PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS: UNDERSTANDING WHAT MAKES FEEDBACK

MEANINGFUL FOR THE RECIPIENT

Michael Kushner

ABSTRACT

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The study was designed to explore how nurses at a non-union pediatric hospital make meaning of the feedback they receive during their career from their annual appraisals. The qualitative study design used a survey, and from the survey participants, 21 interviewees were selected. Based on the survey responses and categorizing those responses by standard deviation from the mean, three groups were determined.

It was expected that there would be differentiated patterns by group. The study identified seven findings that were consistent with the literature. However, there was one surprise. The recipients' appraisal rating/score on their most recent appraisal was expected to impact their view of their experience, but this was not found to be the case. In fact, those with the lowest survey response scores (least favorable sentiment about appraisals) had the same or higher appraisal ratings when compared to the other two survey groups. With few exceptions, the interviewees expressed a wide variety of responses to interview questions, which is a sign of the dysfunction and lack of alignment of the appraisal tool, its administration, and recipients' expectations. As a result, there was a lack of a common experience among the interviewees in total as well as within each of the three groups.

What was confirmed was that appraisal recipients placed different priorities on multiple variables (experiential learning, coaching, process, power, bias, motivation, learning

environment, feedback) that can interfere with the feedback between the leader and the recipient. This can limit the effectiveness of the appraisal and the meaning the recipients make from the feedback. The Introduction chapter highlighted that many employers are struggling with appraisals, as evidenced by the number of major companies over the last few years looking for new ways of providing feedback and casting the traditional appraisal aside. Appraisals are widely used, and much of the research has been completed by researchers in Psychology or Human Resources. Most often, the recipient has not been the focus of the research, or an Adult Learning lens was used.

Understanding how an appraisal recipient makes meaning is complex and likely beyond the training and ability of most leaders. As a result, a principal recommendation of this study is that an intermediary who is a highly trained coach be integrated into the appraisal process for all employees. This would allow a personalized approach to be developed for each employee within a standard process.

Table of Contents

Chapter 5 (continued)

List of Tables

List of Figures

Acknowledgments

I must first express my gratitude to the survey participants and particularly the interviewees who all gave of their time and thoughts so freely. Without them, I would not have a study.

I would also like to express my thanks to the research institution that provided me support and advice throughout this process. My boss, Dr. Narendra Kini, deserves a special call-out as he gave me the time and encouragement to pursue one of my life dreams, my doctorate.

I feel fortunate to be able to pursue my passion about this topic and learn so much in the process about myself.

Dr. Lyle Yorks, my advisor—thank you for many things, including your patience as I worked my way through the process. I enjoyed all the classes you taught in the Adult Learning curriculum. You always challenged me, and I appreciated your feedback. Your guidance during my dissertation was invaluable and always seemed to come when I was struggling with the next step.

Dr. Jeanne Bitterman, my second reader—thank you for your passion and commitment to the students and the Adult Learning program. You always tried to bring out the best in us all.

Dr. Laura Garrido from Nova University in South Florida—for providing me structure and guiding me on my coding efforts.

Most of all, I want to thank my family: my wife, Ellen, and my three daughters, Stefanie, Alissa, and Emily. You were always my inspiration. There were times I could not see how I could complete my class assignments or my dissertation with all my other priorities, but you all gently pushed me and reminded me of my goal. I am now here and so thankful to all. Ellen, you were supportive of me and my goal, and I will be forever thankful for and appreciative of your

editing skills and patience. To my daughters, I hope I am setting an example. Always have

dreams and go after them. They can be achieved and add to your life's joy.

M. K.

Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

Mention the words "performance appraisal" and responses are likely to range from a flicker of anxiety to full-out dread. Performance appraisals have been and continue to be at the center of much debate as organizations consider the effort they expend to complete appraisals versus the value they receive from them. Although there has been a great deal of research on this topic over the last 50 years, this study examined appraisals using an adult learning lens and focused on how the recipient understands the feedback he/she obtains from the process.

Chapter 1 provides the background for this study on how the recipients of a performance appraisal understand and process the feedback they receive. Specifically, this study explored how different groups of nurses in a healthcare organization make meaning of the feedback they receive during the performance appraisal process. The prevalence of appraisals and their history are reviewed, in addition to where the focus of past research has been. This leads to a discussion of the problem statement and purpose of the study, including the research questions, design, assumptions, and information about the researcher. The final section examines the rationale and significance of the study.

According to a 2019 Gallup study published by Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) (O'Connell, 2020), only 10% of U.S. workers felt engaged after receiving negative appraisal feedback; another 30% were so put off that they began exploring new job opportunities. Moreover, research completed by Workhuman Analytics and Research (2019), also published in Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) (O'Connell, 2020), stated that 55% of workers did not believe their appraisal improved performance. With these numbers, it is no wonder appraisals are in the news and businesses are looking for improved tools.

Performance appraisals are an entrenched management practice. In the last part of the 20th century, surveys indicated that between 74% and 89% of businesses in the United States used a formal performance appraisal instrument (Coens & Jenkins, 2002; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Prevalence is similar in governmental entities, and larger organizations are more likely to have appraisal systems than smaller ones—95% and 84%, respectively (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Soltani (2005) cited a 1999 survey commissioned by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that showed appraisals were completed by almost 100% of organizations. According to Longenecker et al. (2014), over 90% of U.S. organizations engaged in some form of performance appraisal process. Although an appraisal is seemingly universal, however, it is not the case within management ranks. The leader's level within the organization impacts whether they are appraised. The higher a manager is in the organization, the less likely the leader will be appraised: low-level leaders (74%), middle-level leaders (71%), and senior leaders (55%) (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

DeNisi and Murphy (2017) reviewed 100 years of research on performance appraisals and organized the research into eight broad categories which are summarized below:

1. Scale formats – research on graphic scales, ranking methods, weighted checklists, critical incident checklists, forced choice scales, behavioral anchor rating scales

2. Criteria for evaluating ratings – reliability, validity, and accuracy (rater bias such as halo, leniency/severity, central tendency, etc.);

3. Training – includes methods of instruction;

4. Reactions to appraisals – includes perceptions of fairness;

5. Purpose of ratings – explores the multiple purposes of appraisals which can lead to conflicting goals;

2

6. Rating sources – includes multiple raters (peers, subordinates, and the correlation of these ratings);

7. Demographic differences in ratings – considers race, gender, age, among others;

8. Cognitive processes – examine how raters acquire, organize, recall, and integrate information into the appraisal (p. 422)

Iqbal (2012) completed a literature review that examined performance appraisal studies completed over the last 50 years to organize an inventory of their purposes and uses. The author used four categories to organize the literature: administrative, developmental, strategic, and role definition. The most researched area was administrative (improve employee performance, compliance with standards, support HR activities, augment selection, succession planning, employee relations issues, compensation issues) with 59.2% of the literature sample, followed by the developmental (coaching) purposes with 26.7% of the sample. Development tools included self-appraisal, 360s, and so on. Strategic (links employee goals to organizational goals and facilitates organizational planning) was 11.0% of the literature. Finally, the smallest segment of the literature was role definition (clarifies the structure of the position-based appraisal by helping the ratee understand his/her strengths and weaknesses related to the functions of the job) at 3.1%. It is clear that appraisals are a standard business practice, and very little research has focused on employee meaning making from the process. The closest the research has come is the small percentage highlighted above, which focused on the recipient's perception of fairness or how the ratee's strengths and weaknesses linked to the function of the job.

Although the system Iqbal used to organize/categorize the research studies differed from that of DeNisi and Murphy, both studies concluded that what was missing was how to measure the effectiveness of the appraisal, which was directly linked to the multiple and, at times,

conflicting purposes an appraisal serves. DeNisi and Murphy added that little is known on how individual performance improvements through appraisals connect and lead to organizational performance improvement. DeNisi and Murphy suggested it has been assumed that if all individuals improve their performance, then the organizational performance would improve. However, there is no evidence for this.

As both Iqbal and DeNisi and Murphy pointed out above, certain inherent conflicts develop when there are multiple purposes for an appraisal. Table 1 summarizes a list of generally accepted purposes and uses of a performance appraisal, as identified by Coens and Jenkins (2002), that rings true for Human Resources (HR) practitioners.

Table 1

Purposes and Uses of Performance Appraisals

Give feedback	Set and measure goals
Promotion screening/decisions	Motivate/provide recognition
Get performance improvement	Downsize/layoff decisions
Coaching and mentoring	Award pay increases
Counsel problem performers	Measure individual performance
Development/training needs	Legal documentation
Career advancement	

Adapted from Coens and Jenkins (2002), p. 15

The multiple functions of appraisals are also reflected in other research, in which Boachie-Mensah and Seidu (2012) summarized the work of Cleveland et al. (1989) that stated there are four primary uses for the appraisal: between person (consisting of administrative decisions such as salary increases, promotions, retention, termination, layoffs, etc.); within

person (identified as feedback on performance strengths and weaknesses to be used for training, determination of future assignments, etc.); system maintenance (related to organizational goals); and documentation (meeting legal requirements to support HR decisions and validate appraisal tool). As appraisals have evolved to include multiple purposes, they have limited the instrument's ability to focus much attention on any one element, such as delivering feedback to the recipient in a meaningful way.

The Research Problem

Well-known management guru William Deming (1986), in his 14 points of management, specifically advocated abolishing the appraisal. According to Point 12, "Remove barriers that rob people in management and engineering of their right to pride or workmanship. This means inter alia, abolishment of the annual or merit rating and of management by objective" (p. 24). In his article, Stepanovich (2013) also quoted Deming to say the following about performance appraisals:

> It nourishes short-term performance, annihilates long-term planning, builds fear, demolishes team-work, nourishes rivalry and politics. It leaves people bitter, crushed, bruised, battered, desolate, despondent, dejected, feeling inferior, some even depressed, unfit for work for weeks after receipt of rating, unable to comprehend why they are inferior. (Deming, 1982/2000, p. 102)

Soltani (2005) quoted research completed by Schellhardt in 1996, who analyzed previous research findings on performance appraisals systems and found most leaders who gave them rated the process a resounding failure. Deming (1986) also argued to shift the appraisal focus to more being team-based. He stated that over 85% of variance in an organization's performance is due to system factors, and only 15% of performance variance is due to person factors. He used this argument for the abolishment of appraisals.

Longenecker et al. (2014) looked at 183 organizations of varying sizes and industries to better understand the current state of appraisals. The study revealed that current appraisal systems in the participant organizations had been in place for an average of 5.5 years, and only 30% were reviewing their processes. This likely reflected that appraisal systems are slow to change as a relatively small percentage of organizations consider modifications. Alternatively, many employers perhaps do not see appraisal systems as broken and do not focus on this important process. This indicates that leaders are slow to respond to changes identified in the popular management literature. What the Longenecker et al. found was that 76% of the survey participants had multiple articulated goals for the appraisal. This led to a potential Achilles' heel of appraisals in that they may attempt to accomplish too much with a single instrument and therefore dilute one of the primary purposes of providing feedback and improving performance.

Other key trends Longenecker et al. found in almost all organizations was that the supervisor was the driver for the appraisal and 72.1% conducted an appraisal annually. There is a contradiction when it comes to prevalence of best practices that are integrated into the corporate appraisal process. An example of one best practice is to require at least one person in addition to the rater to review the evaluation, and 92.3% of organizations have integrated this into their processes. In contrast, another best practice—including self-appraisals—was found by the authors to be only integrated at the 20.2% level. This showed that some of the best practices identified in the literature over the last 30 years have been slow to enter the business world, particularly self-appraisals which focuses on the recipient's perception of performance. The fact that certain best practice adoption is low, while 93.9% of organizations use some form of electronic or web-based platform to administer appraisals, signals that priorities are on administrative efficiency and not necessarily content.

The appraisal process raises anxiety levels for both the leader and the ratee. A study completed by the United Kingdom's Institute of Personnel and Development stated that one in eight managers would prefer a visit to the dentist over conducting a performance appraisal (Armstrong, 2010). Yet other research from Chen and DiTomaso (1996) cited a survey by the American Productivity and Quality Center indicating that only 62% of surveyed employees thought their appraisal was fair.

Coens and Jenkins (2002) summarized surveys about the effectiveness of the appraisal in the following paragraph:

> Academia, industry and professional associations have intensely scrutinized appraisals for more than 50 years now, producing hundreds of studies, surveys, and articles. A survey by the Society for Human Resources Management found that more than 90% of appraisal systems were not successful. Another survey by Development Dimensions Incorporated, a leading H.R. consulting firm, found that most employers expressed "overwhelming" dissatisfaction with their performance management systems. In an Industry Week survey, only 18% of respondents said their performance reviews were effective, with 48% of the respondents calling them "second-guessing sessions." A 1997 survey by Aon consulting and the Society for Human Resource Management found a mere 5% of H.R. professionals polled reported that they were "very satisfied" with their performance management systems. (p. 18)

An article by Julie Cook Ramirez (2013) entitled "Rethinking the Review" described Adobe Systems' journey to eliminate its traditional appraisal system and to replace it in 2012 with a system they called "The Check-In." There is no prescribed timing and no forms to complete and submit to HR. Managers decide how often and what type of format they use to set goals and provide feedback. The objective is to focus on goals, career development, and strategies for improvement. Adobe shifted from a system where they compared employees to their peers to what an employee actually achieved. In the article, several other quoted sources/surveys indicated a high level of disillusionment by HR practitioners with their current performance management systems. The current interest in looking for new ways to manage

feedback may be fueled by a book by Culbert and Rout (2010) entitled *Get Rid of the Performance Review! How Companies Can Stop Intimidating, Start Managing—and Focus on What Really Matters*. The book suggested that current reviews are destructive and counterproductive. Culbert and Rout maintained that the process discourages employees from being honest and limits the value of any feedback discussions. Edward Lawler (2003), another advocate for ongoing feedback, guidance, goal setting, and development discussions, argued that when these functions are aligned with the reward system of the appraisal, the performance management system is more effective. Employee dissatisfaction with current appraisal systems is compounded by more millennials in the workforce, who desire more regular feedback. Techniques like skip-level meetings are testing the effectiveness of more open appraisal systems. The buzzword and objective of these open systems are "real-time feedback."

Cappelli and Tavis (2016) highlighted the recent dissatisfaction with appraisals among major global organizations that have dramatically changed their processes or eliminated them entirely. Among the organizations leading the way to reinvent the appraisal are: Colorcon, Adobe, Juniper Systems, Dell, Microsoft, IBM, Deloitte, Accenture, PwC, Gap, Lear, OppenheimerFunds, Kelly Services, and General Electric. Buckingham and Goodall (2015), in exploring Deloitte's concerns with appraisals, highlighted a recent public survey the firm conducted that concluded that 58% of the 578 executives questioned believed that neither engagement nor high performance was driven by their current performance appraisal system. The survey participants wanted something nimbler, real-time, and more personalized. After Deloitte compiled the amount of time it spent each year with completing appraisals for its 65,000 employees, it concluded the almost 2 million hours (completing forms, soliciting feedback, and holding employee meetings) were not providing much return on investment to the firm.

Deloitte's new system has cast aside traditional goal setting, annual review, 360 feedback, and so on, and replaced it with four key rating areas that team leaders use to evaluate an individual's performance (ratings are completed at the end of a project or quarterly, whichever comes soonest).

1. Given what I know of this person's performance, and if it were my money, I would award this person the highest possible compensation increase and bonus (measured on a five-point scale).
2. Given what I know of this person's performance, I would always want him or her on my team (measured on a five-point scale).
3. This person is at risk for low performance (measured by a yes or no response).
4. This person is ready for promotion today (measured by a yes or no response). (p. 46)

What Deloitte did was to clarify the purpose of its evaluation system as being consistent with the points made by Iqbal and DeNisi and Murphy above. Specifically, it was made more efficient (only four rating areas) and more action-oriented and was less about assessing skills.

Baldassarre and Finken (2015) shared that other major companies such as General Electric (GE) are moving in the same direction by replacing the once-a-year appraisal with regular informal touchpoints. GE has found this helps with alignment and setting priorities, along with improved opportunities for professional development. The division experimenting with this new process has seen a dramatic increase in profitability.

Cappelli and Tavis (2016) asserted that the following three reasons are driving companies to reconsider the value of their current appraisals: (a) development is becoming more important due to a tightening labor market; (b) faster-paced work environments are needed where business cycles are shorter and agility is required; and (c) team-based work should increase as opposed to individual accountabilities. As a result, we are seeing an emerging trend, pointed out by Cappelli and Tavis (2016) who quoted studies from the Corporate Executive Board (CEB) which estimated that 12% of U.S. companies are dropping annual reviews; Willis Towers Watson

estimated 8%. As business has evolved, questions have arisen if the instrument has kept pace with business developments. New ways of looking at appraisals are emerging: Huffington (2020) described that the feedback is not enough, but how one delivers it is very important. A research report on peak performance (*Peak performance*, 2019) explored the link between employee engagement and performance management. Finally, an Advisory Board Report (*Shift from annual performance management,* 2017) noted that one best practice is continuous feedback and suggested moving away from the annual performance management system.

Cappelli and Tavis (2016) shared that companies like Intel, Medtronic, PwC, and Deloitte that were on the forefront of eliminating appraisals have backpedaled to providing appraisal scores or are seeking a middle ground between traditional appraisal systems with scoring and no scorings. Even companies who have made changes to their appraisal systems have not been satisfied with the results and continue to experiment.

As Cappelli and Tavis (2016) reflected above and Fletcher (2001) also questioned: Has the appraisal process kept pace with business developments such as flatter organizations, globalization, virtual offices, quality initiatives, more team-based work, and the like? With this background of flux and uncertainty for appraisals, the stage is set for a new fresh perspective for this nearly universal management practice. After the researcher carefully looked for a study that described the primary disciplines from which appraisal research has come using the basic search term "performance appraisal research comes from what fields" (and variations of this), none were found. However, from the large number of research studies read, most appeared to be from psychology, management, and the human resource fields. This opened the opportunity to examine appraisals from an adult learning lens, which has generally not been represented in the research. This is odd since an appraisal at its core should be a learning tool. Adult learning, as

discussed in Merriam et al. (2007), notes that adult learning is personal and does not occur in a vacuum. As a result, motivation, opportunity, and context all play a vital role in what an adult learns. This is contrasted with Human Resources, which focuses on institutional processes to drive business results.

A major problem for appraisals is that they have grown to include too many purposes, as highlighted above in Table 1 (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012; Longenecker et al., 2014). To be effective, the researcher believes appraisals should be limited to a primary purpose of providing feedback. The other challenge is how to create an institutional system that allows for the personalization of feedback in today's diverse and often global workforce with as many as five generations (Traditionalist, Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z) in the workforce. The recipient of the feedback is at the center of this process and any system should understand and focus on the individual needs of the appraisal receiver, not the giver. Therefore, understanding how the recipients of the appraisal understand, make meaning of, and convert the feedback into action is of paramount importance and is the focus of this research.

Although many studies have been completed on performance appraisals, they have mostly used a single theoretical lens to explain observed behaviors. In today's more complex system-driven world, multiple disciplines are needed to explain phenomena and develop predictive models. As a result, adding the adult learning lens to other disciplines used in appraisal research provides a more holistic approach to understanding this universal process and helps to begin filling in any existing gaps in the literature.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how different groups of nurses in a healthcare organization made meaning of the feedback they received during performance appraisals over

their career. The seven findings confirmed what is known in the literature and begin to provide a gateway to understanding how to impact future individual and overall organizational performance. The research questions for this study are:

1. How do past experiences with the appraisal process impact the recipient's ability to actively participate and engage in the process?

2. What are the differences in the feedback received by employees rating the quality of feedback on a performance appraisal survey high versus those rating it low?

3. What factors help to create an ideal environment for the recipient to receive constructive feedback?

4. Under what kind of circumstances/conditions is the recipient more likely to convert the feedback into possible action/changes in behavior?

Study Design

The study design was qualitative and started with a nursing survey on the quality of the performance appraisal feedback received during the nurses' careers. Nurses comprised about 25% of the overall employee population at the research institution. The survey respondents were divided into three groups based on their responses. The mean for the survey responses was calculated and a group one standard deviation above and below the mean, as well as a group within one standard deviation of the mean, was determined. Twenty-one survey respondents were randomly selected for interviews (7 from each group). This study was conducted at a South Florida pediatric hospital.

The researcher expected to see differences in the way the groups of nurses understood and made meaning of the feedback received, but this did not occur. Experiences were varied by person and were not consistent within their specific survey group. Some findings were nearly

universal among the interviewees. Despite the hospital having a standardized appraisal process, there was variability in the interviewees' experiences. However, it is important to point out that much of healthcare is not-for-profit, as is the research institution, and some of the findings may not be generalizable to other organizations. Furthermore, the research institution is a pediatric-only hospital, and when adding in the uniqueness of the nursing profession, any finding should be carefully reviewed for applicability to corporate workforces.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Many employers are struggling with appraisals, as evidenced by the number of major companies in the news as of late which are casting them aside or seeking better alternatives. It is clear that the existing process, a nearly universal practice for employers, is not providing the desired outcomes and is evolving as quickly as organizations are changing. For example, a newer process will be needed that is more fluid and allows input from multiple sources due to flatter structures that support more team-based work. Adding to the complexity of the environment is the multicultural and multigenerational nature of the workforce, making for a perfect storm with which the current state of appraisals is not equipped to deal. Past research has focused on many areas, but little has turned its attention to the perceptions of the receiver or considered the receiver as an adult learner. We are at a critical crossroads for performance appraisals. If they are to continue, performance appraisals will need to evolve and limit the purposes of appraisal to a few key functions, such as delivering effective feedback through a standardized process allowing for personalization for the individual. Knowledge of how to consider the recipient's perspective, meaning making, and emotional reaction to appraisals may open the door to additional research and valuable reforms.

Focusing on the recipient will not negate the reality that the appraisal function is part of a complex system influenced by process, power dynamics, bias, motivation, context or environment, past experiences, supervisor-employee relationship, trust, and a host of other very important factors. But as many organizations have placed their customers at the center of their strategies, so too should the appraisal process place the appraisal recipient in the center of this process. With that understanding, organizations can design appraisal strategies which help the employee better hear, accept, and actualize the feedback. This can lead to improved morale, engagement, and organizational performance.

The Researcher's Assumptions

The researcher has been a Human Resource Practitioner for more than 30 years and held several key assumptions when approaching this study.

Assumption #1

The performance appraisal process is generally ineffective at delivering meaningful feedback, as evidenced by how seldom the researcher has seen many changes in employee behavior or performance improvements/changes after an appraisal.

Assumption #2

Employees come to work wanting to do a good job each day and be appreciated. They are eager to receive feedback.

Assumption #3

Leaders are generally poorly prepared to provide meaningful feedback and often do not see appraisals as a priority. In addition, many leaders find the process uncomfortable and, as a result, only put minimum effort required into the process.

Assumption #4

The organization often provides lip service about the importance of the process. Often, leaders get poor, if any, training and have little or no accountability for the quality of the process. Typically, they are only measured on whether appraisals have been completed or not. If an employer solicits feedback on how to improve the process, it is usually asked of the leaders, not non-management employees. As a point of information, the researcher several years ago implemented a feedback survey similar to the one use in this study in an attempt to address this problem. It confirmed who the poorer leaders were in providing feedback.

Assumption #5

The researcher assumed that employees would freely and readily agree to share their honest feedback about the performance appraisal process at the researcher's institution, despite knowing the researcher is a former senior executive. This was based on the pilot results.

Assumption #6

Not all best practice steps will be followed by organizations completing performance appraisals because they require additional time in an ever more demanding workday. Also, in flatter organizations, the next level leader may not know the employee being evaluated and may not add any value to the process. In Chapter 2, Figure 2 describes performance appraisal best practice. Based on experience, the researcher feels that the steps least likely to be completed are: self-appraisal by the rater on his/her effectiveness in providing feedback during the performance cycle, the rater's supervisor reviewing the appraisal before it is shared with employee, the rater's draft appraisal and the employee's self-appraisal being shared with each other in advance of the formal appraisal session, communicating pay adjustment in a separate meeting, and, finally, having a formal grievance procedure to resolve appraisal issues. Many employers may have a

grievance process in place, but it was likely not established with the appraisal in mind. Few times is the primary grievance issue presented through such a review process solely based on appraisal issues.

Assumption #7

The appraisal rating/score would influence the recipient's perception of the process.

The Researcher

As previously stated, the researcher has been an HR professional for more than 30 years; he has been at the vice president level for nearly 20 years. The researcher left his senior vice president role at the Hospital in 2019 and conducted the research in 2020. While at the Hospital, the researcher's responsibility had grown beyond HR: He had several hundred employees reporting to him in multiple functional areas that included: a clinical department, marketing, business office operations, volunteer services, patient satisfaction, physician outreach, among others. He has a B.S. from SUNY Binghamton, an M.B.A. from Florida Atlantic University, and is a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University. The researcher was intrigued by the current research problem because he has worked with ineffective appraisal processes for years and wanted to learn how to apply his findings. to improve the appraisal process. He does not see appraisals going away. Rather, what he has seen is that many organizations are making significant changes to their feedback processes to meet the demand of today's business environment.

Definitions

Performance Appraisal/Performance Review/Annual Review/Performance Evaluation/Annual Evaluation or Review – terms that are all used interchangeably in this study to describe the process of evaluating or judging the way in which an employee is

functioning or performing against standards or targets established at work over a specified time period.

Performance Recipient or Ratee – the individual receiving the performance evaluation from a leader. The recipient can also be a leader, but in this study only non-management employees as ratees will be considered.

Performance Appraisal Rating – score received by the appraisal recipient for a given performance year.

Rater – the person/leader providing the formal, often written feedback to the ratee via the defined organizational process, which is generally completed once per year.

Feedback – information provided to an employee on his/her performance over a designated period of time from his/her leader. Typically, the feedback is documented and shared on an employer-developed standard template that all leaders use in a particular organization.

Bias – a set of preconceived ideas or judgments about another. It can be conscious or unconscious and can inhibit a leader's ability to evaluate an employee's performance/ contribution to the organization fairly.

Nurse – any employee at the study site who holds a nursing license from the State of Florida and is required, as specified in the job description, to use his/her licensed skills acquired through education, training, and experience to perform his/her daily job duties.

Chapter 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 1 identified the purpose of this study, which was to explore how different groups of nurses in a healthcare organization made meaning of the feedback they received during the performance appraisal process. To create a foundation of prevalent practices and theories that supported this study, the researcher reviewed the available literature on the three major topics of this study: Performance Appraisal, Adult Learning, and Motivation.

Topic 1 reviews the history of appraisals to gain an appreciation of how this prevalent practice has evolved to its current status, and why there is controversy and doubt about the future of performance appraisals, as highlighted in Chapter 1. Through the literature, one can see how studies have influenced current best practices. Inherent in the appraisal process is the impact of the power dynamic—as well as bias—between a leader and an employee, and both were explored. Topic 2 examines the multiple streams of adult learning theories in an attempt to understand the complexity of this process; included is an examination of experiential learning, feedback, coaching, and the learning environment. Topic 3 comes from the field of Psychology and examines the impact of both how feedback is delivered and its perceived fairness on the employee's motivation to learn and perform.

The researcher explored each topic using Internet search engines such as Google, Google Scholar, ProQuest, TC Super Search, Teachers College's Digital Dissertations, and Teachers College and Columbia University Library websites. The material reviewed included books, journal articles, magazines, newspapers, and various consulting, legal, governmental, and professional association websites. Search terms used included: employee performance appraisal, employee evaluation, annual review, appraisal best practices, performance appraisal bias, performance appraisal, appraisal feedback, appraisal history, performance management,

performance appraisal process, appraisal purpose, feedback, experiential learning, motivation, learning environment, holding environment, and various combinations of the above terms. Information retrieved was reviewed for relevance to the study, and cited references became a rich source of additional information to examine.

Reviewing the literature allowed the researcher to integrate the different streams together into a conceptual framework which depicts the recipient of the appraisal in the center. The map is meant to convey a holistic, complex view of this institutional process and is depicted in Figure 7 in Chapter 2.

Topic 1: Performance Appraisal

History

The most obvious place to start a review of performance appraisals is by understanding their history and the current magnitude of their use. Evaluating employees has been occurring for hundreds of years, yet the absolute origin is unknown. However, there is evidence as early as the 3rd century that Sin Yu, an early Chinese philosopher, criticized the Wei dynasty about its rater bias because men were not being rated on their merits (Coens & Jenkins, 2002; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). There is also documentation that in 1648, the *Dublin* (Ireland) *Evening Post* rated legislators (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). The first industrial use of employee ratings was likely done by Robert Owens at his cotton mills in Scotland in the early 1800s (Coens & Jenkins, 2002; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Appraisals can be found in the U.S. military as far back as 1813, when General Cass rated his officers using such terms as "good-natured" or "knave despised by all" (Coens & Jenkins, 2002; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Later, during World War I, the military used trait leadership theory criteria to evaluate its officers (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). The efficiency rating system in the U.S. Federal Civil Service System can be traced back

to 1842 and was firmly entrenched by 1887 (Coens & Jenkins, 2002; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). In 1914, retailer Lord & Taylor began using appraisals (Coens & Jenkins, 2002). Driven mostly by industrial psychologists, appraisals continued to grow in popularity after World War I, with its main use for manufacturing employees (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

Cappelli and Tavis (2016) sketched out a timeline of some of the major drivers in the ever-evolving performance appraisal history. Clearly, for almost 100 years, "there has been a tug-of-war between accountability and employee development," as depicted in the timeline below.

> **World War II**
> The Army devised forced ranking to identify enlisted soldiers with potential to become officers.
> **1940s**
> About 60% of U.S. companies were using appraisals to document workers' performance and allocate rewards.
> **1950s**
> Social psychologist Douglas McGregor argued for engaging employees in assessments and goal setting.
> **1960s**
> Led by General Electric, companies began splitting appraisals into separate discussions about accountability and growth, to give development its due.
> **1970s**
> Inflation rates shot up, and organizations felt pressure to award merit pay more objectively, so accountability again became the priority in the appraisal process.
> **1980s**
> Jack Welch championed forced ranking at GE to reward top performers, accommodate those in the middle, and get rid of those at the bottom.
> **1990s**
> McKinsey's War for Talent study pointed to a shortage of capable executives and reinforced the emphasis on assessing and rewarding performance.
> **2000**
> Organizations got flatter, which dramatically increased the number of direct reports each manager had, making it harder to invest time in developing them. (p. 2)

Other studies suggested that 80% to 90% of organizations in the United States and United Kingdom use appraisals (Prowse & Prowse, 2009). The performance appraisal is one of the most widely used management tools, and there has been much focus and study on them in the last few

decades. In fact, if interest can be gauged by the number of books on this topic, the Library of

Congress has over 500 titles on performance appraisals, some of which date back to 1898.

However, half of these have been published since 1975 (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

Murphy and Cleveland (1995), Coens and Jenkins (2002), and Prowse and Prowse (2009)

all linked developments in performance appraisals to key business developments over the last

100 years. At the turn of the 20th century, Frederick Taylor's theory of scientific management

and Henry Ford's assembly line transformed industry thinking and created a need for new

management tools. The scientific approach looked at people who, as a part of a big

organizational machine, needed to be controlled. Jobs were reduced to simple repetitive tasks,

and appraisals filled a gap and became widespread by the middle of the 1900s. In the 1930s, the

psychological tradition began and focused on personality traits and performance. In the 1940s,

behavioral methods were developed and fueled by motivation theories. This approach resulted in

Behavioral Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) and similar scales like Behavioral Evaluation Scales

(BES) and Behavioral Observation Scales (BOS).

In the late 1950s, Management-by-Objective (MBO) became the new philosophy which

set targets for employees who were then evaluated based on the extent to which targets were met.

MBO introduced more objective measurable criteria instead of traits and behaviors. In the 1960s,

the self-appraisal was introduced. By the 1980s, the quality management movement had arrived

with the re-emergence of behavioral-based appraisals, along with new tools such as competency-

based (measures skills) appraisals. In addition, the focus shifted from appraisals to performance

management systems, and tools such as 360-degree feedback were added to minimize rater bias

that was now becoming well-documented by researchers. In the 1990s, the balanced scorecard

was working its way into appraisal systems (see Appendix A for the research institution's leader

balanced scorecard). Current trends included more team-based work, less top-down direction that aligns with flatter organizations, and Systems Theory gaining momentum.

To ensure a common understanding, it is necessary to define what is meant here by a performance appraisal and its characteristics. Coens and Jenkins (2002) offered this definition, which is listed in the definition section of Chapter 1 and is considered in this document whenever the term or related terms (performance appraisal, performance review, annual review, performance evaluation, annual evaluation, appraisal or review) are used. Coens and Jenkins defined the characteristics of appraisals as:

1. Employees' individual work performance, behaviors, or traits that are rated, judged and/or described by someone other than the employee
2. Such ratings, judgments and descriptions relate to a specific time period
3. The process is systemically applied to all employees
4. The process is usually mandatory as opposed to voluntary
5. The results of the ratings, judgments, or documentation are kept or preserved by someone in the organization. (pp. 13-14)

The literature and practice of performance appraisals have evolved over the last 50 years and specific focus areas have emerged, as outlined below:

- Early appraisals generally involved ranking and comparing individuals within the organization. These early appraisals have evolved to job-related performance assessments, with a shift in focus from personal traits to behaviors that are related to the employee's particular job (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012).

- Early appraisals relied on informal judgments on personality traits, which are difficult to measure and subject to bias and rating errors (Showkat, 2013). Much of the research to date has focused on the conceptual aspects of the appraisal system. The streams in the literature are: historical treatment and context, definition of job

22

performance, focus on rating scales, rating formats, rating methods, research on the sources of appraisal, and focus on rating errors (Showkat, 2013).

- Turgut and Mert (2014) summarized performance appraisal methods into two main categories: absolute or relative. The most prevalent of these methods are:

  o Comparison or sorting (rater ranks subordinates);

  o Forced distribution (assignment of subordinates to a limited number of categories such as high, medium, or low);

  o Graphic rating scale (widely used where subordinates are evaluated on defined factors using a scale such as very good, good, or weak);

  o Checklist (subordinates evaluated on a list of work-related statements);

  o Forced choice (rater selects from a list of predetermined phrases that best fit the employee);

  o Composition (rater writes a narrative describing performance);

  o Critical incidents (rater writes down the extreme positive and negative performance during the cycle);

  o 360-degree feedback (data are collected from leader, peers, subordinates, and customers);

  o Management by objective (ratee evaluated on predetermined objectives);

  o Assessment centers (ratees are evaluated by a third party through observation and supported by tests);

  o Team-based performance appraisal (ratees are evaluated as a member of a team).

The success of the performance appraisal system is dependent on selecting the alternative that best aligns with the organizational strategy and culture. Combining the right method with strong administration and training will maximize the efficiency of the process, as follows:

- Studies on ratee perceptions of the appraisal process revealed that employees do not perceive that pay is linked to the performance appraisal system in any clear, coherent way (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012), yet it is reported that 65% of non-management public employees and 69% of private non-management employees have their merit increases linked to their appraisal (Prowse & Prowse, 2009). Apparently, employees have little understanding of how the appraisal and merit increases are connected.

- Employee participation in the process is essential for work motivation and a sense fairness with the process (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012).

- Boachie-Mensah and Seidu (2012) suggested that effective managers recognize a performance appraisal system as a tool for managing subordinates rather than as a tool for measuring. Such managers use the performance appraisal to motivate, direct, and develop subordinates.

As many practitioners and researchers continue to explore and develop the instrument, research has evolved from focusing on the rating scales and rater error to more closely examining content (what is appraised) and the process of the appraisal (multi-raters, etc.). Content areas include contextual performance (traits that enhance organizational effectiveness such as cooperation, dedication, passion, etc.), goal setting (both learning and performance goals), and self-awareness that is related to emotional intelligence and gained through multi-rater feedback (Dobbins et al., 1993; Fletcher, 2001). There is a realization that how one gets a job

done is as important as what one accomplishes. Fletcher (2001) suggested that computerized performance appraisal systems have become commonplace, yet their impact is unknown. Certainly, these systems allow broad access to information and appraisal history and enable more input from multiple sources than in the past.

Dobbins et al. (1993) felt that the tool still remains mostly an assessment of the individual's contribution to the organization and often does not consider the situational factors that contributed to the performance level. Employee perceptions of fairness have been studied and resulted in insights into procedural (perceived fairness of rating process) and distributive justice (perceived fairness of the actual rating). Studies in areas like these have begun to move performance appraisal researchers to think about the meaning the recipient makes of the experience. Conventional wisdom has led to the long-standing belief that the employee performance follows the bell curve (a normal distribution or Gaussian curve) where performance clusters around the mean. This is the curve traditionally applied in schools. A recent study completed by O'Boyle and Aguinis (2012) suggested that the bell curve does not accurately describe employee performance in organizations, and a Paretian distribution (also known as a power-law distribution), which has an unstable mean and a greater number of extreme events, is more accurate. Figure 1 below is a picture of the two curves overlaid.

According to O'Boyle and Aguinis (2012), the power-law curve resembles a ski slope. There are a few star performers, a very large group of good performers, and very few poor performers. The overlap of the graphs shows that the typical or average performer in a power-law graph would fall below the mean of the bell curve. In fact, approximately 80% would fall below the mean of the curve, while 10% would be above average and 10% would be high performers. Hence, the classic 80/20 rule could apply here. The implications for performance

Figure 1

Normal Distribution Overlaying a Paretian Distribution

A Normal Distribution Overlaying a Paretian Distribution

Low Performer　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　High Performer
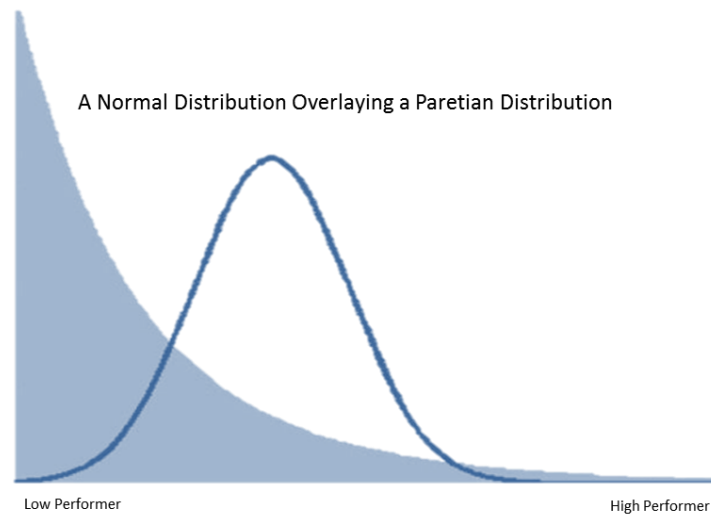
Source: O'Boyle & Aguinis (2012), p. 80

appraisals are huge. Feedback and reward systems have been built on improving the performance

of the majority of workers clustered around the mean, and a normal distribution assumes that

performance increases or decreases at a steady and predictable rate with each standard deviation.

Power-law contradicts this approach. What are the implications for employees if one believes

there is an incorrect philosophical foundation in place for modern-day appraisals?

In summary, performance appraisal history goes back for at least several hundred years

with significant attention paid to them from 1940 onward. Throughout this time period, the focus

has often shifted, driven often by business concerns. The current state of appraisals is a reflection

of the changes made over time; this is described in the next section.

Process

Understanding the best practices for a performance management system is important

because, by its very definition, many organizations' processes will not reflect best practices, and

this will likely impact the effectiveness of the appraisal and the meaning the participants attribute

to it. Sharon Armstrong's (2010) book *The Essential Performance Review Handbook* highlighted the current best practice in performance appraisals. A visual of the key steps in this linear interactive process is the most efficient way to describe it. Following the graphic in Figure 2 is a discussion of key points in the process and implications for completing them or not. The researcher developed this figure from Armstrong's description of best practices as well as firsthand knowledge of the process. Unfortunately, a search to determine the prevalence of the appraisal steps below was not found.

A key part of the appraisal process, which is often overlooked, is goal setting; this should occur at the beginning of the performance cycle. Without goals, it can be more difficult to evaluate performance at the end of the year. Schermerhorn et al. (2012) discussed the link of goal setting to performance appraisals. Without well-written goals, appraisal effectiveness can be limited because there is less to measure against stated objectives. The authors established the following goal-setting guidelines.

- Difficult goals are more likely to lead to higher performance than less difficult ones.

- Specific goals are more likely to lead to higher performance than no goals or vague ones.

- Feedback or knowledge of the results is likely to motivate people toward higher performance by encouraging the setting of higher performance goals.

- Goals are most likely to lead to higher performance when people have the ability and feeling of self-efficacy to accomplish them.

- Goals are most likely to motivate people toward higher performance when they are accepted and there is commitment to them.

Figure 2

Best Practices for Performance Appraisals

| Ongoing formal and informal feedback provided during the performance cycle as well as training on the process | → | At end of performance cycle (usually a year) process begins with rater completing a self-assessment on effectiveness of his/her feedback to the employee during the year | → | At end of performance cycle (usually a year) employee completes a self-appraisal | → | Rater completes a draft of appraisal | → |

| Rater's supervisor reviews draft appraisal | → | Employee's self-appraisal and rater's draft of appraisal are shared with each other sometimes in advance of any scheduled appraisal session | → | In-person appraisal session held where employee's self-appraisal and rater's evaluation reviewed and discussed. Any necessary adjustments are made | → | Goals for the upcoming year are reviewed and agreed to or this can be a separate process | → |

| Employee signs appraisal which acknowledges that the appraisal was shared with him/her and the employee has a section to share his/her comments | → | In a separate meeting or after appraisal discussion is complete, rater shares any pay or bonus information | → | Process begins again |

↓

| Appeal process for resolving issues |

Most employers do not include all the steps in Figure 2 for various reasons such as: insufficient administrative or technology support, amount of time required to complete, or the discomfort of the corporate culture with certain steps. Yun et al. (2005) looked at rater personality (conscientiousness or agreeableness) as part of their research. This could be an additional reason why certain steps in Figure 2 are not used by employers. The topic of power is discussed in a following section. Clearly, some of the steps require the rater to relinquish some of his/her authority or to lose some control (for example, the employee can be prepared to challenge the rater on the draft evaluation if he/she sees it before the formal session).

Best practices often reflect research that can be adapted efficiently and effectively into practice. For adoption, the return on the investment has to exceed the cost of the effort to implement the change. Often, as discussed above, certain logical steps are not accepted into practice on a widespread basis. The next section discusses human behaviors and how they impact performance appraisals.

Bias

Bias and favoritism issues in performance appraisals have been studied for decades, and with the emergence of a global workforce and the resulting increased diversity, more attention has been and will be paid to this issue. Chen and DiTomaso (1996, as cited in Kossek & Lobel, 1996) summarized the cognitive processes that can frame the views of the rater and ratee as appraisals are completed. Researchers have labeled the cultural assumptions or implicit theories which are formed in childhood and are automatic and tacit. Chen and DiTomaso described Hofstede's work in 1993 as including five dimensions: individualism versus collectivism (degree people prefer to act as an individual rather as a member of a group); power distance (degree of inequality considered normal in a culture); masculinity and femininity (degree that tough

29

values—assertiveness, competition, etc., prevail over tender values-relationships, service, etc.); uncertainty avoidance (degree to which people prefer structure over unstructured situations); and long-term versus short-term orientation (values oriented to the future versus the present and past).

This imprinting is part of both the rater and the ratee and will impact the meaning and effectiveness both parties take from an appraisal. For example, Chen and DiTomaso described a situation in which a rater could be evaluating an employee who has a collectivist approach and behaviors. The collectivist rater might assess the employee as preserving social harmony, not complaining, being self-effacing, accommodating to external demands, and being unlikely to take credit for accomplishments. The individualist rater may see this behavior as submissive, demonstrating a lack of confidence or lack of initiative or even incompetence. As one can imagine, the outcome of the appraisal can be very ineffective and demoralizing for both individuals.

Besides our cultural assumptions, we as human beings organize our world through social categorization which creates patterns for us. Things fitting the pattern or category are, by our definition, similar. Chen and DiTomaso stated that these categories are also associated with in-groups (those like ourselves and favored) and out-groups (those who are not like us and are unfavored). Negative pre-judgments made about out-group members lead to stereotyping, and the attribution process has us thinking the best of ourselves and the worst of others. The typical framing is that we credit successes to ourselves and the in-group due to skill and ability, and failures to bad luck and factors out of our control. The opposite is true of the out-group. Success in the out-group is due to luck, and failures are due to character flaws or lack of skills. These processes are part of who we are and when they emerge in appraisals leads to bias.

Performance appraisal errors have been studied and documented and undermine the credibility and sense of fairness experienced by the recipients. Coens and Jenkins (2002) and Turgut and Mert (2014) described the most common errors as:

- Perceived meaning of performance standards (raters use different understandings and perceptions of the meaning of appraisal standards, even if there are a standard form and criteria).

- Halo/Horn effect (rater's perception of employee influences rating. The Halo effect allows rater to look at strengths that overshadow possible performance problems; the Horn effect has the rater focusing on weaknesses that overly influence rating).

- Central tendency error/range restriction error (this error overlooks the strengths and weaknesses of the ratee and rater's tendency to rate the employee as average or within a specific limited range).

- Positive or negative leniency error (tendency of rater to give either inflated or deflated ratings which differ from the deserved level; positive leniency is more common and often done to preserve a working relationship).

- First impression and/or recency error (too much emphasis is placed on first impression or recent interactions).

- Similar-to-me error (rater rates employees higher because they are similar to himself or herself in background, education, attitudes, etc.).

- Contrast error (rater compares one employee to another instead of using the criteria in the appraisal form; this often occurs when an employee is compared to a very successful employee).

- Insufficient observation (determined without sufficient information or observation about the actual performance; perceptions are used).

Many studies that have highlighted the bias in performance appraisals in traditional areas of age, gender, ethnicity, and race will be described in the following pages. U.S. laws that have been passed as an attempt to provide protections in these areas include: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, sex, and national origin; the Equal Pay Act, which prohibits sex-based pay discrimination when men and women perform under similar working conditions; the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, which prohibits discrimination based on pregnancy; the Family and Medical Leave Act, which prohibits discrimination against employees with a serious medical condition or if they are caring for a close family member; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, which prohibits discrimination against employees over the age of 40; the Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits discrimination against qualified employees or job applicants with a disability; and the Genetics Information Non-Discrimination Act, which prohibits discrimination based on genetic information (*Discrimination in the workplace*, 2015).

Geddes and Konrad (2003) examined the effect of gender and race dissimilarity when negative feedback is delivered through the appraisal process. The researchers asked participants to rate their past appraisal experience with regard to fairness, accuracy, usefulness, appropriateness, sensitivity, negativity, and expectations. When given negative feedback, findings revealed that men, more often than women, reacted negatively if their manager was of a different gender. Non-Anglos more than Anglos reacted positively if their manager was Anglo. This was consistent with previous research that found that low-status groups favored high-status out-groups over their own in-group (high-status group for this study was Anglos).

Many studies have looked at objective performance criteria (example: sales) or subjective performance criteria (example: way employee interacts with customers). For example, Liden et al. (1996) suggested that no known studies have looked at how employees were rated on both criteria while examining the age disparity between the subordinate and the supervisor. Age bias has not been clearly established because it is in large part contextual. Factors that influence a potential bias are: rater's age, age of ratee, nature of job (a manual job or high-tech position may be a disadvantage to an older worker, whereas a position that has not changed much over the years might favor an older worker with more experience), any stereotype the rater may hold based on life history and experience, and the rating instrument (whether it has more subjective or objective criteria). The study, which included all sales representatives in the southern region of a large company in the United States, looked at performance appraisals over a 7-year period. Liden et al. randomly selected one appraisal for each participant from that period. In total, 122 sales representatives participated in the study. The performance appraisal ratings of older sales representatives were higher on both the objective and subjective measures than their younger counterparts, and older supervisors rated their employees higher on objective measures. In the discussion section, the authors offered multiple alternatives to explain their results. But like other studies on the potential age bias in performance appraisals, there were many contradictory findings.

Yun et al.'s (2005) study investigated the impact that the following three factors had on appraisal accuracy: social context, rater personality, and rating format. These factors have been studied individually but not in combination. For study definitions, context meant if the rater and ratee had a face-to-face feedback session. Personality was determined to be either conscientiousness or agreeableness. Format was either a graphic scale (included a description of

33

performance along a bipolar adjective scale) or a behavioral checklist (specific sets of behavior that described various performance dimensions). Raters were 246 undergraduate psychology students at a mid-Atlantic university. The sample was almost 80% female and just over 50% White. The survey results showed that raters who were high on agreeableness provided more elevated ratings than those low on agreeableness when they anticipated a face-to-face feedback session. However, those high on agreeableness did not inflate the rating of a poor performer. Raters high on agreeableness gave less elevated ratings when they used the behavioral checklist, compared to the graphic scale. Raters low on agreeableness showed little difference in elevation of scores when using either scale (graphic or behavioral checklist). No conclusive findings were determined about conscientiousness and the social context. It was expected that those raters low on conscientiousness would show inflated ratings.

Beyond the traditional areas most would consider to be areas of potential bias (age, gender, ethnicity, and race), bias also creeps into areas not often thought about (pregnancy, smokers), as the studies below highlight.

Considering the gains women have made in the workplace, Halpert et al. (1993) completed two studies testing stereotypes about pregnant working women and the effect of the pregnancy on performance evaluations. The first study included 209 undergraduate students with roughly an equal number of men and women, 96% of whom were employed or had been in the past. This first study included a 63-item questionnaire to determine attitudes on women, pregnant women, and mothers in the workplace. The second study included 220 different undergraduate students. The groups were divided and shown one of two videotapes of the same woman at an early stage of pregnancy and close to full-term performing various assessment center activities; they were asked to rate the pregnant woman's performance. The first study results supported that

negative stereotypes and beliefs about pregnant women existed, and men were more likely than women to hold these beliefs. The goal of the second study was to see if this attitude would drive a difference in ratings. The results showed lower ratings from all participants when the pregnant woman was near full-term.

Gilbert et al.'s (1998) study showed that bias can be broad and include areas that are typically not considered. The law protects employees from obvious performance appraisal discrimination, yet discrimination is prevalent in non-protected areas such smoking. The hypothesis was that smokers are part of a stigmatized social group, and it was anticipated that smokers would be rated lower when controlling for other factors. The study looked at first-level managers' (supervisors') performance appraisal ratings of employees in two military organizations that were comprised of both military and civilian staff. The study selected control variables for age, race, and gender so that smoker ratings/bias could be more accurately assessed. The assessment was broken down into nine job performance dimensions, and smokers were rated significantly lower in four categories (dependability, proper comportment, positive work relationships, and overall job performance). There was no significant relationship with the other dimensions (partnership with supervisor, humor, commitment to job, technical competence, tendency to speak up). The implications of this study are far-reaching, as approximately 20% of the adult population smokes. The study findings also supported what is known about social stigma theory, which comes about as a result of a person being tainted by a physical or personal attribute that is considered taboo. The bias against a stigma is greater than the bias against a stereotyped group. To the extent that the stigma is associated with conduct or choice like smoking, the bias reaction by others is strengthened. Any bias could be amplified not only by

behavioral choice but also by the observability of the behavior as smokers are generally likely to congregate in designated smoking areas.

Bias is part of all human nature and ingrained from early childhood. Awareness is key to understanding how it may impact a leader's thoughts and, ultimately, how the leader rates others. What the studies revealed is that bias in the traditional areas of age, race, ethnicity, gender, and others is often contextual and can work in a ratee's favor or not. Awareness is at the core of understanding one's bias so that meaningful feedback can be provided. The next human behavior that is reviewed in the next section is power and how that influences the recipient's ability to receive feedback. Like bias that is part of all of us, power is part of us to varying degrees as well.

Power

Power must be considered in the performance appraisal process because it is not an exchange between two equals. The leader or rater has power and influence over the ratee or employee. The leader's evaluation of the employee has a direct impact over pay, promotions, work assignments, continued employment, and the like. As a result, this section explores power from several vantage points. First, McClelland and Burnham's (1995) thoughts, published in one of the best-selling *Harvard Business Review* reprints, established that managers in a large complex organization should possess a need for power, defined as a need to influence people. However, the need must be disciplined so that the focus is on benefitting the organization and not on self-aggrandizement. McClelland and Burnham called this kind of control *inhibition*. The authors added that the need for the power motive should be greater than the need to be liked, to be affiliated, and to achieve (typical of the entrepreneurial mindset). Considering motives, the authors determined three types of leaders: institutional manager (high in power motivation, low in affiliation motivation, and high in inhibition); affiliative manager (higher need for affiliation

than power); and personal power (need for power is higher than affiliation but inhibition score is low). Combining both motive and style yields a profile for the ideal institutional manager, which is high on the power motive but also possesses a coaching style (more democratic) as opposed to an authoritarian style.

Additionally, the ideal manager typically has five characteristics: is more organizational-minded (joins more organizations, committees, etc., and believes in central authority); likes to work; is willing to sacrifice their own self-interest for the overall good of the organization; maintains a keen sense of justice (those who work hard will get rewarded); and has a sense of maturity (is less egotistical, less concerned with their own future, has a sense of vulnerability, and realizes they are not the center of the universe). Applying this framework to appraisals forces us to look at the leader's profile (motives and style) that may lead to insights into who is likely to be more effective at the process. Could a leader's profile stand in the way of the appraisal recipient getting meaningful feedback? For example, if the leader has a strong motive of affiliation, will the feedback be skewed so as not to jeopardize the relationship and will this impact the resulting pay increase decision? The authors suggested that managers can change with increased self-awareness, reflection, and training. Is there a missing component of the appraisal process that trains leaders on their profile? Should leader selection include an examination of the profile?

French and Raven's (1959, in Elias, 2008) basis of social power is one of the most widely accepted conceptualizations. Social power is defined as the ability to influence subordinates, peers, superiors, stakeholders, and others. French and Raven's work focused on the supervisor-subordinate relationship and, as a result, was conceived as a dyad. The five bases of power are: referent (follower identifying or liking the leader), expert (perceived competence of leader),

legitimate (position authority), reward (ability for leader to provide rewards), and coercive (ability to penalize). Later, a sixth base was added: informational (explaining to a person why the compliance or change is needed). French and Raven's original intent was that their five bases of power would be a starting point. Today, other researchers such as Kipnis et al. (1980, cited in Elias, 2008) have added means of influence in the workplace (assertiveness, ingratiation, rationality, sanctions, exchange, upward appeals, blocking, and coalitions). Yukl and Tracey (1992, cited in Elias, 2008) examined the effectiveness of nine power tactics (rational, persuasion, inspirational appeal, consultation, ingratiation, exchange, personal appeal, coalition, legitimating, and pressure). Raven also modified his and French's original taxonomy, but most organizations recognize two broad forms of power today—position and personal—which are combinations of the bases of power already discussed.

To understand the complex nature of social power, Raven developed a power/interaction model that helps to explain why and when a person might select different types of social power to influence others. The model looks at motivation, assessment, preparation, choice of the power base, and, finally, monitoring of the effect of the influencing activity (Elias, 2008). Using McClelland and Burnham's (1995) logic, leaders with a stronger power motive will likely utilize a wider variety and range of social power bases than those with a smaller power motive who will likely rely more on position power. The range a leader routinely uses will have a large implication for the quality and frequency of feedback an employee will receive and experience during the performance cycle (usually 1 year). The social power interaction pattern that occurs between the leader and employee during the year is also likely to carry over to the actual appraisal session. Hogg and Reid's research (as cited in Elias, 2008) indicated that the selection of a power base is influenced by the relationship the leader has with the subordinate. For

example, if the leader has a strong in-group identification with his/her subordinates, then the leader is less likely to use strong power forms such as coercive (Elias, 2008). Preparation involves examining the setting for the use of power and can include the environment where the interaction will take place or even what the leader is wearing. The feedback loop is critical, and based on the outcome of the interaction, certain social power bases may be reinforced or not repeated (Elias, 2008). The effectiveness of a leader is tightly tied to his/her use of social power.

Rowland and Hall's (2012) study focused on whether the employee perception of appraisal fairness has an impact on the effectiveness of the performance management system. The specific questions they answered were:

- Do appraisals contribute to disparities in organizational rewards and burdens?

- Do employees perceive outcomes and procedures as fair and ethical?

The key findings showed the following:

- Strong belief in inequality of treatment between high and low performers based on arbitrary standards.
- Distrust of the appraisal and performance-based pay.
- Widespread confusion about the process.
- Skepticism about the rater's competence and objectivity.
- Fear process is used for redundancy (job elimination).
- Participants saw value in the idea of appraisal but not in execution.
- Employee's voice was not heard or respected.
- Appraisal reinforces power relationships. (pp. 284-287)

Both those being appraised and those doing the appraisal disliked the process. Appraisals are an almost universal feature of the business world today, and perceived fairness is essential for employee engagement. Perceived fairness can be a measure of the level of control in the appraisal environment and a way to measure the relative amount of power being felt or exerted in the process.

The idea that an appraisal is not between two equals is an important influence in performance appraisal systems and contributes to the complexity of the interaction and the effectiveness of the feedback. The next major topic is adult learning theories and is presented as an academic review of major theories that can be applied to the learning that occurs with performance appraisals.

Topic 2: Adult Learning Theories

One of the major theoretical frameworks for adult learning is learning from experience, which can be defined as a direct encounter with a phenomenon that might occur in an educational environment or learning that occurs as a result of direct participation in life's events (Infed.org, 2010). The concept of learning from or through one's experience is fundamental to learning, growing, and maturing as an adult. In addition, the importance of feedback, coaching, and the learning environment was explored. Much of the historical work in performance appraisals has been viewed from a psychological or business perspective and not from an adult learning lens.

Learning from Experience

The concept of learning from experience is foundational to adult learning and particularly applicable to the workplace. Fenwick (2000) established a typology of the five different streams of thought concerning learning from experience: reflection (a constructivist perspective), interference (a psychanalytic perspective rooted in Freudian tradition), participation (from perspectives of situated cognition), resistance (a critical cultural perspective), and co-emergence (from the enactivist perspective emanating from neuroscience and evolutionary theory).

In reflection, a constructivist perspective, "the learner reflects on lived experiences and then interprets and generalizes this experience to form mental structures. These structures are knowledge, stored in memory as concepts that can be represented, expressed, and transferred to

new situations" (Fenwick, 2000, p. 248). Constructivism is seen in the work of Piaget (1966), and the reflection perspective is grounded in the works of Schön (1983), Kolb (1984), Mezirow (1990), and Boud and Miller (1996) (all cited in Fenwick, 2000).

Interference, a psychoanalytic approach which draws on the works of Jung and Freud, sees the struggle between the unconscious and conscious mind and how it influences conscious experiences and impacts learning. This approach also recognizes the importance of desire in learning.

Participation, a situative perspective, moves from the person's internal reflection processes or internal conflicts of conscious and unconscious to the situation or the context. Fenwick (2000) stated:

> Situated cognition maintains that learning is rooted in the situation in which the person participates, not in the head of that person as intellectual concepts produced by reflection nor as inner energies produced by psychic conflicts. Knowing and learning are defined as engaging in changing processes of human activity in particular community. Knowledge is not a substance to be ingested and then transferred to new situations but, instead, part of the very process of participation in the immediate situation. (p. 253)

Resistance, a critical cultural perspective, introduces power as a central issue which is not addressed in the prior three perspectives. Particularly in the work environment, many interactions are not among equals in the hierarchy. This is the case with performance appraisals. According to Fenwick (2000), Flax (1990), Giroux (1992), and Kellner (1995) claimed that when power is present, resistance can appear.

Finally, coemergence, the enactivist perspective, also known as complexity theory, explores the relationship between cognition and the environment. Fenwick (2000) described the perspective this way:

This perspective of experiential learning assumes that cognition depends on the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities embedded in a biological, psychological, cultural context. Enactivist explores how cognition and environment become simultaneously enacted through experiential learning. The first premise is that systems represented by person and context are inseparable, and the second premise is that change occurs from emerging systems affected by the intentional tinkering of one with the other. (p. 261)

Since no one theory can explain how adults learn, several are reviewed that have the most applicability to performance appraisals, starting with Kolb's (1984) foundational model and then reviewing the contributions of Jarvis (1987), Boud and Walker (1991), Fenwick (2001), and Matsua and Nagata (2020), which included broader views, particularly of context.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model depicted in Figure 3 was one of the main conceptual frameworks for this study because appraisal feedback is often limited to a single short session with little time to reflect in the session. Contextual factors are extremely important but may be more relevant following the appraisal session. The model was built on the work of Dewey, Piaget, and Lewin and requires four different kinds of ability (Merriam et al., 2007):

1. An openness and willingness to embrace new experiences (concrete experience)
2. Observational and reflective skills (reflective observation)
3. Analytical abilities so the observations can be processed (abstract conceptualization)
4. Decision-making and problem-solving skills so new concepts can be utilized (active experimentation). (p. 164)

Kolb and Kolb (2009) compiled six general assumptions of experiential learning theory which provide insight into the evolution of Kolb's thinking about his above model:

1. Learning is best conceived as a process, not as an outcome.
2. Learning is relearning.
3. Learning requires a resolution of opposed modes.
4. Learning is holistic.
5. Learning is an interaction between the person and the environment.
6. Learning is constructivist in nature (process of creating knowledge). (p. 43)

Figure 3

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Continuous Cycle)

Concrete Experience (learning by experiencing)

Active Experimentation (learning by doing)

Processing | Continuum

Continuum

Perception

Reflective Observation (learning by reflecting)

Abstract Conceptulation (learning by thinking)
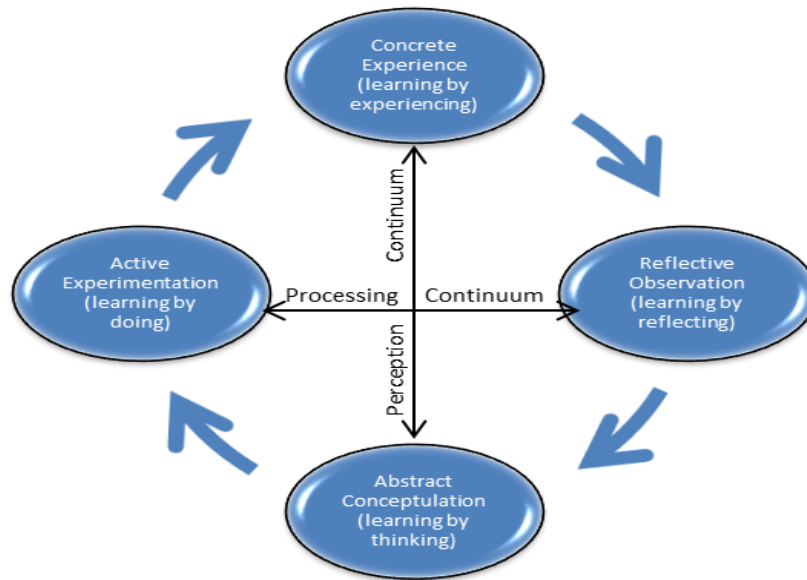
Source: McLeod (2013), p. 4

Although Kolb's model depicted above is linear, the learner can start at any point in the model, and Kolb pictured the phases as interrelated and cyclical (Infed.org, 2010; Merriam et al., 2007). For example, feedback received might be processed and the employee can go into the active experimentation phase. Reactions to the new behaviors might start the whole cycle over again. Factors that impact Kolb's learning cycle might be: if this was the first evaluation of the employee in his/her career, if this was the first appraisal with the manager, or if there were prior appraisals that the manager and employee completed together, among other possibilities.

Kolb also used the model to describe learning styles that are linked to differences in the learner's preference for utilizing the phases of the learning cycle. As a result, four learning modes were identified. These learning styes are influenced by personality, education, career, and country where someone is raised. The four styles are: Diverging, Assimilating, Converging, and

Accommodating. Learning style will have an influence on how the performance appraisal recipient makes meaning from the feedback.

Kolb's model has also been critiqued. Fenwick (2001) pointed out that the learner's context is not carefully considered; Jarvis (1987, 2001) suggested the model treats experience and reflection as if they exist in a vacuum and power is not considered; Boud and Walker (1991) added another dimension to Kolb's model by considering the impact of life history and emotion to the reflection phase (Merriam et al., 2007). These comments around context are considered in the conceptual map of this study. For example, when considering the context or power limitations of Kolb's model, both are considered in the bias or process section of this literature review. The emotion of the appraisal can be captured in the other areas of the conceptual map, such as the learning environment, feedback, and the impact on motivation.

The following serves to show how Kolb's learning theory was applied in a recent study. The purpose of Akella's (2010) study was to use Kolb's experiential learning theory as a framework for sharing his personal experiences as an Asian Indian developing and teaching a management class at a large Black university. The author was able to use Kolb's experiential learning model to assist in understanding the journey he took to maturing as a professor. At first, negative feedback from students was met with an emotional response and self-defensiveness. However, this led to insights and improvements in his teaching. The author was able to integrate techniques and strategies that were more culturally sensitive to his students. He concluded that Kolb's theory can be used to explain and analyze teaching methods and learning styles in the education community. It is also the simplicity of the theory that has appeal (while also acknowledging its limitations). As a result, Kolb's experiential learning theory, despite its identified limitations (in the literature and in Akella's article), can serve as a reasonable

theoretical model to be applied to both the leader's and employee's experiences during a

performance appraisal.

Kolb's model and assumptions can be applied to the rater and ratee experience of the

performance appraisals. If we use the entry point to the model, the concrete experience, it might

include the actual feedback received during the performance year or primarily the formal

appraisal session. The session is likely to be the most intense part of the process where

perceptions, facts, and circumstances can be clarified. It should also be noted that often the only

feedback received during the year is at the feedback session. The ratee's emotional reaction to

feedback should be considered and is a key part of the experience. The feedback might challenge

one's self-image because the appraisal is a judgment. The second part is the reflective

observation, which might include the validation and thinking done about the feedback, and

working through the emotion, which can be positive, negative, or both. The third part of the

model could create conceptualization of the feedback, and decisions could be made on how to

modify behaviors through the last part of the cycle of active experimentation.

Other Learning from Experience Theories

Jarvis (1987) added to a perceived deficit of Kolb's model in that there was no

recognition that the learner brings his/her biography into the experience, which includes the

whole person: knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, emotions, and the senses. Kolb's

model separates the experience and reflection without the context. Jarvis's model in Figure 4 is

also a continuous loop as Kolb's model, with the learner's biography entering at the top left of

the experience. As Kolb indicated, the model includes active experimentation and reflective

practice. It also recognizes that experiences take on meaning when there is a sociocultural-

temporal context. Jarvis's model has continued to evolve.

Figure 4

Jarvis's Learning Process Model
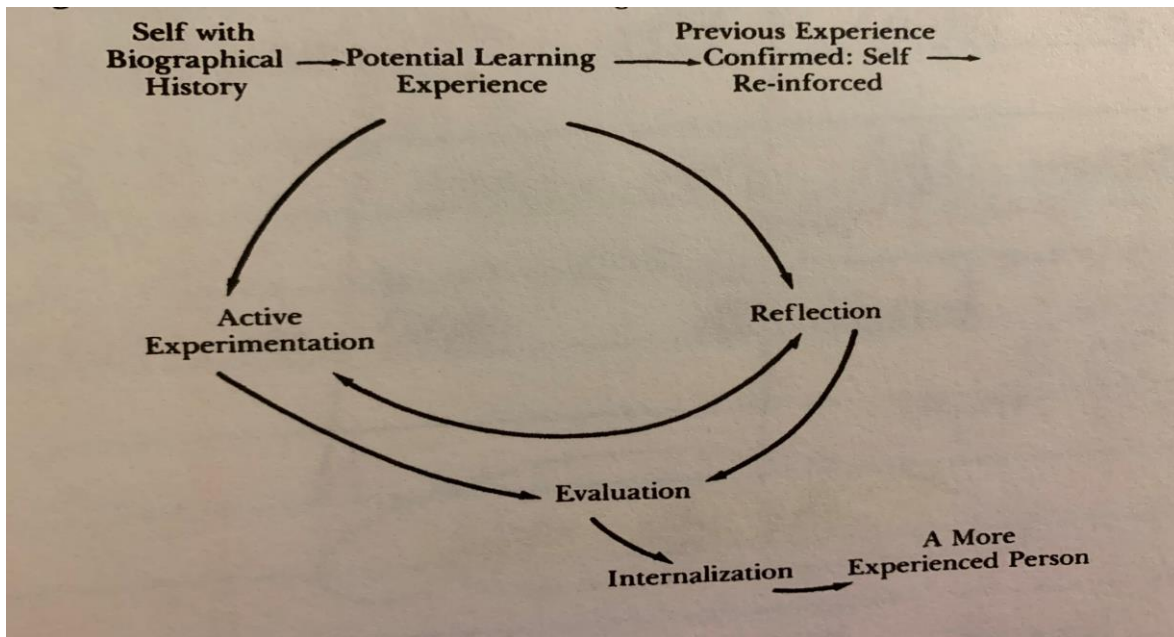
Source: Jarvis (1987), p. 166

Boud and Walker (1991) were clearly in the situated approach, which broadened their model to include the concept of community of practice. The model shown in Figure 5 looks different than the Kolb and Jarvis models, which are continuous loops. The process of reflection includes three important interactive activities in which cognition and feeling are interconnected: experience of event (milieu), noticing (understanding what is occurring in the situation and within the learner), and intervening (interacting and exploring the milieu). Boud and Walker also introduced reflection during the experience, and as others did, considered the after-experience reflection as well.

Figure 5

Boud and Walker's Model
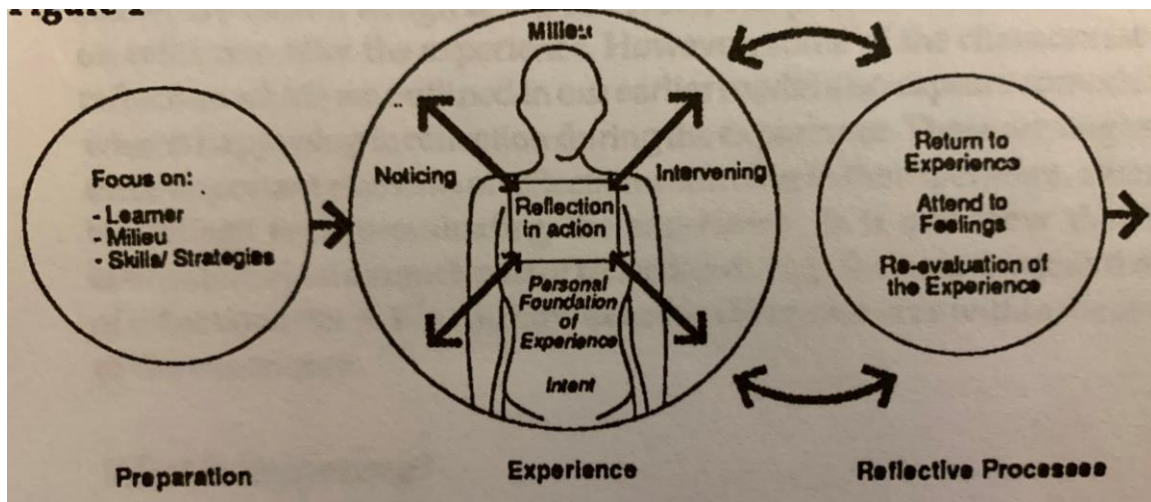
Source: Boud & Walker (1991), p. 18

Fenwick (2001) critiqued Participation (from perspectives of situated cognition), stating: "Relations and practices related to dimensions of race, class, gender and other cultural/personal complexities…determine flows of power, which in turn determines different individual's ability to participate meaningfully in particular practices of systems" (p. 38). According to resistance (a critical cultural perspective), power is a core issue in the experience, flows through the system, and reflects how positions are connected.

Kolb's model can be used for reflection-on-action for the appraisal session. Most often, the appraisal session is short (30 minutes to 1 hour), once per year, and the feedback is typically shared by the leader for the first time during the appraisal session, which can be scheduled or not. This leaves little time to reflect and act. Some recipients of an appraisal, because of a history with a leader or their personality, may be able to have a reflection-in-action. This is often characterized as thinking on one's feet. Schön (1987) suggested reflection-in-action is triggered by a surprise. This can happen in an appraisal with no feedback during the year.

47

Rogers and Horrocks (2010) offered another critique for the Kolb model in that learning should include goals, purposes, intentions, choice, and decision-making, and the authors presented an alternative model integrating these elements.

Matsua and Nagata (2020) offered a more comprehensive model (see Figure 6) that considers many of the issues identified above by Jarvis, Boud and Walker, Fenwick, Rogers and Horrocks, and others. Specifically, it added as part of the reflective cycle deep learning, a process to address emotions, and included a process for reflective analysis such that hypothesis testing or root cause analysis are utilized. Moreover, it added critical reflection, such as transformative learning, and a process for unlearning to disrupt habitual thinking and action. Finally, the model distinguished between expected and unexpected experiences, which can result in discomfort.

Figure 6

Matsua and Nagata's Model
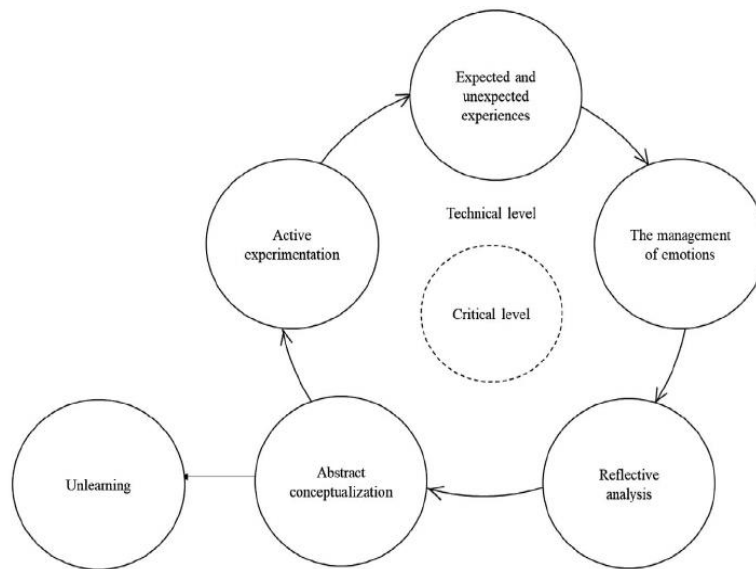
Source: Matsua & Nagata (2020), p. 147

What is clear is that experience is fundamental to the way adults learn, but capturing all the dimensions in a single model that has predictive ability and creates deep understanding for a wide range of situations is difficult and complex.

Feedback

Feedback Quality. Feedback often starts the experiential learning process and is one of the core purposes of why appraisals exist. Heen and Stone (2014) in their recent article put it this way:

> Feedback is crucial. That is obvious: It improves performance, develops talent, aligns expectations, solves problems, guides promotion and pay, and boosts the bottom line. But it is equally obvious that in many organizations, feedback doesn't work. A glance at the stats tells the story: Only 36% of managers complete appraisals on time. In one recent study, 55% of the employees said their most recent performance review had been unfair or inaccurate, and one in four said they dread such evaluations more than anything else in their working lives. (p. 109)

Heen and Stone went on to talk about the problem, which is not that more training is needed for the leaders providing the feedback, but the perspective to consider is the receiver of the feedback. It is the receiver who controls if the feedback is absorbed or not. This is a pull strategy, as opposed to a push from the leader. Feedback sets off the tension between wanting to grow and develop and the need to be accepted as one is. The authors described three triggers that block feedback: Truth trigger (content-based), Relationship trigger (tripped by person providing the feedback), and Identity trigger (challenges the relationship with oneself and a sense of who one is). The authors also discussed strategies that can be employed to avoid the triggers and to see the value of the feedback.

Brookfield (2006) dedicated a chapter in *The Skillful Teacher* on "Technique, Trust, and Responsiveness in the Classroom" to student evaluations. The parallel between the teacher and the corporate leader completing an evaluation is remarkable. Both are in a position of power

(assigning a grade or determining an employee's pay increase) and find the task difficult.

Brookfield stated, "For those of us who wish to build collegial, supportive relationships with students, giving evaluations is one of the most difficult, demanding, and complex tasks we face, yet, well done, it is also one of the most significant spurs to learning" (p. 174). Brookfield's suggestions for completing a successful student evaluation are: clarity (establish up front the evaluative criteria); immediacy (provide feedback as quickly as possible after the learning event); regularity (comment frequently on the student's work); accessibility (be available to the student to clarify feedback); individualized (provide detailed, clear feedback—this sends a message that the student is important to the teacher and the class); affirming (be appreciative and positive); future-oriented (be clear about the action that needs to be taken to improve the quality of the work); justifiable (link the evaluation to the student's long-term interest and goals); and educative (make sure that the comments have meaning for the student and are aligned with the student's and the class's learning objectives). The tasks that Brookfield identified can easily be translated to employers completing appraisals and considered best practices.

Thoughts on feedback from Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2014) could lead to a new paradigm for appraisals where the one-size-fits-all feedback models are transitioned to more of a personalized/interactive communication and feedback plan for each employee, based on his/her level of development and/or personality preference.

Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2014) also examined the issue of feedback using an adult development lens. The authors recognized the need for improvements in adult feedback and quoted from a survey completed in 2014 of district and school leaders in New York City that 75% (article did not include number of participants) responded that giving feedback was the most important skill they wanted to build and grow. Using adult development theory and the

ways of knowing (instrumental, socializing, self-authoring, self-transforming), the authors suggested feedback support and challenge strategies for each way of knowing. If such a strategy were deployed in an appraisal system, it would begin to migrate from the one-size-fits-all feedback models to more of a personalized communication and feedback plan for each employee based on his/her level of development. The drawback of this approach is that it is difficult and costly to determine each employee's level of development accurately. In addition, the levels would have to be monitored as employees grow to new levels so new strategies could be used. Like Brookfield, Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano offered several strategies for effective feedback, including: individualize feedback to receiver, offer focused feedback, maintain a positive focus when offering feedback, provide regular and ongoing feedback, and provide recipients with an opportunity to reflect and respond to the feedback.

Other researchers such as Kuvaas (2011) explored feedback from a more psychological and pragmatic viewpoint by studying the relationship between performance appraisal reactions, affective organizational commitment, and work performance mainly in a corporate setting. The hypotheses were:

- There is a positive relationship between appraisal helpfulness and work performance.
- There is a positive relationship between appraisal helpfulness and organizational commitment.
- Regular feedback will moderate the relationship between helpfulness of the appraisal and work performance.

The study included three organizations: a bank, a government department, and a pharmaceutical company. A total of 2,280 employees in the organizations were sent a survey, and 1,013 (44%) responded. The results showed there was a positive relationship between helpfulness of the

51

appraisal and work performance for employees who had high levels of feedback. Kuvaas also found that using a standard appraisal for employees did not meet the personal contextual needs of the employee, and perceived helpfulness of appraisal was positively related to organizational commitment. This study helped to create a link between the quality and quantity of feedback and how employees connect to how they perform and their commitment to the organization. Thus, the idea of some degree of personalization of the appraisal process to the individual employee context is emerging in the literature.

The quality of the feedback received is generally not meeting the recipient's needs, as Heen and Stone (2014) stated. There is research-based knowledge on how to better deliver feedback, as Brookfield (2006) described above. Yet the feedback is often not absorbed or understood. The literature suggests that personalization of the feedback will increase its effectiveness and combining effective delivery techniques that balance the three areas Heen and Stone described (truth, relationship, identity) can help the recipient to create meaning.

Feedback and Emotions. Carter and Delahaye (2005) studied the physiological effect on 50 employees at several large companies in Australia who underwent their performance appraisal. Three neurotransmitters which are quickly metabolized and easily measured in urine samples are adrenaline, noradrenaline, and cortisol. These all are associated with someone experiencing stress and were measured pre and post the appraisal session. Although there were some differences in the way men's and women's level of the neurotransmitters changed, all participants had elevated neurotransmitter levels pre-appraisal session; for those deemed successful (receiving a pay increase), levels dropped. Stressful events can cause both psychological and physiological response in appraisal recipients. Vogel and Schwabe (2016) completed a comprehensive literature review, citing more than 100 references on student and

teacher stress levels around exams, assignment deadlines, and grading/evaluation times along

with the impact on the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis. This was assumed to be similar to

the stress level experienced by the recipient of a performance appraisal. The researchers found

that modest levels of stress may enhance memory but impair long-term memory retrieval, while

high stress has a negative effect on memory. The result was that stress/anxiety elicits a

physiological response which can have an impact on the appraisal recipient to recall and learn

from the experience.

The quotes from various studies and articles below capture the emotional reaction to a

performance appraisal from both the giver and the recipient.

- "Evaluations are often perceived by employees and supervisors with fear and loathing." (Pettijohn et al., 2000, p. 77)

- "Many managers are uncomfortable with the appraisal process and employees dislike receiving them." (Milliman et al., 2002, p. 88)

- "Delivering critical feedback can be brutal for everyone involved. Most managers hate giving the feedback and most employees detest receiving it." (Cannon & Witherspoon, 2005, p. 120) "Although it is common knowledge that receiving critical feedback is unpleasant, the potential cognitive and emotional complications associated with receiving feedback transcend mere unpleasantness." (p. 122)

- "Feedback is an anomaly. People have a general sense that feedback is good to give and receive. But many people avoid it like the plague. They are uncomfortable telling others they have done well, and they feel even more uncomfortable telling others they have performed poorly. Some people would just as soon not know how they did, and they dodge evaluations of their performance and opportunities to learn how they can improve." (London, 2003, p. xiii)

Actionable feedback is the goal of performance feedback, as Cannon and Witherspoon

(2005) stated: "Candid, insightful feedback is extremely important for employees' development,

but most do not believe their companies do a good job of providing such feedback." Moreover,

they noted that in 38% of the cases studied, feedback actually had a negative impact on

performance. Cannon and Witherspoon also stated that traditional management education on

performance feedback is more focused on the analytical tools and skills than on the psychological aspects. Many recipients of appraisals react with emotion to feedback that can range from anger, retreating, crying, aggressiveness, and so on. Psychology is rich with literature that discusses how people view themselves; often, they do not view themselves accurately or understand how others see them. Typically, their view of themselves is more positive, which is known as a self-serving bias. When critical feedback is shared, it can challenge one's self-image and stimulate the fight-or-flight response to defend oneself, thus creating stress and limiting learning by restricting information processing and constriction of control.

      Feedback—Who Is Best Positioned to Provide It. Multisource feedback for performance appraisals and as standalone instruments became popular in the 1990s, but their roots go back to the early 1900s, with research and experimentation with rating scales that was accelerated by World War II (Hedge et al., 2001). Multisource feedback, also known as 360-degree feedback, can include boss, peer, and subordinates. A meta-analysis from Smither et al. (2005) focused on the effectiveness of the multisource feedback and the validity of the various sources. Generally, the literature on multisource feedback suggests that performance over time improves with considerable variability in the size of the improvement, with no one source (boss, peer, or subordinate) providing superior feedback. Smither et al. identified eight broad factors that largely determine the extent of any performance improvement: characteristics of the feedback (positive or negative); initial reaction to feedback; personality variables (emotional stability after feedback, extroversion vs. introversion, etc.); feedback orientation (overall receptivity to feedback); perceived need for change; beliefs about if change is possible; goal setting; and taking action.

One of most interesting statements from the Hedge et al. paper came from research in social cognition, specifically once a person has been rated by others, the raters will likely remember the way they rated the person, and, absent substantial performance changes, new ratings will likely be consistent with past ratings. This addresses one of the inquiry areas of the present study that first appraisals are often very critical for an employee.

Mauer and Tarulli (1996) attempted to answer several questions in their study about peer and subordinate feedback in an appraisal system. The most relevant question for their study was: Do participants believe that raters have observed behavior adequately prior to rating? They concluded that raters should have an adequate opportunity to observe the recipient's behavior. Limited contact will hinder the rater's ability to assess performance on multiple dimensions. Less direct contact and observation will change the feedback from first-hand knowledge to more of an impression that reduces the accuracy and perceived fairness of the feedback. The bottom line is that feedback has the potential to be most meaningful when the rater has spent sufficient time with the recipient to understand both the job and the context. For example, a nurse providing feedback to another nurse will understand the context of nursing but may not have specific knowledge of a specialty area. As a result, meaningful feedback should start with spending time observing the performance, with the observer being competent in the activities being observed.

Brown et al. (2010) looked at the appraisal recipient's perception of his/her performance appraisal and the impact it had on three key variables: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to quit. Positive experiences were reported by study participants when they believed that their supervisor was technically competent and had a solid knowledge of the employee's job function and duties. As with Mauer and Tarulli above, time spent with the employee observing performance added to the credibility of the feedback and the value of the

appraisal experience. Often, the leader conducting the performance appraisal may not be the person who has spent the most time observing the employee.

Feedback—Recipient Expectations of the Appraisal and Frequency of Feedback/ Effective Communication. In Edwards et al.'s (2003) book *The Human Resources Program-Evaluation Handbook*, the chapter written by Barnes-Farrell and Lynch discussed the perspective of the major stakeholders of an appraisal (organization, appraiser, recipient). Consistent with this work, the focus was on the recipient's perspective and expectations for their appraisal. The authors stated that the following were the recipient's main expectations: valuable feedback about their performance and wanting reward systems to reflect their individual contributions; feedback that is fair and accurate, which is largely dependent on the sources of feedback coming from someone who is sufficiently knowledgeable about the worker's performance and details about the recipient's position to give an accurate assessment; and understanding the support they will receive for developmental areas identified during the appraisal.

In addition, Barnes-Farrell and Lynch described several formal times during the annual performance cycle (setting goals at the beginning of year, midyear check-in on progress, and year-end evaluation) that the leader and recipient should discuss performance. They clearly stated that once per year is inadequate. They also went on to discuss that informal feedback is important as well. It can be delivered during regularly scheduled one-on-one meetings with the recipient. The focus is that the recipient should not be surprised by what is said at a formal appraisal session. For needed areas of improvement, the recipient should have the benefit of time to work on any needed changes, and positive reinforcement of desired performance should be given to support its continuation. Additional studies validated that there is a positive relationship between work performance improvements and the supervisor's constructive feedback when it is

delivered with immediacy and frequency (Kuvaas et al., 2017). To assist with more immediate and frequent feedback, employers have begun to shorten the feedback cycle from annual to as few as 12 weeks (Society for Human Resources Management, 2020).

Feedback—Effective Communication. Immediacy and frequency of feedback (Kuvaas et al., 2017) are basic principles for performance feedback. This means not saving feedback for the annual performance appraisal discussion, which does not give the recipient time to improve. Additionally, memories can fade and distort the actual event. According to Biron et al. (2011) who studied performance management systems in world-leading organizations, additional elements need to be present in feedback communication. Employees need to have unambiguous information about performance expectations. Clear expectations are often established at the beginning of the annual performance management cycle as goals. The authors emphasized that the quality and mutual understanding of these goals or expectations are essential parts of the appraisal system.

Cannon and Witherspoon (2005) also described in their article that to create actionable feedback, concrete performance examples need to be provided to the appraisal recipient. The examples must make it clear to the receiver what caused the leader/rater to see them in a way that certain areas of their performance need improvement. Without specific examples, the recipient may not make the connection to what is being asked of him/her. Many employees may have difficulty with generalizations and comprehending the meaning of the feedback.

Brown et al. (2016) went more deeply into communication tactics by looking at how experienced leaders deliver negative feedback. With negative feedback, employees can experience personal growth and better align with organizational goals (generally leaders are effective at providing positive feedback). Even in the best of circumstances, the managers in this

study reported that only 35% of employees receiving negative feedback improved, while the other 65% either did not improve or found other positions. Providing negative feedback addresses the employees' underperforming areas. If these are not addressed, good performers can become demoralized and/or leave the organization. They realize that they do not have to work as hard because there are no consequences for a lower-level performance and/or they may not be rewarded for the higher level of performance. The three primary tactics described by the authors to provide negative feedback effectively are:

1. Emotive tactic (managers appeal to the employee's self-concept and their need to be a valued member of the employer. This approach appeals to the emotion and feeling of the employee).
2. Evidence tactic (the manager acts as the judge and collects and presents evidence of poor performance to justify the negative feedback. This is a logical, rational appeal based on data).
3. Communication tactic (manager as a conversationalist and focuses on how to present the feedback. Often the leader uses positive and negative feedback during the conversation and invites the employee into the conversation about the performance). (p. 974)

Coaching

Maltbia et al. (2014) reviewed executive and organizational coaching, stating, "There are nearly as many definitions of coaching as there are practitioners and researchers of coaching." A great place to start is with the origin of the word, *coach*, which is linked to the word *carriage* from centuries ago, and helps people move from where they are to where they want to be. Maltiba et al. utilized the definition of coaching from the International Coaching Federation (ICF, the leading global organization for coaches and coaching), which is "Partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their potential and professional potential" (p. 163).

Modern coaching emerged in the mid-1900s and, by the 1980s, the primary focus was on executive coaching. Coaching has crossed over too many disciplines such as psychology, adult

learning, management, organizational development, human resource practices, and so on, and

even has spawned two new disciplines within psychology known as positive psychology

(focusing on the notion of happiness, positive emotion, meaning, and engagement) and coaching

psychology (focusing on behavior, cognition, and emotion within coaching practice to further

processes and techniques).

As organizations become flatter and less hierarchical, the work is completed on an ever-

increasing basis through teams. Graham et al. (1994) studied the new role of leaders, that is,

manager as coach. Coaching extends the traditional roles of leaders from controlling,

supervising, evaluating, rewarding, and punishing to creating an environment of mutual respect

and trust, effective communication, regular feedback, and observation of employee performance.

In their study, Graham et al. looked at eight skills/behaviors of successful managerial coaching

for improved individual and organizational performance:

1. Communicate clear performance objectives
2. Provide regular performance feedback
3. Consider all relevant information when appraising performance
4. Observe performance with clients
5. Know the staff well enough to help them develop self-improvement plans
6. Recognize and reward high performance
7. Provide help, training, and guidance
8. Build a warm, friendly relationship with the employee (p. 84)

Some of the above objectives overlap with communication, which was discussed in a previous

section of the literature review.

In addition, the ICF has set four responsibilities for successful coaching: Discover,

clarify, and align with what the client wants to achieve; Encourage client self-discovery; Elicit

client-generated solutions and strategies; and Hold the client responsible and accountable. These

four principles are foundational to the many coaching models that have developed over the years.

Is workplace coaching worth doing? According to Theeboom et al. (2014), it is. They extended the traditional effectiveness definition of Return on Investment (ROI) to include five variables: performance and skills, well-being, coping, work attitudes, and goal-directed self-regulation. The findings indicated that coaching is effective at improving the functioning of the individual and organization. Jones et al. (2015) also looked at the effectiveness of workplace coaching which was conducted by external and internal coaches. Their analysis also concluded that coaching had a positive effect on organizational outcomes, and internal coaches were more effective than external ones because internal coaches had a more complete understanding of organizational context. Format or coaching technique used in the intervention and the number of coaching sessions had less impact on effectiveness outcomes.

Coaching effectiveness is also dependent on how the recipient and coach feel about feedback. Other studies have focused on the coach's attitude toward and perception of feedback, but in this study, the focus was on the recipient. This aligns with the motivation section in this chapter as well and speaks to the lines between disciplines blurring over time. London and Smither (2002) conceptualized feedback as part of the performance management process and defined feedback orientation as the overall receptivity to feedback; the factors included in receptivity are comfort with the feedback, tendency to seek feedback, and the way it is mindfully processed so the result of the feedback can be acted upon. The study also examined the feedback culture, which refers to the organization's support for feedback, ideally delivered in a non-threatening way, with the focus on behavior where coaches facilitate the interpretation of the feedback.

Gabriel et al.'s (2014) study at a correctional facility focused on how the employees' feedback orientation was impacted by the supervisors' feedback environment. When the

environment fostered by supervisors is positive, it contributes to employee performance and well-being. However, in this study, the authors found that the feedback environment had less impact on changing employee performance than the employee feedback orientation. This crosses over to the discussion of the learning environment discussed next in this chapter.

Learning Environment

Exploring the nature of the work environment, which we call the learning environment that surrounds the recipient of the appraisal, is of paramount importance to understanding how feedback may be received and if it can be acted upon. Several prominent researchers (Kegan, 1982; Torbert, 1978; Yorks & Nicolaides, 2013) have recognized the importance of the learning environment and have coined their own terms for it, but there is commonality in the nature of the environment they described. Winnicott (in Kegan, 1982) first described the psychosocial environment as a holding environment in 1965. However, Winnicott's focus was on early childhood development and the maturation process, whereas Kegan (1982) used the term to describe the multitude of environments a person experiences during his/her lifetime and how each environment helps the individual to evolve. In fact, Kegan described the holding environment as cultures of embeddedness, where the individual is never alone but always part of a larger context or environment. Kegan summarized six evolutionary forms of psychological embeddedness: Incorporative (reflexes, sensing, and moving); Impulsive (impulse and perception); Imperial (enduring disposition, needs, interests, and wishes); Interpersonal (mutuality, interpersonal concordance); Institutional (personal autonomy, self-system identity); and Inter-individual (interpenetration of systems). The last two relate to adults and their work world. Table 2 presents a portion of Kegan's table that further expands the meaning of these stages of psychological embeddedness (pp. 118-120).

Table 2

Forms and Functions of Embeddedness Cultures

Evolutionary Balance and Psychological/ Embeddedness	Culture of Embeddedness	Function 1: Confirmation (Holding on)	Function 2: Contradiction (Letting go)	Function 3: Continuity (Staying Put for Reintegration)	Some Common Natural Transitional "Subject-Object" Bridges
Institutional Embedded in: personal autonomy, self-system identity.	*Culture of identity or self-authorship* (in love or work). Typically: group involvement in career, admission to public arena.	Acknowledges a culture's capacity for independence; self-definition; assumption of authority; exercise of personal enhancement, ambition, or achievement; "career" rather than "job," "life partner" rather than "helpmate," etc.	Recognizes and promotes adult's emergence from embeddedness in independent self-definition. Will not accept mediated, nonintimate, form-subordinated relationship.	Ideological forms permit themselves to be relativized on behalf of the play between forms. High risk: ideological supports vanish (e.g., job loss) at very time one is separating from this embeddedness. (No easily supplied age norms.)	Medium of 4-5 transition: ideological self-surrender *(religious or political); love affairs protected by unavailability of partner.* At once a surrender of the identification with the form while preserving the form.
Inter-individual Embedded in: interpenetration of systems.	*Culture of intimacy* (in domain of love and work). Typically: genuinely adult love relationship.	Acknowledges a culture's capacity for interdependence, for self-surrender, and intimacy, for interdependent self-determination.			

Table 2 illustrates that growth and development occur when both confirmation and contradiction are present, as is the case in most situations. It is when there is a dramatic insufficiency that the individual impairment is likely to happen. Connecting this to the research questions on feedback, the environment contains some tension (confirmation and contradiction), but the holding environment should hold and support the recipient of the feedback in order for the possibility of changes in behavior to occur, which result in improved performance.

In describing Kegan's work, Grabinski (2005) stated, "Cognitive development, then, is the result of the person's engagement with the environment in which the person actively organizes and interprets information according to a distinct and developmentally linked interpretive logic. Knowledge is continuously constructed and reconstructed, etc." (p. 80). Kegan's developmental trajectory includes the five principles below:

- Development is a lifelong process
- The developmental process is distinct from notions of life tasks or life phases
- Development is more than the accumulation of new information and represents qualitative changes in the very ways we know
- Social role and task demands on adults frequently outpace their current developmental capacities
- Development transpires through ongoing interaction between the person and the environment. (p. 81)

The holding environment is characterized by social-cultural, physical, and psychological dimensions, and meaning is derived from experience with each of these elements alone and in combination. The three major functions of the holding environment are: holding on ("supports and recognizes the individual by acknowledging how he thinks and feels and by joining the very way he understands and interprets the world," p. 81); letting go ("challenges the learner to question and rethink his or her constructs of self and ways of knowing at a particular time," p. 82); and maintaining ("provides a context of confirmation so as to enable the coherent integration on new situations, ideas, feelings, and interactions, thus scaffolding the construction of a new meaning system," p. 82). The three functions can be summarized as support, challenge, and maintaining.

Torbert's (1978) theory of liberating structures originated from his work in educational institutions, and his eight qualities define an environment that may be applicable to performance appraisals. The eight qualities are:

1. Deliberate irony where the leadership recognizes that participants will initially interpret the organizational structure and events based on a model of reality different from one inspiring the leadership.
2. Definition of tasks which are incomprehensible and undoable without a reference to process and purpose.
3. Premeditated and pre-communicated structural evolution over time. Organizational members move to appropriation of process and purpose to find a shared purpose, self-direction, and quality of work.
4. Task and leadership structured to provide a constant cycle of experiential learning and feedback.
5. Use all forms of power to support all the qualities, thereby allowing members to question their own assumptions in a community of inquiry.
6. The liberating structure is open to inspection and challenge by its members.
7. Leadership becomes vulnerable in practice when its tasks, processes, and purposes are incongruent and refuses to acknowledge and correct such inconsistencies.
8. Leadership is committed to and practiced in correcting personal and organizational incongruities. (pp. 226-229)

Yorks and Nicolaides (2013) described a different learning environment called generative learning that particularly considers the rapid pace of change, innovation, and disruption in the global, political-socioeconomic environments that adds a level of complexity that challenges the use of existing paradigms. Yorks and Nicolaides defined generative learning as "learning that produces outcomes that call into question one's existing theories-in-use and is the basis of personally transformative and developmental learning," thereby producing "new meaning, insights, perspectives and knowledge from processes of relating new information and facts to prior knowledge and experiences" (p. 4). One of the focal points of the paper is to take multiple streams of theory (complex adaptive systems, learning through experience, and adult development theory) and integrate them in a way to create new educational designs. At their root, performance appraisals can be compared to a course with assignments during the year, with periodic exams and a final grade. Like a teacher who attempts to provide feedback to the student, an appraisal tries to assist recipients to reflect on their performance so behaviors can be modified

and improved. This goes for both top performers and poor performers in that all have areas to consider or blind spots.

Another parallel with the educational setting and performance appraisals is that students and appraisal recipients often operate at the level of first-person inquiry (awareness of one's own intentions, strategies, and sensed performance), and educators and leaders attempt to move the students and appraisal recipients to second-person inquiry (inquiry into one's interactions with others) or even third-person inquiry (awareness of the larger system in which one operates). The conceptual model for this study puts the recipient of the appraisal in the center, the leader on the outside, and the complex issues between them. The goal is to create holistic awareness for the recipient of the appraisal through questioning and reflection.

The above contextual factors, as researched by Kegan, Torbert, and Yorks and Nicolaides, point to how to optimize the learning environment of appraisals, which has been largely ignored. As an example, the physical space in which most appraisals take place is the supervisor's office. The recipient will likely have significant feelings associated with that space, either positive or negative. The learning environment has to be nurturing and sensitive to the social-cultural, physical, and psychological dimensions of the recipient in order for feedback to be heard, absorbed, and reflected upon, and behaviors to change. The next section explores a key area of performance appraisals: how the feedback provided impacts the recipient's level of motivation. It can increase it, decrease it, or be neutral. From the many areas of psychology, the one branch that is most relevant for this study is the literature on Organization and Work, which includes motivation.

Topic 3: Motivation

A more complete understanding of the literature on performance appraisals should begin with a consideration of the area of motivation and its numerous theories. Without consideration of this area, we leave a gap in understanding the confluence of factors that influence the meaning the recipient of an appraisal makes from the process. Because there is a substantial volume of work in this area and the adult learning lens was the primary focus of this dissertation, this section presents only a high-level survey of key theories in motivation.

Schermerhorn et al. (2012) broke motivation into two groups of theories, one group on content theories (motivation focuses primarily on individual needs) and the other group on process theories (focus on the thought processes that motivate individual behavior). In examining key content theories, we start with Maslow (from 1965, as described in Schermerhorn et al., 2012) and his hierarchy of needs theory, which created five levels of individual needs (physiological, safety, social, esteem, self-actualization). The model is linear in that in order to move up to a higher level of needs, one has to first satisfy lower-level needs. The criticism of this popular model is that people may not follow the step-by-step sequence, nor does it fully account for prioritization in different cultures. For example, in collectivist cultures, social needs may be higher than where it is presented in the model.

Alderfer's ERG theory from 1969 (as described in Schermerhorn et al., 2012) broke needs into three broad categories: Existence needs (physiological and material well-being), Relatedness needs (desires for satisfying interpersonal relationships), and Growth needs (desire for continued growth and development). ERG theory advances thinking on personal needs by allowing for regression back to lower levels. McClelland's publications from the 1960s and 1970s (as described in Schermerhorn et al., 2012) utilized the Thematic Apperception Test

(TAT), which is a technique that asks test-takers to write a story about a picture they are shown. Through this instrument, they are able to determine themes that correlate with the following human needs: Need for achievement (nAch), which is the desire to do better, solve problems, or master complex tasks; Need for affiliation (nAff), which is the desire for friendly and warm relations with others; and Need for power (nPower), which is the desire to control others and influence their behavior.

The final content theory to discuss is Herzberg's, from his publications in 1967 and 1968 (as described in Schermerhorn et al., 2012): the two-factor motivator-hygiene theory, in which motivator factors are causes of job satisfaction and hygiene factors are causes of job dissatisfaction. Hygiene factors relate more to the work setting than to the nature of the work itself, and a key finding was that removing hygiene factors will not improve job satisfaction but only decrease job dissatisfaction. It is very interesting to note that pay, which is typically linked to appraisals, is a hygiene factor. By contrast, motivator factors are sources of job satisfaction. There is no surprise that Herzberg was a proponent of job enrichment activities to build more motivator factors. Herzberg is quoted as saying, "If you want people to do a good job, give them a good job to do" (p. 107). Table 3 lists both hygiene and motivator factors.

Table 3

Hygiene and Motivator Factors

Hygiene Factors	Motivator Factors
Organizational policies	Achievement
Quality of supervision	Recognition
Working condition	Work itself
Relationships with co-workers	Responsibility
Status and security	Advancement
Base wage or salary	Growth

Source: Herzberg (in Schermerhorn et al., 2012, p. 106)

Moving next to process theories, we examine equity and expectancy theories. The equity theory of J. Stacy Adams (1963 and 1965, in Schermerhorn et al., 2012) stated that any perceived inequity becomes a motivating state of mind. People perceiving an inequity will work to restore equity. The underlying premise of the theory is social comparison. As it relates to the work environment, someone's motivation is dependent on how rewards received relate to the effort made and how it compares to rewards received by others relative to their efforts. What this theory points to specifically is perceived fairness or perceived inequity. Inequity can be either under-rewarded (negative inequity) when a person feels he/she has received relatively less than others in relation to the work effort, or over-rewarded (positive inequity) when the person feels he/she has received more than others. Either inequity can become a driver/motivator for undesirable behaviors. In the case of negative inequity, the person may reduce work effort, quit, or ask for more to rectify the perceived inequity. In the case of positive inequity, the person can be encouraged to reduce work effort or expect to continually receive more than others. Appraisal rating inequity can drive similar behaviors.

Victor Vroom's (1964, cited in Schermerhorn et al., 2012) expectancy theory captured the degree to which someone is motivated using three factors: effort, reward, and value of reward. The theory can be expressed with the following equation:

Motivation = Expectancy x Instrumentality x Valence

Expectancy is the probability assigned by the individual that the work effort required for the task can be achieved.

Instrumentality is the probability assigned by the individual that if the desired work outcome is achieved, he/she will be appropriately rewarded.

Valence is the value attached by the individual to the work outcome.

This theory can be applied to performance appraisals in various ways when considering how resulting merit increases or bonuses might impact an appraisal recipient's willingness to change behaviors.

One final stream to consider in motivation is reinforcement, which is the delivery of a consequence as a result of a behavior. Properly administered reinforcement can change the direction, level, and persistence of behaviors. Reinforcement can be positive, negative, punishment, or extinction (withdrawal of reinforcement to eliminate undesirable behavior). According to Thorndike's (1969) law of effect, "Behavior that results in a pleasant outcome is likely to be repeated, whereas behavior that results in an unpleasant outcome is not likely to be repeated." Think about the impact of either positive or negative reinforcement at the time of the appraisal that is months after the occurrence. Timeliness of feedback is critical as well, as discussed above in the feedback section. Reinforcement is typically extrinsic, whereas researchers such as Herzberg have indicated that intrinsic rewards are usually more motivating and more closely related to job satisfaction.

In summary, motivation theories are germane to this study on appraisals and are an important part of a holistic view on how to improve a troubled process. For the receiver to act on any feedback given, the receiver should perceive the process to be fair and accurate.

Conclusion and Conceptual Map

Taken together, the studies and literature streams reviewed point to an opportunity to improve performance appraisals as they are administered today in most organizations. Understanding the emotional, psychosocial, cultural, physical, psychological, and other needs of the recipient leads us to consider a more personalized, holistic approach delivered in a standard way so appraisals can be scaled for use in major institutions. No one area will likely hold the

answers necessary to deliver meaningful feedback to the recipient. The disciplines described in the conceptual map will need to work collectively to fill the gaps.

The map in Figure 7 may be simplistic in design, but it is complex in practice. It places the recipient of the performance appraisal in the center of the process, with the leader completing the appraisal at the outside. Between the leader and the recipient are many challenges to overcome so the recipient can make meaning of the feedback received. This study has taken a more global view by incorporating multiple disciplines to understand how the recipient makes meaning of his/her appraisal, with a focus on the adult learning lens which is typically not considered when reviewing performance appraisals.

Figure 7

Conceptual Map

Leader/Appraisal Rater

Experiential Learning
--Kolb (1984)
--Jarvis (1987)
--Boud & Walker (1991)
--Fenwick (2001)

Coaching
--Maltbia et al. (2014)

Process (Best Practices)
--Armstrong (2010)

Feedback
--Brookfield (2006)
--Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano (2014)

Power
--French & Raven (1959)
--McClelland & Burnham (1995)

Employee/ appraisal recipient perspective/reaction

Learning Environment
--Liberating Structures (Torbert, 1978)
--Holding Environment (Kegan, 1982)
--Generative Learning (Yorks & Nicolaides, 2013)

Bias (age, gender, race/ethnicity, other, rating errors)
--Chen & DiTomaso (1996)
--Coens & Jenkins (2002)
--Geddes & Konrad (2003)

Motivation
--Content Theories (Alderfer, 1969; Herzberg, 1967, 1968; Maslow, 1965;
--Process Theories (Stacy [equity theory], 1963, 1964; Vroom [expectancy theory], 1964)

Chapter 3 – METHODOLOGY

Overview of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how hospital employees in a non-union organization, specifically nurses, understand the feedback they receive from performance appraisals and what are the conditions and support needed for the employee to act on the feedback. The literature review made the case that the receiver's viewpoint is often overlooked, which perhaps explains why certain employers are looking for alternative ways to provide feedback other than through traditional established performance appraisal methods. The literature review also depicted a complex conceptual map of multiple factors that can influence the meaning the receiver makes from the feedback.

This study used multiple data collection tools to create confidence with the study findings. The tools included a voluntary nursing survey administered prior to the start of the annual appraisal process, followed by interviews. Focus groups were originally contemplated, but due to COVID-19, they were removed from the process. This chapter describes the research in greater detail and why the various methods were selected to answer the following research questions:

1. How do past experiences with the appraisal process impact the recipient's ability to actively participate and engage in the process?

2. What are the differences in the feedback received by employees rating the quality of feedback on a performance appraisal survey high versus those rating it low?

3. What factors help to create an ideal environment for the recipient to receive constructive feedback?

4. Under what kind of circumstances/conditions is the recipient more likely to convert the feedback into possible action/changes in behavior?

The remainder of this chapter describes the following: (a) overview of research design, including areas of information needed and performance appraisal process at the research site; (b) methods and process for data collection; (c) discussion of the sample; (d) methods for assuring protection of human subjects; (e) methods for data analysis and synthesis; (f) literature to support design and data collection methods, including surveys and interviews; (g) validity and reliability; (h) study limitations; and (i) chapter summary. Table 4 presents the chronological flow of the data collection.

Table 4

Data Collection Timeline

Action	Date Completed
Recruited and completed interviews and transcribed them	June to August 2020
Coded and data analysis	November 2020 to March 2021
Wrote Findings, and Analysis, Interpretation, Conclusions, and Recommendations chapters	April 2021 to September 2021

Overview of Research Design

The researcher chose a qualitative research design employing a voluntary pre-annual appraisal survey. Completing the survey prior to the annual process hopefully would reduce the impact of the recency effect because the goal of this study was for participants to consider how they made meaning from appraisals over their career, not just the last one. The research institution did start a similar survey that was sent to study participants after the annual evaluation to better understand the quality of the feedback received during the annual review process. However, this survey could not be used because it did not have a consent attached to it and did

specify that the survey would be used for internal purposes only, not research. Also, there were assurances of confidentiality; therefore, if the researcher contacted participants, this would violate the commitment made by the research institution. Appendix B contains a copy of the appraisal feedback survey used in this study, which included a consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

From the survey participants, interviewees were selected (see Appendix C for recruitment script). Creswell (2014) suggested that using both quantitative tools (feedback survey) and qualitative methods minimizes bias and can enrich a study by integrating quantitative data that are generally closed-ended with open-ended responses from qualitative data. Maxwell (2005) stated that the strength of qualitative research originates from its inductive approach and its focus on situations, people, and emphasis on words rather than numbers. Maxwell also described five intellectual goals for which qualitative studies are well-suited: understanding the meaning, understanding the context, identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, understanding the process, and developing causal explanations. Due to the nature of the research questions, which focused on how each study participant made meaning of the performance appraisal feedback received from their own world view, the qualitative research method approach was considered well-suited for this study.

Creswell (2014) stated that qualitative research explores the meaning that study participants create for social or human problems. For the feedback questions explored in this study, the qualitative research methods used allowed the researcher to isolate a target group of employees to interview for a better understanding of the conditions that positively and negatively impact feedback and their ability to act upon it.

Areas of Information Needed

The qualitative research design for this study started with a voluntary performance appraisal feedback survey (see Appendix B for a copy of the study survey). The hospital post-appraisal survey that started in 2014 was instrumental in obtaining a strong survey response rate for this study as employees were used to this type of survey. The survey participants were divided into three groups based on the aggregate score of their responses to the survey questions. A mean score was calculated, and a high and a low group were created, that was one standard deviation from the mean. The third group consisted of those survey participants who were less than one standard deviation from the mean. Seven participants from each survey group were randomly selected for interviews, for a total of 21 interviewees for this study. Figure 8 presents a view of the flow of the major information-gathering steps of the research; Table 5 links the research questions to the information needed and the supporting methods.

Figure 8

Research Groups and Flow
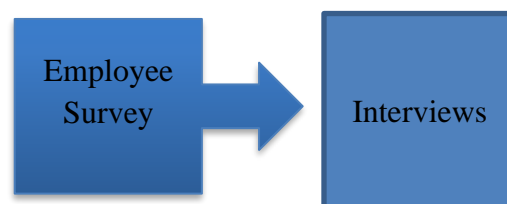
Performance Appraisal Process at the Research Site

The employer site for this research has an annual appraisal process that utilizes a common review date methodology; this means all employee appraisals are completed at the same time during the year. The performance appraisal process represented in Figure 9 is the calendar year that matches the hospital's fiscal year. The process starts with goal setting, which concludes

Table 5

Information Needed

Research Questions	Information Needed	Demographics	Survey Results	Interviews
How do past experiences with the appraisal process impact the recipient's ability to actively participate and engage in the process?	Understand from an identified pool of employees from the same hospital employer that rated high, mean, and low on the same feedback survey tool how their past experience with appraisals set their expectations for future appraisals.		X	X
What are the differences in the feedback received by employees rating the quality of feedback on an annual performance appraisal survey high versus those rating it low?	Understand from an identified pool of employees from the same hospital employer that rated high, mean, and low on the same feedback survey tool what factors or elements in their appraisal experience made them rate the experience high, mean, or low. In their words, look for patterns or trends on the information received from the employees.	X	X	X
What factors help to create an ideal environment for the recipient to receive positive and constructive feedback?	Understand from an identified pool of employees from the same hospital employer that rated high, mean, and low on the same feedback survey tool what factors or elements in their appraisal experience create a positive environment to receive feedback and which a negative environment. Understanding the importance/priority of various identified factors was important as well.			X
Under what kind of circumstances/conditions is the recipient more likely to convert the feedback into possible action/changes in behavior?	Understand from an identified pool of employees from the same hospital employer that rated high, mean, and low on the same feedback survey tool how they describe the conditions needed and support to change work behaviors.	X		X

Figure 9

Hospital Performance Appraisal Process*

*This process was confirmed as accurate by the research institution.

on December 31 of the preceding year. Each January, self-appraisals and peer reviews are

completed for the previous year. In February, leaders complete employee appraisals and, after a

calibration process, leaders in related areas such as nursing get together to confer on the

appropriateness of the rating distributions, i.e., all nurses in a work group are not given the top

rating, and to provide feedback on fellow leaders' employees. Feedback sessions are held with

employees in March. During this session, any pay increase and bonus are communicated and

paid at the end of March or the beginning of April (see Figure 9), and any formal development

plans are discussed and added to the goals for the following performance year. Three times

during the year (April, July, and October), employees are supposed to meet with their

supervisors for formal documented quarterly performance feedback sessions, known as quarterly

performance coaching. These quarterly performance coaching sessions feed into the annual

appraisal.

The final step of the annual electronic appraisal process, which uses Taleo, a commercially available Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software product, with about 13% of the $255 billion annual sales to the employer market (as of 2014, Taleo, which is owned and marketed by Oracle/PeopleSoft, was the second largest vendor in ERP systems [Black Data Processing Associates [BPDA] & National Technology Conference, 2014]), is a request that the employee sign off on his/her appraisal attesting to the fact that the appraisal was reviewed with him/her. This signoff is mandatory and, without it, the employee's raise and bonus will not be processed. The acknowledgment specifically states that signing does not mean the employee is in agreement with the contents of the appraisal. The employee also has the opportunity at this point to add any comments about the appraisal process or specific content in his/her appraisal. These comments become part of the final appraisal and are stored and available for future reference. Approximately 25% of about 4,200 employees choose to comment each year. An actual completed annual nursing performance appraisal from the research institution is included in Appendix D, with the nurse identification deleted.

It is at this final point of the annual appraisal process that the voluntary and confidential performance appraisal feedback survey is requested to be completed. The employee completes it in private. The supervisor never sees the results, and the data from the survey are aggregated for training purposes. Possible leader intervention or action plans could be developed based on the feedback survey, along with other management tools such as the leader scorecard, which includes management information on budget performance, patient quality scores, customer feedback, compliance criteria, employee engagement scores, and employee turnover. The leader scorecard is called the IAM Report (a copy is included as Appendix A). As a reminder, this feedback survey was not used in this study.

78

Methods and Process for Data Collection

As previously stated, two primary data-gathering methods were used in this research: the feedback survey and the interviews. The biggest issue in this study was access to employees and their confidential appraisals and demographic data. As already discussed, the researcher conducted this research at his former place of employment. The challenge was balancing access with power and reliability issues in the study; this challenge is further reviewed in the validity and reliability section below. Although gaining a deeper understanding of the recipient's perspective on appraisal feedback was difficult, the data collection methods described below were deliberately selected to maximize what could be learned from this study.

- The survey was quantitative and created a basis from which to select participants for interviews. The relatively high participation rates in the feedback survey limited any chances of skewed results and allowed the creation of sufficiently large pools from which to select interview participants using random selection techniques.

- The core of the study was to understand how participants made meaning from the feedback provided during an appraisal. Appraisals are a high-stakes event for most employees with job security, pay increases, promotions, and other factors often determined as a result of the appraisal. To gain an understanding of how an employee was processing the feedback input, a personal discussion/interview with participant was essential.

- This study's survey was modeled on the employer's feedback survey, which has been part of the employer's normal operating procedures for several years and was the starting point for the study. The interview questions were tested in a pilot study and refined based on what was learned.

- All data from the interviews were recorded and the resulting recordings were transcribed and analyzed.

The application of each of these methods is described in more detail below.

The Feedback Survey. The feedback survey was critical to this study and was the basis of determining the pools of employees who were selected for interviews. The percent of participation of the ongoing employer survey that was post-appraisal was as follows:

- 2014: 51% participation rate (1,547 employees out of 3,033 eligible)

- 2015: 63% participation rate (1,880 employees out of 2,993 eligible)

- 2016: 61% participation rate (2,007 employees out of 3,312 eligible)

- 2017: 65% participation rate (2,348 employees out of 3,595 eligible)

This set a benchmark for this study's survey response rate.

This study's feedback survey (see Appendix B) had eight questions—seven questions with a 5-point scale and the last an open-ended question with a comment box. The feedback survey used a Likert-type scale (Robson, 2011, p. 303) which has the following characteristics:

- Scale should have both positive and negative responses and extremes should be avoided.

- Most commonly, surveys include five response choices for each question.

A total of 257 nurses responded to the survey, which represents a participation rate of 24.4%. A more detailed discussion about this study's survey response rate is found in the Nurse Survey Findings section of the Findings Chapter. A score was determined for each participant by assigning a value for each of the seven scored questions based on their responses. To accomplish this, a number from 1 to 5, with the exception of question number 2 which had six possible responses, was assigned to the actual employee response to each question (strongly disagree = 1,

disagree = 2, neutral = 3, agree = 4, strongly agree = 5; for question 2, a zero was assigned to the sixth choice which was "did not receive feedback during the year"). The scores from the seven questions were added to determine an overall score for each survey participant. An overall mean was determined, and all participants with at least one standard deviation above or below the mean formed two pools of employees from which the interviewees groups were solicited and selected. In addition, a third group was formed which was less than one standard deviation from the mean. Twenty-one candidates were randomly selected for interviews, seven per group.

Before continuing to describe the data-gathering methods, a review of the nature of the survey data used in this study is needed. Likert data are considered ordinal data that are ordered based on magnitude, but the distance between each of the points on the scale is not equal (Ravid, 2011). There has been controversy for more than 50 years on the appropriate use of parametric tests on ordinal data. Jamieson (2004) was stricter in her interpretation and believed that measures of central tendency, such as the median and mode, are appropriate for ordinal data, while mean and standard deviation are not. Jamieson recognized that this strict interpretation is commonly ignored.

Carifio and Perla (2008) concluded that it is appropriate to summarize the ratings generated from Likert scales using means and standard deviations. The authors said that treating data from Likert scales as ordinal prevents one from using more sophisticated and powerful modes of analysis. The basis for this point of view was that a variety of studies on the nature of Likert scales have shown that the Likert response format produces empirically interval data. Norman (2010) also contended that parametric tests can be used with Likert data. Without these data, approximately 75% of research in education, health status, and quality of life would have to be discarded. Norman also dispelled the three most common reasons why purists have suggested

81

that parametric tests cannot be used on ordinal data: sample size is too small; t-tests and ANOVA cannot be used because the data are not a normal distribution; and ANOVA and Pearson correlations cannot be used because one cannot assume normality. Finally, Norman concluded that "parametric statistics can be used with Likert data, with small sample sizes, with unequal variances, and with non-normative distributions, with no fear of coming to the wrong conclusion. These finding are consistent with the empirical literature dating back nearly 80 years" (p. 631).

Interviews. Returning to the methodology, the next data collection tool was the interview, specifically 21 interviews for this study. Marshall et al. (2013) reviewed 83 qualitative studies to identify a best practice for interview sample size. They concluded that there was little rigor around identifying sample size, but studies should include between 20 to 30 interviews. The interviews along with the survey formed the basis for this multi-method approach, which is commonly used in qualitative studies (Robson, 2011).

Miles and Huberman (1994) discussed the importance of not only determining how to select people for a study, but also establishing the setting, actors, events, and processes. For this study, the researcher agreed that these were important elements to consider for multiple reasons. As already discussed, the researcher worked as a senior leader for the hospital where the research was conducted. As a result, to create comfort for the interviewee, the researcher intended to conduct all interviews at the interviewees' location of choice. However, with the raging COVID pandemic, all interviews were conducted via Zoom. This was a requirement from both Teachers College and the research institution.

Aware of how the researcher's former position could influence the interviews or the research results, the researcher completed the first five interviews and evaluated whether there were any concerns or apparent discomfort from the interviewees. None were detected. If the

researcher had observed any issues, then he would have engaged another qualified interviewer to complete the remaining interviews. The Zoom interview format makes available recordings that can be examined by independent parties to confirm if the researcher was an obstacle to gathering quality data and completing a robust study. In addition, transcripts of the interviews remain available.

Several interviews were completed in the Spring 2015 pilot study, and results did not indicate any concern due to the researcher's position. In fact, one of the interviewees was known to the researcher, and she spoke freely about sensitive issues and her impressions of performance feedback she had received.

The invitees for interviews represented a demographic mix by age, ethnicity, race, length of service, and so on, and represented the overall nursing population at the research institution. Candidates from the survey pool were selected using a random sampling technique. Creswell (2014) defined a random sample as each individual in the sample having an equal probability of being selected. The randomization provides an opportunity to generalize findings to the population. Fowler (2014) described simple random sampling that was applied in this study in the following way. Each possible participant in the three groups was assigned a number, and a computer program generated random numbers (such as picking numbers from a hat) to select the possible study participants. Robson (2011) stated that a simple random sampling technique provides an equal chance of members from the sample groups of being included in the study.

In the following section, the content and conduct of the interviews are described in greater detail. The three pools are limited to non-leadership nurses who generally share a similar education level and a socioeconomic status. This important protocol decision reduced the number of the possible variables to consider in the analysis that could distract from any patterns

observed in the findings. Marshall and Rossman (2011) discussed the complexities of researching across differences in social identities.

The interview method was semi-structured (the interview guide and prompts can be found in Appendix H). Semi-structured interviews are frequently used with qualitive interviews (Robson, 2011). The interview questions primarily consisted of open-ended questions to encourage interviewees to provide their personal thoughts on their appraisal experiences. Probes were used to help the conversation as needed (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In addition, the researcher tried hard to follow Robson's (2011) general advice in conducting interviews:

- Listen more than you speak.
- Put questions in a straightforward, clear, and non-threatening way.
- Eliminate cues which lead interviewees to respond in a particular way.
- Enjoy it. (p. 282)

Twenty-five nurses were invited for interviews; 21 accepted, four declined. One of the four was from the Above group, one from the Mean group, and two from the Below group. All potential interviewees were called. The phone numbers were provided by the research institution. Appointments were made during the phone call. Immediately after the call, the researcher sent a Zoom link from his personal email account to the email specified during the call for the agreed-upon day and time. In most circumstances, the appointment was a day or two after the phone call. This limited the need for reminders or having interviewees not show up.

The questions were grouped into three categories. The first category of questions was asked to establish an understanding of the interviewees' thoughts on the appraisals received during their career. An example of a question in this category was asking the words that come to mind when thinking about your appraisal and then describe situations that support those thoughts. The second category of questions was to establish a baseline of the appraisal process. For example, how much time was your typical appraisal, and did you receive feedback during

the year and how often? The last category of questions was more futuristic and asked about what they would like to ideally experience to maximize feedback provided.

Interviews ranged from about 25 to 45 minutes, with an average time around 35 minutes. The researcher asked at the beginning of each interview if there were any questions about the informed consent and tried to make some small talk to put the interviewee at ease. The researcher was also completely flexible in arranging a time for the interviews, which were always scheduled at a time that was convenient for the interviewee. The researcher conducted all interviews from his home office, and the interviewees' location was split between their home and work.

It is important to emphasize that only non-management employees were included in this study. Supervisors, managers, directors, and vice presidents were excluded. The logic here was that all employees receive an appraisal and have a perception of the feedback, but supervisors and above complete many appraisals and, as a result, their meaning-making process may be very different than that of non-management staff. This study was focused on the employee level and understanding how to create better alignment and behavioral change at the employee level to improve organizational performance.

Having access to the multiple forms of data-gathering techniques provides a wealth of data to analyze and to identify any themes that emerge. The multiple methods utilized in this study (survey and interviews) helped with triangulating the data and avoiding misleading findings.

Discussion of the Sample

This research site was selected because to complete this study, any researcher needed access to very sensitive data (appraisal scores, demographic information, etc.) that ordinarily

would not be available to an outsider. The researcher completed an informal survey among

Human Resource peers at other institutions and asked for their willingness to share the needed

employee demographic and performance appraisal information; the answer was an emphatic

"No." As a result, the researcher chose his former employer worksite. In large part, the research

methodology was developed to minimize any possible impact on the results of the researcher

being a former senior leader at the research institution.

The research site was a pediatric hospital in South Florida which employs approximately

4,200 employees. This includes: 1,055 nurses, 350 physicians, 700 allied health professionals

(pharmacists, lab, rehabilitation [speech, occupational, physical], radiation techs, respiratory

therapists, etc.), 700 support staff (plant operations, environmental services, nutritional services,

sterile processing, operating room techs, care assistants, etc.), and 1,400 others in various

departments such as human resources, marketing, legal, research, finance, and the like.

Approximately 63% of nurses at this hospital have a bachelor's degree, and about 5% have a

master's degree or higher. This site is designated as a nursing magnet location, which means that

higher educational and professional standards must be maintained. Currently, only about 10% of

hospitals in the United States have this designation.

Methods for Assuring Protection of Human Subjects

This was a highly sensitive area for the researcher since he completed the research at his

former place of employment and was a senior leader at the organization. In addition to the IRB

process at Teachers College, Columbia University, the researcher also requested IRB approval

from his former employer's research institute that is fully accredited by the Association for the

Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs. The hospital, like Columbia University,

has a comprehensive IRB process. The researcher took an abundance of care and was most

cautious in designing this study to not subject any employees to any employment or personal

relationship risks, and also to find locations that created a comfortable environment for the

interviews. The COVID-19 pandemic made the environment a non-issue as the interviewee

could select any location of choice as long as there was a Wi-Fi connection. Also, since the

hospital is a large employer, it is unlikely that many interviewees would personally know the

researcher.

Throughout the drafting of this study, the researcher paid close attention to complying

with the guidelines required by the IRBs of both the hospital and the university. The study

maintained as a high priority the protection of participants, including confidentiality, participant

information, and adherence to strict research ethics, as outlined by the hospital and university

IRBs. A formal consent form was required and obtained from each interviewee. The form was

reviewed at the start of the interview to confirm understanding of what was signed and agreed to.

A copy of the survey consent form and the interview consent form are included in Appendix B

and Appendix E, respectively.

Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis

Miles and Huberman (1994) noted that qualitative data are usually in the form of words.

As a result, due to the large volume of words collected in a qualitative study, forethought is

required about the analysis and synthesis of the material into meaningful conclusions. Creswell

(2014) stated, "The text and image data are so dense and rich, not all the information can be used

in qualitative studies" (p. 195). Hence the researcher needed to focus on some data and disregard

other parts of it. The process began with the research questions, which were then reviewed

through the lens of the existing literature, followed by the development of the conceptual map

(presented at the end of Chapter 2, Literature Review). According to Marshall and Rossman

(2011), typical analytical procedures fall into seven phases which guided the researcher: (a) organizing the data, (b) immersing in the data, (c) generating categories and themes, (d) coding the data, (e) offering interpretations, (f) searching for alternative understandings, and (g) writing the report.

The following discusses how the researcher managed, organized, and analyzed the data. The interviews were transcribed, and an Excel spreadsheet was used to capture the coding and eventual determination of themes from among the codes. The coding scheme, which is included as Appendix F, was modified as the research process unfolded. The preliminary coding scheme followed Maxwell's (2005) three broad categories of organizational (broad areas established before the interview that can be anticipated), substantive (primarily describes and includes participants' concepts or beliefs), and theoretical (more from established theories or literature). The codes for this study were focused on process and theoretical domains and were guided by the conceptual map (Figure 7), which also was modified as the coding process moved along. Two individuals assisted with the coding to ensure inter-rater reliability. One was a full-time online professor and an adjunct at a local South Florida university, where she teaches doctoral students Research Ethics and Qualitative Research Methods; she holds a doctorate degree. The other was an experienced market researcher who has coded data for qualitative interviews and focus groups for many years.

To get to the final coding, the interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service; then, the researcher listened to all recordings to ensure accuracy of transcription and made corrections as needed. Once the transcripts were confirmed as accurate, the researcher completed the first coding. Next, the market researcher reviewed each of the 21 coded transcripts

in its entirety. After that, the market researcher reviewed the transcripts in a series of joint sessions. During the sessions, all transcripts were reviewed and the following changes occurred:

- Codes were assigned to text that the researcher had not coded.

- Codes assigned by the researcher were modified.

- New codes were established for interviewee comments.

These joint sessions continued until there was agreement on the coding. At the end, about 80% of the researcher's original codes remained. This process was very iterative and took months to arrive at the final coding. The professor provided more guidance on the structure and framework of the coding. The researcher observed that patterns emerged in response to interview questions that were not directly asked. For example, there was no direct question on communication, but interviewees spoke of the effectiveness of the communication in their appraisal sessions. This resulted in codes for questions that were not directly asked.

Prior to each interview, a pre-interview information sheet was completed that included key demographic data of the interviewee and his/her survey responses and comments. This helped with probing any inconsistencies with the interviewee's responses. As part of the same form, there was a section for after-interview summary, which the researcher completed immediately after the interview to capture the substantial number of nonverbal cues from the interviews that could be lost if the researcher only used the transcribed interviews as a data source. This is particularly important if the researcher does not personally conduct all the interviews. A sample of the form is in Appendix G. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) described the importance of documenting bodily expressions or non-linguistic aspects and the interpersonal dynamics between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Interviewees were given the opportunity to review their transcribed interviews for confirmation that the transcript accurately captured his/her thoughts during the interview. Interviewees were given the opportunity to amend or clarify his/her responses to the questions asked. Each interviewee was given a specific amount of time to review the transcript, and if there was no response by the deadline, the researcher assumed the transcript was accurate. This process was explained to the interviewee at the conclusion of the interview. None of the interviewees requested to review their transcripts. In addition, intercoder reliability, which is further described in the validity and reliability section below, built confidence in the coding scheme as themes emerged. The conceptual framework was the basis for assigning codes. The overall synthesis process can be characterized as non-linear and an iterative process, in which the novice researcher depended on support from his sponsor and network.

Literature to Support Design and Data Collection Methods

To get an in-depth understanding of how the research participants felt about their performance appraisal experiences, the researcher selected a qualitative method—interviews. The pool of candidates for this qualitative method was selected from survey participants. Maxwell (2005) proposed triangulation, defined as using a variety of sources and methods "to reduce the risk that your conclusions will reflect the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows the researcher to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues being investigated" (pp. 93-94). Therefore, this study used multiple methods. The following is a brief discussion highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

Survey

The key considerations for a survey are the design and response rate. First examining the survey design, Fowler (2014) indicated that for self-administered surveys, closed-ended

questions (which can be answered by checking a box) work best when looking for a high response rate. The feedback survey followed this guideline by only including seven questions, each with a Likert scale, except the last one which was open-ended. This design was selected for ease of completion. Fowler also pointed out that self-administered surveys on sensitive topics like this one (thoughts and feeling on the quality of feedback received) contributes to high return rates when anonymity is assured. This leads to a higher level of truthfulness in the responses. A total of 257 participants responded to the survey, which represents a participation rate of 24.4%.

Fowler (2014) indicated that internet surveys range in response rates, but 60% is on the higher end of the range. Fowler also stated that "non-response is problematic and an important source of survey error" (p. 58). Issues that affect response rates are trust, confidential survey results, the literacy level of certain employees, or survey fatigue. Moreover, some survey respondents may not be computer literate or English may not be their first language.

Interviews

The researcher conducted 21 interviews from the pool of nurses who completed the Feedback Survey. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) described a qualitative research interview as "an attempt to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world" (p. 1). An advantage of the interview following the survey was that it allowed the researcher to further probe what was shared in the Feedback Survey. Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) seven stages of an interview inquiry are consistent with the approach the researcher took to develop this research study and interview protocol (Thematizing, Designing, Interviewing, Transcribing, Analyzing, Verifying, Reporting). However, the authors also discussed the dual nature of an interview—that it is a combination of the personal connection between interviewer and interviewee and the knowledge that is derived

from the content of the interview. Both parts work together to create successful interviews which lead to a meaningful study. Rubin and Rubin (2012) also recognized that "unlike most ordinary conversations, interviews usually occur between relative strangers. Yet success in responsive interviewing requires developing a trusting personal relationship between the researcher and the interviewee" (p. 6). This researcher hoped to turn a potential negative of being a former senior leader who was conducting the interviews to one of connection. That both the researcher and the participants were connected by a common experience at the hospital can lead to a bond. In addition, the interviewee may see that as a former senior leader, the researcher may be able to effect change in the appraisal process.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) described an in-depth semi-structured interview format which the researcher used. It allowed the interviewers to come to the interview with prepared open-ended questions and gave the interviewer the flexibility through follow-up questions and prompts to gather rich detailed information. The interview questions in Appendix H were tested and modified as the result of a pilot study. It was expected that these more enlightened questions would improve the data collection and the quality of the interviews.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) opened a discussion on the quality of a good interview and concluded that some people may be easier to interview than others and that an experienced interviewer may help in this regard. Considerations that may have limited a candidate from participating in an interview was the amount of time required (approximately 1 hour) from a busy work and life schedule. To the extent possible, the researcher offered the interviews at convenient times for the interviewees and even attempted to provide them during work time. Also, the location due to COVID-19 was no longer an issue as the interviews were conducted via Zoom. But if they had been in-person, the researcher would have asked the interviewee to select

a time and location to maximize the convenience and comfort of the environment for the interviewee. Likely that would have meant the interviewees' work area. In ordinary circumstances, carefully balancing these concerns can maximize the opportunity to gather valuable information.

Validity/Reliability

Validity, as used by Maxwell (2005), is the "correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation or interpretation, or other sort of account" (p. 106). Validity threats can undermine the credibility of a qualitative study. These threats can lead others to alterative explanations to what has been observed. Incorporated into this research design were various strategies to help minimize validity threats. For this study, reactivity, as used by Maxwell (2005), is the influence the researcher has on the study through normal qualitative methods such as interview and so on, but in this study, this was an even more important issue because the researcher conducted the research at the institution where he was employed in a senior leadership role. The goal was to understand the impact of the researcher and to mitigate it as much as possible by conducting interviews as were proposed for this study.

Maxwell (2005) provided a checklist of methodologies that help to increase the validity of the research, and several of these methods were integrated into this study. Specifically, the methodology employed several different data collection tools (triangulation). The first collection tool was a voluntary feedback survey. From the survey group, three groups of nurses were recruited for interviews based on their survey responses. Initial interview results were carefully evaluated to determine if the researcher was influencing the results. If that had been the case, other qualified interviewers would have been asked to complete the remaining interviews. The interviews were transcribed to provide rich data and to allow as much observation as possible for

data gathering. As a reminder, a pilot study was completed indicating that the researcher's former position was not an issue.

To assist with comparisons and any possible generalizations that could be made, this study was limited to nurses at a single employer located in South Florida, predominantly in the Miami area. This somewhat homogeneous (similar job responsibilities, similar pay and education, etc.) group of nurses limited some of the demographic and socioeconomic variables in the study and hopefully created more of a focus on performance appraisal perceptions.

Reliability, as described by Robson (2011), is "the stability or consistency with which we measure something" (p. 85). As discussed previously, due to the researcher's former role in the organization, additional interviewers were considered to be used to increase validity. However, this could potentially reduce reliability due to observer error or bias because additional interviewers might interpret and conduct interviews differently.

Creswell (2014) and Marshall and Rossman (2011) described intercoder reliability which was applied in this study. Creswell (as cited by Miles & Huberman, 1994) recommended that the consistency of coding among the different coders should be at about the 80% level for good qualitative reliability. Code definitions were developed, and qualified coders reviewed the codes for consistency of meaning and applicability. Codes were intended to lead to the identification of themes that would provide insights into the research questions.

To end this section, it is appropriate to parallel the trustworthiness of a study for both quantitative and qualitative studies. Terms derived from quantitative studies are reliability, validity, objectivity, and generalizability. However, Lincoln and Guba (as referenced in Marshall & Rossman, 2011) provided an alternative construct for qualitative research by using credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. The terms are equivalent in many ways, but the

qualitative terms allow researchers to move away from the rigor that has been operationalized in quantitative research.

Study Limitations

Marshall and Rossman (2011) stated that "all proposed research projects have limitations; none is perfectly designed" (p. 76). The possible limitations for this research are discussed in this section. The primary concern was the researcher had limited experience conducting research, particularly interviews. Would this impact the researcher's ability to develop the needed trust with a diverse group of interviewees, particularly if they were aware of his former role as a senior leader? Would the researcher's age, gender, race/ethnicity, and so on impact the connection with the interviewees, given that the workforce in a city like Miami is very diverse? Would interviewees simply tell the researcher what they believed he wanted to hear? The researcher has been successful in his role at the hospital for more than 10 years, with additional responsibility periodically added, so perhaps that was an indication that the researcher succeeded in navigating the cultural issues and would not be limited in hearing the authentic voice of the employees. In addition, the researcher has been a human resource practitioner for more than 30 years, and interviewing is a core competency of the role. Applying that skill to this research could help compensate for the lack of research experience. However, Guba (1990) pointed out that in qualitative research such as was done in this study, the "results of an inquiry are always shaped by the interaction of the inquirer and inquired into" (p. 26).

The potential impact of the researcher, as a former senior executive at the research institution, on the study results must be considered. The nurses' decision to participate in the survey or not could have been influenced by the researcher's former position. Interviewees were selected from the survey pool. If the survey pool was limited, the results from the interviewees

could potentially represent a narrower view of the nurses' perspectives about performance appraisals. In addition, interviewee responses could have been impacted by the researcher's former position. Many steps were taken in the methodology to mitigate any effect, but there is no certainty if these steps were effective or if the researcher influenced the study.

As a human resource practitioner, the researcher has formed a point of view or bias on the effectiveness of performance appraisals. Would the researcher be able to suspend his perspectives and thoughts to truly hear the employees? The researcher's interest in this research project came from many years of administering performance appraisals that fell short of their primary task, which is to provide feedback. Maxwell (2005) maintained that "qualitative research is not primarily concerned with eliminating variance between researchers in the values and expectations they bring to the study, but with understanding how a particular researcher's values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study" (p. 108).

Would the results from a study completed in a healthcare institution be generalizable to a broader population, or would the findings be only meaningful in a hospital environment? Many people would argue that healthcare does not represent broader corporate cultures. Moving to the corporate world from a hospital happens infrequently because of the perception that there are large cultural differences between the two. Hospitals are generally not-for-profit, not concerned about quarterly earnings. The perception is that corporate cultures are less forgiving and move at a faster pace.

The goal of this study was to develop generalizable knowledge. The design of the study was carefully constructed with these limitations in mind, with the hope of minimizing them and creating results that add to the body of knowledge on performance appraisals.

Chapter Summary

In conclusion, this chapter provided a description of the study's methodology. The purpose of the study was to explore how recipients of performance appraisals, a widely accepted practice, made meaning from the feedback they received. To complete this study, the researcher conducted a survey and interviews. The research sample came from a single employer located in South Florida mainly due to the sensitivity of the required information to complete this study. The researcher was a former employee at this institution and attempted to mitigate any impact this may have on the study through the research design. The literature review provided a conceptual framework for the study and the research questions emanated from the identified gaps in knowledge on performance appraisals. This study will hopefully be the beginning of a new focus on performance appraisal research by placing the recipient at the center of the process and start to return the process to its core purpose—to provide meaningful feedback.

Chapter 4 – FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore how the recipients of an annual performance appraisal made meaning from their experiences over their career. This was accomplished through a survey and interviews of nurses at a pediatric hospital in South Florida. This chapter reviews the seven findings that are aligned to the four research questions, as presented in Figure 10 below. The findings were derived primarily from the interviews as more questions were asked and there was opportunity to probe responses, unlike in the survey. The findings are also organized by themes (see Figure 10). Areas where both the survey (257 participants) and interviews (21 interviewees) line up around a theme are indicated in the findings. The findings are reflective of a large percentage of the interviewees, and mention is made of where they are reinforced by the survey participants. There is also a separate section later in the chapter dedicated to findings from the survey. Even though the survey was conducted first, the primary focus of this study was on the interviews.

Below is a summary of the study findings from the interviews, followed by a demographic review of the study sample, then a detailed discussion of both the interview and survey findings.

Summary of Findings

Research Question #1 Findings (How do past experiences with the appraisal process impact the recipient's ability to actively participate and engage in the process?)

1. Both the survey comments and interviewees raised the issue of the frequency of the feedback provided. The concept was with ongoing and regular feedback, surprises

were minimized during the appraisal, and nurses had an opportunity to act on any

feedback.

Figure 10

Summary of Study Findings

Research Questions	Major Themes Found	Key Findings
Research Question #1 How do past experiences with the appraisal process impact the recipient's ability to actively participate and engage in the process?	Process, feedback, and delivery issues lead to view of experience.	1. More frequent feedback desired.
Research Question #2 What are differences in the feedback received by employees rating the quality of feedback on a performance appraisal survey high versus those rating it low?	Communication effectiveness impacts quality of feedback.	2. Understanding preferred feedback method, feedback including concrete examples, and clearly articulating performance expectations improve communication.
Research Question #3 What factors help to create an ideal environment for the recipient to receive constructive feedback?	An effective learning environment reduces anxiety.	3. Anxiety is a major influence in the process and has varied impact on recipients.
Research Question #4 Under what kind of circumstances/conditions is the recipient more likely to convert the feedback into possible actions/changes in behavior?	Leader's ability to directly interact, observe, and support the employee is a key determinant of recipient's experience.	4 Power dynamic influences recipients. 5. Recipient's primary goal for appraisal is growth and feedback. 6. Most meaningful feedback not from leader. 7. Support to act on feedback not consistent.

Research Question #2 Findings (What are differences in the feedback received by employees rating the quality of feedback on a performance appraisal survey high versus those rating it low?)

2. Communication, to be effective, was expressed in three ways: Understanding recipient's preferred feedback method, feedback is most effective when it includes concrete examples of performance, and clearly articulated performance expectations make it easier to perform and achieve personal and organizational goals. Approximately half the interviewees felt that performance expectations were not mutually understood.

Research Question #3 Findings (What factors help to create an ideal environment for the recipient to receive constructive feedback?)

3. One of the key findings of this study was around the importance of the learning environment. Nearly all interviewees expressed that they experienced stress/anxiety during the performance appraisal. This stress/anxiety adversely impacted the ability to hear and absorb feedback for about half the interviewees.

Research Question #4 Findings (Under what kind of circumstances/conditions is the recipient more likely to convert the feedback into possible actions/changes in behavior?)

4. The power dynamic between the leader and the employee was probed; what was found was the Below group were most fearful or disengaged to even raise an issue of disagreement with the appraisal or were unsure of the viable escalation path. As a result, no resolution was pursued.

5. The interviewees' primary goal for the annual appraisal was feedback and growth.

6. The majority of the interviewees expressed that the most meaningful feedback was from peers, patients, parents, physicians, and clinical educators, as opposed to the leader. The survey participants also commented about who was best positioned to provide feedback.

7. For an appraisal to be effective and bring about desirable performance improvements, there needs to be support mechanisms for the recipients to act on the feedback. Interviewees were split on their assessment of the level of support provided and available for areas pointed out during the appraisal that need developing.

The number of findings for each of the research question varied: Question 1 has one finding, Question 2 and Question 3 each have one finding, and Question 4 has four findings. This is important to note as the findings were placed with the research question that fit best, but the questions interconnected. For example, an interviewee might have discussed the frequency of the feedback he/she received, but there were implications about the amount and quality of the connection with the leader or how many appraisals the leader has to complete, which can have implications for the learning environment and the level of anxiety the recipient experiences during an appraisal. These connections are explored during the discussion of each finding.

Demographic Review of Survey and Interview Participants

This section examines the groups studied (survey group and interviewees) to determine if there were any significant demographic deviations from the overall nursing population at the research institution. The research group was limited to non-supervisory nurses so the group would be homogeneous from a pay and education standpoint. However, additional review of the demographic composition (Gender, Age, Length of Service, and Race/Ethnicity) of the groups was compared to the overall nursing population to determine if there were any demographic

variations that could impact the findings. Table 6 below compares all the group demographics: Interviewee groups—Below, Mean, and Above (defined in the Table 6), all interviewees as a group, all survey participants, and all non-supervisory nurses at the research institution.

The survey group demographics were consistent with the overall nursing population for gender, age, and length of service. There were some small variations in the race/ethnicity mix, but these were judged not to be significant. Having a survey group that matches the overall nursing population at the research institution adds to the soundness of the study, since interviewees were selected from this group.

Concerning the demographics of the interview group (7 were selected for each group Below, Mean, and Above), the biggest variation was that the interview group did not have any males, whereas approximately 10% of the nurses at the research institution are male. The average age for each interview group (Below, 37.3; Mean, 43.1; Above, 40.9) was somewhat different than the average age for the research institution (44). This is also true of the average length of service for each of the interview groups (Below, 9.4; Mean, 10.7; Above, 13.6), whereas the research institution average length of service was 11.0 years. However, the average length of service of all the interviewees (11.2 years) was virtually the same as the survey group (11.0 years) and all nurses (11.0 years) at the research institution. Also, another variation from the norm at the research institution was the race/ethnicity for the interview groups, but when the race/ethnicity for all interviewees was examined, it was more aligned with the survey group and the nurses at the research institution. The biggest variation was that there was higher representation from Black nurses in the interview group than the overall nurse population at the research institution and no representation from the Other group, which was primarily Asian.

Due to the random selection process for the interviews and the small number of interviewees, these variations were expected and were not considered major deviations. This led the researcher to the conclusion that the survey participants and interviewees were a fair mix of demographics and representative of the nurse population at the research institution.

Table 6

Demographic Analysis of Study Participants

Demographic analysis of interviewees and survey participants, compared to overall nursing population at hospital/research institution

	Below (7)*	Mean (7)*	Above (7)*	All Interviewees (21)	All Survey Participants (257)	All Nurses at Facility (1,055)
Percent Female	100%	100%	100%	100%	89.9%	88.7%
Average Age	37.3	43.1	40.9	40.4	45.0	44.0
Average Length of Service in Years	9.4	10.7	13.6	11.2	11.0	11.0
Race/Ethnicity						
% White	14.3% (1)	42.9% (3)	0% (0)	19.0% (4)	24.5% (63)	21.1% (223)
% Hispanic	85.7% (6)	42.9% (3)	71.4% (5)	66.7% (14)	64.2% (165)	61.8% (652)
% Black	0%	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)	14.3% (3)	6.6% (17)	8.3% (87)
% Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	4.7% (12)	8.8% (93)

*Note the following naming convention was used in this study for brevity and clarity and to represent the following groups:

Below = Survey participants or Interviewees who were one standard deviation below the mean in their responses to the survey questions. Interviewees in this group are referred to by their number followed by the letter "B" to indicate they are members of the Below group.
Mean = Survey participants or Interviewees who were within one standard deviation of the mean in their responses to the survey questions. Interviewees in this group are referred to by their number followed by the letter "M" to indicate they are members of the Mean group.
Above = Survey participants or Interviewees who were one standard deviation above the mean in their responses to the survey questions. Interviewees in this group are referred to by their number followed by the letter "A" to indicate they are members of the Above group.

Nurse Interview Findings

In this section the seven findings from the interviews are examined. Table 7 describes the demographic profile of each interviewee as well as how they responded to the seven findings. Given the length of the table, it is divided into two parts: the first part presents general demographics and Findings #1 and #2; the second part presents Findings #3, #4, #5, #6, and #7. This section explores the Findings from several perspectives as bulleted below.

- Summary of Findings from all 21 interviewees as a group.

- Summary of Findings by group (Below, Mean, Above).

- Summary of Findings by demographic factor (generation, length of service, and race/ethnicity).

Finding #1: More Frequent Feedback Desired

In the Methodology chapter of this study, in the section entitled Performance Appraisal Process at the Research Site (Figure 9), the researcher described the standard appraisal process/policy (goal setting, quarterly performance updates, self-appraisal and peer reviews, frequency of feedback, timelines, electronic system for capturing all the feedback, etc.) at the research organization. The process included a quarterly review of performance followed by the annual appraisal. Based on the interview feedback, there was inconsistency in the administration of this process. Two-thirds of the interviewees valued and found it meaningful to receive regular feedback during the performance year. However, only about half of the interviewees actually received performance feedback during the performance year (see Table 8 below).

Table 7

*Interviewee Demographics and Response to Findings**

Part 1: Demographics, Findings #1 and #2

Interviewee	Gender	Generation	Length of Service in Years	Race/Ethnicity	Finding #1			Finding #2				
					Regular Feedback During Year Is Meaningful	Eeedback Limited to Appraisal	Average Time of Appraisal in Minutes	Leader Understands Preferred Method of Feedback	Leader Does Not Understand Preferred Method of Feedback	Feedback Includes Concrete Examples	Performance Expectations Clearly Communicated	Performance Expectations **Not** Mutually Understood
BELOW												
1B	F	Y	11-20	Hispanic	X	X	Up to 15		X	X		X
2B	F	Y	0-5	Hispanic	X		15-30					
3B	F	X	21-30	Hispanic	X	X	Up to 15		X	X		X
4B	F	Y	0-5	White		X	Up to 15			X		
5B	F	Y	11-20	Hispanic	X		>30	X			X	X
6B	F	Z	0-5	Hispanic		X	15-30			X		X
16B	F	Y	6-10	Hispanic	X	X	15-30 & >30		X			X
MEAN												
13M	F	Y	0-5	White			15-30		X	X	X	
14M	F	Z	0-5	Hispanic	X	X	>30		X			X
15M	F	Boomer	0-5	Hispanic		X	15-30	X			X	
17M	F	Y	0-5	White	X		Up to 15	X				X
18M	F	Boomer	>30	White		X	Up to 15		X			
20M	F	Z	6-10	Hispanic	X		Up to 15			X		X
21M	F	Boomer	11-20	Black	X		>30	X				
ABOVE												
7A	F	Y	0-5	Hispanic		X	Up to 15			X		
8A	F	Y	0-5	Black	X		>30		X			
9A	F	X	11-20	Hispanic		X	15-30	X		X		X
10A	F	Y	11-20	Black	X		>30	X				
11A	F	X	21-30	Hispanic	X	X	Up to 15		X			
12A	F	Boomer	>30	Hispanic	X		>30	X				
19A	F	Z	0-5	Hispanic	X		15-30	X				

105

*Please note that the researcher did not ask the interviewees what pseudonym they would like to use to represent them in any quotes or references in the document; consequently, the researcher was reluctant to assign names at the risk of being insensitive to the demographics of the group, particularly regarding race and ethnicity.

Table 7 (continued)

Part 2: Findings #3, #4, #5, #6, and #7

Interviewee	Gender	Generation	Length of Service in Years	Race/Ethnicity	Finding #3 Appraisal Anxiety Is Experienced by Interviewee	Finding #4 Fearful or Disengaged to Raise Issue of Disagreement with Appraisal	Finding #5 Appraisal Goal Feedback and Growth	Finding #5 Appraisal Goal Appreciation and Recognition	Finding #6 Most Meaningful Feedback from Leader	Finding #6 Most Meaningful Feedback from Peer, Patient, Parent, Physician, Clinical Coordinator	Finding #7 Interviewees State There Are Adequate Resources for Professional Development
BELOW											
1B	F	Y	11-20	Hispanic	X	X	X				
2B	F	Y	0-5	Hispanic	X	X	X	X	X		
3B	F	X	21-30	Hispanic	X	X	X	X		X	
4B	F	Y	0-5	White						X	
5B	F	Y	11-20	Hispanic	X				X		X
6B	F	Z	0-5	Hispanic	X	X		X		X	X
16B	F	Y	6-10	Hispanic	X		X	X		X	
MEAN											
13M	F	Y	0-5	White	X		X			X	X
14M	F	Z	0-5	Hispanic	X		X			X	X
15M	F	Boomer	0-5	Hispanic			X	X		X	X
17M	F	Y	0-5	White	X	X	X	X	X		
18M	F	Boomer	>30	White				X	X	X	X
20M	F	Z	6-10	Hispanic	X		X			X	X
21M	F	Boomer	11-20	Black	X		X	X	X		X
ABOVE											
7A	F	Y	0-5	Hispanic	X	X	X	X		X	
8A	F	Y	0-5	Black	X		X		X		X
9A	F	X	11-20	Hispanic			X			X	X
10A	F	Y	11-20	Black	X		X		X		X
11A	F	X	21-30	Hispanic	X		X	X		X	X
12A	F	Boomer	>30	Hispanic			X		X		X
19A	F	Z	0-5	Hispanic	X		X	X		X	

Table 8

Frequency of Performance Feedback

	Below	Mean	Above
Regular Feedback During the Year Is Meaningful	5 (71%)	4 (57%)	5 (71%)
Feedback Limited to Annual Appraisal Session	5 (71%)	3 (43%)	3 (43%)

A review by generation, length of service, and race/ethnicity did not add anything to this finding, except that the Black group (3 interviewees) all said that regular feedback during the year was meaningful and they received feedback more often than the annual appraisal. This was not the case with the White or Hispanic groups. For the White and Hispanic groups, feedback was limited to the annual appraisal more than 50% of the time, even though they highly valued regular feedback as well.

The quote below from Interviewee #3B talked about the importance of regular feedback. Regular feedback eliminates surprises at the annual appraisal session and the appraisal recipient appreciates knowing what areas need to be worked on before the annual appraisal session occurs.

Interviewee #3B: Value of receiving regular feedback
    I think when there's something to bring up it should be brought up throughout the year so that you know how to improve. If you're doing a good job to be brought up throughout the year. If you're not doing a good job it needs to be brought up throughout the year so that, like you said, there's no surprises when you sit down for that evaluation. I think it's more effective if you discuss it throughout the year.

This study highlighted the inconsistent delivery of regular feedback to nurses at the research institution. The interviewed nurses' experience was varied, with some disappointed they did not receive regular feedback while others were pleased that they did. The quotes below illustrate the range of experiences.

> Interviewee #7A: Not receiving regular feedback
>   So, no. I was actually talking to an employee about this during our last appraisal. That all these things get brought up during the appraisal time. But, as they're happening through the year, nobody comes up to you and says, "Hey, well, this happened yesterday or, this happened the day before. And how can we work on it?" So that you're expected that at the end of the year, it will be talked about. Which is why I said, usually I sit there and I think, well, what happened through the year that could be talked about, because, nothing really gets brought up during the time that it happened. That feedback I think will serve better if it happens as the issues happen, not at the end of the year. So, no. I don't see actual evaluations through the years. I don't see actual feedback happening as often throughout the years. Unless it's something that had to be escalated to higher management.

> Interviewee #21M: Receiving regular feedback
>   It's always ahead of time. It's not like they wait for the end of the year. Throughout the year, we have several sessions where we discuss what's going on.

Both the survey (27% of comments) and the interviews (67% of interviews) were aligned in this finding about the desire for feedback more often than one time per year.

Compounding the fact that slightly more than half of the interviewees did not get performance feedback other than at the annual appraisal was the amount of time of the annual appraisal itself and who dominated the annual feedback session conversation. More than two-thirds of the interviewees reported that their annual appraisal session was 30 minutes or less, while more than a third reported it was 15 minutes or less. This limits the time to share and exchange meaningful feedback. See Table 9 below.

Table 9

Average Time of Annual Appraisal Session

	Below*	Mean	Above
Up to 15 Minutes for Annual Appraisal	3 (38%)	3 (50%)	2 (29%)
15-30 Minutes for Annual Appraisal	3 (38%)	2 (25%)	2 (29%)
More than 30 Minutes for Annual Appraisal	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	3 (43%)

*The Below group added up to 8 interviewees because one interviewee gave a range (15-45 minutes) and was placed in two categories: 15-30 minutes and More than 30 minutes.

The Below and Mean groups had shorter annual appraisal sessions than the Above group. All three groups, or 71% of the interviewees (Below, 3; Mean, 5; Above, 7), viewed the appraisal session similarly in that for the majority of the session, the leader did the talking or dominated the conversation; all of the Above group felt this way. However, 20 of 21 (95%) of interviewees indicated that they felt the appraisal session was a dialogue that allowed them to ask questions and get answers; in short, they felt heard. This was one of the few areas in which almost all of the interviewees agreed, yet there were some contradictions here: How can the conversation be characterized as a dialogue when the recipient spends only a small portion of the session speaking?

No additional meaningful patterns were found when the interviewees' responses were examined by generation or length of service for the amount of time spent during the annual appraisal session or if the session was a dialogue. However, the entire Black group spent more than 30 minutes in the appraisal session, almost one-third of the Hispanic group spent more than 30 minutes in the session, and none of the White group spent more than 30 minutes. The two quotes below typify the interviewee comments around the time of the appraisal session and who did most of the talking during the session.

Interviewee #18M: Length of annual appraisal session
    The evaluation probably lasts 10 minutes. I don't know if you know how it's done at the hospital now. They encourage you to do a self-evaluation. And I'm going to say 25 years ago, somebody that I worked with said, "If you don't toot your own horn, nobody's going to toot it for you." And so, you do your best in your self-eval, telling them everything that you do, do and how you feel that you're doing with that. Then after that, they have two other people that evaluate you. And then, the director or in our case, it is our director, which happens to be the doctor that I work with all the time. Then they add their two cents worth into that. So, you read what was said about you by these two other people that did your evaluation, and then you read what the doctor has said about you, the director, whoever it is that's during your eval, but it has to be a doctor in our case. It's about 10 minutes that you read what everybody said and then they may reinforce some things.

Interviewee #19A: Who does most of the talking during annual appraisal session
    I would say 80% my boss, only because part of the appraisal is reading everything, so that takes a lot of the talking, and 20% of me speaking back and giving my response back. Yeah.

Finding #2: Communication Effectiveness (Understanding Preferred Feedback Method, Feedback Including Concrete Examples, and Clearly Articulating Performance Expectations Improves Communication)

In this finding, three sub-themes were found that collectively impact the communication effectiveness of the feedback provided during the appraisal. The sub-themes discussed in this section are:

- if the leader understands the preferred way the recipient would like to receive his/her feedback;

- if the feedback provided uses concrete examples of areas that the recipient performed well or areas where improvement is needed; and

- if the appraisal recipient understands performance expectations through clearly articulated objectives and measures.

Understanding Preferred Feedback Method. In this study, communication effectiveness of the delivery of both positive and negative feedback was found to be connected to three important themes: Understanding the employee's preferred style of feedback, Enhancing the feedback with concrete examples, and having clearly expressed performance expectations. The differences in the quality of feedback often came down to the skill of the leader, the amount of time the leader and employee interacted, and the strength of the leader/subordinate relationship. It is important to note that no specific interview questions were asked about the last two themes (Enhancing the feedback with concrete examples, Having clearly expressed performance expectations), yet the themes were prevalent among the interviewees' conversations with the researcher.

According to Guo (2011), "Communication is the creation or exchange of thoughts, ideas, emotions and understanding between the sender and receiver." An essential element for effective communication is some level of understanding of the recipient's preferred communication style, which was defined in this study as the way in which the recipient wanted information shared. Some of the responses given by interviewees were verbal, written, timely feedback at the time of a positive or negative incident, and private or public discussion. Below are examples of how interviewees expressed their preferences about communication.

Interviewee #20M: Choices of feedback for appraisal recipient
Either in writing or in person is fine with me. I think some things are definitely not something that can be just emailed, especially if other people are involved. I think, face-to-face is more important, so you can kind of get both sides of the story. But, if it's something minor, I don't mind receiving emails about it too, and it's kind of better because again, I feel like you're always nervous going into a manager's office. They don't call you in just to be like, "Hey, how was your weekend?" So half the time we joke and we're like, "What did I do now?" And they're like, "No, it's fine, we just need a favor, whatever."

Interviewee #5B: Choices of feedback for appraisal recipient
So I would say that it's different depending on the type of feedback. If it's positive, I'm very shy, I wouldn't like it publicly, even if it's positive. Maybe via email. If they want to acknowledge something via email while I'm not standing there, that's what I would prefer. Negative, definitely in private. And yeah, I'm sure my leader is aware. You get to know people's personalities very quickly working with them. And there's people that like public praise and there's people that are not.... That they're more shy and timid. I'm definitely one of those shy and timid people. I don't like the public praise.

The interviewees split in their view if their leader understood their preferred method to receive feedback, with eight saying that their leader did not understand their preferred style and eight saying that their leader did understand their preferred style. Five interviewees did not express a thought on this topic. Guo (2011) went on to say that employee motivation and satisfaction are dependent on effective communication, and communication is essential to building and maintaining relationships in the workplace.

There was somewhat of a pattern among the different groups (Below, Mean, Above), with the Above group (4) having the highest number of interviewees who felt their leader understood their preferred method of feedback and the Below group having only one member. This was consistent with the Below (3) and Mean (3) groups both having an equal number of members who felt their leader did <u>not</u> understand their preferred method of feedback. A theme was beginning to emerge that communication effectiveness is linked to how a nurse creates meaning concerning the appraisal. The quotes below represent the typical responses to the question about whether the recipient's leader understood the preferred method/style of feedback.

<u>Interviewee #3B: Leader does not understand interviewees preferred communication method</u>

Does he know? Um, no because again the person that does my appraisal is an administrator who is not in the office every day. We see him once every so often. He comes in, he says hi, but is he rarely in the office on a daily basis to see how we work? No.

<u>Interviewee #21M: Leader does understand interviewees preferred communication method</u>

She does understand my preferred way of getting feedback. She would send me an email, then she would call me on the phone. "Did you read what I sent you?" "Yeah, I did." Yeah, she knows (laughs). I am a visual person. Send me a letter. It will take me a while to go through it, and then read word by word. I like to sit down in person and discuss things. And then at that point, we could go from line to line, where there are questions and stuff, but I like it better in person, verbally.

Feedback Including Concrete Examples. It is notable that although it was not one of the interview questions, almost 40% of the interviewees raised this point. Eight of the interviewees shared that providing examples made the feedback concrete and assisted in creating a sense of fairness. Without such examples, the feedback can be too high level and not actionable. The Below group had the largest number expressing this thought (4) while the other two groups had two each.

When reviewing how generation, race/ethnicity, and length of service impacted the

perspective of the use of examples, it was clear that zero Baby Boomers expressed this concern,

whereas almost half of Gen Z + Gen Y + Gen X (8 of 17) combined felt that performance

examples made feedback concrete and assisted with understanding the feedback and helping the

recipient to make performance improvements. Similar to the generation breakdown, one group,

the Black group, did not express concern with the need for examples. With the other groups,

White (2 of 4) and Hispanic (6 of 14), about half said examples were valuable. Finally, the only

group that was not concerned about concrete performance examples were the long service group,

with over 30 years of service (0 of 2). Interviewee #13M below captured the thought that specific

and measurable feedback was valuable.

> Interviewee #13M: Use of concrete examples aid in delivering meaningful feedback
>   First, I think it's helpful for me to get very specific and measurable feedback. I think
> that kind of comes from my teaching days where I find it more helpful when I'm either
> grading something or evaluating something to have kind of a checklist, an objective kind
> of measure of how people are doing. So I remember the appraisal was more values-based.
> And so it was a little bit more subjective and could be measured really different, a couple
> of different ways. So I remember not quite knowing where I stood going in, because
> it would seem.... Think there was a lot of subjective measures there. So for me, the
> objectivity is important, and then I do also like to have some sort of constructive
> feedback given. I like for there to be something that I'm working on and something I
> know that I need to improve.

Clearly Articulating Performance Expectations. Once again, there was no specific

interview question asking if there were clearly articulated performance expectations, but there

was consistency among the groups who expressed this point. Table 10 shows minimal expression

in the Below, Mean, and Above groups of expectations being clearly communicated and

understood. By contrast, the Below and Mean groups had substantially larger numbers

expressing that the opposite was true, that expectations were not clearly communicated and

mutually understood.

113

Table 10

Understanding If Performance Expectations Are Clearly Communicated

	Below	Mean	Above
Expectations and feedback clearly communicated and understood	1	2	0
Expectations <u>not</u> mutually understood	5	3	1

When reviewing how generation, race/ethnicity, and length of service impacted the perspective of clearly articulated performance expectations, it was found that the younger groups Gen Z + Gen Y + Gen X combined (9 of 17) felt that expectations were not clearly communicated and mutually understood, whereas none of the Baby Boomers expressed this sentiment. Examining race and ethnicity, the Hispanic group had more than half vocalizing that expectations were not clearly communicated or mutually understood. For length of service, more interviewees with shorter service than with longer service felt performance expectations were not clearly understood. Aligned with this was the shorter service interviewees from Gen Z (2 of 4), the youngest employees with the shortest service, who indicated that job expectations became clearer as one performed the job. Interviewee #1B below captured the essence of the frustration of poorly understood performance expectations.

<u>Interviewee #1B: Performance expectations not clearly articulated</u>
I would say that because you, as an employee, you feel you do one way, and then your manager or director doesn't appraise you the same way or view it the same way. They're rating you on different things than what you thought you were doing well on.

Finding #3 had three elements in this study that helped to determine communication effectiveness, which had a direct impact on the quality of the feedback at the research institution—namely, understanding preferred feedback method, feedback including concrete examples, and clearly articulating performance expectations. What was particularly important

114

was that the last two themes were not directly asked in the interviews but were volunteered by

the about half of the interviewees in both cases.

Finding #3: Anxiety Is a Major Influence in the Process and Has Varied Impact on Recipients

Throughout this study, it has become evident that there often was no clear majority in the

interviewees' views about their experience with appraisals. With respect to anxiety/stress,

however, a clear majority—slightly more than 75% of the interviewees—indicated that they

experienced anxiety/stress related to the appraisal. Some interviewees' anxiety/stress was such

that it interfered with their ability to hear feedback delivered during the appraisal. The responses

to this research question pointed to the influence of the learning environment, as highlighted in

the quotes from the following two interviewees.

> Interviewee #1B: Impact of anxiety/stress on understanding feedback
> Yeah. I mean, I guess if I'm too anxious, it's hard to comprehend or understand
> certain aspects of what they're trying to say.

> Interviewee #3B: Impact of anxiety/stress on understanding feedback
> I'm going to be honest. I'm not sure I remember anything once I leave that office or
> once I hang up the phone because I've had performance reviews that are done over the
> phone. I'm not sure—I would say that 50% of what is said in that meeting is not, I don't
> remember after I leave that office.

Almost all members of all three groups (Below, 6; Mean, 5; Above, 5) felt the same in

that they experienced feeling anxiety/stress during the appraisal session, but the resulting impact

on the interviewees' ability to hear and understand the feedback was varied. Of the interviewees

who responded to this question, eight said the anxiety/stress limited their ability to listen and

absorb feedback, while eight said it did not impact their ability. Clearly, individuals have

differing levels of anxiety and coping mechanisms; nonetheless, anxiety was still influencing the

ability to absorb meaningful feedback for a large percent of interviewees.

Age, race/ethnicity, and length of service also had an influence on how interviewees experienced anxiety/stress. Baby Boomers seemed to express less anxiety/stress with the appraisal process (1 of 4), whereas the other three groups (15 of 17 for Gen Z + Gen Y + Gen X combined) expressed it more frequently. To support this finding, zero Baby Boomers expressed that anxiety limited their ability to hear and absorb feedback, whereas nearly half the other three generations expressed this sentiment. Concerning race/ethnicity, Whites (0 of 4) did not say that anxiety/stress limits their ability to listen and absorb the feedback during the annual appraisal session, whereas Blacks (2 of 3) and Hispanics (6 of 14) said it did impact them.

When looking at length of service, all groups experienced anxiety/stress related to the appraisal, except the group with 30 years or more of service. The 30-years-plus group also did not report that anxiety/stress limited their ability to hear and understand feedback.

An interesting observation was that the Hispanic group might be more emotionally reactive to feedback than the other two groups. As a group, Hispanics (5 of 14) expressed that feedback generating an emotional response (positive or negative) can motivate an employee to improve or worsen performance. Whites (0 of 4) and Blacks (0 of 3) did not express this.

The interviewees went on to describe actions by the leader that helped to reduce the anxiety during the appraisal session and improve the learning environment. To reduce their anxiety, there was a preference from the interviewees (8 of 14) who responded to this question that their annual appraisal session be scheduled in advance, so they have time to mentally prepare. However, several interviewees (6) did not have scheduled annual appraisal sessions. The leader simply would request that the interviewee come into the office now. This is reflected in the quotes below from Interviewees #17M and #20M. Gen Z (2 of 4) and Baby Boomers (3 of 4) appreciated it most when the annual appraisal feedback session was scheduled.

116

<u>Interviewee #17M: Appraisal session not scheduled in advance</u>
  It normally is just that we know the month that's coming up. Then they'll catch you when you're on a shift. I think at [research institution] it has mostly been just I've been on shift. Then it happened to be when I was on shifts, but I just knew it was coming. I just didn't know exactly the date.

<u>Interviewee #20M: Appraisal session not scheduled in advance</u>
  I don't really mind either way if I had to choose, I guess, ideally it would be nice to know if it was scheduled, just so you kind of can get a lot of the nervousness out of the way. And know like, okay, today it's happening. Whereas people are being called in, and you have no idea when you're going to be called. So then they call you and then it's like a flood gate opens of nerves.

In addition, some of the interviewees expressed the sentiment that the leader was instrumental in setting a calming/safe environment for the appraisal session, which included a warm greeting, smiles, casual or less formal seating, starting with appreciation, some small talk, and other techniques. The younger interviewees (Gen Z and GenY) and the shorter-service interviewees with less than 5 years were the ones who focused on this thought. As previously discussed in other sections, this was not a specific question asked in the interviews, but this point came up enough that it is reported here. Interviewees #14M and #11A articulated points about the learning environment in the quotes below.

<u>Interviewee #14M: Elements of an effective learning environment</u>
  I would say was the personability. It was the fact that we sat side by side as opposed to across from the desk, face-to-face. It felt very warm and like a very open forum is what she created for discussion and for asking questions about the feedback that she was giving. I think that's just super important. I felt like we were speaking with each other as opposed to being spoken at, and I think that made a huge difference for me and being comfortable.

<u>Interviewee #11A: Elements of an effective learning environment</u>
  I mean, I think the room should be comfortable. And like, I think a lot of it has to do with the person. If you're welcoming, with a greeting. "Hi, good morning, okay, have a seat." You know, something like that. I think that helps a lot. But if somebody is like, their demeanor, if it's serious and not friendly. I mean, obviously you can only be so friendly, you know what I mean? But I think that a smile, hi, good morning, I think that helps a lot. Yeah, I think that helps.

Finding #4: Power Dynamic Influences Recipients

The issue of power evolves with the unequal authority and influence leaders have over employees. The leader decides on career growth, pay, work assignments, shifts worked, approval of vacation time, if you stay employed, and other matters. The power of the leader is also present in the annual appraisal and connected to many employment decisions mentioned above.

Although there were no direct questions about power, some interviewees shared thoughts about this in their comments. However, one of the interview questions asked if at any time during their career they disagreed with or were disappointed with their appraisal rating and, if yes, were they able to resolve the disagreement. The results indicated that some of the interviewees were disappointed but clearly not all. However, among the group of interviewees (one-third) who received a high rating (7 received a 4 out of 5 score, excellent, as an appraisal rating), some still felt they deserved a higher rating than given, as reflected in the comments from Interviewee #6B below.

> Interviewee #6B: Interviewee felt she deserved a higher rating
> Yes. I assumed that I just had to work harder, so I did. That I worked towards. I worked towards it for the next year, but then realized that that wasn't the case. It was just, I was trying to achieve the highest level of appraisal, I believe, because I was just the one right below it and I felt that "Okay. I'm up for the challenge. Maybe it's something that's very difficult to achieve." Although I felt that I had, I was achieving that level of performance, so I just worked towards it for the next year and did not achieve it, so I just gave up on the idea.

Overall, six interviewees expressed that they were too fearful or disengaged to even raise an issue of disagreement with their appraisal or were unsure of a viable escalation path for the disagreement in the rating. As a result, no resolution was pursued. Another three interviewees raised an issue about the appraisal disagreement with their leader but were unable to resolve the disagreement on the rating. Only one interviewee escalated the disagreement beyond their leader

to Human Resources or the next level of leadership. The two interviewees below illustrated their

inability to resolve a disagreement over their appraisal rating.

Interviewee #12A: Interviewee unable to resolve appraisal disagreement
There's been a point where I disagree and I say, "Well, I don't agree with that," and they tell me, "Well, the evidence shows this and this and this." That's the way it ends. Because, if there's evidence appointed to that level, it's evidence there's nothing you can change about it.

Interviewee #1B: Interviewee unable to resolve appraisal disagreement
Yes. There has been a couple of times that that has occurred, but no, we weren't able to resolve it. I spoke to my director, the one who gave me the performance evaluation, and that's as far as I took it.

The Below group represented four of the seven interviewees who stated they were too

fearful or disengaged to even raise an issue of disagreement with the appraisal or were unsure of

a viable escalation path. No resolution was pursued. The Mean and Above groups only had one

such interviewee each express this comment. The Hispanic group appeared to be more

influenced by the power structure and less willing to challenge the appraisal. See Table 11.

Table 11

Comfort with Challenging Appraisal Rating by Race/Ethnicity

Code	White	Black	Hispanic
Employee fearful or disengaged to even raise an issue of disagreement with appraisal or unsure of the viable escalation path. No resolution pursued.	1 of 4	0 of 3	5 of 14
Raised an issue with leader about the appraisal but unable to resolve disagreements on ratings.	0 of 4	0 of 3	3 of 14

Finding #5: Recipient's Primary Goal for Appraisal Is Feedback and Growth

The interviewees expressed their goal for the annual appraisal, and they often had more

than one goal. Table 12 below reflects that 80% of the interviewees expressed that one of their

goals, and often the primary or only goal, was for the appraisal process to help them get the

necessary feedback to grow as a nurse professionally. Only four interviewees in the Below group

expressed the goal of feedback and growth, whereas the Mean and Above groups expressed this

more. The second most prevalent goal, expressed by just over half of the interviewees, was for

appreciation and recognition for the work they did during the year. Interviewees #15M and #10A

best articulated that the primary appraisal goal was feedback and growth, whereas Interviewee

#7A introduced the importance of appreciation and recognition.

Interviewee #15M: Recipient's goal for appraisal: Feedback and growth
    What am I hoping to get out of the appraisal? Every year we try to make
improvements on how we're doing things, both for the community, for the patients, for
each other as a team here. I'm hoping to get whether positive or negative feedback. I
want to see what needs to be addressed, how things can be changed, make everybody's
life easier on a day-to-day. We spend more time here with each other than we do with our
own family members. So let's make it a pleasant day. Let's see our work efficiency,
quality of care, and I want to see where the improvements can be made.

Interviewee #10A: Recipient's goal for appraisal: Feedback and growth
    Just basically to see how I can grow. What I can do better or what is it that I'm doing
that is helping me perform in an excellent way and how to continue to provide excellent
service. So, through the different comments made provides encouragement when you
know that you're doing your best. And you've seen that other people feel the same way
about you that you think you're doing, so it encourages you to continue to do the best that
you can.

Interviewee #7A: Recipient's additional goal for appraisal: Appreciation and recognition
    I hope to get good feedback for the things that have gone through the years, but not
just the years. Overall, your career in that unit. Of course, I want the things that I can
work on to be established and told to me, but I would also like for them to praise you on
the things that you've been doing good, because then that motivates you to just keep
getting better, keep growing. I don't think it should all be the bad, the bad, the bad. It
should definitely include a lot of the good that you do as well, because that makes you
feel good about your job and what you're doing. And you feel like you're making an
impact. But when you're constantly being told of all the bad things that you can work on,
it makes you feel defeated.

Table 12

Interviewees' Goals for Appraisal

Recipient Appraisal Goal	Below	Mean	Above
Feedback and Growth	4	6	7
Appreciation and Recognition	4	4	3

When looking at interviewees' appraisal goal through the lens of generation, race/ethnicity, and length of service, no discernible difference was evident. All groups were eager to grow as professional nurses.

An important point to consider was the response to the interview question asking if the appraisal process has improved, stayed the same, or declined over time. Since feedback and growth were the interviewees' primary goals, it was critical to understand their perceptions of the appraisal experience and how it had changed over time. Table 13 indicates there was no clear pattern, with almost a third of the interviewees in each category (improved, stayed the same, or declined).

Table 13

Interviewees' Perceptions of How the Appraisal Process Has Changed over Time

	Below	Mean	Above
Improved over Time	2	2	4
Stayed the Same over Time	2	1	2
Declined over Time	3	2	1

When generation, race/ethnicity, and length of service were examined to see how interviewees saw the appraisal change over time by these groups, there were no patterns. Instead,

there was a similar mix of viewpoints, somewhat equally divided between the three perspectives

of improved, stayed the same, or declined. Finally, the two quotes from Interviewees #5B and

#18M captured polar views. Interviewee #5B said the appraisal has improved, whereas

Interviewee #18M said the opposite.

Interviewee #5B: Appraisal effectiveness improved over time
I think it has gotten better. I think that it's more specific. I think that there's...I don't
remember when I started 14 years ago, there being peer evals. I might be wrong. I don't
recall there being quarterly evals. So I think that there's more feedback throughout the
year. There's more feedback from not just the manager perspective, but from your peers.
So I think it has improved in the sense that you get more throughout the year and you get
more during your eval.

Interviewee #18M: Appraisal effectiveness declined over time
This is exactly what I want to talk to you about. No, you are not completely evaluated
on your performance. You are evaluated on, did you do a research project? Did you make
a Lean improvement? Did you do a poster board? Did you walk the 2K for the hospital?
Now my question to you is, I have 42 years experience. I have worked in the ICUs for
years as a float. They left me in the ICU and ER for years, just never floated me
anywhere else, just left me in there. I've worked the entire hospital, every department in
that hospital, including radiology, the GI lab.
Would you rather have a nurse with 42 years' experience taking care of you, if you
have a major operation or you want one with one year experience that walked the 2K or
run the 2K and did a research project, and they made 12 posters for the hospital? Who do
you want? But the ones that are doing all those little extra things, that's who's getting
more credit, more points and it's all calculated percentage of what your raise or your
level is going to be. And I have told them for years, that is absurd. If I want a nurse to
take care of me, I want one that is skilled, not one that's good on the computer.

Finding #6: Most Meaningful Feedback Not from Leader

The influence and support provided by the leader were another key component of the

effectiveness on the delivery of the feedback and the recipient's ability to act on it. The

relationship was often defined by the amount of time the leader spent with the employee.

Hospitals operate 24/7 for 365 days a year, and often a nursing leader manages a department of

60 to 80 employees, including nurses and support staff. This is a challenge and has been for

many years when considering how large spans of control detract from a leader's ability to form

work relationships with employees. Cupit et al. (2019) studied nurse leaders' span of control at a major Texas Health System and determined that 44% of the nurse leaders had an excessive span of control. The authors also discussed the changing and expanding role of a nurse leader over the last three decades, resulting in high vacancy rates along with role overload and burnout. Cathcart et al. (2004) reported that employee engagement scores declined fairy consistently as the nursing group size increased. The two key inflection points were when the work group grew larger than 15 employees and, again, when the group was larger than 40 employees.

One-third of the interviewees said that their nursing leader had 30 or more appraisals to complete, and one interviewee said her leader had over 100. Below, Interviewee #11A summarized the appraisal burden in terms of the number a nursing leader may have to complete in a short amount of time since the research institution has a common review date, which means that all staff are reviewed at the same time each year.

> Interviewee #11A: Number of appraisals a nursing leader can be responsible for
> My manager, her name is Jennifer. She's awesome. Awesome. But, she's all around, she's one person and she has 70 people.

As a result of the above operating environment, it was not surprising to find that less than 40% of all three groups (Below, Mean, Above) stated that the most meaningful feedback was from their leader. The Below group was the strongest in expressing this view, with over 70% stating that less valuable feedback came from their leader due to little time spent interacting/ observing and getting to know the whole person. Possibly they worked on evenings and weekends, times when the leader was not there. This could not be confirmed with the data the researcher had gathered.

For the majority of the interviewees (62%), the most meaningful feedback came from peers, patients, parents, physicians, and clinical coordinators (non-leadership roles). Equal

proportions from all three groups (Below, Mean Above) stated this. Interviewees #4B, #6B, and

#14M quoted below made the case why feedback from someone other than the leader was most

meaningful. Interviewee #4B indicated the patient or parent as the best source of feedback, while

Interviewee #6B told us that the clinical coordinator (non-supervisory educator role on nursing

units that assists with orienting new nurses, introducing new workflows or new equipment,

generally is the expert on technical nursing skills) provided the most meaningful feedback, and

Interviewee #14M said peers.

Interviewee #4B: Most meaningful feedback from patients or parents
    Patients (laughs). Patients or their family member, whoever is responsible for the
patient. Whatever they have to say is what I take most to heart more than anybody else,
because that's essentially my customer, my client, the person that I'm working for. So,
whatever they have to say means the most.

Interviewee #6B: Most meaningful feedback from clinical coordinators
    Oh, my clinical coordinator is very empowering. I mean, I believe it's because their
work base is off education and us succeeding in the workplace, both skills and wanting us
to continue our education and stuff. They provide the best feedback. They're the most
approachable, as far as when I do a mistake or I come across something, if I have any
questions. It doesn't matter what it is. They're very open and honest. I believe they do the
best as far as providing feedback. They do such a good job at communicating it without
putting you down and not making you feel like it defines you as a nurse.

Interviewee #14M: Most meaningful feedback from peers
    Probably my peers. They work with me the most, so they know how I work, my work
ethics, and if I'm doing something in the correct manner or it could be improved. So,
hands down the most valuable feedback would come from them.

Several patterns were found when reviewing generation, race/ethnicity, and length of

service. The first was that younger interviewees (Gen Z, Gen Y, and Gen X) found peer, patient,

parent, physician, and clinical educator feedback the most valuable feedback in a 2-to-1 ratio

over leader input. The Black interviewees (all 3) stated the most meaningful feedback was from

the leader. The White group had a mix of views on who provided the most meaningful feedback,

whereas approximately 70% of the Hispanic interviewees said the most meaningful feedback

came from peer, patient, parents, physician, and clinical educator. Finally, those interviewees

with shorter service (less than 10 years) favored peer, patient, parent, physician, and clinical

educator feedback as the most valuable feedback in a 3-to-1 ratio over leader input.

With 62% of the interviewees receiving the most meaningful feedback from a non-leader,

an interesting finding emerged around peer feedback. This was not an interview question, yet

nearly one-third of the interviewees expressed a strong negative reaction to peer feedback. They

felt that peer feedback had limited value due to fear of negatively impacting a coworker, peer

bias (likes the person or not), when it was the only or main feedback given, or the peer had not

worked with the employee often enough or fully understood the interviewee's role. It was

interesting that four of the six who stated the peer feedback had limited value also indicated that

the most meaningful feedback was from their leader. Generation and length of service did not

show any reportable trends, but race/ethnicity pointed to the White group (3 of 4) expressing that

peer feedback had limited value. The Black (1 of 3) and Hispanic (2 of 14) groups were less

concerned. The quotes from Interviewees #7A, #4B, and #1B reflected the favorable and

unfavorable views of peer feedback.

Interviewee #7A: Favorable view of peer feedback
I think we should definitely keep (peer feedback). There's a section in which all the
nurses are allotted or given a person that they work with, to speak on their behalf about
empathy, their advocacy and things of the sort. I think that's important because you're
getting feedback from your colleagues, which are the people that see your work every
day.

Interviewee #4B: Unfavorable view of peer feedback
It's a good concept, but it's also—I think it can also be insignificant because we all
pretty much like each other and get along, and we all want each other to do well and get a
good pay raise, so we're going to say really nice things (laughs) because we want to help
each other out in that regard. I don't know how constructive we actually are when it
comes to writing those peer evals.

125

Interviewee #1B: Unfavorable view of peer feedback
    I think it's very dependent on the person providing the peer feedback because I've seen some that provide really good as far as constructive criticism or it's valuable feedback. I've seen peers do that. But sometimes I feel they may not know all the aspects of what a role is, and then it's hard for them to provide feedback on that person if they don't understand the role completely.

Finding #7: Support to Act on Feedback Not Consistent

The appraisal process at the research institution as designed includes goal setting at the beginning of the performance cycle, regular feedback during and at the end of the cycle, and ongoing support systems to enhance identified areas of performance needing improvement (Chapter 3, Methodology, in the section entitled Performance Appraisal Process, described this process through Figure 9.) This last finding focused on the opportunity for development and support available for the feedback provided.

Sixty-two percent of the interviewees stated that there were adequate resources for the needed professional development. The Below (2 of 7) group shared this view least, with the Mean (6 of 7) and the Above (5 of 7) groups seeing much more support. Interviewee #10A typified the comments on the availability of professional development to the nurses.

Interviewee #10A: Professional support available to act on feedback
    Have the support through my manager, I have the support through my clinical nurse specialist. Gives me different ideas, different projects that I can work on and how to get the things that I need to be able to do the projects and things like that.

There were no discernible patterns among the demographics of age, race/ethnicity, and length of service about adequate or lack of resources for needed professional development. However, another related code looked at the leader support (often described as classes, mentoring, follow-up conversations/check-ins, etc.) for the interviewees' professional development; the only difference among the demographic sorts was that the entire White group

126

(4 of 4) expressed a lack of support from their leader for achieving professional goals, whereas the Black and Hispanic groups felt stronger support from their leader.

One final observation that came from the interviews and subsequent analysis was that development generally fell into two categories: the first being technical nursing skills (starting IVs, administration of medication, taking of history and physical, assessing patient, documenting in the patient chart, etc.), and the second being behavioral changes such as improving customer service, having teamwork, or responding to an aggressive patient or physician, among others. This also was not an interview question, but just under 50% of the interviewees saw the value in measuring both the technical skills and behavioral components of performance, while about 25% said that measuring behaviors was more difficult and more subjective than measuring technical skills. This needs more probing in future research, but most of the interviewees volunteering thoughts about the availability of professional development were talking about technical skills, not behavioral skills. Zero interviewees in the Below group expressed support for the two-part appraisal, and all the interviewees who expressed support for measuring behaviors were in the Mean and Above groups. Perhaps the Below group had less favorable experiences with the more subjective nature of the behavioral feedback.

When generation, race/ethnicity, and length of service were examined, the youngest (Gen Z, 3 of 4) and the oldest (Baby Boomers, 4 of 4) supported the two-part appraisal which assesses technical skills and behaviors/values. Gen Y and Gen X (3 of 13) were not as supportive of this approach. In addition, the Black group (1 of 3) was less inclined to support a two-part appraisal system that assesses both technical skills and behaviors/values. Whites (3 of 4) and Hispanics (6 of 14) were more inclined to support such a system. Finally, it seemed that the short-service and long-service groups were aligned as the generation groups above. Almost 60% of

interviewees with less than 10 years of service and those with more than 30 years more readily

embraced the measurement of both technical skills and behaviors. Interviewee #14M discussed

how it was more difficult to assess behaviors over technical nursing skills.

> Interviewee #14M: More difficult to measure behavior than technical nursing skills
> Probably not, because at least technicalities objectively, you can see it on paper and
> the way they're charting, and then the other portion is going to be a lot more subjective,
> and I would imagine that when I sit with my manager, because she doesn't actually see
> me work, all of her feedback is coming from our peer reviews, my peers that I work with
> on occasion. And even then in the float pool, you might work with one nurse one day and
> not work with them again for another two months. So it's a little hard to find a way to
> measure them equally. But I do think that they're both of equal importance.

Nursing Survey Findings

The survey was the primary tool developed to create a pool of candidates to interview.

The questions were aligned to the interview questions, and the survey provided an additional

data source to examine and correlate with the interview data to help understand the meaning

appraisals had for nurses at the research institution. There were 257 participants, which

represents a participation rate of 24.4%. The literature is unclear on what an acceptable survey

response rate should be. Robson (2011) acknowledged there is little agreement about the rate, but

suggested many researchers use 60% as benchmark. Fowler (2014) pointed to two different

internet surveys with widely varying response rates: one was 60% and the other 30%. Two

additional recent studies found varied response rates. Coryn et al. (2019) found the control group

response rate to be 36%, while Cook et al. (2016) found response rates hovering around 10%.

For this study, support from nursing administration and the fact that the survey was sent through

the internal email system of the research institution added credibility. The study participation rate

appeared to fall in the acceptable range that was wide and not fully defined for internet-based

surveys.

Even though the participation rate was acceptable, it is worth pointing out that it is unknown if the institutional support (survey sent through employer internal email system) had any impact on certain nurses being more or less interested in completing the survey. For example, it may be that nurses who had a more favorable view of the appraisal or trust in the employer were more willing to share their views than those who did not. The researcher feels that based on the survey comments (see Table 16) and the interviews that this was not an issue; nonetheless, future research should consider this issue in the design as previous internal nursing surveys typically yielded a higher survey response rate. This again raises the question about a potential influence the researcher might have had on the survey participation rate as a former senior executive at the research institution.

As Table 6 showed, the survey participants were reflective of the overall nursing population at the research institution. The average responses to the survey by group are shown in Table 14. From these pools, the interview groups were randomly selected.

Table 14

Average Survey Responses by Groups

	Below	Mean	Above
During my career, the feedback I receive during my appraisal matches the feedback I receive during the year	2.51	4.15	4.48
During my career, the appraisal rating (e.g., role model, excellent, strong contributor, etc.), I received in previous years influences my expectations for the current year's rating.	2.78	3.82	4.83
During my career, my appraisals helped me to better understand my performance.	2.18	3.86	4.97
During my career, my supervisor/manager typically discussed at the appraisal ways to improve my performance.	2.78	3.93	4.97
During my career, the feedback I received helped me improve my future performance.	2.38	3.91	4.97
During my career, I have been satisfied with the annual appraisal process.	1.97	3.49	4.75
Average using a 5-point scale	2.39	3.88	4.82

The richness of the survey lay in the comments. Question #8 was an open-ended question asking the participants to share their suggestions on how to improve the appraisal process and/or how to improve the communication of meaningful feedback to the recipient. Eighty-five of the 257 survey participants (33.1%) chose to comment, with some typing as much as a paragraph. Luebker's (2020) study, with more than 14,000 participants in a mixed internet survey with open-and closed-ended questions, resulted in 6% to 7% writing comments. It appeared that the comment rate for this study, with 33.1% of participants commenting, was high.

The comments most often expressed are listed in Table 15, along with the percent of the group who made comments sharing a particular point of view. Generally, the comments were focused on process issues (Research Question #1), and there are some differences between the groups. The biggest issue to emerge was the frequency of the feedback provided. All three groups expressed interest in more regular feedback during the year, so they could act on any feedback given and not be surprised at the annual appraisal.

There may be some link between who is best positioned to provide feedback and the nurses' relationship with their leader. All three groups raised the issue of having someone evaluate them who has firsthand knowledge of their work and has the appropriate credentials. For example, an administrative leader who is not a clinician might not be best-suited to appraise nursing skills.

It is important to emphasize that the survey questions were different and more limited in scope than the interview questions, which covered more topics in greater detail. The comments in Table 15 represented the most common responses which mostly fell under the major themes for Research Question #1 (process, feedback, and delivery issues lead to view of experience), and Research Question #4 (leader's ability to directly interact, observe, and support the

employee is a key determinant of recipient's experience) due to the fact that the survey questions

focused on these areas. There were no significant number of comments in the survey for

Research Questions #2 and #3, which were more about communication effectiveness and the

learning environment, respectively, and thus harder to express.

Table 15

Most Common Themes Represented in Survey Comments

Theme	Below (# /% of comments from group)	Mean (# /% of comments from group)	Above (# /% of comments from group)
Research Question # 1: Process, feedback, and delivery issues lead to view of experience			
Pay increase: Dissatisfaction of linking the appraisal score to the annual pay increase.	3 (10.7%)	1 (2.1%)	--(0%)
Regular feedback: Prefer feedback more regularly, more often than once per year.	6 (21.4%)	14 (29.2%)	3 (33.3%)
Rating Limits: Organization limits the number of nurses who can receive the top rating of role model and many find this hard to understand.	3 (10.7%)	6 (12.5%)	--(0%)
Recipient finds there is a lack of meaning and time to complete appraisal: the process is repetitious, long, and time consuming.	3 (10.7%)	3 (6.3%)	3 (33.3%)
Research Question # 4: Leader's ability to directly interact, observe and support the employee is a key determinant of recipient's experience			
Raise issue that person with firsthand knowledge is best positioned to provide feedback and it may not be leader.	5 (17.9%)	3 (6.3%)	1 (11.1%)
Leader and support: Participants are pleased with support and process	(0%)	5 (10.4%)	1 (11.1%)

However, even though there were no substantial number of survey comments for Research Questions #2 and #3, an analysis of the tone of the comments revealed an overwhelming number of what would be considered negative comments, as Table 15 indicated. In this way, the survey participants were expressing their view around the emotion of the appraisal process. Table 16 shows the number of negative, neutral, and positive comments by survey group (Below, Mean, Above); regardless of survey group, the tone of all comments was overwhelming strong, direct, and negative. The assessment of tone was usually very clear, as the three sample survey comments below show. In addition, tone evaluation was reviewed by the inter-rater who had expertise in marketing, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Negative: Take away the clinical apex ladder, compensate and pay nurses what they deserve instead of making it so difficult.

Positive: I have been happy with the current system.

Neutral: Meeting more often during the year.

Table 16

Tone of Survey Comments

Tone of Survey Participants' Comments	Below	Mean	Above
Negative and questioning about the appraisal experience	24 (86%)	30 (63%)	7 (78%)
Neutral about the appraisal experience	4 (14%)	12 (25%)	1 (11%)
Positive about the appraisal experience	--	6 (12%)	1 (11%)

The strong negative tone can be a reflection that part of a nurse's professional identity and annual pay increase are determined by the appraisal. Tying the performance appraisal to a reward system can shift the employees' focus from meaningful feedback (listening and

absorbing) to dwelling on their pay increase. This is discussed in the section titled Future

Research Opportunities in Chapter 5.

Key quotes from survey participants from the open-ended questions are included in

Appendix I and represent the most prevalent thoughts expressed in the survey as well as the

range of thoughts expressed. The quotes reflect the themes and are organized by the research

question under which they best fall, along with a description of the theme. Certain quotes may fit

into more than one research question. The quotes often had the same sentiment expressed by

different groups (Below, Mean, Above). But with a few themes, different perspectives were

expressed by different groups and the quotes captured the divergent views. As pointed out in the

previous section on Interview findings, some of the survey themes aligned with findings of the

interviews.

Chapter Summary

The survey from which the interviewees were selected aligned with some of the major

findings from the interviews; where this occurred, it was pointed out in this chapter. Figure 10,

Summary of Study Findings, highlighted the research questions, major themes found, and seven

key findings. There were other comments of interest made by some study participants without a

specific prompt that could evolve into a finding in a future study.

Clear among the survey participants and interviewees was that there was no single view

of appraisals. Some in the survey said the appraisal was a great source of feedback, while others

said it was flawed; many were in the middle, recognizing their utility but finding room for

improvement. These were largely the same findings gleaned from the interviews.

There were seven findings in this study. However, interview responses were sometimes

broader than the questions asked and could lead to additional findings with further investigation.

Interviewees' responses were rarely unanimous. In fact, responses most often reflected a range of thoughts and, at times, were polar. This can only be interpreted as a failure of the appraisal process (which includes multiple aspects of the procedural steps, forms, and administration) or the research design. Ways to address any potential design issues are discussed in the section entitled Future Research in Chapter 5.

Performance appraisals at the research institution are designed to be standard tools that should deliver a similar experience to all recipients. Instead, there was tremendous variation. An idyllic image of what an appraisal could be was expressed by Interviewee #9A below.

Interviewee #9A: Image of a performance appraisal
I think it's a 12-month gauge on my performance. That's how I see it, like a 12 month I guess you could say even a 12-month photo album type of thing, you know? Because it's so detailed. It just shows me where I stand.

Given the variability of the interviewees' experiences, it was apparent there was little uniformity or accountability around the content and delivery of the appraisal feedback. As long as forms were completed, deadlines were met, and written comments stayed within legal boundaries, there was minimal review and oversight.

One of the more significant findings to emerge in the survey comments was the frequency of the feedback provided. All three survey groups expressed interest in more regular feedback during the year, so they could act on any feedback given and not be surprised at the annual appraisal. This was a consistent message from the interviewees, with a majority of the interviewees valuing and finding meaningful regular feedback during the performance year. However, this was contrasted with approximately half of the interviewees not receiving performance feedback during the year. Feedback for this half of interviewees was limited to the annual appraisal session, and some felt this was unfair because they did not have the opportunity to improve during the performance year.

The second finding was that the effectiveness of appraisal communication was linked to the leader and was collectively defined by interviewees in three sub-themes: Does the leader understand the recipient's preferred method of feedback? Does feedback (positive or negative) include concrete examples to reinforce behaviors? and Are performance expectations clearly articulated so the recipient understands expected outcomes and how they will be measured? Among the interviewees, there was no unified thought about the effectiveness of communication. In fact, they were largely split in their view on these three key components of communication.

The third finding was that anxiety had a major influence on the appraisal participants. Its impact varied by recipient. This finding highlighted the importance of the learning environment. Slightly more than three-quarters of the interviewees expressed that they experienced stress/anxiety during the performance appraisal, and for many, it lessened their ability to hear and absorb feedback.

The fourth finding dealt with the power dynamic between leader and employee. Nearly a third of the interviewees were fearful or too disengaged to even raise an issue of disagreement with the appraisal or were unsure of the viable escalation path. As a result, no resolution was pursued.

The fifth finding established that the primary appraisal goals for over 80% of the interviewees were feedback and growth, followed by nearly two-thirds also saying that appreciation and recognition were valued. This finding drew a contrast between the recipient's expectations and hopes and what was delivered. However, the dilemma was that 80% of the interviewees desired meaningful growth and feedback from the appraisal and, as stated in Finding #1, more frequent feedback was desired, yet 70% of the interviewees' annual appraisal session was 30 minutes or less, with 50% not having any performance feedback during the year.

For the sixth finding, the majority of all three interview groups stated that the most meaningful feedback came from peers, patients, parents, physicians, and clinical educators as opposed to the leader. The survey participants also commented that the persons best positioned to provide feedback were the ones with first-hand knowledge of the employee's performance.

The seventh and last finding suggested that appraisal effectiveness was linked to support mechanisms in place once feedback was provided. Nearly two-thirds of the interviewees stated there were adequate resources needed for professional development. However, a difference was expressed about the support available for developing technical nursing skills versus improving behaviors.

Final Chapter Summary Thoughts

What was apparent from the findings were that there is no single view about appraisals. Some in the survey said the appraisal was a great source of feedback, others said it was flawed, and many were in the middle, seeing the utility of appraisals but finding that there was room for improvement. The positive and negative comments from the survey, detailed below, captured the extremes.

Positive survey comment:
My manager is amazing and gives feedback all the time, whether it is positive or for areas of improvement.

Negative survey comment:
I feel like no matter what accomplishments I make during the year, my performance appraisal remains the same as the previous year. Over the years (28 years) I have grown a huge amount professionally. I have participated in projects and activities both unit and hospital wide. I have been involved in Beacon/Magnet and other leadership activities. Despite writing paragraphs of explanation for my self-appraisal, detailing all accomplishments, I still receive virtually the same appraisal as previous years. So, I'm not sure what to do to improve. It's a little frustrating.

This was largely the same with the interviews, with half of the interviewees (12) finding the feedback/appraisal process to be fair and meaningful. The remaining interviewees had a

mixed view of the value, either providing minimal to no value (4) or each year having repetitive

content with little learning (5). The following quotes from interviews captured the same essence

as survey participants' comments:

<u>Interviewee #9A: Positive interview comment</u>

But yes, it's my manager's delivery on my feedback. She just has this way of speaking. Again, so non-threatening, and at the same time, I'm like, "You know what? I really want to make her proud." It's funny because she's much younger than me, but she's my manager. Who cares about age? She is my manager. Yeah, so, I think it's the delivery, her delivery on it, and the fact that it's so easy to follow. "One thing this year, and this is the thing." And that's it. It's so black and white.

<u>Interviewee #7A: Negative interview comment</u>

Honestly, I feel like appraisals have gotten worse. When I first started, the manager would constantly come into the unit, have a conversation with me, talk to me. So, by the time the annual review came, I kind of knew what was going to be said because, she had spoken to me about most of it. The things that she thought that I was going good, the chart reviews, for example, or, where I needed to improve. As the years went by, I have noticed there has been less time allocated to the appraisal process. And, it's very, read what's off the appraisal tool, but not, put your own input and emotions on the evaluation.

Chapter 5 – ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, CONCLUSIONS,
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how the recipient of the annual performance appraisal process makes meaning from the feedback received and to understand the obstacles the recipient encounters in this process and what practices facilitate the provision of valuable input that can lead to changed behaviors. The performance appraisal process is the annual cycle that was defined in the Literature Review chapter for the research institution, which includes any goal setting and regular feedback during the annual cycle and culminates in the formal written appraisal session. Throughout the study, the researcher hoped to obtain insights into how meaning was created by the recipients and how learning occurred in order to provide recommendations for process improvements or new contributions to the literature. The four research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do past experiences with the appraisal process impact the recipient's ability to actively participate and engage in the process?

2. What are the differences in the feedback received by employees rating the quality of feedback on a performance appraisal survey high versus those rating it low?

3. What factors help to create an ideal environment for the recipient to receive constructive feedback?

4. Under what kind of circumstances/conditions is the recipient more likely to convert the feedback into possible action/changes in behavior?

Seven major findings were described in Chapter 4.

- **<u>Finding #1</u>:** More frequent feedback desired.

- **Finding #2:** Communication effectiveness (understanding preferred feedback method, feedback including concrete examples, and clearly articulating performance expectations improves communication).

- **Finding #3:** Anxiety is a major influence in the process and has varied impact on recipients.

- **Finding #4:** Power dynamic influences recipients.

- **Finding #5:** Recipient's primary goal for appraisal is growth and feedback.

- **Finding #6:** Most meaningful feedback not from leader.

- **Finding #7:** Support to act on feedback not consistent.

Upon review of the findings, the following three major themes emerged as the analytical categories:

1. Although the appraisal is a standard process at the research institution, and in most organizations, the experience of the recipients at the research institution is varied and inconsistent across most findings. Seldom did the interviewees have a unanimous view on a theme. What was generally found was that within interview groups (Below, Mean, Above) as well as across groups, there was no agreement on themes.

2. The appraisal process is well-defined in policy and procedures as well as fully automated at the research institution, but there is little leader accountability to ensure that the multiple steps are followed and little measurement of the effectiveness of the appraisal feedback.

3. The conceptual map specifies many streams of literature and processes that can enhance or limit the value of the feedback for the recipient (motivation, bias, power, process issues, experiential learning, coaching, feedback, learning environment). There is likely additional literature that can be considered, but there is tremendous

complexity with understanding which of the streams of literature or processes have

the largest impact on the individual receiving the appraisal feedback.

In this chapter, the researcher first discusses the findings relative to the analytical

category in which they fall, followed by how these findings relate to the literature. Finally,

assumptions presented in Chapter 1 are revisited, along with how this study contributes to the

literature.

Analysis

Participant Groups

This study started with a performance appraisal survey of the non-supervisory nurses at

the research institution. Two hundred fifty-seven nurses participated. Based on the responses to

the survey, the respondents were divided into three groups: Below, Mean, and Above. The

Above and Below groups were one standard deviation from the mean. From the three groups, the

21 interviewees were randomly selected. The demographics of each group were presented in

Chapter 4 (Table 6) and generally reflected that each group (Below, Mean, Above), all

interviewees as a group of 21, and the survey participants were consistent with the overall

nursing population at the research institution.

Analytical Category 1. *Standard appraisal process but the delivered experience of the*

recipients is varied. As reported in Chapter 4, the seven findings can be organized under overall

themes or analytical categories. The themes capture the interconnectivity of the findings. The

findings that fall under Analytical Category 1 are: Finding #1: More frequent feedback desired,

and Finding #5: Recipient's primary goal for appraisal is growth and feedback. These two

findings reflect the polarity between what the recipients want in the way of more feedback so

they can grow professionally and what they receive from the appraisal process.

Finding #1, where the recipients desire more frequent feedback, is a perfect example

of a standard process that is delivered differently by different leaders. Figure 9 in Chapter 3,

Methodology, described the research institution's standard appraisal process. Both the survey

participants who wrote comments and the interviewees strongly indicated that regular feedback

was desired. However, less than half of the interviewees received feedback during the year or

outside of the annual appraisal session. Compounding the lack of ongoing feedback is that the

interviewees' annual appraisal session was typically short, with more than two-thirds of the

sessions running 30 minutes or less, with 71% stating the leader did the majority of the talking.

This limited the time for discussion and understanding and creating meaning. Interviewees'

expectations and perceptions of what the annual appraisal session conversation should be were

likely set from their previous experiences. The power dynamic discussed in Finding #5 may

influence the dialogue as well.

Even though the study results showed that a large number of interviewees were not

receiving ongoing feedback, Armstrong (2010) indicated that best practices for performance

appraisals included ongoing formal and informal feedback provided during the performance

cycle. This might reflect the discomfort that many leaders and recipients have with the process

and leaders often feel the appraisal is something they have to do with few measurable outcomes

or employee performance improvements. In addition, in Chapter 4, Finding #6 introduced that

the demands on nursing leadership have grown so large due to the business requirements of

healthcare (demands in finance, quality, compliance, HR, supply chain, etc.) and large spans of

control that little time may be available to provide feedback to the staff. This may be a systemic

issue with no easy or quick solution. At a philosophical level, if the leaders of the organization

feel this way, the processes and quality of the feedback will generally be weak and not meet the

employees' desire for meaningful feedback. This can also reflect a core belief of leaders about why employees come to work each day: to receive a paycheck or to make a contribution and improve. If the latter, feedback should be provided regularly to allow for growth and time to improve. Further, using the models of Kolb (1984), Jarvis, (1987), Boud and Walker (1991), Fenwick (2001), and Matsua and Nagata (2020), it is clear that all include a reflective period to assimilate and react to the experience. Without regular and ongoing feedback, reflection and time to clarify feedback provided are minimized and, as a result, the opportunities for learning become more limited.

Brookfield (2006) suggested nine variables to completing a successful student evaluation, and several dealt with frequency, immediacy (provide feedback as quickly as possible after the learning event), and regularity (comment frequently on the student's work).

Drago-Severson and Blum-Destefano (2014) introduced the idea that one size does not fit all, and feedback through performance appraisals may need to be transitioned to more of a personalized/interactive model of communication and feedback. Edwards et al. (2003) and Kuvaas et al. (2017) agreed that frequency and immediacy of feedback are important, and waiting to share feedback until the annual performance appraisal is inadequate.

The need for balanced, regular, ongoing feedback, both positive and negative, is clearly documented in the literature. The question is why is that not happening, particularly when it is the policy of the research organization, and the tool for capturing the feedback is readily available through an electronic system.

Moving on to Finding #5, recipient's primary expressed goal for appraisal is growth and feedback, this was not surprising, particularly if one subscribes to the point above that employees come to work to do a good job and want to learn and grow, not just work to get a paycheck.

Intrinsic and extrinsic factors motivate employees. Eighty percent of the interviewees expressed that their primary goal for the appraisal was to obtain the necessary feedback to grow professionally as nurses. The second most prevalent goal, with just over half the interviewees expressing this, is for appreciation and recognition for the work done. Both appraisal goals can coexist and complement one another. As above in Finding #1 (more frequent feedback is desired), there is a dilemma with short appraisal sessions. Almost 70% of the interviewees' appraisal sessions was less than 30 minutes, and 50% said they did not receive any performance feedback during the year. Therefore, when and where is the feedback delivered that allows the recipient to grow and be adequately recognized for their contributions?

When considering other findings in this study such as limited communication effectiveness (#3) and, at times, power issues (#5), we see a confluence of issues that can limit the ability of the recipients to gather meaningful feedback from the appraisal to fulfill their goal of growth and feedback. The final point is that there was no agreement among interviewees if the process had improved, stayed the same, or declined, which can be interpreted that the recipients' experience was varied, even though the process appears to be standard.

The findings of Coens and Jenkins (2002) and Barnes-Farrell and Lynch (in Edwards et al., 2003) aligned with the findings of this study in that performance appraisal recipients want valuable feedback about how they are performing and their rewards should be reflective of their individual contributions. The concept of fairness was also introduced. For the recipient to absorb any feedback, it needs to be judged as fair. Brown et al. (2016) discussed how to deliver negative feedback effectively, which is part and parcel of providing feedback. It can be uncomfortable for someone to hear negative feedback and that they need to improve their performance. But when balancing the feedback (positive and negative), it becomes more possible to hear critical input.

Consistent with this approach, Brookfield (2006) also added that one of the factors for student evaluations is affirming (be appreciative and positive).

Analytical Category 2. *Little accountability for leaders to conform to appraisal policies and procedures.* Analytical Category 2 was supported by Finding #6 (Most meaningful feedback not from leader), Finding #7 (Support to act on feedback not consistent), and Finding #2 (Communication effectiveness [Understanding preferred feedback method, feedback including concrete examples, and clearly articulating performance expectations improves communication]). These three findings are linked to the variability with which leaders administer and follow performance appraisal policies and procedures. This leads to inconsistent outcomes among the recipients.

Starting with Finding #6, at first this seemed surprising, but upon further review of the literature and reflection on how healthcare has changed over the recent years, the finding began to make more sense. Cupit et al. (2019) and Cathcart et al. (2004) concluded that nursing leaders' span of control has grown and, for many, it is considered excessive. Employee engagement scores declined when direct reports were in excess of 40. One-third of the interviewees in the study reported that their leader had more than 30 appraisals to complete each year. Combining the 24/7 nature of a hospital with the typical nurse leaders' schedule being day shift, it is no longer surprising that less than 40% of interviewees stated the most meaningful feedback comes from their leader.

A typical nursing leader's work schedule is almost always day shift, Monday to Friday. Interviewees have stated that nursing leaders are often taking care of administrative responsibilities in their office or attending meetings during the day. The nursing leader's schedule presents even greater challenges for the evening, night, and weekend staff to be

144

observed at work and to form a relationship with the nurse leader doing the appraisal. Due to cost, hospitals have been reluctant to expand the leadership ranks. In fact, based on the literature, the trend is to increase the span of control and add charge nurses (shift leaders/acting supervisors) that do not have budget responsibility or hire/fire/discipline authority.

Barlett and Ghoshal (1997) described the competencies needed for new managers; the core responsibilities needed for today's leaders are: understanding and creating opportunities by maintaining knowledge of the competitive and customer environments, attracting and utilizing scarce resources and skills including financial and people, and thoroughly understanding the business operations to effectively improve processes. Accepting these new competencies to be successful in today's business world points to a contradiction in the findings of this study: if one of the three critical manager skills is managing and developing people, why are leaders not the most important source of feedback? Sixty-two percent of the interviewees said the most meaningful feedback came from peers, parents, physicians, and clinical coordinators. What has become clear is that a clinically qualified person who spends the most quality time working with or observing the nurse is in the best position to provide the most meaningful feedback.

Two interesting points became apparent is that healthcare systems may have no formal processes with which to gather feedback from these alternative sources. No literature was found suggesting that healthcare organizations have formal mechanisms to integrate physician or patient feedback into nurse performance appraisals. The researcher has worked in several healthcare institutions and does not know of any formal process to capture this valuable input. The research institution has a formalized automated peer feedback mechanism, but no formal way to integrate feedback from parents, physicians, and clinical coordinators. Gathering this input is largely dependent on leaders, the priority they set, and the effort they put into the

appraisal process. Also, almost one-third of the interviewees expressed concern with peer feedback for multiple reasons such as: limited value due to fear of negatively impacting a coworker; peer bias (like the person or not) when it is the only or main feedback provided; or the peer has not worked with the employee often enough or does not fully understand the employee's role.

The literature is replete with studies on multisource feedback, which typically includes boss, peer, and subordinates. Smither et al. (2005) suggested that performance over time improves with multisource feedback, with no one source (boss, peer, subordinate) providing superior feedback. Mauer and Tarulli (1996) confirmed that feedback is most meaningful when the rater has spent adequate time with the recipient to understand the job and the context.

So how are leaders held accountable for the appraisals they complete? Typically, all that is monitored is the timeliness of the appraisal. Did the leader complete the appraisal by the due date? Content is rarely monitored, particularly at the research institution, because it is based on a common review date where all employees' appraisals are due on the same date. Thus, it is impossible to review all 4,200 employee appraisals in the short time available to Human Resources and/or Management. Unless there is a complaint by the employee, little is reviewed. In 2014, the research institution added a short survey at the end of the appraisal process to gauge the effectiveness of the appraisal from the recipients' viewpoint. The survey was not shared with the leader and was run by Human Resources. This was an attempt to increase accountability and understand more of the conversation that transpires between the leader and the employee. The goal was to break open the "black box," so to speak, as there is rarely a witness to the conversation between the leader and the appraisal recipient.

The survey did not create much change and only reinforced what was already known through other sources (who were the strong and weak leaders), such as the employee engagement survey, which was also confidential. Leaders and employees only received aggregate department results, not who said what. This raised the question again about organizational readiness and commitment to a culture of feedback though the performance appraisal. Finding #7 reflected that the support to act on feedback was inconsistent, with almost 40% of the interviewees feeling that support for professional development was inadequate. The interviewees differentiated between two types of skills on which they were appraised: nursing technical skills (starting IVs, administration of medication, taking history and physicals, assessing patients, documenting in the patient chart, etc.) and behavioral skills (customer service, teamwork, etc.). The technical skills were more easily developed and supported than the behavioral changes an employee might need to make.

When trying to understand what a key driver might have been for the Below group of interviewees to rate the survey low, it could have been that they did not feel the same level of support as the other interviewees.

As discussed above, Barlett and Ghoshal (1997) shared that part of a current manager's responsibility is to recruit, retain, and develop talent. As we know, the quality of an organization's staff can make the difference between long-term success and failure. Ideally, all interviewees should feel they are supported in their professional development. The inconsistency reported by the interviewees revealed a gap in Human Resources practice and leader accountability for one of management's fundamental responsibilities.

Levasseur (2013) also differentiated between hard skills (technical or administrative) and soft skills (self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills). Hard skills are learned whereas soft

147

skills are developed (communication and collaboration). Hard skills are often honed through education and training and are easily measured. Success is objective. Soft skills development, however, requires motivation and an ecological environment that supports interaction with others. Soft skills are more difficult for organizations to integrate into its development programs because they are more subjective and harder to measure. In healthcare, the dynamic and changing nature of the business (Cathcart et al., 2004; Cupit et al., 2019) over the last few decades put financial and operational pressures on leaders, often limiting their ability to help support staff in their professional development journey, particularly concerning soft skill development.

The final finding under Analytical Category 2 is Communication Effectiveness, which was broken into three sub-findings (understanding preferred feedback method, feedback including concrete examples, and clearly articulating performance expectations improves communication). Communication effectiveness is directly linked to the leader's commitment to providing feedback as well as his/her experience and skill in delivering feedback.

Starting with the first sub-finding, understanding preferred feedback method/style is often dependent on the skill of the leader, the amount of time leader and employee interact, and the strength of the relationship. There are guidelines at the research institution for the frequency of formal communication, as discussed in Finding #1, as well as training classes on managerial best practices. However, this policy is not synchronized with the realities of the operating environment. Consistent with Analytical Category 1 (standard appraisal process but the delivered experience of the recipients is varied), there was an equal split among interviewees stating that they thought their leader understood or did not understand their preferred communication method/style.

The second sub-finding, feedback should include concrete examples, was expressed by almost 40% of the interviewees, even though this was not an interview question. Moreover, the third sub-finding was that clearly articulated performance expectations are critical for effective communication but are in large part lacking. Even though this was also not an interview question, nine of the 12 interviewees who mentioned this topic stated that expectations were not clearly communicated. The literature confirmed the interviewees' perspective. For example, Cannon and Witherspoon (2005) described that actionable feedback often comes from concrete performance examples. Brown et al. (2016) talked about tactics for delivering negative feedback. Using the appropriate tactics when delivering critical negative feedback in the needed improvement areas will assist the recipient to make meaning of the feedback. Without critical feedback and effective delivery, there is little chance for any change. Graham et al. (1994) talked about the environment of trust, respect, effective communication, regular feedback, observation, and highly important communication of clear performance objectives.

Analytical Category 3. *Complexity of understanding which factors (motivation, bias, power, process issues, experiential learning, coaching, feedback, learning environment) have the greatest impact and how they work together for the individual receiving the appraisal feedback.* Analytical Category 3 is supported by Findings #3 (Anxiety is a major influence in process and has varied impact on recipients) and #4 (Power dynamic influences recipients). This Analytical Category captures the view of the conceptual map for this study in that many factors can and do come between the leader and the appraisal recipient that can enhance or detract from the value of the feedback provided.

Finding #3 is about the impact anxiety has on the appraisal recipients, and it is often an undiscussed part of the literature on performance appraisals. Many of the findings already

149

discussed did not have a clear majority of interviewees who had a common point of view. However, with respect to anxiety and stress, more than 75% of the interviewees indicated that they experienced anxiety/stress related to the appraisal process. Some of the interviewees even indicated that their level of stress/anxiety interferes with their ability to hear feedback delivered during the appraisal. The interviewees went on to discuss tactics used by some leaders to help alleviate the stress/anxiety.

When looking at the some of the demographic sorts of the interviewees, it became clear that the Baby Boomers expressed less anxiety about the appraisal than the younger groups (Gen Z, Gen Y and Gen X). This is logical as they have generally experienced many appraisals during their careers and may be more comfortable with the experience and process. Also, those with longer service (interviewees with more than 30 years of service) expressed less anxiety concerning the appraisal than interviewees with less service. This same point was made above about Baby Boomers who, as a group, have experienced many appraisals during their careers and may be more comfortable with the experience and process. As a corollary, the study also pointed out that the younger and/or shorter-service interviewees are helped to stay calmer during the annual appraisal if the physical environment is more welcoming.

The impact of emotions on the learning experience has been integrated into the models of Jarvis (1987), Boud and Walker (1991), Fenwick (2001), and Matsua and Nagata (2020). They recognized that experience and reflection are not necessarily separate, and the context is of critical importance. Carter and Delahaye (2005) studied the physiological effect of employees undergoing performance appraisals, and Vogel and Schwabe (2016) studied the impact around exam time for students. Both studies concluded that stress can create psychological and physiological responses which can interfere with recall and the recipient's ability to learn from

150

the experience. Vogel and Schwabe pointed out that modest levels of stress can enhance memory but impair long-term memory retrieval. High stress has a negative effect on memory. The level of stress experienced by the appraisal recipient is dependent on many factors, including their biology, personality, life history, and contextual environment.

It is worth emphasizing these quotes to capture the intense emotional reaction to a performance appraisal experienced by both the giver and the recipient.

- "Evaluations are often perceived by employees and supervisors with fear and loathing" (Pettijohn et al., 2000).

- "Many managers are uncomfortable with the appraisal process and employees dislike receiving them" (Milliman et al., 2002).

- "Delivering critical feedback can be brutal for everyone involved. Most managers hate giving the feedback and most employees detest receiving it." Also, "Although it is common knowledge that receiving critical feedback is unpleasant, the potential cognitive and emotional complications associated with receiving feedback transcend mere unpleasantness" (Cannon & Witherspoon 2005).

- "Feedback is an anomaly. People have a general sense that feedback is good to give and receive. But many people avoid it like the plague. They are uncomfortable telling others they have done well, and they feel even more uncomfortable telling others they have performed poorly. Some people would just as soon not know how they did, and they dodge evaluations of their performance and opportunities to learn how they can improve" (London, 2003).

Appendix J includes multiple quotes from the interviewees from all three groups (Below, Mean, Above) that confirmed what the authors above stated in the literature.

Moving to Finding #4 about the power dynamic at play during the appraisal, it is clear that power belongs in the complexity section because it is an important influence, along with the other streams of literature and processes identified in this study, but it can be more subtle and harder to detect than other themes. The appraisal is a classic example of unequal authority and influence leaders have over employees. Although in this study there was no direct question about power, it came to the forefront in comments made by various interviewees about challenging the appraisal score or in specific written comments made by the leader during the annual session. Certain interviewees with the second highest appraisal rating (Excellent) felt they deserved the highest rating (Role Model). Thus, a low score was not the only driver for a challenge.

However, rarely would the interviewees challenge the rating or the appraisal comments, despite having formal employer channels available to settle disagreements. Typical interviewee comments were "I just gave up on the idea" (challenge, Interviewee #6B) or "The evidence shows this and that would be the way it would end" (Interviewee #12A). The researcher detected fear and hopelessness at times. Data were not available about the supervisor's race/ethnicity, but it is possible that there was some bias as both Interviewees #6B and #12A were Hispanic. Even though this was a possibility, the context for the research institution is that over 60% of the nurses are Hispanic.

As indicated in Finding #3, the anxiety/stress associated with the appraisal was likely related to the leader's power position. It is possible, as suggested in Finding #1 about the appraisal dialogue (leader does the majority of talking during the appraisal session), that interviewees spent a small amount of the appraisal time talking because of the imbalance of power.

Looking at the race and ethnicity of the interviewees, it appears that the Hispanic group was more influenced by the power structure and less willing to challenge the appraisal. The population of Miami Dade County, where the research institution is located, is 69.4% Hispanic (U.S. Census, 2019). This is a similar demographic for the multiple children's hospitals in South Florida. Many are first- or second-generation citizens coming from the Caribbean or South American countries, where a dictator leads the country. This may have influenced the interviewees' willingness to challenge a leader (see Table 11).

McClelland and Burnham (1995) described how power of leaders must be disciplined to benefit the organization. French and Raven (1959, in Elias, 2008) defined social power to be used to influence others, such as subordinates. Of the multiple types of social power described by French and Raven, the one selected can be dependent on the nature of the relationship between the leader and employee (Elias, 2008).

Power can be seen in the nature of the dialogue of the appraisal session. Seventy-one percent of the interviewees reported that the leader does the talking for the majority of the session and dominates the conversation. Most interviewees felt they were able to ask questions, so it was not a leader monologue. Also, when the appraisal process is examined, it is clear that many employees complete a self-appraisal which is shared with the leader prior to the appraisal session and, most often, this is the basis for the leader to draft his/her written comments. The recipient is not afforded the same opportunity to see the leader's written comments prior to the session so they can maximize their preparation and responses. Unfortunately, the unequal balance of power helps the leader and puts obstacles in the recipient's way to maximize the experience and feedback.

As already discussed in Finding #2 above, a better indicator of the overall interviewees' appraisal experience is the perception of the fairness of the process. Rowland and Hall (2012) linked perceived fairness to the effectiveness of the performance management system. There is a direct connection to fairness and whether power is appropriately contained and balanced.

To conclude this section, below is a quote that combines several issues but mainly reflects the power of the leader to take shortcuts with a well-documented process. In addition, one can see limited accountability and perhaps a lack of time invested in the appraisal process by the leader (the leader may have too many evaluations to complete). The question then becomes: Is this leader typical or not?

> Interviewee #15M
> Now it's more complex before you even sit down to see somebody about your evaluation, you're writing about yourself, what you have accomplished, what you're doing in your department, your day in and day out. You're basically evaluating yourself and your employer's looking at your own evaluation and making adjustments as you go along. So it's gotten more complex than it used to be…but we're basically writing our own evaluation and they're fine-tuning it, which in a perfect world, when we sat down to be evaluated, they should be evaluating us, not us writing our evaluation and then fine-tuning it, which is basically what's occurring.

View from Demographic Sorts

As the researcher had key demographic information about the study participants (age/generation, race/ethnicity, length of service, and gender) and analyzed the results from these viewpoints, he is reluctant to make generalizations as the numbers were small. Nonetheless, some patterns did emerge that are worth noting:

- The Below group of interviewees were most fearful or disengaged to even raise an issue of disagreement with the appraisal and/or were unsure of the viable escalation path. As a result, no resolution was pursued.

- Almost all the White and Black interviewees felt that the appraisal process was fair, but less than half of the Hispanic group felt this way. As a reminder, almost 70% of the county in which the research institution is located is Hispanic; thus, this result is very curious.

- The Below interviewee group was largely in agreement that their leader did not understand their preferred communication style or that performance expectations were clearly understood. Perhaps this could account for why the interviewees gave lower ratings on the survey responses. This possibly could be explained by a distrust in the appraisal system, the organization, or the leader, as well as potential cultural differences.

- Younger interviewees expressed that performance expectations were not clearly communicated and mutually understood.

- Older and longer-service interviewees were less impacted by the stress/anxiety of the appraisal process. By contrast, the younger and shorter-service interviewees were most affected and, as a result, the learning environment became a focus of their comments on this issue.

- Younger and shorter-service interviewees more readily found valuable feedback from peers, patients, parents, physicians, and clinical educators, but not the leader.

These are not surprising findings and speak to many issues articulated in the conceptual map. Many variables (motivation, bias, power, process issues, experiential learning, coaching, feedback, learning environment) in the conceptual map can interfere with the feedback being effectively delivered to the recipient. It is often dependent on the recipient which of the factors are most in play.

155

Summary of Analysis

This study confirmed that a standardized appraisal process did not create consistent meaning among survey participants and interviewees. Study participants used their own filters to create meaning from the feedback received, which can be either positive, negative, or neutral. How the various factors influenced the meaning making is complex and dependent on many variables (motivation, bias, power, process issues, experiential learning, coaching, feedback, learning environment). There is an old expression: It is not what you say but how you say it. In the case of appraisals, it is both what and how; content and delivery are equally relevant. The researcher has shared seven findings that responded to the four research questions. The seven findings roll up into three analytical categories that at times overlap and support one another.

Interpretation

In this chapter, three analytical categories representing key patterns of data were reviewed with the goal of gaining deeper insights into the study's findings. However, to interpret this study, a higher level of abstraction of the data is needed. As a result, a holistic view of the three analytical categories is discussed. As in many parts of this study, considering only siloed streams of literature does not adequately explain the behaviors observed. Complexity theory simultaneously links the appraisal recipients' cognition and environment through the experience. The conceptual map for this study featured three concentric circles, with the recipient in the innermost circle. Surrounding the recipient in the next circle is a host of factors (motivation, bias, power, process issues, experiential learning, coaching, feedback, learning environment) facilitating or interfering with the feedback delivered by the leader, who is in the outer circle.

As described in Chapter 3, Methodology, there is a standard appraisal process at the research institution. The process includes standard forms, deadlines that need to be met, as well

as behaviors on which all employees are evaluated (see Appendix D for sample nurse appraisal). However, the appraisal process at the research institution has not carefully considered the factors in the middle circle (motivation, bias, power, process issues, experiential learning, coaching, feedback, learning environment) and how the leader and recipient interact. As a result, the study participants have inconsistent experiences and outcomes, yet the goal of an appraisal is to provide meaningful feedback.

One of the researcher's initial hypotheses was that the recipients' appraisal rating (score on a 5-point scale) might influence their view of the appraisal experience. It was expected that there would be lower average appraisal scores in the Below groups (survey and interview) and their comments would potentially be more negative. What the data showed was quite different. The average group appraisal rating for the three survey groups (Below, Mean, Above) was almost identical, and this was the same pattern with the interviewees, with no meaningful difference in their appraisal ratings among the three groups. To the researcher, this was perhaps one of the more intriguing and potentially significant emerging themes of the survey—that the appraisal rating did <u>not</u> appear to have an influence on what the participant experienced and felt about performance appraisals.

The researcher had the last appraisal rating for survey participants and the interviewees. The average appraisal rating, which is based on a 5-point scale, was almost identical for the three survey groups and the three groups of interviewees. The Below group of interviewees had the highest average appraisal rating, with 4 of the 7 interviewees having a rating of 4 (excellent). The survey and interview average appraisal scores by group are listed in Table 17 below.

157

Table 17

Average Appraisal Rating (Last Appraisal)*

	Below	Mean	Above
Average survey appraisal rating on a 5-point scale	3.4	3.3	3.5
Average interview appraisal rating on a 5-point scale	3.6	3.0	3.3

*Appraisal Rating scale at research institution
1 = Unsatisfactory; 2 = Developing Contributor; 3 = Strong Contributor; 4 = Excellent; 5 = Role Model
Below = Survey participants or Interviewees who were one standard deviation below the mean in their responses to the survey questions. Interviewees in this group are referred to by their number followed by the letter "B" to indicate they are members of the Below group.
Mean = Survey participants or Interviewees who were within one standard deviation of the mean in their responses to the survey questions. Interviewees in this group are referred to by their number followed by the letter "M" to indicate they are members of the Mean group.
Above = Survey participants or Interviewees who were one standard deviation above the mean in their responses to the survey questions. Interviewees in this group are referred to by their number followed by the letter "A" to indicate they are members of the Above group.

Thus, the appraisal rating recipients received did not appear to have a significant influence on how they viewed their experience. The biggest variation in the appraisal score for the interviewees was in the Below and Mean groups. The Below group of interviewees had the highest average appraisal rating, while the Mean group had the lowest. This was largely due to one participant in the Mean group who had a low appraisal score (2), which brought down the group average. The interview groups were too small to attach much meaning to the variation.

To further explore this emerging theme, the researcher resorted the coding by appraisal rating. On a 5-point scale, there was one rating of 2 (developing contributor), 13 ratings of 3 (strong contributor), and seven ratings of 4 (excellent). There were no 1 (unsatisfactory) or 5 (role model) ratings among the interviewees, nor were there significant additional findings when looking at the data through this lens. However, a few interesting observations can be made, as seen in Table 18.

Table 18

Resorted Data by Appraisal Rating

Findings	Observations
#1: More frequent feedback desired	There was no difference between the interviewees with a 3 rating or 4 rating regarding the desire for regular feedback during the year. However, feedback for interviewees with a 4 rating (71%) was limited to once a year more often than those with a 3 rating (46%).
#2: Communication Effectiveness (understanding preferred feedback method, feedback including concrete examples, and clearly articulated performance expectations improves communication)	• Approximately 40% of interviewees with a 3 rating and a 4 rating said that their leader did not understand their preferred communication style. • Interviewees with a 3 rating expressed more frequently than the those with a 4 rating the value of concrete performance examples. All the Below group in the 3 rating expressed the desire for concrete performance examples. • No variations in patterns seen on clearly articulated goals.
#3: Anxiety is a major influence in the process and has varied impact on recipients	Anxiety was expressed at relatively the same level by the interviewees with a 3 rating (77%) and a 4 rating (71%).
#4: Power dynamic influences recipients	No differences or patterns were seen in the interviewees with a 3 rating or 4 rating regarding the power issue.
#5: Recipient's primary goal for appraisal is growth and feedback	• The interviewees with a 3 rating most frequent expressed goal was feedback and growth (92%). The interviewees with a 4 rating, expressed as their most frequent goal appreciation and recognition (71%), not feedback and growth (57%). • The interviewees with a 4 rating felt strongest (57%) that the appraisal process had improved over time, whereas the interviewees with a 3 rating felt less strongly that the process had improved (23%).
#6: Most meaningful feedback not from leader	The only difference or pattern seen was that a subgroup (Below and Mean) of interviewees with a 3 rating felt particularly strongly that the most meaningful feedback came from non-leaders (peers, patients, parents, physicians, and clinical leaders).
#7: Support to act on feedback not consistent	No meaningful differences or patterns were seen. However, none of the Below subgroup of the interviewees with a 3 rating stated that there were adequate resources for professional development. The interviewees with a 4 rating stated at a higher percentage than all interviewees that there were adequate resources for professional development.

Of the 21 interviewees, only one was rated a 2 (developing contributor); even though this was only one person, it was interesting to compare this interviewee with the other interviewees who were rated either 3 or 4. What was found is highlighted below, but it begins to create a story about this employee and her potential cultural fit in the research organization.

- Power was a real issue for this employee as she was fearful or disengaged to even raise an issue of disagreement with her appraisal. In addition, she was afraid that she might lose her job if her performance did not improve.

- Interviewee stated there was a lack of resources to support her professional development.

- Professional goals were like other interviewees in that this nurse wanted feedback and growth as well as appreciation and recognition. But unlike all but three other interviewees, she also said one of her appraisal goals was a raise/pay increase. She may have been more honest than others or perhaps this was a real difference.

- Her annual appraisal session was 15 minutes or less.

- This interviewee said that much of today's nursing work is done as a team and not all team members contribute equally. She also stated that peer feedback has limited value and the leader has the most meaningful feedback. One could question the strength of the relationships with her team members.

- Finally, the interviewee expressed a communication concern that performance expectations were not mutually understood, and she valued regular feedback but did not say if she got it.

Despite having a low rating, this interviewee felt the appraisal process was fair and meaningful. This apparent contradiction supported the emerging theme that the performance

160

rating may not necessarily be a significant influence on the appraisal experience. The researcher assumed that the higher the rating, the more confident and secure the interviewees would be to express their thoughts. But this additional data view did not support that. In fact, those with a 3 or 4 rating had the same number of average codes per interviewee.

In addition, one might have assumed that the number of negative comments by survey respondents could be linked to the participants' appraisal rating. Those with the lowest appraisal rating would respond to the survey with the lowest scores and more negative comments. However, as Table 17 indicated, this was not the case. All three survey groups (Below, Mean, Above) had almost the identical average appraisal ratings (Below, 3.4; Mean, 3.3; Above, 3.5), and the percentage of negative comments among the three groups was similar, as indicated in Table 16.

It seems that a better predictor of the appraisal satisfaction and/or the overall appraisal experience is linked to the feeling the recipients articulated about whether the appraisal was fair and meaningful. Slightly more than half of the interviewees (12) found the feedback/appraisal process to be fair and meaningful. Other interviewees had a mixed view of the value. Either the process provided minimal to no value (4) or each year the content was repetitive ("copy and paste") with little learning (5). The split here, where almost half the interviewees found the process fair and meaningful, is consistent with many of the themes in this study. That is, the individual experiences varied, and the factors that contribute to this variability need to continue being explored. There are differences as we look at the demographic sorts described below:

- The Below (3), Mean (4), and Above (5) groups considered the appraisal feedback/ process fair and meaningful to varying degrees. Perhaps this was an indication of

161

their experience with the appraisal and why the Below group had a lower overall

survey score than the other two groups.

- The middle two age groups of Gen Y and Gen X (9 of 13, 69%) felt that the

  feedback/process was fair and meaningful, compared to only 3 of 8 (38%) for Gen Z

  and Baby Boomers.

- When looking at the groups by length of service, about half the members of each

  group said the feedback process was fair and meaningful, except for the 11-20 years

  of service group, all of whose members (5 of 5) stated this.

- There was variability among race and ethnicity groups. Three out of four Whites and

  all three Blacks expressed that the appraisal process was fair and meaningful, whereas

  only 6 of 14 Hispanics stated this.

Interviewees #16B and #14M captured the appraisal recipients' range of thoughts on their

experience and feelings about the fairness and meaning of the feedback delivered.

Interviewee #16B: Not finding meaning and/or fairness in appraisal
    I think it's also to being transparent. There's a part where I felt like at some point, leadership wasn't very transparent when it came to annual appraisals. A lot of the times, towards the end, I learned about this matrix that the annual appraisal was based on. And I don't think that gets really explained by leadership. How and why you get appraised that way. Especially when there's a discrepancy of performance level.

Interviewee #14M: Finding meaning and/or fairness in appraisal
    I think everything was pretty spot on and anything that was negative, so to speak, was more in terms of the technicalities of our position, so like charting certain things, and so, I found it very valuable. In fact, because to this day, I'm like, "Oh, I have to remember X, Y, Z."

To further the point, Interviewee #16B quoted above was rated on her appraisal a 4

(excellent) on a 5-point scale, and Interviewee #14M was rated on her appraisal a 3 (strong

contributor) on a 5-point scale, yet their perceptions of fairness were very different and may have

impacted how they answered the questions in the survey and ultimately the group they were in

(Below or Mean). This important connection between the recipients' appraisal rating and the participants' performance appraisal experience and feelings was significant but would not have come to light without access to critical data, which were often not available to researchers. The trade-off in this study was the potential influence (mitigated as much as possible in the methodology) of the researcher on the study as a former executive as well as of the support the research institution provided for distributing the survey versus having access to these unique data.

After a literature review, the researcher was unable to find any studies that corroborated or refuted a connection between the appraisal rating and what the participants felt about performance appraisals. If this linkage can be confirmed, it could mean that the appraisal score was not a significant influence on how recipients created meaning about their appraisal experience. This is more understandable when we link this to the interviewees' primary appraisal goal as being feedback and growth (Finding #5). Thus, there appears to be no direct relationship between the appraisal rating and which survey or interview group the respondents were in.

What seemed to be a better indicator of the interviewees' overall experience with the appraisal was their perception of whether the process was fair and provided meaningful feedback. The literature confirmed this finding. We have another example of Analytical Category 1, in which a standard process delivers a varied experience to recipients, with only slightly more than half of the recipients finding the appraisal process to be fair and meaningful.

Researchers (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012) have suggested that an appraisal takes on too many functional responsibilities such as: salary increases, promotions, retention, termination, layoffs, feedback on performance strengths and weaknesses to be used for training, determination of future assignments, linked personal and organizational goals, and

documentation to meet legal requirements, among other responsibilities. Although appraisals have evolved to include multiple purposes, this has limited the instrument's ability to focus much attention on any one element, such as delivering feedback to the recipient in a meaningful way.

One of the more important questions to address in this study is: Did the researcher's former executive position at the research institution influence the study results? Several data points have suggested it did not. First, the survey participation rate and the high percentage of comments were indicators that the researcher's former position did not impact the willingness of nurses to participate and share their comments.

The high percentage of comments is potentially indicative of the strong feelings participants had about the appraisals and, when asked, they were eager to share. Each survey respondent's comment usually focused on a single appraisal issue, which likely was the most important point for them personally. The aggregate of their themes reflected many of same themes heard in the interviews.

It can be thought that the survey participants were comfortable and trusting of the survey and felt free to express their genuine feelings and thoughts. Perhaps the survey participants also felt this could be a forum that could serve as a catalyst to fix what they perceived as needing improvement in the appraisal process at the research institution. It is encouraging that although the survey disclosed the researcher was a former executive at the research institution, many respondents were willing to share negative comments.

A second key point described in Chapter 3, Methodology, was the use of a single form with a pre-interview section and a post-interview section that aided in the analysis of the findings. A copy of the form is attached as Appendix G. The pre-interview section summarizes the interviewees' score on each question on the survey and any comments made on the last open-

ended question. In addition, key demographic information was included on the form. This information was used to prepare for the interviews and potentially probe any responses that appeared to be inconsistent with the survey responses or demographics. The demographic information included contact information, work unit, last appraisal rating, length of service, age, gender, employment status (full-time or part-time), race/ethnicity, and pay rate.

The post-interview section was developed to document an immediate reaction by the researcher after each interview about the level of comfort and transparency of each interviewee. The summary of the post-survey is included in the Appendix K. The five post-interview questions are listed below:

1. How comfortable was the interviewee during the interview?

2. Were nonverbal cues consistent with the verbal responses to the questions asked?

3. Were there any questions that created discomfort for the interviewee?

4. How truthful did you feel the responses to the questions were?

5. How would you rate the connection or interpersonal dynamics between the interviewee and interviewer?

The comments and scoring on the post-interview survey completed by the researcher suggested the interviewees had comfort with the researcher as the interviewer, and the researcher had a strong sense that almost all interviewees responded honestly and did not hold back any comments (see Appendix K). The anecdotal evidence of this is the number of negative comments received about the appraisal process from the interviewees; there appeared to be no concern about those comments getting back to their leader or the research institution. However, the researcher recognizes there were limitations in that no one else observed the interviewees and completed the post-interview evaluations.

Brown et al. (2010) confirmed in their study that the quality of appraisal varies, with some recipients having a high-quality experience and others experience low quality. How can we account for differences within the same organization with the same leader training and same processes and policies? The authors quoted Pettijohn et al. (2001) who suggested that leaders could be the cause: "Supervisors conduct appraisals in an arbitrary and perfunctory manner as they believe that conducting performance appraisals requires considerable amounts of time and effort, generates few rewards and adds considerably to the managers level of conflict and stress." This is part of the holistic view, but it is too simplistic to understand fully how the recipient makes meaning.

Thus, we have a standard process designed from the organization's point of view. But it does not adequately consider the recipient; there is a lack of accountability and organizational commitment to the performance appraisal process; and too many potential barriers exist (motivation, bias, power, process issues, experiential learning, coaching, feedback, learning environment) between the leader giving the appraisal and the recipient. Below is a list of commonly accepted assertions supported by the literature or by this study.

- Regular feedback is critical for the appraisal recipient to absorb, reflect, and potentially change behaviors.
- The appraisal experience is not related to the appraisal rating/score.
- Effective communication of appraisal feedback includes understanding the preferred style of the recipient, providing concrete performance examples, and clearly articulating performance expectations. These are essential to creating aligned objectives and balancing the delivery of both positive and negative feedback.

- Anxiety can limit the ability of recipient to hear meaningful feedback. As such, the learning environment is an important part of the feedback process.

- The leader's position of power can positively or negatively impact the effective delivery of feedback and can limit the ability of the recipient to challenge it. Cultural background can influence how an individual deals with power.

- The employees' primary goal of the appraisal is to receive feedback for growth and development and the secondary goal is recognition and appreciation.

- The most meaningful feedback comes from the person who is technically competent and spends the most time with the recipient, observing and understanding the job being completed. This is often not the leader.

- Support for professional development is varied; it is easier to improve technical skills (hard skills) than behavioral or soft skills.

- For recipients to absorb any feedback and become motivated to act on it, they should perceive the feedback as fair.

- Multisource feedback, which typically includes boss, peer, and subordinates, generally improves employee performance over time. While the research institution has a formal way to include peer input in the process, there is no formal or automated way to integrate feedback from parents, physicians, and clinical coordinators.

To make sense of and integrate all of these findings and themes known from the literature, a new way of thinking about appraisals should be contemplated. Otherwise, all that can be done is incremental change to a process that is not meeting the needs of the recipient, leader, or organization. The Introduction of this study discussed how many organizations are struggling with the appraisal. The research in the literature to this point has focused largely on

167

the leader and the organization and has not fully considered how the recipient constructs meaning. In addition, studies that use adult learning theories as the basis for appraisal inquiries are limited; most studies come from Human Resources and Psychology.

Part of the issue is that an appraisal has taken on too many functional responsibilities such as salary increases, promotions, retention, termination, layoffs, feedback on performance strengths and weaknesses to be used for training, determination of future assignments, linked personal and organizational goals, and documentation to meet legal requirements, among others. If appraisal processes separated all the functions except for feedback, would that improve the meaning for the recipient?

Finally, co-emergence, the enactivist perspective—also known as complexity theory— explores the relationship between cognition and the environment. Fenwick (2000) described the perspective this way:

> This perspective of experiential learning assumes that cognition depends on the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities embedded in a biological, psychological, cultural context. Enactivist explores how cognition and environment become simultaneously enacted through experiential learning. The first premise is that systems represented by person and context are inseparable, and the second premise is that change occurs from emerging systems affected by the intentional tinkering of one with the other. (p. 261)

Understanding how the recipient makes meaning of the appraisal feedback involves understanding the whole person through their life history, cognitive and emotional state, and the contextual environmental factors that surround the feedback. Something different is needed because what is currently in place serves the needs of about half of appraisal recipients; this presents a large gap and opportunity that will likely only be closed with new thinking that accounts for all the complex variables in the workplace. Feedback is essential for personal and organizational development. The researcher does not see the appraisal process disappearing.

Based on this study and the literature, however, the researcher feels a performance coach can be an inexpensive way to create a breakthrough and bring the appraisal to the next level. If the small number of coaches who are needed can better align individual performance to the organization strategy, the benefits could outweigh the costs. In addition, other Human Resources practitioners could potentially be repurposed for these roles.

Revisiting Assumptions

As discussed in Chapter 1, the researcher held seven assumptions at the beginning of this study. The following is a discussion of each of these assumptions in light of the findings in Chapter 4 and in this chapter.

Assumption #1

The performance appraisal process is generally ineffective at delivering meaningful feedback, as evidenced by how seldom the researcher has seen many changes in employee behavior or performance improvements/changes after an appraisal.

Finding #1. Based on the findings, we cannot say the performance appraisal process is generally ineffective but more likely supported inconsistently throughout the organization. The process is standardized but not uniformly followed, which results in varied levels of meaning for the recipients. With many of the findings, there was no clear majority reporting a single response to a question or theme.

Assumption #2

Employees come to work wanting to do a good job each day and to be appreciated. They are eager to receive feedback.

Finding #2. Employees come to work wanting to do a good job each day and be appreciated. They are eager to receive feedback.

169

Assumption #3

Leaders are generally poorly prepared to provide meaningful feedback and often do not see appraisals as a priority. In addition, many leaders find the process uncomfortable and, as a result, only put minimum effort required into the process.

Finding #3. This assumption is partially true. There is variability depending on the leader. Some are well-prepared to deliver appraisal feedback and make them a priority, while others are not. The healthcare environment with tighter budgets, larger staffs, and 24/7 operational responsibility has made nursing leadership a challenging role. Finally, both the leader and the recipient experience apprehension and anxiety related to the appraisal process.

Assumption #4

The organization often provides lip service about the importance of the process. Often, leaders get poor, if any, training and have little or no accountability for the quality of the process. Typically, they are only measured on whether appraisals have been completed or not. If an employer solicits feedback on how to improve the process, it is usually asked of the leaders, not non-management employees. As a point of information, the researcher several years ago implemented a feedback survey similar to the one use in this study in an attempt to address this problem. It confirmed who the poorer leaders were in providing feedback.

Finding #4. There is an automated system for the annual appraisal process with much functionality. However, not all of it is used by all leaders or staff, and often not all the steps are completed, which is outside of organizational policies. Through the interviewees, it became clear that there are no consequences for non-compliant managers. Appraisal training for leaders is just in time and minimal.

Both findings to Assumptions #3 and #4 were a bit of a surprise to the researcher. As a senior leader at the research institution, he was responsible for designing and administering the appraisal process. Although he recognized that some leaders were poorly prepared to provide meaningful feedback, he thought that the appraisal was an organizational priority and generally the standard process was followed. It was a surprise to hear as much variability as he did from the interviewees. Argyris and Schön (1974) espoused that theories and theories-in-use are most apparent from the researcher's former ivory-tower perch. This realization has changed the researcher's view on how to create sustainable organizational change and how best to institute new processes. It should be done through ongoing observation and interviewing with the end user—in this case, the appraisal recipient. It is critical to confirm that initiatives are being adopted and effective. Implementing new strategies without cultural support and monitoring is likely to fail. Organizations have worked hard in the last decade to focus on their customers' needs through surveys and other means. There could be substantial benefits for organizations that adopt a similar mindset for employees.

Assumption #5

The researcher assumed that employees would freely and readily agree to share their honest feedback about the performance appraisal process at the researcher's institution, despite knowing the researcher is a former senior executive. This was based on the pilot results.

Finding #5. The researcher left the research institution prior to the start of the survey and the interviews. However, based on the survey participation rates and the interview conversations, the researcher does not feel that his former position influenced the results, although this is hard to confirm. The researcher's former position was prominently disclosed on the survey instrument and consent forms. However, although many steps were taken in the methodology to mitigate

any impact, there is no certainty if they were effective or if the researcher had influenced the study.

Assumption #6

Not all best practice steps will be followed by organizations completing performance appraisals because they require additional time in an ever more demanding workday. Also, in flatter organizations, the next level leader may not know the employee being evaluated and may not add any value to the process. In Chapter 2, Figure 2 described performance appraisal best practice. Based on experience, the researcher feels that the steps least likely to be completed are: self-appraisal by the rater on his/her effectiveness in providing feedback during the performance cycle, the rater's supervisor reviewing the appraisal before it is shared with employee, the rater's draft appraisal and the employee's self-appraisal being shared with each other in advance of the formal appraisal session, communicating pay adjustment in a separate meeting, and, finally, having a formal grievance procedure to resolve appraisal issues. Many employers may have a grievance process in place, but it was likely not established with the appraisal in mind. Few times is the primary grievance issue presented through such a review process solely based on appraisal issues.

Finding #6. The steps described above (self-appraisal by the rater on his/her effectiveness in providing feedback during the performance cycle; rater's supervisor reviewing the appraisal before it is shared with employee; the rater's draft appraisal and the employee's self-appraisal being shared with each other in advance of the formal appraisal session; communicating a pay adjustment in a separate meeting; and, finally, having a formal grievance procedure to resolve appraisal issues) as least likely to be used were not used at the research institution. This assumption is confirmed.

The appraisal rating/score will influence the recipient's perception of the process.

Finding #7. This was perhaps the most surprising as an emerging theme that the appraisal recipients' rating/score did not impact the meaning they ascribed to the appraisal process in this study.

Contributions to the Literature

The researcher embarked on this study knowing that there was limited literature on how recipients create meaning from feedback received from the performance appraisal. Most of the literature originated from Psychology (Schermerhorn et al., 2012, including Herzberg, Maslow, Vroom, Adams, Alderfer, etc.) or Human Resources (Armstrong, 2010; Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012; Brown et al., 2010; Pettijohn et al., 2001) and focuses on process improvements. Little has been written from the recipients' perspective or from an Adult Learning lens. Experiential learning models from Kolb (1984), Jarvis (1987), Boud and Walker (1991), Fenwick (2001), and Matsua and Nagata (2020) are generally not integrated into the performance appraisal literature. Best practice on providing feedback related to the appraisal is documented in the literature by Brookfield (2006). Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2014) introduced the idea of a personalized communication to fit the recipient. Edwards et al. (2003) and Kuvaas et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of frequent and timely feedback. Also, Kuvaas et al. (2017) and Rowland and Hall (2012) both emphasized that for feedback to be effective, it should be perceived as fair. Graham et al. discussed the importance of trust, respect, and clear communications. Brown et al. (2016) emphasized effective delivery of negative feedback. Cannon and Witherspoon (2005) studied actionable feedback. Smither et al. (2005) and Mauer and Taurelli (1996) studied the impact of multisource feedback.

Coaching and coaching effectiveness (Jones et al., 2015; Maltbia et al., 2014; Theeboom et al., 2014) are important topics for this study, as is the learning environment (Kegan, 1982; Torbert, 1978; Yorks & Nicolaides, 2013).

Barlett and Ghosal (1997) and Levasseur (2013) described managers' current responsibilities and needed competencies in today's business world. Cupit et al. (2019) and Cathcart et al. (2004) reviewed the unique operating environment of healthcare. Carter and Delahaye (2005) and Vogel and Schwabe (2016) reflected on the physiological effect the performance appraisal stress can have on recipients. Power dynamic is consistent with the classic work of McClelland and Burnham (1995) and French and Raven (1959, in Elias, 2008).

What is known is that in recent years, many large organizations (see Chapter 1, Introduction) have publicly expressed their concern over the effectiveness of the appraisal, particularly with the changing demographics of the workforce. To corroborate that little has been done from the recipients' viewpoint, the researcher asked colleagues from multiple organizations if they provide performance appraisal training for the recipients; almost universally, they said training was limited to leadership.

The seven findings confirmed what is known in the literature. However, the emerging theme of the performance rating not being a determinant of appraisal experience was not found in the literature and may add new insights to the appraisal literature. Part of the reason this insight was found was the availability of data from the research institution. This level of supporting documentation may not have been provided or accessible in other studies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

At the beginning of this study, there were four stated research questions which are repeated below. The study's seven findings fall under the research questions; Figure 10

connected the research questions to the themes and findings and leads to the conclusions in this study.

1. How do past experiences with the appraisal process impact the recipient's ability to actively participate and engage in the process?

2. What are the differences in the feedback received by employees rating the quality of feedback on a performance appraisal survey high versus those rating it low?

3. What factors help to create an ideal environment for the recipient to receive constructive feedback?

4. Under what kind of circumstances/conditions is the recipient more likely to convert the feedback into possible action/changes in behavior?

This chapter presents the researcher's two conclusions and multiple recommendations, based on the findings of this study.

Conclusion #1: Current performance appraisals have too many functional objectives which minimize the primary objective of providing meaningful feedback to the recipient. A leadership commitment is needed to enhance effectiveness and accountability.

Conclusion #2: To accelerate the transformation of the appraisal process and minimize or maximize, as appropriate, the factors described in the conceptual map (motivation, bias, power, process issues, experiential learning, coaching, feedback, learning environment) that can influence the effectiveness of the feedback, a trained intermediary should be considered as part of any formal feedback session between leader and recipient.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1. A formal mechanism is necessary to provide valuable performance feedback to employees, but current processes in many organizations have too many functional

objectives added to the instrument (salary increases, promotions, retention, termination, layoffs, feedback on performance strengths and weaknesses to be used for training, determination of future assignments, linked personal and organizational goals, and documentation to meet legal requirements, etc.), thereby making them less effective. The primary objective should be to provide meaningful feedback to the recipients as specified by the study participants. The appraisal instrument needs transformation and not incremental change to reflect today's workforce and business needs. The fact is that appraisals are universally accepted and completed. If a better way is developed, many organizations will likely make changes rapidly to their tools and processes. As a baseline, organizations need to commit to the importance of feedback through enhanced accountabilities and a means to measure the quality of the feedback. In addition, organizations need to adopt a philosophical orientation that is an optimistic view, namely that employees come to work to do a good job and want to grow and develop. The three analytical categories in this study tell the story of the appraisal. The process is standard, guided by policies, yet the resulting experience of the recipients is inconsistent and varied. The process, systems, and organizational commitment often stand in the way of providing meaningful feedback.

Conclusion 2. The literature documented issues with appraisals that make them less effective than they optimally should be. The issues were highlighted in the Introduction and Literature Review chapters and supported by the findings of this study. What seems to be lacking in practice are holistic, cost-effective processes that will result in the delivery of meaningful feedback for the recipient. This will require a transformational shift. Adult Learning and Development theories are ahead of the state of current-day appraisals and, if applied, may improve feedback resulting in better-performing employees and organizations. One way of

creating a positive change could be to add an observer/translator/witness/coach to the feedback from the appraisal session. It can reduce anxiety, whereby all participants feel someone is helping them through a difficult, often confrontational, event and leveling the playing field from a power perspective. This could be considered analogous to a union representative protecting the employees' interests by advocating for them. The appraisal process is very complex, and as the conceptual map shows, there are many variables (experiential learning, coaching, process, power, bias, motivation, learning environment, feedback) that impact individuals differently and can affect their ability to absorb feedback and modify behaviors. Therefore, the role of an intermediary/coach is to personalize the appraisal for the recipient within a standard process that would need modifications to deliver enhanced results for the recipient, leader, and organization at a minimal cost.

Success for an improved appraisal for recipients would not look like the quote from Interviewee #2B below, who described a repetitive process without much thought placed into the appraisal from the recipient (self-appraisal) or the leader.

Interviewee #2B: Repetitive appraisal feedback each year
 And I mean, usually they're just the same things every year that both of us kind of copy paste from the one year to the next.

Recommendations for Future Research

To advance meaning making for appraisal recipients, additional research is needed. This study had a good mix of race/ethnicity, age, and length of service, but no male interviewees were randomly selected. Understanding gender differences and looking at larger demographic samples from more professions and industries would be helpful to gain further insights and test a wider application of this study's findings. Additional areas to explore and consider are offered below.

- The appraisal is an individual evaluation and, in today's business world, work is largely done in teams that are constituted for a project and then disbanded, with new teams created. The literature and appraisal instruments are slow to integrate effective ways of considering how to balance individual and team contributions. New research needs to focus on this important work development (Kline & Sulsky, 2009).

- Additional research is needed to confirm if the impact of the recipients' thoughts on the appraisal experience is connected to the appraisal ratings they have received. Two different sorts of the data did not show a connection of the experience to the rating.

- Complete research on a large scale with access to key study participant demographics, such as generation/age, race/ethnicity, length of service, and gender, would be helpful to further understand any differences by group. Some preliminary indications were identified in this study, but the number of participants was too small to generalize any patterns or develop any firm conclusions. In addition, it would be valuable to gather the same demographic data on the leader completing the performance appraisal to test for any possible patterns of bias.

- Two patterns emerged with regard to the Power dynamic that can be further investigated. The first pattern was among the Hispanic group that is worth further exploration. The Miami community has a large percentage of Hispanics, but many are first-generation and have come from very different types of governments in South America or the Caribbean, where they may not have had the same freedoms as they do in the United States. This background may be a contributing factor for some of their reluctance to challenge the leader, an authority figure. The second pattern was that shorter-service employees may be less willing to challenge the feedback they

receive from their leaders. This seems logical as they are still learning the organization and building their career and skills.

- Almost two-thirds of the interviewees stated there were adequate resources for development, but during the interviews, it became clear that the nurses were talking about technical skills, not necessarily behavioral skills. Additional probing is needed in this area to better understand the support around behavioral development and its availability to nurses.

- A literature review should be completed to see if, typically in other research studies on performance appraisals, participants express a wide range of views on interview questions. It is important to confirm if the questions should be narrower in scope and if the nurse population studied here was unique.

- The impact of institutional support (survey sent through employer internal email system) should be explored, and ways to mitigate any influence on the willingness of nurses to participate in a study should be developed.

- Eighty percent of the interviewees expressed that their primary goal for the appraisal was to obtain the necessary feedback to grow professionally. Other motives not expressed should be probed more deeply, such as the influence of a pay increase. In the recommendation for future practice section below, one suggestion is to explore ways of decoupling the pay increase from the appraisal.

- Link the survey questions more closely to the interview questions so the instruments can be compared and contrasted more easily. Interview findings that can be confirmed by the survey, which has large numbers, would add credibility to the study and help to understand if there are new contributions to the literature.

Recommendations for Future Practice Considerations

  Ideas that came from this study could be quickly tested for reasonableness and effectiveness if a progressive organization was willing to trial some of the suggestions below. Linderbaum and Levy (2010) and Steelman et al. (2004) provided a framework for considering the findings and practice recommendations described in Figure 11. Linderbaum and Levy (2010) developed a multidimensional measure of feedback orientation, which is the receptivity of the recipient to feedback. The measure includes four factors: utility (recipient propensity to believe feedback is used for goal attainment or achieving results); accountability (recipient's commitment to react to and follow up on feedback); social awareness (awareness of other's perception of oneself and contemplation of these views); and feedback self-efficacy (recipient's perceived competence to respond to feedback). Steelman et al. (2004) created a tool to aid in the determination of feedback environment, which is the contextual characteristics of the feedback process. The seven factors are: source credibility (source expertise and trustworthiness); feedback quality (consistency and usefulness of feedback); feedback delivery (recipient's understanding of source's intentions of providing the feedback); favorable and unfavorable feedback (perceived frequency of both positive and negative feedback); source availability (amount of time the recipient spends with the source); and promotes feedback seeking (measure of environment supporting recipient seeking feedback or not). Further detail is provided for some of the recommendations discussed in Figure 11 below as well as some other practitioner considerations:

Figure 11

Possible Recommendations for Practitioners

Key Findings	Theoretical Framework	Recommendations
1. More frequent feedback desired.	Feedback quality, source availability, promotes feedback seeking (Steelman et al.)	Explore manual or automated processes that confirm that appraisal feedback is occurring as per stated policy with rewards and penalties for leader. This can include recipient surveys and should be completed by an outside department such as HR.
2. Understanding preferred feedback method, feedback including concrete examples, and clearly articulating performance expectations improve communication.	Feedback delivery, favorable and unfavorable feedback (Steelman et al.)	Additional leader training on effective appraisal communication, particularly on these three subthemes or a third-party performance appraisal coach could assist with ensuring effective communication.
3. Anxiety is a major influence in the process and has varied impact on recipients.	--Personality variables (Smither et al.), --Physiological response (Carter et al.)	--Set a calming learning environment, set a neutral location for the annual appraisal. --Performance appraisal coach can help set an appropriate learning environment.
4 Power dynamic influences recipients. 5 Recipient's primary goal for appraisal is growth and feedback. 6 Most meaningful feedback not from leader. 7 Support to act on feedback not consistent.	4. Power (French et al. and McClelland et al.) 5. Promotes feedback seeking (Steelman et al.) and accountability (Linderbaum et al.) 6. Source credibility, source availability (Steelman et al.) 7. Feedback self-efficacy (Linderbaum et al.) and promotes feedback seeking (Steelman et al.)	4. Introduce an intermediary to help balance the power in the appraisal session and have the leader send the draft of the recipient's appraisal to him/her prior to the session so the recipient can absorb and be prepared to dialogue on the contents. 5. Tools could be deployed to measure the feedback orientation of the recipient and the feedback environment. 6. Explore an automated means of bringing additional sources of feedback such as customers, physicians, clinical coordinators, etc. into the appraisal. An intermediary can be a manual collector of this broader feedback. 7. Additional training of recipient, tracking mechanisms by an outside department such as HR, or an intermediary performance appraisal coach can create more consistency.

- Test the concept of a performance coach for practicality and effectiveness.

- The research institution has an automated appraisal system, yet it has not formally integrated valuable feedback (other than peers) from subordinates, physicians, customers (patients/parents), clinical coordinators, and other groups into the process. The multisource feedback literature indicated that additional feedback adds value and generally improves performance.

- In addition, more rigorous checks and balances need to be developed to confirm that frequent feedback is being provided to recipients. Perhaps an evaluation of the leader by the recipient on key questions needs to be completed. This survey would be incorporated into the leader's appraisal rating. A mechanism such as this could align the philosophy of feedback with its execution. Developing people is one of the essential management responsibilities of today's organizations.

- Will COVID-19 encourage more remote work in the future, or will employees return to the office as in pre-pandemic times? If the former, how will that impact the leaders' ability to observe, interact, assess, and get to know their employees to accurately appraise them? How will this drive appraisal redesign when considering all the factors in the conceptual map?

- Although leaders were not a focus of this study, it is paramount that their views be solicited in any redesign or administration changes to the tool.

- Although employers have attempted to decouple pay from the appraisal process in the past, this has never caught on as an employer best practice. Ways of separating the pay increase from the feedback should be explored so employees can truly be at the center of this process.

Researcher Reflections

Drago-Severson and Blum-Destefano (2014) introduced the idea that one size does not fit all, and feedback through performance appraisals may need to be transitioned to more of a personalized/interactive model of communication and feedback. This is the challenge, and this is an outcome assumption for future research. How does an organization create a standard process while at the same time allowing for preferences and for an understanding of the individual? The answer may be in placing an intermediary or a coach in the appraisal session. Each appraisal session is a "black box," to a large extent, with only the leader and recipient having first-hand knowledge of what occurred. At times, the participants (recipients and leaders) walk away with different understandings or perceptions of the encounter. Organizations use this practice of having an intermediary in special circumstances. For example, in disciplinary actions, Human Resources is often a witness to the action between the leader and the employee to create credibility and document what transpired.

Often, coaching is reserved for underperforming employees or for a leader's growth to greater responsibility or effectiveness. An appraisal intermediary/coach could become a way of bringing everyone along in the organization. A coach's current role might need to be expanded to focus more on the critical relationship of the leader/direct report and on appraisals. It could play exceedingly well to the younger generations, Millennial and Gen Z, as they are often looking for more regular and understandable feedback.

In fact, Human Resources could create a new role called Appraisal or Performance Coaches. At the research institution, there were over 4,200 employees and about 500 leaders (supervisors, managers, directors, vice presidents). This brings up an interesting point that the average span of control (4,200/500) is approximately 8.4 employees per leader. This is not the

case in nursing, where there are routinely substantially more direct reports at the research institution. It would not be unusual to have 30 or more direct reports in a nursing unit on all three shifts, 7 days a week.

The value of performance coaches is they can be carefully selected and trained. Ideally, they would be employees of the institution. Theeboom et al. (2014) found that internal coaches were more effective as they better understood the organizational context and culture. Using the research institution as an example, the 500 managers all have various levels of experience and commitment to the appraisal process, and all report to different parts of the organization with different appraisal priorities. The performance coach as a witness to and active participant in the appraisal process can enhance feedback to the recipient and provide feedback to the leader. With a small number of coaches, the feedback process can be elevated.

Coaches can create the personalization needed based on the developmental needs of the recipients while working within a standard process. Coaches could use commercially available tools and develop a profile of the recipients in the key areas of motivation, bias, power, process issues, experiential learning, coaching, feedback, and learning environment. The key role of coaches would be to prepare both leader and appraisal recipients for the appraisal session, intercede during the session as necessary, and help after the session to create meaning for the content exchanged. This could be most empowering to the employees and put the leader and recipients on more of a level playing field, thereby minimizing any power dynamics. It can also help the recipients interpret the meaning of the feedback. A simple change might be that the leader's appraisal is shared with the recipients in advance of the session, so during the session the recipients can discuss what the leader has written and not see it for the first time at the session. This makes the leader much more accountable for what is written and spoken. Again,

this reduces the power advantage the leader has and creates a greater focus on the feedback. After all, that is the primary goal of the appraisal: performance feedback and improvement.

How would an organization know if a personalized performance coach for all employees is working? That could be measured from existing HR/organizational metrics such as engagement, turnover, and financial results. This approach is predicated on the belief that employees come to work to do a good job and want to improve. The systems, processes, and conceptual map factors discussed in this study stand in the way of meaningful feedback.

To make the performance coach effective, the traditional view of workplace coaching might need to be expanded to include principles from counseling. The most critical relationship at an organization is often between the leader and the direct report. This needs to work well, and principles from marriage counseling or something similar could strengthen this relationship. Key questions the performance coach could answer would be:

- Will the leader/direct report relationship work?

- What are the needs of both, and what range do both have to adapt to the other's preferences?

According to Gottman and Gottman (2018) in their couples' work entitled *The Art and Science of Love*, couples are more successful if the interactions are positive and conflict is handled gently. Their research also specified a five positive to one negative comment ratio during disagreements as a determinant of a stable healthy relationship. The positivity ratio is even higher in normal interactions. Perhaps this learning is adaptable to appraisals and a positive-to-negative feedback ratio could be developed.

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Appendix A

Leader's Scorecard: IAM Report

MIAMI CHILDREN'S HEALTH SYSTEM

Integrated Accountability Model

January - May 2017

Director	BUDGET	QUALITY	TURN OVER (Rolling 12 months average)		COMPLIANCE			ENGAGEMENT SCORE	SERVICE EXCELLENCE	IAM Score
	Variance % — Met Peak>5%, Met Target= 4% - (-5%), Met Neither <5% — January - May 2017	Unit Based Clinical Excellence Index (Max = 100) — Met Peak ≥ 95, Met Target >=94 and <95, Met Neither < 94 — January - May 2017	First Year Turn Over — Met Peak= 0 - 10%, Met Target = 11 - 13%, Met Neither >13% — June 2016 - May 2017	Overall TurnOver — Met Peak=0 - 10%, Met Target = 10 - 15%, Met Neither 15% — June 2016 - May 2017	Clean Sweeps — Met Peak= 97% - 100%, Met Target = 93% - 96%, Met Neither <92% — January - May 2017	Initial Compliance metrics (People) — Met Peak=90 - 100%, Met Target= 80 - 89%, Met Neither <80% — January - May 2017	Compliance metrics (People) Lic/Certs — Met Peak = 97% - 100%, Met Target = 93% - 96%, Met Neither <=92% — January - May 2017	Morehead Engagement Score — Met Peak= 83+, Met Target= 78 - 82, Met Neither<=77 — January - May 2017	Service — Met Peak= Green, Met Target= Yellow, Met Neither= Red — January - May 2017	IAM Score
███			3.03%	9.01%		100%	100%			81.25%
███	-319.20%									0.00%
███	-6.51%		62.50%	14.44%		100%	100%			34.38%
███		100.00%	16.67%	15.00%			100%	79		53.57%
███	7.01%	100.00%	16.67%	9.28%	100%	100%	100%	66		90.00%
███						100%	100%			70.00%
███	7.66%		8.33%	19.61%	88%	100%	100%	82		66.67%
███	5.09%		0.00%	0.00%		100%	100%	89	100.00%	100.00%
███	-17.48%					100%	100%			40.00%
███	-16.32%		0.00%	4.30%		100%	100%	87	89.81%	57.14%
███		97.92%	8.89%	13.86%	97%	100%	100%	90		85.00%
███	-11.33%	96.33%	14.41%	14.28%	100%	97%	100%	86		65.00%
███	-99.50%					100%	100%	88		70.00%
███	-77.61%		0.00%	0.00%		100%	100%	80	100.00%	86.36%
███			27.27%	35.90%		100%	100%	82		45.45%
███	66.16%			0.00%		100%	100%			100.00%
███	8.75%			0.00%		100%	100%	85	93.02%	100.00%
███			0.00%	3.77%		100%	100%			81.25%
███	-10.58%			12.50%		100%	100%	84	100.00%	70.00%
███		98.87%	0.00%	4.13%	92%	100%	100%	93		83.33%
███						100%	100%			70.00%
███	-58.52%		0.00%	4.96%		98%	100%	86	70.46%	72.73%
███	-6.32%	98.12%	0.00%	7.00%	98%	100%	100%	92		80.00%
███	-6.89%							89		50.00%
███	6.89%		0.00%	0.00%		100%	100%			100.00%
███	-32.23%			0.00%		100%	100%			53.85%
███	-16.44%		16.82%	17.50%		99%	100%	86	91.56%	57.14%
███	-28.64%		0.00%	0.00%		100%	100%	86	100.00%	78.57%
███	35.82%		0.00%	1.96%		100%	100%	85	73.68%	78.57%
███			50.00%	14.29%		100%	100%	85	70.00%	51.79%
███		99.34%	3.85%	5.42%		100%	100%	93		86.67%
███						100%	100%			70.00%
███	47.45%					100%	100%			100.00%
███	10.91%		12.50%	13.81%		100%	100%	91	100.00%	89.29%
███	-22.58%	96.06%	0.00%	4.84%		100%	100%	92		66.67%
███	33.41%			0.00%		100%	100%	86		100.00%
███			0.00%	4.00%		100%	100%	88		86.36%

Appendix B

Nurse Performance Appraisal Survey and Consent

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000
INFORMED CONSENT

Protocol Title: Performance Appraisals: Understanding what makes feedback meaningful for the recipient?

Principal Investigator: Michael Kushner, Doctoral Student, Teachers College, Protocol Number: 19-009

(305) 342-1456, Michaelkushner6@gmail.com

Dear _____,

Please complete this short survey which will support a study that may help improve the performance appraisal process. All employees completing this survey will be entered a drawing where twenty participants will have a chance to receive a $5 Starbucks gift card.

You are being invited to participate in a research study being conducted at the Research Institution called "Performance Appraisals: Understanding what makes feedback meaningful for the recipient" The study's goal is to determine how recipients of performance appraisals understand and feel about the feedback they receive.

The principal investigator for the research is Michael Kushner, former Senior Vice President, Chief Talent Officer at the Research Institution, who is a doctoral student at Teachers College and is completing this study as part of his dissertation.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can change your mind about participating at any time and there will be no consequences. Your supervisor will not know whether you chose to participate or not. If you chose to participate, your responses will only be shared with the principal investigator. Your responses, will not be shared with your supervisor or anyone else at the Research Institution

This survey is the first step in the research study. This should take only approximately 15 minutes of your time. **If you choose to complete the survey, you are also consenting to be potentially recontacted for an invitation to a personal interview or a focus group**. **Not everyone who completes the survey will be recontacted**. If you are recontacted, you will have the choice to participate in the interview or focus group or not to participate. This should take approximately 1 to 2 hours of your time.

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking a routine physical, a school test or having a job interview. However, there are some risks to consider. You might feel uncomfortable describing feeling and situations from past performance appraisals. However, you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don't want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. Participants may feel concerned that they must participate in the study because the researcher is also a manager at the Research Institution **However, the study is voluntary and it carries no weight on your employment status or job duties.**

There is a risk of loss of confidentiality and because of this you might feel concerned that things you say might get back to you leader. The principal investigator is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity by keeping your name in a separate file from the data obtained in the survey. This key will be destroyed after all the data analysis is completed. All information will also be on a password protected computer or locked in a drawer.

Thank you for participating!

Begin Survey

Thank you for your interest in the survey. Your feedback is important

1. By clicking I agree, you agree to be in the study and confirm I am 18 years of age or older.
   □ I agree
   □ I Disagree

Next

2. During my career, the feedback I generally received during my appraisals matched my perception of my performance.
   □ Strongly Disagree
   □ Disagree
   □ Neutral
   □ Agree
   □ Strongly Agree

3. During my career, the feedback I received during my appraisals matched the feedback I received during the year.
   □ Strongly Disagree
   □ Disagree
   □ Neutral
   □ Agree
   □ Strongly Agree
   □ Did not receive feedback during the year

4. During my career, the appraisal rating (role model, excellent, strong contributor, etc.), I received in previous years influences my expectations for this year's rating.
   □ Strongly Disagree
   □ Disagree
   □ Neutral
   □ Agree
   □ Strongly Agree

5. During my career, my appraisals helped me to better understand my performance.
   □ Strongly Disagree
   □ Disagree
   □ Neutral
   □ Agree
   □ Strongly Agree

6. During my career, my supervisor/manager discusses ways to improve my performance.
   □ Strongly Disagree
   □ Disagree
   □ Neutral
   □ Agree
   □ Strongly Agree

7. During my career, the feedback I received helped me improve my future performance.
   □ Strongly Disagree
   □ Disagree
   □ Neutral
   □ Agree
   □ Strongly Agree

8. During my career, I have been satisfied with the annual appraisal process.
   □   Strongly Disagree
   □   Disagree
   □   Neutral
   □   Agree
   □   Strongly Agree

9. Please share your suggestions on how to improve the appraisal process and how to improve the communication of meaningful feedback for you.

```



```

10. You have the option to enter a raffle where if your name is drawn you will receive a $5 Starbucks gift card. There are 20 cards in the raffle. Your email address and survey response will be stored separately. Your chances of receiving the gift card are estimated to be 1 in 300. Only the person whose name is drawn for the raffle will be contacted via email. You do not have to enter the raffle to complete this survey. Please specify the email address below that you would like to be contacted at should you win the raffle.

    □   Please enter me into the raffle.

Email

```



```

Appendix C

Recruitment Script

<u>For Interview Participants</u>

You are being invited to participate in a research study being conducted at the Research Institution called "Performance appraisals: Understanding what makes feedback meaningful for the recipient." The study's goal is determine how the recipients of performance appraisals understand and feel about the feedback they receive.

The principal investigator for the research is Michael Kushner, Senior Vice President, Chief Talent Officer at the Research Institution, who is completing this study as part of an educational program.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can change your mind about participating at any time and there will be no consequences. Your supervisor will not know whether you choose to participate or not. If you choose to participate, your responses will only be shared with the study team. Your responses will not be shared with your supervisor or anyone else at the Research Institution.

You are being contacted because you participated in the first step of this research by completing a survey. You are being asked now to participate in the interview. This should take approximately 1 to 2 hours of your time. Either Michael Kushner or another qualified interviewer may conduct the interviews.

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking a routine physical, a school test or having a job interview. However, there are some risks to consider. You might feel uncomfortable discussing feeling and situations from past performance appraisals. **However, you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don't want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.**

There is a risk of loss of confidentiality and because of this you might feel concerned that things you say might get back to your leader**.** The principal investigator is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity by keeping your name in a separate file from the data obtained in the survey. This key file will be destroyed after all the data analysis is completed. All information will also be on a password protected computer or locked in a file drawer.

All interviews will be recorded so that they can be transcribed. The recordings will be destroyed after they are transcribed. You will not receive any remuneration for participating in the interview. If you are interested in participating, I will send you additional information on this study along with an informed consent and a participant's rights for your review.

Sample Nurse Appraisal from Hospital

Annual Performance Review - Completed

Document Type: Annual Performance **Template:**
Nurse Performance Review 2020**Status:**
Completed

Period: 01/01/2020 - 12/31/2020
Document ID: 1496
Due Date: 02/19/2021

Empl ID :		
Department :		
Location Code :	0001	Nicklaus Children's Hospital

Section 1 - Goal Plan

Goal Nurse

Description :

Every nurse will actively participate in a unit, hospital-wide, or specialty specific initiative in alignment with organizational priorities. These may include "Happy Family/Patient Experience" initiatives, LEAN, quality improvement (QI)/performance improvement (PI) projects, evidence based projects, engagement/retention initiatives, or innovation.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Manager Comments: Ana understands and supports NCHS values and strategic!priorities. She fully supports and understands our departmental goal of turnover time and the first case starts. Ana is very knowledgeable takes pride: in her profession.
She has strong technical skills which are made evident with the confidence she shows with her patients and families. She contributes to a positive and effective teamwork. She understands and supports NCH's strategic goals.

Employee Rating:
Employee Comments:

Goal Plan Summary

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor
Summary Weight: 5% (not less than 5%)

Employee Rating:

Section 2 - Job Specific Duties

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Works with Admitting and processes consents for family and reviews of orders as needed.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

C!in Coord Same Day Surgery
Description:

Supports departmental goals and the Hospital strategic plan. Actively participates in the nursing governance council and unit-based committee.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin **Coord Same Day Surgery**
Description:

Ensures department meets/exceeds and sustains acceptable service scores as measured by service index.Supports the Service Recovery program.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Provides mentoring and coaching on immediate basis to ensure the quality of nursing care.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Initiates the admitting process, communicates assignments with care team, and holds ongoing huddles.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Works collaboratively with all levels of the Hospital interdisciplinary team and promotes the team concept within the department & hospital wide.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:
_____

C!in Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Interacts with patients and families to review plan of care and solicits input and communicate any patient and family concerns to physician.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Interacts with the family to ensure their discharge needs are met.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Oversees and administers direct patient care during high census or when resources are not available including nursing assessment, recovery, vitals, planning, intervention, and evaluation.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:
_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Collaborates and rounds with a multi-disciplinary team in daily care planning rounds, as appropriate and fosters a family centered care environment.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:
_____

C!in Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Communicates the patient's progress including critical findings and changes in the patients' condition.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:
_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Oversees, implements, and documents the plan of care in collaboration with other disciplines and services to assure care.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Actively participates in the performance review process through chart reviews and validating timeliness of charting and all requirements are met.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Achieves a 95% CEI by conducting chart audits utilizing the EMR to ensure staff adherence to regulatory requirements of the DNV, CMS, DOH & other accrediting agencies.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Achieves and maintains acceptable standards with infection control goals and acceptable designated target/rates by performing infection prevention standards for assigned shift.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating: 1. Role Model
_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Conducts audits to ensure proper endoscope cleaning and processing.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:
_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Performs all Q&A with the pregnancy testing.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:
_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Achieves adequate PAR level by partnering with the Care Assistants to ensure supplies are requested and ordered within a timely manner.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Identifies opportunities to improve processes and assists with projects to enhance workflow utilizing Lean methodologies and tools.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Assists and supports the RNs and team with Anesthesia Stat efforts.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:
_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Reviews and aligns schedules with volume/census for all team members for Same Day Surgery department using flex options.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Accountable for patient throughput providing schedule coverage with internal resources.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Provides resolution while ensuring ideal anesthesia assignments for patient flow, admissions, transfer, or discharge in a timely manner.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Supports and directs Care Assistants and prioritizes the workflow. Works to ensure room turnover occurs in a timely manner per Hospital protocol and policy.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Clin Coord Same Day Surgery

Description:

Monitors and communicates attendance discrepancies. Supports Leader to drive accountability & compliancewithe MCHS attendance policy & nursing/department call-in procedures.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Section 3 - Common Job Duties

Common Job **Duty Staff 01**

Description:

Maintains accountability by ensuring compliance thru timely completion of licensures, certifications, all competencies/reviews, health requirements (PPD, N95, Flu, TDap), & education requirements.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating: 1**.** Role Model

_____

Common Job **Duty Staff 02**

Description:

Maintains accountability and timekeeping expectations as outlined by NCHS Timekeeping and Attendance policy & procedures.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Common Job **Duty Staff 03**

Description:

Assists the department in achieving or exceeding its overall service targets by creating positive memories and patient experiences for our patients and families.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Employee Rating:

_____

Common Job Duties Summary

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Summary Weight: 20% (not less than 20%)

Manager Comments:

Ana is very knowledgeable takes pride in her profession. She has strong technical skills which are made evident with the confidence she shows withher patients and families. She contributes to a positive and effective teamwork. She understands and supports NCH's strategic goals. Ana is an exceptional team player and is considered an asset to her teammates. She consistently performs and contributes at a level that keeps pace with changing expectations.

Employee Rating: 1. Role Model

Employee Comments:

Maintains accountability by ensuring compliance thru timely completion of licensures, certifications, all competencies/reviews, health requirements **(PPD,** N95, Flu, TDap), & education requirements. Not only as described in the role, but I assist the SDS manager in ensuring staff is compliant.

Section 4 - iCreate Behaviors and Values

Collaboration

Description:
What it means for us:
Communicating within and outside of the health system to bring the best ideas, knowledge and perspectives tothe organization, the patient and the family.

Key Characteristics:
Respectful; self-disciplined; open; transparent; approachable; flexible

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Manager Comments: Ana is proactive in maintaining consistent and effective communication with her team members

Employee Rating: 1. Role Model

Respectful; self-disciplined; open; transparent; approachable; flexible

Employee Comments: COVID-19 PRE-OP PATIENTS
Created Standard Work, Developed first NCHS employees testing, Developed workflow for COVID-19 clinic testing.

_____

Responsibility

Description:
What it means for us:
Taking ownership; acting with integrity and transparency; being reliable and dependable; consistently drivingquality and safety.

Key Characteristics:
Focused; transparent; honest; consistent.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Manager Comments: Same Day Surgery can be a very stressful environment at times. Ana leads
our "Speak Up" policy through example. She uses her expert knowledge and is always a patient advocate.

Employee Rating: 1. Role Model

Taking ownership; acting with integrity and transparency; being reliable and dependable; consistently driving quality
and safety. In the last year, I have been engaged in various projects and new initiatives that have driven quality
metrics in SDS.

Employee Comments:

DNV Champion, EOC Champion, RAIN Champion, Report FCS
metrics to leadership team

_____

Empowerment

Description:
What it means for us:
Encouraging all employees to take initiative and make decisions in the best interests of the child and family to improve
customer service and experience.

Key Characteristics:
Trust; respect; selfless; determined; decisive.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Manager Comments: Ana has the trust and respect of all those around her due to her clinical
knowledge. She is determined in driving projects and is always opened to feedback.

Employee Rating: 2. Excellent

Employee Comments: Press Ganey scores rating above exceeded for SDS.

_____

Advocacy

Description:
What it means for us:
Relentlessly supporting each other and championing the child and the family in the hospital, in the home, in thecommunity
and in health policies.

Key Characteristics:
Positive; persistent; resourceful; problem-solver.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Manager Comments: Ana has been of service and contributory to the development and start-up of
the Covid Clinic, keeping in mind the best interest and improvement goals for the team. She dove into the team's
efforts as a true team player.

Employee Rating: 1. Role Model

Employee Comments: I go above and beyond to solve issues and concerns that arise within the
department and assist other teams within Surgical Services in navigating same.

_____

Transformation

Description:
What it means for us:
Inspiring valuable and positive change; passionate about enhancing the motivation, morale and performance of others; consistently innovating and pushing our knowledge boundaries to improve our reach and expertise.

Key Characteristics:
Purpose-driven; people-driven; articulate; tenacious; innovative; inspiring

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Manager Comments: Ana helped organize the Covid Clinic of April 2020. She inspires all new nurses to always advocate for the patient and to stay curious. Her motivationand expertise have truly assisted in improving the culture within the department.

Employee Rating: 2. Excellent

CLAIRVIA scheduling and allow for flexibility to ensure staff is able to accomplish scheduled training, college schedules and required training

Employee Comments:
_____

Empathy

Description:
What it means for us:
Stepping into the shoes of another person, aiming to understand and respect their feelings and perspectives, and to use that understanding to guide our actions.

Key Characteristics:
Curious; non-judgmental; humility; good listener; open; tolerant.

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Manager Comments: Ana always tries to build trust and understanding with her team and co-workers alike

Employee Rating: 2. Excellent

Employee Comments:
_____

---

iCreate Behaviors and **Values Summary**

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Summary Weight: 50% (not less than 50%)

Employee Rating: 2. Excellent

Section 5 - Overall Rating Summary

Manager Rating: 3. Strong Contributor

Manager Comments:

knowledge and experience with policy and procedure, she continues to be a strong leader to all the staff day in and day out. There is no question she can't answer and if she is not 100% sure of the answer, she will follow up am make sure that the staff member will ALWAYS receive the right answer. She is a thorough and strong reference for all of us.

Employee Rating: 2. Excellent

Employee Comments:

2020 was a year to show-case my leadership qualities amongst my peers. There were various projects in which I assisted my leaders guide and succeed in.
_____

Section 6 Employee Comments

Employee Comments:
_____

Section 7 Peer Feedback:

_____

Section 8 Signatures and Date

Appendix E

Interview Informed Consent

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York, NY 10027
212 678 3000

INFORMED CONSENT

Protocol Title: Performance Appraisals: Understanding what makes feedback meaningful for the recipient

Principal Investigator: Michael Kushner, Graduate Student, Teachers College
(305) 342-1456. Michaelkushner6@gamil.com
_____

INTRODUCTION
You are being invited to participate in this research study called "Performance Appraisals: Understanding what makes feedback meaningful for the recipient" You may qualify to take part in this research study because you are a nurse who is employed at Research Institution who has been through the performance appraisal process one or more times. Approximately thirty-five people will participate in this study and it will take a maximum of 2 hours of your time to complete. The principal investigator for the research is Michael Kushner, Senior Vice President, Chief Talent Officer at the Research Institution, who is a doctoral student at Teachers College and is completing this study as part of his dissertation.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?
This study is being done to determine how the recipients of performance appraisals understand and feel about the feedback they receive and how past experiences with the process impact the recipient's ability to engage in the process. In addition, the study will explore what factors may help to create an ideal environment for the recipient to receive positive and constructive feedback.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
If you decide to participate, you will be either interviewed or participate in a focus group, not both. The principal investigator or a co-principal investigator will conduct the interviews and focus groups. During the interviews or focus groups you will be asked to discuss your experiences with performance appraisals. The interview and focus groups will be audiorecorded. After the audio-recording is written down (transcribed) the audio-recording will be deleted. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will not be able to participate. The interviews will take approximately 90 minutes and the focus group approximately two hours.

For focus group participants, everyone will be asked not to discuss what is being spoken about outside of the group but it is impossible to guarantee complete confidentiality.

Interviews and focus groups will take place at your worksite at a convenient location and time for all participants. You will be asked to ensure that there is adequate coverage on your work unit during the time you are away participating in the study.

To assist with understanding trends and patterns for this study, the researcher may review your confidential information such as demographic data, previous performance appraisals or performance appraisal feedback surveys maintained by the Hospital.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking a routine physical, a school test or having a job interview. However, there are some risks to consider. You might feel uncomfortable discussing feeling and situations from past performance appraisals. **However, you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don't want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.**

There is a risk of loss of confidentiality and because of this you might feel concerned that things you say might get back to your employer or work leader. The principal investigator is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity by maintaining personal data in a **de-identified format** instead of using your name. All information will also be on a password protected computer or locked in a file drawer.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?
You will not be paid to participate in this study. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY
The investigator will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio-recording will be written down and the audio-recording will then be destroyed. Any personal data will be maintained on a de-identified basis which means a separate file will be kept linking your name with a study-specific ID that will be assigned to you.

The research dataset will contain only the study-specific ID. The key will be destroyed after data analysis is complete. In furtherance of this study confidential information such as demographic

data, previous performance appraisals or performance appraisal feedback surveys maintained by the Hospital may be examined to assist with understanding trends and patterns for this study.

For quality assurance, the study team, the study sponsor (grant agency), and/or members of the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review the data collected from you as part of this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will 19-009 09/15/2020 Teachers College, Columbia University 525 West 120th Street New York NY 10027 212 678 3000 3 be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by U.S. or State law. No individual participant's comments or results will be shared with the Research Institution.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?
Your identity will be removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the principal investigator and all data collected during the study will be kept for a minimum of three years after the completion of the study.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING
Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, you will not be able to participate in this research study.

_____   I give my consent to be recorded
(Participant Initials)

_____   I do not consent to be recorded
(Participant Initials)

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

___I consent to allow audio recorded materials viewed at an educational setting, at a conference outside of Teachers College, or by a third party transcribing the audio
recordings_____
                                        Signature

___I **do not** consent to allow audio recorded materials viewed outside of Teachers College, Columbia University

_____
                                        Signature

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?
If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Michael Kushner, 305 342-1456 or at michaelkushner6@gmail.com. You can also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Lyle Yorks at 212-678-3820 or the Research Institution 786-624-3540.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University. You can also contact the Research Institution at 786-624-3540.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

• I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.

• I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty to future employment.

• The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion if I appear to be unduly stressed by participating in the study.

• If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.

• Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

• Identifiers may be removed from the data and de-identifiable data may be used for future research studies, or distributed to another investigator for future research without additional informed consent from the subject or the representative

• I will receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study

Print name: _____**Date:** _____

Signature:_____

Appendix F

Coding Scheme

Bias
• Leader sharing feedback from their own bias and not facts/do not know whole person
Learning Environment: Emotion
• Anxiety/stress experienced by recipient
• Calm and looking forward to appraisal session
• Anxiety/stress <u>can</u> limit ability to listen/absorb feedback
• Anxiety/stress <u>does not</u> limit ability to listen/absorb feedback
• No described emotion/acceptance
• Disappointed in process and/or feedback received
• Leader setting a calming/safe environment (greeting, smiles, seating, starting with appreciation, etc.)
• Range of emotions both positive and negative experienced
Learning Environment: Physical Environment
• Physical environment can reduce anxiety/stress
• Physical environment can increase anxiety/stress
Experiential Learning
• No or minimal valuable feedback (appraisal is an obligation/drudgery either for recipient or leader)
• Historical appraisals set expectation for current/future appraisal
• First appraisals **<u>most</u>** meaningful, sets pattern and typically the most uncertain
• First appraisals **<u>least</u>** meaningful, poor understanding of process, job, and not well known to leader
• Meaningful feedback over career inconsistent
• Repetitive content which is similar each year (copy and paste) with little learning
• Consistent ratings each year lead to comfort with process
• Figured out appraisal system to get desired rating
• Job expectations become clearer as you perform the job
• Appraisal effectiveness declined over time (more requirements not adding value & less time spent with employee)
• Appraisal effectiveness improved over time
• Appraisal effectiveness the same over time
• Access to leaders/resources limited on night shift, learning is more independent, and harder to get meaningful feedback from leader (limited first-hand knowledge)
• Building a relationship with your leader is critical to ensuring fair feedback and to feel supported
• Assessing the behaviors/values is subjective and hard to measure

- Employee develops strategies knowing himself/herself to maximize the value of the appraisal (i.e. listening techniques, note taking, checklists during the year, etc.)
- Feedback/Process considered fair and meaningful (reflects whole performance cycle)

Feedback: Appraisal Session

- Appraisal session allows time for questions and clarification of leader's perspective but recipient not necessarily heard
- Appraisal session is a dialogue which allows for questions and answers and the recipient feels heard
- Too much focus on negative feedback, not a balance
- Appraisals are individual reviews and much of the work is done as a team, not all team members equally contribute and certain alliances can distort feedback

- Performance examples make feedback concrete and can create a sense of fairness, without them feedback can be too high level/no actionable follow-up
- Feedback matched what I heard/my perception during the performance cycle year
- Feedback does not reflect the whole performance cycle (recency effect)
- Leader solicits feedback from employee

Feedback: Communication

- Leader understands employee preferred method of receiving feedback
- Leader does **not** understand employee preferred method of receiving feedback

- Expectations not mutually understood
- Expectations and feedback clearly communicated and understood
- Poor explanation from leader for performance rating and words do not agree with rating

Feedback: Frequency

- Timely feedback from leader observing/experiencing the behavior is meaningful

- Timely feedback from peer, patient, parent observing/experiencing the behavior is meaningful
- Regular feedback during the performance year is meaningful and avoids surprises at the annual appraisal
- Feedback limited to annual appraisal only and some consider this unfair as there is no opportunity to improve during the year

Feedback: Source

- Meaningful feedback from leader when leader spends time interacting/observing and getting to know the whole person

- Less valuable feedback from leader due to little time spent interacting/observing and getting to know the whole person
- Most meaningful feedback is from leader

- Most meaningful feedback is from peer, patient, parent, physician, clinical educator
- Peer feedback has limited value due to fear of negatively impacting coworker, peer bias (likes the person or not), when it is the only or main feedback given, or the peer has not worked with the employee often enough or fully understands the role
- Peer feedback considered very valuable

Feedback: Time

- No sit down annual appraisal, appraisal sent to employee for review and signature
- Up to 15 minutes for annual appraisal
- 15 to 30 minutes for annual appraisal
- More than 30 minutes for annual appraisal

Motivation

- Meaningful feedback can lead to behavior change and is from a respected leader (Respects knowledge and/or cares about employee)
- Positive reinforcement supports behavioral change
- Employee validating feedback is essential to accepting feedback and changing performance/behaviors
- Employee who considers feedback invalid/inappropriate can become demotivated or can decide not to challenge it

- Recipient appraisal goal: Feedback and Growth
- Recipient appraisal goal: Rating
- Recipient appraisal goal: Raise/money
- Recipient appraisal goal: Appreciation and Recognition
- Effectively delivered feedback can motivate employee to improve performance

- Feedback that generates an emotional response (positive or negative) can motivate employee to improve or worsen performance
- Employee not participating in work decisions can be demotivating
- Certain employees are driven from within to perform or improve
- Employees are more apt to change if they see the importance of the change (what is in it for them)
- Meaningful when leader prioritizes the needed performance changes to create a focus on only a few most important areas so as not overwhelm employee
- Jointly developing a plan with the leader is most helpful to create a change in performance or behavior

Power

- Employee suggestions/process improvements have no path for consideration
- Fearful or disengaged to even raise an issue of disagreement with appraisal or unsure of the viable escalation path. No resolution pursued.

- Raise an issue with leader about the appraisal but unable to resolve disagreements on ratings
- Employee escalates disagreement beyond leader
- Fearful might lose job if performance does not improve

Process Appraisal Session
• Appraisal session; majority time leader talking • Annual appraisal feedback session is scheduled and for some it relieves anxiety • Annual appraisal feedback session is <u>not</u> scheduled • Effective appraisal session presents positive and negative feedback • Leader showing appreciation/respect/projecting caring for employees adds to appraisal effectiveness • Successful/Meaningful/Valuable appraisal involves active participation by employee and leader

Process Instrument/Tool
• Self-rating performance valued • Self-rating performance <u>not</u> valued and not adequate time to complete • Supports two part appraisal (assesses technical skills and behaviors/values) • Not all parts/questions of appraisal reflect the actual job being completed or too many questions on appraisal • Process does not integrate key feedback for example from parents • Stop annual appraisal with common review date • Appraisal process similar at various institutions (appraisal session with leader, reconciliation of self and leader ratings, etc.) • Raise linked to ratings which are subject to a curve • Employee raise dependent on organizational performance and external competitive market • Rate leaders effectiveness on providing feedback • Leader invests <u>little</u> time in developing feedback and just edits employee's self appraisal

Process Professional Development
• Leader support for achieving professional goals • Lack of resources and support for professional development • Adequate resources for professional development • Need support to change behavior/old habits

Process Standardization/Variation
• Leader variability/confusion on assigning performance ratings. Same performance in two different departments or by two different leaders might get different ratings • Consistent assignment of performance ratings. Same performance in two different departments or by two different managers would get same ratings • Leader has <u>more than</u> 30 appraisals to do. • Leader has <u>less than</u> 30 appraisals to do.

Appendix G

Pre- and Post-Interview Summary Form

Pre-interview Information

Received signed consent: Yes or No

Name: Date of Interview:
Phone #:
Email address:
Department:

Survey overall score:
        Question 1 score:
        Question 2 score:
        Question 3 score:
        Question 4 score:
        Question 5 score:
        Question 6 score:
        Question 7 score:

Survey Comments:

2019 appraisal rating:
Age:
Gender:
Ethnicity/Race:
FTE:
Pay:

After Interview Summary
(to be completed within 24 hours of interview)

Observation/Question	Scale	Score	Comments
How comfortable was the interviewee during the interview?	On a scale of one to ten assign a value with 10 being extremely comfortable without any signs of stress or anxiety.		
Were non-verbal cues consistent with the responses to the questions asked?	On a scale of one to ten assign a value with 10 being extremely consistent with the verbal responses.		
Were there any questions that created discomfort for the interviewee?	Specify which question(s)		
How truthful did you feel the responses to the questions were?	On a scale of one to ten assign a value with 10 being extremely truthful.		
How would you rate the connection or interpersonal dynamics between the interviewer and interviewer?	On a scale of one to ten assign a value with 10 being the highest possible connection between the interviewer and interviewee		

218

Appendix H

Interview Questions

1. What are the words that come to mind when you think about the annual performance appraisals you have had during your entire career, not just the last one? Please explain why you selected the words you did.
Possible Prompts
      a. Approximately how many appraisals have you had during your career?
      b. In the feedback survey you completed you indicated that the feedback you received was (fill in details). Can you explain why you rated the feedback the way you did (can either agree with the words just given or not)?

2. Was there an annual appraisal that stands out as providing you valuable feedback? Please explain.
Possible Prompts
      a. Relationship with leader
      b. What was the rating
      c. Was there a special project or patient?

3. Was there an annual appraisal that stands out as <u>not</u> providing you valuable feedback? Please explain.
Possible Prompts
      a. Relationship with leader
      b. What was the rating
      c. Was there an assignment that you did not like?

4. a. What are the words that come to mind that describe the range of emotions you have experienced during your appraisals?
   b. How do these feelings affect your ability to hear any feedback messages? Please explain.
   c. What strategies do you use to minimize emotion?
Possible Prompts
      a. Fear
      b. Anxiousness
      c. Happiness
      d. Disappointment
      e. Frustration
      f. Confusion
      g. Relief

5. At any time during your career have you disagreed or been disappointed with the rating you received from an appraisal? If yes, why and were you able to resolve the disagreement?
Possible Prompts
      a. During your career did the organization ever explain what outcomes or behaviors it required to achieve certain ratings?

b. In your estimation was there bias? Please explain.
c. Were you able to discuss the disagreement and were you comfortable having the conversation?
d. Have you ever sought a third party to resolve the disagreement like Human Resources or your leader's boss?
e. Did you speak with your peers, others within the organization outside your chain of command or someone outside the organization?

6. Please consider how <u>past</u> evaluations scores and feedback sessions have set your expectations for future evaluations as you consider the following questions.
   a. Have previous appraisal scores or experiences influenced your expectations, mood, feeling, thoughts, etc., about your next appraisal?
   b. How much time do you typically spend with your leader at the annual appraisal session?
   c. Have your appraisal sessions been a discussion or did the leader do most of the talking?
   d. Did you feel heard and were you able to ask questions and were your questions answered adequately?
   e. Approximately how many employees does you manger have to evaluate?
   f. Is your annual appraisal session scheduled in advance? If not, how do you find out about it.
   g. Can you tell me about how often during the year you receive performance feedback?

7.   a. What is your preferred way to receive feedback? Please give an example
        b. Does your leader know your preferences and use them to provide feedback?
<u>Possible Prompts</u>
   a. Privately versus publicly
   b. At the time of incident or later
   c. With detailed examples or generalized input
   d. Documented formally or informally
   e. From a particular person you trust or respect or anyone
   f. Understood the frequency in which you like to receive feedback

8. Who in your work world generally provides the most meaningful feedback? Please explain.
<u>Possible Prompts</u>
   a. Peer
   b. Boss
   c. Subordinate
   d. Patient or family member of patient
   e. Friend or professional outside the organization
   f. Human Resources
   g. Internal or external coach

9. If you are given feedback that suggests an area that you could improve, what kind of support do you need in order to make and sustain a change in your behaviors or processes? Do you usually get it?

<u>Possible Prompts</u>
   a. Peer/buddy
   b. More time with your leader
   c. Structured meetings to review progress
   d. Additional training or education

10. Please give me a recent example when feedback you received during the appraisal process, or outside of it, caused you to change a work behavior or process. Please explain how the feedback was presented to you and by whom so you were motivated to make a behavioral or process change.

<u>Possible Prompts</u>
   a. What motivated you to make the change?
   b. What made the change possible?
   c. What support did you have?
   d. Value of peer feedback and/or self-appraisal

11. What do you hope to get out of the annual appraisal process?

<u>Possible Prompts</u>
   a. Pay increase
   b. Promotion
   c. Feedback
   d. Rating level
   e. Documentation for your performance
   f. How to improve your performance

12. a. Has the performance appraisal process improved, stayed the same or gotten worse over the course of your career and why?
    b. What suggestions would you have to improve the appraisal process and feedback you receive to make it more meaningful?

<u>Possible Prompts</u>
   a. Process changes
   b. Content changes
   c. More training for leaders
   d. Training for employees
   e. Feelings about a neutral third party observing appraisal/feedback and coaching the leader and you

Appendix I

Survey Comments by Research Question

Research Question	Theme	Below	Mean	Above
1	Patient input	Include family/patient ratings of nurse performance		
1	Peer input	The appraisal is usually created by our coworkers. This means that mostly everyone that completes it will give you a great rating because they don't want to affect your pay. The opposite can happen if there is some on the unit doesn't like you.		I do not find the practice of colleagues evaluating each other, peer review, useful. Comments not usually objective and unbiased. Sometimes used to attack others. Staff asked to review people that they don't have sufficient work exposure to.
1	Frequency of feedback		Appraisals need to be held more frequently throughout the year in order to be truly effective.	There are no quarterly meetings truly occurring. … I think it would be beneficial to all employees to have quarterly meeting TRULY occurring so the appraisal is not a surprise.
1	Time to complete appraisal	… The process is long and repetitive…	It's more complicated than it needs to be.	
1	Self – evaluation		The self-evaluation is a waste of time. Basically, the leaders already know what you will get or not get, by me doing a self eval I think it is only a waste of time.	

1	Rating		Managers/Directors should be free to rate employees at the level they feel is appropriate, based on performance, not at the level dictated by HR. If a department has many high performers, the leader should be able to rate them as such without the confines of limits on rating levels.	
1	Pay increase	I don't believe that the appraisal rating (role model, excellent) should be tied to the amount of your increase. Lots of nurses deserve "role model" but are not given that rating because it means that they have to be given a higher raise.	We should have a better appraisal since there were no raises this year, that contributed to staff finding them "meaningless."	
2	Communication effectiveness	I feel I only get feedback when it's negative from my superiors.		
2	Communication effectiveness	I think the only time we receive feedback is when we make a mistake.		
2	Communication effectiveness	When someone receives praise and thanks all year long, but then just "meets expectations" for a quarterly or annual eval...it leaves people scratching their heads.		
4	Most meaningful feedback	The people best enabled to give feedback on any given employee are the people who work side by side with that employee completing the employee's job requirements. Rarely are these people supervisors/leaders.		

4	Leader and support	I have never received feedback from my manager…	My manager is amazing and gives feedback all the time, whether it is positive or for areas of improvement.	
4	Motivation	No matter what I do I still get the same evaluation, I can follow my manager's suggestions to a T, and the result is the same.	I don't understand why the manager would say that I did everything right but I cannot be a strong contributor because I am not involved in any research, I don't participate in the different committees, I don't go to conferences. I want to be a bedside nurse not a research nurse.	

Appendix J

Comments from All Three Groups of Interviewees on the Level of Emotion of the Appraisal

Below Group
Interviewee #2B
Okay. There was one year that I had, I mean, I was pregnant, I was working night shifts. And basically the whole evaluation said that I seemed distracted and tired and not motivated. And I'm like, well, yeah. I'm pregnant. And tired. So I didn't find much value in that one…Yeah. I was just really angry. I mean, I don't know. I don't know if it was anything they said, they just said, okay, well, you had a rough year, maybe next year you can do better. I don't remember exact words, but something to that phrase. I was just angry that was the evaluation I had gotten, and held that grudge, I guess. Laughs.

Interviewee #3B
What if they tell you something that you're not going to want to hear, or what if they tell you you're not doing a good job? I think that usually the person who gives your performance review is not – if it's your director that gives you the performance review but it's not your director that's really looking at your daily job tasks or how you interact with families, how you interact with patients. It's all what other people say about you. There's always that thought of anxiety and a little bit of anger saying, why are you doing my performance review when you're not really in the office with me? So you don't really see how I am with families and patients. It's all hearsay. It's all what other people tell you about me….
I don't think I've ever done anything about it. Whatever has been said has always stayed there because I think there's always a fear factor of if you say something, if you bring something up is that going to affect my job in the future? Being there all the years that I've been … you're kind of always walking on ice saying what if they fire me because I bring up something? Because I've been there for so long. After 20-plus years you start to wonder. My days are limited, my years are limited. They're going to find somebody that they can hire for half the money that I make, so I don't think I've ever said anything about it

Mean Group
Interviewee #13M
Yeah, I think it's certainly nerve-racking. It's probably the biggest one. You never quite know what is going to come out of an appraisal, but usually towards the end I leave feeling more confident and more affirmed.

Interviewee #14M
Well, for me, probably, the first word that comes to mind would be like nerve-wracking, just because it was my first as a brand-new nurse. I wasn't sure what to expect, and thankfully it was very well, very professional. Excellent, great feedback and critique, but definitely the biggest word was nerve-wracking.

Interviewee #17M
I'm always a little bit nervous, not because of the appraisal itself, but sometimes I'm the person that doesn't do well with criticism, not that I take it personally, but I guess a little tenderhearted. I would say a little bit of nervousness, but not so much that I'm nervous the night before, just right when they're about to call me into the office.

Above Group
Interviewee #8A
Nervous. Scared. Worried. I'm nervous about the unknown during the interview. It does affect it because, at the time, I'm hoping it hurries up. I don't know. I don't know if I'm really paying to what she's saying. I hear her, but I don't know if I'm comprehending it. At the time I'm like, okay, how long is it going to be? Am I going to hurry up and get out of here? Then, when I leave, I'm like, okay, it was not that bad. I don't know. That's all I can say about that.

Interviewee #10A
Well, sometimes nervous when you're doing it, because you don't know how people perceive how you are and things like that. So sometimes when that time comes, you just feel nervous about how you're going to come about. How do you think people look at you? Or are you doing a great job and things like that?
Anytime you have anxiety you can feel worked up that's in anything, but specifically during performance appraisals you're just anxious just to hear how you've been doing. I mean, I'm sure anybody can have some sort of anxiety when they're being appraised you know?

Interviewee #19A
Words of emotion... I would say that I definitely felt... during, I was still a little anxious, there's always... I have a very nice relationship with my manager, but when you're still sitting in an office face-to-face with them going over what people have written about you, or what people have said about you, I would still say that there's a little bit anxiety around that time

Summary of Post-Interview Comments/Observations

Observation/Question	Scale	Score																				
		Interviewee																				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
How comfortable was the interviewee during the interview?	On a scale of one to ten assign a value with 10 being extremely comfortable without any signs of stress or anxiety.	8.0	9.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	7.0	8.0	9.5	7.0	8.0	7.5	9.0	8.0	8.0	8.5	7.5	7.5	9.0	8.0	8.0
Were non-verbal cues consistent with the responses to the questions asked?	On a scale of one to ten assign a value with 10 being extremely consistent with the verbal responses.	8.0	9.0	0.0	0.0	8.5	8.0	8.0	8.0	9.5	0.0	8.0	0.0	9.0	8.0	0.0	8.5	0.0	0.0	9.0	8.0	8.0
Were there any questions that created discomfort for the interviewee?	Specify which question(s)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
How truthful did you feel the responses to the questions were?	On a scale of one to ten assign a value with 10 being extremely truthful.	9.0	9.0	8.0	9.0	9.0	8.0	9.0	8.0	9.5	8.0	8.5	8.0	9.0	9.0	8.0	8.5	7.5	8.0	9.0	8.5	8.0
How would you rate the connection or interpersonal dynamics between the interviewer and interviewer?	On a scale of one to ten assign a value with 10 being the highest possible connection between the interviewer and interviewee	8.5	9.0	8.0	8.0	8.5	8.0	9.0	8.0	9.5	7.5	8.5	8.0	8.5	8.5	8.0	8.5	7.5	8.0	9.0	8.0	8.0
Total		34	36	24	25	34	32	33	32	38	23	33	24	36	34	24	34	23	24	36	33	32

Interview's Comments/Observations

Observation/Question	Interviewee																				
	1	2	3	4*	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
How comfortable was the interviewee during the interview?	Was very open, on-time, was bit repetitive with her examples. Used some other experience as a supervisor in the past to help her with how to create meaning for the recipient.	Very comfortable. Worked a full day and then will work again tomorrow.	Did not want video	Very comfortable. Did not share screen/audio only.			Said was a bit nervous but calmed down quickly.		Knew interviewee from the past and she was very much at ease.	Interviewee was cautious. Took two calls to recruit her. 1st call she said call back and when I did she agreed to participate.	Answers were generalized and had difficulty personalizing responses or thinking of examples.	Interviewee was cautious and English was not her first language. She struggled with understanding some of the questions.	Very articulate and open. Nursing is second career	Was a 1st year nurse with one appraisal	Was at work and they blocked video for Zoom.	Has several rescheduled interviews but finally connected today.	Did not share video. Got the sense she was guarded & uncomfortable fully sharing. She had a low appraisal rating and said things I believe she thought I wanted to hear. Although there were some gems here.	Only interview which was a phone interview. She was intimidated with technology. No video. Had a definite view point and it took a while for her to make her points. She had chip on her shoulder about her education which was from a nursing diploma school.	New nurse (2 years) has received excellent support & feedback. Not quite long enough experience to form thoughts about how the appraisal process could change/improve.	New nurse with one appraisal thus far but with Hospital 5 plus years. She worked in the registration department prior to becoming a nurse. Seemed a bit nervous at first.	Was in an open area during the interview that may have limited her ability to speak freely. Did not understand all the questions.
Were non-verbal cues consistent with the responses to the questions asked?			Could not see her							Did not want video on.		Did not want video on.									
Were there any questions that created discomfort for the interviewee?	Some questions were thought provoking & she paused to think before responding.																				
How truthful did you feel the responses to the questions were?		Honest answers					Felt her answers were well articulated with good examples.	Was truthful and pleased with appraisal process at Hospital. Liked change to more input from peers and self-eval.													
How would you rate the connection or interpersonal dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee?		Strong																			