For purposes of simplicity the following notation will be used:

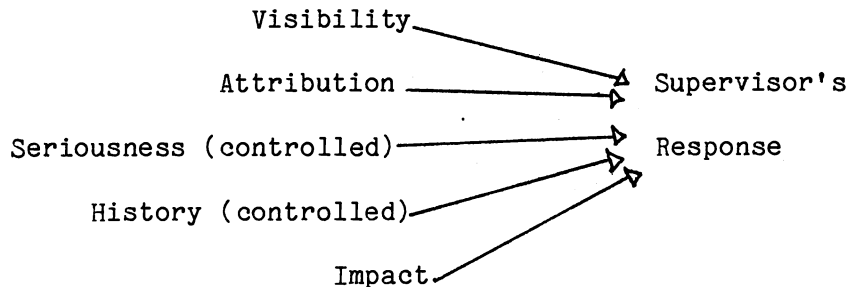
- Visibility** = Visibility of subordinate's behavior.
- Attribution** = Supervisor's determination of the cause of the subordinate's behavior. Whether the supervisor perceives the subordinate as being responsible for the behavior (internal attribution) or perceives him or herself as being responsible for the subordinate's poor performance (external attribution).
- Seriousness** = Seriousness of the outcome of subordinate's behavior.
- History** = Supervisor's knowledge of subordinate's behavioral history.
- Impact** = Supervisor's perceived impact of the situation (subordinate's poor performance) on him or herself.
- Controlled** = Indicates that a variable is controlled (rather than manipulated) in the research design.

Because it is well-established in the literature that the seriousness of the outcome and the supervisor's knowledge of the subordinate's work history have significant effects (e.g. Mitchell and Wood, 1979, 1980), these two variables are held constant, while the other independent variables will be manipulated as described in the operationalization section. Thus, the review of the literature and the theoretical base suggest several general propositions; specific hypotheses are presented in the next section.

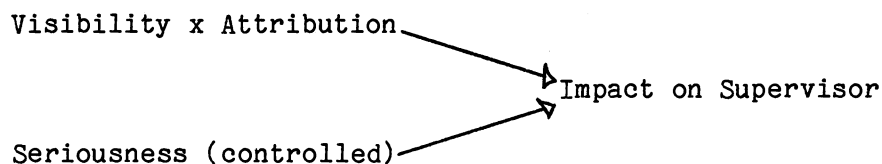
(1) The first concerns one of the major propositions of the proposed model. It is implied in the model that visibility of subordinate's behavior, seriousness of the outcome, and the causal attribution all will be related to the supervisor's perceived impact of the situation on him or herself.



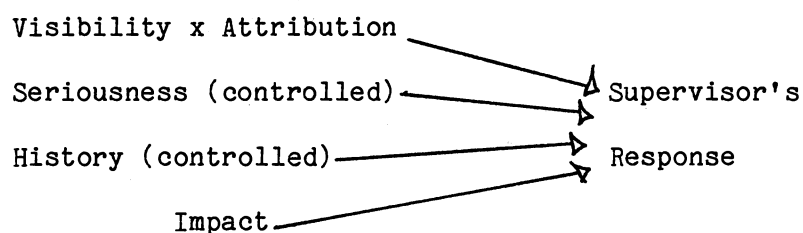
(2) A second important proposition is that visibility, seriousness, attribution, work history, and perceived impact will be related to the supervisor's response to the poor performing subordinate.



(3) Another proposition is that there is an interactive effect between the causal attribution and visibility with respect to the perceptions of the impact of the situation on the supervisor.



(4) A final proposition is that there is interaction between causal attribution and visibility with respect to the supervisor's response.



Hypotheses

The proposed contingency model of supervisors' responses to poor performing employees introduced in this chapter suggests five different general propositions that have been described in the previous section. These propositions are all drawn from the second part of the proposed model. As indicated earlier, the first part of the model implies relationships that have already been tested and supported in empirical studies by Brown and Mitchell (1986), Liden and Mitchell (1982), Heerwagen, Beach, and Mitchell (1985). Thus, the propositions from the first part will not be tested in the present study. The second part of the model suggests a two-phased investigation in which the first phase

addresses questions related to the supervisor's perceptions of the impact of the situation on him or herself. The other phase addresses questions related to the supervisor's response to the poorly performing employee, in which one of the independent variables is the perceived impact on the supervisor.

Questions Addressing the Perceived Impact on the Supervisor

Supervisors' personal interests in subordinates' performance has been supported by research results reported by Ilgen et al. (1981), O'Reilly and Weitz (1980), and Tjosvold (1985). The existence of differential supervisory reactions to subordinates making varying contributions to the accomplishment of the supervisor's goals has also been supported by Ilgen et al. (1981) and Tjosvold (1985). Also the concept of supervisors' self-defensive behavior has been supported by Brown and Mitchell (1986) and O'Reilly and Weitz (1980). The notion that the evaluation of the supervisor's performance will generally depend on the performance of his or her subordinates has also been supported in studies such as those Knowlton and Mitchell (1980) and O'Reilly and Weitz (1980). These findings lend support to Heider's (1958) notions of how other people's behavior affects our own behavior and the Jones and Davis' (1965) argument that other people's behavior may have effects that are "hedonically relevant" to the observer (e.g. supervisor).

These arguments lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. When the visibility of subordinate's poor performance is high, supervisors' perceptions of the impact of the situation on

themselves will be greater than when visibility of subordinate's behavior is low.

In addition to self-defensive behavior (e.g. Brown and Mitchell, 1986) and the likelihood that supervisors' performance evaluations will depend greatly on their subordinates' performance (e. g. Knowlton and Mitchell, 1980; O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980), the responsibility for the outcome of the subordinate's behavior may shift from the subordinate (when the attribution made is internal) to the supervisor (when the attribution made is external). The Weiner et al. (1972) model has explained how observers make causal attributions of others' behavior. The Weiner et al. model uses two dimensions; the stability of the behavior and the locus of control. In the latter dimension the responsibility for the behavior is assigned to either the actor, under the internal locus of control condition, or the situation, under the external locus of control condition (Weiner et al., 1972). It has been argued that in the supervisor-subordinate interaction, when the subordinate's behavior is perceived as influenced by an external cause (external locus of control), then the behavior or its outcome can be blamed on the supervisor because he or she should have at least partial control over the conditions under which the work is carried out. This line of reasoning is consistent with the generalized knowledge that managers, and supervisors, are expected to maintain the right match between jobs and people for effective employee performance (Middlemist, Hitt, and Greer, 1983). Thus, supervisors may be blamed for any subordinate's poor performance that is attributed to an external cause (e.g., Knowlton and Mitchell, 1980; Brown and Mitchell, 1986).

The above arguments lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. When the subordinate's poor performance is attributed to an external cause (e.g., blamed on the supervisor), the supervisor's perceived impact will be greater than when the attribution is internal (e.g., blamed on the subordinate).

The role of attributions has not been fully examined. Green and Liden (1980) and Mitchell et al. (1980) examined the role of attributions as a moderating variable between poor subordinate performance and the application of company policy. Attributions could also have a discounting or augmenting effect on the influence that the visibility of subordinate's behavior has on the perceived impact on the supervisor. Brown and Mitchell (1986) have suggested that supervisors may show a defensive behavior when the employee's poor performance is attributed to factors that could have been controlled by the supervisors. Also, Heider (1958), O'Reilly and Weitz (1980), and Tjosvold (1985) have suggested that people may perceive and react to the actions of others that may be threatening. It could be concluded that, when subordinate's poor behavior is attributed to an external cause, such as lack of training, the responsibility for this behavior shifts over to the supervisor, and when the behavior is attributed to an internal cause, such as lack of attention to the task, then the responsibility is blamed on the subordinate. Thus, it is logical to examine the question of whether the type of attribution has some effect on the relationship between visibility and the dependent variable tapping impact on the supervisor. Specifically, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 3. The relationship between visible poor performance on

the part of the subordinate and the perceived impact on the supervisors will be stronger when the attribution is external than when the attribution is internal.

Questions Addressing Supervisors' Responses

The review of the literature and the theoretical base have identified five major variables having effects or potential effects on supervisors' responses to poor performing subordinates. These variables are visibility, attribution, seriousness, history, and the impact on the supervisor. The effects of seriousness of the outcome and the supervisor's knowledge of the subordinate's behavioral history have been tested in empirical studies by Mitchell and Wood (1979, 1980) and found to be significantly related to the supervisor's response. Thus, these two variables are controlled in the present study and the focus of attention will be on the potential effects of the other three variables.

The visibility of the subordinate's behavior has been suggested as a variable to be considered in the disciplinary process (Arvey and Jones, 1985), but it has not been empirically tested before. This variable could potentially have significant effects on how the supervisor responds to the poor performer. O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) have argued that supervisors may initiate severe responses to poor performers as a means of protecting the productivity of the work group. They have even suggested that other employees may perceive these responses as a positive action (O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980). These arguments lead to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. Visible poor performance on the part of the subordinate is associated with greater severity in the supervisor's response.

The role of attributions in the interaction between supervisors and subordinates has been investigated and has been found to have some influence on supervisor's response to poor performers (e.g. Mitchell and Wood, 1979, 1980). After a series of studies Mitchell (1982) argued that the role of attributions may be only a minor one. However, other researchers have reported results supporting the notion that attributions play an important role in the supervisor-subordinate interaction (Green and Liden, 1980). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 5. The response of the supervisor to the poorly performing subordinate will be more severe when the subordinate's behavior is attributed to an internal cause (the individual) than when it is attributed to an external cause (e.g., blamed on the supervisor).

Various authors have suggested or implied the existence of supervisory self-defensive behavior (e.g. Brown and Mitchell, 1986; Ilgen et al., 1981; O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980; Tolsvold, 1985) when they are faced with poor performing subordinates. O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) have added that supervisors may respond also to protect group performance evaluations. Thus, it is appropriate to argue that the supervisor's perceptions of the impact could generate corresponding supervisory reactions. These arguments lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6. A high perceived impact on the supervisor is associated with greater severity in the supervisor's response

The findings of two streams of research lead to the next

hypothesis. O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) have found that supervisors who rely on more severe response to poor performance tend to receive higher unit performance ratings. Along a different line, Ilgen et al. (1980), Brown and Mitchell (1986), and Tjosvold (1985) have noted the self-defensive behavior that supervisors may exhibit when faced with poor performers. These findings lend theoretical support to the contention that visibility of employee's poor performance may have an important effect in the relationship between attributions and the response generated by the supervisor.

These arguments lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 7. Under condition of high visibility, the response of the supervisor will be more severe when the attribution for poor performance is internal (e.g., blamed on the subordinate) than when the attribution is external (e.g. blamed on the supervisor).

CHAPTER IV

OPERATIONALIZATIONS, SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

Operationalizations

Introduction

As indicated earlier, there are two parts to this study. The first set of hypotheses (numbers 1, 2, and 3) are designated as Set A and were tested in the first part of the study. Set A deals with the supervisors' perceptions of the impact of the situation on him or herself. The second part of the study is concerned with the actual responses of the supervisor to poor performing employees. The hypotheses addressing the questions of supervisors' responses are designated as Set B (numbers 4, 5, 6, and 7).

Independent and Dependent Variables

To test the hypotheses in both sets there are five independent variables which are operationalized as follows: (1) the visibility of the subordinate's behavior was presented to the subjects as either high (many people witnessed the behavior or were aware of it), or low (few people saw or witnessed the behavior); (2) the seriousness of the outcome was

controlled and presented to the subjects at one level, namely the outcome was a serious one (e.g. two coworkers got hurt as a consequence of the subordinate's behavior); (3) the causal attribution of the subordinate's behavior was manipulated as either being internal (caused by the individual subordinate) or external (e.g. the supervisor is blamed for the problem because he failed to provide or seek the appropriate training for the subordinate); (4) the fourth independent variable is the supervisor's knowledge of the subordinate's work history. This variable is controlled by presenting the subjects with a description of a subordinate for whom they have favorable information concerning his or her work history (e.g. the subordinate has been a good performer, etc.); and (5) the last independent variable is the perceived impact on the supervisor. This variable was manipulated by the use of two levels, high perceived impact and low or no impact. The research was designed to elicit differential perceptions of the three independent variables discussed. The manipulation checks discussed in the next section revealed that this objective was accomplished.

The dependent variable for the hypotheses in Set A is the supervisor's perceived impact of the situation on him or herself. This set of hypotheses is tested through the analysis of the manipulation of the independent variables; visibility and attribution and results in a [2x2] design. Manipulation checks are explained in the data collection section and pertain to the visibility, the attribution, and the impact variables.

The dependent variable for the hypotheses contained in Set B is the response of the supervisor to the poor performing subordinate. There are

five independent variables of interest in Set B, two of which are controlled by the use of only one level as explained above. The other three independent variables, visibility, impact, and attribution, are manipulated by the presentation of two levels for each variable. The use of the three variables (two conditions) results in a [2x2x2] design. As with the previous analysis, the hypotheses in this set are tested through the analysis of the manipulation of the independent variables.

Defining Poor Performance and Supervisor Responses

To define poor performance modified excerpts from professional trade publications were used (Note 1) as scenarios. These versions were presented to representatives from the International Fire Service Training Association and the Stillwater, Oklahoma Fire Department. Their inputs were used in the development of the scenarios describing poor performance. This procedure allowed for the development of the eight different scenarios describing situations of poor performance that should appear realistic to the subjects in the study. The instance of poor performance and the manipulation checks are described in Appendix D.

A pilot test of the instrumentation was conducted using 45 students in the fire protection and safety technology program at Oklahoma State University. An analysis of the manipulation checks showed that the mean for the external attribution condition ($\bar{x} = 35.38$) was significantly different ($t = 4.6529, p < .01$) from the internal attribution condition ($\bar{x} = 28.87$). Comparison of the means for high visibility ($\bar{x} = 16.95$) and low visibility ($\bar{x} = 12.74$) conditions revealed that they were

significantly different ($t = 4.26$, $p < .01$). However, the comparison of the means for high impact ($\bar{x} = 13.45$) and low impact ($\bar{x} = 12.74$) conditions revealed no significant difference. In a second pilot study using 16 supervisors from a bank, results similar to those reported above for the first two variables were obtained. But the manipulation checks showed that the difference between the means for high impact ($\bar{x} = 32.0$) and low impact ($\bar{x} = 27.88$) conditions was significantly different ($t = 6.85$, $p < .01$).

The Sample

In this study supervisors from a public service organization (fire department) who had experience with supervising employees on a daily basis were asked to participate. The supervisors from this organization are middle men, in they are expected to receive pressure from both subordinates and their own bosses.

Data Collection

The supervisors from the public service organizations selected for this research served as the subjects. They were randomly assigned to one of the eight different experimental conditions. Each of the eight scenarios describing an experimental condition contained the same instance of a subordinate's poor performance, and the same information on the seriousness of the outcome and work history (the two controlled variables). To create the eight different experimental conditions the

subjects received additional information on the other three variables. The subjects received this information at random and it described the causal attribution of the subordinate's behavior (either internal or external), the perceived impact on the supervisor (high or low), and the visibility of the subordinate's behavior (high or low). Appendix D shows a description of the instance of subordinate's poor performance and the manipulation checks.

Subjects were asked to answer the Responsibility in Supervision Scale (RISS) questionnaire (Appendix B) disguised as the perceptual differences questionnaire (Appendix C). The RISS questionnaire was especially developed for this study and it measures supervisors' perceptions about responsibility for group performance, knowledge of subordinate's job, responsibility for equipment and tools, responsibility for the right match between the subordinate and the task, responsibility for the motivation of subordinates, the impact of employee's poor performance on themselves (the supervisors), and responsibility for subordinates' performance evaluation.

The RISS questionnaire served as a pre-test measure of supervisors' perceptions of responsibility for various aspects of the job situation previously described. It was assumed that supervisors scoring low on the RISS scale would not respond as conscientiously to the stimulus material as well as those scoring high on the scale. Because of potential shortcoming in any analysis based on such results, separate analyses which included all subjects and excluding the low scoring supervisors.

Subjects were asked to read the scenario describing the instance of poor performance. Each subject was also asked to assume that the employee

whose behavior was described in the scenario was one of the members of his or her work unit. Subjects were then asked to answer the questions in section C of the instrument (see Appendix C). These questions were related to the supervisor's response to subordinate's poor performance. Once they described their responses, subjects were then instructed to rank their responses according to how severe they perceived the response to be using the following scale: (1) extremely severe, (2) very severe, (3) severe, (4) moderate, (5) mild, (6) very mild, and (7) non-severe (see section D of Appendix B).

Finally, the subjects were instructed to answer the questions in sections E and F. Questions in section E are related to the supervisor's perceptions of the impact of the situation on him or herself and questions in section F are the manipulation checks.

The responses to the items in the RISS questionnaire and the items in the manipulation checks were marked on a continuous scale of seven points (strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, neither agree nor disagree, slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree having values 1 to 7 respectively). These scores were used for two different purposes. Their first use was for manipulation checks for the controlled conditions (seriousness, history, and impact). The second and more central use of the scores was in hypothesis testing.

Statistical Analysis

Factor analysis was used to confirm the dimensionality and to refine the variables used in the analysis. Correlational analysis was

employed to examine the relationships among dependent and independent variables. Regression analysis was applied in the testing of the hypotheses presented in the previous chapter. Figure 4.1 summarizes the operationalizations used in the present study.

FIGURE 4.1

SUMMARY OF THE DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Variables	Scenario ^a Manipulated	Number of Conditions Manipulated in Scenario	Multiple Item Scale Asking About Scenario Perceptions. Used as Manipulation Check and Continuous Variables.
Independent:			
1. Visibility	Yes	2 (high/low)	3-item scale, 7-interval
2. Attribution	Yes	2 (external/ internal)	7-item scale, 7-interval
3. Impact on Supervisor	Yes	2 (high/low)	4-item scale, 7-interval
4. Seriousness	No	1 (high)	
6. History	No	1 (good)	
Dependent:^b			
1. Supervisor's Response	No	--	3-item scale, 7-interval ^d
2. Impact on Supervisor ^c	--	--	4-item scale, 7-interval (Same as # 3 above)

a. Eight (8) scenarios: 2 visibility x 2 attribution x 2 impact.

b. Each subject responded to 1 scenario which was randomly assigned.

c. Variable is employed as both independent and dependent variable

d. Not used as manipulation checks.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Introduction

As indicated earlier, subjects for the present study were fire department officers from two different cities in Oklahoma. After 160 questionnaires were mailed to the first fire department, sixty questionnaires were returned in a first batch. After two follow up visits to this organization, two more sets of 31 and 13 questionnaires, respectively were received. Out of the total of 104 questionnaires received from the first fire department 98 were usable. The other six had missing values in either sections A, D, E, or F of the instrument. (See Appendix C.) In the second fire department, questionnaires were sent to 21 subjects. All of these were completed and returned. The rate of return of usable questionnaires was 61 percent for the first fire department, and 100 percent for the second. The total number of usable responses was 119.

To review the data collection procedure presented earlier, data were obtained through two different approaches. The first part of the data pertained to the eight scenarios, which provided categorical information on three manipulated conditions: (1) attribution of employee's behavior, value of 1 for internal and a 2 for external; (2)

supervisor's perception of the impact of the situation on him or herself, value of 1 for low and a 2 for high; and (3) the visibility of subordinate's behavior, value of 1 for low and a 2 for high. In the second approach, data for the constructs were collected mostly through use of multiple Likert-scale items and are presented as indicated in Appendix C.

Notation Used

To be consistent with the theoretical discussion presented in previous chapters, the following notation will be used:

- Visibility** = Defines the visibility of the subordinate's poor behavior.
- Attribution** = Defines whether the supervisor perceives the subordinate as responsible for the behavior (internal attribution), or perceives him or herself as being responsible for the subordinate's poor performance (external attribution).
- Impact** = Supervisor's perception of the magnitude of the impact of the situation (e.g., subordinate's poor behavior) on him or herself.
- Response** = Describes the severity of the supervisor's response to the subordinate's poor behavior.
- Service** = Tenure with the organization expressed in number of years.
- RISST** = Aggregate value of all the RISS sub-scales.
- NEWRISS** = Shortened version of the aggregated RISST variable.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 5-1 presents some descriptive statistics for the major variables used in the present analysis.

TABLE 5-1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR CONTINUOUS VARIABLES

Variables	n	\bar{X}	SD	Minimum Value	Maximum Value	Number of Items
Visibility	119	18.74	4.86	7.00 (low)	28.00 (high)	4
Attribution Perceived Impact ^a	119	9.03	2.74	2.00 (internal)	14.00 (external)	2
Severity of the Response ^b	119	11.93	3.99	3.00 (low)	21.00 (high)	3
Service ^c	119	9.73	4.79	3.00 (low)	21.00 (high)	3
RISST ^c	108	15.90	5.57	6.00 (years)	30.00 (years)	1
NEWRISST ^c	119	122.22	12.45	82.00 (low)	144.00 (high)	22
	119	56.29	6.30	34.00 (low)	70.00 (high)	10

^a This variable is the dependent variable for the first part of the study, then it is used as an independent variable in the second part of the analysis.

^b This is the dependent variable for the second part of the study.

^c These three variables have been added to this analysis. The justification for this decision will be provided in later sections of the paper.

Manipulation Checks

In the previous chapter, the results of the pilot tests of the instrumentation were presented. These results showed that the manipulations of the three conditions in the scenarios were significant. Furthermore, these manipulations were tested again using the 119 observations in the main study. Analysis of these manipulation checks revealed that the mean for the external condition of the attribution variable ($\bar{x} = 33.55$) was significantly higher ($t = 5.56$, $p < .01$) than that for the internal attribution condition ($\bar{x} = 28.04$). Comparison of the means for high perceived impact ($\bar{x} = 3.88$) and low impact ($\bar{x} = 3.33$) conditions also indicated a significant difference ($t = 1.97$, $p < .05$).

Finally, comparison of the means for high visibility ($\bar{x} = 14.57$) and low visibility ($\bar{x} = 12.57$) conditions also indicated a significant difference ($t = 2.87, p < .01$). Table 5-2 presents a summary of these manipulation checks.

TABLE 5-2
MANIPULATION CHECKS

CONDITION:	MEAN	t

Attribution or Shift of Responsibility (2 items):		
External(Condition 1B)	33.57	5.56***
Internal(Condition 1A)	28.04	
Supervisor's Perceived Impact (Only 1 item used):		
High (Condition 2B)	3.88	1.97**
Low (Condition 2A)	3.33	
Visibility of Subordinate's Behavior (4 items):		
High (Condition 3B)	14.57	2.87***
Low (condition 3A)	12.57	

*** $p < .01$	** $p < .05$	* $p < .10$

Factor Analysis

Subjects responded to 26 items from Section A of the instrument. (See Appendix C.) These items made up the Perceived Responsibility in Supervision Scale (RISS), which was designated as the perceptual differences section of the questionnaire. Subjects also answered one question in Section D, two questions in Section E, and 16 questions in Section F of the questionnaire. Sections D, E, and F contained items pertaining to the scenario which tapped the dependent and the independent

variables. Section B described the scenario and Section C contained a filler question that was not used in the present study.

The 26 items in the RISS and the 19-items comprising the dependent and independent variables were factor analyzed using principal components with varimax rotation. Only those factors with eigenvalues ≥ 1.00 were retained for further analysis. The criteria for selection of items were: (1) a communality $\geq .50$, and (2) items to be used should load cleanly on only one factor, e.g. $\geq .50$ loading on only one factor.

For the 26 items from the RISS scale (section A of the questionnaire in Appendix C), the factor analysis procedure identified eight factors having eigenvalues ≥ 1.0 . Of the 26 items in this scale, four did not meet the criteria for use specified above. The remaining 22 items loaded on the following factors: (1) within group responsibility for group performance (six items), (2) between groups responsibility for group performance (three items), (3) responsibility for subordinates' skills, abilities, and tools used (four items), (4) effect on supervisor of subordinates' behavior (three items), (5) responsibility for guidance and feedback (two items), (6) responsibility for the motivation of subordinates (two items), (7) effect of the subordinate's behavior on the supervisor's performance rating (one item), and (8) responsibility for reporting subordinate's performance (one item). Table 5-3 below shows the loading factors and the communality values.

Most of the factors identified by the factor analysis for the 26-item RISS scale corresponded to the areas of responsibility intended to be measured by the scale. One exception was that the supervisor's perception of his or her responsibility for group performance resulted in

two separate factors. One pertained to within the group (INTPERF) or dealt with the responsibility for group performance with respect to people within the group (e.g. subordinates). The other pertained to between groups (EXTPERF) or the same responsibility with respect to people outside the group, e.g., other supervisors, managers.

In the other two cases, the factor analysis identified two factors with one item loading cleanly in each. The first of these two factors was identified as the supervisor's perception of the effect of subordinates' behavior on the supervisor's performance rating (OWNPERF). (See Appendix B for a description of the items.) The separation of this particular item is interpreted as a disassociation between (1) one's own performance rating, and (2) chances for promotion and career development. The three items loading in the former group dealt with chances for promotion or career development, and the isolated item dealt with the supervisor's own performance rating. (See Appendix E for more details on the item loadings.)

The second one-item factor was the supervisor's responsibility for reporting the subordinate's performance (TELL). This item was one of the group of items dealing with the supervisor's responsibility for subordinates' performance evaluation. The factor analysis results seem to suggest that one task is to deal with this evaluation within the group. The other task is to report evaluation results to someone outside the group. This seems to be consistent with other research findings reported in the area of evaluation and feedback (e.g., Fisher, 1979).

Although the results of the factor analysis procedure did not generate the exact scales originally intended in the RISS instrument, the

TABLE 5-3

**PRINCIPLE COMPONENTS LOADINGS FOR 26 PERCEIVED RESPONSIBILITY
IN SUPERVISION ITEMS**

Items:	Factors								Commu- nalities
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
A01	.59								.62
A02				.75					.75
A03			.50						.54
A04									.59
A05						.74			.75
A06		.79							.67
A07		.64							.62
A08		.56							.62
A09			.65						.58
A10						.78			.78
A11									.72
A12	.63								.69
A13				.84					.76
A14	.76								.73
A15									.45
A16	.54								.54
A17							.74		.68
A18									.58
A19								.85	.76
A20					.50				.65
A21	.68								.63
A22				.59					.63
A23	.51								.67
A24					.71				.58
A25			.66						.64
A26			.53						.55

Description of factors:

- Factor 1: Within Group Responsibility for Group Performance (INTPERF).
- Factor 2: Between Groups Responsibility for Group Performance (EXTPERF).
- Factor 3: Responsibility for Subordinates' Skills, Abilities, and Tools (SAT).
- Factor 4: Effect on Supervisor of Subordinate's Behavior (EFFECT).
- Factor 5: Responsibility for Guidance, Coordination, and Feedback (FEEDBACK).
- Factor 6: Responsibility for the Motivation of Subordinates (MOTIVATE).
- Factor 7: Impact on Supervisor's Own Performance Rating (OWNPERF).
- Factor 8: Responsibility for Reporting Subordinates' Performance (TELL).

procedure served as a confirmatory test for the conceptualized areas of concern in the supervisor's perception of his or her responsibilities. It was recognized that 119 observations represented a relatively low number for the analysis of 26 items. To compensate for this weakness reliability coefficients were computed for each factor. These coefficients are presented and discussed in a following section.

A similar procedure was followed in factor analyzing the 19 items making up the dependent and the independent variables. (See Appendix C.) As indicated earlier, these 19 items are found in sections D, E, and F of the questionnaire. The first dependent variable was the perceived impact on the supervisor. This same variable was then used as an independent variable in the study of the other dependent variable which was the severity of the supervisor's response. The other two independent variables measured with the 19-item scale were the visibility of subordinates' behavior and the attribution or shift of responsibility for the subordinate's behavioral problem. Table 5-4 shows the results of the factor loadings for the 19 items.

Again the factors retained were those satisfying the eigenvalue \geq 1.0 criterion. The items used were those meeting the criteria indicated for the previous analysis; a communality estimate \geq .50, and loading cleanly on only one factor (e.g., \geq .50 loading). The items retained, with the exception of two, reproduced the dependent and independent variables as they were originally intended. Of the 19 items five did not meet the criteria, and the rest loaded on the following factors: (1) severity of supervisor's response (three items), (2) perceived impact on

supervisor (three items), (3) visibility of subordinate's behavior (four items), (4) attribution or shift of responsibility (two items), and (5) responsibility for problem prevention (two items).

TABLE 5-4

**PRINCIPLE COMPONENT LOADINGS FOR 19 ITEMS
POTENTIALLY TAPPING DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT
VARIABLES AND SERVING AS MANIPULATION CHECKS**

Items:	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Communalities
F01				.80		.71
F02			.68			.79
F03			.65			.72
F04						.56
F05			.62			.71
F06	.85					.77
F07						.39
F08						.57
F09				.81		.68
F10		.83				.79
F11						.38
F12		.77				.65
F13					.77	.66
F14	.90					.83
F15		.76				.61
F16					.63	.51
D1	.78					.67
E1						.48
E2			.68			.76

Description of factors:

- Factor 1: Severity of the Supervisor's Response (RESPONSE) - Dependent Variable.
- Factor 2: Impact on Supervisor (FIMPACT) - Manipulation Check/Independent/ Dependent Variable.
- Factor 3: Visibility of Subordinate's Behavior (VISIBIL) - Manipulation Check/Independent Variable.
- Factor 4: External/Internal Attribution or Shift of Responsibility (ATTRIB) - Manipulation Check/Independent Variable.
- Factor 5: Responsibility for Problem Prevention (PREVENT).

As can be seen, the factor analysis solution produced the dependent and independent variables proposed for this study, plus an additional variable (factor five) that related to the supervisor's potential ability to prevent the subordinate's behavioral problem. Because of its consistency with the theoretical arguments for the shift of responsibility (attribution) variable, the former variable was employed in supplementary analyses as additional independent variable. It is conceptually sound to reason that a supervisor who perceives that he or she has the potential to prevent a problem, will perceive a greater personal impact. Likewise if the perceived potential for problem prevention is high, it should be expected that the severity of supervisor's response will be low.

Reliability

The reliability of the RISS was determined by first computing the internal reliability of the scales contained in the instrument and then computing it for the whole instrument. The rationale behind this is that the scales are sets of items intended to measuring the same domain of a specific concept (Nunnally, 1978). In this case the specific concepts are the supervisors' perceived responsibilities for various aspects of the job situation. Coefficient alpha was used to estimate the internal reliability of the scales (Nunnally, 1978). The reliability coefficients are presented in Table 5-5 below.

Coefficient alpha was used also to estimate the reliability of the dependent and independent variables. These results are shown in Table 5-6.

TABLE 5-5
SUBSCALES RELIABILITIES FOR THE
RESPONSIBILITY IN SUPERVISION SCALE
(RISS)

Sub-scales	Number of Items	Coefficient Alpha
Within-Work Unit Responsibility for Group Performance (INTPERF) ^a	6	.81
Between Work Units Responsibility for Group Performance (EXTPERF) ^a	3	.65
Responsibility for Subordinates' Skills, Abilities, and Tools (SAT)	4	.57
Effect on Supervisor of Subordinate's Behavior (EFFECT)	3	.66
Responsibility for Guidance, Coordination, and Feedback (FEEDBACK)	2	.51
Responsibility for the Motivation of Subordinates (MOTIVATE)	2	.73
Impact on Supervisor's Own Performance Rating (OWNPERF)	1	-0-
Responsibility for Reporting Subordinate's Performance (TELL)	1	-0-

^a The original instrument had considered one set of variables only for the supervisor's perception of his/her responsibility for group performance. The results of the factor analysis differentiated two forms of supervisor's responsibility for group performance. The first form dealt with group members (within group), and the second dealt with outsiders, e.g., supervisor's boss (between groups).

TABLE 5-6
SUBSCALES RELIABILITIES FOR THE
DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT (MANIPULATION CHECK)
VARIABLES

Sub-scales	Number of Items	Coefficient Alpha
Severity of Supervisor's Response (RESPONSE) -Dependent Variable	3	.89
Impact on Supervisor (IMPACT) - Manipulation Check/Independent/ Dependent Variable	3	.80
Visibility of Subordinate's Behavior (VISIBIL) - Manip. Check/Indep. Variable	4	.78
External/Internal Attribution or Shift of Responsibility (ATTRIB) - Manipulation Check/Independent Variable	2	.68
Responsibility for Problem Prevention (PREVENT)	2	.36

Correlation Analysis

Correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationships among the RISS subscales. Table 5-7 presents these correlations. Only five correlations are $\geq .40$, the highest of which is .57. It may be noted that the one-item subscale TELL, has significant relationship with only the FEEDBACK scale. This one-item scale was intended as an item on the FEEDBACK subscale, but it loaded on a different factor in the factor analysis. Table 5-7 shows these correlations.

TABLE 5-7

**PEARSON CORRELATIONS FOR
THE SCALES IN THE RISS INSTRUMENT**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Within Group Responsibility for Performance-INTPERF	---						
2 Between Group Responsibility for Performance-EXTPERF	.57***	---					
3 Responsibility for Subordinates' Skills, Abilities, and Tools-SAT	.43***	.24***	---				
4 Effect on Supervisor of Subordinate's Behavior-EFFECT	.29***	.22**	.25***	---			
5 Responsibility for Guidance, Coordination, and Feedback-FEEDBACK	.44***	.49***	.23***	.21**	---		
6 Responsibility for the Motivation of Subordinates-MOTIVATE	.38***	.36***	.40***	.28***	.30***	---	
7 Impact on Supervisor's Own Performance Rating-OWNPERF	.29***	.19**	.22**	.27***	.13	.27***	---
8 Responsibility for Reporting Subordinate's Performance-TELL	.13	.13	.12	.03	.21**	.14	-.04

*** p. <.01

** p. <.05

* p. <.10

Correlation coefficients were computed also for the dependent and independent variables and aggregated RISS scales. Earlier it was theorized that supervisors' perceptions of responsibility would affect their responses to the stimulus material. The first RISS variable represents an aggregate value of all the sub-scales in the RISS and it is labeled as RISST. The second RISS-related variable is a shortened version of the aggregated RISST variable and has been labeled NEWRISS. This variable uses only selected subscales of the RISS for which the criterion

for selection of sub-scales was correlation with two dependent variables. To measure internal reliability, coefficient alpha was computed for these two variables. The coefficient alphas were .83 and .67, respectively for the RISST and the NEWRISS variables. Table 5-8 shows the correlation coefficients for the dependent, independent, and the RISS-related variables.

TABLE 5-8
PEARSON CORRELATIONS FOR
DEPENDENT, INDEPENDENT, AND RISS-RELATED VARIABLES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Severity of Supervisor's Response - RESPONSE	---						
2 Supervisor's Perception of the Impact on Him or Herself-IMPACT ^a	.13	---					
3 Visibility of Subordinate's Behavior-VISIBIL	.47***	.39***	---				
4 Attribution of the Cause of Subordinate's Behavior or Shift of Responsibility-ATTRIB	-.11	.27***	.13	---			
5 Responsibility from Problem Prevention-PREVENT	-.24***	.03	-.08	.12	---		
6 Aggregated Value of All RISS Subscales-RISST ^b	-.05	.20**	.27***	.14	.13	---	
7 Shortened Version of the RISST- NEWRISS ^c	-.16*	.21**	.21**	.18**	.15*	.90***	---

*** p < .01

** p < .05

* p < .10

a. This variable is the dependent variable for the first part of the study, and an independent variable for the second part.

b. This variable is an aggregate value of the RISS sub-scales that has been added to the analysis of the data.

c. This is a shortened version of the RISST variable.

None of the correlations among the independent variables is $\geq |.40|$

with the exception of the two versions of the RISS measure. It may be concluded on the basis of these results that the scales and the variables analyzed here can be used to study the phenomena under consideration.

Hypothesis Tests

It should be recalled that the hypotheses in the present study addressed two sets of questions. The first set of hypotheses pertained to the perceived impact on the supervisor of the subordinate's problem behavior. Hypotheses one, two, and three were included in the first set. The second set of hypotheses dealt with questions addressing the severity of the supervisor's response to the problem subordinate. Hypotheses four, five, six, and seven were included in this group.

Hypotheses Addressing the Perceived Impact on the Supervisor

In the first set it was hypothesized that both the attribution of the subordinate's behavior (the shift of responsibility from the subordinate to the supervisor), and the visibility of the subordinate's behavior would be related to the supervisor's perceived impact of the situation on him or herself. It was also hypothesized that there would an interaction effect of both independent variables (attribution and visibility) on the dependent variable (perceived impact).

These hypotheses were first tested using the categorical variables based on the scenario manipulations. None of the regression models analyzed in this part of the study was significant. Table 5-9 shows these

results. Different specifications of the equations are run to assess the impact of multicollinearity and test different hypotheses. Each equation will be designated by a column number in this table and in Tables 5-10 through 5-14. The F values for the five models tested showed no significance and very low explanatory power. A comparison of all the models run shows that the highest R^2 value is .03. Likewise none of the coefficients was significant, with the exception of one marginal interaction coefficient ($p < .10$). However, this interaction coefficient had a negative sign which is opposite to the hypothesized direction of the relationship and it is difficult to explain.

TABLE 5-9
REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR
PERCEIVED IMPACT ON SUPERVISION
(Using Dichotomous Independent Variables)

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Intercept	13.48 (11.41)***	12.33 (10.30)***	14.09 (8.17)**	12.49 (10.51)***	13.56 (11.44)***	8.99 (2.26)**
Attribution	-1.00 (1.38)	---	-1.04 (1.41)	---	-.43 (.45)	2.22 (.92)
Visibility	---	-.26 (.35)	-.36 (.49)	.85 (.89)	---	2.89 (1.20)
Attribution x Visibility	---	---	---	-.80 (1.78)*	.41 (.37)	-2.10 (1.42)
n	119	119	119	119	119	119
R^2	.02	.00	.02	.03	.02	.04
\bar{R}^2	.02	.00	.00	.01	.01	.01
F	1.89	.12	1.06	1.66	1.35	1.39

*** $p < .01$

** $p < .05$

* $p < .10$

The six models analyzed using the dichotomous variables were tested again but this time continuous forms of variables pertaining to manipulations of the scenarios were used. These results are shown in Table 5-10.

An examination of the models in columns 1 and 3 of Table 5-10 indicates that the attribution of an employee's poor performance (internal or external) is significantly related to the supervisor's perception of the impact of the situation on him or herself. The coefficients for attribution are positive and significant ($p < .01$) in

TABLE 5-10

**REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR
PERCEIVED IMPACT ON SUPERVISION
(Using Continuous Variables)**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Intercept	8.45 (6.91)***	6.00 (4.43)***	3.56 (2.20)**	6.47 (4.82)***	9.24 (7.89)***	.74 (.14)
Attribution	.39 (2.98)***	---	.32 (2.61)***	---	-.23 (1.17)	.62 (1.11)
Visibility	---	.32 (4.52)***	.29 (4.26)***	.16 (1.69)*	---	.44 (1.64)*
Attribution x Visibility	---	---	---	.01 (2.41)**	.03 (3.93)***	-.02 (.56)
n	119	119	119	119	119	119
R ²	.07	.15	.20	.19	.18	.20
\bar{R}^2	.07	.15	.18	.18	.17	.18
F	8.86***	20.46***	14.14***	13.57**	12.68***	9.48***

*** p < .01

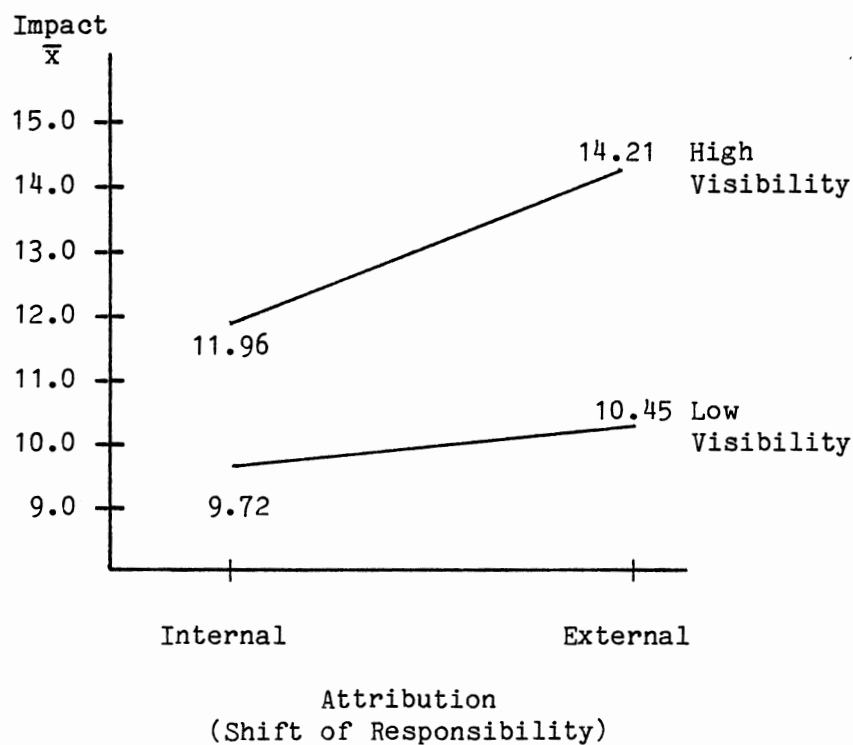
** p < .05

* p < .10

columns 1 and 3. Likewise the coefficient for the visibility of a subordinate's behavior was significant ($p < .01$) and positive in columns 2 and 3, and marginally significant ($p < .10$) and positive in columns 3 and 6.

Finally the interaction effect between attribution and visibility on the perceived impact was significant ($p < .05$ and $p < .01$) and positive in columns 4 and 5, but it was negative and not significant in column 6. When the interaction term is added (column 6) the increment in the explanatory power is less than one percentage point compared to that of column 3. Inspection of the six equations reveals that the equation in column 3, with an R^2 value of .20, has the greatest explanatory power.

FIGURE 5-1
MEAN PERCEIVED IMPACT



To help understand the results for the interaction between attribution and visibility on supervisor's perceived impact, Figure 5-1 shows the mean perceived impact for the two levels of both visibility and attribution. Figure 5-1 shows that perceived impact is higher under condition of high visibility than when visibility is low, as predicted. But this difference is even higher when the attribution made of subordinate's poor performance is external than when it is internal. It should be recalled that an external attribution, as opposed to the internal attribution, could indicate that the supervisor is the responsible for the subordinate's poor performance. For example, the supervisor did not provide the appropriate training.

These results provide support for hypothesis one which predicts that visibility is associated with perceived impact. Hypothesis two which predicts a relationship of attribution with perceived impact was also supported by the results. Hypothesis three which hypothesized an interactive relationship of attribution and visibility with perceived impact also received support.

Hypotheses Addressing Supervisor's Response

Hypotheses four, five, and six dealt with the relationships of independent variables (1) visibility, (2) attribution, and (3) impact with the dependent variable tapping the severity of the supervisor's response. Hypothesis seven stated that there would be a significant interactive relationship with visibility and attribution. These hypotheses were first tested by using the dichotomous independent

variables, which resulted from the manipulations of the scenarios. The results of the equations tested in this phase are presented in Table 5-11.

An examination of these results indicates that the relationship of the visibility of subordinate's behavior with the severity of supervisor's response was not significant in the equation in column 1, not significant and in the wrong direction in equation in column 3,

TABLE 5-11
REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR
SEVERITY OF THE SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSE
(Using Dichotomous Independent Variables)

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Intercept	9.25 (4.93)***	15.97 (9.00)***	16.53 (7.58)***	9.86 (5.62)***	15.97 (8.96)***	22.71 (5.40)***
Attribution	---	-4.27 (5.27)***	-4.25 (5.29)***	---	-4.31 (4.07)***	-8.92 (3.41)***
Visibility	.06 (.07)	---	-.36 (.45)	3.14 (2.87)***	---	-5.03 (1.92)*
Impact	.26 (.29)	.16 (.20)	.19 (.24)	.13 (.16)	.15 (.19)	.29 (.37)
Attribution x Visibility	---	---	---	-2.20 (4.35)***	.07 (.14)	3.01 (1.88)*
n	119	119	119	119	119	119
R ²	.00	.19	.20	.14	.19	.22
\bar{R}^2	.00	.18	.18	.12	.17	.19
F	.05	14.02***	9.35***	6.27***	9.28***	8.05***

*** p < .01
** p < .05
* p < .10

significant and in the right direction in equation 4 ($p < .01$), and marginally significant ($p < .10$) and in the wrong direction in column 6. These results do not provide consistent support for hypothesis four. However, the attribution of the subordinate's behavior was significant in all the equations in which it was included (columns 2, 3, 5, and 6). The F values for this variable were all highly significant ($p < .01$). These results provide strong support for hypothesis five. A further examination of the results in Table 5-11 shows that the perceived impact has no significant effects in any of the six equations. Thus, the results failed to support hypothesis six. Finally, the interaction between visibility and attribution showed some mixed results. It was significant ($p < .01$), although in a negative direction, when combined with visibility and impact. But it was not significant when combined with attribution and impact. And again it was marginally significant ($p < .10$) and in the positive direction in column six. It seems that the greatest explanatory power was attained when the attribution variable was included in the equations. The R^2 values (.19, .20, and .22) revealed some explanatory power for equations in columns 2, 3, 5, and 6. The interaction term makes a negligible contribution to the R^2 value. (See equations in columns 2 and 5, and 3 and 6.) The other two variables show mixed results.

The regression equations run with the dichotomous variables and discussed above were also run with the continuous variables. Table 5-12 presents this the results for this new set of regression equations.

An examination of the results shown in Table 5-12 indicates that the attribution variable was inversely related to the severity of the supervisor's response, with the exception of equation 6 where the

attribution variable was not significant. The attribution of subordinate's behavior was marginally significant ($p < .10$) when combined with impact. Its effect was more significant ($p < .05$), when combined with visibility and impact. And its effect was even more significant ($p < .01$), when combined with visibility and the interaction between attribution and visibility.

TABLE 5-12
REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR
SEVERITY OF THE SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSE
(Using Continuous Variables)

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Intercept	1.41 (.84)	9.70 (5.45)***	3.39 (1.77)*	.55 (.32)	12.53 (7.28)***	-5.52 (.90)
Attribution	---	-.27 (1.66)*	-.30 (2.05)**	---	-1.19 (4.98)***	.67 (1.03)
Visibility	.49 (5.60)***	---	.49 (5.73)***	.65 (5.91)***	---	.95 (3.07)***
Impact	-.07 (.66)	.21 (1.85)*	-.02 (.16)	-.02 (.14)	.02 (.22)	-.03 (.24)
Attribution x Visibility	---	---	---	-.02 (2.35)**	.04 (4.94)***	-.05 (1.55)
n	119	119	119	119	119	119
R ²	.23	.04	.25	.26	.21	.27
\bar{R}^2	.21	.02	.23	.24	.19	.24
F	16.98***	2.45*	13.04***	13.61***	10.10***	10.48***

*** $p < .01$

** $p < .05$

* $p < .10$

The visibility of subordinates' behavior was positively related to the severity of the supervisor's response in all the equations in which this variable was included (equations 1, 3, 4, and 6, in Table 5-12). The F values for this variable were all highly significant ($p < .01$). Conversely, the results for perceived impact were generally insignificant. In the cases where impact was combined with other than the visibility variable, it had the expected sign but was only marginally significant in one equation ($p < .10$). Because of the correlation between the impact variable and the other independent variables, the effects of multicollinearity were assessed in further analyses.

Finally, the interaction term between attribution and visibility showed a similar pattern as that for impact (Equations 4, 5, and 6, Table 5-12). When visibility was in the equation, the interaction term was negative and significant ($p < .05$) in equation 4, but insignificant in equation 6. When visibility was not in the equation, then the interaction term was still significant ($p < .01$), but the relationship was positive.

By substituting in the variable values into the equations presented in columns 4 and 5 of Table 5-12, predicted values for the severity of response may be obtained across different combinations of visibility and attribution conditions within each column. Coefficients for the intercept, the impact variable, and the error term may be disregarded since they would be constant across different conditions of visibility and attribution. In both columns, coefficients for the remaining visibility and attribution variables and the interaction variables are significant. By using the means for each condition on visibility and attribution (reported earlier in the discussion of manipulation checks),

predictions of the severity of the supervisor's response may be made for four conditions of visibility and attribution. In equation 4, the internal attribution, high visibility condition was found to have the most severe response. The same prediction was found for the equation in column 5. However, the magnitude of differences in severity of response across conditions is not large and probably does not convey much information.

FIGURE 5-2
MEAN SEVERITY OF SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSE
FOR LOW IMPACT

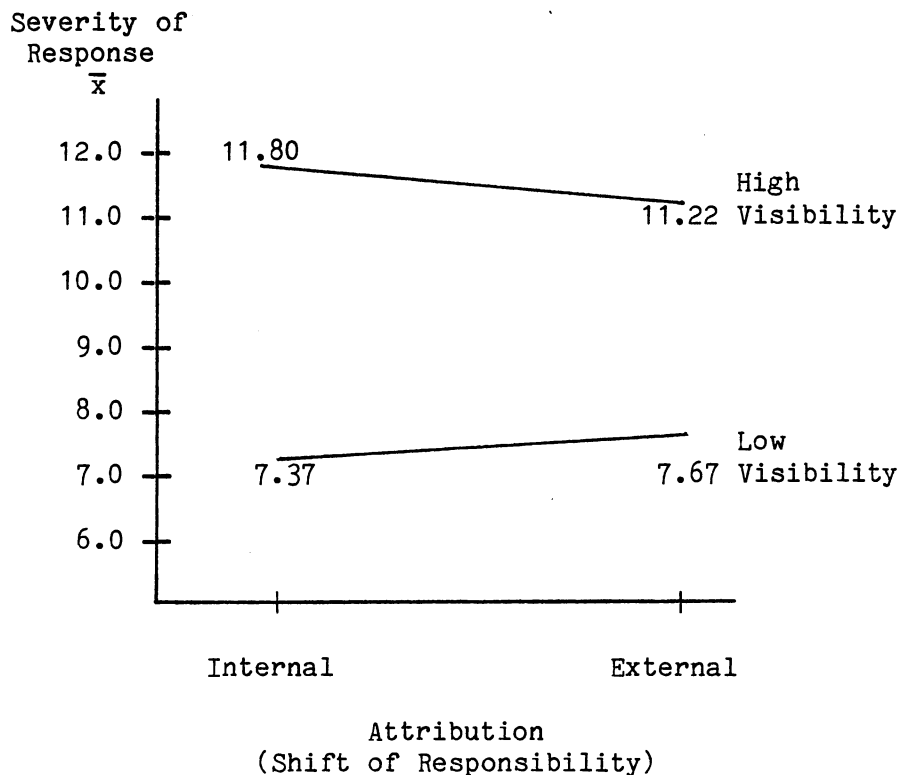
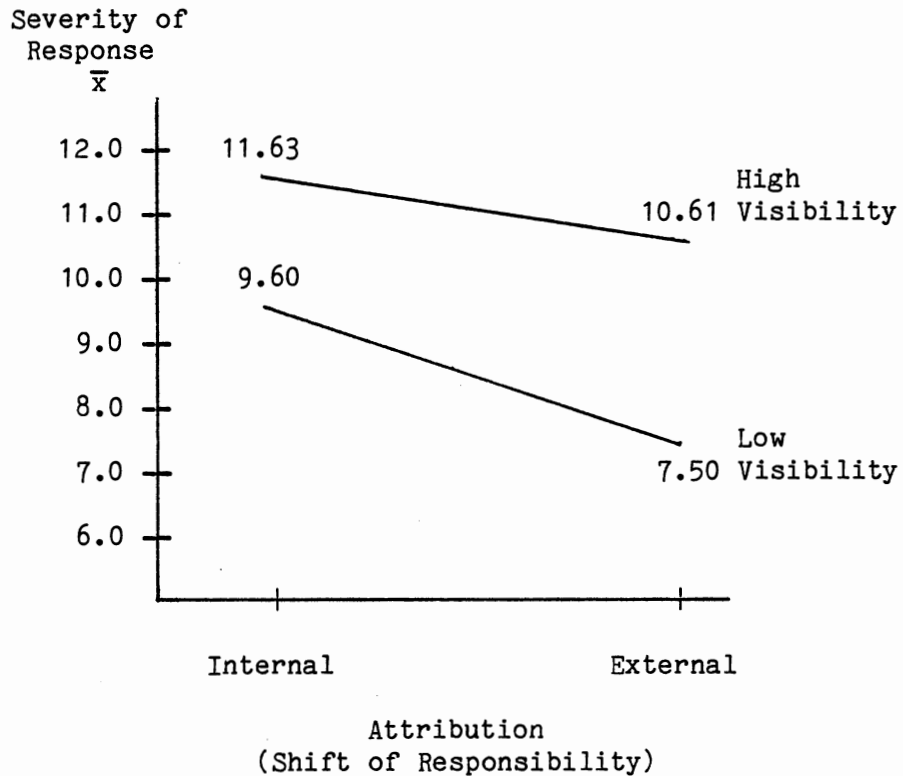


FIGURE 5-3

**MEAN SEVERITY OF SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSE
FOR HIGH IMPACT**



Figures 5-2 and 5-3 represent also the hypothesized relationship of the interaction between attribution and visibility with severity of the supervisor's response. These graphical representations of the interaction provide additional support to the discussion in the preceding sections.

An examination of the explanatory power of the regression equations analyzed in Table 5-12 seems to indicate that the visibility variable is the most important contributor to the R^2 values. For instance, comparing

equations 1 and 3, it can be observed a small improvement of the R^2 value (from .23 to .25) when the attribution variable is added. Also, a comparison of equations 1 and 4 shows a small change in the R^2 value (from .23 to .26) when the interaction term is added. However, all the regression models run in this section of the analysis were highly significant, with the exception of equation 2, whose significance was marginal ($p < .10$).

Rationale for Additional Tests

Shift of Responsibility

In the section discussing the results for the factor analysis procedures and the reliabilities, a new variable was introduced as a result of the factor analysis. This variable was related to the supervisor's perceived ability to prevent the subordinate's poor behavior. It was noted that the inclusion of this variable in the analysis was justified by the same theory used for the attribution variable. Both refer to the shift of responsibility from the supervisor to the subordinate and vice versa.

Responsibility for the outcomes of a subordinate's poor behavior could shift from the supervisor to the subordinate, and vice versa for different reasons. For example, the employee could be unable to master the task (an internal attribution, the employee is responsible). Conversely, the supervisor could have given additional instructions to help the employee understand the task (an external attribution, high

ability to prevent the problem, the supervisor is responsible). On these grounds it seemed logical to combine the original attribution or shift of responsibility variable with the new responsibility for problem prevention variable. The new combined variable was labeled shift of responsibility. It has a coefficient alpha of .58 (4 items).

Multicollinearity

As noted earlier, it was suspected that multicollinearity could have affected some of the results. Specifically, the impact variable was not significant and sometimes had the wrong sign, which could be interpreted as an indication of multicollinearity (Lewis-Beck, 1980). However, the zero-order correlation of impact with the severity of response variable was small. (See Table 5-8.) Nonetheless, to further examine the potential contribution of the impact variable, it was combined (summed) with the visibility variable. This combined variable approach was consistent with the recommendation of Lewis-Beck (1980) for dealing with multicollinearity.

This combination of variables had theoretical sense and was limited to only tests of the second set of hypotheses, which had severity of the response as the dependent variable. As noted earlier, the impact variable measured the supervisor's perceived impact of the subordinate's poor behavior on him or herself. The other variable measured the visibility of the subordinate's poor behavior. As can be seen in Table 5-8 the variables are relatively highly correlated ($r = .39, p < .01$). Visibility was also a major correlate of perceived impact, as shown in Table 5.10

and the corresponding discussion. The resulting combined variable, labeled overall impact, has a coefficient alpha of .80 (7 items) and was used as a substitute for the two original variables. These results are presented after a discussion of other variations in the analysis.

Perceived Responsibility

As discussed in the previous chapter, the RISS instrument was used to collect information on the supervisor's perceived responsibility for various aspects of the job situation. This step was based on the assumption that supervisors scoring low on the RISS scale might not respond to the stimulus material as conscientiously as those scoring high on the scale. To test this assumption a variable was constructed by using the items from selected sub-scales of the instrument. The specific subscales were selected through a purely empirical process. Those having the predicted relationships with both dependent variables; perceived impact and severity of supervisor's response were included. The subscales selected were (1) between work units responsibility for group performance (EXTPERF), (2) responsibility for subordinates' skills, abilities, and tools (SAT), (3) responsibility for guidance, coordination, and feedback (FEEDBACK), and (4) impact on supervisor's own performance rating (OWNPERF). See Tables 5-5 and 5-7, and the corresponding discussion for further details about these sub-scales. This new variable was labeled perceived responsibility, and it has a coefficient alpha of .67 (10 items).

Years of Service

One more variable was incorporated as a covariate in this part of the analysis. This variable, which was studied by O'Reilly and Weitz (1980), was related to the seniority of the supervisor. Years of service was included as a covariate because it has been found to affect supervisors' reactions. Thus, supervisors were asked to indicate the number of years they have been with the organization. The variable is labeled years of service.

Additional Tests

The perceived responsibility and years of service variables were added to the earlier regression models tested in Table 5-10, to determine their effect on perceived impact. Shift of responsibility was used in place of the attribution variable. Table 5-13 shows the results of the new set of regression equations after implementing the changes discussed. Examination of the results indicates that the shift of responsibility variable was significant in all the equations, with the exception of the equation in column 5. In the first four equations the shift of responsibility variable showed a positive a positive significant relationship with the perceived impact variable (F values significant at $p < .10$ and $p < .05$). These results provide support for hypothesis two. As in the earlier results, once again, the visibility variable showed a strong positive relationship ($p < .01$) in all the equations, with the exception of equation 5. The sign of the effect of visibility was in the predicted

TABLE 5-13
REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR
THE PERCEIVED IMPACT
(Using Revised Continuous Variables)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Intercept	8.69 (5.23)***	3.87 (1.86)*	1.88 (.91)	.24 (.07)	1.87 (.27)
Shift of Responsibility	.20 (2.13)**	.20 (2.23)**	.17 (2.03)**	.16 (1.85)*	.07 (.21)
Visibility	---	.26 (3.57)***	.21 (2.96)***	.20 (2.76)***	.11 (.33)
Years of Service	---	---	.21 (3.43)***	.21 (3.41)***	.21 (3.41)***
Perceived Responsibility	---	---	---	.04 (.60)	.04 (.61)
Shift of Resp. x Visibility	---	---	---	---	.00 ^a (.27)
n	108	108	108	108	108
R ²	.04	.14	.23	.23 ^c	.23 ^c
\bar{R}^2	.04	.13	.21	.20	.20
F	4.35**	8.88*	10.47***	7.89***	6.27***

*** p < .01

** p < .05

* p < .10

^a Indicates a very small positive coefficient.

^b Indicates a very small negative coefficient.

^c Indicates a very small increase in the R².

direction, which provided strong support for hypothesis 1. Years of service, one of the two new variables added, was consistently significant (p < .01) in the three equations where it was included. Conversely, the perceived responsibility variable was not significant. Similarly, the

interaction effect between the shift of responsibility and visibility did not have a significant relationship ($F = .27$) with perceived impact. As with the results presented in previous sections these results did not provide support for hypothesis 3.

Although all the regression equations run in this phase of the study had significant F values ($p < .05$ and $p < .01$), equations 4 and 5 indicate that the addition of perceived responsibility and the interaction term variables contribute very little explanatory power. The results in Table 5-13 indicate that the F values and the R^2 values show improvement over results in Table 5-10 only after the shift of responsibility, visibility, and years of service variables are included in combination.

New regression models with the modifications discussed were run to study relationships with the severity of supervisor's response to subordinates' poor behavior. The revisions included (1) use of the shift of responsibility variable in place of the attribution variable, (2) use of the overall impact variable, which resulted from the combination of the perceived impact and the visibility variables, and (3) addition of perceived responsibility and years of service variables. Table 5-14 presents the results of the new regression models.

An examination of the results in Table 5-14 indicates that the shift of responsibility variable has a strong negative relationship with the severity of the supervisor's response in equations 1 through 4. In equation 5, the shift of responsibility variable was not significant. These results lend support to hypothesis 5. The overall impact variable is also highly significant ($p < .01$) in a positive direction in three of

the equations (columns 2, 3, and 4, of Table 5-14), and significant ($p < .05$) in the last

TABLE 5-14
REGRESSION ANALYSIS RESULTS FOR
SEVERITY OF THE SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSE
(Using Revised Continuous Variables)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Intercept	15.02 (7.39)***	7.46 (3.06)***	15.40 (3.79)***	15.43 (3.74)***	5.52 (.60)
Shift of Responsibility	-.30 (2.67)***	-.36 (3.45)***	-.31 (3.00)***	-.31 (2.98)***	.26 (.48)
Overall Impact	---	.28 (4.75)***	.31 (5.26)***	.31 (4.96)***	.62 (2.32)**
Perceived Responsibility	---	---	-.17 (2.41)**	-.17 (2.40)**	.17 (2.35)**
Years of Service	---	---	---	-.00 ^b (.05)	-.02 (.20)
Shift of Resp. x Overall Impact	---	---	---	---	-.02 (1.21)
n	108	108	108	108	108
R ²	.06	.23	.27	.27 ^c	.28
\bar{R}^2	.06	.21	.25	.24	.24
F	7.12***	15.56***	12.78***	9.50***	7.93***

*** $p < .01$

** $p < .05$

* $p < .10$

a Indicates a very small positive coefficient.

b Indicates a very small negative coefficient.

c Indicates a very small increase in the R².

equation (Column 5). The sign of the overall impact variable was in the

predicted direction. The combined perceived impact and visibility variable, when used with the shift of responsibility variable (column 2), produced an R^2 value of .21. This represents a slight improvement in explanatory power over the earlier results in column 3 of Table 5-11 in which $\bar{R}^2 = .18$.

The perceived responsibility variable was significantly ($p < .05$) related to the supervisor's response. This relationship was in the predicted negative direction. This variable was included after it was assumed that the degree of supervisor's perceived responsibility for the job situation would be related to the supervisor's reaction to the stimulus material. It may be said that the assumption has been confirmed.

The results in Table 5-14 indicate also that supervisors' tenure with the organization was not significantly related to the severity of supervisor's response. These results did not support the O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) contention, although the years of service variable was significantly related to perceived impact. The years of service variable may operate through the supervisor's perceived impact in an indirect relationship with the severity of the response variable. Finally, the interaction between the shift of responsibility and the overall impact variables was not significant. This was consistent with the results discussed earlier and did not provide support for hypothesis 7. In terms of the explanatory power of the different models, the best regression model is that shown in column 3 (Table 5-14). This model, which has an R^2 of .27, includes three variables: (1) shift of responsibility, (2) overall impact, and (3) supervisor's perceived responsibility. The increment in the R^2 value from the addition of the years of service

variable is very low (column 4, Table 5-14).

Summary

The results presented in this chapter have provided support for hypotheses one and two which pertain to the relationships of attribution (or shift of responsibility) and visibility with the supervisor's perceived impact of the subordinate's poor behavior on him or herself. However, the results did not support hypothesis three which stated that there would be an interaction effect between attribution and visibility. In further, supplemental analyses of the data, a significant relationship was found for the covariate, years of service, with the impact variable. The interaction between the attribution and the visibility variables received some support from these findings.

For the hypotheses related to the response of the supervisor, the results provided support for both hypotheses four and five. These hypotheses stated that there would be significant relationships for visibility and attribution. The results did not indicate a relationship for impact, as stated in hypothesis six. Likewise, the results did not indicate the hypothesized interaction between attribution and visibility on the response of the supervisor.

For reasons explained above, the visibility and impact variables were combined into one overall impact variable. Similarly, the attribution and perceived responsibility for problem prevention variables were also combined into one variable labeled shift of responsibility. Finally, perceived responsibility and years of service were included in

the regression models. The results provided in these additional analyses provided further support for earlier additions and all revised variables, except years of service, showed significant relationships with the dependent variable, severity of the supervisor's response.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The present study was designed to examine the response of supervisors to poorly performing subordinates. The model developed in this study depicted this subordinate/supervisor interaction as a two-phase process (Figure 3-1), which allowed for the distinction between (1) the determination of the cause of the subordinate's poor behavior and (2) the formation of the supervisor's response. The first part of the model stated that the subordinate's behavioral history and an attributional schema were relevant determinants on the supervisor's attribution of the cause of poor performance. This part of the model, first developed by Green and Mitchell (1979) was not tested in the present study because it has been widely supported by previous research (e.g., Mitchell et al., 1981).

The emphasis of the present study was the examination of the second part of the model, the formation of the supervisor's response to poor performance. It was hypothesized that the causal attribution formed in the first step, the visibility of the situation, the supervisor's perceived impact of the situation on him or herself, the seriousness of the outcome of the poor behavior, and the subordinate's behavioral

history were the predictor variables for the severity of the supervisor's response. Likewise, it was hypothesized that the causal attribution formed by the supervisor, the seriousness of the behavior, and the visibility of the subordinate's poor behavior were the major determinants of the supervisor's perception of the impact of the situation on him or herself.

Some Reminders

The present study, as specified in Figures 3-1, 3-2, and 3-3, did not try to establish causality. The arrows used in the contingency model depicted in Figure 3-1, as in Figures 3-2 and 3-3, indicate the sequence of events. Establishing causality in the supervisor/subordinate interaction is not an easy task. For example, it could be said that the supervisor was not present when the subordinate's poor performance occurred, and that he or she (the supervisor) knew about it after learning that there was a serious outcome or because a third party told the supervisor about it. Or it could also be that the supervisor witnessed the subordinate's poor performance.

It should be recalled that, in the interaction between the supervisor and the subordinate, the causal attribution of subordinates' behavior was theorized differently than the previous studies in this area (e.g., Green and Mitchell, 1979; Mitchell et al., 1981). Previous studies have assumed that when determining the cause of subordinate's behavior, supervisors are not affected by the situation. In the present study, the supervisor/subordinate interaction is presented more realistically,

because it is stated that the determination of the causal attribution of subordinate's poor behavior could identify the supervisor as the responsible for that behavior. For instance, when an external attribution is made for the subordinate's behavior, it could indicate that the supervisor failed to provide adequate training or directions to the subordinate. That is why the attribution variable has also been referred to as the shift of responsibility. Responsibility for a subordinate's poor performance could shift from the subordinate to the supervisor, depending on the characteristics of the situation.

The original model developed to describe the supervisor/subordinate interaction (Green and Mitchell, 1979) included the supervisor's knowledge of the subordinate's behavioral history and the seriousness of the outcome of the poor performance as predictor variables of the supervisor's response. These two independent variables were held constant in the present study because they have been widely supported in previous research studies (e.g., Mitchell et al, 1981). Two new variables were added to the set under scrutiny (1) the visibility of the subordinate's poor performance and (2) the supervisor's perception of the impact of the situation on him or herself. The effect of these variables has not been examined in previous studies. The perceived impact which constitutes a very important factor in social interaction (Heider, 1958; Jones and Davis, 1965), has been only indirectly suggested in previous studies (Tjosvold, 1985; Brown and Mitchell, 1986).

Although no hypothesized relationships were presented, the effects of two additional predictor variables were examined in the last phase of the present study. The first predictor was the supervisor's perceived

responsibility for various aspects of the job situation, which was assumed to have some effect on a supervisor's reactions to the stimulus material. The other variable was the supervisor's tenure with the organization expressed in number of years. Years of service was found to be significantly related to the severity of the supervisor's response to subordinates' poor behavior (O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980).

Findings on the Perceived Impact on the Supervisor

Studies dealing with discipline in organizations are not abundant and most of them emphasize the effects of punishment on employees (Arvey and Jones, 1985). In addition, most of these studies have examined the relationship between supervisors and subordinates from the point of view of the subordinate, giving limited attention to the supervisors' perceptions of the interaction (e.g. Arvey et al., 1984; Greene and Podsakoff, 1981; Podsakoff and Todor, 1985). Of these studies just a few dealt with the supervisor's response to poorly performing subordinates (e.g. Brown and Mitchell, 1986; Green and Mitchell, 1979; Ilgen et al., 1981; Mitchell and Wood, 1979, 1980; Mitchell et al., 1981; O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980). While these studies examined the effects of a number of contextual and individual factors on the supervisor's responses to subordinates' poor behavior, they pay little or no attention to supervisor's perceptions of the situation.

One of these perceptions in the supervisor/subordinate interaction deals with the supervisor's perceptions of the effect of that interaction on him or herself. Specifically, one major question concerns how a

supervisor perceives that a subordinate's poor performance affects his or her image, opportunities for promotion, career development, recognition, and respect. As discussed earlier there is enough theory to support this issue as a research question. For example, Heider (1958) stated that a person's life space is enhanced by his perceptions of the potential benefit or harm of other's actions. This seems to indicate that a person's reaction to another's behavior will be different when the person perceives some benefit or harm from the other's behavior, than when this perception does not exist. Jones and Davis's (1965) hedonic relevance also supports this contention. They discussed a person's tendency to see others' actions having affective consequences for him or herself as more dispositional than when these consequences are not perceived (Jones and Davis, 1965). Beach and Mitchell's (in press) image theory seems to suggest that, when making and implementing decisions, managers may take into consideration their personal objectives regarding career development in organizations. "The most important characteristics of events that affect us are, first whether or not they are positive, pleasant, and satisfying, and second their causal source." (Heider, 1958, p.16).

As discussed earlier, the analysis of the categorical variables did not provide any support for the hypotheses addressing the perceived impact on the supervisor. However, the results for the analyses employing continuous variables supported the hypothesized relationships between the supervisor's perception of the impact of the situation on him or herself (the dependent variable) and the visibility of the subordinate's behavior (hypothesis one), whether subordinate's poor behavior is attributed to the employee or to the situation (hypothesis two), and the interaction

between visibility and attribution (hypothesis three).

The different results obtained when using the dichotomous and the continuous variables could be explained by (1) the restricted range used in all of the dichotomous variable (1 for low and 2 for high), and (2) the fact that two of the correlations between the dichotomous variables and the corresponding continuous variables were low. These correlations were: (1) for attribution $r = .23$, (2) for visibility $r = .14$, and (3) for the perceived impact $r = .01$. The last two correlations were a major concern when running the manipulation checks. The low correlation for the impact variable can be explained in part. As can be seen in Table 5-2, only one of the four items of the impact variable indicated a significant manipulation; the other impact items indicated insignificant manipulation.

The significant and positive relationship found between attribution, visibility, and the interaction between attribution and visibility with supervisor's perception of the impact of the situation on him or herself lends support for the theoretical arguments presented in previous chapters. It seems clear that the supervisors in the study perceived themselves as active and interested participants in the problem behavior situation, and not as impartial observers. Supervisors' impartiality when dealing with poor performing employees has been implied in most of the previous studies reviewed (e.g. Mitchell et al., 1981). Likewise, the results of the present analysis seem to support the theoretical contention that the application of the Weiner et al. (1972) model, which explains how observers make attributions of other's behavior could be inappropriate when applied to the supervisor/subordinate

interaction. The Weiner model is based on two dimensions which provide observers with four factors to explain task outcomes: (1) ability, (2) effort, (3) task difficulty, and (4) luck (Figure 2.2).

It was argued that the Weiner et al. (1972) model may not be appropriate for the study of the supervisor/subordinate interaction because some of the assumptions made in the model may not apply to all situations. For example, Mitchell et al. (1981) contended that the classification of ability as a stable factor and effort as unstable could be inaccurate. In previous chapters, it was also argued that the use of luck and task difficulty as two other factors explaining task outcome may not be justified in most cases.

The basic managerial tasks of planning, organizing, directing and coordinating, and controlling (Hitt, Middlemist, and Mathis, 1986) do not seem to consistent with use of luck as a factor explaining task outcomes. Likewise, the time and efforts an organization spends on recruiting, selecting, socializing, and training employees (Middlemist, Hitt, and Greer, 1983) seem to make task difficulty an unrealistic explanation of task outcomes. It should be noted that the arguments presented here do not ignore the fact that, under very special conditions luck and task difficulty could appropriately explain task outcomes, but these cases should be the exception and not the rule.

The results of the present analysis indicate that the supervisors perceived a greater impact of the situation on themselves when the attribution of subordinate's behavior was external than when it was internal. In the external attribution condition the supervisor could have been at fault. He or she could have been seen as not providing effective

guidance and orientation to the subordinate, which would result in the supervisor being blamed for the situation. In the internal attribution condition the subordinate could be blamed for the poor behavior because he or she had been properly trained and prepared for the task. Thus, the shift of responsibility from the supervisor to the subordinate and vice versa seems to be clearly supported by these findings.

Similarly, the results indicated that the perceived impact is greater when visibility of subordinate's poor performance is high than when it is low. Thus, the supervisor perceives him or herself more affected by a subordinate's poor performance when this behavior is witnessed by other organizational members than when it is not. Likewise, the interaction between attribution and visibility was consistent with the previous results. A combination of an external and highly visible behavior was associated with a high supervisor's perception of the impact of the situation on him or herself. The least amount of perceived impact occurred under the internal attribution and low visibility combination.

It should be emphasized that the visibility variable was the most important variable in this part of the study. Some real life examples may provide additional explanation to the contention that visibility is highly related to the supervisor's perceived impact of the situation on him or herself. Just recently, Tom Lasorda, manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, team which is not performing very well, has taken over the coaching position at third base. This action may compensate for the visible poor performance of the team, and provide some positive visibility for the manager as an indication that he is trying to do something about it. It should be remembered that, given the presence of

fine baseball players, poor performance by the team might be an indication of poor management.

It was assumed that supervisors' perceptions of their responsibilities for various aspects of the job situation would affect their reactions to the stimulus material. In order to test this assumption the RISS instrument was constructed and given to the supervisors in the study. Surprisingly, the tests of the variable developed from the RISS instrument showed no significant relationship with the perceived impact. For reasons explained before, the years of service of the supervisors was added as one more predictor variable. In this case the results provided partial support for the O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) contention that the supervisor's seniority affects his or her reactions to poor subordinates' behavior. The results showed that the years of service variable was significantly related to the perceived impact. This positive relationship indicated that increased number of years of service is associated with greater perceived impact.

In summary it can be said that the results discussed for this part of the study support the contention that supervisors are not, and cannot be considered impartial observers for they can affect (Lowen and Craig, 1968) and they are affected by their subordinates' behavior.

Findings on Supervisors' Response to Subordinates' Poor Behavior

Given that subordinates' poor behavior has a perceived negative impact on supervisors, it is logical to examine the correlates of this impact on the severity of a supervisor's response to the subordinate's

poor behavior. Heider (1958) suggested that people can affect other's behavior; Jones and Davis (1965) discussed the hedonic relevance phenomenon which affects how people perceive other's behavior; Beach and Mitchell (in press) have suggested that supervisors may make decisions that benefit their personal career goals; Chapman (1974) suggested the presence of a norm of reciprocity which covers both negative and positive effects; O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) found that supervisors with more seniority tended to be more severe in their response to poor behavior than those with less seniority, because the organization tended to reinforce this behavior more than others.

Although based on a somewhat unrealistic assumption, Tjosvold (1985) found that supervisors' responses were significantly more favorable to poor performing subordinates under a cooperative goals condition rather than competitive goals conditions. Brown and Mitchell (1986) suggested the presence of self-defensive behavior in supervisors who were exposed to situations where subordinates' poor behavior could have been attributed to external reasons such as scheduling problems and task interdependence.

These studies indicated the need for examining the responses of the supervisor to perceptions of the impact of subordinates' poor behavior. Thus, the supervisor's perception of the impact of subordinates' poor behavior was included in the second part of the present study as a variable related to the severity of the supervisor's response to subordinates' poor behavior.

Other variables also included in the second phase of the study were: (1) the attribution made of the subordinate's behavior, whether the

poor performance was seen as caused by the employee (an internal attribution) or was seen as caused by factors external to the employee (for example, the supervisor made an error); and (2) the visibility of the subordinate's poor behavior, expressed in terms of the number of other organizational members that witnessed this poor behavior.

The seriousness of the outcome of the employee's poor behavior and the subordinate's behavioral history are other predictor variables of interest in the supervisor/subordinate interaction (Mitchell et al., 1981). These variables were assigned a constant value or effect in the research, because they have already been widely tested in previous research (e.g. Mitchell et al., 1981). According to Mitchell et al. (1981), the seriousness of the outcome and the subordinate's work history would show a pattern similar to that of the visibility variable. There were hypotheses developed for the impact, the attribution, and the visibility variables, as well as for the interaction between attribution and visibility.

For reasons explained in previous sections of this paper, two additional predictor variables were included in this part of the study. They were (1) the years of tenure with the organization (expressed in years of service), and (2) the supervisor's perceived responsibility for various aspects of the job (measured with the RISS instrument). No hypotheses were developed for these two predictor variables. Tenure with the organization has been found to influence supervisors' reactions to poor performance (O'Reilly and Weitz, 1980). The supervisors' perceived responsibility for various aspects of the job was assumed to affect reactions to the stimulus material.

The results presented in the previous chapter gave strong support to hypothesis four which stated that visibility of subordinates' behavior was related to the severity of the supervisor's response. It was found that when a subordinate's poor behavior was visible, the supervisor's response was more severe than when the subordinate's poor performance was not. Likewise, the results provided support for hypothesis five which stated that, when the cause of subordinate's poor performance was internal the severity of supervisor's response would be higher than when the cause was external.

The hypothesized relationship between perceived impact and the severity of the supervisor's response, hypothesis six, was not supported. It was suspected that multicollinearity between the independent variables may have contributed to the inconsistency of the impact variable. In order to address this problem transformations of variables were performed, and the results were presented and discussed in previous sections. A combined variable (impact plus visibility) labeled overall impact had a highly significant relationship with the severity of the supervisor's response (Table 5-14). This relationship was a positive one. Nonetheless, the zero-order correlation between impact and severity of the response was insignificant.

The interaction that was hypothesized stated that under conditions of high visibility, the response of the supervisor would more severe when the attribution for poor performance is internal (e.g., blamed on the subordinate) than when the attribution is external (e.g., blamed on the supervisor). Although the interaction term coefficients were generally insignificant for the complete models, and unstable depending on whether

attribution or visibility was deleted, other results provide an indication of the conditions under which the more severe responses are likely. Visibility is the key variable. By itself visibility explains 22 percent of the variance in the severity of the supervisor's response ($r = .47$). Thus, the most severe responses showed, according to the results, when the behavior is highly visible. When visibility is controlled along with impact, internal attributions are associated with severe response.

It should be recalled that two additional predictor variables were included in this part of the study; the supervisor's perceived responsibility for various aspects of the job situation (RISS) and the supervisor's tenure with the organization (years of service). Perceived responsibility exhibited an inverse relationship with the severity of the response, which confirmed the assumption made in previous chapter. This relationship indicated that supervisors who perceived more responsibility for the various aspects of the job situation preferred less severe responses for subordinates' poor behavior than those who perceived less responsibility.

The second additional variable, the covariate years of service, was included because O'Reilly and Weitz (1980) found that tenure with the organization was positively related to selection of a tough style when dealing with employees' poor performance. Thus, it was expected that the seniority of the supervisor (in number of years) with the organization would be positively related with the severity of the supervisor's response to poor performance. This assumption was not directly supported. However, years of service was found to be positively related to perceived impact, which was in turn positively related with the severity of the

response. Thus, years of service may be related to the severity of the response, through perceived impact.

The revised analyses proved to be highly effective (Tables 5-13 and 5-14), for they not only reduced the multicollinearity problem, but also provided more consistent findings. In addition to this, these analyses also provided information on the predictors (perceived responsibility and years of service) as they relate to the dependent variables.

To summarize, it should be recalled that the objective of this study was to present and test a model explaining the supervisor's response to subordinates' poor performance. The results supported the major contention that supervisors may perceive a negative impact from subordinates' poor performance, and that this perceived impact in turn may affect the supervisor's response to poor performance. This variable has not been examined in any of the previous studies reviewed. Likewise, the importance of the visibility of subordinate's behavior was strongly supported by the results. This variable was also found to influence both the supervisor's perceptions of impact and response to poor performance.

Similarly, it was assumed that the supervisor's perceived responsibility for various aspects of the job situation would affect his or her reactions to the stimulus materials. This assumption was tested through the use of the RISS instrument. The perception of responsibility exhibited a significant inverse relationship with the severity of the response. However, perceived responsibility was not significantly related to perceived impact. Likewise, the supervisor's tenure with the organization, expressed in terms of the number of years with the organization, was also included as a covariate. It was found that tenure

with the organization was positively related to perceived impact, but no relationship was found between this variable and the severity of the response.

The results discussed in the present study indicate that the causal attribution made for the subordinate's poor behavior is an important contributor in explaining perceived impact and severity of the supervisor's response. However, other variables were more important contributors to the variance of the dependent variables. For example, for the dependent variable perceived impact, the visibility of subordinate's behavior and the years of service were important contributors of explained variance. For the dependent variable severity of the supervisor's response, visibility and attribution were important contributors to explained variance.

Finally, it should be said that these findings are encouraging because they enhance our understanding of people's behavior in organizations. The theoretical basis that supported the present research study has been enriched as a result of these findings. It may now be possible to increase the possibility of making more accurate predictions of supervisors' behavior in organizations.

Limitations of the Present Study

The major limitation of the present study is related to the sample used, which may limit the generalization of these results to similar situations in other organizations. Considering that the samples were drawn from fire departments, which are public and bureaucratic

organizations, it could be assumed that the centralized, tight control normally found in them may contribute to lower supervisors' perceptions of responsibility for and impact from subordinates' poor behavior than in other types of organizations. If this theoretical speculation holds true, then the use of private, for profit organizations should produce improved results. In private organizations areas of responsibility and accountability might be more clearly defined than in public organizations. Thus, studies of private enterprises may produce stronger findings than those presented in this study.

A second limitation deals with the scope of the study. The present research was limited to the study of supervisors' reactions for several reasons. It would have been ideal to study also the reactions of subordinates because this would have provided a full picture of the relationship. The best approach would have probably been to manipulate the variables in such a way that both the reactions of supervisors and subordinates could have been observed. However, it is an exception when an organizations allows outsiders to manipulate variables that can create dysfunctional behaviors among their employees. The use of an experimental design with students playing the role of supervisors was ruled out, because it would have taken a tremendous amount of training to get the students to express supervisors' reactions with the same flavor and intensity as experienced and real supervisors.

Recommendations for Future Research

Some recommendations for future studies should be made at this point. The first of which should be the replication of the present study using subjects from business organizations and other public organizations. These replications should confirm the assumption that the model tested in this study should be more effective when applied to business organizations because of clearer definitions of responsibility and accountability of supervisory personnel. The replication of the study using samples drawn from other public organizations would allow for the determination of the generalizability of the results reported. Such replication would also allow comparisons within and across public and private sectors.

A second recommendation is that when measuring supervisors' responses to poor performing employees, researchers should not provide subjects with a limited list of alternative explanations for poor performance (for example: ability, effort, luck, and task difficulty). The use of these lists may affect supervisors' perceptions and may force them to choose one of the alternatives given even if they do not accurately describe the situation. It may be more effective to use initially open-ended questions and then content analyze them. Such procedures may provide more accurate explanations for subordinates' poor performance in organizations.

Final Remarks

The findings reported here are encouraging because they provide additional information on the supervisor/subordinate interaction, which enhances the accumulated knowledge. The results have shown that supervisors may react in ways that are rational to them, for example self-defensive behavior, although such reactions may not be the most appropriate for the organization. The study has also identified new questions about some of the attribution theories. For example, the actor observer phenomenon (Jones and Nisbett, 1972) could be due to the self-defensive behaviors that managers seem to exhibit when employees' poor performance can be attributed to the supervisor.

If supervisors react in ways that are rational to them, but not to the organization, then upper level managers should consider the defense mechanism used by supervisors. It would necessary to implement procedures that limit the possibilities of occurrence of this behavior. Since supervisors may be the only linkage between subordinates and upper levels of management, they posses control over critical information.

NOTES

1. The scenarios were developed through the use of excerpts from the October, 1986 issue of Fire Engineering magazine and Management in the Fire Service, by Didactic Systems, Inc. (1977). These excerpts were combined to generate the basic instance of poor performance. This first instance was presented to Mr. Michael D. Conley, of the International Fire Service Training Association, and Chief William Womack, of the Stillwater Fire Department. Their input was used to make sure that the description of poor performance was realistic.

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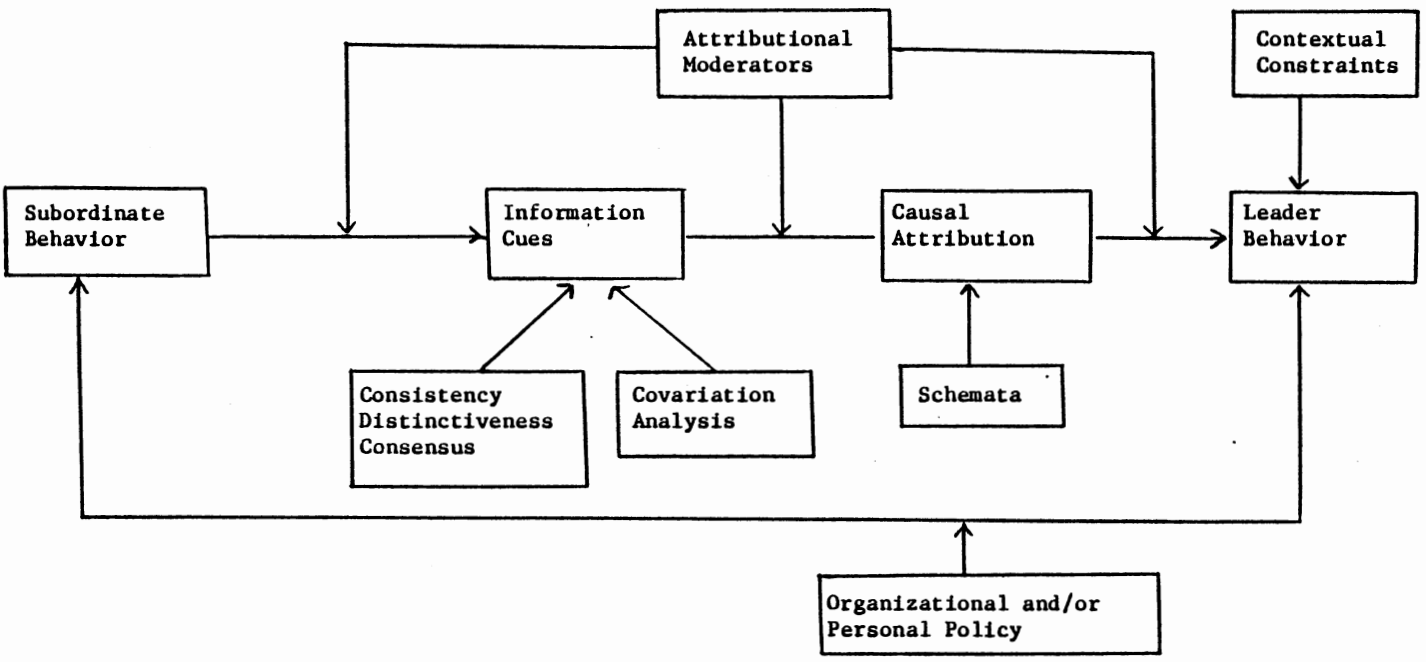
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APPENDIX B

RESPONSIBILITY IN SUPERVISION SCALE

(RISS)

The Responsibility in Supervision Scale (RISS) attempts to measure supervisors' perceived responsibility for various aspects of their subordinates' jobs and the work environment. It also attempts to measure supervisors' perceptions of the impact of employees' performance on their own future careers and image in the organization (e.g., how the supervisor's perceived opportunities for promotion are affected by the performance of his/her subordinates).

A. Supervisor's perceived responsibility for work group performance.

- 01 I am responsible for the performance of my work unit.
- 07 My boss considers that the performance of my unit is my responsibility.
- 11 A supervisor's effective coordination of tasks and subordinates' work is an important determinant of effective unit performance.
- 16 To the extent that I effectively coordinate the work of the employees and tasks in my unit, the performance of my unit will be effective.
- 20 It is my responsibility to coordinate tasks and individuals to assure effective unit performance.

B. Knowledge of subordinates' jobs (See note 1).

- 08 It is my responsibility to make sure that my subordinates know what their jobs are and know how to do them well.
- 12 It is my responsibility to know my subordinates' jobs.
- 21 To be an effective supervisor, I need to have a clear understanding of my subordinates' jobs.

C. Supervisor's perceived impact of unit's performance on him or herself.

- 02 The performance of my unit affects my chances for promotion.
- 13 When my unit is effective, such performance increases my chances for promotion.

APPENDIX B (Continued)

- 17 My subordinates' performance has no effect on my own performance ratings.
- 22 My career with the organization will be secure as long as my boss believes that my group is performing well.
- 25 My image as an effective supervisor will depend on how well my subordinates do their jobs.

D. Responsibility for equipment and tools.

- 03 I have to make sure that the equipment and tools used in my unit are always in optimal operating condition.
- 09 It is my responsibility to make sure that my subordinates have the equipment and tools required to do a good job.
- 14 As a supervisor, I need to make sure that my subordinates make appropriate use of the tools and equipment assigned to them.

E. Responsibility for the right match between employees' abilities, skills, and task requirements.

- 04 I have to maintain the right match between subordinate's qualifications and the requirements of the task.
- 23 I have to make sure that my subordinates can perform the tasks assigned to them.
- 26 It is my responsibility to make sure that my subordinates have the skills and abilities required for task performance.

F. Responsibility for the motivation of subordinates.

- 05 It is my responsibility to maintain a high level of motivation among my subordinates.
- 10 To the extent that I effectively motivate my subordinates, the performance of my work unit will be effective.
- 18 As a supervisor, I have to be successful in getting people to work together.

APPENDIX B (Continued)

G. Responsibility for subordinates' performance evaluation.

- 06 I am responsible for the accurate evaluation of my subordinates' performance.
- 15 I have to make accurate assessments of my subordinates' performance.
- 19 I have to report my subordinates' performance to my superiors.
- 24 I have to provide subordinates with performance feedback.

NOTES

1. Questions in section B will not be used in this research. They will be filler questions.

MANIPULATION CHECKS

A. Shift of responsibility for poor performance (causal attribution).

- 01 This subordinate's poor performance could have been due to the wrong assignment of the task to the individual.
- 04 I believe that this employee's poor performance was caused reasons for which he or she is not responsible.
- 07 I feel that this employee's performance problems might have been caused by the subordinate's personal problems.
- 09 My boss might consider this subordinate's poor performance to be the result of a mismatch between the individual and the task.
- 11 This subordinate's poor performance could have been the result of him or her being poorly trained.
- 13 This incident of poor performance could have been the result of the employee's lack of ability or effort to do the job.
- 16 As a supervisor, I could have prevented this employee's performance problem.

APPENDIX B (Continued)**B. Visibility of Subordinate's Poor performance.**

- 02 This employee's poor performance was very obvious to other people in the organization.
- 05 This subordinate's poor performance was witnessed by others in the organization.
- 08 Many people in the organization became aware of this employee's poor performance.

C. Supervisor's perception of the impact of the situation on him or herself.

- 03 This subordinate's poor performance negatively affects the performance of my whole unit.
- 10 This subordinate's poor performance has a negative impact on my own performance ratings.
- 12 This employee's performance problem can make me look like an ineffective supervisor.
- 15 My career with the organization could have been negatively affected by this subordinate's poor performance.

D. Supervisor's Response (Not used as manipulation checks).

- 06 My response to this subordinate's poor performance would extremely severe.
- 14 This subordinate's behavior should be dealt with an extremely severe action

NOTE

Items 06 and 14 are two of the three items measuring the dependent variable "supervisor's response." The third item can be found in section D of the questionnaire presented in Appendix C.

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A

#01-1A2A3A

PERCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES

Most people have different perceptions about their jobs and supervisors are not an exception. The following statements try to tap these perceptual differences. Thus, there are no right or wrong answers. Please indicate the degree to which you agree, or disagree with the statements below by placing a check mark on the scale beside each statement.

	Strongly		Slightly	Neither Disagree	Slightly	Strongly
	Agree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
01. I am responsible for the performance of my work unit.	—	—	—	—	—	—
02. The performance of my unit affects my chances for promotion.	—	—	—	—	—	—
03. I have to make sure that the tools and equipment used in my unit are always in optimal operating condition.	—	—	—	—	—	—
04. I have to maintain the right match between subordinate's qualifications and the requirements of the task.	—	—	—	—	—	—
05. It is my responsibility to maintain a high level of motivation among my subordinates.	—	—	—	—	—	—
06. I am responsible for the accurate evaluation of my subordinates' performance.	—	—	—	—	—	—
07. My boss considers that the performance of my unit is my responsibility.	—	—	—	—	—	—
08. It is my responsibility to make sure that my subordinates know what their jobs are and know how to do them well.	—	—	—	—	—	—
09. It is my responsibility to make sure that my subordinates have the equipment and tools required to do a good job.	—	—	—	—	—	—

APPENDIX C (Continued)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10. To the extent that I effectively motivate my subordinates, the performance of my unit will be improved.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
11. A supervisor's effective coordination of tasks and subordinates' work is an important determinant of effective unit performance.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
12. It is my responsibility to know my subordinates' jobs.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
13. When my unit is effective, such performance increases my chances for promotion.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
14. As a supervisor, I need to make sure that my subordinates make appropriate use of the tools and equipment assigned to them.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
15. I have to make accurate assessments of my subordinates' performance.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
16. To the extent that I effectively coordinate the work of the employees and tasks in my unit, the performance of my unit will be effective.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17. My subordinates' performance has no effect on my own performance rating.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
18. As a supervisor, I have to be successful in getting people to work together.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
19. I have to report my subordinates' performance to my superiors.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
20. It is my responsibility to coordinate tasks and individuals to assure effective unit performance.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
21. To be an effective supervisor, I need to have a clear understanding of my subordinates' jobs.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

APPENDIX C (Continued)

	Strongly		Neither		Strongly	
	Agree	Agree	Disagree	nor	Disagree	Disagree
	Agree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
22. My career with the organization will be secure as long as my boss believes that my group is performing well.	—	—	—	—	—	—
23. I have to make sure that my subordinates can perform the tasks assigned to them.	—	—	—	—	—	—
24. I have to provide subordinates with performance feedback.	—	—	—	—	—	—
25. My image as an effective supervisor will depend on how well my subordinates do their jobs.	—	—	—	—	—	—
26. It is my responsibility to make sure that my subordinates have the skills and abilities required for task performance.	—	—	—	—	—	—

Section B

The following account describes a situation in which your company was involved. As you read it, please keep in mind that the firefighters described here are members of your unit.

Your battalion chief had just assigned your company to begin an interior attack in a three-story building fire, with ladder companies immediately committed to search and coordinated venting operations. Other engine companies had been assigned to place water between the fire and the most severe exposure and to keep the fire from extending to uninvolved portions of the building. Heavy smoke was pushing from around first-floor windows and doors. Despite the heavy smoke in this part of the building, no fire was visible from outside. After receiving your instructions, three firefighters from your company were advancing a hose-line via the rear entrance when a backdraft occurred. One firefighter was able to jump back and away from the heat and flames. He assisted the other two who suffered some injuries. Fortunately the explosion was a minor one, which accounted for the minor injuries suffered by the two firefighters. The third man who escaped unhurt was leading the group into the building...

According to what is known, the firefighter leading the way should have been able to prevent this accident. He has had enough training and experience to identify this type of danger and protect his life and his peers. It seems that he chose to ignore warning signs and your specific instructions regarding this type of situation. It is known also that this firefighter has ignored your instructions in two previous occasions, but without major consequences.

You are going to report this accident to your boss, but it will not have any impact on your supervisor's evaluation of your own performance. There will not be an impact on your image as an effective supervisor or on opportunities for future promotions. At the time of the accident, no member of any other unit or company was close enough as to become aware of what has happened.

APPENDIX C (Continued)

	Strongly Agree	Slightly Agree	Neither nor Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
07. I feel that this employee's performance problems have been caused by the subordinate's personal problems.	—	—	—	—	—
08. Many people in the organization became aware of this employee's poor performance.	—	—	—	—	—
09. My boss might consider this subordinate's poor performance to be the result of a mismatch between the individual and the task.	—	—	—	—	—
10. This subordinate's poor performance has a negative impact on my own performance ratings.	—	—	—	—	—
11. This subordinate's poor performance could have been the result of him or her being poorly trained.	—	—	—	—	—
12. This employee's performance problems can make me look like an ineffective supervisor.	—	—	—	—	—
13. This incident of poor performance could have been the result of the employee's lack of ability or effort to do the job.	—	—	—	—	—
14. This subordinate's behavior should be dealt with an extremely severe action.	—	—	—	—	—
15. My career with the organization could have been negatively affected by this subordinate's poor performance.	—	—	—	—	—
16. As a supervisor, I could have prevented this employee's performance problem.	—	—	—	—	—
17. Please give an overall evaluation of the cause of this subordinate's performance. According to your own perception of the situation, indicate the extent to which the behavior of this subordinate was due to internal reasons (e.g. the subordinate ignore some warning signals), or it was the result of some external cause (e.g., there was a mismatch between the subordinate and the					

APPENDIX C (Continued)

task), or the behavior was the result of a combination of both internal and external causes. Please indicate your overall evaluation of the situation by placing a check mark below the statement that best describes your evaluation.

100%	80% internal	60% internal	50% internal	60% external	80% external	100%
Internal	20% external	40% external	50% external	40% internal	20% internal	External

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Name: _____ Job Title _____

How long have you been with this organization? ___ years. What is your age? ___ Years.

How long have you been in your present position? ___ years. Sex: Male ___ Female ___.

How many people do you supervise? _____.

Please circle the highest level of education completed:

1. Some high school
2. Graduated from high school or G.E.D.
3. Some college or technical education beyond high school
4. Graduated from college
5. Some graduate school
6. Graduate degree (Master, PhD, etc.)

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION !!!

APPENDIX D

Description of Scenarios

Scenario #1 (Internal Attribution-Low Impact-Low Visibility)

The following account describes a situation in which your company was involved. As you read it, please keep in mind that the firefighters described here are members of your unit.

Your battalion chief had just assigned your company to begin an interior attack in a three-story building fire, with ladder companies immediately committed to search and coordinated venting operations. Other engine companies had been assigned to place water between the fire and the most severe exposure and to keep the fire from extending to uninvolved portions of the building. Heavy smoke was pushing from around first-floor windows and doors. Despite the heavy smoke in this part of the building, no fire was visible from outside. After receiving your instructions, three firefighters from your company were advancing a hose-line via the rear entrance when a backdraft occurred. One firefighter was able to jump back and away from the heat and flames. He assisted the other two who suffered some injuries. Fortunately the explosion was a minor one, which accounted for the minor injuries suffered by the two firefighters. The third man who escaped unhurt was leading the group into the building...

According to what is known, the firefighter leading the way should have been able to prevent this accident. He has had enough training and experience to identify this type of danger and protect his life and his peers. It seems that he chose to ignore warning signs and your specific instructions regarding this type of situation. It is known also that this firefighter has ignored your instructions in two previous occasions, but without major consequences.

You are going to report this accident to your boss, but it **will not** have any impact on your supervisor's evaluation of your own performance. There **will not** be an impact on your image as an effective supervisor or on opportunities for future promotions. At the time of the accident, no member of any other unit or company was close enough as to become aware of what has happened.

APPENDIX D (Continued)**Scenario #2
(Internal Attribution-Low Impact-High Visibility)**

The following account describes a situation in which your company was involved. As you read it, please keep in mind that the firefighters described here are members of your unit.

Your battalion chief had just assigned your company to begin an interior attack in a three-story building fire, with ladder companies immediately committed to search and coordinated venting operations. Other engine companies had been assigned to place water between the fire and the most severe exposure and to keep the fire from extending to uninvolved portions of the building. Heavy smoke was pushing from around first-floor windows and doors. Despite the heavy smoke in this part of the building, no fire was visible from outside. After receiving your instructions, three firefighters from your company were advancing a hose-line via the rear entrance when a backdraft occurred. One firefighter was able to jump back and away from the heat and flames. He assisted the other two who suffered some injuries. Fortunately the explosion was a minor one, which accounted for the minor injuries suffered by the two firefighters. The third man who escaped unhurt was leading the group into the building...

According to what is known, the firefighter leading the way should have been able to prevent this accident. He has had enough training and experience to identify this type of danger and protect his life and his peers. It seems that he chose to ignore warning signs and your specific instructions regarding this type of situation. It is known also that this firefighter has ignored your instructions in two previous occasions, but without major consequences.

You are going to report this accident to your boss, but it **will not** have any impact on your supervisor's evaluation of your own performance. There **will not** be an impact on your image as an effective supervisor or on opportunities for future promotions. At the time of the accident, firefighters and officers from two other companies were close enough and witnessed what has happened.

APPENDIX D (Continued)**Scenario #3
(Internal Attribution-High Impact-Low Visibility)**

The following account describes a situation in which your company was involved. As you read it, please keep in mind that the firefighters described here are members of your unit.

Your battalion chief had just assigned your company to begin an interior attack in a three-story building fire, with ladder companies immediately committed to search and coordinated venting operations. Other engine companies had been assigned to place water between the fire and the most severe exposure and to keep the fire from extending to uninvolved portions of the building. Heavy smoke was pushing from around first-floor windows and doors. Despite the heavy smoke in this part of the building, no fire was visible from outside. After receiving your instructions, three firefighters from your company were advancing a hose-line via the rear entrance when a backdraft occurred. One firefighter was able to jump back and away from the heat and flames. He assisted the other two who suffered some injuries. Fortunately the explosion was a minor one, which accounted for the minor injuries suffered by the two firefighters. The third man who escaped unhurt was leading the group into the building...

According to what is known, the firefighter leading the way should have been able to prevent this accident. He has had enough training and experience to identify this type of danger and protect his life and his peers. It seems that he chose to ignore warning signs and your specific instructions regarding this type of situation. It is known also that this firefighter has ignored your instructions in two previous occasions, but without major consequences.

You are going to report this accident to your boss even though it **will have a negative** effect on your own image as an effective captain. There **will be a negative** effect on your own performance evaluation or chances for future promotions. At the time of the accident, no member of any other unit or company was close enough as to become aware of what has happened.

APPENDIX D (Continued)

**Scenario #4
(Internal Attribution-High Impact-High Visibility)**

The following account describes a situation in which your company was involved. As you read it, please keep in mind that the firefighters described here are members of your unit.

Your battalion chief had just assigned your company to begin an interior attack in a three-story building fire, with ladder companies immediately committed to search and coordinated venting operations. Other engine companies had been assigned to place water between the fire and the most severe exposure and to keep the fire from extending to uninvolved portions of the building. Heavy smoke was pushing from around first-floor windows and doors. Despite the heavy smoke in this part of the building, no fire was visible from outside. After receiving your instructions, three firefighters from your company were advancing a hose-line via the rear entrance when a backdraft occurred. One firefighter was able to jump back and away from the heat and flames. He assisted the other two who suffered some injuries. Fortunately the explosion was a minor one, which accounted for the minor injuries suffered by the two firefighters. The third man who escaped unhurt was leading the group into the building...

According to what is known, the firefighter leading the way should have been able to prevent this accident. He has had enough training and experience to identify this type of danger and protect his life and his peers. It seems that he chose to ignore warning signs and your specific instructions regarding this type of situation. It is known also that this firefighter has ignored your instructions in two previous occasions, but without major consequences.

You are going to report this accident to your boss even though it **will have a negative** effect on your own image as an effective captain. There **will be a negative** effect on your own performance evaluation or chances for future promotions. At the time of the accident, firefighters and officers from two other companies were close enough and witnessed what has happened.

APPENDIX D (Continued)**Scenario #5
(External Attribution-Low Impact-Low Visibility)**

The following account describes a situation in which your company was involved. As you read it, please keep in mind that the firefighters described here are members of your unit.

Your battalion chief had just assigned your company to begin an interior attack in a three-story building fire, with ladder companies immediately committed to search and coordinated venting operations. Other engine companies had been assigned to place water between the fire and the most severe exposure and to keep the fire from extending to uninvolved portions of the building. Heavy smoke was pushing from around first-floor windows and doors. Despite the heavy smoke in this part of the building, no fire was visible from outside. After receiving your instructions, three firefighters from your company were advancing a hose-line via the rear entrance when a backdraft occurred. One firefighter was able to jump back and away from the heat and flames. He assisted the other two who suffered some injuries. Fortunately the explosion was a minor one, which accounted for the minor injuries suffered by the two firefighters. The third man who escaped unhurt was leading the group into the building...

According to what is known, the firefighter leading the way could have not been able to prevent this accident. He has received the same training as other members of the department. But because of the lack of practical experience in the recognition of this type of dangerous situations, he might have had problems recognizing the warning signs. It was known also that he was unable to follow your instructions regarding this specific situation. This task should have been assigned to a better prepared firefighter or he should have been closely supervised.

You are going to report this accident to your boss, but it **will not** have any impact on your supervisor's evaluation of your own performance. There **will not** be an impact on your image as an effective supervisor or on opportunities for future promotions. At the time of the accident, no member of any other unit or company was close enough as to become aware of what has happened.

APPENDIX D (Continued)**Scenario #6
(External Attribution-Low Impact-High Visibility)**

The following account describes a situation in which your company was involved. As you read it, please keep in mind that the firefighters described here are members of your unit.

Your battalion chief had just assigned your company to begin an interior attack in a three-story building fire, with ladder companies immediately committed to search and coordinated venting operations. Other engine companies had been assigned to place water between the fire and the most severe exposure and to keep the fire from extending to uninvolved portions of the building. Heavy smoke was pushing from around first-floor windows and doors. Despite the heavy smoke in this part of the building, no fire was visible from outside. After receiving your instructions, three firefighters from your company were advancing a hose-line via the rear entrance when a backdraft occurred. One firefighter was able to jump back and away from the heat and flames. He assisted the other two who suffered some injuries. Fortunately the explosion was a minor one, which accounted for the minor injuries suffered by the two firefighters. The third man who escaped unhurt was leading the group into the building...

According to what is known, the firefighter leading the way could have not been able to prevent this accident. He has received the same training as other members of the department. But because of the lack of practical experience in the recognition of this type of dangerous situations, he might have had problems recognizing the warning signs. It was known also that he was unable to follow your instructions regarding this specific situation. This task should have been assigned to a better prepared firefighter or he should have been closely supervised.

You are going to report this accident to your boss, but it **will not** have any impact on your supervisor's evaluation of your own performance. There **will not** be an impact on your image as an effective supervisor or on opportunities for future promotions. At the time of the accident, firefighters and officers from two other companies were close enough and witnessed what has happened.

APPENDIX D (Continued)**Scenario #7
(External Attribution-High Impact-Low Visibility)**

The following account describes a situation in which your company was involved. As you read it, please keep in mind that the firefighters described here are members of your unit.

Your battalion chief had just assigned your company to begin an interior attack in a three-story building fire, with ladder companies immediately committed to search and coordinated venting operations. Other engine companies had been assigned to place water between the fire and the most severe exposure and to keep the fire from extending to uninvolved portions of the building. Heavy smoke was pushing from around first-floor windows and doors. Despite the heavy smoke in this part of the building, no fire was visible from outside. After receiving your instructions, three firefighters from your company were advancing a hose-line via the rear entrance when a backdraft occurred. One firefighter was able to jump back and away from the heat and flames. He assisted the other two who suffered some injuries. Fortunately the explosion was a minor one, which accounted for the minor injuries suffered by the two firefighters. The third man who escaped unhurt was leading the group into the building...

According to what is known, the firefighter leading the way could have not been able to prevent this accident. He has received the same training as other members of the department. But because of the lack of practical experience in the recognition of this type of dangerous situations, he might have had problems recognizing the warning signs. It was known also that he was unable to follow your instructions regarding this specific situation. This task should have been assigned to a better prepared firefighter or he should have been closely supervised.

You are going to report this accident to your boss even though it **will have a negative** effect on your own image as an effective captain. There **will be a negative** effect on your own performance evaluation or chances for future promotions. At the time of the accident, no member of any other unit or company was close enough as to become aware of what has happened.

APPENDIX D (Continued)**Scenario #8
(External Attribution-High Impact-High Visibility)**

The following account describes a situation in which your company was involved. As you read it, please keep in mind that the firefighters described here are members of your unit.

Your battalion chief had just assigned your company to begin an interior attack in a three-story building fire, with ladder companies immediately committed to search and coordinated venting operations. Other engine companies had been assigned to place water between the fire and the most severe exposure and to keep the fire from extending to uninvolved portions of the building. Heavy smoke was pushing from around first-floor windows and doors. Despite the heavy smoke in this part of the building, no fire was visible from outside. After receiving your instructions, three firefighters from your company were advancing a hose-line via the rear entrance when a backdraft occurred. One firefighter was able to jump back and away from the heat and flames. He assisted the other two who suffered some injuries. Fortunately the explosion was a minor one, which accounted for the minor injuries suffered by the two firefighters. The third man who escaped unhurt was leading the group into the building...

According to what is known, the firefighter leading the way could have not been able to prevent this accident. He has received the same training as other members of the department. But because of the lack of practical experience in the recognition of this type of dangerous situations, he might have had problems recognizing the warning signs. It was known also that he was unable to follow your instructions regarding this specific situation. This task should have been assigned to a better prepared firefighter or he should have been closely supervised.

You are going to report this accident to your boss even though it **will have a negative** effect on your own image as an effective captain. There **will be a negative** effect on your own performance evaluation or chances for future promotions. At the time of the accident, firefighters and officers from two other companies were close enough and witnessed what has happened.

APPENDIX E

**PRINCIPLE COMPONENTS LOADING FOR 26 PERCEIVED RESPONSIBILITY
IN SUPERVISION ITEMS
(With Full Description of the Items)**

	Factor	Factor	Factor	Factor	Factor	Factor	Factor	Factor	Factor	(See
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Note	Below)
01. I am responsible for the performance of my work unit.	.59									
02. The performance of my unit affects my chances for promotion.				.75						
03. I have to make sure that the tools and equipment used in my unit are always in optimal operating condition.			.50							
04. I have to maintain the right match between subordinate's qualifications and the requirements of the task.										
05. It is my responsibility to maintain a high level of motivation among my subordinates.						.74				
06. I am responsible for the accurate evaluation of my subordinates' performance.		.79								
07. My boss considers that the performance of my unit is my responsibility.		.64								
08. It is my responsibility to make sure that my subordinates know what their jobs are and know how to do them well.		.56								
09. It is my responsibility to make sure that my subordinates have the equipment and tools required to do a good job.			.65							
10. To the extent that I effectively motivate my subordinates, the performance of my unit will be improved.								.78		

APPENDIX E (Continued)

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8
11. A supervisor's effective coordination of tasks and subordinates' work is an important determinant of effective unit performance.								
12. It is my responsibility to know my subordinates' jobs.		.63						
13. When my unit is effective, such performance increases my chances for promotion.				.84				
14. As a supervisor, I need to make sure that my subordinates make appropriate use of the tools and equipment assigned to them.		.76						
15. I have to make accurate assessments of my subordinates' performance.		.58						
16. To the extent that I effectively coordinate the work of the employees and tasks in my unit, the performance of my unit will be effective.		.54						
17. My subordinates' performance has no effect on my own performance rating.						.74		
18. As a supervisor, I have to be successful in getting people to work together.								
19. I have to report my subordinates' performance to my superiors.							.85	
20. It is my responsibility to coordinate tasks and individuals to assure effective unit performance.					.50			
21. To be an effective supervisor, I need to have a clear understanding of my subordinates' jobs.		.68						

APPENDIX E (Continued)

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7	Factor 8
22. My career with the organization will be secure as long as my boss believes that my group is performing well.								.59
23. I have to make sure that my subordinates can perform the tasks assigned to them.		.51						
24. I have to provide subordinates with performance feedback.						.71		
25. My image as an effective supervisor will depend on how well my subordinates do their jobs.				.66				
26. It is my responsibility to make sure that my subordinates have the skills and abilities required for task performance.					.53			

Note:

- Factor 1: Internal responsibility for group performance (INTPERF).
 Factor 2: External responsibility for group performance (EXTPERF).
 Factor 3: Responsibility for subordinates' skills, abilities, and tools (SAT).
 Factor 4: Impact on supervisor of subordinate behavior (IMPACT).
 Factor 5: Responsibility for guidance, coordination, and feedback (FEEDBACK).
 Factor 6: Responsibility for the motivation of subordinates (MOTIVATE).
 Factor 7: Impact on supervisor's own performance rating (OWNPERF).
 Factor 8: Responsibility for reporting subordinate's performance (TELL).

APPENDIX E (Continued)

**PRINCIPLE COMPONENT LOADINGS FOR 19 ITEMS POTENTIALLY TAPPING
DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND SERVING AS MANIPULATION CHECKS
(With Full Description of the Items)**

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	(See note below)
01. This subordinate's poor performance could have been due to the wrong assignment of the task to the individual.				.80		
02. This employee's poor performance was very obvious to other people in the organization.			.68			
03. This subordinate's poor performance negatively affects the performance of my whole unit.			.65			
04. I believe that this employee's poor performance was caused by reasons for which he or she is not responsible.						
05. This subordinate's poor performance was witnessed by others in the organization.			.62			
06. My response to this subordinate's poor performance would be extremely severe.	.85					
07. I feel that this employee's performance problems have been caused by the subordinate's personal problems.			(-) .53			
08. Many people in the organization became aware of this employee's poor performance.						
09. My boss might consider this subordinate's poor performance to be the result of a mismatch between the individual and the task.				.81		

APPENDIX E (Continued)

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
10. This subordinate's poor performance has a negative impact on my own performance ratings.		.83			
11. This subordinate's poor performance could have been the result of him or her being poorly trained.					
12. This employee's performance problems can make me look like an ineffective supervisor.		.77			
13. This incident of poor performance could have been the result of the employee's lack of ability or effort to do the job.				.77	
14. This subordinate's behavior should be dealt with an extremely severe action.	.90				
15. My career with the organization could have been negatively affected by this subordinate's poor performance.		.76			
16. As a supervisor, I could have prevented this employee's performance problem.				.63	
D1. Please rank the response you indicated in the previous section by placing a check mark below the statement that best describes how severe this response is.		.78			
E1. To what extent do you agree that the employee's performance problem has had a negative impact on your career and image?		.63			
E2. To what extent do you believe that this subordinate's poor performance can negatively affect the overall performance of your unit?				.68	

APPENDIX E (Continued)**Note:**

Factor 1: Severity of the supervisor's response (RESPONSE) - dependent variable.

Factor 2: Impact on supervisor (FIMPACT) - Manipulation check/Independent variable.

Factor 3: Visibility of subordinate's behavior (VISIBIL) - Manipulation check/Independent var.

Factor 4: External/Internal attribution or shift of responsibility (EXTINT)

Manipulation check/Independent variable.

Factor 5: Responsibility for problem prevention (PREVENT).

VITA

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Candidate for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

THESIS: SUPERVISORS' RESPONSES TO EMPLOYEES' POOR PERFORMANCE: THE ROLE
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