Lisa A. Steelman · Jane R. Williams
Editors

Feedback at Work

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Preface

The process of giving, receiving, and using feedback at work is a perennial topic of interest in organizations, and among employees and managers. If you search the internet for “feedback at work,” you will find literally billions of articles offering advice on how to give feedback. Feedback is viewed as critical for success, and yet the process is challenging enough that billions of articles have been written on how to do it effectively. Published research on feedback at work dates back at least 100 years and covers the role of feedback in learning, motivation, and self-regulation. Indeed, we have learned a lot, and our understanding of feedback continues to evolve and become more nuanced over time.

The process of feedback at work is facing new scrutiny as organizations are increasingly modifying and enhancing feedback mechanisms. We compiled this book to summarize the current state of evidence-based knowledge on feedback processes. Our goal was to bring together experts in the field to discuss a range of topics related to feedback and chart a course for the application of feedback-related evidence into new organizational processes, and to compel future research.

We believe that feedback at work cannot be separated from the work context or from the interpersonal relationships therein. The chapters in this volume discuss critical aspects of the feedback process within this framework. Each chapter provides a unique perspective, all with the goal of enhancing intentionality in feedback processes. The book starts by presenting the newest thinking on the traditional feedback topics of the feedback source, the relationship between the feedback source and feedback recipient, and the notion of feedback frequency. We then move to a focus on the feedback recipient including reactions to feedback and the recipient’s feedback orientation or receptivity to feedback. Continuing with a focus on the recipient, there are chapters on the active elicitation of feedback known as feedback seeking. Given that feedback does not occur in a vacuum, but rather interacts with the environment and the individual, the next chapters discuss the feedback environment and individual differences that have been linked to the feedback process. The book closes by examining 360 degree feedback and new applications of technology for the feedback process.

All chapters in this volume contextualize the most current research in feedback processes for contemporary organizations and the workforce of today. The time is right to bring these ideas together in one book that dives into the current state of the feedback literature. We encourage organizations to look to the current research for direction as they seek to enhance feedback processes, and we challenge readers to use the ideas represented here to continue to advance the field!

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Chapter 1
Using Science to Improve Feedback Processes at Work

Lisa A. Steelman and Jane R. Williams

Using Science to Improve Feedback Processes at Work

Meaningful feedback is essential for employees on the job, yet feedback itself is an anomaly. On the one hand, job performance feedback is essential to development, performance improvement, and goal setting, and people generally report that they value feedback and want more of it (London, 2003). Feedback guides, motivates, and reinforces effective behavior, and identifies and reduces ineffective behavior. On the other hand, recipients may be defensive and dismissive of feedback, particularly negative feedback. In light of this, feedback sources may delay or distort feedback and are often reluctant to provide critical feedback (Murphy, Cleveland & Hanscom, 2018). Additionally, many feedback sources shy away from providing favorable feedback in the workplace. These contradictions highlight the challenges that managers and employees experience in the feedback process.

The assumption is that if people receive feedback about their performance, they will be motivated and empowered to use it to make improvements. However, seminal research by Kluger and DeNisi (1996) suggests that as much as one-third of the time feedback messages can result in lower performance, rather than the expected performance improvement. In fact, feedback has a fundamentally bad reputation, epitomized by this quote: "Performance feedback represents the ultimate lose–lose scenario. It is extremely difficult to do well, and if it was done well, the recipients would be likely to dismiss their feedback as inaccurate and unfair. It is no wonder

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that supervisors and subordinates alike approach performance appraisal with a mix of skepticism and unease" (Adler et al., 2016, page 231).

The dichotomy of job performance feedback is clear, feedback is important for effective job performance, but it is infrequently given and frequently misused. Interestingly, there is a current trend in organizations to encourage frequent, in-the-moment feedback and reduce the focus on formal performance appraisal (Adler et al., 2016). This new focus, embraced by organizations such as Eli Lilly, Microsoft, Adobe, and Gap, relies on managers to provide effective feedback and employees to receive and utilize this feedback in their work. In other words, it relies on a process that many feel is flawed and is a lose–lose situation. However, feedback does not have to be so maligned. Feedback, after all, is just performance information. When we take a golf or tennis lesson, we pay someone to give us feedback. We see this feedback as valuable to improving our performance on the links or tennis court. Certainly, in the workplace job performance feedback operates differently because it can be wrapped in affect, politics, and other interpersonal processes. This is where feedback research can have an impact. Research can disentangle the feedback message from individual difference factors and workplace context factors to identify best practices for the provision and use of feedback.

Decades of feedback research has sought to break through these issues and improve the effectiveness of job performance feedback. Early feedback research was dominated by an evaluative framework and focus on the rater in which the purpose of feedback was to convey a judgment (Levy & Williams, 2004). Ilgen, Fisher, and Taylor (1979) presented an early model of this feedback process. They proposed that the feedback process itself had three components – the source of the feedback, the actual feedback message, and the feedback recipient. Characteristics of the feedback source, such as the source's credibility, affect how the recipient receives and reacts to the feedback. Components of the feedback message include the timing of the feedback, the frequency with which feedback is given, and the sign (positive or negative) of the feedback. Finally, Ilgen and colleagues refer to a recipient's response to feedback in four steps: (1) perceived feedback, (2) acceptance of feedback, (3) desire to respond to feedback, and (4) intended response. They discuss the conditions that promote individual acceptance of feedback and the desire to respond to the feedback message. This model provided the foundation for subsequent feedback investigation in which researchers examined the specific factors laid out by Ilgen et al. and their impact on the feedback process.

Building on the Ilgen et al. (1979) model, Taylor, Fisher, and Ilgen (1984) proposed a control theory approach for how a recipient reacts to and uses feedback. When feedback indicates a discrepancy between the current state of performance and the standard or goal, one of several responses can occur, such as accepting the feedback and changing performance, changing the goal, or ignoring the feedback altogether. Taylor et al.'s model suggests several moderators that affect how feedback recipients will respond and subsequently take action on feedback including feedback sign, recipient individual differences, and level of investment in the performance goal.

Another decade passed in which researchers examined how the feedback source cognitively processes performance information and comes to an evaluative judgment, and the outcome of that feedback event relative to recipient attitudes and performance outcomes (Ilgen, Barnes-Farrell, & McKellin, 1993). In 1996, Kluger and DiNisi summarized the feedback research in a meta-analysis and reported that the impact of feedback on behavior change is variable and that up to 38% of the time feedback has a detrimental impact on performance. Drawing on prior theories of feedback, Kluger and DiNisi proposed the Feedback Intervention Theory to describe the elements of feedback that would impact the outcome of the feedback event. They suggested that cues embedded in the feedback will direct the recipient's attention to one of the three levels—the task detail level, the motivational level, or the self-attentional level. Their theory suggests that when feedback changes the focus of attention from the task or motivational levels to the self, it diverts resources away from the job at hand to self-consciousness or self-protection, thus negatively impacting performance.

In the ensuing decade, several authors contended that viewing feedback as a stand-alone event neglects the broader context of work which involves ongoing interpersonal relationships, individual experiences, and the workplace context in general (Bretz, Milkovich, & Read, 1992; Levy & Williams, 2004; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). One important perspective that integrates these notions is the theory of feedback-seeking behaviors proposed by Ashford and Cummings (1983). Up until this point, feedback was viewed as an organizational resource given to a recipient, whether they wanted it or not. Ashford and Cummings (1983) argue that feedback is also an individual resource that employees need to achieve their goals and perform well on the job. Employees will value this resource and be motivated to seek it out to reduce uncertainty, maintain feelings of self-efficacy, and better understand the rewards and other contingencies in the environment. Thus, Ashford and Cummings' model of feedback-seeking behavior proposed that individuals are motivated to know how they are doing and how their work behavior is perceived and evaluated. This inspires the act of feedback-seeking, either through direct inquiry or indirect monitoring. Ashford and Cummings' model stimulated what is now decades of research on the nature of the feedback-seeking process and its antecedents and consequences.

London and Smither's (2002) model of feedback in the performance management process also builds on the importance of contextual factors in the feedback process. Their model proposes that feedback is provided based on critical performance in the workplace. The recipient processes the feedback mindfully, dealing with emotions, interpreting the information, and deciding whether or not to use it, and after deciding how to use the feedback, initiates action. This process is impacted by the recipient's feedback orientation, or receptivity to feedback and accountability for using feedback, as well as the organization's feedback environment, or norms for giving, receiving, and using feedback. London and Smither's model positions feedback as an ongoing process of performance management, rather than a singular event, that is directly impacted by all the sociocultural factors that are present in the workplace.

In summary, feedback theory and research has moved from viewing feedback as an evaluative event to understanding that feedback is an ongoing developmental process. Concomitantly, the workplace is moving away from a focus on annual reviews to viewing feedback as an informal, collaborative communication process between a manager and employee, and among colleagues, to promote performance improvement, career development, and employee well-being. What is needed now is research and theory directed to the nuances of this process to optimize the impact of ongoing job performance feedback. We believe that participants in the feedback process should be more intentional, and new theory and research in the field offer great insight and substantive direction forward.

In this book you will find chapters by experts in the field of feedback that discuss the current state of theory and research, as well as practical recommendations for using the evidence to improve feedback processes in organizations. This book is intended for scholars and managers, but anyone on the giving or receiving end of feedback will benefit from a better understanding of the process. The chapters in this volume provide a deep dive into the current literature regarding the process of feedback, and provide key takeaways for being more intentional throughout the feedback process.

This volume starts where all the feedback models start, with a focus on the feedback source. In Chap. 2, Drawbaugh, Williams, and Wang provide an updated perspective on the primary source of feedback, the supervisor. They introduce two supervisor characteristics that may impact their role and behaviors in the feedback process, often occurring beyond the supervisor's conscious awareness. First, Drawbaugh et al. discuss the supervisor's implicit person theory (entity vs. incremental) and how it can impact the way supervisors interact with employees. They then introduce a new construct called Commitment to Performance Management, which they propose will impact a supervisor's behaviors throughout the feedback process, as well as employee and organizational outcomes. Finally, they discuss emerging work on the interaction between the supervisor and employee during a feedback exchange.

In Chap. 3, Anseel and Brutus pick up on the discussion of the interaction between the feedback source and feedback recipient. They argue that the dyadic, interpersonal nature of the feedback process is understudied and is thus underappreciated in organizations. They also argue that the field needs to focus more on the dynamic nature of the feedback process, that feedback does not occur in a vacuum but instead is embedded in time to previous and future conversations. Taken together, they offer a research agenda that explores the dyadic and dynamic nature of the feedback process and offer potential implications for the workplace.

Tseng, Levy, Young, Thibodeau, and Zhang discuss the feedback message in Chap. 4. Given that research and practice have moved beyond a primary focus on a feedback event to promoting ongoing, frequent, developmental feedback, Tseng et al. argue that the field would be well-served to better understand how to best operationalize frequent feedback. Their review discusses how frequent feedback is conceptualized and put into practice, and they offer a solid research agenda to build on previous work and support current organizational trends.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the feedback recipient. In Chap. 5, Pichler highlights reactions to performance appraisal feedback from a longitudinal and multilevel perspective. He integrates the notions of due process and social context of performance appraisal and discusses their impact on the relationship between the supervisor and employee, and subsequent employee reactions to the feedback process. The recipient's feedback orientation is the emphasis of Chap. 6. Patel, Silva, and Dahling summarize the current state of the literature on feedback orientation and chart important directions for future research. They identify particular needs to study how feedback orientation develops over time, relates to leadership dynamics, operates in cross-cultural contexts, and shapes employee development. Based on the current evidence, they also provide recommendations for leveraging feedback orientation in practice.

Chapters 7 and 8 address feedback-seeking, which is a proactive, feedback recipient-driven approach to the feedback process. In Chap. 7, Sully de Luque, Wollan, and Boyi introduce a dynamic, reciprocal model of feedback-seeking that includes three phases—pre-interaction, interaction, and post-interaction. They argue for the importance of understanding distinct feedback-seeking styles to help answer the question of how employees seek feedback over time. The important, yet unexplored, topic of social identity in feedback-seeking is discussed in Chap. 8. Flores, Elicker, and Cubrich present a model of the impact of individual social identity and race on feedback-seeking motives and behaviors. They provide propositions to direct future research as well as practical recommendations for organizations.

The feedback environment is discussed in Chaps. 9 and 10. In Chap. 9, Gallo and Steelman review the literature supporting the importance of the feedback environment and note the lack of research on how to develop a favorable feedback environment. They present a study that demonstrates supervisors can be trained to cultivate a favorable feedback environment. In Chap. 10, Elicker, Cubrich, Chen, Sully de Luque, and Shemueli follow this up with a discussion of employee reactions to the feedback environment. They discuss how reactions to the feedback environment are formed, presenting empirical results of studies in this area. They also present results of research that connect reactions to the feedback environment to key employee outcomes of job engagement, organizational embeddedness, and feedback-seeking.

In Chap. 11, Corwin, Simon, and Rosen synthesize the literature on how individual differences impact all phases of the feedback process including feedback provision, feedback-seeking, and reactions to feedback. Moreover, they suggest that research needs to examine the boundary conditions that impact how or when these individual differences impact the feedback process. They identify areas where the research findings are inconsistent and suggest impactful directions in which future research might reconcile these inconsistencies.

Chapter 12 brings together individual differences and reactions to feedback to provide recommendations on giving 360-degree feedback results. In this chapter, Fleenor presents a model of the characteristics of 360-degree feedback and how these characteristics interact with employee feedback reactions to impact behavior change. Specific practical recommendations are provided.

Chapters 13 and 14 address new directions in feedback that utilize technology. In Chap. 13, Steelman, Kilmer, Griffith, and Taylor discuss the role of feedback in coaching and how feedback is incorporated into technology-enabled coaching, or e-coaching. They also present an artificially intelligent virtual coaching process that may allow coaching to scale even further. The authors identify specific areas in which future research will benefit new types of technology-enabled coaching. In Chap. 14, Young and McCauley discuss application-based technology for user-driven feedback-seeking. This technology-enabled approach to feedback-seeking allows employees to electronically request feedback whenever and from whomever they wish.

Our goal in bringing together this group of scholars was to both summarize the feedback-related research from the past several years, and importantly to set the research agenda for the future. We believe we have accomplished this goal and hope that future scholars will be motivated by this work, in much the same way that we were inspired by the work of Ilgen et al. (1979), Taylor et al. (1984), Kluger and DeNisi (1996), Ashford and Cummings (1983), and London and Smither (2002).

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Chapter 2
A New Look at the Supervisor Role in Performance Management

Montana L. Drawbaugh, Jane R. Williams, and Erzhuo (Ernie) Wang

Performance management (PM; broadly defined as the practices involving the process of providing feedback and developmental support to employees) is inarguably one of the most difficult human resources (HR) practices for organizations to execute well (Pulakos, 2009) and one that supervisors and employees alike consistently denigrate. Even with common practices, procedures, forms, and clear expectations from upper management, the effectiveness as well as overall validity and acceptance of these systems appear to vary greatly even within a single organization. Our tenet is that these inconsistencies may be partially due to the fact that while the structure for the PM system is common across an organization, the implementation and execution of the practice depends on multiple (if not hundreds of) supervisors. In other words, organizations rely on supervisors to bring PM "to life" with employees. A renewed examination of supervisors and their role in the PM process is in order to better understand the variability in outcomes we observe. This chapter focuses on supervisor characteristics and behaviors that may impact the feedback they provide, employees' reactions, and the overall effectiveness of the PM process.

Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) argue that frontline managers are especially important in understanding whether HR practices in general are successful. Indeed, they suggest that the variability in enacted (versus espoused) HR practices is due to the inconsistency in frontline managers' motivation and commitment to these

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practices. Similarly, Pulakos, Hanson, Arad, and Moye (2015) also call for a focus on the daily behaviors that supervisors engage in as a means to improve the PM process (e.g., regularly communicating expectations, providing feedback in real time, provide coaching). Specifically, they suggest that supervisors need to be trained to engage in performance management behaviors in real time (e.g., consistently and repeatedly) throughout the PM process, rather than at the intermittent schedule typically in place. While we agree that these behaviors should be trained and reinforced in supervisors, we also believe that there may be some interesting individual differences or factors related to the supervisor that predict these types of behaviors. Moreover, we anticipate that supervisors are not likely aware of these factors and/or how they may play a part in the success of the PM process.

In summary, the current chapter seeks to review and integrate recent literature examining the influence of the supervisor on the PM process. We begin with a discussion of *implicit person theory* (Dweck, 1986; Heslin, Vandewalle, & Latham, 2006) and then introduce a new construct: *commitment to performance management*. Finally, we will review some exciting new research examining the performance feedback exchange (see Meinecke, Klonek, & Kauffeld, 2017; Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Kauffeld, 2017; Schaerer et al., 2018) and propose new research streams that integrate these constructs.

Implicit Person Theory

As Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) argue, employees' responses to PM are influenced by the HR policies, and also by how supervisors display leadership behaviors in this context. Perhaps instead of focusing on supervisor behaviors, we need to take a step back and examine factors that influence how supervisors behave within PM. As the individuals with the most responsibility for and arguably the greatest impact on performance management outcomes, individual differences of the supervisors may be important antecedents to examine within the PM process. In fact, we argue that supervisor individual differences may play a role in creating and widening the gap between espoused and enacted PM practices. Given the potential impact of the supervisor on PM outcomes, this under-researched area is relatively troubling. Fortunately, some researchers have begun to fill this gap in the literature and show promising evidence that supervisor individual differences may help account for uneven PM outcomes (e.g., Antonioni & Park, 2001; Heslin et al., 2006; Heslin, Latham, & VandeWalle, 2005; Judge & Ferris, 1993). In this section, we seek to highlight one supervisor individual difference in particular that is receiving attention from feedback and PM researchers—*implicit person theory* (IPT).

IPT is the belief one holds about whether people can change—a framework people use to interpret human behavior. Those who adhere to an *entity theory* believe that personal attributes and characteristics are not malleable and cannot change or be developed over time. On the other hand, those who adhere to an *incremental theory* believe that personal attributes and characteristics are malleable and can be developed over time. IPT was first proposed in 1986 by Carol Dweck, whose original conceptualization examined how this theory of intelligence in children impacted their motivational processes. Her key proposition was that children who hold entity beliefs about their intelligence (e.g., that it is fixed) adopt performance goals, while children who hold incremental beliefs about their intelligence (e.g., that it is malleable) adopt mastery goals (Dweck, 1986). While research supports this notion, other scholars have discovered that IPT is applicable across domains and can be defined and influential in a broader sense, not just in regard to intelligence. In fact, these rarely verbalized beliefs not only influence motivation, but can also have a profound impact on our general thoughts, judgments, and actions. Initial research in the area of IPT took a within-person perspective, focusing on how IPT influenced self-related processes such as reactions to one's own failure; however, later research has shifted to taking a between-person perspective, finding that IPT can also influence how one judges, responds to, and interacts with others (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997; Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995). Importantly, IPT largely operates outside of one's consciousness; individuals are unaware that the IPT they hold is likely influencing their judgments, responses, and behaviors toward others.

Given IPT's potential to explain how individuals respond to and interact with others, researchers have begun investigating the impact of IPT in organizational contexts. With the recent stronger emphasis on the social context and supervisors' need to engage employees more actively in this process (Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011), IPT may help to explain how supervisors *differentially* interact with employees during the PM process. Specifically, IPT may be a valuable supervisor individual difference to consider, as it may predict how and the extent to which supervisors provide developmental assistance to their subordinates. For instance, research suggests that those who hold an incremental theory believe that others can change and are therefore, more likely to actively work to help others grow and develop than those who hold an entity theory. In support of this notion, Heyman and Dweck (1998) found that incremental individuals, when asked to help another struggling student, supplied the student with more and greater elaborated feedback than entity individuals. Incremental individuals were also more likely to attribute the other students' failure to process-related factors (i.e., effort) rather than ability and more likely to encourage the other student to try again following a failure.

Researchers have also found that supervisors differ in their inclination to coach employees, which appears partially attributable to their IPT. Heslin et al. (2006) conducted a series of studies to investigate the relationship between IPT and supervisors' coaching behaviors. In a longitudinal field study, they found that supervisors' IPT predicted their willingness to coach and help develop employees—a finding they later replicated in a second study. Additionally, in a third study, these researchers manipulated supervisors' IPT and found that inducing an incremental IPT enhanced supervisors' inclination to coach employees, as well as increased the quality and extent of the performance feedback they provided.

Overall, research suggests that individuals who hold an incremental IPT are more willing to invest in, coach, and develop others than those who hold an entity theory. Incrementalism has also been related to transformational leadership, with researchers asserting that transformational leadership and an incremental IPT both include having a growth mindset (Kam, Risavy, Perunovic, & Plant, 2014). Interestingly, this connects back to Dwecks' (1986) beliefs about how IPT impacts goal orientation. She predicted that those with incremental beliefs would adopt mastery goals for themselves, which may also translate into their work as supervisors. Thus, we anticipate that incremental supervisors are willing to engage in more discretionary PM behaviors such as coaching and providing elaborated feedback to employees, aiming to develop them more holistically (mastery goal). Conversely, entity supervisors are more likely to adopt performance goals, which typically limits the range of PM behaviors they engage in.

Supervisors' IPT may also differentially impact the extent to which they ask for input and feedback from employees, as well as how they perceive and value employee feedback. Heslin and VandeWalle (2005) found that supervisors higher in incrementalism were more likely to display feedback-seeking behaviors—specifically, asking employees for negative feedback (Study 1). The relationship between IPT and these feedback-seeking behaviors was mediated by perceived cost and value of the feedback. In particular, incremental supervisors perceived more value and lower costs in seeking employee feedback, and in turn, were more likely to seek this type of feedback (Study 2). Overall, these findings suggest that supervisors who hold incremental beliefs are more likely to consult employees and may give them more voice within the PM process because they recognize that the value of employees' voice outweighs potential costs of seeking their feedback.

Supervisors' IPT has also been shown to influence how employee performance is evaluated. In fact, a supervisor who adheres to entity beliefs is more likely to anchor performance ratings to their initial judgments. Contrarily, supervisors who adhere to incremental beliefs are more attuned to recognize situational and personal influences on performance and therefore, are more likely to acknowledge performance changes over time (Heslin et al., 2005). Not only does this have implications for how employees are rated within PM, but this may also impact how supervisors engage with their employees throughout the PM process. Incremental managers may be more likely to acknowledge and reinforce change with positive and supportive feedback.

Additionally, it appears that employees form impressions of their supervisors' IPT partially based on whether the supervisor notices change in the employees' performance. In fact, employees appear to somewhat accurately predict their supervisors' IPT, suggesting that employees pick up on external criteria and cues from their supervisor that hint at their underlying IPT beliefs (Kam et al., 2014). Employees' impressions of their supervisors' IPT also predicts other important outcomes, some of which are directly related to PM. For instance, the more incremental a supervisor was perceived to be, the more motivation employees reported having to improve their job performance. Perceived incrementalism in supervisors also positively predicted employees' job satisfaction and negatively predicted employees' turnover intentions (Kam et al., 2014).

More recently, Heslin and VandeWalle (2011) linked supervisor IPT to an important performance appraisal outcome—perceived procedural justice. Supervisors' incrementalism was found to positively predict employees' perceptions of the supervisors' procedural justice within the performance appraisal interview, even after controlling for supervisors' management experience, age, and distributive justice. Furthermore, all measured procedural justice components—voice, rating accuracy, rating correctability, and lower bias—were significantly related to supervisors' incrementalism. These results suggest that IPT can help explain why some supervisors are perceived as more procedurally just than others (Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011).

In summary, examining the impact of supervisor individual differences on performance management outcomes is a relatively new but under-researched area of literature. IPT, in particular, is an individual difference that generally operates outside of one's awareness but exhibits promise in predicting important aspects of the role supervisors have in PM—coaching, providing feedback and developmental assistance, rating/judging/evaluating performance, and seeking input and feedback from employees. Additionally, it also appears to be related to employee appraisal reactions (e.g., justice). However, we believe there is a great deal of additional work that can and should be completed to fully understand the influences of supervisors' IPT on PM outcomes.

For instance, future research should not only focus on examining how IPT influences supervisors' behavioral displays in PM broadly, but also within more specific contexts such as feedback conversations and formal performance appraisal interviews. It appears that IPT may help explain why some supervisors perform only mandatory performance management behaviors (e.g., complete forms and hold annual meetings), while others perform both mandatory and discretionary behaviors that go beyond expectations (e.g., continuous real-time feedback and coaching). However, additional research is needed to further substantiate this effect. Furthermore, the IPT of the supervisor may influence the kind of feedback environment they foster within their workgroup (Steelman, Levy, & Snell, 2004). It would be interesting to assess the relationship between supervisors' IPT and employees' perceptions of their feedback environment. Perhaps both the quantity and quality of the feedback exchange between supervisors and employees varies depending upon the IPT of the supervisors. Moreover, IPT may predict the content of the feedback given to employees in these critical feedback conversations. As will be explored more fully below, new research has begun to examine the actual content of the feedback exchange events (Meinecke, Klonek, et al., 2017; Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al., 2017).

While we are calling for more research to be conducted in this area, we believe the existing research can and should inform current PM practices. At a minimum, organizations may want to assess and make supervisors aware of their IPT and its potential impact on subordinate outcomes. Further, researchers have been successful in manipulating IPT (Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin, & Wan, 1999; Levy, Stroessner, & Dweck, 1998), with effect shown to last up to 6 weeks (Heslin et al., 2005). Thus, if IPT predicts supervisor behaviors, organizations could also potentially manipulate supervisors' IPT before they perform PM practices such as performance appraisal interviews.

Commitment to Performance Management

Purcell and Hutchinson (2007) suggest that frontline managers' lack of commitment to HR practices partially explains inconsistent outcomes. Related to the current chapter, we agree that considering managers' specific commitment to performance management may be important in understanding variability in PM effectiveness. We begin this section by briefly discussing the history of organizational commitment and more recent efforts to examine specific foci of commitment. We also introduce a new construct (*commitment to performance management*) and describe our efforts to develop this new scale. Finally, we will share some preliminary data associated with the scale and provide suggestions for future research.

Organizational commitment is defined as an employee's bond or the psychological mindset that drives an individual to maintain membership in an organization. The focus of the original work in this area was assessing employees' commitment to their organizations, broadly defined (for a more thorough review, see Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). One prominent theory for considering organizational commitment is a three-factor conceptualization—affective, normative, and continuance commitment—identified by Meyer and Allen (1991). Individuals who are affectively committed remain with the organization because they feel emotionally attached and have a high sense of affiliation with the organization. Individuals who are normatively committed remain because they have a high degree of loyalty or feel obligated to maintain membership. Finally, employees who are continuously committed maintain membership because they have no other options or feel they may lose too much if they leave. While all three types of commitment help explain why individuals remain within an organization, only the first two consistently predict positive outcomes. Continuous commitment is typically related to outcomes such as higher intentions to leave, more dysfunctional behaviors, and lower citizenship behaviors. Contrarily, affective and normative commitment are typically related to higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and well-being (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Thus, researchers and practitioners alike have been interested in identifying how to elevate or increase the first two types of commitment while mitigating the levels of continuous commitment. As such, the literature examining the predictors and outcomes of these three types of organizational commitment is extensive.

Subsequently, researchers have expanded the notion of commitment to incorporate the idea that individuals can have multiple foci, or be committed to other social entities or even courses of actions within organizations. For instance, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) proposed that commitment's "core essence" lays in a mindset tying an individual to actions aimed at achieving a certain target. This proposition suggests that commitment can be generated toward various targets, including "a recognizable entity," "an abstract concept," and/or "the intended outcome of a course of actions" (p. 310). Importantly, this suggests that commitment is not simply an affective state, but rather one that drives individuals to behave in specific ways. Following this notion, Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe (2003) found that affective commitment toward the supervisor (unlike affective commitment toward the organization) mediated the relationship between supervisor support and turnover. Vandenberghe, Bentein, and Stinglhamber (2004) were further able to show the usefulness of differentiating commitment toward the organization, the supervisor, and the workgroup. They demonstrated that these more specific commitments were better able to predict specific behaviors than general organizational commitment. Similarly, Neubert and Cady (2001) studied employees' commitment to a continuous improvement program and found that it was positively correlated to their participation in the program and its overall success. Finally, Gosserand and Diefendorff (2005) found that employees who were highly committed to the emotion display rules (in a service organization) were more likely to comply with these rules and respond appropriately to customers. In sum, research supports the idea that commitment can be more specifically focused toward social entities and/or actions, which can impact behavior in unique and meaningful ways.

Important for our current consideration, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) qualify that when commitment is focused toward a set of actions (i.e., organizational initiatives or change), there can still be great variability in the way behavior is enacted. They suggest that even if an individual is committed toward specified actions, the type of commitment they hold (e.g. affective, normative, or continuous) will influence the range of behaviors they engage in. In other words, "the committed individual always has some discretion in the specification of the terms of the commitment" (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p. 312). Affectively committed individuals will likely engage in a greater number of discretionary behaviors related to the desired outcome (e.g., successful performance management). In other words, someone affectively committed may be more likely to go above and beyond required activities in order to achieve the desired outcomes, because they believe so strongly in the outcome. Conversely, individuals who are continuously committed (i.e., focused on costs and requirements) are limited in their thinking by the list of required behaviors. Thus, they are less likely to expand their actions to achieve the desired end. In other words, continuously committed individuals will be less likely to engage in discretionary behaviors and may only engage in behaviors they feel are required (i.e., focal behaviors). According to Meyer and Herscovitch (2001), normatively committed individuals will likely engage in the focal behaviors, but will also engage in more discretionary behaviors if they believe these behaviors are expected to fulfill an obligation.

Based on this initial work, Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) executed a series of studies that are particularly helpful in guiding the current discussion. In the first study, they were able to show that one could validly and reliably assess the three components (i.e., affective, normative, and continuous) as applied to commitment to change. In the final two studies, they examined nurses' levels of commitment toward an organizational change and also assessed their stated levels of compliance, cooperation, and championing. Compliance was treated as the focal behavior, or behavior individuals were required to do, associated with the change. Cooperation and championing were treated as discretionary behaviors, with the former including behaviors that go along with the change but do not require great sacrifice, while championing requires greater sacrifice or effort to promote the change. Interestingly, they found that while all three types of commitment were related to compliance (e.g., "I comply with my organization's directives regarding the change"), only affective and normative commitment toward the change were related to cooperation (e.g., "I am tolerant of the change" and "I try to keep myself informed…") and championing (e.g., "I speak positively about the change to others). This provided strong evidence of the importance of assessing the three unique components of commitment to a course of action. Additionally, these results support the idea that the type of commitment to a course of action may help to explain the variability of behaviors individuals engage in to support an action. Continuously committed individuals engaged in fewer and more prescribed behaviors related to the outcome, while affectively and normatively committed individuals engaged in a greater variability of behaviors that required increased effort to achieve the desired outcome. Related to the current work, we have begun to consider whether employing the three-component model of commitment to performance management might help to explain some of the variability in supervisors' behaviors and performance management outcomes.

For instance, like the nurses in the Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) study, we suggest all managers are likely to comply with the focal elements of performance management. In other words, they will complete the paperwork and other "required" steps in the performance management process regardless of their commitment levels. However, continuously committed individuals may comply because the consequence of not doing so may be costly (e.g. termination), while affectively and normatively committed individuals may comply because they believe in the value of the activities. However, the type of commitment may predict greater variability in the cooperation and championing types of performance management behaviors (those that are more discretionary). For instance, we anticipate that managers who are primarily continuously committed will be less likely to engage in ongoing feedback or coaching behaviors that are associated with best practices in performance management. Managers who are affectively committed to performance management (i.e., really believe in the value of performance management) are going to engage in a higher variety and greater number of behaviors related to the performance management process (e.g., carefully observing and documenting performance, providing ongoing feedback, and coaching). Normatively committed individuals will likely vary between these in terms of amount and quality of PM behaviors. In sum, affectively and normatively committed supervisors may be more likely to engage in cooperating and championing behaviors (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

In addition to predicting supervisors' behaviors throughout the PM process, we anticipate that the three types of commitment may also predict other individual and organizational outcomes. For instance, supervisors who are affectively and normatively committed to PM will likely generate the most positive reactions from their employees. These managers will likely be perceived as providing the greatest amount of feedback as well as behaving in ways that are procedurally fair and supportive. Overall, although not an individual difference variable per se, we believe that managers are not necessarily cognizant of their level of commitment to PM (much like their IPT); yet, it may have a profound impact on how they implement PM practices both broadly, as well as on a more day-to-day basis.

Performance Management Commitment Measure We have engaged in some initial efforts to assess commitment to performance management and its relationship to other variables. First, we have developed a measure of affective, normative, and continuous commitment to performance management consistent with the measurement structure in Herscovitch and Meyer (2002). Sample items of affective commitment to PM include, "Performance management is beneficial to this organization" and "I believe in the value of performance management." Sample items of normative commitment to PM include, "It is my obligation to devote energy to performance management" and "As a manager, it is my obligation to conduct performance management." Finally, sample items of continuous commitment to PM include, "I have no choice but to engage in performance management" and "I have too much at stake if I do not perform performance management."

To begin to establish the psychometric properties of this scale, we collected data from 159 MTurk participants who had at least 1 year of supervisory experience and had participated in at least one performance appraisal review process as a supervisor. Data were collected at two time points; assessing managers' level of IPT and demographic information (e.g., tenure, experience, reason for appraisal, size of organization) at time one and the three types of commitment to performance management at time two. Reliability and confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to ensure the internal consistency of the scale and to begin to establish the discriminate validity of the three commitment measures. Internal consistencies for the three measures were reasonable (ranged from .80 to .92). Confirmatory factor analysis indicated a three-factor model provided the best fit to the data; however, it also suggested that continued refinement of the measures may be required (CFI = .83, RMSEA = .09). In addition to finding that the three performance commitment types were unique factors, we were also able to determine that they were distinct from the three types of organizational commitment (see the third author for additional information; Wang, 2016).

Affective commitment and continuous commitment to PM were significantly and positively related to normative commitment to PM (r = .52 and .26 respectively). The correlation between affective and continuous commitment to PM was nonsignificant (r = .15). A few interesting correlations emerged from the other measured variables. Specifically, we used the Levy and Dweck (1997) "kind of person" scale to assess IPT, where high scores indicate an incremental theorist and low scores indicate an entity theorist. IPT was positively, but not significantly related to both affective and normative commitment to PM (r = .13 and .12 respectively); however, IPT was significantly and negatively related to continuance commitment to PM (r = −.21). This suggests that individuals who hold an entity theory are more likely to report high levels of continuance commitment to PM (i.e., are doing it because they have to). This suggests that individuals who believe abilities are fixed or do not believe people can change are also more likely to report that they engage in performance management because they feel they have to. Although not statistically significant, the positive correlations between IPT and affective and normative commitment to PM suggest that individuals who report higher levels of these constructs may be more likely to hold an incremental theory. In other words, those who believe that individuals can develop and improve their skills are more likely to also report they believe in and are committed to performance management. These data are preliminary and much additional work needs to be completed; however, they do suggest that the commitment to performance management measures may be useful and further work should establish whether they predict variability in supervisors' behavior throughout the PM process, as well as other important outcomes such as employees' reactions to PM. The only other correlation of interest was the relationship between organizational size and continuous commitment to PM (r = .22), which suggests that individuals in larger organizations also report higher level of continuous commitment.

As with IPT, a great deal of additional work needs to be completed in this area. First, we need to further establish the reliability and validity of the commitment to PM scales. Although we were able to obtain reasonable evidence of reliability and validity, it would be beneficial to establish this factor structure with additional samples. Further refinement of the measures may be necessary to fully capture the construct space. Second, we need to establish that supervisors' commitment to PM predicts important supervisor behaviors and performance management outcomes. Moreover, as will be explored in the section below, perhaps the type of commitment a manager holds influences the amount or quality of the content they provide in important feedback exchanges.

Consistent with some of the relationships described in the IPT section above, it would be important to demonstrate that affective, normative, and continuance commitment to PM are uniquely and differentially related to performance managements outcomes such as employee perceptions of procedural fairness and satisfaction with the PM process (Keeping & Levy, 2000). Additionally, it would be interesting to assess whether the three types of commitment to PM differentially predict the required versus discretionary behaviors supervisors enact throughout the PM process. Finally, it would be interesting to develop a deeper understanding of the individual and organizational factors that contribute to commitment to PM. We found some support for the relationship between IPT and continuance commitment to PM, but perhaps there are other individual and/or organizational factors that contribute to one's commitment to performance management.

Feedback Exchanges

A final area where we believe supervisors likely vary greatly is in the performance feedback conversations they have with employees. Interestingly, there is not a great deal of research that has examined either quantitatively and qualitatively the content of these important conversations. Research has been conducted on the impact of the "sign" of the feedback or type of feedback (outcome vs. process) on employee reactions (Medvedeff, Gregory, & Levy, 2008; Nease, Mudgett, & Quiñones, 1999; Podsakoff & Farh, 1989). However, until very recently, researchers have not investigated the actual content of the conversations in the feedback exchange. Below we will describe some of this research and develop some suggestions for how our previously discussed supervisor factors may also impact performance management discussions.

A new line of research has recently emerged that uses qualitative and mixed methods to conduct in-depth investigations of performance feedback conversations, going beyond self-report to illuminate what supervisors say and do in these contexts. This novel avenue of research began in the field of business, with Asmuß (2008) and Clifton (2012) both publishing studies using conversation analysis to break down individual appraisal interview conversations in the *Journal of Business Communication*. While these studies make an important contribution to their field, they provide no quantitative data, nor do they examine the subsequent impact of these feedback conversations. Recently, Meinecke, Klonek, et al. (2017) and Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al. (2017) continued this line of research, publishing some papers that we hope spark other researchers to utilize similar approaches to investigate performance feedback exchanges.

Meinecke, Klonek, et al. (2017) and Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al. (2017), to our knowledge, are the first to utilize a mixed methods approach to directly examine what happens during performance appraisal interviews. They highlight the importance of these conversations, arguing that appraisal interviews are dynamic verbal interactions between supervisors and employees that shape subsequent perceptions and behaviors, for employees as well as supervisors. To investigate this notion, Meinecke, Klonek, et al. (2017) and Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al. (2017) recorded real appraisal interviews and collected subsequent self-report data from both the supervisor and the employee.

In one study, Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al. (2017) were specifically interested in the impact of supervisor behaviors and statements during these conversations, coding for relational-oriented (e.g., consulting and/or asking for input, providing support and recognition, developing employees' skills and confidence) and task-oriented supervisor behavior/statements (e.g., short-term planning, clarifying tasks and roles, monitoring performance and operations). Interestingly, the relational-oriented behaviors sound similar to the discretionary behaviors described above or the everyday PM behaviors described by Pulakos et al. (2015), while the task-oriented behaviors seem more similar to the prescribed or focal behavior required in these interactions. These two categories were identified by pulling from various leadership theories such as relational leadership theory, a hierarchical taxonomy of leadership behaviors (see Yukl, Gordon, & Taber, 2002), and the Ohio/Michigan State leadership tradition. After coding for these types of supervisor behaviors, Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al. (2017) examined conversational patterns and how these patterns predicted subsequent reactions. They found that relational-oriented supervisor statements elicited active participation from employees, and supervisors were more likely to respond to active participation from employees with more relational-oriented statements. Further, these relational-activation patterns positively predicted supervisors' and employees' perceptions of the success of the appraisal interview and were marginally related to employees' perceptions of supervisor support. Contrarily, they found that task-oriented supervisor statements elicited passive acceptance, which was generally followed by additional task-oriented statements from supervisors. However, these task-passive patterns were not predictive of subsequent reactions. In sum, these results suggest that supervisors' relational-oriented behaviors (those more developmental discretionary behaviors) may help evoke more positive PM outcomes than task-oriented behaviors. These positive employee reactions are also consistent with those reported by employees who interact with a supervisor who holds an incremental IPT. As will be explored further below, it may be that IPT predicts the type of communication pattern supervisors initiate with employees. Relatedly, this pattern of open feedback exchange is also characteristic of a positive feedback environment described by Steelman et al. (2004).

In a second paper, Meinecke, Klonek, et al. (2017) proposed that appraisal interviews serve two main functions: evaluating performance and discussing development planning. However, they believed that these two phases of appraisal interviews evoked disparate levels of employee participation within these feedback discussions. Specifically, they argued that while more time would be spent discussing performance evaluations, employees would participate more and also perceive they had more voice in the portion of the appraisal interview focused on development planning. After further examination of their 48 audiotaped appraisal interviews, the researchers found that supervisors spent much more time discussing performance (M = 37.29, SD = 15.87) than they did on discussing development planning (M = 9.87, SD = 5.97). Moreover, employees participated in the conversation significantly more during development planning (an overall increase of 5% participation from performance evaluation) and also reported higher perceived voice during this phase, suggesting that employees were cognizant that their participation levels differed between phases. Employee voice and engagement are critical elements of PM as noted by Pulakos et al. (2015). Meincke et al. assert that effective PM is not something that managers enact while employees are simply passive recipients, but rather successful PM is the result of interactions between the two individuals in which both parties share information and feedback.

Of note, Meinecke and colleagues also found that on average, employees only talked for 26% of the feedback conversation in this set of 48 appraisal interviews (Meinecke, Klonek, et al., 2017; Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al., 2017). This key finding demonstrates the disparity between desired employee participation and the reality of conversational dynamics in performance appraisal interviews. The results of these studies, however, also offer a potential solution: Supervisors may want to focus more on discussing development planning and displaying relational-oriented behaviors to increase active employee participation. These relational-activation communication patterns hold even more value as they lead to better post-interview perceptions—higher perceived success of the interview by both parties and higher perceived supervisor support on the part of the employee—than task-oriented behaviors. In fact, it may be beneficial to limit or at least balance task-oriented behaviors with relational-oriented ones, because these appear to come at a cost of low employee participation and worse post-interview perceptions. Alternatively, it is also possible that a high degree of both relational-oriented and task-oriented supervisor behaviors may elicit the best PM outcomes by providing a greater amount of feedback that is both developmental for the employee and builds the supervisor–employee relationship, and also provides the employees with helpful clarifications and suggestions to improve their performance. Additional examination of these supervisor behaviors within feedback conversations and how they impact PM outcomes is certainly warranted.

It would also be interesting to examine if there are some supervisor factors that predict supervisors' behaviors and the amount of time they allot to each of the phases observed in the Meinecke, Klonek, et al. (2017) and Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al. (2017) studies. For instance, because incremental supervisors believe skills and characteristics are not fixed, they may invest more time discussing and collaboratively constructing employees' development plans. Additionally, it is possible that supervisors who hold an incremental theory may generally be more likely to incite relational-activation patterns. Indeed, research appears to support these notions with evidence that incremental managers are more likely than entity managers to display discretionary behaviors that also map onto the aforementioned relational-oriented behaviors (i.e., consulting and/or asking for input, providing support and recognition, developing employees' skills and confidence). Specifically, incremental managers are more likely to give greater elaborated feedback (Heyman & Dweck, 1998), seek input and feedback from employees (Heslin & Vandewalle, 2005), and engage in more coaching (Heslin et al., 2006). Essentially, research supports the conception that supervisor factors such as IPT may predict supervisors' behaviors and communications in feedback exchange contexts.

Further, extant literature has also linked supervisors' behaviors and content focus to subsequent outcomes. For instance, discussion of employees' career and personal development has been shown to positively predict employees' perceived utility of appraisal interviews (Nathan, Mohrman, & Milliman, 1991). Additionally, employee participation and voice in feedback exchanges, which relational-oriented statements and discussions of development planning evoke, are also critical predictors of feedback exchange outcomes. Indeed, when employees perceive they have more voice in feedback discussions, they also tend to report greater levels of satisfaction with the appraisal interview (Giles & Mossholder, 1990) as well as greater perceived utility (Elicker, Levy, & Hall, 2006). In sum, it appears it may be possible to tie supervisor factors, such as IPT, to behaviors and content focus within the appraisal interview, as well as employees' subsequent reactions (i.e., perceived utility, satisfaction, success of session, procedural justice). In fact, supervisors' appraisal interview behaviors and content focus may mediate the relationship between individual differences such as IPT and employees' reactions to their appraisal interviews. We encourage researchers to explore these linkages further.

Feedback Conversation Perceptions and Expectancies

The notion that supervisor's behavior may have an unintentional impact or that supervisors may be unaware of factors influencing their behavioral choices is a theme in this chapter. As noted earlier, IPT operates largely outside of consciousness but has strong implications for supervisor behaviors. Similarly, we believe that supervisors do not systematically stop and consider their commitment to performance management in their everyday interactions with employees. However, as noted above, we believe supervisor's commitment to PM will influence the range of behaviors they engage in. This last section of the chapter highlights some interesting new research suggesting supervisors may be unintentionally inflating feedback provided to employees. This knowledge could add to our understanding of both supervisors' and employees' frustration with the PM process as well as the impression that the practice is ineffective.

Another study recently published examines the finding that while participating in the same conversation, the parties involved may not always perceive and interpret the conversation in the same manner. In other words, supervisors' and employees' perceptions of feedback processes are often misaligned. This raises the question: are supervisors doing a good job at communicating feedback, and are employees correctly interpreting this feedback? Exciting new evidence provides us with another glimpse into the feedback exchange and suggests that there can be a significant breakdown in the feedback chain, especially in regard to negative feedback. While some have investigated the impact of the intentional inflation of performance ratings (Wang, Wong, & Kwong, 2010), Schaerer et al. (2018) sought to examine whether supervisors may unintentionally inflate employees' performance feedback.

There is a prevailing assumption that managers tend to inflate negative performance feedback because of their deliberate effort to avoid the associated interpersonal outcomes. Yet, Schaerer et al. (2018) challenged this assumption by proposing that the ineffectiveness of communicating negative performance feedback is due to their lack of motivation. In fact they proposed that supervisors may suffer from *the illusion of transparency,* in which people believe that their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are easily and accurately observed by others. In this context, supervisors overestimate the extent to which employees understand and correctly interpret the feedback message they are trying to communicate. They posited that this phenomenon would occur to a greater degree the more negative the feedback was, as negative feedback elicits emotionally unpleasant conditions and therefore, may strengthen anchoring effects.

To establish the existence of transparency illusions, Schaerer et al. (2018) first conducted a field-study in a real organization and found a discrepancy between supervisors' feedback expectancies and what employees interpreted. Essentially, the supervisors anticipated that the employees would understand the feedback more accurately than the employees actually did. This effect was exacerbated by the negativity of the feedback: the more negative the feedback, the larger the gap between supervisors' anticipated understanding and employees' actual understanding of the feedback. These findings were replicated in a second study that used a student sample where the valence of the feedback was manipulated.

After confirming the occurrence of transparency illusions, Schaerer and colleagues wanted to rule out the possibility that the effect they found was a result of employees' need to maintain positive self-regard, given that feedback receivers may selectively seek feedback that confirms their positive self-view. However, third-party observers of the feedback conversations interpreted the feedback more similarly to the employees' understanding than the supervisors' expectancies. This finding suggests that employees' positive self-regard is most likely not the catalyst behind this gap in feedback understanding; rather, it appears supervisors are not doing a good job at communicating negative feedback. This is somewhat understandable, as negative feedback can be difficult to give, and supervisors may be hedging this feedback in an attempt to make the feedback conversation more pleasant. Additionally, this discrepancy in understanding can potentially create performance management problems or a rift in the supervisor–employee relationship if conflict should arise or if supervisors become frustrated if employees do not adjust their behavior.

In an attempt to attenuate these potential issues and close the gap between supervisors' expected understanding and employees' actual understanding of negative feedback, Schaerer and colleagues tried to reduce these transparency illusions in three ways: intrapersonal awareness, interpersonal accountability, and organizational incentives. Enhancing interpersonal awareness by explicitly telling supervisors that the employee may not interpret the feedback exactly as it was meant decreased the gap in understanding, but this was because supervisors inflated their feedback to be more positive. In another study, interpersonal accountability was induced by providing supervisors with a message that the employee specifically wanted clear, critical feedback. This manipulation closed the gap in feedback understanding, but in a different manner: supervisors' expectancies did not differ from the control, but employees' understanding of the feedback was significantly more negative. This finding suggests that interpersonal accountability can attenuate the effects of supervisors' transparency illusions and increase the accuracy of employees' feedback perceptions, perhaps by creating an atmosphere where negative feedback is expected, normalized, and not so uncomfortable to give.

Lastly, when supervisors were given an organizational incentive—told they would receive a monetary bonus if the employee correctly interpreted their feedback—the supervisor believed they gave more negative feedback and the employee interpreted the feedback similarly. The gap in understanding was sufficiently reduced to a level illuminating how negative the feedback truly was, suggesting that incentives may be the most effective strategy in ameliorating transparency illusions. However, the authors suggest a more systematic review of these interventions is in order, given that only some resulted in the delivery of more accurate feedback. As such, testing these interventions and gathering data inside an organization could provide helpful insights regarding the true effectiveness of these interventions. For instance, in real-world contexts, the effectiveness of these interventions may be attenuated or even exacerbated by additional motivations (i.e., harmony goals) or underlying supervisor factors (i.e., IPT, commitment to PM). A further investigation of the complexity of interactions between supervisor feedback motivations and goals, both conscious and unconscious, and supervisor factors is warranted.

In conclusion, it appears that supervisors are not always effective in communicating negative feedback. Employees appear more accurate in how they perceive feedback than managers are in knowing what message they are communicating. The good news is that there are strategies that can reduce and essentially eliminate the gap between anticipated and actual understanding of negative feedback. This recent study sheds some more light on the feedback process; however, it is not without limitations. A major limitation of this study is that we do not know exactly what was being communicated by supervisors. What kind of language were supervisors using that they thought communicated negative feedback, but employees interpreted more positively than intended? Future research could utilize content analysis or an analysis of communication patterns, similar to what Meinecke, Klonek, et al. (2017) and Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al. (2017) used, to help illuminate exactly where these communication problems lie. Additionally, future research should examine whether some supervisors may be more susceptible to the illusion of transparency. Perhaps there are characteristics of the supervisor or the supervisor–employee relationship, such as trust or LMX, that influence this phenomenon. For instance, it is possible that with increased trust in and quality of this relationship, supervisors are less guarded and more frank with their feedback, reducing transparency illusions and discrepancies in understanding. On the contrary, it is also possible that supervisors may unconsciously inflate their feedback to maintain a positive supervisor–employee relationship. Future research should investigate these competing ideas.

Overall Summary

Engaging in meaningful and effective performance management is likely one of the greatest challenges for supervisors. The evidence from researchers and practitioners, as well as those involved in the process suggest that it is not done very well (Pulakos et al., 2015). Our focus in this chapter was to bring together some converging evidence that suggests we need to continue to examine the role of the supervisor in this process. Importantly, supervisors may not even be aware of how they are engaging with employees or at the very least how their behaviors are impacting employees' perceptions and reactions. Cardy and Dobbins (1994), among others (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Williams & Levy, 2000), have suggested that employee reactions are critical outcomes of the performance appraisal and management process. If supervisors are unintentionally negatively impacting employees' perceptions of or reactions to the PM process, it may help to explain the uneven experience that both supervisors and employees describe. Our goal was to integrate some recent research in this area to generate new streams of research with potentially important theoretical and practical significance.

First, we highlighted the important work conducted by Heslin, VandeWalle, and colleagues Heslin et al., 2006; Heslin & VandeWalle, 2005, 2011). They have been able to consistently show that supervisors' IPT is related to important behaviors that support an effective PM process (e.g., increase coaching and elaborated feedback), and also employees' perceptions (e.g., support and procedural fairness). However, what has yet to be established is whether the way supervisors engage with employees during the feedback exchange or whether the actual content of those exchanges may also vary by supervisor IPT. Meinecke, Klonek, et al. (2017) and Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al. (2017) have also provided initial findings that the communication patterns initiated by supervisors in performance feedback exchanges can predict employees' voice in the process as well as their perceptions of its success. Notably, this also predicted supervisors' perceptions of the process. This is exciting work because it provides one of the first in-depth examinations of the actual content of feedback exchanges, as well as some highly practical implications. We think it would be interesting to connect these two streams of work and examine whether managers' IPT also predicts the kinds of behaviors displayed and communication patterns instigated by supervisors. The relational-activation patterns, characterized by seeking input, as well as providing support and developing employee's confidence, may be more likely to be initiated by a manager who believes individuals can develop and improve.

We also introduced some thinking we have engaged in about supervisors' commitment to performance management. Utilizing the earlier work by Herscovitch and Meyer (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001), we sought to establish an initial measure of affective, normative, and continuous commitment to performance management. Like IPT, we theorize that these bases of commitment will differentially predict the types of behaviors that supervisors employ in the PM process. Given our belief that continuously committed individuals will only engage in those PM behaviors that they must, we do not anticipate that they will engage in the full-range best practices of continuous feedback, coaching, and support that we and others (Pulakos et al., 2015) believe lead to effective performance management. We encourage continued work to establish relationships between the three bases of commitment and supervisor behaviors as well as other important PM outcomes (e.g., employee reactions). Additional work is also needed to further establish the scale and understand the individual and organizational factors that influence commitment to PM.

Finally, we shared the important and emerging work conducted on the content of supervisors' feedback exchanges and its impact on employee reactions and understanding of the exchange. Meinecke, Klonek, et al. (2017) and Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, et al. (2017) were able to show that how supervisors engaged with employees influenced how employees responded and how they perceived the process. Further, when employees responded more actively in the exchange, it generated additional relational behaviors from the supervisor. It would be interesting to see if this finding generalizes beyond the annual performance appraisal to more informal, ongoing feedback exchanges. Additionally, it would be interesting to examine how supervisor factors such as IPT or commitment to PM impact the communication patterns between supervisors and employees. Additionally, Schaerer et al. (2018) provided evidence that supervisors do not always clearly communicate the full valence of negative feedback. Their work provides suggestions for how supervisors may be more effective; however, we encourage additional work to understand the boundary conditions of these effects.

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Chapter 3
Checking In? A Dyadic and Dynamic Perspective on Feedback Conversations

Frederik Anseel and Stéphane Brutus

With their *Harvard Business Review* article "Reinventing Performance Management," Buckingham and Goodall (2015) seem to have given the starting signal for a worldwide trend of companies reconsidering the fundamentals of their performance management systems. Seeking to reverse a trend toward an ever-increasing structuring of the performance management process (i.e., ratings, rigid protocols, etc.), companies are increasingly moving toward more fluidity and flexibility in their performance management processes. In doing so, they are recognizing that employee feedback should not be a yearly isolated event, but rather part of an ongoing, informal conversation between employees and their managers (Levy, Tseng, Rosen, & Lueke, 2017). This is best exemplified by "check-ins." Software developer Adobe introduced check-ins as an informal, ongoing dialogue between managers and their direct reports with no formal written review or documentation. The goal of check-ins is to move toward an organizational routine of frequent feedback exchanges throughout the year that may be instigated by both employees and managers.

The trend to "unstructure" feedback processes in organizations has led to a renewed interest for evidence-based guidelines on how to organize such check-ins and how to gauge their effectiveness. Fortunately, scientific interest in feedback dates back to the early 1900s (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), and a rich body of knowledge can be drawn from it to inform both our understanding and management of these contemporary approaches to feedback. For the purpose of the chapter, we identified three broad streams of feedback research that specifically pertain to these novel "formats" of feedback processes in organizations.

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First, formal feedback intervention studies using both experimental and field survey studies have provided important insights as to when and how people respond to feedback affecting their performance (e.g., Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Second, in the past 30 years we have gained a relatively good understanding of when, why, and how people seek feedback from their supervisors (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015). Third, the research line that probably comes closest to studying informal feedback conversations is the study of the feedback environment and its outcomes (Rosen, Levy, & Hall, 2006). This line of research has explained what type of feedback-supportive behaviors leaders need to engage in to produce favorable employee outcomes. Together, these lines of research provide an initial basis for understanding some aspects of informal feedback conversations.

However, despite this rich body of research, there remains a dearth of knowledge on two fundamental properties of feedback processes as they are now being reflected in current trends in organizations. First, feedback is *dyadic* in that both employee and supervisor are active agents in a feedback exchange and either can initiate and shape feedback conversations and respond to the other agent's actions. Second, and building upon its dyadic property, feedback is *dynamic*. Feedback conversations are seldom isolated and punctual events but are almost always connected in time to previous and future conversations with the outcomes of one feedback episode potentially providing input for the next conversation. Reoccurring feedback conversations between two individuals represent fundamental characteristics of feedback processes in organizations and the lack of studies that have systematically explored the dyadic and dynamic elements of feedback is problematic.

One of the most likely reasons why research has neglected the dyadic and dynamic elements of feedback processes is the methodological and statistical hurdles in capturing, simultaneously, two actors' perspectives and modeling their exchanges over time. As a result, feedback-seeking behavior and feedback-giving behavior have been studied mostly in isolation, with some studies focusing on the act of seeking feedback and others on the response to feedback provided (Anseel, 2017; Anseel, Lievens, & Levy, 2007; DeNisi & Sockbeson, In press). For instance, the first theoretical model depicting the dynamic interplay between employees' feedback-seeking strategies and supervisors' delivery of performance feedback dates back to 1989 (Larson, 1989), but the propositions advanced have remained largely untested.

However, in recent years, conceptual and methodological advances in studying dyadic and dynamic processes have become available, benefiting from insights in communication and relationship research among others (e.g. Gooty & Yammarino, 2011; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012; Liden, Anand, & Vidyarthi, 2016). These now allow researchers to systematically address previously unexplored research areas and to paint a more complete picture of how informal feedback exchanges in organizations unfold over time. Therefore, the aim of the current chapter is to bring together the feedback-seeking, feedback-giving, and feedback environment literatures to advance a dyadic and dynamic perspective on feedback processes in organizations. To this end, we first provide a brief overview of how each of the three research lines provides an overly static and one-sided picture of the feedback process. However, at the same time, we identify studies in each of these research streams that have started to shed initial light on the dynamic and dyadic nature of feedback exchanges. Next, we explain how adopting an approach that is both dyadic and dynamic might advance our understanding of feedback conversations in organizations. To inspire future research, we provide examples of studies that have begun to study feedback processes in such a way, highlighting new methodological and statistical approaches. By sequentially incorporating dyadic and dynamic aspects in the feedback process, we advance previously unaddressed questions in a new feedback research agenda and highlight how the answer to these questions has the potential to inform the current practice of informal feedback exchanges.

Feedback Intervention Research

Giving feedback is one of the most widely applied psychological interventions with conventional wisdom suggesting that feedback is necessary for motivation, wellbeing, and growth and is generally beneficial for performance. Not surprisingly, a wealth of studies have examined how formal feedback interventions affect subsequent motivation and performance. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) shaped the domain with an influential historical and systematic meta-analytic review of feedback studies, showing that the effects of feedback, although generally positive, are not easily understood and show large variation. With the risk of oversimplifying the domain, we identify two broad types of feedback studies in organizations that inform contemporary feedback practices and that have preliminarily touched upon dyadic and dynamic aspects of feedback exchanges.

A first line of feedback studies examines how employees perceive and respond to feedback given by others, typically supervisors in a performance appraisal context (e.g., Lam, Yik, & Schaubroeck, 2002), or a (developmental) assessment setting (Ryan, Brutus, Greguras, & Hakel, 2000; Woo, Sims, Rupp, & Gibbons, 2008). This research however, approaches feedback processes from the unique perspective of the feedback receiver and lacks a true dyadic perspective. For instance, in a prototypical example of this line of research, Kinicki, Prussia, Wu, and McKee-Ryan (2004) found that after performance appraisal, favorable perceptions of credibility, specificity, frequent, and positive feedback were predictive of performance 1 year later. Further, these relationships were mediated by perceptions of accuracy, desire to respond, and actual response. While the feedback receivers' perceptions and responses are measured in the context of a feedback exchange, there is no attention to the perspective and actions of the feedback-giver (except as seen by the feedback receiver) nor for their potential interplay. A theoretical exploration of both giving and receiving narrative comments in the context of appraisals has been developed (Brutus, 2010), but no empirical work has examined these propositions. Furthermore, these types of studies will typically focus on a single feedback event, without taking into account previous or future exchanges between the same actors over time.

The second prototypical feedback study examines this phenomenon as a punctual intervention. These studies, mostly experimental in nature, were summarized in Kluger and DeNisi's (1996) meta-analysis but have also been regularly conducted in subsequent years (e.g., Anseel, Lievens, & Schollaert, 2009; Kim, Atwater, Patel, & Smither, 2016; Oc, Bashshur, & Moore, 2015). Typically, these studies adopt a between-person design with one group receiving one type of feedback while other group(s) receive another type(s) of feedback or no feedback at all. The efficacy of the specific feedback intervention is inferred from the difference in performance or behavior between the two or more experimental conditions. The more sophisticated experimental designs have also included repeated measures tracking feedback effects on performance over time (e.g., Ilies & Judge, 2005). By including longitudinal aspects in their design, these studies provide some initial leads for developing a dynamic perspective on feedback processes. For instance, using a managerial decision-making task, Goodman and Wood (2004) found that increasing the specificity of feedback increased performance, but the benefits did not endure over time. Similarly, using a multiple trial decision-making task, Lam, DeRue, Karam, and Hollenbeck (2011) found that feedback frequency exhibited an inverted-U relationship with learning and performance over time. The takeaway from this line of research is that, unequivocally, people respond strongly to feedback interventions with general positive effects of feedback on performance ($d = .41$, Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). However, while highly informative as to the basic cognitive and motivational underpinnings of receiving feedback information, these types of studies do not explain how the exchange unfolds over time. Furthermore, as these studies did not examine actual feedback conversations, they did not examine the feedback recipient's role in dynamically shaping the feedback exchange.

Feedback-Seeking Research

Complementary to the research on structured feedback interventions is the research stream on feedback-seeking behavior instigated by Ashford and Cummings in the early 1980s. This research posits that employees are not passively waiting for feedback to be provided to them but that they will also actively pursue feedback themselves. In the past 35 years, feedback-seeking research has rapidly grown to seek to understand (a) what methods individuals use to seek feedback, (b) how frequently they seek feedback, (c) when people seek feedback, (d) from whom they seek feedback, and (e) what type of performance feedback is being sought (for a meta-analytic review, see Anseel et al., 2015). While there is obviously quite some variety in feedback-seeking studies, a prototypical study aims to better understand the antecedents and consequences of the frequency with which employees seek feedback through inquiry and monitoring (e.g., Ashford, De Stobbeleir, & Nujella, 2016). Inquiry involves seeking feedback by directly asking others for feedback. Monitoring involves screening the work environment and the behavior of colleagues in order to gain insight into how one's behavior would be assessed by others without directly asking anyone. Studies would then focus on identifying and understanding individual differences such as learning goal orientation or self-esteem (e.g., Northcraft & Ashford, 1990; VandeWalle & Cummings, 1997), situational aspects such as the presence of others when seeking feedback (Williams, Miller, Steelman, & Levy, 1999), and interactions between individual and situational antecedents (e.g., Levy, Albright, Cawley, & Williams, 1995; Sijbom, Anseel, Crommelinck, De Beuckelaer, & De Stobbeleir, 2018). Having determined what drives or hinders people to seek feedback, studies have in turn sought to examine the outcomes of seeking feedback, with task performance and job satisfaction as the most studied outcomes (Anseel et al., 2015).

A range of ingenious research designs have been adopted to investigate these research questions, but they have almost invariably focused on only one actor in the feedback-seeking process: the person seeking feedback. It is surprising to observe that virtually no studies have also included the perspective and behavior of the source from whom feedback is been sought, be it a supervisor or a colleague. This is a crucial oversight when looking to understand the relationship between feedback-seeking behavior and performance outcomes. The underlying, seemingly evident assumption of this relationship is that people who seek feedback will improve their performance *because* their supervisor will respond to their seeking attempt by giving useful feedback, which will then be listened to and used by the feedback-seeker to adjust his or her behavior. However, asking for feedback does not automatically imply receiving useful feedback nor listening to the information provided (Kluger & Malloy, in press). To date, no studies have actually tested these assumptions and there is little evidence of how the feedback-seeking process unfolds after the initial feedback-seeking and subsequent feedback-giver's responses. Given the mixed findings regarding the effects of seeking feedback on performance (Anseel et al., 2015), a more detailed examination of the intermediate processes involving the perspectives and actions of both actors involved in the feedback exchange could help solve this puzzle.

In terms of developing a dyadic perspective, it is important to acknowledge that a number of studies have already looked at the attributions supervisors make when they are being asked for feedback. For instance, Ashford and Tsui (1991) found that feedback sources' reporting of negative feedback-seeking was associated with a higher perception of effectiveness, while positive feedback-seeking was associated with a lower perception of effectiveness. Similarly, when feedback-seekers had a favorable performance history, seeking feedback led to more positive impressions of the seeker's personal characteristics and performance potential (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992). For top performers, managers also interpreted feedback-seeking as being motivated by performance improvement motives but less so for mediocre employees (De Stobbeleir, Ashford, & Luque, 2010). Such supervisor attributions about the motives of employees to seek feedback are important as subordinates' feedback-seeking has been found to relate to supervisor-rated work performance only when supervisors interpreted the feedback-seeking behavior as being driven more by performance enhancement motives and less by impression management motives (Lam, Huang, & Snape, 2007). Together, these findings indicate that the feedback source plays an active role in the feedback-seeking process in how they interpret the feedback-seeking intentions. While none of these studies involved the perspective of the feedback-seeker and feedback-giver simultaneously, they provide a preliminary basis to inform future research that aims to take a closer look at the dyadic interplay of their behaviors.

In terms of developing a dynamic perspective, previous feedback-seeking research has provided a relatively static depiction of the feedback-seeking process. Experimental studies have mostly adopted between-person designs, providing different situational cues to look at whether people would seek feedback or not in a given situation. Field studies rely mostly on cross-sectional designs (multiple source), wherein individuals look back at their behavior over a period of time and provide an indication of the frequency of their feedback-seeking behavior. These perspectives, however, do not consider the iterative nature of feedback exchanges. As mentioned earlier, seeking feedback in organizations is most often not a one-time, isolated event, but a reoccurring exchange with the same actors, thus connecting each feedback cycle with previous and future feedback exchanges. Combined with the earlier dyadic shortcoming, it could very well be that increases or decreases in feedback-seeking behavior are determined by the earlier responses of the feedback-giver or by previous attempts or future prospects to seek feedback. As concluded by Anseel et al. (2015), longitudinal designs that take the iterative nature of feedback into account are sorely needed to address some of the unsolved puzzles in the feedback-seeking domain. A good example of this is the fuzzy relationship between uncertainty reduction and feedback-seeking, which could result from uncertainty being both an antecedent and outcome of seeking feedback.

While only a handful of studies have adopted a process or longitudinal perspective, these have been quite informative for developing such a dynamic account of feedback-seeking behavior. Levy et al. (1995), for example, remains one of the only studies that measured intention to seek feedback, subsequent feedback-seeking, and the tendency to change initial intentions, thus providing an in-depth process view of how individuals flexibly navigate through one feedback cycle. People intending to seek feedback, reconsidered and refrained from seeking feedback when they became aware that they had to so in public to avoid face loss. A few other studies have examined how the frequency of feedback-seeking behavior may fluctuate over time (and thus, over feedback cycles). In a longitudinal study with data collected three times over a year, Callister, Kramer, and Turban (1999) found that monitoring for feedback from peers and supervisors remained constant over time, as did inquiry from supervisors, but that inquiry from peers declined. In a study of 205 new accountants that were surveyed 1, 3, and 6 months into their jobs, Morrison (1993) found that feedback-seeking remained relatively stable over time. In two longitudinal studies of organizational newcomers, Vandenberghe et al. (in press) found that declining levels of feedback-seeking behavior resulted in decreased organizational commitment across time and ultimately greater turnover. Combined, these studies suggests that there might be substantial intra-individual variation in the frequency of feedback-seeking behavior over time and, at present, research has not sufficiently looked at how the iterative nature of the feedback process might affect feedback-seeking behavior.

In sum, research on feedback-seeking behavior has extended feedback research by advancing our understanding of the organic nature and informal aspects of feedback exchanges in organizations. However, with its predominant focus on the feedback-seeker's side of the feedback exchange at a single point in time, the feedback-seeking research does not fully capture the dynamics of both actors in shaping the feedback conversation over time.

Feedback Environment Research

Research on the feedback environment seeks to address some of the previously mentioned limitations by providing a holistic perspective on how supervisors, and to a lesser extent colleagues, may support employee development through informal feedback behaviors. The feedback environment refers "to the contextual aspects of day-to-day supervisor–subordinate and coworker–coworker feedback processes rather than to the formal performance appraisal feedback session" (Steelman, Levy, & Snell, 2004, p.166). A favorable feedback environment is characterized by managers and employees feeling comfortable seeking, providing, and receiving feedback for development. Feedback environment studies have typically adopted a survey approach with employees reporting on their perceptions of the (supervisor) feedback environment by means of a composite score of seven feedback environment facets (e.g., feedback quality, feedback delivery, favorable feedback, feedback credibility, unfavorable feedback, source availability, promotion of feedback-seeking). Overall, studies examining the outcomes of a favorable feedback environment have shown that it is related to job satisfaction (Anseel & Lievens, 2007), affective commitment, organizational citizenship behavior (Norris-Watts & Levy, 2004), psychological empowerment (Gabriel, Frantz, Levy, & Hilliard, 2014), various aspects of work performance (Rosen et al., 2006) and increased employee feedback-seeking (Whitaker, Dahling, & Levy, 2007).

The feedback environment approach has been particularly valuable in demonstrating the utility of conceptualizing informal feedback-supportive behavior of supervisors. It has explicitly acknowledged how supervisors continuously give informal feedback and may be responsive to feedback-seeking attempts from their subordinates, thus opening up for the possibility of both dyadic and dynamic exchanges over time. However, by only tapping into the feedback perceptions of feedback receivers, this perspective suffers to some extent from the same limitation as earlier discussed; a lack of attention to the dynamic interplay between feedback-giver and feedback-seeker. Furthermore, the global assessment of the feedback environment and the lack of longitudinal designs do not allow for a process approach acknowledging the iterative nature of feedback exchanges.

Toward a Dyadic and Dynamic Perspective on Feedback

To complement and extend previous feedback perspectives, we propose a dyadic and dynamic perspective on supervisor–employee exchanges by drawing on recent advances in the study of dyads in the fields of organizational behavior, personal relationship, and communication.

Dyadic Considerations

We first examine dyadic aspects of feedback processes in more detail. Dyadic constructs involve relationships, interactions, and exchanges that occur between two members of a dyad (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). As the dyad is the essential building block of two-way communication, feedback exchanges should in essence be analyzed as dyadic constructs. While it is possible to isolate and study the individual behaviors of each of the two actors involved in the exchange, as previous feedback research has mostly done, both perspectives are dependent on each other. An employee seeking feedback from a supervisor aims to elicit a response of the supervisor, leading him or her to give feedback or not, which in turn is expected to instigate a response by the initial feedback seeker (or not). Therefore, a feedback exchange should be conceptualized as a multilevel construct because the exchanges occur between lower level units (feedback-giver and -seeker) nested within a higher-level unit (supervisor–employee dyad). This higher-level unit, in turn, has its own attributes influencing the perspectives and actions of both actors within it such as the history of the relationship, the frequency of exchange, and the timing and duration of the conversation, among others. Three key characteristics of dyadic relationships stand out as having been overlooked by previous feedback research.

A first dyadic aspect central to feedback exchanges is relational dependency. The actors are dependent on each other in their actions and are aware of this dependency when anticipating and engaging in the exchange. Both employee and supervisor may be responsive to each other's feelings, thoughts, and behavior and change their own behavior accordingly, for instance, to shape their relationship toward valued end goals or to accommodate the other person. Indeed, a supervisor who is solicited for feedback is not a computer that provides an automated feedback message. As previously demonstrated, supervisors make cognitive attributions about the motives to seek feedback. When being approached by an employee, a supervisor may feel that his or her subordinate is simply seeking attention or is looking for an ego boost. As a result, keeping dependency in mind, this supervisor may either choose to forego the opportunity to give diagnostic feedback or choose to give in and bolster the employee's self-esteem with positive feedback. Similarly, before or after initiating a feedback conversation, employees may try to forecast changes in the supervisor's thinking during the feedback episode or over multiple feedback episodes and adapt their actions accordingly. These dependency considerations are shaped by their feedback history, relationship characteristics (e.g., the quality of the relationship) or the timing of their exchange, which are all dyadic properties. In sum, the relational context of feedback episodes and the associate dependency considerations form an important aspect of feedback exchanges that need to be taken into account to understand how feedback episodes unfold.

In addition to dependency, behavioral reciprocity is a second important characteristic of feedback dyads that seems currently misunderstood. Feedback does not emerge from any individual as a standalone actor, but is cocreated and embedded within the reciprocal interplay between employee and supervisor. When studying feedback exchanges and asking supervisors to report on their feedback-giving behavior, that self-reported behavior is dependent on the employee's feedback-seeking behavior. In turn, a supervisor's report of an employee's feedback-seeking behavior is also dependent on his or her own feedback-giving behavior. Conversely, questionnaires measuring employee self-reports of feedback-seeking behavior are dependent on the supervisor's actual feedback-giving behavior, in the same way as an employee's report of a supervisor's feedback-giving behavior is dependent on his or own feedback-seeking behavior. To date, no studies have statistically or methodologically accounted for this behavioral reciprocity. This concurrent influence between both actors implies mutuality, the reciprocal influence both feedback-giver and feedback-seeker have on each other's behavior, which has been identified as one of the basic elements of a dyadic relationship (Ferris et al., 2009).

Third, in most cases both feedback-giver and feedback-seeker in a feedback exchange share a common past and future. Their attitudes, cognition, and behavior in any given feedback conversation may be (partly) driven by their experience with the other party in a previous exchange or by their anticipation of future exchanges. For instance, if a manager has the feeling that the feedback she or he gave a couple of months has not been acted upon by an employee, she or he might be reluctant to respond constructively to questions for feedback in a new situation. Also, an employee might feel satisfied with a brief and incomplete feedback conversation with his or her supervisor, knowing that she or he will have many further opportunities for seeking feedback in the upcoming days. As most feedback research to date has overlooked relational dependency, behavioral reciprocity, and shared time perspective, it may be that we are misunderstanding or are not fully capturing the true nature of the relationships between feedback and employee outcomes (Kenny et al., 2006; Tse & Ashkanasy, 2015).

Dynamic Considerations

Logically following from these dyadic considerations, it becomes clear that a second important characteristic of feedback exchanges that has not been incorporated to its full potential is the dynamic aspect of feedback processes. Despite the recognition of and continuous interest in feedback as a central driver of individual's growth trajectories, our collective understanding of how feedback processes unfold over time remains surprisingly incomplete. For instance, it remains unclear why and when individuals follow up on initial feedback-seeking decisions; how various cognitive, motivational, and behavioral processes result from seeking and receiving feedback, and how they together promote (and, in some cases, inhibit) a developmental trajectory. Along those lines, we know very little about the decisions of when and how to expand on feedback received throughout one's development process as well as when and what feedback interventions by a feedback-giver are most appropriate throughout this development trajectory. In other words, we know a lot about what matters in the feedback process but relatively little about *when* or *why* it matters. One of the primary reasons for the slow progress in this area is a fundamental misalignment of theory and research with the dynamic nature of the feedback process. Feedback and the learning resulting from it are dynamic processes that occur at the within-person level and unfold over time and across multiple levels of analysis. Theoretically, learning from feedback is a cyclical process (Taylor, Fisher, & Ilgen, 1984) in which individuals experience performance-goal discrepancies, which they try to solve by seeking or listening to feedback. They channel cognitive resources toward understanding and learning from the feedback, develop metacognitive strategies to filter and apply the feedback received, and subsequently modify their self-regulatory processes over time potentially needing additional feedback at indeterminate times (Carver & Scheier, 2000; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989; Pintrich, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000). Thus, it is a within-person process that evolves over time. However, the picture emerging from our partial review is that the majority of research on feedback processes thus far has been conducted at the between-person rather than within-person level. As Dalal and Hulin (2008, p. 69) cautioned "the distinction between within-person and between-person structures of behaviors is ignored at the researcher's peril." Indeed, findings derived from between-person methodologies alone present an incomplete and occasionally misleading picture of the dynamic phenomena in question. For instance, a current assumption in the feedback-seeking domain is that newcomers seek frequent feedback to learn the ropes of their new jobs. As tenure increases, they are increasingly feeling more comfortable in their work environment and jobs, resulting in less need for and thus less feedback-seeking. However, the underlying evidence about this assumed within-person decline in feedback-seeking frequency is almost entirely built on between-subject correlations (Anseel et al., 2015). In other words, while we are observing that individuals high in tenure are seeking less feedback than their counterparts low in tenure, we conclude that newcomers actually *change* their feedback-seeking behavior over time. Of course, various other explanations could also account for such a between-person correlation with reversed causality (i.e., people who frequently seek feedback are more likely to stay in the company) as one of the more plausible ones. Thus, switching from a between- to a within-person level of analysis requires researchers to rethink feedback theories. For instance, one of the main theories driving feedback-seeking research has been uncertainty reduction theory, predicting that one of the main motives for people to seek feedback is to reduce work-related uncertainty (Ashford, 1986). However, research on uncertainty reduction in communication research (Brashers, 2001) has raised the possibility that uncertainty may actually be sought after (i.e., the motives of feedback seekers, in some situations, may not be to reduce it but to increase it). To increase uncertainty (e.g., around performance levels or social evaluation), people may deliberately seek out information that contradicts their and other beliefs or introduce new alternatives for consideration (Kruglanski, 1989).The current dominant between-person approach taken in feedback research does not allow tackling such research questions. Thus, new longitudinal research methodologies and analytic techniques are needed to more accurately depict how feedback processes evolve over time and how work environments may disrupt or accelerate employees' feedback trajectories.

Recent methodological advances have allowed researchers to address such dyadic and dynamic research questions in more depth and in novel ways (see Bliese & Lang, 2016; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012; Lehmann-Willenbrock & Allen, 2018; Tse & Ashkanasy, 2015). Implementing these advanced techniques may allow feedback research to make substantial progress in addressing previously unexplored questions and shed new light on old questions. Below, we describe these approaches and explain how applying them to feedback research may inspire various new research questions, bringing previous strands of research together. We summarize the new research questions that may be examined through new methods in Table 3.1. Most of the approaches described below allow examination of both dyadic and dynamic aspects of feedback exchanges. However, we first discuss approaches that have initially put most emphasis on dyadic aspects and then discuss approaches that were originally developed to study dynamic patterns.

A Research Agenda

Social Relations Approach to Dyadic Research

Within the domains of communication and personal relations the social relations model and its variants (SRM; Kenny et al., 2006) have been advanced as approaches to disentangle dyadic phenomena in four variance components: actor, partner, relationship, and error. When dyadic scores are not partitioned, actor, partner, and relationship effects might be confounded. This means that it is impossible to determine whether unique behavior occurs in specific dyads, whether there is a stability of behavior exhibited (i.e., actor effects) or provoked (i.e., partner). A particularly relevant example of a study in the interpersonal relations domain is Kluger and Malloy's (in press) examination of how asking questions may lead to better liking by conversation partners. Using SRM procedures, they reanalyzed Huang, Yeomans, Brooks, Minson, and Gino's (2017) experiments on question-asking behavior, a true dyadic phenomenon. When taking into account the dyadic nature of asking and responding questions, the researchers reached fundamentally different conclusions than the original study. Whereas Huang et al. (2017) concluded support for a trait-level model of question-asking behavior, Kluger and Malloy found that a third of

Table 3.1 Overview of dyadic and dynamic perspectives in generating new research questions for feedback research

Dependent variable	Illustrative research questions	Recommended approach for research question
Dyadic perspective		
Feedback-seeking behavior	How do characteristics of the feedback-giver elicit different types of feedback-seeking behavior? How do characteristics unique to the dyad elicit feedback-seeking behavior?	Social Relations Model Actor–Partner Interdependence Model
Feedback-giving behavior	How do specific feedback-seeking strategies elicit different types of feedback-giving behavior? Do leaders give feedback in different ways to different employees?	Social Relations Model Actor–Partner Interdependence Model
Outcomes	How do various feedback-giving behaviors relate to increased feedback use by employees? How do specific combinations of characteristics of both feedback-seeker and feedback-giver lead to increased performance?	Social Relations Model Actor–Partner Interdependence Model
Dynamic perspective		
Feedback-seeking behavior	How does the work environment affect feedback-seeking behavior over time?	Growth/Longitudinal Modeling
Feedback-giving behavior	How do managers adapt their feedback-giving behavior to external events?	Discontinuous Growth Modeling
Outcomes	How many feedback conversations are optimal for sustaining motivation and performance?	Growth/Longitudinal Modeling
Dyadic and dynamic		
Feedback-seeking behavior	How do employees adapt their feedback-seeking strategies on the basis of the feedback they received in a previous feedback exchange? How do employees follow up their initial feedback-seeking attempts on the basis of the response of their manager?	Repeated measures Actor-Interdependence model Growth/Longitudinal Modeling
Feedback-giving behavior	Do leaders compensate for a decline in feedback-seeking behavior by giving more feedback? Do people give different feedback on the basis of employees not having listened to previous feedback?	Repeated measures Actor-Interdependence model Growth/Longitudinal Modeling
Outcomes	How do previous feedback exchanges unfold into an effective or ineffective feedback relationship? How does the dynamic interplay between seeking and responding to feedback within a feedback episode lead to enhanced employee performance?	Relational event modeling Temporal social interaction approaches

the variance in question-asking behavior can be attributed to the specific dyad, and a smaller portion of the variance can be attributed to the partner's tendency to elicit question asking.

When seeking to apply an SRM model to the study of feedback-seeking behavior, as proposed by Anseel, Vossaert, and Corneillie (2018), it becomes clear that previous research might have been overly narrow in modeling the drivers of feedback-seeking behavior. Actor variance would reflect individual differences in one's tendency to frequently seek feedback, a frequently studied relationship. However, partner variance would reflect a different trait, that is, the tendency of some people to elicit feedback-seeking attempts; relationship variance would reflect the tendency to frequently seek feedback in the presence of a specific partner. Finally, error variance is distinguished from relationship variance when more than one measure is available. When scores are not partitioned, actor, partner, and relationship effects are confounded, as has been mostly the case in previous feedback research. To date, virtually no studies have looked at feedback-givers who would elicit more or less feedback-seeking behavior and what relationship characteristics would uniquely predict more feedback exchanges.

A special case of SRM is the one-with-many (OWM) model (Kenny et al., 2006; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012). It is designed to analyze data collected from an individual who forms multiple relationships (dependent dyads) in a team. Adopting this method, Venkataramani, Green, and Schleicher (2010), for example, asked team members to list the extent to which they sought advice from different supervisors and looked at how their network centrality shaped leader–member exchange and members' work attitudes. A similar approach focusing on network centrality in feedback-seeking could further unravel feedback-seeking and feedback-giving dynamics. An example might clarify the type of feedback research questions that adopting OWM could inspire. For instance, if Mike gives feedback to Mary, this could be a consequence of (a) his feedback-giving behavior (e.g., Mike generally gives a lot of feedback), (b) her feedback-seeking behavior (e.g., Mary generally seeks feedback a lot), or (c) their relationship-specific feedback behavior (e.g. Mike gives Mary more feedback than others while Mary seeks more feedback from Mike than with others). Observing Mike and Mary in multiple dyads over multiple feedback episodes would enable us to disentangle drivers of feedback-giving and feedback-seeking behaviors. Moreover, this approach would also us allow to look at the extent to which the supervisor personalizes his/her feedback-giving approach and explore the effect on the effectiveness of feedback. Do supervisors respond uniformly to feedback-seeking or do they adopt feedback-seeker or relationship-specific feedback styles? Feedback studies addressing these questions would need to collect data from individuals who form different feedback relationships with multiple feedback sources. Typically, a "round-robin" technique could be used, in which an employee lists all the feedback sources from whom he or she receives, seeks or give feedback. This would, for example, allow research questions focusing on differences in status, relationship qualities, or expertise among feedback sources and how they determine feedback-seeking and giving behaviors.

While SRM and OWM focus on multiple existing relationships, the actor–partner interdependence model (APIM, Kenny et al., 2006) enables data analysis collected from two individuals who belong to the same dyad and allows testing of reciprocal effects. Hence, APIM is uniquely suited to analyze one-on-one feedback interactions and can help determine whose and which attitudes or behaviors influence particular outcomes (in the actor or the partner), while taking into account the characteristics of the dyad. Partner-oriented models (Kenny & Cook, 1999) assume that an actor's outcome is a product of a partner effect, meaning in this context that feedback-seeking behavior is largely determined by another one's feedback-giving behavior (or responsiveness). For instance, research questions could focus on how a leaders' personality or supportive behavior affects an employee's feedback-seeking or an employees' acceptance and use of feedback. Switching the actor and partner roles, feedback-giving (as an actor's outcome) could be the product of feedback-seeking (as a partner effect.) Research questions could examine the characteristics and types of feedback-seeking behavior and how they relate to different patterns of feedback-giving.

Dyadic mediation effects can also be assessed via the actor–partner interdependence mediation model (Ledermann, Macho, & Kenny, 2011), shedding light on the intermediate mechanisms such as actor and partner attributions and exchange goals. Various interaction models can be distinguished (Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012) such as APIM with actor–partner interaction, where an actor effect varies across levels of partner's scores on the independent variable and/or that partner effects vary across levels of actor's scores on the independent variable. For instance, feedback-seekers could report more useful feedback exchanges when both feedback-seeker and feedback-giver have high scores on learning goal orientation. Moderators can also be situated at the dyad level, where for instance relationships could be different depending on the status of the dyad. An example would be examining if someone's feedback-seeking within teams or across teams yields different outcomes. Thus, these models allow for the inclusion of characteristics of both the actors and the dyads in the feedback conversation and examine how they coproduce partner, actor, and dyad outcomes.

Before discussing new approaches to study dynamic process, it is important to understand that SRM approaches have also been developed to study dyadic phenomena over time. For instance, repeated measures APIM (Kenny et al., 2006) not only examine reciprocal effects between actor and partner but it also incorporates dynamic effects by examining how actor's and partner's variables change between two points in time. This analytical approach opens up the possibility of a range of research questions examining how a leader's feedback-giving behavior and a subordinate's feedback-seeking behavior at time 1 affects their own and each others' behaviors at time 2 (for a more systematic discussion, see Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012).

Temporal Social Interaction Approaches for Dynamic Processes

In recent years, a number of researchers have developed advanced dynamic social interaction analysis techniques for studying temporal interactions in organizations such as leader–follower dynamics (for an overview, see Lehmann-Willenbrock & Allen, 2018). Rather than one specific model, this line of research encompasses a wide range of methodologies for quantifying temporal interaction pattern to study actual interactions in the field as they unfold over time. Examples include lag sequential analysis, pattern analysis, statistical discourse analysis, and visualization methods. A recent study of Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, and Kauffeld (2017) takes a detailed process perspective on the appraisal interview and provides a good example of the promise of these methods for studying new research questions in feedback conversations. By modeling micro-patterns of supervisor–employee interactions in the appraisal interview, they captured the dynamic interplay between both interview partners as the interview progresses. By coding different behaviors, such as the extent to which the supervisor shows task or relation-oriented behaviors, and adopting lag-sequential coding to analyze the data, they unraveled the patterns of interaction that led to higher interview success ratings. Emphasizing the importance of the dyadic nature of the interview, they found that relation-activation patterns in which there were reciprocal relationships between relation-oriented supervisor communication and active employee involvement were linked to higher interview success ratings by both supervisors and employees. The frequencies of isolated supervisor or employee behaviors did not determine the success' perceptions of supervisor and employees.

As will be clear from this example, the emphasis in this paradigm lies on the study of actual behavior. To capture behavioral aspects of feedback conversations, video or audio recordings, use of app-based analytics, observation and coding, or wearable sensors might be advisable. These approaches seem most appropriate for a temporal sequence micro-analysis of feedback conversations to see how one feedback episode unfolds and how various verbal and nonverbal micro-behaviors may provoke responses in the other party. Much like analyzing how both partners in a dance cocreate a dance sequence, feedback episodes can be minutiously broken down in a temporal sequence of micro-actions by each of the actors. Imagine the following episode being videotaped and analyzed: When Gareth is uttering some doubts to Laura about an ongoing shared project, Laura might lean forward to express opennenss and support. In turn, this might trigger Gareth to openly voice his concerns and ask Laura for feedback about how he is doing. Laura may seemingly jump in too quickly with a disapproving message, but upon seeing a defensive reaction in Gareth's bodily posture she quickly adapts and reconfirms her confidence in the abilities of Gareth.

Event-Based Approaches to Dynamic Processes

While the previous approach seems particularly appropriate to study within-episode dynamics, relational event modeling can help incorporate dynamic aspects over sequences of events and examine how they lead to emergent feedback patterns between members of a dyad (DuBois, Butts, McFarland, & Smyth, 2013; Kozlowski, Chao, Grand, Braun, & Kuljanin, 2013). Relational event modeling has been mostly applied to study the emergence of group constructs as an unfolding process. The assumption is that actions of and interactions between groups members coalesce into collective psychological states. The manner by which one interaction follows another one describes a group's behavior, with different temporal patterns being characteristic for different groups. Similarly, the specific pattern of encounters between a feedback-giver and feedback-seeker over time may be predictive of a unique feedback relationship. Each feedback-seeking and feedback-giving interaction can be seen as driven by the situational context, the attributes of the partners within the dyad, and the preceding sequence of feedback-seeking and giving episodes (Leenders, Contractor, & DeChurch, 2016). For example, Schecter, Pilny, Leung, Poole, and Contractor (in press) use relational event modeling to analyze sequences of interactions within teams to study emergent processes in a team such as knowledge sharing and cooperation. Frequent reciprocal interactions between team members were found to be associated with greater perceived knowledge sharing and cooperation in the team. However, an inclination toward preferential attachment had a negative effect on perceived process quality. While to our knowledge no feedback studies have adopted relation event modeling, we suggest that feedback relationships between managers and employees can be seen as emergent processes that are shaped by previous actions and that may enable and constrain employees to accomplish their tasks and goals (Schecter et al., in press). The feedback pattern within a dyad develops and evolves over iterations which ultimately results in an idiosyncratic feedback pattern. Thus, adopting such an event-based perspective could be key to understanding detrimental feedback conditions. Similar to Tolstoy's famous observation that "happy families are all alike but every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way," it could be that the key to understanding detrimental feedback conditions is a better understanding of idiosyncratic feedback dynamics over time: Every ineffective feedback dyad might be ineffective in its own unique way.

A second approach to examine how events may impact feedback conversations is the use of discontinuous growth modeling (Bliese & Lang, 2016). By using experience sampling methodology, researchers would be able to collect repeated measures of the feedback-seeker's, feedback-giver's, or ideally both perspectives over longer periods of times. An untested assumption in feedback research is that feedback behaviors demonstrate linear growth or decline. For instance, feedback-seeking research has hypothesized that as newcomers in an organization learn the ropes and decrease uncertainty, their feedback-seeking behavior would steadily decline (Vandenberghe et al., in press). However, change can also happen abruptly. Events in the wider organizational environment may trickle down to the dyad level and disrupt the routine trajectory of feedback conversations (Morgeson, Mitchell, &

Liu, 2015). For instance, the introduction of a new performance management system, an organizational crisis or even more proximal events such as a team conflict or a promotion or the firing of a coworker may all affect regular feedback patterns in a nonlinear way. Future feedback research could test for differences in feedback patterns prior to an event (e.g., before a restructuring), in reaction to an event (e.g., during restructuring), and following an event (e.g., after restructuring). In doing so, one can propose and examine whether different response patterns in the longitudinal process reflect properties of one of the actors or of the dyadic entity (e.g., resilience of the feedback relationship). To date, there is a paucity of feedback studies taking a longitudinal approach, let alone testing the possibility that change over time may not happen in a linear fashion.

Summary

We believe that feedback research could be considerably advanced by better aligning conceptualization, measurement, and analysis of feedback as a dyadic and dynamic process. Given the promise for advancing our understanding of feedback processes in organizations, we encourage a feedback research agenda adopting a dyadic and dynamic approach. To attain this goal, future research should try to include at least one or more of the following elements in dyadic and dynamic studies of feedback. First, feedback researchers should include the perspectives or actual feedback behaviors of *both* feedback actors to study the interplay between feedback-seekers and feedback-givers in shaping feedback exchanges. Second, characteristics at the dyad level (e.g., intensity, frequency, duration, history) are informative to account for the multilevel structure of feedback conversations. Third, future research should include *a temporal perspective* by examining feedback behavior(s) over time. A temporal perspective can be focused on one feedback episode mapping the micro-behaviors of one or both feedback actors or may seek to model the iterative nature of feedback conversations by following a feedback dyad across multiple feedback cycles. Depending on the predominant focus they take, these studies could help in advancing our understanding of feedback-seeking behavior, feedback-giving behavior, and their outcomes. To summarize the new perspective and provide examples of new research questions to explore, Table 3.1 provides an overview how including dyadic and dynamic aspects and their combination may advance the study of feedback-giving behavior, feedback-seeking behavior, and feedback outcomes.

Suggestions for Practice

The starting point of the current chapter was the observation that we currently lack strong evidence-based guidelines for informing informal feedback processes in organizations. In the last years, performance management practices in organizations have seen a clear trend toward emphasizing the value of continuous feedback exchanges between employees and their managers. The lack of specific research on the topic precludes the proposition of very specific practical recommendations to date. However, on the basis of the our review and methodological analysis, a number of general steps seem advisable to organizations.

First, provided that organizations want to follow the trend toward encouraging more fluid and flexible feedback exchange, they may want conduct a thorough evaluation of the current feedback culture in place. In doing so, it would be most important to monitor the actual feedback conversations by asking questions such as: how many feedback exchanges occur between employees and their managers? What is the quality of those conversations? How long do conversation usually take? Who instigates the feedback conversations—is it mostly employees asking for feedback or managers approaching their employees?

Second, consistent with the dyadic aspect of feedback exchanges, it seems particularly important to map the viewpoints of both parties. It could be that employees have quite different views about the prevalence and quality of feedback exchanges than supervisors. Potential disagreements in perceptions and in reporting objective factors of feedback exchanges could be an indicator of a malfunctioning performance management process. Similarly, organizations may want to monitor the more dynamic aspects of feedback exchanges: Do conversations refer back to previous conversations and the agreements or intentions that were articulated in them? Is there continuity, a common understanding and/or a sense of progress in the feedback relationship by employees and managers referring back or looking forward to future conversations? Alternatively, organizations may also want to adopt a micro-perspective and monitor the dynamics within one specific feedback conversation. It is not uncommon when strengthening feedback processes in organizations to have an external coach, with a background in interpersonal dynamics, present for one or more conversations to help employees and managers getting (re)started.

Third, once organizations have a good sense of the current status of their performance management system and the feedback conversations happening, they may want to decide on the balance between structure (i.e., more classic approaches) and fluidity (i.e., following the new trends) in their performance management strategy. It is clear that abandoning performance management altogether is not the preferred option for most companies but most organizations will want to supplement their formal system with some flexibility.

Fourth, in doing so, managers will need to assess whether managers and employees are ready, willing, and able to engage in a more organic feedback process. If not, HR can look for ways to better equip them with training and/or incentives to do so. Again, a previously underexplored theme that should be part of training interventions is increasing awareness of the dyadic and dynamic aspects of feedback conversations. For instance, leaders might not be fully aware how they inadvertently respond and customize their feedback behaviors in response to feedback-seeking tactics of employees. Similarly, employees may learn how to adopt feedback-seeking strategies that have a higher likelihood of yielding the type of feedback they need from their manager. Both managers and employees may together need to discover a workable routine and rhythm in the feedback conversations, while at the same time making connections with past and future conversations.

Conclusion

In summary, a dyadic and dynamic perspective can contribute to a better understanding of how feedback exchanges unfold over time and develop their own unique dyadic pattern through various cycles of feedback-seeking and feedback-giving. Previous research has provided valuable insights into the basic principles of feedback intervention effects, feedback-seeking behavior, and the feedback environment. Although these have provided some initial leads for the new feedback perspective articulated in this chapter, these lines of research have not explicitly taken into account the dyadic and dynamic nature of feedback conversations in organzations. Our review of the literature suggests that the overly static and one-sided perspective limits our understanding of how feedback unfolds in organizations. Methodological developments, however, may now allow for a more systematic study of the dyadic and dyadic aspects of feedback. We propose that the characteristics of the feedback-giver and -receiver, the characteristics of the feedback relationship between them, and the previous and future sequences of feedback together shape the effectiveness of feedback processes. Hence, we conclude and hope that future research will benefit from taking a more fine-grained dyadic and time-bound perspective on feedback dynamics that will allow to provide stronger evidence-based recommendations to guide informal feedback practices in organizations.

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Chapter 4
Frequent Feedback in Modern Organizations: Panacea or Fad?

Steven T. Tseng, Paul E. Levy, Sue Hua Aw Young, Ryan K. Thibodeau, and Xiyang Zhang

Feedback frequency is an important component of the feedback process in the workplace. When it comes to basic feedback information, we can ask "Who gave the feedback?" or "What kind of feedback was given: praise or criticism?" Along with elements such as source and favorability, frequency simply provides another piece of descriptive information about feedback. Instead of addressing questions of who and what, information about frequency addresses questions of "When?" or "How often?" When was the last time I received feedback on my work? How often do I hear from others about how well I am doing on the job? How often do I hear that I am doing a good job? How often am I told that I made a mistake? These are the types of questions asked when it comes to feedback frequency.

Previous research and seminal reviews have identified frequency as an important element of performance management in organizations (e.g., Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979; Kinicki, Prussia, Wu, & McKee-Ryan, 2004). Employees want to know how they are doing, and they notice when feedback regarding their work performance is lacking. Generally speaking then, frequent feedback should usually be a good thing. It is almost intuitively understood that a manager who communicates well and provides feedback often will likely be more effective than one who rarely touches base with employees to tell them what they are doing well and what they need to improve upon. So, why dedicate a chapter to this seemingly straightforward issue of frequent feedback?

Although it sounds simple, we recognize that the "frequency" issue turns out to be less straightforward than it seems. With advances in technology and changes in the workplace, the form that frequent feedback may take today appears to be quite different from the form that it took in the past. In other words, the meaning of frequent feedback in the modern organization has changed over time. Today, the notion

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of frequent feedback reflects feedback interactions beyond just the formal performance appraisal session. Common terms used to describe this sort of feedback include *frequent*, *continuous*, *ongoing*, and *informal*. With the advent of technology-assisted feedback tools, *real-time* feedback has also become a popular term. Rather than feedback tied to formal performance appraisals, which are traditionally conducted only annually or semi-annually, there is now an increased interest in feedback that occurs on a day-to-day basis and often under informal conditions. Given the increased interest in and changing nature of frequent feedback, it is prudent to examine our cumulative knowledge of the topic closely.

A quick Google search reveals press headlines such as "The Rise of Continuous Feedback," "3 Reasons Your Employees Want Frequent Feedback," "Why You Should Be Offering Frequent Performance Feedback," and "How HR can make continuous feedback a reality" – all published within the last year. Popular business guidebooks, such as the *HBR Guide to Performance Management*, also discuss the importance of frequent feedback. Vendors such as Impraise and Reflektive have built their entire product-line – performance management software and solutions – on this notion of streamlining the feedback process in organizations. As we will discuss in the next section, this interest in frequent feedback is tied to developments in the area of performance management, in which feedback plays an integral role. This idea of frequent feedback in organizations has become such a hot trend lately that we determined this seemingly simple (yet deceptively complex) idea deserves special attention.

Together, the evolution and rising prevalence of frequent feedback in organizations prompted us to review the literature on the topic, clarify what we know, and identify what we are unsure of. In this chapter, we will delve deeper into the details around frequent feedback. First, an overview of the emergence of this frequent feedback trend is presented. Next, empirical evidence for frequent feedback is reviewed and major implications based on the academic literature are summarized. Finally, suggestions for future research directions are provided.

How We Got Here

Performance management is broken! This has become a very common mantra expressed throughout the literature by researchers (Banks & Murphy, 1985; Bretz Jr, Milkovich, & Read, 1992) and lamented among practitioners (Pulakos, Hanson, Arad, & Moye, 2015; Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011). The concerns and frustration with the performance management (PM) process have become more intensified in recent years. Perhaps the best compilations that detail these issues are two sets of papers published in *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice* (Volume 4, Issue 2 and Volume 8, Issue 1). Pulakos and colleagues wrote two lead articles outlining their thoughts about the brokenness of PM and their suggestions for fixing it. Additionally, other scholars' thoughts and comments were included to supplement those lead articles. Feedback takes a very central role in these discussions that focus on recent thoughts, concerns, and suggestions about PM.

Levy and his colleagues, in a very recent monograph (Levy, Tseng, Rosen, & Lueke, 2017), crafted a paper that attempted to do five things: (1) review the recent criticisms of practitioners about PM, (2) review the potential solutions suggested by practitioners, (3) connect the problems and proposed solutions to the existing research – that is, what do we know about PM?, (4) make suggestions about how organizations should move forward with PM, and (5) suggest some ideas for future research to bridge the science–practice gap.

The Levy et al. (2017) paper identified four major concerns articulated consistently and vociferously by practitioners. First, there seems to be a great deal of agreement that PM is cumbersome and time-consuming. Second, performance appraisal ratings are often believed to be inaccurate as a result of many problems like biases and rating errors. Third, there is widespread unhappiness and dissatisfaction with the PM process that is manifested in negative cognitive, affective, or behavioral reactions. Finally, the static annual (or semiannual) review process does not fit the dynamic nature of organizations which exist, move, and make decisions in real time. Although we would argue that each of these four criticisms is related to feedback processes, for our purposes in this chapter, we will focus on the dissatisfaction with the static nature of the PM process because this most directly links to issues around feedback characteristics like frequency and timing.

Pulakos and O'Leary (2011) have suggested that the day-to-day feedback interactions that take place among employees as well as between employees and supervisors are most important for employee development and organizational success. In other words, our focus on the annual or semiannual formal performance review has missed the mark. Continuous, frequent, real-time feedback is more beneficial for employees and organizations and both our research and practice have not paid enough attention to this critical element of PM. This suggestion by Pulakos and O'Leary and the organizational trends that we are seeing now focusing on more frequent feedback are consistent with the work of Steelman, Levy, and their colleagues. More specifically, the Feedback Environment Scale (Steelman, Levy, & Snell, 2004) was created to measure the feedback culture in organizations and, in particular, the informal feedback processes described by Pulakos and O'Leary as well as Levy et al. (2017).

Some organizations are trending in this direction where they may be doing away with the traditional annual performance review and replacing it with a continuous informal feedback system. Other companies are keeping their annual reviews but supplementing them with continuous feedback systems. Deloitte, Adobe, Accenture, GE, and others have moved in the direction of including continuous informal feedback systems as the backbone of their PM systems or, at least, as an important part of their PM systems. GE's new PM system, PD@GE, (performance development at GE) is built around the notion of fostering conversations among employees. Employees can reach out to coworkers and ask for feedback or provide feedback to any coworkers they would like. The emphasis is on facilitating real-time feedback and continuous improvement (Birt, 2017). They also provide opportunities for employees to ask for a "touch-point" meeting any time in the business cycle. A scan of the practitioner literature reveals that organizations use many interesting terms for this notion of frequent, continuous feedback, such as regular check-ins, continuous review systems, instant feedback tools, checkpoints, regular feedback mechanisms, and regular touch points (Levy et al., 2017). This is consistent with our previous discussion about changing the traditional static PM process to better fit with the dynamic nature of organizations.

The notion of business cycles seems to be a very important issue for practitioners as they reconsider their PM systems and how to enhance them, in part, by making them more agile and a better match for the dynamic nature of 21st century organizations. This agility can be achieved in various ways. Deloitte's new PM system uses quick, reliable data (analytics) and regular check-ins to enhance employee's learning (Buckingham & Goodall, 2015). Focusing on short-term goals and structuring reviews around projects and deadlines rather than using the arbitrary annual or semiannual time period also may better serve the dynamics of organizations (Cappelli & Tavis, 2016).

Another element of "new" PM systems that is focused on more frequent feedback is the use of technology. Although this is an obvious advantage – and perhaps a necessity – for moving toward on-demand feedback, more flexible goal-setting, and real-time conversations (Hunt, 2011), the use of phone apps takes the technology to another level. PwC (formerly PricewaterhouseCoopers) has started using mobile apps so that employees can receive on-demand feedback from coworkers and supervisors regarding the extent to which they are meeting expectations (Levy et al., 2017). This use of technology seems likely to open the door to real-time feedback like we have never seen in organizations prior to the development and application of this technology.

Work performance happens every day with frequent interactions and many problems to solve (Cunningham, 2015). Performance does not happen on a 6- or 12-month cycle. Organizations live and die today – they do not wait around to see what the environment or economy or political outlook is in 6 months. Employees want to know how they are performing NOW and do not want to live in the past or wait months to get their feedback. Social media, as an example, is not going away and it has provided a structure to our world and created real-time expectations that have not been a part of personal life and certainly not a part of our work life until recently. All of these changes in our social context, our work experiences, organizational expectations, and our personal preferences have come together and, in some way, have led us to what appears to be a critical and potentially pervasive transition to frequent, continuous, real-time feedback. Given this context, it is important that we delve into what we really know about the impact of frequent feedback versus less frequent feedback. It appears that organizations are moving in this direction, but is that movement something that can be supported by our research or does the research suggest that more frequent feedback is no more effective than traditional less frequently provided feedback?

Frequency of Feedback: What Does the Research Say?

In this section, we review the research on frequent feedback. We focus on frequent feedback in the context of performance management and not in the context of training or education. Our primary aim is to discuss several representative studies and highlight key findings regarding frequent feedback. Although our purpose was not to conduct a formal meta-analysis, we believe we were reasonably comprehensive in our literature search and we examined studies for characteristics that may be relevant to our discussion. Research on frequent feedback has focused on a variety of different outcomes. These outcomes can generally be categorized as nonperformance-related or performance-related. Nonperformance-related outcomes refer mainly to employee reactions to feedback, such as perceptions and attitudes. In the literature, these outcomes are often nested under the term appraisal reactions and include perceptions of accuracy, perceptions of fairness, perceptions of justice, satisfaction, and motivation to improve (Levy & Williams, 2004). Performance-related outcomes refer to objective indicators or subjective ratings of effective behavior.

Table 4.1 summarizes the papers that provided a foundation for our analysis of the current research knowledge base related to feedback frequency. In our review, we identified how frequent feedback was operationalized in each study and recorded the reported findings, both of which are included in Table 4.1. In addition, we noted other study characteristics, such as design and tasks, but do not include them in Table 4.1 to keep the table simple. Instead, we discuss the relevant issues in the text.

Frequency and Nonperformance-Related Outcomes

A recent meta-analysis summarizes the research on the relationship between frequent feedback and employee reactions to performance appraisals (Pichler et al., 2018). Results of this meta-analysis indicate that frequent feedback has a moderate to large positive correlation with appraisal reactions (ρ = .45). The data indicated potential moderators, and the researchers hypothesized and found support for two: knowledge of performance standards and rating favorability. The positive relationship between frequent feedback and appraisal reactions was stronger when employees had more knowledge of performance standards and when performance ratings were more favorable. Ten of the studies from this meta-analysis are included in Table 4.1. The major conclusion from this meta-analysis is that frequent feedback was associated with positive reactions to performance appraisals, especially when evaluations of employee performance were favorable, and employees were clear on the standards against which they were being evaluated.

One noteworthy point regarding this meta-analysis is that the operationalization of frequent feedback varied across the individual studies. Frequent feedback referred to, for example, the number of times a formal evaluation occurred in the past

Table 4.1 Summary review of feedback frequency research

Study	Operationalization of feedback frequency	Finding
Nonperformance-related outcomes		
[a]Dobbins, Cardy, and Platz-Vieno (1990)	Number of formal performance appraisals during the preceding 12 months	Feedback frequency was more positively related to appraisal satisfaction under high levels of role conflict and when supervisors had large spans of control
[a]Evans and McShane (1988)	Perceived continuity of feedback on performance throughout the year	Feedback frequency was positively related to perceptions of performance appraisal system fairness
[a]Gaby (2004)	Number of times and regularity a ratee receives feedback regarding level of performance	Feedback frequency was positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, motivation, process satisfaction, supervisor satisfaction, and feedback satisfaction
[a]Inderriden, Allen, and Keavey (2004)	Perceptions of specificity, timing, and frequency of feedback	Feedback frequency was positively related to perceived fairness of performance ratings and job satisfaction
[a]Kinicki et al. (2004)	Perceptions of how often supervisor gives positive feedback	Feedback frequency was positively related to trust in supervisor, perceptions of fairness and rating accuracy, intrinsic motivation, and being upset due to inaccuracy
[a]Klein and Snell (1994)	Number of months since last formal performance review	Feedback frequency was not significantly related to attitudinal reactions
[a]Kuvaas (2011)	Perceived frequency and regularity of informal feedback	Feedback frequency was positively related to intrinsic motivation and affective commitment
[a]Landy, Barnes, and Murphy (1978)	Perceptions of whether formal performance appraisals occur at least once every 12 months	Feedback frequency was positively related to employee perceptions of performance appraisal fairness and accuracy
[a]Shrivastava and Purang (2011)	Perceptions of rater ability to provide clear, timely, frequent, and constructive feedback	Feedback frequency was reported to be positively related to appraisal reactions in the meta-analysis. Original article did not report a direct test of feedback frequency and outcomes
[a]Steensma and Otto (2000)	Perceived frequency of participation in performance appraisal sessions	Feedback frequency was positively related to employee satisfaction with the quality of performance appraisal sessions
Performance-related outcomes		

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

Study	Operationalization of feedback frequency	Finding
Alavosius and Sulzer-Azaroff (1990)	After one or two behaviors each day (continuous) or once every week (intermittent)	Continuous feedback resulted in more rapid acquisition of behaviors than intermittent feedback, but both schedules of feedback were similarly effective for maintenance of behaviors
Alvero, Bucklin, and Austin (2001)	Daily, weekly, monthly, or quarterly (as well as combinations)	Monthly and daily feedback resulted in more consistent feedback intervention effects on performance, but no statistical significance tests were conducted
Casas-Arce, Lourenço, and Martinez-Jerez (2017)	Weekly versus monthly	Less frequent (monthly) and detailed feedback related to higher performance compared to more frequent (weekly) feedback
Chhokar and Wallin (1984)	Weekly versus biweekly	Weekly feedback and biweekly feedback improved performance, but the effects were not different from each other
Kang, Oah, and Dickinson (2005)	After every session or after every fourth sessions	Feedback given every session resulted in more work units completed than feedback given every fourth session, but only when pay was contingent on units of work completed rather than hourly
Kinicki et al. (2004)	Perceptions of how often supervisor gives positive feedback	Feedback frequency was positively related to performance
Klein and Snell (1994)	Number of months since last formal performance review	Feedback frequency was not significantly related to performance change
Kuvaas (2011)	Perceived frequency and regularity of informal feedback	Feedback frequency was positively related to work performance
Kuvaas, Buch, and Dysvik (2017)	Perceptions of feedback immediacy and frequency	Perceived feedback immediacy and frequency was not significantly related to work performance, but higher levels strengthened the relationship between perceived feedback constructiveness and performance
Lam, DeRue, Karam, and Hollenbeck (2011)	Two, four, seven, or fourteen total rounds of feedback over a simulation	Feedback frequency had an inverted U-shaped relationship with task effort and performance
Leivo (2001)	Weekly or biweekly (frequent) feedback that gradually increased up to a range from 3 weeks to 3 months (infrequent)	Feedback frequency was not significantly related to performance after a learning period

(continued)

Table 4.1 (continued)

Study	Operationalization of feedback frequency	Finding
Lurie and Swaminathan (2009)	Every one, three, or six simulated rounds (Experiment 1); every one, five, or ten rounds (Experiment 2 and 3); every two, six, or ten rounds (Experiment 4)	More frequent feedback resulted in lower performance compared to less frequent feedback in a decision-making game
Pampino Jr, MacDonald, Mullin, and Wilder (2004)	Daily versus weekly feedback	Performance was higher in the daily feedback condition compared to the weekly feedback condition, but no statistical significance tests were conducted
So, Lee, and Oah (2013)	Daily versus weekly feedback	Weekly feedback improved performance, and daily feedback improved performance further

Note. [a]indicates articles from the Pichler, Beenen, and Wood (2018) meta-analysis

12 months (Dobbins et al., 1990), the number of months since the last appraisal interview (Klein & Snell, 1994), perceptions of feedback regularity from one's supervisor (Inderriden et al., 2004), and perceptions of frequency of informal appraisals (Evans & McShane, 1988). In some studies, feedback frequency reflected the number of times formal performance appraisals were conducted (e.g., Dobbins et al., 1990; Klein & Snell, 1994; Landy et al., 1978). For instance, Dobbins and colleagues (1990) asked a sample of bank tellers to report the "actual number of times their performance had been formally evaluated during the preceding 12 months" in their study of appraisal characteristics and satisfaction with the performance appraisal system. They found that frequency was positively related to appraisal satisfaction when employees experienced high role conflict and when supervisors had wider spans of control. In other studies, frequent feedback reflected perceptions of informal feedback frequency (e.g., Evans & McShane, 1988; Inderriden et al., 2004; Kuvaas, 2011). For instance, Kuvaas (2011) developed a survey to measure perceptions of "feedback outside formal feedback systems" in his study of the link between frequent feedback and appraisal reactions and found that perceived frequency of feedback was positively related to affective commitment. In some other cases, frequent feedback reflected the frequency of both formal and informal feedback (Gaby, 2004). This may not seem like an important issue given that the results of individual studies generally support the conclusion that frequent feedback is positively related to appraisal reactions, but the fact that the key variable of interest to organizations is not conceptualized consistently across studies makes it somewhat difficult to draw clear conclusions. Also, because of the widespread inconsistency of frequency operationalizations resulting typically in only one or two studies operationalizing frequency in the same way (thus, a very small *k* for levels of moderation), the meta-analysis was unable to code for this operationalization and test it as a moderator.

Frequency and Performance-Related Outcomes

Although we did not find a recent meta-analysis on feedback frequency and performance-related outcomes, we do review the empirical research on the topic and summarize it in Table 4.1. Overall, research shows mixed support for the effect of frequent feedback on performance and behavior. On the one hand, some studies found that frequent feedback had a positive effect on performance (e.g., Kang, Oah, & Dickinson, 2005; So et al., 2013) and behavior change (e.g., Alavosius & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1990). For instance, So and colleagues (2013) found that weekly feedback increased gas station employees' use of customer service behaviors, and daily feedback further increased them. On the other hand, some studies challenged the "more is better" assumption and found that more frequent feedback either did not impact performance (e.g., Casas-Arce, Lourenço, & Martínez-Jerez, 2017; Chhokar & Wallin, 1984) or indicated some detrimental effects on performance (e.g., Lam et al., 2011; Lurie & Swaminathan, 2009). Chhokar and Wallin (1984) conducted a field experiment with a sample of manufacturing and maintenance employees to examine the effect of feedback frequency and other interventions on behavioral safety performance. They found that more frequent feedback (i.e., weekly) did not result in better performance compared to less frequent feedback (i.e., biweekly). In another study, Lurie and Swaminathan (2009) conducted a series of lab experiments with undergraduate students to examine the effect of feedback frequency on performance in a computer-based decision-making task. They found that frequent feedback led to performance declines under conditions of high uncertainty due to encouraging excessive focus on recent information instead of taking a holistic approach and integrating information.

Several individual studies contribute other unique conclusions regarding the relation between frequent feedback and performance-related outcomes. Frequent feedback appears useful for acquisition of behaviors (Alavosius & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1990; Leivo, 2001), but not any more useful than less frequent feedback for maintenance of behaviors (Alavosius & Sulzer-Azaroff, 1990), suggesting that the informational value of feedback diminishes after a learning period (Leivo, 2001). The effect of frequent feedback on performance levels may depend on reward conditions, with frequent feedback being more effective than less frequent feedback under incentive pay conditions but not under hourly pay conditions (Kang et al., 2005). This, of course, suggests that feedback is operating indirectly via values in the sense that if the feedback is perceived to have real benefits (e.g., higher compensation) then it is likely to impact effort and performance. The effect of frequent feedback on performance may also be curvilinear, where frequent feedback is most effective at moderate levels compared to low levels but less effective at high levels (Lam et al., 2011). The downside of frequent feedback can be explained by resource allocation theory (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989). The idea here is that feedback is a complex source of information for the recipient, and processing feedback requires dedicating cognitive resources which may be otherwise allocated to the task (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Lam et al., 2011). Thus, although feedback often may be useful, too much feedback may lead to cognitive overload and leave feedback recipients with insufficient cognitive resources to dedicate to the task and, therefore, result in performance decrements. In sum, consistent with resource allocation theory, research has demonstrated that high levels of frequent feedback may reduce effort allocated to the assigned task (Lam et al., 2011) and may cause excessive focus on recent performance data at the cost of integrating information given over time (Lurie & Swaminathan, 2009). Note that these conclusions are only tentative at the moment as they are derived from limited research. More empirical research and replications are necessary to confirm these conclusions.

Most studies on feedback frequency and performance-related outcomes used a lab or field experimental design. In theory, this research design offers high internal validity and allows us to infer a causal effect of frequent feedback on performance and behavior. However, a word of caution is that task performance may be confounded with task learning (Lam et al., 2011; Schmidt & Bjork, 1992). This is especially the case for lab experiments where novel tasks are introduced to participants. In other words, when participants are performing a new task in the lab, we are not sure whether frequent feedback is primarily helping participants learn a new task or providing consistent useful information for maintenance of behavior and performance. As the study by Alavosius and Sulzer-Azaroff (1990) along with research in the training literature (e.g., Schmidt & Bjork, 1992) suggest, frequent feedback may be helpful for initial learning and acquisition behavior but less helpful for performance maintained over the long term.

Another noteworthy aspect of the studies on performance-related outcomes is that, similar to the case with the studies on nonperformance-related outcomes discussed earlier, the conceptualization of feedback frequency varies from study to study. In the context of the lab and field experiments reviewed here, feedback frequency was manipulated, and a comparison was made between a condition where feedback was more frequent versus a condition where it was less frequent. In other words, feedback in one condition was frequent relative to feedback in another condition, and these conditions were not consistent across experiments. One field experiment compared a weekly feedback schedule to a biweekly feedback schedule (Chhokar & Wallin, 1984). Another field experiment compared a weekly feedback schedule to a monthly feedback schedule (Casas-Arce et al., 2017). Similarly with lab experiments, one study compared feedback every session to feedback every fourth session on an accuracy task (Kang et al., 2005), while another created a gradient of feedback every round, every three rounds, and every six rounds in a decision-making task (Lurie & Swaminathan, 2009).

Finally, it should be noted that some studies had small sample sizes. So and colleagues (2013) demonstrated support for daily feedback being more effective than weekly feedback for increasing service behaviors of four gas station employees. Similarly, the study by Alavosius and Sulzer-Azaroff (1990) studied four female caregivers at a residential facility and found that continuous feedback was more effective than intermittent feedback for rapid acquisition of behaviors but not for maintenance of behaviors. Studies with small sample sizes should be replicated before we draw any firm conclusions.

Summary and Implications

Perhaps the most notable detail from our review of the research on the frequency of feedback is the inconsistent operationalization and conceptualization of frequent feedback across individual studies. This inconsistency was present in feedback frequency research examining both nonperformance- and performance-related outcomes alike. Understandably, there may have been good reasons to operationalize frequent feedback the way it was done in different studies when considering study design and constraints, particularly for field and lab experiments. Field experiments likely had to work within the constraints of the organizations from which data were collected, and lab experiments needed to be done in a way that made sense in the context of the task used. Furthermore, informative and consistent trends have certainly emerged in the results across studies using different operationalizations of frequent feedback. In general, it is safe to conclude that employee reactions are more favorable when performance reviews happen more frequently than once a year or when employees perceive feedback as being more frequent. It is also safe to conclude that the effect of frequent feedback on performance and behavior is complicated and it is not simply "more is better." Nevertheless, the fact that frequent feedback itself is operationalized so differently across studies calls into question the depth of our understanding of the phenomenon and our ability to predict the consequences of feedback interventions in organizations. This inconsistent operationalization of frequent feedback reveals a somewhat unclear picture of what frequent feedback looks like in practice and what the exact outcomes will be, which raises several concerns. In particular, we discuss concerns regarding the scientist–practitioner gap, the lack of specificity on boundary conditions, and other unanswered practical issues that need to be considered.

The first concern highlights a quintessential scientist–practitioner gap issue: A discrepancy between what can be concluded from research and what organizations envision. Across all the studies we reviewed, frequent feedback has most commonly been operationalized as the objective frequency of formal performance appraisals, self-reported perceptions of feedback frequency, or the number of trials between feedback being given in experimental tasks. These approaches of capturing frequent feedback may not accurately reflect the current popular idea of frequent, ongoing, continuous, and informal feedback that organizations seem to be espousing. Organizations envision a continuous flow of feedback interactions that are untethered from formal appraisal events, where managers and employees as well as their subordinates and peers give and request feedback on a regular basis. Some organizations claim to be foregoing formal processes, and in some cases formal ratings altogether, in favor of informal check-ins. Frequent performance appraisals, which are formal, planned, and expected events, do not reflect this idea. Employee self-reports of feedback frequency may also be potentially problematic due to differences in perceptions. The same objective rate at which feedback is provided may be received and interpreted differently by different employees. For instance, new employees may feel that weekly check-ins are frequent enough, whereas more tenured employees may feel they are too frequent. Finally, feedback given after a certain number of experimental tasks may not fully capture the complexity of real job tasks. Rarely are major work behaviors and the accompanying feedback unidimensional. Most performance of real-world tasks is complex and employees often work on multiple tasks a day, so feedback is typically not narrowly focused on a single criterion.

The second concern is around the lack of information regarding boundary conditions. We know that more may not be better, but when is it better and at what point is it possibly harmful? The speculation that more frequent feedback is not always better has already been raised long ago (e.g., Ilgen et al., 1979), but research has only recently begun to address this issue empirically (e.g., Lam et al., 2011). Further, the effectiveness of different feedback frequencies may depend on countless contextual variables, such as individual traits and job characteristics. The goal here is not to derive a specific number or even a range of values. Rather, the goal is to provide organizations, managers, and other feedback providers with recommendations beyond "give more feedback but not too much," leaving them to navigate a feedback process that is even more complicated with fewer guidelines and best practices than they have traditionally had.

Finally, the third concern is in regard to practical issues that remain unanswered. Whereas most research has addressed the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes for feedback recipients, less work has been done to examine the outcomes for feedback providers. Although frequent feedback may bring benefits to those who receive feedback, we are unsure how implementing frequent feedback will affect those on the other side of the equation who provide feedback. In many cases, managers are the ones tasked with the duty of providing feedback to employees, and we currently do not know much about how the new demands that come with this new approach of frequent feedback might affect them.

Furthermore, the frequent feedback that organizations envision involves both managers and employees giving and receiving feedback to and from each other. Employees will be expected to not only process more feedback in the new environment but also give feedback regularly to coworkers as well. We already know that processing feedback can be cognitively taxing for employees. We can also assume that providing feedback, which consists of everything from observing behavior to crafting a message, requires a great deal of effort as well. An important issue to consider going forward is how much more cognitive load will be placed on employees and managers under the modern approach to frequent feedback.

Relatedly, another issue to consider is the matter of time. One of the purported purposes of making changes to PM was to save time. Managers have often voiced their dissatisfaction with the cumbersome and time-consuming nature of performance reviews (Cappelli & Tavis, 2016). Does implementing a system of frequent feedback address this issue or exacerbate it? With a higher rate of recurring feedback interactions, managers and employees may perhaps perceive the new approach as taking more time than before. Perceptions and reactions to these changes will be important to pay attention to in the future.

Future Directions

Based on our review of the existing literature and the inferences we have drawn, we identify several research needs and provide suggestions for future work on the topic of frequent feedback.

Clarifying the Construct

The first and perhaps most urgent need is to develop a clearer picture of frequent feedback in the modern organization. Clarifying what is meant by feedback that is now described as frequent, continuous, ongoing, informal, or real-time will help align research and put us on the same page in regard to the construct of interest. Decades ago, frequent feedback meant formal performance appraisal sessions that occurred more than once or twice a year. Today, when evaluating feedback frequency, the day-to-day feedback interactions that occur outside of the formal appraisal context are also included in the conceptualization. In some cases, organizations plan to supplement formal appraisals with regularly occurring informal feedback. In other cases, some organizations are even considering replacing formal reviews with more regular informal check-ins. Although the design of the performance management system will likely vary from organization to organization, the common theme is that the rate of delivery of information in some form will increase. The important point that needs to be addressed is discerning *what* exactly is increasing and becoming more frequent. Are employees and managers now required to touch base weekly in one-on-one meetings? Is it the new norm that informal, hallway conversations happen every other day? Are managers and employees checking for or reacting to notifications from a PM app on their mobile phones throughout the day? Future work will need to be done to capture and study frequent feedback as it is practiced in organizations today.

Future research can begin to address this issue of clarifying the practice of frequent feedback using a descriptive approach. Researchers can survey human resource management professionals across organizations about their specific approaches to feedback practices. A recent exploratory study of PM practices provides a good example of this type of research. In this study, the researchers surveyed human resource executives across 101 US organizations to establish a benchmark of current PM practices (Gorman, Meriac, Roch, Ray, & Gamble, 2017). Their findings relevant to frequent feedback include the following: 62% of organizations conduct performance reviews annually; 25% of organizations conduct performance reviews biannually; and 61% of organizations employ informal feedback sessions between official performance reviews. Another survey study by the Center for Effective Organizations found that, across 244 companies, 97% of them reported the use of ongoing feedback (Ledford, Benson, & Lawler, 2016). While these studies primarily focused on PM practices broadly, future research can more specifically examine the different ways in which frequent feedback is put into practice.

Integrating Formality and Immediacy

Related to the first need of clarifying the concept of frequent feedback, another need is to distinguish, or perhaps integrate, feedback frequency and other related aspects of feedback. Our literature search and review focused narrowly on feedback frequency, specifically in the context of performance management. This approach may have come at the expense of discounting research that, although perhaps does not directly address the issue of frequency, does address other aspects of feedback that should be considered. In particular, we identify formality and immediacy as potential elements to consider when examining the issue of frequency. In some of the research we reviewed in this chapter, formality was expressly a part of the operationalization of frequent feedback, such as in the study by Evans and McShane (1988) that examined perceptions of frequency of informal appraisals. In other research we reviewed, immediacy was conceptualized as inherently tied to frequency, such as in the study by Kuvaas and colleagues (2017) that examined perceived feedback immediacy and frequency as one composite variable. However, the specific areas of informal feedback and immediate feedback alone, separate from frequent feedback, have also received a fair amount of attention in research. We do not provide an in-depth review of the literature for the two areas but instead discuss them as they relate to the issue of frequency.

Informal feedback has been defined in several ways, but it generally refers to day-to-day feedback interactions that occur outside of formal, standardized appraisal processes (Fedor, Eder, & Buckley, 1989; London & Smither, 2002; Steelman et al., 2004). Given our discussion throughout this chapter, it is evident that the degree of feedback formality is highly relevant to the trend of frequent feedback today. As organizations begin to adopt the use of regular check-ins in addition to or in lieu of formal appraisals, it appears that it is frequent informal feedback in particular rather than frequent formal feedback that is on the rise. One question that emerges is whether the fact that it is informal rather than formal feedback that is becoming more frequent relates to the effectiveness of frequent feedback in organizations. Whereas formal appraisals may be perceived by employees as more closely tied to administrative decisions, informal feedback may be perceived as more developmental. Since employees tend to view appraisals for developmental purposes more favorably (Boswell & Boudreau, 2000), it may be the informal aspect of the frequent feedback trend that contributes to its effectiveness. From this perspective, frequent informal feedback signals a developmental environment to employees, and it may be this perceived supportiveness for development that makes frequent feedback effective. An interesting follow-up question is how enforcing and proceduralizing regular check-ins would impact perceptions of formality. If it is the informality of frequent feedback that grants its effectiveness, formally encouraging its use may paradoxically render it less effective. Future research is needed to address this issue.

Immediate feedback is similar to frequent feedback in the sense that time is an integral aspect of its definition. Whereas immediacy refers to how close in time feedback is given relative to the actual occurrence of the behavior referenced by the feedback, frequency captures the rate at which feedback is given on behaviors over some span of time. The concept of feedback immediacy is also often referred to as timing of feedback (Ilgen et al., 1979). In terms of definitions, immediate feedback and frequent feedback are conceptually distinct. However, some researchers have proposed that immediacy and frequency of feedback are naturally conflated in terms of perceptions (Kuvaas et al., 2017). From this perspective, employees tend to view the occurrence of feedback interactions as frequent if feedback is provided immediately after behavioral events. Indeed, Kuvaas and colleagues (2017) demonstrated in an exploratory factor analysis of feedback characteristics that items pertaining to perceived feedback immediacy and frequency loaded onto one factor while items pertaining to perceived constructiveness of feedback loaded onto the second factor. Further research should continue to examine the relation between immediacy and frequency perceptions to confirm this factor structure. Aside from self-report survey research, immediate feedback has also been studied in laboratory experiments where it is compared to delayed feedback. Results from some experimental research indicate that immediate feedback is more effective than delayed feedback for task performance (e.g., Mason & Redmon, 1993), although research in the education literature tend to find the opposite effect on learning (Kulik & Kulik, 1988). More recently, researchers have argued that immediate feedback, in an organizational behavior context, is clearly more advantageous than delayed feedback (Lechermeier & Fassnacht, 2018). In relation to the conflated perceptions of immediacy and frequency, future research can examine whether objectively immediate feedback compared to delayed feedback relates to perceptions of frequency.

Although frequency, formality, and immediacy are conceptually distinct concepts, in the context of the popular modern idea of frequent feedback it may be more useful to integrate the three concepts rather than focus on clarifying their differences. Immediate frequent feedback in informal contexts more accurately reflects the type of feedback that is advocated today. In other words, frequent feedback today will very likely also be of the informal and immediate sort as well, and this is especially the case given advances in technology and the popularization of ePM applications (Stone, Deadrick, Lukaszewski, & Johnson, 2015). This is a wide-open area for future research because we know so little about feedback frequency as it is conceptualized today by organizations looking to move PM in new directions.

A useful starting framework for integrating the concepts of formality and immediacy was introduced by Pitkänen and Lukka (2011). They developed an analytical matrix of formal and informal feedback in a management accounting context based on a case study of feedback practices in an organization in Finland. In this framework, formal and informal feedback differ along three dimensions: source, time, and rule. Under the *source* dimension, system-based feedback consisting of performance records in objective forms reflects formal feedback whereas interpersonal feedback consisting of interactions between people reflects informal feedback. Under the *time* dimension, regular feedback that is planned and scheduled ahead of time reflects formal feedback, whereas instant feedback that is unplanned and spontaneous reflects informal feedback. This distinction between instant and regular feedback most closely reflects the distinction between immediate and delayed feedback. Finally, under the *rule* dimension, obligatory feedback that is required by official policies and procedures reflects formal feedback and voluntary feedback that is not required and given by free choice reflects informal feedback.

Notably, their framework considers formal and informal feedback as existing along a continuum rather than as a strict dichotomy. That is, feedback can still be considered informal even if one dimension among source, time, and rule appears to be formal. This aspect of the framework can be useful if ambiguity arises when attempting to classify different feedback practices across organizations and it is not obvious whether the feedback should be considered formal or informal. In addition, immediacy is inherently integrated with formality under the time dimension of this framework: informal feedback tends to be more immediate than delayed. Introducing frequency to this framework adds another layer beyond informality and immediacy that reflects the rate of feedback occurrences over time. The type of feedback that occurs exists along the continuum ranging from formal to informal (and hence immediate) and this feedback can occur at a high rate (i.e., frequently) or not.

Going Beyond Procedural Steps and Considering Experiences

The previous two needs mostly reflect procedural considerations regarding how frequent feedback is conceptualized and put into practice. Addressing these first two needs is certainly an important step toward understanding frequent feedback as part of the PM system in organizations. From a management perspective, addressing the first two needs can be informative for the implementation of frequent feedback as a mechanism for improving performance. However, clarifying the ways in which management proceduralizes frequent feedback only captures one side of the story. Beyond the procedural steps, it is crucial to also take into consideration the experiences of the managers and employees directly involved in the whole process. The perspectives of those who actually experience frequent feedback in practice further provide more information about the feedback process beyond aspects such as formality and immediacy. For instance, the sign of the feedback that is provided more frequently can markedly impact employee experience and outcomes. Are employees now consistently hearing praise on a job well done? Or are they now regularly getting criticism for continued struggles every day? The attitudinal, behavioral, and performance outcomes may be quite different for employees receiving frequent positive rather than frequent negative feedback (e.g., Herold & Parsons, 1985; Kuvaas et al., 2017).

Similarly, there may also be differential effects on feedback providers depending on whether they need to deliver frequent positive or frequent negative feedback. While managers and coworkers will likely find providing frequent praise easier and more rewarding, they may also find frequent criticism and pointing out flaws, even if constructive, much more uncomfortable (Levy & Williams, 2004; Villanova, Bernardin, Dahmus, & Sims, 1993). Individual characteristics of the feedback recipient (Gabriel, Frantz, Levy, & Hilliard, 2014) and the feedback provider (Steelman & Wolfeld, 2018) may also play a role in employee experiences and reactions to this evolving feedback process. Future research should pay attention to these important interactive effects between frequent feedback and other characteristics as they relate to manager and employee experience and perceptions of the process.

Conclusion

In light of the growing popularity of frequent feedback practices to address issues with current PM systems, we reviewed the literature to assess whether evidence from research supports its universal usage. In our review, we found that there are encouraging signs for the benefits of frequent feedback, yet it would be remiss to claim that we wholly comprehend frequent feedback in its modern form and its consequences. Levy and colleagues (2017) clearly articulated practitioners' desire for the use of more frequent, real-time, informal feedback that was more consistent with organizations' work cycles. However, to this point, the research on these types of feedback systems, where feedback is shared often and bidirectionally, is scant. We know that frequent feedback as operationalized in a more traditional way – more PM feedback sessions rather than fewer – results in more favorable reactions and sometimes leads to better performance. However, this is not the frequency movement that seems to be actively rolling through organizations. We need to better understand the nature of the frequent feedback that is in vogue today. Beyond the need to clarify the form of frequent feedback promoted today, further research is necessary to clarify the mixed results regarding the effect of frequent feedback on performance, which is a primary outcome of interest in PM. Simply encouraging more feedback more often from managers and employees might not be the straightforward cure-all to all the problems with PM that organizations were looking for, but the research on frequent feedback and attitudinal outcomes suggests that it is a good start to improving employee reactions to PM. Frequent feedback might not be a panacea, but the practitioner movement in this direction has opened the door for researchers to explore feedback frequency in isolation, and more importantly, in conjunction with other feedback characteristics such as sign, source, and formality. There is a strong basis for continuing to explore more frequent feedback as an initiative, but also a need for much more research going forward.

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Chapter 5
Performance Appraisal Reactions: A Review and Research Agenda

Shaun Pichler

Performance appraisal (PA) is perhaps the most common human resource management tool used in organizations (Rynes, Gerhart, & Parks, 2005). Scholars and practitioners have argued that employee reactions to performance appraisals are a set of key criteria by which to judge appraisal effectiveness (e.g., Cardy & Dobbins, 1994; Folger, Konovsky, & Cropanzano, 1992; Keeping & Levy, 2000) given the importance of buy-in to the process (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Performance appraisals have important implications for organizations in terms of the overall performance management process and the allocation of scarce resources, such as merit increases (Aguinis, 2013). Employee reactions to performance appraisals[1] are correlated with job attitudes and subsequent performance (e.g., Anseel, Van Yperen, Janssen, & Duyck, 2011; Jawahar, 2010). Thus, appraisal reactions are essential to appraisal effectiveness (Bernardin & Beatty, 1984; Cardy & Dobbins, 1994; Folger et al., 1992; Pichler, 2012; Pichler, Beenen, & Wood, 2018).

With that said, research has shown that employees are often dissatisfied with the appraisal process (e.g., Taylor, Tracy, Renard, Harrison, & Carroll, 1995). Managers generally dislike giving negative feedback, and employees generally react negatively to such feedback (Brett & Atwater, 2001), which could reduce their subsequent performance. This is a key problem in that the primary purpose of performance appraisal is to give employees feedback so as to improve their performance (Aguinis, 2013; Tziner, Murphy, & Cleveland, 2005). Performance appraisal research has traditionally not focused on ways by which to improve appraisal reactions. Historically, most performance appraisal research focused on the so-called psychometric

[1] Employee reactions to performance appraisals will be referred to as appraisal reactions throughout the rest of the document for purposes of clarity and parsimony.

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approach (Folger et al., 1992), that is on reducing rating errors and improving rating accuracy. This led to a science–practice gap in the sense that there is relatively less research on how to improve appraisal reactions—criteria that practitioners are most interested in compared to psychometric features of performance ratings (Balzer & Sulsky, 1990). This is surprising since researchers have been interested in appraisal reactions for some time (e.g., Zander & Gyr, 1955). Indeed, Ilgen, Barnes-Farrell, and McKellin (1993) argued more than 20 years ago that performance appraisal research needed to move beyond rating format and cognitive perspectives so as to better inform theory and practice related to performance appraisal.

There is, however, a growing body of research on appraisal reactions. For instance, Levy and Williams (2004) identified employee reactions as a key outcome of the social context of performance appraisal, which was subsequently tested by Pichler (2012). There have also been several meta-analyses on predictors of appraisal reactions, namely employee participation (Cawley, Keeping, & Levy, 1998), the social context of performance appraisal (Pichler, 2012), and adequate notice in performance appraisal (Pichler et al., 2018). Since acceptance of feedback is important if not necessary for changing behavior, that is to improve one's performance (Carver & Scheier, 1981), and with this growing stream of research (Levy & Williams, 2004), the time is ripe to review of this literature. Although appraisal reactions might no longer be "neglected criteria" (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995, pg. 310), the literature still lacks cohesion in terms of an integrative view of the cumulative body of evidence—and where the field is headed. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to review the existing research on appraisal reactions with the intention of identifying key predictors of appraisal reactions, identifying opportunities for future research on this topic, and drawing implications for managers and organizations in terms of performance appraisal effectiveness.

The next section will provide an overview of appraisal reactions as a set of criteria of the appraisal process. The following sections will review the literature on two key contextual predictors of appraisal reactions, namely due process performance appraisal and the social context of performance appraisal, respectively. Although there have been reviews of the due process metaphor (Levy, Cavanaugh, Frantz, & Borden, 2015) as well as the social context of performance appraisal (Levy & Williams, 2004), there has been no comprehensive review of empirical studies linking due process performance appraisal or the social context to appraisal reactions. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of implications for future research, as well as practical implications for managers and organizations.

Employee Reactions to Performance Appraisal

In terms of performance appraisal effectiveness, Cardy and Dobbins (1994) proposed three key criteria, that is, rater errors, rating accuracy, and qualitative criteria. Given that rater errors and rating accuracy are two of three criteria identified by these authors, this reflects on the historical prominence of the psychometric view of performance appraisal. Appraisal reactions are a component of qualitative criteria, or qualitative outcomes of the appraisal process (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). One could argue that appraisal reactions are an additional, distinct set of key criteria of performance appraisal. Indeed, Levy and Williams (2004) later replaced qualitative criteria with employee reactions in their model of appraisal effectiveness. Heretofore, scholars have not proposed an operational definition of appraisal reactions and, as such, Pichler (2012) offered the following: *individual-level attitudinal evaluations of and responses to the performance appraisal process.* Keeping and Levy (2000) provide perhaps the best treatment of the nature of appraisal reactions as appraisal criteria.

In order to understand relationships between appraisal reactions and their predictors, it is important to briefly explain each of these reactions (see also Keeping & Levy, 2000; Levy & Williams, 2004). *Accuracy* is an individual's perception that their rating accurately reflects their objective performance. *Fairness* is a measure of an individual's perception that their appraisal review was fair overall. *Motivation to improve* is a measure of an individual's intention to improve their performance subsequent to the review. *Satisfaction* is a measure of how satisfied an individual is overall with the appraisal review. *Utility* is a measure of the extent to which an individual felt that they received useful feedback. Measures of appraisal-specific organizational justice are also included in studies of appraisal reactions. Performance appraisal *procedural and distributive justice* are generally adapted measures to reflect the process and outcome fairness of the appraisal review. Although not included in the Keeping and Levy (2000) study, researchers have more recently begun to include measures of *interactional justice*, that is, perceptions of fairness of interpersonal treatment (Colquitt, 2001), as it relates to the appraisal review (e.g., Elicker, 2000).

The purpose of the Keeping and Levy (2000) study was to test the measurement properties of scales used to operationalize appraisal reactions. They found that existing scales generally performed well, which is to say that they represented distinct constructs when subjected to confirmatory factor analysis. In this connection, they also found that appraisal satisfaction, which is general in nature, could be effectively separated into session and system satisfaction. The former reflects satisfaction with the appraisal review session itself; the latter reflects satisfaction with the overall performance appraisal process as a system. It is important for future research to distinguish between these constructs since they are distinct conceptually and differentially related to correlates (Cawley et al., 1998; Keeping & Levy, 2000). Keeping and Levy (2000) also found that appraisal reactions represented a higher-order latent factor; thus, it is important that researchers test for this higher-order factor in studies where multiple criteria are included and, when supported and when possible given sample size and power, include this latent factor in substantive analyses, that is, in latent variable structural equation modeling.

Due Process Performance Appraisal

Now that the reader has been presented with information about appraisal reactions, the different types of appraisal reactions that are typically measured in existing research, and the nature of their measurement properties, it is important to consider predictors of appraisal reactions. When it comes to predictors of appraisal reactions, scholars have generally looked to the so-called performance appraisal context. Murphy and Cleveland (1995) defined performance appraisal context as “a heterogeneous mix of factors, ranging from the social and legal system in which the organization exists to the climate and culture within the organization” (pg. 31). Thus, the appraisal context is broad and could include a wide range of factors. Two aspects of appraisal context that are relatively prominent in the literature are due process performance appraisal (Folger et al., 1992; Levy et al., 2015) and the social context of performance appraisal (Levy & Williams, 2004; Pichler, 2012). Scholars have offered a number of models of performance appraisal context, but they do not necessarily consider the role of appraisal reactions as related to context (e.g., Erdogan, 2002; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

The following sections will consider the role of due process and social context as they are related to one another and to appraisal reactions. Due process performance appraisal is discussed prior to the social context because due process contains elements of broader organizational features that may influence social-contextual variables.

The Due Process Metaphor

Taylor et al. (1995) noted that performance appraisal is “one of the great paradoxes of effective human resource management” in that the intention is to give feedback so as to improve performance, yet this is often unrealized due, in part, to negative appraisal reactions and, in connection, a lack of due process. Folger et al. (1992) developed a due process model of performance appraisal based on due process of the law. They did so in response or in contrast to what they call the “test metaphor” of performance appraisal, which is different vernacular for the psychometric approach to performance appraisal described in the introduction of this chapter. Folger et al. (1992) noted that the test metaphor relies on several tentatively held assumptions, namely that work performance can be measured reliably and validly; that raters can judge performance accurately; and that there is some ultimate criterion of performance against which ratee performance can be evaluated. Because these are tenuous and criticized assumptions in the performance appraisal and job performance literatures, researchers have, as described above, redefined appraisal effectiveness.

The due process model of performance appraisal (Folger et al., 1992) is based on principles of due process of law, which are tied to the Fifth and Fourteenth amendments to the United States Constitution. These amendments are meant to increase fairness in legal proceedings in that they prescribe adequate notice (the publication and dissemination of laws), a fair hearing (the accused has a right to present evidence on his or her behalf and have a voice in proceedings), and judgment based on evidence (decisions are free from bias). As applied to the performance appraisal context, this means that the appraisal process should include adequate notice (e.g., knowledge of performance standards and frequent feedback as to performance), a fair hearing (e.g., participation in the appraisal), and judgment based on evidence (e.g., performance is evaluated based on job-relevant factors and the supervisor is unbiased). Of course, some of these aspects may be questionable themselves, such as the extent to which supervisors are unbiased, but this provides a useful framework for understanding first, appraisal fairness, and second, key contextual predictors of appraisal reactions.

Most research that has included variables related to due process has done so without explicitly referencing due process or the model developed by Folger et al. (1992), with some important exceptions (e.g., Pichler et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 1995; Taylor, Masterson, Renard, & Tracy, 1998). That said, other key studies in the performance appraisal literature support the importance of due process. For instance, in his seminal study Greenberg (1986) proposed factors that represent performance appraisal fairness, namely employee input prior to the appraisal (part of adequate notice), rater familiarity with critical ratee performance incidents (part of fair hearing), and the consistent application of performance standards (part of judgment based on evidence). There are a number of other studies that have included one or more dimensions of due process as they related to appraisal reactions, which will be discussed below.

Those studies that have explicitly used the due process framework to study appraisal reactions have found that appraisal reactions are more favorable, even when performance ratings are lower, under conditions of due process (Taylor et al., 1995). Research has also shown that relationship quality is higher and managers are less likely to deliberately bias ratings under conditions of due process (Taylor et al., 1998). This is one important tie in the literature between due process and the social context of performance appraisal. Moreover, different aspects of due process have been found to have multiplicative effects: Pichler et al. (2018) found that the relationship between feedback frequency and appraisal reactions was enhanced when knowledge of performance standards was higher. This line of research supports the overarching argument of Folger et al. (1992) and their due process metaphor, which was that the process of performance appraisal was as important—if not more important—than measurement aspects of performance appraisals.

Adequate Notice

The basic principle of adequate notice in terms of performance appraisal is that employees should be aware of the standards to which they will be held accountable at the time of the review, that is, that they've been adequately notified of performance standards. This also requires that employees be given feedback throughout the review cycle so that they can understand whether their performance is meeting those standards. A number of studies have measured relationships between adequate notice and appraisal reactions.

Knowledge of Performance Standards Although scholars have tended to use different operationalizations, several studies have measured relationships between knowledge of performance standards, such as perceived system knowledge (Levy & Williams, 1998; Williams & Levy, 2000) and appraisal reactions. Knowledge of performance standards is important because without it, employees likely do not know how they will be evaluated or the behaviors and results for which they will be held accountable. Empirical findings tend to be consistent, that is, researchers have consistently found positive relationships between knowledge of performance standards and reactions such as procedural justice (Levy & Williams, 1998), distributive justice (Inderrieden, Keaveny, & Allen, 1988), fairness perceptions (Evans & McShane, 1988), and system satisfaction (Inderrieden et al., 1988; Williams & Levy, 2000). This suggests that providing employees with knowledge of performance standards may help to improve appraisal reactions. Indeed, Pichler et al. (2018) found a meta-analytic correlation of $Mr = 0.49$, $p < 0.05$ ($k = 19$, $N = 5445$) between knowledge of performance standards and appraisal reactions.

Feedback Frequency Feedback frequency is another aspect of adequate notice, which has received relatively more attention in the empirical literature (see Pichler et al., 2018). A number of scholars have suggested that frequent feedback is an important aspect of the appraisal process (e.g., Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979; Kinicki, Prussia, Wu, & Mckee-Ryan, 2004; Landy, Barnes, & Murphy, 1978). In fact, research on feedback frequency dates back to at least the 1950s (e.g., Zander & Gyr, 1955). Frequent feedback is important so that employees can make adjustments to their behavior throughout the review cycle, that is, prior to the review. Without frequent feedback, employees are more likely to feel surprised during the review because they hadn't been apprised heretofore that there was a performance issue. This is, of course, a key problem with appraisal reviews: Employees feel surprised by their evaluation at the time of the appraisal review.

The results of this line of research are mixed. Researchers have found positive relationships between feedback frequency and appraisal reactions, such as procedural and distributive justice (Erdogan, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001; Inderrieden et al., 1988; Inderrieden, Allen, & Keavey, 2004), but have reported mixed results when it comes to other outcomes, such as appraisal accuracy and motivation to improve (e.g., Kinicki et al., 2004), composite measures of appraisal reactions (Klein &

Snell, 1994; Landy et al., 1978), and appraisal fairness (Evans & McShane, 1988). It is important for future research to examine the reasons why there might be differential relationships between feedback frequency and different appraisal criteria. That said, Pichler et al. (2018) found a meta-analytic correlation of $Mr = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$ ($k = 24$, $N = 5227$) between feedback frequency and appraisal reactions despite the mixed results in the primary literature, which suggests that frequent feedback is important as related to appraisal reactions.

Fair Hearing

The most studied aspect of the fair hearing is employee participation in the performance appraisal review. Participation in the review has been operationalized in a number of ways, including the amount of time the ratee talked, goal-setting, self-appraisal, as well as instrumental and value-expressive voice (see Cawley et al., 1998).

Time Talked The amount of time the ratee was able to talk during the review may not seem like a particularly substantive measure of appraisal participation, but it has been established as a predictor of appraisal reactions, one that is distinct from other reactions, such as voice (see Greller, 1975; Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Kauffeld, 2017).

Goal-Setting Goal-setting is important in the sense that it allows for participation in the review, as well as an opportunity for the employee to set goals for the next appraisal period (Nemeroff & Wexley, 1979). Moreover, the relationship between goal-setting and behavioral change has been well documented for decades (e.g., Kay, Meyer, & French, 1965). Goal-setting research has found that setting goals leads to more positive attitudes and performance (e.g., Locke & Latham, 1990), and thus would suggest that setting goals during the appraisal review could lead to more favorable appraisal reactions, especially since performance standards should be clearer. Although several studies have measured goal setting during the review process as related to appraisal reactions, there is very little research tying key propositions of goal-setting theory, such as the importance of setting difficult goals and allowing for frequent feedback, to appraisal reactions. It could be useful for performance appraisal researchers to more fully leverage goal-setting theory and research in studies of appraisal reactions.

Self-Appraisal Scholars have argued that allowing employees to self-appraise should increase their participation in the review and thus improve their appraisal reactions (Burke, Weitzel, & Weir, 1978). That said, there are inconsistent empirical relationships between self-appraisal and appraisal reactions (Cawley et al., 1998; Korsgaard, Roberson, & Rymph, 1998). There are a variety of explanations for these mixed findings.

It could be that self-appraisals increase disagreement during the review given leniency of self-ratings. Korsgaard et al. (1998) found that self-appraisals were positively related to appraisal reactions when ratees were trained to self-appraise and were trained to be assertive. Another key explanation is that self-appraisals can backfire so to speak if they aren't really leveraged during the review. In fact, when self-appraisals do not influence ratings, they can lead to negative appraisal reactions (Inderrieden et al., 2004). In contrast, when self-appraisals are used as the basis of the performance appraisal discussion (Bassett & Meyer, 1968) or in the performance rating decision process, they are positively related to appraisal reactions (DeGregorio & Fisher, 1988). The cumulative research on self-appraisals is mixed and this could be due to the moderating roles of ratee decision control and rater–ratee disagreement. It is important for future research to try to tease apart the reasons why self-appraisals are sometimes positively, and other times negatively related to appraisal reactions.

Voice The above constructs, namely goal-setting, self-appraisal, and especially time talked, are relatively objective measures of appraisal participation. Researchers have also measured employee perceptions of two forms of voice: value-expressive (otherwise known as voice for the sake of voice) and instrumental (otherwise known as decision control) (e.g., Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995). A key finding of the Cawley et al. (1998) meta-analysis was that value-expressive voice was more strongly related to appraisal reactions than decision control. These results suggest that simply allowing employees to express themselves, for example, through active listening, can improve appraisal reactions, more so than affording the employee a sense of control over the appraisal process. At first blush, this may seem surprising in the sense that individuals want to have some influence in processes that affect them and their livelihoods. On the other hands, procedural justice theories, such as the group-value model (Lind & Tyler, 1988), suggest that being a valued member of the group is paramount to individuals, and that a lack of ability to express oneself is especially detrimental to employee attitudes. That said, Cawley et al. (1998) noted that this finding was based on a limited number of studies and should be revisited.

This is an important area for additional research because other primary studies have found conflicting results. For instance, Suh (1992) found that instrumental voice was related to procedural justice whereas value-expressive voice was not. The author suggested that the importance of having voice in the process was not supported, whereas having influence was supported. This contrasts with the conclusion of Cawley et al. (1998). Bonness and Macan (2006) found that when self-appraisals were considered during the appraisal review, appraisal reactions were more favorable as compared to when employees were allowed to self-appraise but their perspective was not considered. The authors concluded that instrumental voice was more important to the participants in their study than value-expressive voice. One-third variable to consider here is the favorability of the individual's performance feedback. It could be the case that instrumental voice (value-expressive voice) is more important when one's feedback is relatively negative (positive). Researchers should continue to investigate and compare relationships between different types of voice and appraisal reactions, and the moderating role of other variables, such as rating favorability.

Supervisor Job Knowledge Another aspect of a fair hearing in the performance appraisal context is supervisor knowledge of the employee's job and job-related performance. Supervisor job knowledge should, all else equal, lead to a more accurate and fairer evaluation, and thus to more favorable reactions. A number of studies have investigated relationships between supervisor job knowledge (e.g., the extent to which one's supervisor "Became thoroughly familiar with your performance," Folger & Konovsky, 1989) and appraisal reactions. Results tend to suggest that supervisor job knowledge is positively related to appraisal reactions. For instance, studies have found that job knowledge is positively related to distributive justice (Folger & Konovsky, 1989), appraisal fairness (Giles, Findley, & Field, 1997), motivation to improve (Kinicki et al., 2004), and composite measures of appraisal reactions (Landy et al., 1978). This suggests that it is important for managers to give employees the impression that they are familiar with the employee's job, for example, by expressing knowledge about the job description, as well as the employee's performance, for example, by reiterating and discussing critical performance incidents.

Judgment Based on Evidence

The judgment based on evidence dimension of the due process metaphor posits that decisions should be based on objective performance-related information. In this connection, supervisors should be neutral and performance ratings should be based on job-relevant factors, a valid rating instrument, and appealable.

Supervisor Lack of Bias Research has consistently found positive relationships between employee perceptions of supervisor lack of bias and appraisal reactions, including perceptions of fairness (Kavanagh, Benson, & Brown, 2007), motivation to improve (Kinicki et al., 2004), and composite reactions (Kleiman, Biderman, & Faley, 1987). There is very little research on why this is the case, however. These relationships could be due to how employees are treated during the review, such as more interpersonally fair (Colquitt, 2001), or simply because of the perception that the supervisor is unbiased. It could also be the case that perceptions of supervisor bias are related to other variables, such as social support or trust, which are then related to appraisal reactions. Indeed, since trust is comprised of perceptions of benevolence (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995), it would seem that perceptions of supervisor lack of bias should be tied to perceptions of supervisor trust. As is mentioned below, there is very little research connecting due process performance appraisal to the social context of performance appraisal; this is one such opportunity.

Valid Rating Instrument There has not been extensive research connecting appraisal reactions to the validity of performance ratings. That said, there is a relatively robust literature on differences between evaluation formats (e.g., Borman, 1979; Tziner & Kopelman, 2002). There is also a literature connecting appraisal reactions to different rating formats. Consistent with the concept of judgment based on evidence, scholars have argued that because behavior observation scales at least ostensibly require raters to observe and document performance, they should be perceived as fairer as compared to other formats, such as graphic rating scales (Tharenou, 1995). That is, behavior observation scales should be perceived as a more valid rating format so to speak by ratees. Research has supported this proposition, and has shown that, compared to graphic rating scales, behavior observation scales are related to higher levels of appraisal satisfaction as well as subsequent performance (Tziner, Kopelman, & Joanis, 1997; Tziner, Kopelman, & Livneh, 1993).

Job-Relevant Factors Folger et al. (1992) posited that to the extent performance evaluations are based on information that is job-relevant, perceptions of fairness should be higher. Again, the notion here is that more job-relevant information signals that the evaluation is more accurate and less biased. For instance, Nathan, Mohrman, and Milliman (1991) developed a scale that measured “the extent to which the actual evaluation was based on results achieved, job-related behaviors, skills and abilities and predetermined goals” (pg. 358). Research has shown that perceptions that a performance evaluation was based on job-relevant factors are positively related to procedural justice (Cobb, Vest, & Hills, 1997; Erdogan et al., 2001). There is very little research otherwise, and it would be useful to better understand the reasons why job-relevant factors are related to perceptions of justice, and if job-relevant factors are related to other appraisal reactions.

Appeals Process Having an appeals process in place so that employees can appeal their performance evaluations to an authority other than their line manager may be important in connection to appraisal reactions. This is consistent with procedural justice theory, which suggests that having resource over decisions that affect them should increase perceptions that the process was fair (Greenberg, 1987). Several studies have measured relationships between having an appeals process and appraisal reactions, and results have been consistent in that appeals processes are positively related to appraisal reactions (Cobb et al., 1997; Giles et al., 1997). This suggests that organizations should consider implementing appeals processes, for example, where the next-level manager or someone from human resources reviews the evaluation. Some organizations have implemented performance rating calibration, where managers come together to discuss their evaluations of employees so as to try to ensure consistency and accuracy in ratings (Lombardi, 2011). That said, there is unfortunately little research on appeals processes in performance appraisal, the outcomes of these processes, or how these processes are actually implemented in organizations.

The Social Context of Performance Appraisal

Another key aspect of the appraisal context, in addition to due process, is the social system within which the appraisal process is embedded (e.g., Erdogan, 2002; Levy & Williams, 2004; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). In fact, some researchers have argued that the social context is the most important aspect of performance appraisal (Russell & Goode, 1988). What is important to note here is that there is a link between due process and social context in the sense that for due process to be effective, it should be linked to leader–member interactions and communications (Levy et al., 2015), although there has been relatively little research that has examine due process and social-contextual variables simultaneously.

The Social-Contextual Domain

When it comes to social context, researchers have studied a number of different variables ranging from interpersonal affect (Varma, Pichler, & Srinivas, 2005), to rater–ratee similarity (Ferris, Judge, Rowland, & Fitzgibbons, 1994; Pichler, Varma, & Petty, 2008), and influence tactics (Dulebohn & Ferris, 1999). Levy and Williams (2004) provided an excellent review of the role of the social context in performance appraisal based on a review of the performance appraisal literature from 1995 to 2003. They identified distal and proximal predictors of rater–ratee behavior (performance ratings, rater/ratee attitudinal, behavioral and cognitive reactions, and perceptions of justice). Distal variables, which in their model are also related to proximal variables, include environmental (e.g., legal and economic conditions), as well as organization (organizational culture and HR strategies) factors. Proximal variables were separated into process (e.g., supervisor–subordinate relationships) and structural (e.g., the appraisal system and performance standards) features. Their model is notably comprehensive, and was influential not only in organizing research to that point, but in providing directions for future research. Their model is also consistent with subsequent research, which has shown that feedback climate (Steelman, Levy, & Snell, 2004) and justice climate (Pichler, Varma, Michel, Levy, & Budwar, 2016) are important predictors of supervisor–subordinate leader–member exchange and appraisal reactions.

Leader–Member Relationship Quality

Although appraisal reactions play prominently in the model developed by Levy and Williams (2004), not all of the social context studies preceding or following the publication of their model also focused on appraisal reactions. Of those that have, scholars have measured constructs such as leader–member exchange (Dulebohn & Ferris, 1999; Erdogan, 2002), trust (Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995; Levy & Williams, 2004), supervisor support (Giles et al., 1997), and supervisor satisfaction (Nathan et al., 1991) as predictors of appraisal reactions. Based on leader–member exchange theory, Pichler (2012) argued that each of these constructs could be conceptualized as aspects of relationship quality. That is, high-quality leader–member exchanges are, by definition, characterized by higher levels of trust and support (e.g., Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997). Based on this premise, he treated each of the variables mentioned immediately above as aspects of relationship quality; meta-analyzed relationships between these variables and appraisal reactions (as a composite); and tested three competing models of the role of relationship quality as related to appraisal reactions using meta-analytic structural equation modeling.

The results of these meta-analyses were both expected and somewhat surprising. First, Pichler (2012) found that the relationship quality variables were related to appraisal reactions at about the same magnitude ($Mr = 0.58$ to 0.60), which was expected based on leader–member exchange theory. Second, a composite of these relationship quality variables was notably strongly related to appraisal reactions ($Mr = 0.66$); the magnitude of this relationship was not expected. This relationship was noticeably larger than other predictors, such as the favorability of one's performance rating and the amount of employee participation in the review (see Cawley et al., 1998). These bivariate results suggest that the social context of performance appraisal, at least when it comes to relationship quality specifically, is particularly important to employees in terms of how they react to their appraisal. That said, this is a difficult inference to make based on bivariate relationships alone.

To further test this notion, Pichler (2012) tested three competing structural models with three sets of predictors of appraisal reactions, that is, relationship quality, appraisal participation, and rating favorability. Meta-analytic structural equation modeling is particularly useful for clarifying research findings and theory-testing (e.g., Fassina, Jones, & Uggerslev, 2008). In the direct effects model, all predictors were treated as antecedents. In the instrumental model, appraisal participation and rating favorability were treated as endogenous variables; there was no direct path between relationship quality and appraisal reactions. The relationship-driven model was the same as the instrumental model, except a direct path from relationship quality to appraisal reactions was added. Results indicated that the third model was the only one that fit the data well, which suggests that when it comes to contextual predictors of appraisal reactions, relationship quality is paramount. To probe the boundary conditions of this finding, the author tested rating favorability as a potential moderator of the relationship quality–appraisal reactions relationship, but the results were non-significant. This suggests that relationship quality is important when it comes to appraisal reactions, regardless of one's performance rating, which was not expected.

The Reciprocal Nature of LMX and a Model of Appraisal Reactions

It is important to note here that previous models of the performance appraisal process have positioned leader–member exchange as an outcome of the appraisal process (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). Levy and Williams (2004) position leader–member relations as a proximal process variable in their model of the social context of performance appraisal. The literature on the social context of performance appraisal has yet to fully develop the role of leader–member exchange in the overall performance appraisal process. Inderrieden et al. (1988) noted that performance appraisal research should examine the appraisal as a process, not as a single event. They suggested studying how interactions between raters and ratees prior to the appraisal impact appraisal reactions. This is consistent with the model of the appraisal process developed by Klein, Snell, and Wexley (1987), in which they proposed the process is conceptualized as inputs (the appraisal context, e.g., leader–member exchange), throughputs (the appraisal session, e.g., participation), and outputs (reactions).

Cumulatively, this research suggests that contextual variables (e.g., organizational culture, due process characteristics, and justice climate) are related to leader–member exchange, which is related to key variables in the appraisal review (e.g., appraisal participation), which are in turn related to appraisal reactions, subsequent job attitudes and performance, as well as leader–member exchange (see Fig. 5.1 for an illustration). In other words, I propose a dynamic process whereby the appraisal context is related to leader–member exchange; leader–member exchange is subsequently related to variables that occur during the appraisal review; variables in the appraisal review are subsequently related to appraisal reactions; and appraisal reactions are subsequently related to job attitudes, leader–member exchange, and feedback climate.

To elaborate, when the appraisal context is more favorable, for example, when employees are aware that their review can be appealed (due process) or when employees receive more regular, ongoing feedback (feedback climate), this should foster conditions in which leader–member exchanges should be higher on average (Folger et al., 1992). Differences in leader–member exchange between subordinates should be related to how supervisors treat subordinates during the review, for example, leaders should be more likely to encourage participation from subordinates with whom they have higher quality exchanges. More favorable treatment during the review should be related to more favorable reactions (Meinecke et al., 2017; Pichler, 2012), and more favorable reactions should be positively related to more distal outcomes, such as job attitudes and performance (Anseel et al., 2011; Jawahar, 2010) and LMX (Masterson et al., 2000). This model integrates previous theory (Folger et al., 1992) and conceptual models of the appraisal process (e.g., Inderrieden et al., 1988; Klein et al., 1987; Levy & Williams, 2004) with empirical research on appraisal process and outcomes (e.g., Anseel et al., 2011; Masterson et al., 2000; Pichler, 2012).

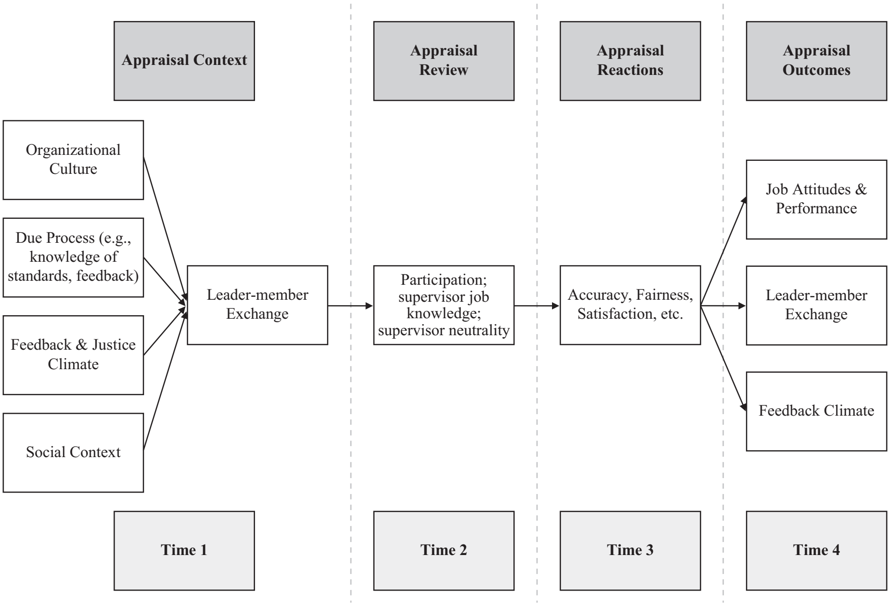

Fig. 5.1 Longitudinal model of appraisal context, appraisal reactions, and appraisal outcomes

One important note as related to this model is that many if not most studies of appraisal reactions have been cross-sectional. That is, they have measured characteristics of the appraisal context, such as relationship quality, at the same time as appraisal reactions. It is important that future research separate measurements of contextual variables and appraisal reactions (Fig. 5.1).

Testing the model presented in Fig. 5.1 is challenging in at least two key ways: First, this would require a relatively sophisticated multilevel research design with a relatively large sample size, and second, this would require longitudinal research. There are examples of multilevel (e.g., Pichler et al., 2016) and longitudinal (e.g., Nathan et al., 1991) research on appraisal reactions, but there has yet to be a study combining multilevel and longitudinal designs. This seems particularly important, however, since various models of the appraisal process include both organization-level (e.g., organization culture) and lower-level (e.g., appraisal reactions) variables. Moreover, models of the appraisal process position social contextual variables, such as relationship quality, at different stages in the appraisal process (e.g., Erdogan, 2002; Klein et al., 1987; Levy & Williams, 2004). Thus, a multilevel longitudinal model seems like the direction in which appraisal reaction research should be headed.

Discussion

Performance appraisal is one of the most common human resources tools used in organizations. The key purpose of performance appraisal is to give employees feedback so as to improve their performance. One key problem is that feedback acceptance is important if not necessary for performance improvement, and many managers and employees react negatively to appraisal reviews. In this sense, employee reactions to performance appraisals are a key set of criteria by which appraisals should be evaluated. In fact, some scholars have suggested that appraisal reactions are the most important outcome of appraisals. There is a growing literature on appraisal reactions (e.g., Levy & Williams, 2004; Pichler et al., 2016; Pichler et al., 2018), and a growing literature on performance appraisal context (e.g., Levy et al., 2015; Levy & Williams, 2004 ; Pichler, 2012). The overarching purpose of this chapter, therefore, was to review the literature on appraisal reactions with a focus on how two key contextual factors, namely due process performance appraisal (Folger et al., 1992; Levy et al., 2015) and the social context of performance appraisal (Levy & Williams, 2004; Pichler, 2012), are interrelated—and how they are related to appraisal reactions. This review culminated in a multilevel longitudinal model linking appraisal context to appraisal reactions and ultimately to more distal appraisal outcomes, such as subsequent job performance.

Implications for Future Research

In addition to providing a review of the literature on appraisal reactions, a related purpose was to highlight important gaps in the literature and directions for future research. When it comes to measuring appraisal reactions, there are some standardized measures (e.g., Greller, 1975), and it seems that the measures used in the literature conform to a priori factor structures (Keeping & Levy, 2000). Many studies measure multiple appraisal reactions, for example, fairness and satisfaction, and other studies measure a composite of appraisal reactions (see Cawley et al., 1998; Pichler, 2012). Still others use original measures developed for the purposes of a given primary study. It is important that researchers 1) use consistent measures of appraisal reactions, and 2) when possible, test for a higher-order latent appraisal reactions factor (Keeping & Levy, 2000) and include this in substantive hypothesis testing. In this way, findings will be more comparable across studies.

In terms of appraisal context, a number of studies have linked due process performance appraisal to appraisal reactions. This literature has generally supported a key proposition of the due process metaphor developed by Folger et al. (1992), which is that with increased process fairness should come more favorable reactions to appraisal reviews. That said, most studies that have measured due process variables have not done so explicitly, that is they have not referenced the due process framework, with some important exceptions (e.g., Pichler et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 1995, 1998). It seems important that researchers more consistently leverage this framework and use the same variables across studies. For instance, when it comes to knowledge of performance standards, since no variable was developed and validated to measure this aspect of due process per se, researchers might consider using the validated perceived system knowledge measure by Williams and Levy (1992). The more consistently researchers use the same variables to operationalize due process constructs, the easier it will be to cumulate research evidence as to performance appraisal effectiveness and to draw statistically valid conclusions.

Although there are generally consistently positive relationships between most due process variables and appraisal reactions, one important exception is the relationship between feedback frequency (a dimension of adequate notice, Folger et al., 1992) and appraisal reactions. This is surprising because scholars and practitioners have long argued for more frequent feedback as a way to improve the appraisal process. After all, one reason appraisal reactions are often negative is because employees are surprised by their evaluation. More frequent feedback should reduce this surprise because, at least in theory, employees will have a better sense of where they stand going into the review. Pichler et al. (2018) found a multiplicative relationship between feedback frequency and knowledge of performance standards; they concluded that frequent feedback is more effective when employees have knowledge of performance standards. That said, it is important for future research to further investigate why frequent feedback is inconsistently related to appraisal reactions, and to examine why or under what conditions there might be differential relationships between feedback frequency and different appraisal reaction criteria.

The cumulative evidence as to the relationship between self-appraisals and appraisal reactions is also mixed. What is interesting about this is that few studies have attempted to investigate why—or, put differently, under what conditions self-appraisals are positively related to appraisal reactions. Many organizations encourage, and some even require, that employees self-evaluate prior to the appraisal review, ostensibly so as to increase fairness in the sense that employees have a voice in the process. That said, it is likely that managers vary widely in the extent to which they allow for and actually listen to the employee's self-evaluation during the review. Moreover, self-appraisals might be related to disagreement during the review due to self-inflated ratings. It is important that future research more fully investigate the role of self-appraisals in the overall appraisal process and, more specifically, as related to appraisal reactions.

There has been very little research, relatively speaking, on other aspects of due process, especially supervisor neutrality or lack of bias and appraisal reactions, that is, part of the judgment based on evidence dimension of due process (Folger et al., 1992). This is interesting because employee perceptions of supervisors are closely tied to a variety of important variables, such as employee attitudes, rater–ratee relationship quality, and employee performance. It would seem that perceptions of supervisor bias could be not only a key predictor of appraisal reactions, but of attitudes and behavior following the review (Fig. 5.1). It would also be interesting to better understand the factors that predict employee perceptions of the extent to which supervisors are biased during the review. For instance, exchange quality going into the review is a likely predictor of employee perceptions of supervisor neutrality (Fig. 5.1). Again, this could be one way to connect due process performance appraisal to the social context of performance appraisal. Moreover, research has shown that relationship quality is higher and managers are less likely to deliberately bias performance ratings under conditions of due process (Taylor et al., 1998). Thus, it may be the case that due process characteristics, for example, high levels of knowledge of performance standards, might lead to higher levels of exchange quality and, hence, to perceived supervisor neutrality (Fig. 5.1).

Practical Implications

The literature on due process has shown that appraisal reactions are more favorable under conditions of due process even when performance ratings are low (Taylor et al., 1995). The literature on the social context of performance appraisal has also found that appraisal reactions are more favorably when rater–ratee relationship quality is high, even when ratings are low (Pichler, 2012). Taken together, these findings suggest that employees might not be as concerned about performance ratings as managers think. Surely performance ratings are important—they directly represent the manager's view of the employee's performance and are often tied to compensation and promotion opportunities (Aguinis, 2013). That said, the existing evidence suggests that other factors in the appraisal context and review may be more important. This is consistent with the key finding of the Cawley et al. (1998) meta-analysis, that is, that value-expressive voice is more important than decision control. It seems that, all else equal, employees favor being heard than having influence over the appraisal process; they also seem to favor feeling that their supervisor is supportive and trustworthy over favorable performance ratings.

These findings have important implications for managers and organizations. Organizational leaders should consider implementing due process characteristics, at least those that are feasible and are consistent with the organization's culture. Some characteristics, such as knowledge of performance standards, might be easier to implement than others, for example, an appeals process. Disseminating employee handbooks, providing socialization programs, and developing ways by which managers and employees can become familiar with their job descriptions are processes that most large organizations already do, all of which might reduce employee surprise during the appraisal review. Implementing an appeals process, on the other hand, could be time- and resource-intensive. After all, this means that higher-level managers or human resources professionals make time to review contested performance evaluations. With that said, the existing evidence suggests that appeals processes are important to employees and to how they react to performance appraisals.

Another implication is that training managers to develop relatively high-quality relationships with employees is important. Research suggests that employee perceptions of relationship quality with their managers are more important as related to appraisal reactions than performance ratings or appraisal participation. This isn't to say that appraisal participation is unimportant; research suggests the opposite (Cawley et al., 1998). What this does suggest is that training and development around developing trusting and supportive relationships is not only beneficial to employee health (e.g., Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011), but that this can improve performance appraisal effectiveness. This type of training may not seem like an obvious way to improve performance appraisal, but if the goal is to increase feedback acceptance, and hence employee job performance, manager–employee relationships are key. This goes hand in hand with the findings from Cawley et al. (1998): Hearing an employee out during the review through, for instance, active listening seems more effective than giving them the impression that they've influenced the process or the manager's decision. This is also consistent with from Meinecke et al. (2017), which documented that relationship-oriented statements during the appraisal interview are related to employee participation and appraisal satisfaction (from both manager and employee perspectives).

Finally, it seems that supervisor job knowledge is related to appraisal reactions. Most previous performance appraisal training focused on the psychometric approach, that is, training raters to mitigate rating errors and provide more accurate ratings. This type of training certainly has its place in organizations. That said, there isn't much evidence that would support the proposition that this leads to more favorable appraisal reactions, and hence to appraisal effectiveness. Managers might consider focusing on becoming as familiar as possible with their employee's job descriptions and discussing their work activities on a regular basis—and then reiterating this information during the appraisal review. This might seem like a simple solution, and perhaps it is—but we've probably all heard the complaint that employees feel that their manager doesn't fully understand their role or their objective performance in that role. This may be especially the case when the manager in question hasn't actually performed the same role in the past. Under these circumstances, it seems especially important for the manager to provide the employee with a clear sense that he or she understands the ins and outs of the work role, its requirements, and challenges to success. This is consistent with models of the appraisal process that have highlighted the importance of rater credibility in reactions to performance appraisal (Folger et al., 1992; Ilgen et al., 1979).

Conclusion

Employee reactions to performance appraisals, which include perceptions of appraisal accuracy, fairness, and satisfaction, for instance, are a key set of criteria by which appraisal effectiveness is evaluated. This is, in part, because acceptance of appraisal feedback is important if not necessary for performance appraisal to achieve its key purpose—to give employees feedback so that they can improve their performance. Due process performance appraisal and the social context of performance appraisal are two key predictors of appraisal reactions. There has been very little research integrating these two aspects of appraisal context, despite the notion that due process should influence the social context of appraisal (Folger et al., 1992). Thus, the research gaps identified in this review, and the concomitant model (Fig. 5.1), are meant to be guides for future research. Managers and organizations can improve appraisal effectiveness by developing high-quality relationships with employees and implementing due process characteristics in performance appraisal systems.

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Chapter 6
Leveraging Feedback Orientation in the Workplace: Directions for Research and Practice

Kajal R. Patel, Rebekah A. Silva, and Jason J. Dahling

Growing discontent in many organizations has recently driven a paradigm shift in performance management, with HR leaders now moving toward approaches that seek to eliminate rigid and irregular formal ratings (e.g., Adler et al. 2016; Buckingham & Goodall 2015; Gorman, Meriac, Roch, Ray, & Gamble 2017; Levy, Tseng, Rosen, & Lueke 2017). Instead, these new approaches to performance management emphasize informal, ongoing feedback dialogues between managers and subordinates. While little evidence speaks to the effectiveness of these new approaches, much of the current debate swirling around them focuses on making sure that these feedback dialogues actually occur and meaningfully influence subordinate performance (Adler et al. 2016; Chawla, Gabriel, Dahling, & Patel 2016).

Although many individual differences influence the provision and acceptance of performance feedback (see the chapter by Corwin et al. (2019) in this volume for a comprehensive review of the role of individual differences in the feedback process), feedback orientation is likely the most important for these new models of performance management. *Feedback orientation* is a multidimensional quasi-trait that involves seeing feedback as valuable, feeling accountable and capable to act on feedback, and being cognizant of feedback information in one's social environment (Linderbaum & Levy 2010; London & Smither 2002). Put simply, people with low feedback orientation are unlikely to benefit from even the most carefully designed performance management systems; they will miss, ignore, or outright reject any feedback that they receive, which has crucial consequences for their development and performance. Conversely, people with high feedback orientation carefully

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process feedback information and can capitalize on this input for personal growth and career progression.

Despite the clear importance of feedback orientation to effective performance management, we know surprisingly little about this individual difference. In this chapter, we review the state of research on feedback orientation in organizations. We then turn to exploring important directions for future research and practice to identify ways to develop and sustain positive feedback orientations in the workplace.

Origins and Development of Feedback Orientation Scholarship

Feedback orientation was first described by London and Smither (2002), who built on earlier work that proposed the existence of narrower individual differences such as "feedback propensity" (Herold, Parsons, & Rensvold, 1996). London and Smither conceptualized feedback orientation as a multidimensional construct consisting of (1) viewing feedback positively, (2) being behaviorally prone to seek feedback, (3) processing feedback mindfully, (4) being sensitive to others' view of oneself, and (5) believing in the value of feedback to enhance personal performance. According to their theoretical model, feedback orientation impacts each stage of the performance management process. In Stage 1, which occurs just before and immediately after feedback provision, feedback orientation should help people regulate their emotional reactions to feedback so that they can focus on using it to improve performance. As time passes after the feedback event, people move into Stage 2, when those with high feedback orientation are more likely to constructively reflect on feedback, internalize it, and set appropriate goals for the future. Ultimately, appropriate goals are more likely to yield performance improvements later in Stage 3, when the consequences of behavioral changes accrue. These improvements are particularly likely among people with high feedback orientation because they seek ongoing feedback about the quality of their goal-directed behavior. Although many of the propositions developed by London and Smither (2002) remain untested, their model inspired all subsequent scholarship on feedback orientation.

Despite this strong foundation, researchers made little progress in studying feedback orientation until Linderbaum and Levy (2010) developed a measure with extensive validity evidence (e.g., Braddy, Sturm, Atwater, Smither, & Fleenor 2013; Dahling, Chau, & O'Malley 2012; Lilford, Caruana, & Pitt 2014). Their measure, the Feedback Orientation Scale (FOS), remains the predominant assessment of feedback orientation in the literature. The FOS consists of four dimensions: (1) feedback utility, which involves the belief that feedback is instrumental in attaining desired outcomes; (2) accountability, which involves a felt obligation to act on feedback information; (3) feedback self-efficacy, which concerns one's level of confidence in dealing with feedback situations; and (4) social awareness, which involves a tendency to use feedback to understand others' views of oneself, and to be sensitive to those views. Importantly, the FOS diverges from London and Smither's (2002) original definition in one key respect – the behavioral propensity to seek feedback is not reflected in the FOS, which encompasses beliefs and attitudes related to feedback information rather than feedback-related behaviors. However, FOS scores are highly predictive of feedback-seeking behavior (Crommelinck & Anseel 2013; Dahling et al. 2012; Linderbaum & Levy 2010; Qian et al. 2017).

Researchers agree that feedback orientation is neither a fixed trait nor a volatile state, but the precise nature of this individual difference remains elusive. Linderbaum and Levy (2010) characterized feedback orientation as "an individual difference that is generally stable ... it can be influenced (to some extent) over the longer term by individual efforts or environmental change efforts. On the whole, however, it is seen as a stable individual difference variable…" (p. 1375). Later research more specifically characterized feedback orientation as a "quasi-trait," a term drawn from the goal orientation literature (DeShon & Gillespie 2005). From this perspective, feedback orientation is likely malleable over moderate periods of time (e.g., 6–12 months) based on strong, consistent experiences with feedback (Dahling et al. 2012). For example, a manager who coaches her subordinates effectively with consistently supportive, insightful feedback might eventually be able to improve her subordinates' orientation toward feedback (e.g., Dahling, Taylor, Chau, & Dwight 2016). Feedback orientation is not presumed to be a domain-specific construct, however; while feedback orientation can change, it is theorized to remain stable in the short term as the person moves across different contexts and interaction partners (e.g., different supervisors) inside and outside of the workplace.

Unfortunately, little empirical research has explicitly focused on the nature and development of feedback orientation, so many of these assertions about the fundamental characteristics of this construct remain conjecture. Strengthening the conceptual foundation of feedback orientation scholarship is consequently an enormously important direction for future research. For example, we do not know how easily feedback orientation changes, or what kinds of experiences prompt those changes. Further, even if we accept that feedback orientation is a malleable quasi-trait, it is likely that people vary in the stability of their feedback orientations, with some people exhibiting greater malleability than others. Performance management research will likely benefit from "taking a step back" to explore these basic questions about feedback orientation in greater detail.

Empirical Findings: What Do We Know About Feedback Orientation?

Although many fundamental questions about feedback orientation remain unanswered, a growing literature demonstrates that feedback orientation is related to a wide variety of individual differences, work attitudes, behaviors, and performance criteria (see Fig. 6.1). Much of this literature is cross-sectional, which greatly

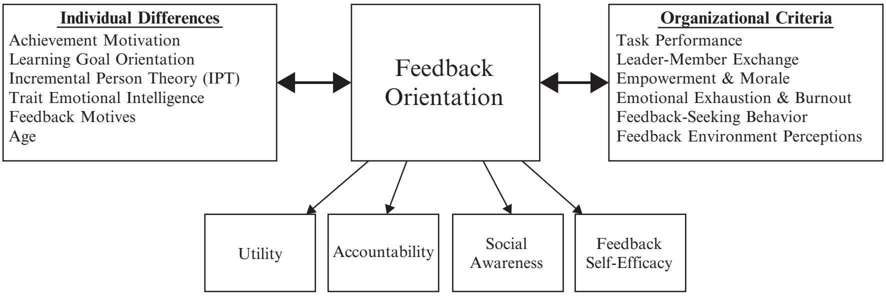

Fig. 6.1 Dimensions and known correlates of feedback orientation

complicates the interpretation of these findings. Although many studies characterize these variables as antecedents or outcomes of feedback orientation, such an interpretation is generally not supported by their designs. We consequently do not make assertions about causality in Fig. 6.1 or the discussion that follows.

First, several studies document that feedback orientation is related to, but distinct from, many other individual differences that concern growth, learning, and development. For example, feedback orientation is positively related to qualities such as achievement motivation, learning/mastery goal orientation, and incremental person theory (a belief that people are capable of change and improvement; Braddy et al. 2013; Whitaker & Levy 2012). One plausible explanation for these relationships is that feedback orientation, like these other traits, operates in the service of higher-order goals and needs for personal growth and improvement (DeShon & Gillespie 2005; Powers 1973). People with high feedback orientation also report high levels of "trait" self-rated emotional intelligence (Dahling et al. 2012) and self-monitoring (Linderbaum & Levy 2010). These relationships are theorized to occur because all three constructs involve common elements of social awareness and self-efficacy for managing emotional information.

With respect to demographic differences in feedback orientation, some of the most provocative research to date concerns employee age (Wang, Burlacu, Truxillo, James, & Yao 2015). Wang and colleagues found that older workers scored higher on the social awareness dimension of feedback orientation, but lower on the utility dimension: they were more cognizant of feedback information in the environment, but generally perceived it to be less useful, when compared to younger workers. These differences in feedback orientation mediated the moderating effects of age on the relationships between feedback characteristics and feedback reactions. Specifically, the effect of feedback quality on feedback reactions was stronger for younger workers as a consequence of their higher utility perceptions. Conversely, the effects of feedback delivery and favorability on feedback reactions were stronger for older workers as a consequence of their higher social awareness. This pattern of findings speaks to important age-related differences in feedback orientation that require further research attention, and it underscores the value of exploring the dimensionality of feedback orientation in greater detail.

Several other studies document that people with high feedback orientation are both receptive to received feedback and eager to seek feedback from others, consistent with London and Smither's (2002) original conceptualization of the construct. For example, feedback orientation predicts positive reactions to 360-feedback from colleagues, openness to coaching, and coach–coachee relationship quality (Braddy et al. 2013; Gregory & Levy 2012; Smither, London, & Reilly 2005), in addition to proactive feedback-seeking behavior directed toward supervisors and peers (Dahling et al. 2012; Qian et al. 2017). Feedback orientation also predicts the motives that people express for their feedback-seeking behavior. Specifically, people with high feedback orientation are more likely to seek feedback for instrumental, ego enhancement, and image enhancement reasons. Conversely, they are less likely to report ego or image defense concerns (Dahling, O'Malley, & Chau 2015; Nakai & O'Malley 2015). This pattern of findings reflects the global belief that feedback information has value and utility for achieving goals, whether those goals are related to job performance (instrumental motive), self-worth perceptions (ego enhancement motive), or impression management concerns (image enhancement motive). As a consequence of enhanced feedback receptivity and feedback-seeking behavior, feedback orientation also relates to a variety of beneficial outcomes, including leader–member exchange (LMX) and supervisor ratings of task performance (Dahling et al. 2012; Rasheed, Khan, Rasheed, & Munir 2015).

The most complex empirical findings concerning feedback orientation concern its relationship with feedback environment (FBE) perceptions. FBE perceptions refer to employees' beliefs about the work context that surround daily feedback processes, such as whether or not feedback sources are accessible and able to provide quality, tactful feedback (see the chapter by Elicker et al. (2019) in this volume for a comprehensive review of reactions to the feedback environment; Steelman, Levy, & Snell, 2004). Although research differentiates between coworker FBE and supervisor FBE perceptions, the majority of scholarship focuses on the supervisor environment (Dahling, Gabriel, & MacGowan 2017; Dahling & O'Malley 2011). Researchers disagree how feedback orientation relates to FBE perceptions. Feedback orientation may be an antecedent of feedback environment perceptions (Dahling et al. 2017; Steelman & Wolfeld 2018), an outcome of feedback environment perceptions (Whitaker & Levy 2012), or simply a correlate (Dahling et al. 2012). Several studies also document that feedback orientation interacts with feedback environment perceptions to shape important outcomes, including feedback-seeking behavior and positive reactions to feedback (Borden, Levy, & Silverman 2018; Wang et al. 2015), enhanced psychological empowerment and morale (Borden et al. 2018; Gabriel, Frantz, Levy, & Hilliard 2014; Gong, Wang, Huang, & Cheung 2017), and reduced emotional exhaustion and burnout (Gong et al. 2017). These interactions generally take the same form across most studies, such that beneficial outcomes are maximized when both FBE perceptions and feedback orientation are high. Although feedback orientation is clearly related to FBE perceptions, unpacking this complex relationship remains an important future research direction.

An Agenda for Future Research

Despite this accumulating body of evidence concerning the importance of feedback orientation in the workplace, many fundamental research questions about this construct remain unanswered. These questions include (1) how feedback orientation develops over time, (2) how feedback orientation relates to relationship quality, (3) what feedback orientation means in diverse and cross-cultural contexts, and (4) the role of feedback orientation in more complex work arrangements, particularly in teams and distributed workgroups. Naturally, this is not an exhaustive agenda, but rather a set of questions and issues that highlight major concerns for future researchers to consider when studying feedback orientation.

Developing Feedback Orientation

As noted in our review of empirical findings, little is known about the antecedents that shape feedback orientation. The results of Wang et al. (2015), who found that older employees have higher levels of social awareness, but lower levels of utility, than younger employees, suggest that age-related developmental experiences may shape feedback orientation. This finding is broadly consistent with meta-analytic research documenting a negative relationship between age and feedback-seeking behavior (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett 2015), wherein experienced workers are aware of how to get feedback, but need less of it to perform well. In the shorter term, a separate line of research suggests that managers with positive feedback orientation may strengthen their subordinates' feedback orientation. This effect is mediated by effective coaching and championing a supportive supervisor FBE (Steelman & Wolfeld 2018). However, these studies are cross-sectional and cannot make strong claims about developmental causality.

In order to better understand how feedback orientation develops, longitudinal studies with repeated measures are needed to determine what events predict changes in this quality over time. Consistent with London and Smither's (2002) original theory, feedback orientation is likely to have cross-lagged and reciprocal relationships with other feedback-related constructs. For example, improvement in feedback orientation should promote feedback-seeking behavior, and successful feedback seeking should, in turn, further strengthen feedback orientation in a virtuous cycle. Similarly, worsening FBE perceptions (e.g., if a manager leaves the organization, or becomes overworked and inaccessible) may trigger a downward, reciprocal spiral between FBE perceptions and feedback orientation if useful or tactful feedback ceases to be readily available to employees.

Feedback Orientation and Relationship Quality

Although characteristics of the feedback seeker and the target have received a great deal of research attention, it is also important to consider the broader relationship context in which feedback takes place (Anseel et al. 2015). Research on supervisor–subordinate relationship quality (i.e., leader member exchange, or LMX) raises important questions about the nature of FBO: to what extent is FBO truly chronic, versus domain-specific and shaped by the relationship quality that one holds with an immediate supervisor? Does FBO speak to beliefs about feedback globally and across all sources, or do people have different "feedback orientations" across sources that vary as a consequence of relationship quality? FBO and LMX likely relate to each other in complex ways that are not yet fully understood.

To be clear, much research documents that LMX relates to feedback-seeking frequency and strategies. For example, subordinates seek more negative feedback when engaged in a high-quality LMX relationship with their supervisor, particularly when those subordinates have a low sense of empowerment (Chen, Lam, & Zhong 2007). Similarly, LMX lowers perceived costs associated with feedback-seeking behavior, which in turn promotes more regular inquiry (Chun, Choi, & Moon 2014). Employees who have high-quality relationships with their supervisors are also more likely to use direct than indirect strategies when seeking feedback from their supervisors (Lee, Park, Lee, & Lee 2007).

Together, these studies illustrate that LMX shapes employees' behavioral propensity to seek feedback, and their judgments about the costs associated with this behavior. Feedback experiences with direct supervisors probably exert an especially strong influence on feedback orientation given the strong connection between supervisor feedback and important employment outcomes (Dahling & O'Malley 2011). However, we do not yet know if supervisor feedback experiences shape feedback orientation in ways that persist and remain stable in different contexts, and we do not know if dynamism in LMX quality over time can change feedback orientation. Future research must examine the relational context of feedback orientation and rigorously test its cross-situational consistency.

Cross-Cultural Contexts

Only a small body of research has focused on the role of culture in shaping feedback dynamics (e.g., MacDonald, Sulsky, Spence, & Brown 2013; Morrison, Chen, & Salgado 2004; Sully de Luque & Sommer 2000), and virtually no research has considered how culture might specifically influence feedback orientation. Although some studies of feedback orientation use samples drawn from outside of the United States (e.g., Gong et al. 2017), cultural variables are not implicated in these models. However, many cultural dimensions and syndromes identified by cross-cultural psychologists are likely related to feedback orientation. For example, Sully de Luque and Sommer (2000) proposed that cultural differences in tolerance for ambiguity will shape feedback-seeking behavior; they posited that individuals shaped by low tolerance for ambiguity cultures would exhibit more feedback-seeking behavior in response to uncertain contexts, even if the costs for feedback seeking were high. Although their theoretical model did not speak to feedback orientation, their arguments imply that low tolerance for ambiguity cultures also produce individuals with more positive feedback orientation, largely as a function of seeing feedback information as having high utility.

Cultural differences in status identity may also complicate feedback orientation. In high status identity cultures, members are hierarchically separated. Sully de Luque and Sommer (2000) proposed that feedback tends to be conveyed more frequently in a top-down process in high status identity cultures, and that top-down feedback is likely to be seen as highly important. Consistent with our observations concerning LMX and multiple feedback orientations, high status identity cultures could result in different orientations toward feedback, with employees perceiving greater utility and accountability concerning feedback information that originates from members of higher status in the culture.

Beyond studying cultural differences, cross-cultural interactions also raise interesting questions for feedback orientation scholars. For example, Barner-Rasmussen (2003) found that feedback-seeking behavior was enhanced between managers from dissimilar national backgrounds. One possible explanation for this finding is that managers expect feedback from cross-cultural sources to be particularly different, insightful, and diagnostic. Repeated interactions with cross-cultural sources of feedback might consequently help managers to develop a positive feedback orientation, provided that their assumptions about the value of this feedback prove correct. Much future research is needed to understand how culture shapes the development of feedback orientation, and how interactions across cultures might improve feedback orientation over time.

Teams and Distributed Workgroups

Research on feedback orientation (and feedback dynamics in general) tends to focus on dyadic interactions, usually between a subordinate recipient and a supervisor source, with both parties physically accessible to one another. However, feedback orientation may develop and operate differently in more complex work arrangements, such as teams and geographically distributed workgroups. To date, no research has explored feedback orientation in the context of these increasingly common modes of working.

First, the impact of feedback, and subsequent judgments about feedback utility and accountability, may be blunted when feedback is delivered to teams, but not individuals. Research indicates that team feedback alone can be ineffective when the good performance of one team member compensates for the team's total performance (Salas, Rozell, Driskell, & Mullen, 1999). In such circumstances, poor performers may be able to ignore negative feedback, and sustain a poor orientation toward feedback, because the team's outcomes are not contingent on their individual performance improvement. Consequently, the literature on effective teamwork underscores that teams must receive *both* team-level and individual-level performance feedback (DeShon et al. 2000; Matsui, Kakuyama, & Onglatco 1987). In the absence of individual-level feedback, we expect that feedback orientations would generally remain negative when workers can count on the efforts of strong teammates to carry the group. Much of the current work on feedback in teams concerns its direct effects on goals and rewards, but we expect that feedback orientation is an important and understudied part of this puzzle.

Feedback orientation may also be important to consider when assembling teams and structuring teamwork. For example, feedback orientation may be particularly important within teams characterized by low psychological safety, a shared perception that actions within the team are characterized by high interpersonal risk. Research indicates that psychological safety within teams contributes to team learning behaviors, such as seeking feedback, sharing information, asking for help, and discussing errors (Edmondson 1999). Conversely, it may be the case that feedback orientation is especially important to learning in groups in which psychological safety is low and feedback seeking would otherwise be rare. With respect to task structure in teams, task interdependence tends to promote greater feedback-seeking behavior from colleagues when compared to task independence (De Stobbeleir & Ashford 2014). Again, this effect was particularly strong when the team was perceived as psychologically safe. This pattern of findings suggests that individual feedback orientation is important to feedback sharing in teams characterized by more independent work that would otherwise suppress feedback sharing and seeking. Collectively, these studies hint that individual differences in feedback orientation may have important effects within traditional work teams.

These questions become even more complex when we consider how feedback orientation develops and operates in distributed teams. Many teams operate remotely in ways that change the nature and likelihood of feedback; for example, as of 2015, 24% of employees worked from home (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016). Distributed teams oftentimes struggle with fragmented communication, which results in misunderstandings concerning expectations, challenges with observing and analyzing performance, and difficulties with providing meaningful performance coaching (Armstrong & Cole 2002). In such contexts, feedback provision is routinely less frequent, and oftentimes there is a greater delay between performance events and performance feedback. Consequently, having a distributed workgroup may impact the trajectory of workers' feedback orientation. Feedback information, when received, may have less utility because it is not timely or precise. Distributed teammates may also feel less accountability to act on feedback because they do not have to directly interact with one another, and they may experience less social awareness about when, and from whom, good feedback information is available. Lastly, workers in distributed teams may also develop lower feedback self-efficacy due to the greater difficulty associated with getting feedback, and the challenges associated with interpreting and internalizing it without cues from a physically present source.

Overall, we see a clear need for feedback researchers, and especially those interested in the development of feedback orientation, to study team and distributed dynamics in much greater detail.

Leveraging Feedback Orientation in Practice

To this point, our review has highlighted that we have many unanswered questions about the nature, antecedents, and consequences of feedback orientation. Although much more research on feedback orientation is needed, the literature to date also demonstrates that managers and organizational decision-makers should strongly attend to cultivating and maintaining positive feedback orientations. We explore the importance of feedback orientation for practice below, and we offer some preliminary suggestions for what managers might do to improve a negative feedback orientation.

As we noted in the opening of this chapter, frustrations with traditional performance appraisal are presently motivating a massive paradigm shift in performance management (Gorman et al. 2017; Levy et al. 2017). Many organizations are moving toward systems that minimize or eliminate ratings, and instead employ regular, informal feedback dialogues throughout the performance cycle (Adler et al. 2016; Buckingham & Goodall 2015). We are not optimistic that these approaches will truly help managers and employees improve performance and save time unless organizations start thinking systematically about how to improve beliefs and attitudes toward feedback (Chawla et al. 2016; Dahling et al. 2017). Managers and subordinates both need positive feedback orientations in order to find value in the time investment required for regular feedback dialogues. Moreover, both parties require positive feedback orientations to take feedback information seriously and act on it. Lastly, when regular feedback is not forthcoming, subordinates need a high feedback orientation to provide the social awareness and self-efficacy necessary to seek out and get the information that they need to perform well. These person-level dynamics are easy to overlook when we focus on organization-wide performance interventions, but the effectiveness of “the new performance management” hinges entirely on honest, difficult conversations between people. Consequently, we see a real need for organizations to be strategic and mindful about fostering positive feedback orientation throughout the workplace.

How might organizational decision-makers promote feedback orientation? One likely mechanism is through perceived organizational support (POS). Employees who perceive high organizational support are more inclined to have trust in their employer and its leadership (Ling, Floyd, & Baldridge 2005; Perrot et al. 2014). We suggest that this trust should predispose employees to consider feedback seriously, even if they are starting with a relatively negative feedback orientation. This consideration can subsequently lead to the gradual improvement of feedback orientation as trusted feedback proves to be useful for achieving personal goals. Organizations can use supportive human resources practices, such as participative decision-making, fairness of rewards, and growth opportunities, to increase employees' POS (Qian et al. 2017).

Another mechanism to increase feedback sharing and improve feedback orientation is by reducing some of the impression management costs involved in feedback seeking. Those seeking feedback often perceive that there is some risk involved in feedback seeking (Morrison & Bies, 1991). The impression management cost framework posits that employees make a conscious evaluation of the benefits and costs associated with feedback-seeking behavior. This cost–value assessment is regarded as the main determinant of feedback seeking behavior in the future (Anseel et al. 2015). For employees with negative feedback orientation, costs may be especially salient because there is little counterweighting benefit associated with feedback information. Managers can take steps to improve the cost–benefit ratio associated with feedback by deliberately improving FBE perceptions among their subordinates (Dahling & O'Malley 2011; Nakai & O'Malley 2015). Consistent with the FBE literature, managers should take pains to be accessible and informed to provide quality feedback, to encourage and reward feedback-seeking behavior initiated by subordinates, and to remain tactful when providing positive and negative feedback (Steelman et al., 2004). Managers should also strive to avoid arrogant behaviors and other dysfunctional leadership styles that might undercut FBE perceptions (Borden et al. 2018).

A third route to promoting feedback orientation may be through effective performance coaching provided by managers to subordinates. For example, Dahling et al. (2016) compared the effects of coaching frequency (i.e., how often managers coached individual subordinates) to those of coaching ability (i.e., the quality of coaching performed by managers) on sales goal attainment in a pharmaceuticals organization. Coaching abilities improved performance directly and indirectly through improved role clarity for employees. In contrast, coaching frequency was not related to performance, and the lowest performance was observed among employees coached frequently by coaches with low ability. Although Dahling et al. (2016) did not include feedback orientation in their study, the results suggest that low-quality coaching might have a detrimental effect on feedback orientation because employees recognize that the feedback information provided by the coach lacks utility. An important practical implication of this study is that organizations need to train people to become effective, skilled coaches of their subordinates; feedback orientation will likely improve among employees if organizations focus on developing managerial coaching skills versus simply monitoring how much time managers spend coaching or providing feedback (Chawla et al. 2016).

Related to coaching skill, another manager skill that may help with improving feedback orientation is a deliberate focus on developing leaders' listening behavior. Research indicates that effective listening helps followers trust and feel more comfortable with their leader. Leaders can learn to act as effective listeners by paraphrasing and summarizing their subordinates' perspective, making empathetic comments, and asking appropriate questions (Qian et al. 2017). Effective listening can help leaders recognize how their followers think about feedback, which might help them identify opportunities to improve feedback orientation. Further, feedback from an effective listener may be appraised as more accurate and useful by the subordinate, which can create the foundation for feedback orientation improvement.

As a closing caveat, research to date suggests that supervisors may especially struggle with promoting feedback orientation in older workers. Consistent with the results of Wang et al. (2015), older workers may exhibit greater levels of social awareness concerning feedback, but they tend to view feedback information as having lower utility due to their greater degree of work experience. Consequently, supervisors need to consider age differences and work experience when attempting to improve feedback orientation; even high-quality feedback may not result in favorable reactions if the utility component of feedback orientation is low (Linderbaum & Levy 2010; Wang et al. 2015). When supervisors provide feedback to older workers, they should be particularly careful to emphasize favorable feedback and deliver feedback effectively to elicit the most positive reactions (Wang et al. 2015). Conversely, improving the informational quality of feedback is most important to manage the reactions of relatively younger workers, who have less personal experience to draw upon.

Conclusion

Although much more research is needed, feedback orientation clearly has an important role to play in the evolving practice of performance management. Organizations that can foster and maintain positive feedback orientations among their employees can expect open feedback dialogues, genuine self-reflection, and improved morale and performance. These organizations will also be better poised to take advantage of new developments in performance management practice that capitalize on the benefits of regular, informal feedback dialogues. We hope our review of this literature stimulates more interest in feedback orientation among performance management researchers and highlights how managers can take proactive steps to foster feedback orientation in the workplace.

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Chapter 7
Beyond the Strategies of Feedback Seeking: A Review and Initial Conceptualization of Feedback-Seeking Styles

Mary F. Sully de Luque, Melody L. Wollan, and Victor Boyi

Conventional theory of feedback seeking indicates that, as individuals enter an organization, they tend to seek performance feedback frequently. Research has shown that as individuals stay longer in organizations, their propensity to seek performance feedback decreases. Thus, feedback inquiries relate negatively to organizational tenure (Benzinger, 2016). At least two reasons have been proposed to explain this phenomenon. On the one hand, some scholars propose that the success of the socialization process reduces the necessity for protracted feedback seeking. Accordingly, the decline in feedback seeking over time can be attributed to the successful integration of the employee with her/his work environment (Ang & Cummings, 1994; Ang, Cummings, Straub, & Earley, 1993). Such scholars often claim that individuals' feedback seeking may diminish as tenure increases because they understand the requirements/demands of their work environments more fully and develop heuristics to fulfill these demands successfully.

More recently, however, Vandenberghe and his colleagues (2019) observe that the decline in feedback seeking over time is due in part to the failure of the socialization process. They posit that feedback seeking declines when individuals fail to integrate with their work environments properly. As a direct consequence of this decline in the frequency of feedback-seeking behavior, employees' affective commitment may decrease, and turnover intention may rise. As feedback seeking should

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be expected to decline over time, such decline may be due to either the success or failure of the socialization process. This in turn is predictive of either commitment and task performance/role clarity, on the one hand, or reduction in commitment and increasing turnover intentions, on the other.

In contrast to the notion of feedback seeking declining over time, other literature (e.g., Callister, Kramer, & Turban, 1999) has depicted feedback inquiries to be constant over time. For example, Callister et al. (1999) observed that although the overall feedback seeking may decline over 12 months, the decline may be minimal. Specifically, amongst three sources of feedback seeking (supervisor, peer, others), they reported a decline in only feedback seeking from peers. This reduction could however be because peers are not often the preferred source of feedback when it comes to performance feedback (Morrison, 1993). Thus, their findings may suggest that when employees seek performance feedback over time, the frequency of such feedback-seeking behavior may remain constant.

Although these two perspectives of feedback seeking have independently improved our knowledge about what happens over time, their contrasting findings present a perplexity. As such, the onus is on researchers to further explore and unpack the complexities of feedback seeking over time. Furthermore, since studies that have supported each of these perspectives have largely been based on two strategies (direct inquiry and monitoring), it is necessary for scholars to expand current theorizing to include newly developed strategies (e.g., backgrounding, acting, forecasting).

In this chapter, we aim to critically examine our current knowledge of feedback-seeking strategies, especially as they advance over time. We begin by presenting a dynamic reciprocal model of feedback seeking highlighting three phases (see Fig. 7.1). Next, we review some of the empirically identified strategies of feedback seeking (see Table 7.1). Based on the contents of feedback-seeking interactions, we propose a higher-order typology of feedback-seeking style—direct and indirect feedback seeking (see Table 7.2). We theorize feedback-seeking style to be a representative portfolio of preferences which individuals make during feedback-seeking interaction. Distinctively, we propose the direct style of feedback as using strategies which afford increased interpersonal interactions and seeking feedback about the self. Likewise, we propose the indirect style as a method of obtaining comparison information (i.e., feedback about peers) and seeking feedback using strategies that offer only minimum interpersonal interaction. We argue that the feedback-seeking styles (direct, indirect) maybe influenced by an individual's cultural orientation. Evaluated over time, we also theorize that an understanding of the styles helps to reconcile the equivocal findings of strategies. Shifting the focus from the more narrowly defined strategies of feedback seeking to more broadly conceptualized styles allows for a more comprehensive interpretation of both prior and future research findings. Based on this new typology, we review two possible factors affecting the configuration of feedback-seeking styles—cost and context of feedback interaction. We conclude by reviewing and recommending areas for further research, reflecting our expanded notions of feedback-seeking styles.

Feedback-Seeking Interaction: A Dynamic Reciprocal Process

Earlier research on employees' feedback seeking often overlooked the interactive nature of feedback seeking. Indeed, feedback seeking has been commonly examined from the seeker's standpoint, frequently ignoring the contribution of the source in the feedback-seeking process. Thus, it has been argued that our knowledge of the feedback-seeking process has been focused more on the individual employee's behavior than either the feedback-seeking interaction itself or how it evolves over time (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015). Despite these shortcomings, pockets of research have supported the idea that feedback-seeking behaviors are products of not only the individual's motivation but also her/his interactions with elements in the work environment (Harrison & Rouse, 2015). For instance, the desire for feedback often arises due to uncertainty in the work environment. Such uncertainties, in effect, may arise because of interactions with a task or function.

As an interactive process, Levy and his colleagues (1995) have previously observed feedback-seeking behavior to be a product of three interrelated phases. Accordingly, each of these phases is influenced by different motives for feedback seeking. In the earliest phase, the motive to seek feedback is the most important. In the later phases, however, the motive to manage impression and ego becomes more salient. Further supporting this interactive process model, Harrison and Rouse (2015) observed that interactions during a long-term project might resemble a cycle between participants in multiple phases rather than the linear model predominantly depicted in extant management literature. In both of these studies, it was observed that the process of feedback seeking involves several distinguishable but interdependent phases. Identified in the Harrison and Rouse (2015) study are four phases of the feedback interaction. In the first stage, the employee develops a prototype which creates uncertainty and then a need for feedback. In the second phase, the employee has her/his first interactions with the feedback source. Based on the initial feedback from the source, the employee enters the third phase of feedback seeking. In this phase, the employee essentially tries to clarify the initial feedback. In their fourth phase, employees react to feedback.

Generalizing from this information, we theorize feedback seeking as a process involving three distinct yet interdependent phases (see Fig. 7.1 below). In the first phase which we refer to as the *pre-interaction phase*, a seeker decides whether to seek or not to seek. Here the most critical variable is the motive for feedback. While the cost of negative feedback—or any socially related cost—may feature in the seeker's thoughts, we endorse Levy et al. (1995) findings that contend the most crucial consideration is the value of the feedback and the feedback-seeking behavior. These values are often traceable to the motives of feedback seeking. Although it has not been directly empirically supported, we posit that there are at least two types of values identifiable in the feedback-seeking process—value attributable to the feedback information and value of the feedback-seeking interaction as an impression management opportunity. While scholars have not differentiated these values

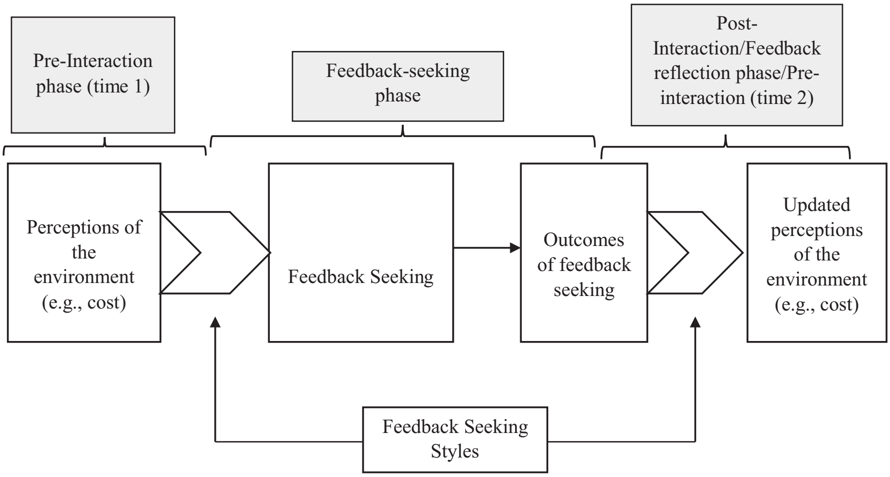

Fig. 7.1 A dynamic reciprocal model of feedback interaction

explicitly, there exists indirect empirical support for this dichotomy of values. In the literature examining the instrumental motive for feedback seeking, the value of feedback as a resource for regulating performance has been aptly highlighted.

Similarly, in the impression management stream, the value of the feedback-seeking interaction has also been demonstrated. Morrison and Bies (1991) find that individuals often utilize the feedback-seeking opportunity both to shape the feedback-seeking environment and to influence the content of the feedback received. In line with more recent findings from Anseel et al. (2015), we contend that once there exists a value/benefit to be obtained from seeking feedback, individuals will be motivated to seek. This may explain why feedback-seeking literature finds equivocal support for a cost-benefit analysis in the decision to seek feedback. The cost associated with seeking feedback only comes into play in the second phase of feedback seeking (interaction phase).

The second phase which we herein refer to as the *interaction phase* encompasses all activities during the feedback-seeking interaction. In this phase, the focal question is about how to initiate interaction. That is a decision on how to seek feedback. This involves a decision to contact the source either through direct inquiries or other strategies. In this phase, the focal factor is expected to be the cost of the feedback-seeking strategy. It is important to note that cost, as we mean it here, is not *an independent concept*. Instead, the cost of seeking feedback using direct inquiry is either more or less costly than seeking feedback via another strategy. This conceptualization of cost is important because there is always a cost associated with each feedback-seeking strategy.

Moreover, trying to measure cost as an absolute construct makes it challenging to explain why an individual may choose another strategy which is also costly. This leads to the question of why an individual would seek feedback indirectly when more accurate feedback can be secured via direct interactions. In the second phase of the feedback seeking, the cost of seeking feedback using the direct inquiry strategy is compared to the cost of seeking feedback using other appropriate strategies.

In the third phase which we herein refer to as the *reaction/post-interaction phase,* the seeker processes the feedback s/he has received. This processing, in turn, affects subsequent behaviors, which may then lead to an improvement in performance. The focus of our model, however, is on the influence of this processing on subsequent feedback-seeking interactions. As suggested by Moss and Sanchez (2004), when a source with zero-tolerance for error delivers feedback during a direct interaction, s/he would deliver it so unusually that the seeker may perceive a higher cost of seeking directly in the future. Thus, in the post-interaction phase, the cost associated with a feedback-seeking strategy would be updated. Such updates inadvertently serve as inputs to the model in a future interaction phase. This is such that cost may operate in a dynamic reciprocal model as depicted in Fig. 7.1. Cost may serve as an input in phase 2 and as an output in phase 3.

The dynamic reciprocal process model we suggest here may help refocus the literature from the currently static snapshot conceptualization to a more dynamic conceptualization of feedback-seeking interactions which take into consideration the longer-term nature of employees in the organization. We acknowledge that prior research may have suggested this kind of model. However, empirical examinations have been limited due to the convoluted nature of prior dynamic reciprocal models of feedback seeking.

For the remainder of this chapter, we focus on the second phase of feedback seeking which has often been assessed peripherally in the current literature. This phase is particularly important because this is the phase where the feedback seeking as a behavior occurs. Moreover, an in-depth understanding of this phase may help researchers answer novel questions such as how do employees seek feedback? And, how do employees switch between feedback-seeking strategies in subsequent feedback-seeking interactions? In the next section, we review the established strategies of feedback seeking in this phase, and beyond that we propose a new typology of the style of seeking feedback.

Strategies of Feedback Seeking

Several strategies of feedback seeking have been proposed and empirically supported in the literature. However, since Ashford and Cummings (1983) proposed their two-strategy model of feedback seeking, the number of strategies that have been proposed has grown. For instance, Morrison and Weldon (1990) observed that individuals often seek feedback via the acting strategy. Similarly, in their seminal article, Sully de Luque and Sommer (2000) proposed the indirect inquiry strategy which balances the shortcomings of the direct inquiry and monitoring strategy earlier supported by Ashford and colleagues (Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Cummings, 1985). More recently, in an inductive study of creative workers, Harrison and Rouse (2015) observed that individuals often seek feedback using three additional strategies—backgrounding, forecasting, and opening. In the remaining part of this section, we review these feedback-seeking strategies in a bid to highlight their complexities and apparent similarities.

Direct Inquiry

With direct inquiries, one person directly asks another for information (Vancouver & Morrison, 1995), using "direct [and] explicit verbal requests for feedback" (Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003, p. 776). Various antecedents, such as relationship quality with supervisors, positively influence the use of direct inquiry (Chun, Choi, & Moon, 2014; Lam, Huang, & Snape, 2007). Direct inquiry has also been observed to be positively related to the seeker's trust in the source of feedback (Barner-Rasmussen, 2003).

Direct inquiry is often the preferred feedback-seeking strategy when people need technical and task-related information (Morrison, 1993). Due to its interactional nature, the direct inquiry strategy has also been observed to influence source's evaluations of the seeker's job performance (Wu, Parker, & De Jong, 2014), and even other observers' evaluations of such performance (De Stobbeleir, Ashford, & Zhang, 2019). Considered somewhat desirable for more evaluative topics such as performance reviews, direct inquiry often yields rich and highly credible information. However, direct inquiries also yield only information that the source is willing to share and often exposes the seeker to social costs (Fedor, Rensvold, & Adams, 1992; Northcraft & Ashford, 1990). Yet, these costs do not necessarily preclude the use of the direct inquiry strategy especially when feedback is sought to manage impressions (Dahling & Whitaker, 2016; Morrison & Bies, 1991). Although when costs are prohibitive, the direct inquiry strategy may be less favored (Anseel et al., 2015).

Monitoring

Monitoring refers to consciously attending to a situation, others' behavior, or both, to obtain informational cues (Morrison, 1993). It is a form of vicarious learning that allows a seeker to draw inferences about appropriate expectations by observing events or others' experiences in the work environment (Ashford et al., 2003). Monitoring requires attentive observations and making mental notes (Miller, 1996). This form of feedback seeking has been observed to be used extensively by managers when interacting with their supervisors (Ashford & Tsui, 1991).

The monitoring strategy may be focused on either direct or indirect cues in the environment. Likewise, employees' level of monitoring often remains stable over time (Callister et al., 1999). Scholars have also observed monitoring to be positively related to an individual's openness to experience and negatively to individual's self-esteem (Krasman, 2010). Ashford, De Stobbeleir, and Nujella (2016) posit that people use feedback monitoring more indiscriminately and gather information continuously with this method, whereas direct inquiry is more targeted and depends on the credibility of the source.

Moreover, monitoring is a one-way communication process and as such it has a few disadvantages, including the potential for lower information quality (VandeWalle, 2003), and higher probabilities of misinterpreting social cues (Morrison, 1993) or making inference errors (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Miller & Jablin, 1991). A person may or may not observe relevant events that also are informative, particularly if the information pertains to unique, novel, or infrequent activities. Moreover, monitoring is challenging to measure, because it relies exclusively on self-reports. Thus, data collection is problematic when relying on independent observations.

Indirect Inquiry

Proposed by Sully de Luque and Sommer (2000) and empirically supported by Krasman (2010), indirect inquiry involves indirect discussions with the information source, manifested as hypothetical inquiries, third-party inquiries, inquiries about comparable peers, or disguised questions to seek information in the workplace. The method of indirect inquiry satisfies the dual objective of obtaining useful feedback (good or bad) while minimizing potential costs (e.g., social costs, effort costs). That is, indirect inquiry can reconcile the motivation to avoid feedback (impression management) with the motivation to obtain feedback (self-evaluation and feedback-seeking). It offers a means to obtain valued feedback without calling undue attention to the event itself.

The indirect inquiry strategy may appear more appropriate for veteran employees (Ashford et al., 2003) who seek verification of their own assessments. Such covert behaviors may seem especially effective in modern business environments that emphasize strong self-awareness and emotional intelligence. When organizational environments or cultural factors define the direct inquiry strategy as inappropriate (MacDonald, Sulsky, Spence, & Brown, 2013; Morrison, Chen, & Salgado, 2004; Sully de Luque & Sommer, 2000), indirect inquiry would be more effective in garnering evaluations without disrupting the organizational climate. For example, employees may choose to avoid direct inquiry when seeking feedback about their probability of being promoted. Due to high social costs, and because the potential feedback sources may be unlikely to respond to such direct inquiries with clear information (Larson, 1989), these employees might use and obtain better results from indirect tactics. Hypothetical indirect questions like "So, who was recently promoted around here?" or "What does the committee typically look for?" may provide benchmark information that workers can use to assess their chances for promotion. Furthermore, indirect inquiry potentially reduces the negative emotional arousal that frequently follows from supervisors' feedback, particularly about highly salient issues or to address poor performance (Moss, Valenzi, & Taggart, 2003). Thus, indirect inquiry provides an option to increase feedback accuracy without putting the giver "on the spot" emotionally or otherwise.

An indirect inquiry can balance the strengths and weaknesses of direct inquiry and monitoring. Monitoring may create misinterpretation risks, and direct inquiry feedback-seeking tactics are potentially costly on several dimensions (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford et al., 2003; Ashford et al., 2016). Using indirect inquiry, people can access more relevant and accurate information than is available through monitoring. This may then lower effort costs, as well as the conspicuousness of efforts to generate a specific evaluation, so that it might attenuate social costs linked to feedback-seeking interactions. Finally, similar to direct inquiry and monitoring strategies, indirect inquiry depends on the circumstances, personality characteristics, and the cost associated with each strategy (Krasman, 2010; Sully de Luque & Sommer, 2000).

Acting

Extending the initial typology of strategies proposed by Ashford and Cummings (1983), Morrison and Weldon (1990) identified the acting strategy. They conceptualized acting as seeking feedback from sources that did not exist before the feedback-seeking attempt. Acting involves the creation of new sources within the environment. Indirect evidence from Kramer, Lee, and Guo (2019) also suggests that acting may be prevalent on social media. When individuals utilize the acting strategy, they essentially become both a seeker and a source.

Acting is well adapted for situations where employees already have assigned goals. The acting strategy can be influenced by employees' commitment to meet assigned goals, the importance of the goals, and the effort required for acting. When employees are committed to attaining assigned goals, they will initiate the acting strategy more frequently than employees who are less committed. Similarly, where the goal is of higher importance to the individual, such as targeted level of output which may guarantee promotion, acting occurs with a higher frequency. In situations where the effort required for acting is prohibitively high, however, its frequency may be lower. Additionally, acting has been observed to influence goal attainment positively. Morrison and Weldon (1990) observed that utilizing the acting strategy often yields highly specific information. Because this feedback is specific to the current performance and informative about the required efforts, this allowed subjects to attain assigned goals.

Similar to the monitoring strategy, the acting strategy involves minimal levels of interpersonal interaction and the possibility of bias. It involves more of intrapersonal interactions and no interpersonal interaction. Acting is distinguishable from monitoring because it involves higher levels of proactivity (Morrison & Weldon, 1990). While the monitoring strategy relies on making inferences based on the actions of others within the environment, acting involves introspection and making inferences based on assigned goals and the seekers understanding of her/his performance and the procedure for attaining such goals. Acting may also be distinguished from monitoring based on the sources of feedback (Morrison & Weldon, 1990). While monitoring involves the gathering of feedback from sources already in existence, acting involves the creation of feedback and feedback sources (Morrison & Weldon, 1990).

Backgrounding

Proposed by Harrison and Rouse (2015), backgrounding feedback-seeking strategy involves the provision of historical information or history about a project in a creative work setting. This is not a general history of the performance, however, but more of a response to previous feedback received. It is essentially a strategy used to refine feedback during a feedback interaction. As a strategy for seeking feedback in a more general setting, backgrounding involves the provision of additional historical information to a feedback source (Harrison & Rouse, 2015). This added information could inadvertently reduce the negative feedback expected.

While this feedback-seeking strategy involves an inquiry, it is markedly distinguishable from the direct inquiry strategy proposed by Ashford and Cummings (1983). As in the direct inquiry strategy, backgrounding involves direct interactions with the source, but the language of interaction differs. Direct inquiries may involve question such as "how am I doing?". However, backgrounding may evoke statements such as "When I was trying to write the article, I reviewed literature in only the top journals on the FT ranking." Backgrounding may resemble the self-disclosure dimension of Sully de Luque and Sommer's (2000) indirect inquiry strategy.

Forecasting

Instead of explaining the historical foundations of their work performance, employees may seek feedback by acknowledging the deficiencies in their current performance and seek feedback on their plan of action. Like the backgrounding strategy, forecasting feedback-seeking strategy involves a provision of additional information to the source (Harrison & Rouse, 2015). Forecasting differs from backgrounding however, because of the orientation of the additional information being provided. With the backgrounding strategy, employees provide more information which is focused on helping the source understand the process of attaining the current performance. When employees utilize the forecasting strategy, they provide more future-oriented information. To illustrate, when seeking feedback on a writing assignment, a student utilizing the backgrounding strategy may use statements such as "When I was trying to write the article, I reviewed literature only in the top journals on the FT ranking." Conversely, when such a student seeks feedback using the forecasting strategy, s/he may use a statement such as "Next time, I would review literature only published in top journals on the FT ranking." Similar to the backgrounding strategy, forecasting feedback-seeking strategy relies greatly on self-disclosures and high levels of interpersonal interactions, which makes it akin to the indirect inquiry strategy.

Opening/Open Questions

Building on Harrison and Rouse (2015), scholars Harrison and Dossinger (2017) define open questions as feedback-seeking strategy that utilizes questions with a broader scope. Such questions invite the source to give an honest opinion about a specific idea or focus of the interaction. It is essentially an invitation for the source to join in a conversation on the topic of interest to the seeker. This strategy may result in a copious quantity of feedback, because it may not only invite the source to provide feedback on the employees' performance, but also allow the source to state her/his general opinion about the task. While this provides similar information to the monitoring strategy proposed by Ashford and Cummings (1983), this "open questions" strategy is akin to the indirect inquiry strategy because it is more focused on a specific issue. Also distinguishing this from the monitoring strategy is the level of interpersonal interactions displayed between the seeker and source. With monitoring, the level of interpersonal interactions will be lower because only the seeker is active in the feedback environment. Using the "opening" strategy, however, there are at least two interactors—the seeker and a source (Harrison & Dossinger, 2017). Thus, we expect more interpersonal interactions.

As with forecasting and backgrounding feedback-seeking strategies, the opening/open questions strategy may be apt only after an initial feedback encounter. In our student-professor interaction example, this may involve a statement like "I have not tried using the FT journal rankings for a literature review, how does that work?". This self-disclosure may motivate the professor to give more direct feedback about how the student may utilize the FT journal rankings as a guide in the literature review. Much like forecasting and backgrounding, employees using the opening feedback-seeking strategy would be expected to provide additional information. However, when using the opening strategy, the feedback seeker would provide information that highlights an opening for further feedback interaction.

A comprehensive review of all feedback-seeking strategies would require highlighting every strategy across different fields and purposes other than performance feedback seeking. Such an effort is beyond the effective scope of this chapter. Instead, we offer an initial view of the complexities of the various feedback-seeking strategies, presenting a snapshot of how employees seek feedback (see Table 7.1). In the next section, we attempt an extension into how information is sought, by proposing a higher-order typology of feedback-seeking styles which further explains how strategies may morph over time.

Table 7.1 Strategies for feedback seeking, definitions, and illustrative behaviors

Strategies	Definition	Illustrative behavior
Direct inquiry	Direct and explicit verbal requests for feedback.	Explicitly request for feedback from a supervisor.
Indirect inquiry	Indirect discussions with the information source, manifested as hypothetical inquiries, third-party inquiries, inquiries about comparable peers, or disguised questions to seek information in the workplace.	Covertly asking questions related to performance.
Monitoring	A conscious attention to a situation, the behavior of others, or both, to obtain informational cues.	Observe the performance and/or behaviors of individuals in the environment.
Acting	Seeking feedback from sources that did not exist before the feedback-seeking attempt.	Measuring current performance to evaluate the requirement to attain established goals.
Backgrounding	The provision of historical information or history about a task or performance.	Self-disclosure about the pathway to the current level of performance.
Forecasting	Acknowledging the deficiencies in their current performance and seek feedback on their plan of action.	Self-disclosure about future activities.
Opening	Invite the source to give a candid opinion about a specific idea or focus of interaction by asking open questions.	Self-disclosures about incompetence.

Feedback-Seeking Styles

Our knowledge of feedback-seeking strategies has been largely limited to a snapshot of the feedback interaction. Only a handful of studies have attempted to examine how employees seek feedback over time. Of these studies, most have also been focused on direct inquiry and monitoring strategies, yielding equivocal results. In one study, Anseel et al. (2015) concluded that direct inquiry feedback seeking decreased over time. In another study, Callister et al. (1999) observed that direct inquiry targeted at superiors was constant over 12 months. These studies suggest that direct performance inquiry either remains constant or decreases over time, with superiors the often-preferred source for performance feedback (Morrison, 1993).

A promising avenue to reconcile these findings is revealed in the cross-cultural feedback-seeking literature. Drawing extensively on the seminal work of Markus and Kitayama (1991), cross-culture feedback-seeking scholars have investigated feedback through the individualistic or collectivistic cultural lens (e.g., MacDonald et al., 2013; Morrison et al., 2004; Sully de Luque & Sommer, 2000; Wilson & Elicker, 2015). Autonomous and independent, individualists are often viewed as being less restrictive in expressing themselves and pursuing their goals. Those higher in individualism tend to believe that to achieve their goals they need to communicate more directly. Conversely, collectivist individuals are less apt to emphasize their individual needs and rights. Such reticence assists collectivists in preserving harmonious interpersonal relationships, often resulting in less-assertive behavior. Morrison et al. (2004) found that newcomers higher on collectivism were less likely to openly use direct inquiry than those higher on individualism. Importantly, such perceptions about the self are argued to guide interactions over time and in various contexts. In the feedback-seeking literature, such cultural orientations play a critical role in the determination of strategies for feedback seeking, as well as how individuals perceive their contexts (Wilson & Elicker, 2015).

Drawing on this literature, we argue that cultural orientation may help explain how feedback is sought over time. However, since the cross-culture feedback-seeking literature has been focused on the direct inquiry and monitoring strategies, we posit that further complexities may arise with the proliferation of strategies. Thus, we first propose a more detailed categorization of the strategies based on the amount of interpersonal interaction permitted during feedback seeking (see Table 7.2). These types of categorizations are not uncommon, with a recent such categorization scheme in the adjacent proactivity literature revealing novel insights (e.g., Belschak & Hartog, 2010; Parker & Collins, 2010). We argue that those higher on individualism would tend to be more expressive, thus they would prefer to use the strategies that permit higher interpersonal interactions. Conversely, those higher on collectivism would tend to be less expressive and more reserved, thus they would prefer to use strategies that permit only a limited interpersonal interaction when seeking feedback. Beyond the strategies, another critical factor to be considered in the *how* of feedback seeking is the focus of the feedback interaction (Gong, Wang, Huang, & Cheung 2017). Accordingly, the focus of the feedback may be an important classifier of feedback interactions.

Drawing on our dynamic reciprocal model (see Fig. 7.1 above), we begin to visualize the in-depth complexities of feedback seeking occurring over time. We expect that based on the outcomes from initial attempts to seek feedback, the choices individuals make will be updated over time. For instance, a supervisor may deliver feedback so inadequately that even employees from highly individualistic cultures may perceive the strategies that permit high interpersonal interaction to be prohibitively costly in another feedback interaction.

We propose that *feedback-seeking style* can help clarify such future behavior, taking into consideration the context and the individual's definition of the self. These styles reveal a broader appreciation for both the strategy and the focus of feedback. Feedback-seeking style represents an individual's culturally embedded predisposition to make decisions in a feedback-seeking interaction. It is manifested as a portfolio of individual preferences for matching strategies to the focus of feedback during a feedback interaction. We argue that feedback-seeking styles are second-order categorizations that appreciate the strategies and focus of feedback seeking, while also acknowledging the importance of each feedback interaction. Proposing these two styles of feedback seeking (direct and indirect), we contend that these styles transcend strategies. While the direct feedback-seeking style involves seeking feedback where there is high interpersonal interaction and the focus is on the self, merely seeking feedback using the direct inquiry strategy does

Table 7.2 Classification of feedback-seeking strategies

	Content of feedback interaction		
Strategies	Level of interpersonal interaction	Focus of feedback	Classification
Direct inquiry	High	Self	Direct
		Others	Indirect
Indirect inquiry	High	Self	Direct
		Others	Indirect
Monitoring	Low	Self	Indirect
		Others	Indirect
Acting	Low	Self	Indirect
		Others	Indirect
Backgrounding	High	Self	Direct
		Others	Indirect
Forecasting	High	Self	Direct
		Others	Indirect
Opening	High	Self	Direct
		Others	Indirect

not sufficiently represent this behavior. Inquiry from any source about a third party (e.g., peer) would be more appropriately categorized as indirect feedback seeking.

This broader categorization allows for better integration of the prior literature of feedback-seeking strategies. For example, when an individual seeks feedback about the performance of others, using the indirect inquiry strategy, we expect that the results should be similar to seeking feedback using other configurations of the indirect style (see Table 7.2). Paying attention to these nuances in strategies for feedback seeking (interpersonal interactions and content) may offer insights into these multifaceted dynamics.

Direct Feedback-Seeking Style

The direct feedback-seeking style is conceptualized as an individual's disposition to seek feedback with strategies that permit more interpersonal interactions, as well as to seek for self-focused feedback. Individuals using this style often develop it over time via their interactions in social contexts. We argue that direct feedback-seeking style is manifested in feedback interactions that involve higher levels of interaction with another individual source. Such attempts are devoid of any medium of communication which may deflect the attention of the source from the seeker. In seeking performance feedback directly from a source, the seeker is exposed to the various social costs in the environment and anonymity is not guaranteed in this style of seeking feedback. Direct feedback seeking can be initiated in various ways if there is an interaction between an independent seeker and an external source (see Table 7.2).

For a feedback-seeking attempt to be categorized as direct, it must be direct both in the ability of the strategy and the focus of the information to minimize deflection of the source's attention. That is, direct feedback seeking should include a strategy that involves high degrees of interactions and feedback focus on the seeker's performance. From our review in the early part of this chapter, strategies such as the direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, backgrounding, forecasting, and opening would fulfill this categorization when the information being sought is addressing some sort of performance on the part of the seeker. Although feedback about the self can be sought via all strategies, we argue that it is direct when there is a high level of interpersonal interaction between the seeker and the human source.

The direct feedback-seeking style exposes the seeker to high levels of interpersonal interactions and feedback seeking about the self. When social costs are updated after an initial feedback inquiry, they would be expected to influence the specific configuration of the direct feedback-seeking style. Therefore, we expect that individuals may seek information using this direct feedback-seeking style even when there is a high social cost. As suggested earlier, studies using direct inquiry in largely individualistic cultures have revealed conflicting findings. However, we believe that rather than an actual decline in direct inquiry as observed by some researchers, these employees may have adopted a more effective configuration of the direct feedback-seeking style such as using indirect inquiry with a focus on the self. Thus, actual inquiry may not decline over time; rather it is the configuration of the individual's style that changes.

Indirect Feedback-Seeking Style

Indirect feedback seeking is manifested in individuals' preference for obtaining comparison feedback and for seeking feedback using strategies that permit only minimal interpersonal interactions. This style is conceptualized as an individual's disposition to initiate a feedback interaction which permits some elements of inattentiveness in the source. Employees using the indirect feedback style often deflect exacting inquiry of the individual source. This style may be associated with the collectivist employee because of their self-effacing nature (Sully de Luque & Sommer, 2000). Note however that for feedback-seeking style to be categorized as indirect, the strategy is also required to align with the focus of the feedback sought. For instance, an employee may seek feedback using indirect inquiry but focused on the self. Such attempts may be appropriate for instances where the direct inquiry may be ineffective, but it does not satisfactorily fit the indirect feedback-seeking style. Such an attempt comes close, but it does not deflect the attention of the source. In such instances, the risk of the source finding out about the exact nature of the interaction is unabated. In sum, feedback-seeking style is indirect when the focus is not on the self and when the interaction with the human source is minimal such as with monitoring and acting.

In practical terms, an advantage of the "big two" feedback-seeking styles proposed here is that, rather than presenting managers with many feedback-seeking strategies that reveal similar outcomes and are tied to very similar antecedents, these styles enable managers to use a higher-order framework to understand their feedback-seeking interaction with employees. Additionally, focusing managers' attention on two feedback-seeking styles rather than seven or more feedback-seeking strategies would help managers to quickly identify feedback-seeking behaviors within their environment. Such quick identification, we expect, would also allow managers to support the feedback-seeking behaviors of employees with whom they interact.

Furthermore, the feedback-seeking styles would permit researchers to make informed judgments about future research questions. For instance, with the development of the indirect feedback-seeking style, we hope to address the prevailing notion that our field has been unduly focused on the direct inquiry strategy (cf. Anseel et al., 2015). The indirect feedback-seeking style as we propose here highlights the unique contributions of prior researchers to understanding how the monitoring and indirect inquiry strategy can and may have been uniquely captured in our literature (e.g., Gong et al., 2017). In the next section, we outline some of the factors which may explain how the configurations of feedback-seeking styles change over time.

Factors Affecting the Configuration of Feedback-Seeking Style

As with the choice of feedback-seeking strategy, a plethora of factors may play a part in the configuration of style that employees adopt during a feedback-seeking interaction. Drawing on the process model presented earlier (see Fig. 7.1 above), we contend that this decision resides in the second phase of feedback seeking and is primarily influenced by the relative cost of the content of feedback seeking experienced at the time. Also important in this phase may be contextual factors such as the context of feedback-seeking interaction, which may influence the choice of the components of the feedback-seeking styles. In this section, we review the role of cost and contextual factors (face-to-face vs. computer-mediated) in the determination of the configuration of feedback-seeking style.

Cost

Seeking feedback comes with some attendant risks which seekers often consider; this is often identified as the cost of feedback seeking. The mainstream literature has proposed four types of cost—*effort cost, face cost, inference cost, and ego cost*. The effort cost refers to the cognitive and physical resources necessary for implementing feedback-seeking activities. Face cost refers to the impression created in the minds of others through feedback seeking. Inference cost is the cost of inaccurately interpreting feedback. The ego cost of feedback seeking is concerned with the individual's self-concept (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford et al., 2016; Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Hays & Williams, 2011; Levy et al., 1995; Morrison, 1993; Northcraft & Ashford, 1990; Sully de Luque & Sommer, 2000). However, only scant empirical support has been found for all four types of cost. For example, early studies such as Ashford and Cummings (1983) have found support for the three-type structure of cost. Yet, Hays and Williams (2011) have observed that the image and ego cost concepts are not empirically differentiable. This finding by Hays and Williams (2011) is also in line with the previous conceptualization of a social cost (Miller, 1996). Accordingly, we adopt this conceptualization through the remainder of our chapter (i.e., effort cost, inference cost, and social cost). Similar to Levy et al. (1995), we contend that each of these costs become pertinent at different phases in the feedback-seeking process. For the chapter, the social cost is of primary focus as this is critical in the decision about how to interact with a source.

Traditionally, the cost-benefit analysis has been conceptualized as an input in the decision on "whether to seek or not to seek" (Anseel et al., 2015; De Stobbeleir et al., 2019). While some costs are precise, in dynamic situations the cost of the content of feedback-seeking styles may be uncertain. Hence, studies that operationalize cost as a cross-sectional variable may underestimate the complexity of cost in feedback seeking. Even with studies that acknowledge an increase in perceived costs during the feedback-seeking process, they still offer a static snapshot of the seeker's perceptions of the costs. The perception of cost is dynamic, so it needs to be understood and examined over time. Specifically, the role of cost and its relationship with feedback-seeking style choices may change as the seeker moves through the three phases of feedback interactions: pre-interaction, interaction, and post-interaction or reflection (see Fig. 7.1 above). In the pre-interaction phase, the cost may be an antecedent that affects the intentions to seek feedback. Essentially, the focus here is on the effort cost. However, as the seeker progresses into the interaction phase the focus shifts to social costs and more focused on how to seek feedback (what configuration of style to adopt). As the seeker proceeds to the post-interaction phase (i.e., evaluating information), the cost may cease functioning as an antecedent and becomes an outcome which would influence subsequent decisions on how to seek feedback.

Cost as an antecedent Various theoretical frameworks have been proposed to explain feedback-seeking choices, and the cost-benefit framework has been the most prominent (Anseel et al., 2015; Anseel, Lievens, & Levy, 2007; De Stobbeleir et al., 2019). This perspective centers on how seekers' cost perceptions influence their decision to seek feedback using a direct or indirect strategy (Chun et al., 2014; Levy et al., 1995; Qian, Lin, & Chen, 2012). The resulting stream of research highlights that the value people attach to feedback defines their intention to seek it, and the perceived cost of doing so influences the strategy they use (Levy et al., 1995; Lim, Teo, & Zhao, 2013). Thus, when employees perceive face costs as more salient, they often use indirect strategies. In their meta-analysis, Anseel et al. (2015) clarify that the value of feedback determines whether people seek it, but its cost is what defines the strategy adopted. Even when employees perceive high costs, it will not obviate their desire to seek feedback but instead determine the strategies they employ to gather it.

Cost as an outcome Feedback-seeking strategies could also shape perceptions of costs. According to the cost primacy model (Anseel et al., 2007; Lim et al., 2013), cost-related considerations influence how employees evaluate different feedback-seeking strategies, and the unique costs of each strategy determine employees' perception of its appropriateness (Fedor et al., 1992); that process, in turn, can affect future assessments of costs. In this sense, perceptions or evaluations of the cost of feedback seeking depend on both prior and current interactions. The feedback environment (e.g., the source's style of delivery, exchange quality between seeker and source) may be estimated only through prior interactions with the source. As indicated by recent qualitative research, peripheral support indicates that the feedback environment is a consequence of iterative feedback interactions (e.g., Harrison & Dossinger, 2017; Harrison & Rouse, 2015). Such effects challenge a simple, unidimensional link between perceived cost and the choice of feedback-seeking strategies.

Combined role of cost: The configuration of feedback-seeking styles At first glance, these two views of costs, as an antecedent or an outcome, may seem incongruous, yet they are not necessarily contradictory and can be reconciled with a dynamic, reciprocal model that emphasizes the choice of feedback-seeking strategies. Notably, this choice is not independent of prior choice. Hence, we argue that the use of prior feedback-seeking strategies affects perceptions of the feedback context, which then determines which strategies the feedback seekers use going forward. Newcomers with a preference for the direct feedback-seeking style, yet unsure of the feedback environment, may initially seek feedback using indirect inquiries. However, after receiving edifying feedback, they may use direct inquiry more frequently. The initial positive feedback received reduces the perceived feedback-seeking costs in that environment. If instead employees have reason to anticipate socially costly feedback based on previous interactions, they will likely prefer to continue with other forms of feedback-seeking strategy that minimizes the social interaction with the source (Morrison & Bies, 1991).

Generalizing to the styles of feedback seeking, however, we argue that the styles need not change drastically; instead, only this strategy component of the style changes with the updated cost. This lends credence to the notion that feedback seeking using one strategy may become less frequent over time (Ashford & Cummings, 1985), and reconciles it with findings that overall performance feedback seeking may remain constant over time (Callister et al., 1999).

Contextual Factors: Face-to-Face Versus Computer-Mediated Feedback Interaction

Most studies of feedback seeking refer to offline settings (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford et al., 2016), yet contextual elements may strongly influence exchange outcomes (Ramirez, Walther, Burgoon, & Sunnafrank, 2002). Observations of workplace communications reveal that a substantial proportion of workplace interactions are mediated by computers (Ramirez et al., 2002). This suggests the need to study feedback-seeking behaviors in not only face-to-face encounters, but also computer-mediated contexts (cf. Ang et al., 1993; Ang & Cummings, 1994; Harrison & Dossinger, 2017). No clear explanation details the effects of computer-mediated communications on the choice of feedback-seeking strategies or any other content of the feedback-seeking style, though Ashford et al. (2003) mention some potential implications of working remotely.

Furthermore, as the notion of cost is well established, we note a dearth of research on this topic in computer-mediated contexts. The cost of seeking feedback could be mitigated in such contexts as when enterprise social media or other professional outlets (e.g., LinkedIn, Glassdoor, Quora) provide enough anonymity to mitigate social costs (Ang et al., 1993; Walther, 1996; Walther & Tidwell, 1995). Employees who are more inclined to seek feedback directly (i.e., direct feedback-seeking style) then might engage in both more frequent feedback-seeking attempts overall and more direct feedback-seeking utilizing strategies that may typically expose them to higher interpersonal interactions. In general, the prevalence of computers as media of communications in work settings makes it essential to develop a robust understanding of their role in the configuration of styles.

Ashford et al. (2003) lay a groundwork and suggest that feedback-seeking strategies may be constrained in computer-mediated contexts. To broaden our understanding of this context, we extend these arguments to include an affordance perspective (Ang et al., 1993; Ang & Cummings, 1994). As Strong et al. (2014) define it, an "affordance" refers to the potential for action created by a relationship between an artifact and a goal-oriented person, such that the affordance of computers for feedback seeking arises from their use. For example, when people use email to send and receive messages (i.e., feedback), it allows them to gain insights into the approaches and behaviors of the source in the context of their interaction. Indicators such as the time it takes for the source to respond, the time of the day when the source responds, and the tone of the response all may be indicative of the source's willingness to provide feedback and the cost of using any strategy (Walther & Tidwell, 1995). By identifying affordances available to feedback seekers in computer-mediated contexts, we hope to broaden the theoretical focus of existing research and integrate two research streams (related to feedback-seeking strategies and affordances), spanning information systems and computer-mediated communication literature. This chapter thus complements Ashford et al.'s (2003) perspective by highlighting the importance of the context of interaction in the choice of feedback-seeking strategies.

Initially introduced in ecological psychology by Gibson (1986/2014), affordances stem from the interaction between an actor and the environment, in which actors both perceive and respond to the surroundings. An affordance does not predict any specific activity or response but rather acknowledges the conditions exist for an activity to occur (Greeno, 1994). The concept of affordances has spread across disciplines, including applications that shift from the conceptualizations of the environment to the focus on technologies (Hutchby, 2001). Thus, it offers a promising approach to the interaction between individual actors and the technologies they use, particularly in complex, modern workplace environments in which organizations constantly alter their technology systems to adapt to changing landscapes (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018). Among modern workplace technologies, email remains the most popular (Tatum, Martin, & Kemper, 2018), though, instant messaging, video calls, social media, and artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots are expanding in popularity as well (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018). We do not attempt to detail the differences among these available feedback-seeking media but instead structure our discussion around two established affordances provided by computer-mediated contexts for feedback seeking: anonymity and persistence. We consider how these affordances may influence choices of feedback-seeking strategies.

Anonymity Anonymity in the feedback-seeking process arises when an actor can enter a feedback interaction without exposing his or her identity. Even if the source is aware of a feedback-seeking attempt, he or she will remain unable to identify the seeker accurately. Research on feedback seeking has established that the absence of anonymity may increase the salience of image-based costs (Sully de Luque & Sommer, 2000), and prior research affirms that people may postpone or even decline the opportunity to seek feedback when they suspect their identity is not protected from the source (e.g., Ang et al., 1993; Ang & Cummings, 1994). In face-to-face communication, anonymity is virtually impossible. Consequently, to reduce image-based costs, people with a preference for the direct feedback-seeking style may often prefer to use strategies that limit interpersonal interaction.

In contrast, in computer-mediated communication contexts, including emails, professional networks, and AI chatbots, the identity of the seeker is less exposed. Thus, employees might be more inclined to seek feedback using strategies which have hitherto been classified as exposing individuals to higher interpersonal interactions. For example, when asking for feedback from an AI chatbot, it is beneficial to be as specific as possible, prompting equally clear information unaffected by contextual influences. Consequently, when feedback is mediated by a technology that affords anonymity, we predict that people will more willingly adopt strategies that will expose them to higher interpersonal interactions.

Persistence Computer-mediated contexts afford seekers a certain amount of precision related to interpreting the feedback received. In face-to-face feedback seeking, inference costs drop when the seekers obtain feedback from a credible source; in computer-mediated feedback-seeking environments though, even an expert source might not mitigate the possibility of misconstruing the feedback received. Computer-mediated feedback seeking then could mitigate this inference cost, due to the continuous nature of information provision. That is, feedback in face-to-face interactions must be decoded in real time, and the original intent may be easily lost afterward, but with computer-mediated feedback seeking, the provided information remains available and consistent over time. Thus, the employee has more time to contemplate the intended message, particularly if the information is nuanced. Consequently, when feedback is mediated by a technology that affords information persistence, we predict that people will more frequently adopt strategies that expose them to higher interpersonal interactions in the face-to-face context; however, the frequency of feedback seeking may decrease over time.

Research Directions

Throughout this chapter, we have highlighted what we consider to be promising avenues for future research on feedback-seeking strategies and styles. Scant scholarly work has examined how feedback-seeking strategies may be combined over time, despite evidence to support this plausibility (Fedor et al., 1992). Our proposition of feedback-seeking styles provides an initial framework for understanding how employees may seek feedback over time. We encourage researchers and practitioners to join us in this conversation to refine our acumen of feedback-seeking styles, in combination with other critical avenues for future research.

Thus, we encourage researchers to critically investigate the components of the feedback-seeking styles proposed in this chapter. While we have concentrated primarily on two elements of the feedback interaction (i.e., strategy and focus), we reason that other constituents of the feedback interaction may help refine our conceptualization the feedback-seeking style. For example, in a recent study, Gong et al. (2017) observed that the sign of the feedback sought (positive or negative) is associated with feedback seeking. Scholars find that employees who seek negative feedback often possess a more critical view of their performance (Ashford & Tsui, 1991). Yet negative feedback seeking may be expected to occur more frequently in contexts where the seeker has a higher interpersonal relationship with the source (Chen, Lam, & Zhong, 2007; Chun, Lee, & Sosik, 2018). This research suggests that seeking negative feedback may be linked with employees who are predisposed to the direct feedback-seeking style. Currently, we do not have evidence from either the cross-culture or feedback seeking literature to support the stability of the sign of feedback. Research on these above-mentioned areas is recommended.

Further, we encourage researchers to examine whether feedback-seeking style is stable over time. This evokes questions about whether employees feedback seeking partners become predictable over time despite the changes in the environment. In turn, this leads to further questions such as the likelihood of employees interchanging strategies over the course of their career. We believe scholarship should pursue a more and in-depth investigation of whether and how feedback-seeking styles develop. Specifically, research examining questions such as how people acquire or foster their styles of seeking feedback would be of value in organizational settings. Although we theorize that feedback-seeking styles are culturally influenced, we encourage analysis of whether or how this evolves over time. As socialization is a continuous process, it is important for researchers to clearly understand the point at which feedback-seeking styles are formed. Along these lines of research interest is how feedback-seeking styles are affected by interactions with new cultures, especially over an extended period of time. We invite researchers to engage in examination of such questions.

Given the interactive component of these topics, we propose that another promising avenue for research is the influence of individual social capital on feedback-seeking strategy and styles. People are social in nature, and their social status may determine an employee's self-construal. An employee who is central in the organizational network may find it less difficult to seek feedback using a direct strategy than those on the periphery, and this may shift the predictions about styles. To explore such questions, research efforts might map full organizational networks using social network analysis, which would also reveal the directions of feedback seeking within organizations. Such research could help answer questions about where individual employees prefer to seek feedback (e.g., less, equally, or more central sources).

Beyond the styles of feedback seeking, in this chapter, we have reviewed each strategy separately. With few studies having previously examined the use of direct and indirect feedback strategies simultaneously (e.g., Callister et al., 1999), there are persuasive reasons to explore these more comprehensively. For example, while some prior research (e.g., De Stobbeleir, Ashford, & Buyens, 2011) asserts that only the direct inquiry strategy may influence creativity, more recent evidence (e.g., Sijbom, Anseel, Crommelinck, De Beuckelaer, & De Stobbeleir, 2018) reveals a link between creativity and feedback seeking in environments that promote active monitoring. While no explicit evidence regarding the simultaneous use of these strategies is available, further research might investigate the extent to which both styles and strategies affects other established outcomes of feedback-seeking behaviors, such as citizenship behaviors, job satisfaction, role clarity, or feedback acceptance.

Moreover, feedback seeking may be self-reinforcing (Ang & Cummings, 1994), and it is often measured by frequency (Anseel et al., 2015). However, very few studies examine its dynamism over time as we have suggested here. Brown, Ganesan, and Challagalla (2001) sought to measure if using two strategies in combination may lead to more role clarity, but they provide only a limited depiction of the interaction. The feedback-seeking strategies tend to be presented as competing strategies, but they arguably could be complementary. Accordingly, the consequences for future feedback seeking remain unexamined.

A related pursuant topic is the role of groups in feedback seeking (Grimes, 2017; Stoker, Grutterink, & Kolk, 2012). Research shows that a group may influence reactions to feedback (Grimes, 2017) and that the frequency of feedback seeking within a group depends on leadership styles (Stoker et al., 2012), but beyond these insights we know little about group influences. This suggests the need for research that assesses group sense-making efforts or the impact of choices of feedback-seeking styles and strategies on subsequent feedback interactions. This would address the largely overlooked topic of feedback seeking by groups or teams. Additionally, scholarly opportunities exist investigating how individual members of a team enact feedback-seeking behavior, especially in relation to the effects of the organizational context. This research could address questions such as: Does the size of the group affect the strategy used? Are the costs (e.g., effort, and social) similar for individual members and teams? Do teams also possess a feedback-seeking style? We invite research into the impact of teams on feedback-seeking activity, how members seek feedback on behalf of teams and the factors that affect this process.

As well, we call for further theoretical and empirical development of feedback seeking in different occupational contexts. In their meta-analysis, Anseel et al. (2015) decisively refined their analyses to omit feedback-seeking studies conducted in exclusively clinical or educational contexts. Their arguments for focusing the sample were well-reasoned; nonetheless, extrapolating research to include these studies would be informative for refining theories further (Wu et al., 2014). Research across a variety of samples may better apprise our understanding of the feedback-seeking styles. More studies in diverse contexts could answer questions about the generalizability of these styles across occupations, as well as reveal whether the indirect feedback-seeking style is effective, or even advisable, in all occupational contexts.

We further propose the explicit incorporation of time as a factor in theory development and research designs. Even with the inclusion of time lags in studies of feedback-seeking behavior, measuring different predictor variables at different times may not definitively resolve the endogeneity problem due to possible omitted variables (Fischer, Dietz, & Antonakis, 2017). However, experiments involving feedback-seeking styles could be useful, because manipulated variables (i.e., exogenous) can serve as instrumental variables. In sequential experiments, different cause-and-effect relationships might be examined separately, thus supporting exogenous manipulations of otherwise endogenous variables. As an example, one study might test the impact of a challenging work environment on the feedback-seeking styles; then separate investigations could assess the effect of each style on creative performance. These sequential experiments would help improve claims of causality (Eden, Stone-Romero, & Rothstein, 2015) and enrich our understanding of feedback-seeking styles in the feedback-seeking process.

Finally, qualitative designs may help uncover the reciprocal dynamics involved in the process of choosing a feedback strategy (Harrison & Dossinger, 2017; Harrison & Rouse, 2015), and in-depth interviews might reveal the sequential nature of feedback-seeking strategies in each style. For example, qualitative studies could further reveal individual factors which may influence the choice of feedback-seeking styles including characteristics such as trait curiosity (Harrison & Dossinger, 2017). As supported in prior research, such personality characteristics may influence employees' propensity to inquire for feedback directly and also directly clarify the feedback received (Harrison & Dossinger, 2017). Trait curiosity may influence how employees react to the initial feedback received. Specifically, Harrison and Dossinger (2017) observed trait curiosity as an important moderator of the individual's willingness to directly engage in feedback interactions. The use of qualitative designs could shed new light on feedback seeking and the feedback-seeking styles in workplace settings.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we aspired to address issues relating to seek feedback strategies. In doing so, we introduced a dynamic reciprocal model of feedback seeking, which highlighted three phases (pre-interaction, interaction, and post-interaction) of the process. Through our review of the empirically identified strategies of feedback seeking, we argue that the constructs of direct inquiry and monitoring strategies, which have become the prevailing standard, fall short of capturing the complexity of assessing how people seek feedback. Few studies have explicitly investigated such complexity of seeking feedback, with the exception of the meta-analysis conducted by Anseel et al. (2015) that provides a unique investigation of questions surrounding the nomenclature of feedback-seeking strategies. Proposing this notion of feedback-seeking styles (direct, indirect), we posit that the style of feedback seeking helps to answer the question of how employees seek feedback over time. Thus, it is our contention that conceptualizing feedback seeking as styles deepens and enhances the application of the multiple feedback-seeking strategies. We theorize that feedback-seeking styles will help to reconcile the equivocal findings of strategies over time.

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Chapter 8
The Importance of Social Identity in Feedback Seeking: A Race Perspective

Catalina Flores, Joelle D. Elicker, and Marc Cubrich

For the past 2 years, the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) has identified diversity, inclusion, and equity as the #2 workplace trend and critical issue facing the modern organization. This identification underscores the need for research that examines the experiences of underrepresented group members such as women, racial minorities, the LGBTQ+ community, etc., across distinct aspects of their working lives (SIOP Administrative Office, 2018, 2019). Specific issues include understanding how biases affect the ways in which individuals perceive and interact with others, the need to create both diverse and inclusive workplaces and practices, and challenges arising from increased globalization (SIOP Administrative Office, 2018, 2019). One avenue for understanding the unique work experiences of underrepresented group members is through everyday feedback processes.

Feedback exchanges are a powerful process in the life and functioning of an organization and may offer a needed approach to understanding the experience of underrepresented group members at work. While more explicitly discriminatory treatment such as segregation and wage disparities based on sex and race have declined since the introduction of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, certain groups remain underrepresented in high-paying and high-status jobs (Berdahl & Moore, 2006). Performance feedback, in a more subtle way, can serve as a tool for either maintaining or disrupting this inequality in the workplace. Bear and colleagues (2017) describe performance feedback as a power retention mechanism that preserves and amplifies power differences in organizations (e.g., differences in resources, authority, and rank) and can disproportionately harm those with less power (e.g., underrepresented groups). Frequently, feedback sources, who tend to hold more privileged positions in society than those seeking feedback, hold considerable power over individuals and have discretion in how and when feedback

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is provided, mimicking power dynamics outside of the organization (Bear et al., 2017). Feedback is an inherently evaluative, social process that is subject to the motives and biases of the source. These issues are especially critical when considering the onboarding and socialization of new employees, as ineffective information exchange can impede newcomers' sense of belonging as well as their effective participation in the workplace (Morrison, 2002).

Clearly, these feedback dynamics have the potential to influence workers' lives immensely. Understanding the way in which feedback exchanges are affected by social categories such as race, gender, age, and sexual orientation provides one method to promote equity and inclusion at work. Yet, the feedback literature has been mostly silent on this topic. The research that does examine social categories in feedback processes advocates for more formal, structured approaches as a means to limit the pervasive issue of bias toward members of protected classes (Anderson et al., 2015; Baltes, Bauer, & Frensch, 2007). Research by Baltes and colleagues (2007), for instance, found the influence of negative racial biases on performance ratings was reduced when individuals were given a structured free recall intervention that prompts raters to recall specific behavioral information. This presents a paradox when considering that best practices in existing feedback research would call for less structured approaches. For instance, a growing body of literature has focused on the feedback environment (FE) or the social context in which informal, day-to-day feedback exchanges occur (Gregory & Levy, 2015; Steelman, Levy, & Snell, 2004). This growing body of research acknowledges that feedback processes are steeped in a social context in which work is accomplished through and with other people. As such, there is a need to recognize the social processes and phenomena that are inherent in these informal exchanges.

It is well known that people's thoughts, feelings, and actions are influenced by social categorization and that these social categorizations influence later perceptions and behavior (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). While demographic differences in feedback seeking have begun to receive more research attention in the past 15 years (Ashford, De Stobbeleir, & Nujella, 2016), the effects of demographic social categories have been almost completely ignored as a part of the informal feedback context. Given the unstructured and interpersonal nature of feedback exchanges, social categories have the potential to play a key role in feedback interactions and may affect the provision, seeking, and processing of feedback.

The industrial and organizational psychology literature has historically neglected the importance of race as a social identity (Proudford & Nkomo, 2006). When race is studied, research questions are limited to whether race differences exist based upon racial category alone and have not drawn on race theories or literatures to shed light onto the mechanisms or consequences of differences. There is an increasingly important need to study race as a focal variable in research and to consider it at a deep level (Cox & Nkomo, 1990; Roberson, Ryan, & Ragins, 2017). Scholars have noted that society has reached an "awkward historical moment," regarding race relations, in that despite advancements toward equality, multilevel factors persist in negatively impacting the lives of people of color (Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009). Additionally, while people of color are increasingly represented in the general population and the workforce, and news outlets project that the United States is becoming a "majority-minority" nation (Toossi, 2002), much of psychology's research utilizes overwhelmingly White samples, limiting our understanding of workplace constructs, processes, and dynamics (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010).

In light of this significant research gap, this chapter provides an integration between the feedback seeking and social identity literatures by considering the influence of race as an exemplar of the value of such an approach. As a starting point, a conceptual model is presented to illustrate how the feedback-seeking process is influenced by distal factors including the societal and organizational contexts, as well as more proximal influences such as the interactive effects of individuals, their coworkers, and the social identities of each. One goal of this chapter is to offer avenues for advancing future research that are informed by the conceptual model, social identity theory, and other theoretical perspectives on race. We also outline areas of intervention for practitioners based on the knowledge we have thus far.

The Role of Social Identity Theory in Feedback Seeking

Social identity theory (SIT) explains how individuals classify themselves and others into social groups using perceived prototypical characteristics and how they utilize these categorizations to navigate social settings such as the workplace (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). According to SIT, the self-concept is comprised of two parts: a personal identity encompassing idiosyncratic characteristics (e.g., bodily attributes, abilities, psychological traits, interests) and a social identity encompassing salient group classifications (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Classifications frequently occur based on surface-level demographic characteristics such as race, age, or gender (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). These initial judgments can lead to identity-based subgroups in which individuals classify other members as belonging to their in-group by inferring similarity in deep-level characteristics (e.g., values, personality, attitudes; Carton & Cummings, 2013). The nature of these classifications has personal effects on individuals (e.g., personal racial identity, social identity, sense of belongingness) and on interpersonal interactions with individuals within and outside of the group (e.g., trust, cohesion, exclusion, prejudice; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). SIT has been useful in clarifying how group-based perceptions can affect important workplace processes including group dynamics and leadership (Hogg & Terry, 2000).

As previously mentioned, a growing trend promoted by scientists and practitioners is advocating for an unstructured approach for the provision of feedback at work. Many organizations are eliminating the use of annual appraisals (Pulakos & O'Leary, 2011). Researchers advise practitioners to focus on informal avenues of performance information such as feedback seeking or the conscious devotion of resources toward obtaining information about the correctness and adequacy of behaviors (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Levy, Silverman, & Cavanaugh, 2015).

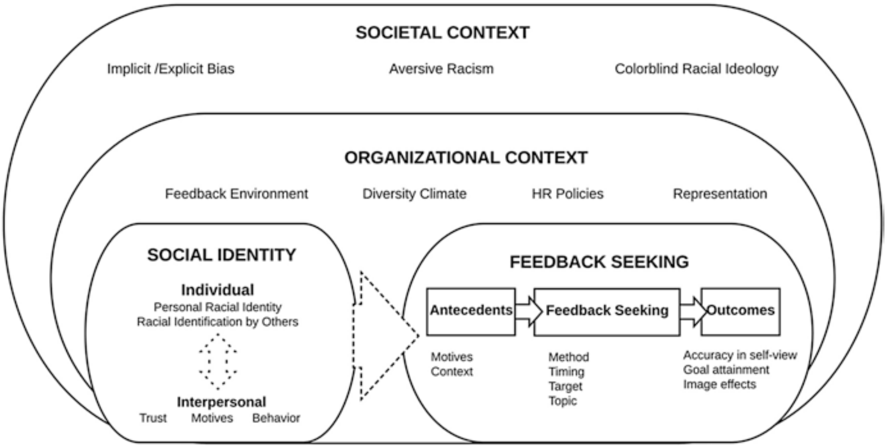

Fig. 8.1 Conceptual model of social identity and race influences on feedback seeking

While it has been well established that feedback seeking has implications for task performance, effective self-regulation at work, and social perceptions, the influence of social identity has not yet been extensively considered. We assert that the feedback literature, which de-emphasizes structured approaches in favor of socially based informal feedback seeking, would benefit from an integration with SIT to flesh out important influencing factors.

Our model identifies the overarching societal context and the more proximal work context involving interpersonal experiences related to bias and race as two central influences affecting the feedback-seeking process for employees of color (see Fig. 8.1). We explore the implications of these contexts for employees of color navigating the feedback-seeking process, with a focus on generating specific research questions, and offer areas of intervention and potential solutions for these concerns in the workplace.

Conceptual Model: Social Identity Theory and Race Influences on Feedback-Seeking

Objectives and Background

Our objective in presenting this model is to rethink the paradigm through which we understand the role of diversity in feedback processes by considering the influence of social identity, using race as an exemplar. To define our terms, race is a socially constructed categorization that sorts individuals into groups based on perceived characteristics, with differential value and privilege assigned to each group (Markus, 2008). In the United States, the term "race" primarily refers to differences in skin color, despite biological research indicating that this conceptualization is arbitrary and that there is no single set of traits that distinguishes one group from another (Lauritsen, 2005). While some distinguish between race and ethnicity, we use race in a broad sense, in line with calls to integrate the terms (Quintana, Chew, & Schell, 2012), though we maintain consistency with terms used when citing prior research.

A recent review of the feedback-seeking literature identified a study by Roberson and colleagues (2003) as one of the very few studies looking at issues of race in the feedback-seeking process (Ashford et al., 2016). Using Black managers, this study examined how solo status (being the only minority in a work group) predicted perceptions of stereotype threat and how this status related to feedback-seeking strategies (Roberson et al., 2003). Solo status in the group was theorized to make personal racial identity particularly salient, thereby activating a fear of confirming negative stereotypes. The study found that managers experiencing stereotype threat sought feedback more often via monitoring, and to the same extent via inquiry, but more frequently discounted the performance feedback received (Roberson et al., 2003). This study is evidence that workers belonging to a racial minority behave differently with regard to feedback seeking. More research aimed at understanding the feedback-seeking experiences of employees of color is sorely needed, especially research that is well grounded in theory and can guide organizational practice.

Our conceptual model can serve as a foundation for such research and practice advice. Next, we discuss the integration of the feedback seeking and social identity literatures as they apply to race. We also present an initial set of propositions (see Table 8.1), derived from the model, to guide future research. In the model, societal context is conceptualized as a higher-level influence on feedback dynamics, affecting organizational feedback seeking through work experiences. Work context refers to employees' interpersonal experiences which are influenced by their race, composed of both one's personal racial identity as well as how an individual's race is perceived by others. These work experiences subsequently affect the feedback-seeking process.

Multilevel Influences

Societal context Societal context refers to macro-level distal influences that shape the context of work-related feedback exchanges, especially for employees of color. Systemic issues, such as explicit and implicit bias and modern types of prejudice (such as microaggressions), impact the lives of people of color in such a way that typically goes unnoticed by the White majority group. Racial bias can be conceptualized as overt, subtle, or implicit discrimination (Ruggs et al., 2016). Subtle or implicit discrimination are of particular interest because, due to their nature, they can affect work interactions in ways that can be difficult to identify and rectify.

Table 8.1 Summary of research propositions

Antecedents	
Proposition 1	Employees of color reporting to White managers (a) perceive higher instrumental value of feedback overall and (b) experience a weaker relationship between instrumental motives and feedback seeking compared to their White counterparts
Proposition 2	The experience of identity compartmentalization at work leads employees of color to hold less ego defense and ego enhancement motives compared with their White peers
Proposition 3	Employees of color may hold higher image defense and enhancement motives, which relate to more feedback monitoring and less inquiry, particularly for those high in racial identity
Proposition 4	Favorable diversity climates will relate to more frequent feedback seeking for employees of color, particularly for those high in racial identity
Proposition 5	Favorable supervisor characteristics, such as political skill, will facilitate a better relationship among mixed-race dyads via reported LMX and LMX agreement, which will relate to feedback seeking
Proposition 6	Trust in a White supervisor will vary as a function of racial identity for employees of color, with subordinates high in racial identity having lower trust, resulting in less feedback seeking
Feedback seeking	
Proposition 7	Employees of color frequently utilize feedback inquiry, despite lower perceived utility of the message and lower credibility of the feedback source
Proposition 8	Employees of color rely more on feedback monitoring than inquiry due to high perceived costs and generalized vigilance from cultural mistrust
Outcomes	
Proposition 9	Employees of color will more frequently discount feedback from White supervisors, due to perceived bias in the source's motives

Implicit bias refers to attitudes or stereotypes held unconsciously and activated without one's intention, which also affect behavior (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). Implicit attitude research shows pervasive bias toward people of color with a pro-White and anti-Black bias, independent of explicit prejudice (Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009), which has also been linked to discriminatory behavioral outcomes (Sabin & Greenwald, 2012). Implicit biases are difficult to address because they are, by definition, not part of an individual's conscious awareness (Tomlin & Bradley-Geist, 2016). Aversive racism refers to Whites supporting egalitarian principles while having aversive feelings including anxiety, social awkwardness, and avoidance of people of color (Neville, Spanierman, & Lewis, 2012).

In a diverse workplace, those holding implicit or aversively racist attitudes may engage in ineffective interracial communication, including feedback exchanges, the effects of which can accumulate over time and contribute to a climate of distrust (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002). We see these societal-level contextual variables as inputs affecting workplace dynamics.

Work context Work context draws attention to how larger societal dynamics play out in the workplace. As a result of biases and modern forms of racism at the societal level, many institutions take a color-blind approach to navigating racial diversity in the workplace, which is harmful for intergroup relations. In such a work environment, people of color feel they are marginalized and their experiences discredited, which is related to negative health effects (Neville et al., 2012). Similarly, cues including the supportiveness of the organizational diversity climate, inherent biases in HR practices, and the representation of racial diversity across levels provide signals to employees of color either that they are acknowledged in a positive way or not valued (Cox, 1994). Research has established that favorable feedback environments (FEs) are an important part of the work culture, promote feedback seeking, and are associated with affective and performance outcomes (Dahling & O'Malley, 2011). As such, researchers and practitioners alike have turned their attention to fostering FEs, but research has not yet explored how FE perceptions vary among coworkers as a result of social categorization.

Social identity Two distinct aspects of an individual's race are important: employees bring their personal racial identity with them to work, and they are racially identified by others in a way that may not align with their personal identity. These components of social identity affect how employees approach interpersonal interactions at work, and prior experience from societal and work contexts affects the development of trust toward coworkers, their evaluation of others' motives, and the employees' own work behavior in ways such as adhering to prescribed norms.

The concept of racial identity includes an individual's understanding of their race, as well as the centrality of race to one's self-image (Rockquemore et al., 2009). As an example of this distinction, one study of Asian-American students found experiencing discrimination was harmful for well-being, and the effects were more pronounced for those higher in ethnic identity (Yoo & Lee, 2008). Racial identification by others refers to how one tends to be categorized by other people. Research on Latinos shows being identified by others as White allows access to privileges associated with that group, even if it differs from one's personal racial identity (Renteria, 2016). When considering feedback interactions between supervisors and subordinates, racial identity is most pertinent to the feedback recipient's perceptions and behavior, while racial identification by others is most relevant for the feedback source (how the source views the feedback recipient).

Social identity, in conjunction with societal context and work experiences, subsequently affects the feedback-seeking process, antecedents, and outcomes (Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003). Antecedents include motives for seeking and contextual factors: the presence of peers and desire to appear competent are linked to whether individuals ask for feedback and the type sought (Ashford et al., 2003). We propose that the overarching societal context and the proximal work context influence social identity-based interactions at work, an important antecedent to feedback seeking, particularly for employees of color who have been understudied in this literature. In the next sections, we discuss each of the components of feedback-seeking behavior with a focus on social identity, initial insights, and areas for future research consideration.

Antecedents to Feedback Seeking

Motives, costs, and values Generally regarded as the primary determinant of feedback-seeking behavior, the cost-value framework of feedback seeking posits that employees make a conscious assessment of the associated costs and values (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015). The potential of race being uniquely associated with costs and values has not been considered. Underlying this cost-value analysis are the seeker's motives for seeking feedback, which are seen as an instrumental motive to achieve a goal, an ego-based motive to protect one's ego, or image-based motive to affect how one appears to others (Ashford et al., 2003). We assert that evaluation of motives may operate differently for employees of color than current research based on mainly White samples would suggest.

For instance, research finds that individuals holding instrumental motives seek feedback because they believe it has high informational value and will help them achieve their goals. Employees of color may have particularly high instrumental motives: navigating job demands in an environment where they feel they are held to more stringent standards can result in increased uncertainty and role ambiguity and a greater perceived need for feedback information (Thompson, Neville, Weathers, & Poston, 1990). Typically, employees with high instrumental motives and in uncertain situations would be thought to engage in frequent active feedback seeking (Morrison & Cummings, 1992), but this may not be true for employees of color who face additional barriers between motives and seeking feedback.

Shedding more light on this, one study on feedback seeking in multinational corporations hypothesized that those who were distinct from the workplace culture would have more to learn in terms of acceptable behavior and would be more likely to seek feedback, but results found no relationship between cultural distance, conceptualized by overall difference in the cultural values of each country, and feedback seeking via inquiry or monitoring (Gupta, Govindarajan, & Malhotra, 1999). This could imply that while there is greater value in the feedback information, those benefits are neutralized by increased perceptions of costs in terms of effort, inference, and face loss, although this has not been directly assessed (Gupta et al., 1999). Applying this to employees of color in predominantly White workplaces, prior research suggests that the cultural difference results in greater value of and desire for information (i.e., instrumental motives). However, we argue this motive may not relate to feedback seeking as strongly as it does for White employees because the greater value is offset by additional perceived barriers and higher perceptions of costs.

Another established finding is that hearing information about oneself can be threatening, and individuals with ego-based motives will avoid or discount feedback that disrupts a positive self-view, even if the information is needed to strive toward work-related goals (Baumeister, 1991). This motive may be less relevant for employees of color, who conceptualize their self-view at work differently, such that work-related feedback may not be as threatening to one's ego. Research has demonstrated that employees of color distinguish their culture from the

White-dominant culture in organizations and often feel the need to suppress their racial identity at both surface levels such as in their dress and deeper levels such as who they associate with (Thomas & Alderfer, 1989). Alternating between the two different cultures as needed, employees of color may compartmentalize their identities. One study on how career-oriented Black women manage their bicultural identities found they report seeing themselves as living in two contexts, one Black and one White. They revealed a large extent of compartmentalization, as their networks consisted of subgroups that were closed off from one another, with sharp boundaries between their work and their personal worlds (Bell, 1990). As a result, employees of color may be less sensitive to information that would tend to be threatening to others, due to reliance on coping strategies such as identity compartmentalization to fit into White workplaces, suggesting feedback about the "work self" may not have bearing on one's overall self-image (Bell, 1990).

Further, asking for feedback reveals a level of ignorance which may be interpreted as a sign of insecurity or incompetence (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Individuals with image-based motives have a desire to be perceived favorably by others and this leads to less intentions of direct feedback seeking in favor of more indirect forms (Fedor, Mathieson, & Adams, 1990). Employees of color would be expected to be high on this motive with concerns of impression management (i.e., stereotype threat) and self-presentation, due to general distrust of the work environment. These propositions suggest that future research examine how motives, and the relationship between motives and feedback seeking, may differ as a function of social identity.

Contextual factors Aside from individual factors, researchers have identified several relevant contextual factors that serve as antecedents to feedback-seeking behavior. Organizational culture affects how acceptable it is to seek feedback (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992). Perceived organizational support (POS) is one component that can promote feedback seeking; this involves creating a culture where people feel the organization is actively invested in their employees and wants to help them succeed. POS can make employees feel welcome to seek feedback and neutralize possible image costs and lessen their feelings of risk (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998).

In addition to these considerations, another important factor is organizational diversity climate, defined as employee behaviors and attitudes grounded in perceptions of the organizational context related to diversity and inclusion (Mor Barak, Cherin, & Berkman, 1998). Dimensions include the extent to which diverse input is valued in decision-making and the extent to which feedback is provided fairly, regardless of an employee's race. Diversity climate has positive performance outcomes for employees of color, and this effect is mediated by psychological safety (McKay & Avery, 2015; Singh, Winkel, & Selvarajan, 2013). This highlights the importance of employees feeling comfortable to be themselves without fear of negative or biased judgments.

Employees of color place greater value on their employer's efforts to promote diversity, such that a favorable climate that makes employees feel valued would also allow them to feel comfortable seeking feedback (Kossek & Zonia, 1993). Employees' racial identity can also affect how diversity climate is perceived: a study by Watts and Carter (1991) found that Black employees lower in racial identity had more favorable views of organizational racial climate, while those higher in racial identity had more negative views of the climate. This suggests that more rigorous culture changes may be needed to foster a diversity climate that those high in racial identity will find favorable. Although feedback is mentioned as a key mechanism through which the effects of diversity climate occur (Cox, 1994), research has not yet conceptualized diversity climate as an antecedent of feedback seeking or empirically tested this relationship.

Leadership Supervisors hold a key role in feedback seeking, and there are many components to discuss in considering how supervisor characteristics shape the context of feedback-seeking behavior for employees of color. The quality of the relationship with one's supervisor can greatly enhance or diminish the likelihood of subordinates seeking feedback. Interracial dyads in which an employee of color reports to a White supervisor are likely the most frequent instance. These dyads may have a less favorable relationship quality, which can hold subordinates back from seeking needed feedback. Research on interpersonal interactions between participants of color and White participants with implicit prejudice suggests there may be a mismatch in interracial dyads between how the supervisor and subordinate view their interactions. This imbalance can have negative consequences if subordinates view the relationship as unfavorable, while supervisors, unaware of this, take no action to improve it (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002).

Two aspects of the supervisor-subordinate relationship quality are leader-member exchange (LMX) and interpersonal trust. LMX is considered a relationship-based approach to leadership, defined as the quality of exchange and support in vertical dyads (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In conceptualizing the development of LMX in demographically dissimilar dyads, researchers have drawn on similarity-attraction theory. Per this theory, supervisors and subordinates who see themselves as alike will see each other's behavior as predictable and feel more comfortable with one another (Byrne, 1971). Research conceptualizing similarity in terms of race has found racially similar dyads report higher LMX quality and interpersonal trust as rated by subordinates (Pelled & Xin, 2000).

Of course, not all racially dissimilar dyads will have low-quality relationships; Uhl-Bien (2003) argued that individuals who have the interpersonal skills necessary to build effective and lasting work relationships will be best equipped to overcome the "unfavorable context" created by an interracial dyad. Specifically, skills in self-presentation and communication should be most beneficial (Uhl-Bien, 2003). Political skill has been identified as one way these skills can manifest, which is thought to help subordinates because of their social astuteness and ability to exert influence in maintaining work relationships (Brouer, Duke, Treadway, & Ferris, 2009).

These ideas were examined in a study that replicated the negative effect of racial dissimilarity on LMX quality and found the effect was moderated by political skill, such that subordinates in mixed-race dyads that were high in political skill reported the same levels of LMX as those in same-race dyads (Brouer et al., 2009). Future research can examine the impact of political skill of the supervisor, as a sole focus on the subordinate runs the risk of placing the "solution" to effective intergroup relations in the hands of the subordinates who tend to be employees of color. People of color already feel they carry the burden of making White people comfortable with them to have a chance at being treated fairly (Thomas & Alderfer, 1989).

A limitation of the literature on LMX is that evaluations of the relationship are almost always captured from only one perspective and assume one member's view (typically the subordinate) is sufficient to describe the LMX quality of the dyad. Research that does account for both perspectives has demonstrated that positive relationships between LMX and outcomes (such as engagement and citizenship behavior) are strengthened when leaders and subordinates agree on LMX but weakened when there is low agreement (Matta, Scott, Koopman, & Conlon, 2015). This approach of utilizing LMX agreement could be applied to test several research questions: Is LMX agreement lower on average for racially dissimilar dyads? Does LMX agreement moderate the extent to which LMX promotes feedback seeking?

Trust has been identified as an important factor in whether an employee will seek feedback from a source (Hays & Williams, 2011). A subordinate's trust in their supervisor is determined as the employee's overall propensity to trust, as well as judgments of the target's perceived ability to provide useful feedback and intention to provide feedback with integrity (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). In evaluating a supervisor's ability to provide useful feedback, employees of color may believe that stereotypes and bias will influence judgments of their performance (Roberson et al., 2003). This perception is likely based in reality – as research reveals that White supervisors are uncomfortable delivering negative feedback to Black subordinates out of fear that supervisors will be perceived as racist and therefore may give false feedback or avoid it altogether (Cox, 1994). Since negative feedback is more diagnostic and useful for performance improvement, employees of color may learn over time that they do not gain useful information from White feedback sources, diminishing trust.

Employees of color may also enter a relationship with their supervisor with lower levels of trust due to cultural mistrust from previous history with prejudice and discrimination in general (Thompson et al., 1990). It is likely that racial identity could play a moderating role here as well: those high in racial identity may have developed a more pronounced cultural mistrust compared to those lower in racial identity. There are clear barriers for employees of color developing effective relationships with White supervisors, especially regarding trust. However, it should also be viewed as an opportunity to foster trust which can directly benefit the overall relationship and promotion of feedback seeking. The development of multicultural competence may play a key role in overcoming this trust deficit (Chrobot-Mason and Ruderman, 200 4).

Feedback seeking Employees can engage in several strategies to seek feedback: inquiry, an explicit verbal request, is the most direct method (Ashford et al., 2003).

Alternatively, individuals engage in monitoring by noting situational cues and observing how others respond to their behavior (Ashford, 1986). Feedback inquiry has the potential to result in the most informational value because recipients typically get a straightforward response, but it is associated with greater perceived costs; people want to present themselves as confident and asking for feedback reveals vulnerability. Individuals weigh the costs and values and typically seek feedback via inquiry if the informational value is high or monitoring if costs are high (Ashford et al., 2003). Monitoring is an indirect method of obtaining feedback information, which involves assessing the environment and peers for indications of how one is doing and what others think of them (Ashford et al., 2003). This method can have lower image costs but more inference costs in extrapolating what the cues mean about one's performance. There is lower value in the feedback because individuals can extract inaccurate information; its nature makes it prone to miscommunications and misinterpretations.

When considering how race can affect the use of these different methods, Roberson et al. (2003) conducted the only study examining this, observing Black managers experiencing stereotype threat used inquiry to the same extent but monitoring more. One possible explanation suggests employees of color can have trouble obtaining candid negative feedback and may see the information they obtain from inquiry as less accurate and useful (Lovelace & Rosen, 1996), which results in reliance on monitoring and reading nonverbal cues to get a better sense of accurate performance information. Future research should work to replicate and clarify the mechanisms of this discrepancy.

Another explanation of why employees of color would rely on monitoring more than inquiry is due to the way they manage and compartmentalize their identities. Employees of color may feel that they need to present differently to navigate their work and social life, which can lead to feelings of estrangement from both identities (Bell, 1990). Often, employees of color feel they need to work harder to get the same level of respect as their White colleagues; one way to cope with this may be through vigilance which can take the form of monitoring.

The target of feedback seeking can also vary depending on antecedent factors. If seeking for instrumental motives, for example, employees are more likely to approach more credible sources such as supervisors over peers (Ashford et al., 2003). For employees of color, the person they see as most credible may not be a supervisor, but instead someone they see as a source of support might be trusted to give authentic feedback, which could be a peer or subordinate.

Outcomes Outcomes of FSB are unique in that they are largely dependent on the feedback message itself, which can vary independent of other aspects of the model. Theoretically, since the instrumental purposes of seeking are to reduce uncertainty and attain goals, feedback should result in improved performance and satisfaction. The link between feedback seeking and outcomes is derived from associated increases in role clarity, learning, and motivation (Ilgen, Fisher, and Taylor, 1979). Anseel and colleagues' (2015) meta-analysis demonstrated that feedback seeking was positively related to job satisfaction but unrelated to job performance.

A unique challenge for employees of color is the tendency for these employees to more easily discount negative feedback, which may weaken the relationships between feedback seeking and intended outcomes. Negative feedback is often perceived as being due to bias, while positive feedback is being due to a desire to appear unbiased (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991). In fact, research has observed a positive feedback bias, such that White raters give overly positive reviews to Black employees due to self-presentation and social desirability concerns (Carver, Glass, & Katz, 1978; Harber, 1998). One solution may be training in how to provide useful feedback to employees of color. Employees of color may also be sensitive to the perceived motives behind feedback messages, resulting in a stronger relationship between perceived motives of the feedback source and the individuals' response.

Future Research Directions

The proposed conceptual model offers intriguing possibilities for more inclusive research and practice in feedback processes. To develop a more complete understanding of feedback-seeking behavior that accounts for the realities of a diverse workforce, both quantitative and qualitative research is needed. The propositions stated throughout this paper are meant to facilitate future empirical work utilizing this perspective. Given the interpersonal nature of feedback seeking and giving, future research should examine additional relational antecedents (i.e., perceived similarity, liking, etc.) that may attenuate the costs associated with feedback seeking for employees of color. Given that feedback environment is usually measured with the supervisor as the target (Dahling & O'Malley, 2011), much less is known about the social, contextual factors that lead individuals to seek feedback from other targets such as their peers and the potential ramifications for organizations. This could be particularly interesting given that seeking feedback laterally (i.e., from peers) is typically associated with fewer costs.

As previously noted, demographic differences in feedback seeking have begun to receive research attention in recent years (Ashford et al., 2016). However, this research has been sparse. This chapter introduces social identity theory as a lens to view feedback exchanges and, in particular, to understand the unique experience of employees of color. In addition to race, other demographic characteristics such as age, gender, and sexual orientation, as well as the intersections of those identities, can also be examined through the lens of social identity theory. While feedback-seeking strategies utilized by employees may differ as a function of age (Finkelstein, Kulas, & Dages, 2003), a social identity theory perspective might reveal age-related differences where older workers receive less useful feedback due to stereotypes. For example, age biases can result in younger employees being targeted more for developmental feedback that can aid future career opportunities (Rosen & Jerdee, 1977).

How gender relates to feedback processes can also be understood in terms of social identity. Miller and Karakowsky (2005) found that the gender of the feedback seeker, the gender composition of the team, and the gendered nature of the task all influence feedback seeking. Despite major strides in a number of professional roles, women remain a minority in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) occupations due to social structural factors (Miner et al., 2018). In these occupations where women, particularly women of color, are less visible, resulting in uniquely challenging work experiences (Flores, 2018), the influence of social identity theory and categorization may be particularly salient in feedback processes. Future research should further examine the role of occupation and gender role congruity as it relates to social identification and related feedback processes.

Finally, while sexual orientation is largely considered an “invisible” identity, following self-disclosure or perceived group status, LGBTQ+ individuals may be subsequently relegated to an out-group. Due to their out-group status, sexual minorities tend to have markedly different work experiences compared to their heterosexual counterparts. Specifically, sexual minorities are likely to encounter different work experiences resulting from heterosexism experienced in the workplace. Sexual orientation only becomes visible when these individuals communicate it via the “coming out” process (Ragins, 2004). As a result, LGBTQ+ employees face an ongoing and often challenging process of negotiating their invisible identity in the workplace (Ragins, 2004). These employees, in particular, may rely on feedback-seeking processes to gather social information regarding the supportiveness of the environment. LGBTQ+ employees are likely to rely on indirect forms of information seeking to note varying situational cues (i.e., overhearing heterosexist jokes). Future research should examine the unique costs and benefits of feedback seeking for sexual minorities along with the ways in which these individuals seek information that informs their disclosure at work.

While we discuss the groups of race, gender, age, and sexual orientation in isolation due to the absence of research on each of these topics, it is important to note that intersectional approaches, addressing how multiple identities coexist and their effect on work experiences, are also needed in future work. This perspective can reveal trends that are not clear by focusing on one group or identity at a time; for instance, women of color tend to fall into a position of “double jeopardy” because of gender and racial hierarchies that persist in society (Crenshaw, 1991). Experimental or quasi-experimental designs may not be possible to test these proposed relationships in organizations, but longitudinal designs with several measures collected at multiple times can be helpful in increasing our understanding of these social identities and feedback-seeking processes over time.

Practical Implications and Potential Areas of Intervention

While the feedback literature has not extensively attended to the effects of race, a few areas stand out as promising starting points for promoting more effective feedback dynamics (see Table 8.2).

Table 8.2 Summary of practice recommendations/areas for intervention

1. Fostering multiculturalism can promote effective interpersonal interactions, a more inclusive diversity climate, and subsequent positive attitudinal outcomes.
2. Encourage managers to reflect on their own racial identity through implicit bias awareness and training for multicultural competence, including conflict management, interpersonal communication, and feedback delivery.
3. The experience of discomfort in interracial interactions can lead to avoidance of interaction with people of color. Awareness of this discomfort is a first step and supports the efficacy of interventions in promoting more effective interracial encounters.
4. Providing clearly defined social scripts (with norms and cues to guide appropriate speech and behavior) can lower anxiety and nonverbal cues of discomfort of White individuals approaching interracial interactions.
5. Providing informal opportunities for interracial interaction can foster the development and practice of behavioral scripts in interracial interactions.
6. Promoting the ethnic identity development of White employees allows for a better understanding of the privileges afforded to individuals due to their race and facilitates a development of multicultural competence.
7. Interventions targeted at fostering supportive feedback environments should create a social context in which all employees feel comfortable engaging in informal, day-to-day feedback exchanges.
8. Employees of color can learn to reframe feedback, while considering the feedback source's motives and desire to affirm group-based power differences. External coaches may be able to assist employees of color in evaluating feedback objectively.
9. By providing their evaluators with unambiguous information about their performance, employees of color may be able to reduce the potential effects of bias.

Promoting Multiculturalism

Organizational success depends on people of different backgrounds effectively working together. This goal is supported by a culture of multiculturalism that values racial differences and deals openly with diversity issues. Multicultural organizations foster more effective interpersonal interactions, a more inclusive diversity climate, and other positive attitudinal outcomes (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009). It is not dysfunctional in and of itself for employees of color to report to a White supervisor. Having a White supervisor who has anxiety interacting with people of color, who has not reflected on their own racial identity, and who has not developed multicultural competence, however, will often result in an unfavorable relationship and negative career outcomes for employees of color (Chrobot-Mason & Thomas, 2002; Thomas, Willis, & Davis, 2007).

Leaders can spearhead initiatives dealing with both perceptions and behavior toward others and self-reflection for those in dominant positions. This could take the form of raising awareness of implicit biases and providing training for multicultural competence. Specifically, multicultural competence training includes content areas of conflict management, interpersonal communication, and feedback delivery (Chrobot-Mason & Ruderman, 2004). Companies can seek to make tangible the detrimental effects of biased evaluations, for example, by showing how specific talented employees of color have been lost due to bias. Promoting multiculturalism can serve as a first step in changing people's assumptions and stereotypes.

Encouraging Self-Awareness and Intergroup Interaction

Reflection and self-awareness are other important components of promoting effective intergroup relations. It is well established that White Americans feel discomfort in interracial interactions, and anxiety leads Whites to avoid interacting with people of color, particularly Black individuals (Dovidio, Kawakami, and Gaertner, 2002; Plant & Devine, 2003). Awareness of this discomfort is a first step in working toward productive interracial encounters. As for interventions, one study conducted by Avery, Richeson, Hebl, and Ambady (2009) supports the efficacy of providing clearly defined social scripts, which provide information about norms and cues to guide appropriate speech and behavior. They found that White individuals approaching Black-White interactions with scripts had significantly less anxiety and nonverbal cues indicating discomfort (Avery et al., 2009). Organizations can foster opportunities for interracial interaction in which White employees can develop and practice behavioral scripts.

Promoting the ethnic identity development of White employees may be another way to do this; understanding the privileges afforded to individuals due to their race facilitates a development of multicultural competence (Helms, 1990). Indeed, a study on this topic found that White participants with higher levels of identity development had more favorable reactions to interacting with Black colleagues than those with lower levels of identity development (Block, Roberson, & Neuger, 1995). While telling, future research should investigate whether Black partners also rate their interactions with racially identified White partners more favorably.

Employee-Driven Interventions

Another approach suggests that employees of color can find ways to effectively deal with the potential of biased feedback. However, this puts the onus on employees of color to separate the information provided into valuable feedback and information that reflects the source's biases and, hence, does not truly address the underlying problems. Nonetheless, one avenue of intervention is that employees of color can learn to reframe the feedback and to consider the feedback source's motives as well as the source's desire to affirm group-based power differences (Bear et al., 2017). Among other benefits, external coaches may be able to assist employees of color in evaluating feedback objectively and dissecting pertinent information (Gregory & Levy, 2012).

Employees belonging to underrepresented groups may also improve feedback exchanges by providing their evaluators with unambiguous information about their performance as much as possible. Structured free recall interventions attempt to reduce biases by asking raters to recall specific behaviors rather than relying on their own judgments (Baltes et al., 2007). These interventions rest on the notion that the reliance on specific behavior mitigates the potential effects of bias; this method has proven effective in reducing bias against employees of color (Baltes et al., 2007) and women (Anderson et al., 2015; Bauer & Baltes, 2002). In the context of feedback seeking, employees can frame their seeking efforts in terms of specific behavioral instances of past performance.

Conclusion

Feedback seeking is a complex process with various influencing factors. The present chapter highlights assumptions and areas of opportunity to continue developing an understanding of feedback seeking and its antecedents and outcomes through the lens of social identity theory. With a particular focus on race, the model we developed led to propositions revealing important differences with respect to the feedback-seeking process likely experienced by employees of color. This integration offers intriguing possibilities for more inclusive research and practice in feedback in organizations. A critical examination of feedback processes through the lens of social identity offers a starting point for a better understanding of the unique experiences of underrepresented groups and a means to address the use of feedback as a power retention mechanism. Finally, based on the knowledge we have thus far, areas of intervention were identified with the intention of facilitating the full participation of employees of all backgrounds.

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Chapter 9
Using a Training Intervention to Improve the Feedback Environment

James R. Gallo and Lisa A. Steelman

Managers are increasingly being called upon to coach subordinates to higher performance. Coaching has become an important skill for managers and has been incorporated into managerial competency models and expectations of managerial behavior (Peterson, 2009). New models of performance management emphasize this approach to coaching and communication in addition to, or in place of, once-a-year performance appraisals (Pulakos, Mueller Hanson, Arad, & Moye, 2015). To facilitate this process of ongoing feedback, managers are encouraged to promote a favorable culture for feedback, also referred to as a favorable feedback environment (Chawala, Gabriel, Dahling, & Patel, 2016; Levy, Tseng, Rosen, & Lueke, 2017). To meet this need, numerous authors have called for a better understanding of approaches to train managers in how to cultivate a favorable feedback environment in their work group (Dahling & O'Malley, 2011; Levy et al., 2017; Steelman, Levy, & Snell, 2004). In this chapter we examine the impact of a training intervention to improve employee perceptions of their supervisor's feedback environment.

The feedback environment refers to the workplace context surrounding the provision, receipt, and use of informal feedback (Steelman et al., 2004). Similarly, London and Smither (2002) refer to a strong feedback environment, which they term feedback culture, as one in which employees routinely receive, solicit, and use feedback to improve their job performance. Supervisors promote a favorable feedback environment within their units through providing high-quality feedback, both positive and negative, that is justified, timely, and dispersed in an empathetic and tactful manner. The supervisor feedback environment is assessed with the feedback environment scale which measures the supervisor's

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credibility and expertise to provide feedback, the quality, utility, and timeliness of the supervisor's feedback, the tact and compassion with which the supervisor delivers feedback, the extent to which both positive and negative/constructive feedback are provided when warranted, and how comfortable employees feel when asking their supervisor for feedback (Steelman et al., 2004).

Research has consistently found a relationship between the feedback environment and outcomes desirable to both individuals and organizations. Supportive feedback environments have been linked to supervisor ratings of employee task performance through greater feedback-seeking behavior and improved role clarity (Dahling, Chau, & O'Malley, 2012) and through enhanced morale (Rosen, Levy, & Hall, 2006). Employees working in supportive feedback environments are more likely to display organizational citizenship behaviors than are employees working in less supportive feedback environments (Norris-Watts & Levy, 2004; Peng, Tseng, & Lee, 2011). Supportive feedback environments have also been linked to a number of workplace attitudes and motivational states including lower perceptions of organizational politics (Rosen et al., 2006), higher-quality LMX (Anseel & Lievens, 2007), stronger affective commitment (Norris-Watts & Levy, 2004), greater job satisfaction (Dahling, Gabriel, & MacGowan, 2017; Steelman et al., 2004), and enhanced psychological empowerment (Gabriel, Frantz, Levy, & Hilliard, 2014). The feedback environment has also been associated with well-being outcomes. For instance, Dahling et al. (2017) found a high-quality feedback environment was related to lower levels of emotional exhaustion and Sparr and Sonnentag (2008) found that those who experienced a favorable feedback environment reported less helplessness, job depression, and job anxiety.

Although studies have demonstrated the positive impact of the feedback environment, little is yet known about how to intervene to shape the feedback environment (Levy & Thompson, 2010). It is clear that managers can be trained on how to give feedback in general (Heslin, Vandewalle, & Latham, 2006; London, 2003), but we do not yet know how or if we can train managers to promote a favorable feedback environment. Although little work has been done in this area, several authors have suggested that supervisors can be trained to foster a favorable feedback environment (e.g., Chawala et al., 2016; Dahling et al., 2017; Sparr & Sonnentag, 2008; Steelman et al., 2004). For instance, London and Smither (2002) suggest a number of organizational practices that can improve the feedback culture including training supervisor on how to set standards and provide useful feedback, training and rewarding supervisors for coaching employees, and encouraging informal, ongoing provision and use of feedback. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to describe the nature and impact of a training program designed to positively influence the supervisor feedback environment. The training intervention and research discussed in this chapter answers calls to better understand how to promote more effective feedback processes in organizations (Pulakos et al., 2015).

Feedback Environment Training

For this study, we designed a feedback environment training intervention for supervisors. The training program consisted of two half-day sessions with a homework assignment in between. For the homework, trainees applied the skills they learned within their own work groups and brought written reflections with them to the second half-day training session, during which the trainer led a discussion of the trainees' experiences. The two sessions were conducted over the course of 2 weeks. The goal of the training was to enhance trainees' knowledge of the components of a favorable environment for feedback, as well as how to apply this information to their own work groups. The training program was designed using concepts of active learning and guided exploration which have been shown to improve training effectiveness (Bell & Kozlowski, 2008). Formal training design elements, including case studies, role plays, and practice with feedback, were incorporated throughout the program. Splitting the session into two half days and requiring trainees to practice what they learned back on the job was intended to enhance learning, transfer of training, and strategic knowledge, defined as knowing when and how to apply a specific knowledge or skill (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). Both positive and negative experiences encountered during the homework (i.e., error management, Keith & Frese, 2008) were discussed. Given the interpersonal nature of feedback processes, throughout the training, attention was also directed toward self-regulation (self-monitoring and self-efficacy) as well as emotion management (Bell & Kozlowski, 2008). Overall, best practices in applied training design were incorporated into the development of the training intervention (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012).

The goal of the feedback environment training was to positively impact supervisor behavior aligned with all seven facets of the feedback environment. The first dimension of the feedback environment is *supervisor credibility*. Supervisor credibility refers to an employee's perception of the competence and trustworthiness of the feedback source. Employees are more likely to accept and use feedback from their supervisor when they view the supervisor as a credible source for feedback (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979; Steelman & Rutkowski, 2004). Consistency between a supervisor's words and actions is also a critical component of credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Therefore, the feedback environment training intervention was designed to educate supervisors on the importance of maintaining credibility and being viewed as a credible source of feedback. For instance, the training discussed the value of fully understanding a subordinate's job responsibilities and trained supervisors to set clear performance expectations, reduce biases, and follow through on commitments.

The second dimension of the feedback environment is *feedback quality*. Training on this dimension covered all the evidence-based aspects of high-quality feedback (London, 2003) such as how to give feedback that is specific and consistent and that provides information across time on behaviors and processes pertinent to performance outcomes. Supervisors also learned how to identify gaps in performance and coach employees to close those gaps. The third dimension of the feedback environment is *feedback delivery* and refers to using consideration and tact that takes into account the receiver's reaction, when providing feedback. For instance, Young, Richard, Moukarzel, Steelman, and Gentry (2017) demonstrated that subordinates have more favorable reactions to leaders who provide negative feedback with empathic concern as opposed to leaders who do not. The authors recommend that leaders be trained on how to communicate their understanding and concern for their subordinate's well-being during the provision of feedback. Therefore, for training this dimension, supervisors were coached on the use of emotional intelligence, empathy, and perspective taking when delivering feedback.

The fourth and fifth dimensions of the feedback environment deal with providing *accurate positive and negative feedback* on an ongoing basis. Positive feedback is motivational and lets employees know what they are doing well. Negative feedback is the opportunity to redirect employee behaviors to improve job performance. Research has shown that employees value both positive and negative feedback if it is provided constructively (Steelman & Rutkowski, 2004) and that employee who receive constructive feedback feel more respected and perceive greater developmental opportunities (Sommer & Kulkarni, 2012). For this dimension, supervisors were trained on the importance of balance between positive and negative feedback, how to identify both positive and negative instances of job performance, and how to not rely on just positive or just negative feedback when coaching subordinates.

The fifth dimension of the feedback environment is *source availability*. Source availability refers to the accessibility of the feedback source. In this dimension, supervisors learned that feedback once a year, positive or negative, is not likely to have much impact on long-term performance. This aligns with the timeliness dimension of the feedback process (Ilgen et al., 1979). Supervisors who occasionally offer feedback will eventually seem disconnected from an employee's daily activities. Feedback discussions that are more regular help both parties understand the expectations and developmental areas (London, 2003). Additionally, the supervisor who provides regular feedback is in a better position to praise or offer developmental suggestions that are closer in time to the behavior references which is more likely to be attended to and accepted (Kinicki, Prussia, Wu, & McKee-Ryan, 2004). Feedback should not be a surprise on an annual review. Instead, the annual review should be a recap of previous conversations that occurred throughout the year. Being available for employees to receive feedback is the first step in guiding them to reach their goals.

The final dimension of the feedback environment is *promotion of feedback seeking* and refers to the extent to which employees are encouraged and rewarded for seeking feedback and the extent to which they are comfortable asking others for performance information. Feedback seeking is a critical component of performance improvement (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015). However, some requests for feedback result in no response or a maladaptive response from the supervisor, which will inhibit future seeking. Some research suggests that supervisors should be trained to understand a subordinate's motives for feedback seeking and respond in kind (De Stobbeleir, Ashford, & de Luque, 2010). For instance, feedback information sought because of an instrumental motive may rightly elicit a different response than feedback sought to protect one's ego (ego defense) or public image (image defense) (Ashford, Blatt, & Walle, 2003). A supervisor's supportive behavior should increase feedback-seeking frequency (VandeWalle, Ganesan, Challagalla, & Brown, 2000). However, research has been surprisingly silent on understanding what constitutes a constructive response to subordinate feedback-seeking behaviors. Training in this dimension first identified and discussed the importance of feedback seeking in general. Then the training instructed supervisors on how to create an environment in which employees feel comfortable asking for feedback by encouraging their employees to ask questions without the threat of reprisal.

A total of 31 supervisors from a government contracting company participated in the feedback environment training. There were three data collection points – pre-training, 2 weeks post-training, and 4 weeks post-training. Thirty-nine subordinates completed a measure of the feedback environment (Steelman et al., 2004) at all three data collection points, using a 7-point Likert-type agreement scale. We predicted that subordinate perceptions of their supervisor feedback environment would be higher at the two post-training assessments, as compared to the pretraining assessment.

Feedback-Seeking Frequency

Research prior to Ashford and Cummings (1983) focused on feedback in a relatively passive way, as something given to employees. Ashford and Cummings (1983) suggested that employees are not passive recipients of feedback but rather actively seek out job performance feedback. Feedback seeking is a dynamic process in which employees will actively seek or avoid feedback information (Brutus & Greguras, 2008). Previous research has supported that proactive feedback seeking is an important resource to both individual and organizational outcomes including job satisfaction, employee learning, and motivation (Whitaker, Dahling, & Levy, 2007).

The favorability of the feedback environment is related to feedback-seeking frequency (Anseel et al., 2015; Whitaker et al., 2007) and when the environment obstructs feedback, negative perceptions, and reduced feedback-seeking result (Walsh, Ashford, & Hill, 1985). For instance, supportive environments may encourage feedback seeking by reducing the threat to an individual's public image (Levy, Cober, & Miller, 2002). Alternatively, an unfavorable feedback environment may suppress feedback seeking when destructive feedback is provided in public. Feedback seeking is often a rational, cost-benefit decision, and when there is a supportive feedback source and feedback is provided with appropriate consideration for a recipient's ego and public image, feedback seeking is more frequent (Williams, Miller, Steelman, & Levy, 1999).

Since our training was designed to improve the feedback environment, we predicted that individuals who perceive a favorable feedback environment post-training will be more inclined to seek feedback post-training than they were pretraining. Therefore, subordinate feedback seeking was measured using the scale developed by Williams and Johnson (2000) prior to the feedback environment training and 4 weeks post-training. This measure was assessed on a 6-point scale ranging from never to always.

Feedback Orientation

London and Smither (2002) define feedback orientation as “a construct consisting of multiple dimensions that work together additively to determine an individual’s overall receptivity to feedback and the extent to which the individual welcomes guidance and coaching” (p.82–13). They contend that individuals with a favorable feedback orientation will be receptive to job performance feedback in general, seek feedback more often, process feedback thoughtfully, value feedback, and feel accountable to act on feedback. In cross-sectional studies, feedback orientation has been positively related to feedback-seeking frequency and the feedback environment (Dahling et al., 2012; Linderbaum & Levy, 2010). Furthermore, managers with higher feedback orientation are viewed as better coaches and as promoting a more favorable feedback environment than are managers with lower feedback orientation (Steelman & Wolfeld, 2018).

While an individual’s feedback orientation is generally viewed as stable, it can be influenced (to some extent) by individual or environmental change efforts over time (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010). London and Smither (2002) suggest that the relationship between the feedback environment and an individual’s feedback orientation is ongoing and cyclical such that as employees have positive experiences with feedback in their work environment, their receptivity to feedback in general is likely to increase, and as employees become more receptive to feedback, their supervisors will be more willing to provide feedback and thus cultivate an even more favorable feedback environment. Thus, an individual’s feedback orientation and the feedback culture within which they are embedded are mutually reinforcing. However, there are currently no studies that examine feedback environment and feedback orientation over time. Therefore, in the current study we did two things. First, we assessed supervisor feedback orientation using Linderbaum and Levy’s measure (2010) (using a 7-point Likert-type agreement scale) prior to the training as a control variable; we also assessed supervisor feedback orientation post-training to examine the extent to which the training impacted supervisor feedback orientation. Second, we measured employee feedback orientation pre- and post-training to examine whether an improved feedback environment impacts employee feedback orientation.

Results and Discussion

Thirty-one supervisors from a small government contracting organization attended the feedback environment training program. Thirty-nine subordinates participated at all three data collection time points, and eight supervisors had more than one subordinate participate. Sixty-two percent of the subordinate participants were female, 44% were between the ages of 46 to 55, and 59% had been with the organization for 10 or more years.

Because the number of supervisors and employees participating in the study was small, formal statistical analyses were not conducted. Means are presented to demonstrate trends in the data. The overall supervisor feedback environment score improved slightly from Time 1 (*M*, 5.41; *SD*, 0.84) to Time 2 (*M*, 5.45; *SD*, 0.77) and Time 3 (*M*, 5.44; *SD*, 0.84). The supervisor feedback environment scores at Time 1 (pretraining) ranged from 3.0 to 6.86, on a 7-point Likert-type scale, indicating supervisors in this organization promote feedback environments with different levels of favorability. In light of this, Time 1 pretraining feedback environment scores were trichotomized into low ($n = 13$), moderate ($n = 12$), and high scores ($n = 14$) to reexamine change over time. With this approach, the only meaningful change in feedback environment scores was for the group reporting an unfavorable feedback environment at Time 1, their feedback environment improved from Time 1 (*M*, 4.49) to Time 2 (*M*, 4.73), and then declined slightly at Time 3 (*M*, 4.57). Therefore, the results indicate that subordinates reported an improved feedback environment 2 weeks after their supervisor attended the feedback environment training, only when they initially reported a relatively unfavorable initial feedback environment. The improvement, however, was not sustained to 4 weeks after training, suggesting the supervisors may not have maintained their favorable feedback environment behaviors. Those reporting an average or favorable feedback environment initially did not report a change in their feedback environment after their supervisor attended the training. These results are consistent with arguments suggesting there are different profiles of the feedback environment and more research is needed to better understand the antecedents of these profiles (Dahling et al., 2017; Steelman et al., 2004).

Employee self-report of feedback seeking from their supervisor was assessed prior to supervisor feedback environment training and at Time 3, 4 weeks after training was completed. Overall, feedback-seeking frequency improved from Time 1 (*M*, 2.49; *SD*, 0.73) to Time 3 (*M*, 2.64; *SD*, 0.81). After trichotomizing feedback environment at Time 1 into thirds, those initially reporting a low or unfavorable feedback environment had the largest increase in feedback seeking from Time 1 (*M*, 2.54) to Time 3 (*M*, 2.78). In other words, those reporting an unfavorable baseline feedback environment were most likely to have increased feedback-seeking frequency after supervisor training. These results are consistent with research linking the feedback environment to feedback-seeking frequency (e.g., Dahling et al., 2017) and provide some evidence of the causal effect of the feedback environment on feedback seeking.

Subordinate feedback orientation scores were measured at Time 1 (*M*, 5.63; *SD*, 0.72) and Time 3 (*M*, 5.68; *SD*, 0.59) and did not change, nor was there a meaningful change over time for employees at different initial levels of the feedback environment. This indicates that although the feedback environment improved for those with unfavorable baseline feedback environment, there was no corresponding improvement of subordinate feedback orientation, contrary to London and Smither's (2002) predictions. The feedback environment improved initially 2 weeks after training, but this improvement was not sustained to 4 weeks after training. It may be that feedback orientation will not increase unless there is a sustained improvement in feedback environment.

It is worthwhile to note that the supervisor's own feedback orientation slightly declined from Time 1 (*M*, 5.48; *SD*, 0.60) to Time 2 (*M*, 5.17; *SD*, 0.60) which suggests that the feedback environment training did not simply impact the supervisor's own appreciation for feedback. Furthermore, supervisor's own feedback orientation was unrelated to the feedback environment they promote (Time 1 $r = 0.08$, ns; Time 2 $r = -0.09$, ns). The goal of the feedback environment training intervention was to train supervisors on what a favorable feedback environment is like and how to achieve it. Our results suggest it is possible to do this without simply driving change in supervisors' own receptivity to feedback. These results are consistent with the notion that feedback orientation is a relatively stable trait that may not be impacted in the short term (Dahling et al., 2012).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of a training intervention to improve the supervisor feedback environment. The results indicate that it is possible to train supervisors on the seven dimensions of the feedback environment to promote a favorable feedback environment and that training had the most impact on supervisors who initially were rated as having a relatively unfavorable feedback environment. Furthermore, improvements in the feedback environment were also associated with increases in subordinate feedback seeking. Supervisor and subordinate feedback orientation was not impacted by the training, suggesting the results are not simply driven by supervisor's increased personal receptivity to feedback.

Informal supervisor–subordinate day-to-day interactions including more frequent and ongoing feedback are viewed as a way to improve performance management in general (Pulakos et al., 2015). For managers and employees alike to thrive in this new environment of continuous feedback, supervisor training in the feedback environment is necessary (Cappelli & Tavis, 2016; Levy et al., 2017). Along with this, researchers and practitioners argue that improving the feedback culture will result in improvements in feedback processes in general (Goler, Gale, & Grant, 2016). The results of this preliminary study suggest that supervisors do promote different levels of the feedback environment and that training may be an important antecedent to improving the favorability of supervisor feedback environments. This is the first study to address a way to change or improve the feedback environment, although researchers have suggested that different supervisors may have different feedback environment profiles (Dahling et al., 2017) and that supervisor training is a necessary next step in the evolution of our understanding of the construct (Levy et al., 2017).

Indeed, initial theoretical development of the feedback environment construct endorsed pretesting supervisors on feedback environment (actually their subordinate's perceptions of their feedback environment) to understand which supervisors and which feedback environment dimensions would be most impacted by training (Steelman et al., 2004). While this is important for research, it also has practical implications. Organizations should have a clear understanding of the return on investment before any intervention is initiated. Furthermore, the expectation for managers to provide ongoing coaching is increasing in organizations (Gregory and Levy, 2010; Steelman & Wolfed, 2018), and competency models for managerial coaching behaviors have been developed (Peterson, 2009). We need to give managers the tools they need to be successful.

This study has shed some light in a new direction and offered some initial data that suggests that we can change a feedback environment without necessarily changing an individual's feedback orientation. In this study, only feedback environment and feedback-seeking frequency were outcomes of the training intervention. Future work in this area should take a broader view of training outcomes to include cognitive, skill-based, and affective outcomes and their impact on subordinates and the feedback process (Bell, Tannenbaum, Ford, Noe, & Kraiger, 2017). Further research is also needed to assess the longer-term implications of changing an organization's feedback environment on an individual's feedback orientation. Research should focus on intervention designs to increase an organization's feedback environment for the entire organization and interventions to impact the coworker feedback environment as well as the supervisor feedback environment.

The limitations to this preliminary study include the small sample size and short timeframe between the training and the assessments. Continued research on antecedents to a favorable feedback environment is warranted. As with any study of this type, there were external factors we could not control for such as organizational support for change and the environment to which the supervisor returned after training. It is possible the environment did not support the supervisor in using what he or she learned in training back on the job (Maurer, Weiss, & Barbeite, 2003).

Improving managerial coaching is critical to improving performance management processes in general (Gregory & Levy, 2010; Pulakos et al., 2015). One feature of effective managerial coaching is creating a favorable feedback environment (Steelman & Wolfeld, 2018). The purpose of this study was to provide deeper insight into supervisor training as an antecedent to a favorable feedback environment. This initial study demonstrated that it is possible to train supervisors to create an environment that promotes the provision of constructive job performance feedback and results in improved employee perceptions of the feedback environment and increased employee feedback-seeking frequency.

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Chapter 10
Employee Reactions to the Feedback Environment

Joelle D. Elicker, Marc Cubrich, Julie M. Chen, Mary F. Sully de Luque, and Rachel Gabel Shemueli

In the past 15 years, a growing body of research has increasingly considered the feedback environment (FE) or the social context in which day-to-day, informal feedback exchanges occur (Gregory & Levy, 2015). Along with increased attention to the social context of these processes, conceptualizations of the feedback process have expanded to allow for a fuller consideration of attitudes, affect, and perceptions of justice (Levy & Williams, 2004). While researchers have brought attention to affective and attitudinal reactions as important criteria for traditional performance appraisals (see Cawley, Keeping, & Levy, 1998; Keeping & Levy, 2000; Pichler, 2012), the feedback literature has not considered specific attitudinal reactions to the social context of feedback processes (i.e., the feedback environment).

Using traditional performance appraisals, Pichler (2012) supported a relational model of the exchange between performance appraisal partners by examining important indicators such as rater-ratee relationship quality, appraisal participation, and rating favorability. Results indicate that aspects of rater-ratee relationship quality (i.e., supervisor satisfaction, supervisor support, supervisor trust) are strongly related to ratee reactions to performance appraisals (Pichler, 2012). Feedback seeking and feedback giving are inherently interpersonal, relational processes that take place in day-to-day supervisor-subordinate and coworker-coworker exchanges. Favorable feedback environments are supportive of these exchanges and are characterized by high-quality feedback that is readily accessible,

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available, and consistent (Rosen, Levy, & Hall, 2006). With this in mind, this chapter describes several studies examining employee reactions to the feedback environment, in particular employee perceptions of their fit with, satisfaction with, and perceived fairness of the feedback environment. The forthcoming discussion includes an explanation of how these reactions are formed and the results of research studies supporting important relationships among these reactions and hypothesized antecedents, which include the feedback environment itself and feedback orientation. This discussion highlights an important person-environment interaction of the feedback process as proposed by London and Smither (2002). Subsequently, rationale and research connecting these reactions to key employee behaviors of job engagement, organizational embeddedness, and feedback seeking follow, paying special attention to the role of individual power distance. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

The Social Context of Feedback Processes: The Feedback Environment

As defined by Steelman, Levy, and Snell (2004), the feedback environment refers to the contextual aspects of day-to-day supervisor-subordinate and coworker-coworker feedback processes. The feedback environment scale (FES) is a comprehensive measure of this context, assessing seven facets comprising source credibility, source availability, feedback delivery, feedback quality, favorable feedback, unfavorable feedback, and the promotion of feedback seeking. Source credibility refers to the knowledge and trustworthiness of the feedback source. Source availability captures how easy or difficult it is to contact the person providing feedback. Feedback delivery refers to the manner in which feedback is conveyed, for example, whether this is done in a considerate manner. Feedback quality denotes the value and helpfulness of the feedback itself, which can be favorable (positive) or unfavorable (negative). The promotion of feedback seeking is straightforward – it is the extent to which employees are encouraged to seek out feedback information. The FES developed by Steelman et al. (2004) was designed to provide diagnostic information in the area of coaching and development. In a favorable feedback environment, information about performance is easily accessible, salient, and thereby more likely to direct employee beliefs and behaviors (Rosen, Levy, & Hall, 2006). For example, in a given organization, a favorable feedback environment is one in which the employee trusts the knowledge and values the feedback given by the supervisor, where the employee can easily obtain and use the feedback given, and this happens in a context in which feedback is promoted by the supervisor.

Research has established that favorable feedback environments are associated with many desirable outcomes, including lower perceptions of organizational politics (Rosen et al., 2006), job satisfaction (Anseel & Lievens, 2007), organizational citizenship behaviors (Norris-Watts & Levy, 2004; Peng & Lin, 2016), and decreased turnover intentions and workplace deviance behaviors (Sparr & Sonnentag, 2008; Peng & Lin, 2016). Along with this, a growing body of research has documented the critical role that supportive feedback environments play in feedback seeking (Borden, Levy, & Silverman 2018; Dahling, O'Malley, & Chau, 2015; Steelman et al., 2004; Whitaker, Dahling, & Levy, 2007). With increasing emphasis on continuous improvement and self-development in organizations, researchers and practitioners alike have turned their attention to identifying feedback environments that encourage employees to seek performance feedback.

While feedback environments that are high in source credibility, source availability, and feedback quality, among other things, are associated with favorable outcomes including feedback seeking, not all employees embrace feedback. This points, at best, to missed opportunities to develop and, at worst, to potential adverse outcomes such as negative employee attitudes, counterproductive work behaviors, or reduced performance. Indeed, Kluger and DeNisi's (1996) meta-analysis revealed that while feedback can have positive outcomes, one third of the feedback interventions they examined were associated with decreased performance. Hence, it is important to understand what is related to reactions within the context of feedback processes and the extent to which reactions to this context are related to future employee behavior. As with traditional performance appraisals, attitudinal reactions relating to aspects of the social context should be considered important criteria if organizations want to achieve the benefits of supportive feedback environments.

Feedback Environment Reactions: How They Develop and How They Help Us Understand Employee Behavior

Essential to this discussion is a clear understanding of the formation of job attitudes and a clear conceptualization of employee reactions. Broadly speaking, job attitudes represent evaluations, feelings about, and reactions to some evaluative objective in an organizational setting (Ajzen, 2001). Attitudes are psychological tendencies of evaluations in favor or disfavor that are directed at some element of the organization, individuals in the organization, or the environment (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) has emerged as a foundational theory explaining human action. This theory posits that intentions to perform a behavior can be predicted with high accuracy from attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991, 2001). These intentions work in tandem with perceptions of behavioral control and account for considerable variance in actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991, 2002). Such attitudes may be formed based on reactions to the environment, which shape employee intentions for behavior at work.

We contend that the feedback environment generates distinct reactions and that these reactions are related to a number of organizationally relevant behaviors and outcomes. In the present context, employee reactions to the feedback environment are defined as individual-level attitudinal evaluations of and responses to context of informal day-to-day feedback at work. This conceptualization is similar to that used by Pichler regarding employee reactions to the performance appraisal process (Pichler, 2012). Employee reactions to performance appraisal processes can be considered an important determinant of the ultimate success and effectiveness of the appraisal process (Cawley et al., 1998). Keeping and Levy (2000) built on previous work by arguing that perhaps the best criterion to use in evaluating performance appraisal systems was the reactions of ratees. Their results suggested that the most established reactional measures are system satisfaction, session satisfaction, perceived utility, perceived accuracy, procedural justice, and distributive justice.

Research has demonstrated that employees have different types of reactions to performance appraisal processes, such as fairness perceptions or system satisfaction (Van den Bos, Wilke, & Linde, 1998). The existing research on reactions to feedback itself has focused almost exclusively on reactions to feedback given during traditional, annual performance appraisal processes. If organizations want to develop interventions involving the feedback environment, assessing reactions to this social context may serve a key diagnostic role. The focal reactions to the feedback environment discussed in this chapter attempt to capture an array of possible responses to the experienced social context of feedback processes. In particular, this discussion will focus on employee perceptions of their fit with, satisfaction with, and perceived fairness of the feedback environment. The aforementioned reactions are closely related to the feedback process because feedback is an interpersonal process that occurs within the broader climate of the feedback environment. The existence of a supportive feedback environment generates positive attitudinal reactions that predict subsequent behavior. The designated reaction subscales may be aggregated to create a composite reaction indicator. However, each reaction may be used individually to provide unique information and will be discussed individually hereafter. Just as the feedback environment scale has two referents, the reaction subscales can be modified to assess reactions to coworker (peer) or supervisor feedback environment, as well.

Satisfaction with the Feedback Environment

In the past, the most frequently assessed subordinate reaction to traditional performance appraisals has been satisfaction (Giles & Mossholder, 1990). This wealth of research was largely driven by observed relationships between employee satisfaction with the performance appraisal process and variables such as productivity, motivation, and organizational commitment (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979; Larson, 1984; Pearce & Porter, 1986; Wexley & Klimoski, 1984). As such, a thorough understanding of reactions to the feedback environment includes an individual's overall satisfaction with the environment.

A study by Graham and Elicker (2014) was the first to develop and utilize measures of reactions to the feedback environment. Satisfaction with the feedback environment is a modified scale from the job satisfaction work of Spagnoli, Caetano, and Santos (2012). Spagnoli et al. (2012) differentiated job satisfaction into different types: satisfaction with managerial practices, rewards, work climate, and the job itself. Their findings indicate that satisfaction with the climate and managerial practices are often the best predictors of job satisfaction (Spagnoli et al., 2012). Satisfaction with work climate and managerial practices are closely related to the feedback environment as they both incorporate the performance appraisal processes and relations with management. The satisfaction with feedback environment items focuses on the feedback climate and asks respondents to indicate their satisfaction with a number of aspects relating to the informal, day-to-day feedback exchanges. Items for all reactions to the feedback environment measures can be found in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1 Measures for reactions to the feedback environment

Reaction variable	Scale	Number of items	Items
Satisfaction with the feedback environment	1–5	3	Please indicate how satisfied you are with the following aspects of your work: “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied”
			1. “The day-to-day environment in which I receive informal feedback”
			2. “The informal interactions in which I receive feedback from my supervisor”
			3. “The supportiveness of the environment in which I receive informal feedback”
Fit with the feedback environment	1–5	3	Administer these items on a scale from “not at all” to “completely”
			1. “The extent to which I value receiving informal feedback matches that of the organization”
			2. “My personal values in day-to-day interactions match those of my organization”
			3. “My organization’s values regarding day-to-day interactions in which I receive feedback provide a good fit with the things I value”
Fairness of the feedback environment	1–5	3	Please indicate the extent to which you believe the following aspects of your job are fair: “very unfair” to “very fair”
			1. “The informal interactions with my supervisor in which I receive feedback”
			2. “The day-to-day informal feedback I receive from my supervisor”
			3. “The context in which I receive informal feedback”

Fit with the Feedback Environment

Research on the match between employees and their work environments, also known as fit, is one of the most widely researched topics in organizational behavior (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Fit represents the extent to which individuals match with various organizational entities (e.g., organization, job, group, role, etc.) and this construct has demonstrated associations with a number of organizational outcomes (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). There exist many conceptualizations of fit, such as person-organization fit, person-environment fit, person-team fit, person-role fit, demands-ability fit, and more.

Perceptions of the environment are key drivers of attitudes and can be more critical than the actual environment (Ostroff, Shin, & Kinicki, 2005). Conceptually, fit can influence both an individual's behaviors and attitudes associated with a job (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). Therefore, if there is a negative perception of fit with the feedback environment, it can lead to negative behaviors that result in reduced performance or other outcomes. On the other hand, if there is a perception of fit, this can lead to improved job outcomes. For example, person-organization fit has been associated with autonomy need satisfaction, relatedness need satisfaction, and competence need satisfaction (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). The experience of fit in an organization can play a role in multiple decisions throughout one's tenure at a specific organization. These decisions include whether to join or leave a particular organization (Cable & Judge, 1996; O'Reilly et al., 1991). As it relates to feedback processes, Peng and Chiu (2010) found a positive relationship between a supportive feedback environment and perceptions of fit within the organization. Fit with the feedback environment is theoretically grounded in the person-environment fit (PE fit) literature and reflects the extent to which participants perceive that they fit with the informal feedback processes associated with supportive feedback environments. Graham and Elicker (2014) modified three items from a measure of person-organization fit used by Greguras and Diefendorff (2009) to assess perceived fit with the feedback environment (see Table 10.1).

Fairness of the Feedback Environment

The extent to which individuals feel they were fairly evaluated has also been examined by many researchers. Early research on fairness reactions focused on a number of elements including the appraisal system or ratings (Landy, Barnes, & Murphy, 1978; Taylor, Tracy, Renard, Harrison, & Carroll, 1995), specific appraisal sessions (Burke, Weitzel, & Weir, 1978), and overall perceptions of fairness of the appraisal system (Evans & McShane, 1988). In general, studies have demonstrated that both ratees and raters respond more favorably to performance appraisals that are considered fair (Levy & Williams, 2004). Meta-analytic results examining justice perceptions at the individual level indicate that fairness is a substantial predictor of a number of desired outcomes, including organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007). Conversely, the perception of unfair treatment is associated with an increase in counterproductive work behavior, turnover, and theft (Lavelle et al., 2007).

Fairness of the feedback environment reflects perceptions of fairness relating to aspects of the informal feedback environment rather than formal appraisal systems. Fairness perceptions have an important conceptual role when discussing dimensions of the feedback environment such as source credibility, feedback quality, and feedback delivery. When looking at source credibility, it is important to consider perceptions of fairness, particularly procedural fairness. Procedural justice is demonstrated by the inclusion of individuals in the decision-making process (Thibaut & Walker, 1975) as well as the extent to which fair procedures are upheld to maintain accuracy (Leventhal, 1980). A supervisor who lacks credibility, expertise, and trustworthiness may be less apt at making accurate judgments and assessments and thereby seen as unfair (Steelman et al., 2004). On the other hand, supportive feedback environments encourage feedback that is high in quality and delivered consistently through day-to-day interactions. As a result, these supportive environments are likely to produce attitudinal perceptions of fairness. Graham and Elicker (2014) developed three items to measure perceived fairness of the feedback environment, specifically focusing on daily interactions with the supervisor and the context for informal feedback (see Table 10.1). In the proceeding section, we describe results from several studies utilizing these measures, which have begun to investigate reactions to the feedback environment. This emerging program of research has supported the utility, replicability, and generalizability of several observed relationships involving reactions to the feedback environment. A summary of the antecedents and outcomes examined in this research is presented in Fig. 10.1. The following section will describe these studies using diverse samples and a collection of key organizational outcomes.

Research on Reactions to the Feedback Environment

Initial Study: Employed Students in the USA

The study by Graham and Elicker (2014) examining working undergraduate students was the first to investigate reactions to the feedback environment. They observed that the degree of employees' perceptions of fit with, satisfaction with, and fairness of the feedback environment depends on the employees' feedback orientation. Feedback orientation is defined as the overall receptivity of an individual to feedback, which includes the dimensions of utility, accountability, social awareness, and feedback self-efficacy (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010; London & Smither, 2002). Utility refers to an individual's tendency to believe feedback is needed to obtain desired goals, whereas accountability captures an individual's need to respond to and follow up on feedback (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010). The social awareness dimension reflects an individual's sensitivity to others' views of oneself (London & Smither, 2002). Feedback self-efficacy indicates an individual's perceived competence to interpret and respond to feedback appropriately (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010).

This interaction between feedback environment and feedback orientation has been observed in prior research and is important to consider, as feedback orientation allows the individual to potentially play a role in the relationship that a given feedback environment can have upon outcomes (Gabriel, Frantz, Levy, & Hilliard, 2014). Illustrating the person-environment interaction that London and Smither (2002) proposed, Graham & Elicker (2014) indicated favorable environments were viewed more positively by employees who held a more favorable disposition toward feedback. Further, they assessed the relationship of the feedback environment with important outcomes including employee engagement and embeddedness. Engagement and embeddedness represent related but conceptually distinct constructs. Engagement refers to the extent to which a person devotes and expresses oneself in a job (Kahn, 1990; Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010), while embeddedness describes the extent to which a person is immersed in an organization (Crossley, Bennett, Jex, & Burnfield, 2007; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001). Embeddedness is characterized by the connections an individual possesses with other members of the organization and perceived cost of material or psychological benefits lost by leaving that particular job (Crossley et al., 2007; Mitchell et al., 2001).

The findings identified perceived fit with, satisfaction with, and perceived fairness of the feedback environment as important reactions that increase as the context surrounding informal feedback becomes more favorable, especially when employees view feedback positively, for example, when they see it as useful and they feel accountable and competent to use feedback. Both engagement and embeddedness were observed to be higher when the feedback environment was rated as more favorable. Notably, reactions such as perceived fit with the feedback environment mediated the feedback environment-engagement relationship, indicating fit as a mechanism through which the feedback environment is related to engagement. Thus, when employees experience fit with the feedback environment, they experience more engagement or devotion to the job. Alternately, satisfaction with the feedback environment mediated the feedback environment-embeddedness relationship. When employees were satisfied with the feedback environment, they felt more immersed and connected to the organization.

Working Adults in Peru

The work of Graham and Elicker (2014) was an important first step in establishing the utility of examining reactions to the feedback environment. Cubrich, Elicker, Gabel Shemueli, and Sully de Luque (2019a) sought to replicate and extend these

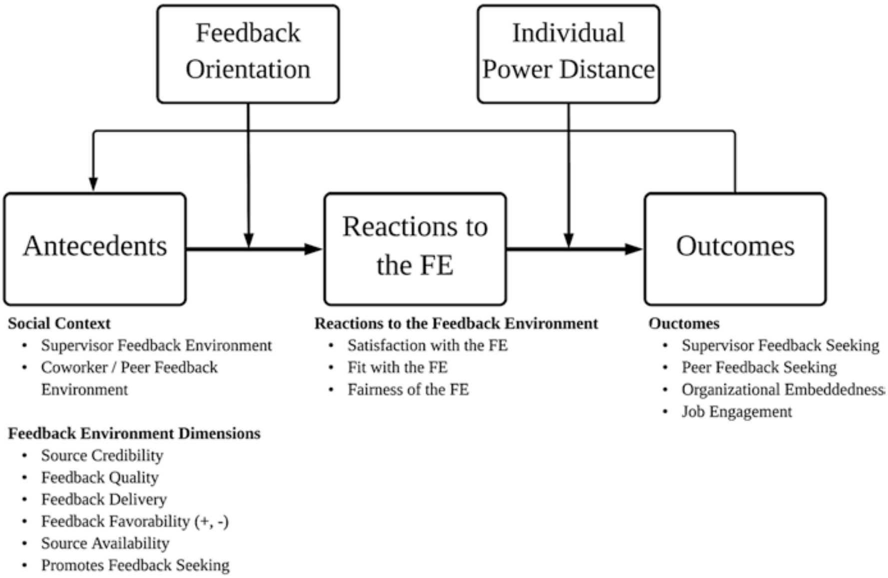

Fig. 10.1 Theorized model with support from initial research studies. *Note:* This model lists variables from all of the initial studies described in this chapter. While none of the studies tested all of the variables together, aspects of this model have been supported in our initial stream of research

findings by assessing supervisor feedback-seeking behavior in full-time working adults. Feedback seeking is defined as the conscious devotion of resources toward information about the correctness and adequacy of behaviors for attaining valued end states (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Using 438 employees from the finance sector in Peru, they demonstrated that perceptions of the feedback environment predicted supervisor inquiry and monitoring feedback-seeking behavior through employee reactions to this environment. Hence, employees' perceived fit with, satisfaction with, and fairness of the feedback environment were related to feedback seeking from their supervisor. It is through these reactions that the feedback environment is theorized to encourage seeking. This study replicated the feedback environment-feedback orientation interaction observed by Graham and Elicker (2014) in predicting environment reactions (see Fig. 10.1).

In addition, employees' *individual* power distance, the extent to which individuals accept inequality and large differentials between those having power and those having little power (Hofstede, 1980; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), interacted with feedback environment reactions to predict feedback-seeking behavior. This interaction revealed a strengthening effect; employees higher in individual power distance showed stronger relationships between reactions to the feedback environment and seeking feedback from the supervisor for both monitoring and inquiry strategies. This is likely due to the respect and dutifulness to authority that is part of the higher power distance value, regardless of the form of feedback seeking. For individuals who are higher on *individual-level* power distance values, positive reactions to the feedback environment may serve an informational function in that they indicate the costs and value associated with seeking feedback. These favorable reactions to the feedback environment increase perceived value and mitigate associated costs, thereby increasing subsequent monitoring and inquiry.

Building on this research, Cubrich, Elicker, Sully de Luque, and Gabel Shemueli (2019b) examined the role of reactions to the feedback environment for peer (or coworker) feedback seeking. Results indicated that peer inquiry and monitoring feedback-seeking behavior was predicted by the peer feedback environment through reactions to the feedback environment, as was observed in the other studies. Individual-level power distance, again, played an important role working in conjunction with reactions to the environment in the relationship with feedback seeking. Similar to what was observed regarding seeking from supervisors, the higher employees' individual power distance, the stronger the relationship between reactions and seeking feedback, but in this study seeking was from peers.

While it may be somewhat counterintuitive, seeking feedback laterally is still associated with some costs given that social exchanges can bring great social gain or loss. Research has demonstrated that the nature of peer relationships (e.g., a closer relationship, task importance, and behavioral expectations) determines whether a source will provide or withhold negative feedback (Lundgren & Rudawsky, 2000). Even among organizational peers, workers make seeking decisions based on the nature of the peer relationship (Myers et al., 2018). Generally, people who are high on individual-level power distance are theorized to be more sensitive to and affected by power differentials in the workplace. As a result, individuals high on this cultural value are more apt at making and evaluating cost-value judgments when seeking feedback. In general, people with higher individual-level power distance orientations engage in more self-monitoring and are higher on public self-consciousness compared to those lower on individual-level power distance orientations (Gudykunst, Yoon, & Nishida, 1987). Highly public self-conscious individuals are sensitive to feelings of being observed by others, make inferences about others' perceptions of them, and are highly susceptible to how others react to them in social situations (Fenigstein, 1979). Cubrich et al., (2019a, 2019b) results support that employee characteristics such as feedback orientation and individual-level power distance are necessary considerations for understanding feedback environment reactions and feedback-seeking behaviors.

International Executive MBA Sample

Using a multinational sample of 253 employees representing 38 countries and 80 industries, Chen, Elicker, Cubrich, Sully de Luque, and Wilson (2019) tested the replicability and generalizability of several relationships observed in the prior studies. In particular, they investigated (a) the role of reactions to the feedback environment as an explanatory mechanism influencing job engagement, organizational embeddedness, and feedback-seeking behavior, (b) the interaction of feedback environment and feedback orientation in predicting reactions to the feedback environment, and (c) how individual-level power distance interacts with reactions to predict employee feedback-seeking behavior. As such, Chen et al. (2019) broadened the work previously done in the area by using a larger, more diverse sample in terms of industries as well as cultural backgrounds by using employees across the world.

In line with the findings of Graham and Elicker (2014), all three reactions to the feedback environment mediated the feedback environment-embeddedness relationship. Hence, this study reaffirmed that the fit with, satisfaction with, and perceived fairness of the feedback environment are important in connecting the social context of informal feedback, which can consist of a knowledgeable and trustworthy feedback source who is available and offers useful positive and negative quality feedback, with the outcome of embeddedness. Therefore, if a manager is looking to increase the embeddedness or attachment of an employee to the organization, it is important to consider employee reactions to the feedback environment, through which the feedback environment can affect embeddedness.

In addition, fit and satisfaction with the feedback environment mediated the feedback environment-job engagement relationship. Thus, when considering the job engagement of an employee, fit and satisfaction with the feedback environment are important through the context of the feedback interactions. Replicating the work of Cubrich and colleagues' (2019a, 2019b) study using employees in Peru, Chen et al.'s (2019) results support a mediating role for reactions in the relationship between the supervisory feedback environment and inquiry feedback seeking.

In terms of the separate moderating effects of feedback orientation and power distance, this interaction between feedback environment and feedback orientation was not observed with this given sample despite its establishment in previous literature (Cubrich et al., 2019a, 2019b; Gabriel et al., 2014; Linderbaum & Levy, 2010). We postulate that the lack of an observed joint influence between feedback orientation and feedback environment could be a result of the sample that was used, as studying individuals with multiple cultural orientations creates varying internalizations of cultural values. Research has demonstrated that feedback seeking is related to nationality and power distance (Morrison, Chen, & Salgado, 2004). For example, when power distance is higher, there is a lessened emphasis on self-management via feedback seeking and a greater reluctance to ask supervisors for performance feedback because employees are more likely to accept and respect power differences (Hofstede, 1980; House et al., 2004; Morrison et al., 2004). On the other hand, when power distance is lower, employees are less mindful of power differences, thus being more willing to readily interact with, and ask for advice from their supervisors (Hwang & Francesco, 2010). As a result, the variety of cultural values among the individuals who participated in this study sample could have had an effect on the interaction between feedback environment and feedback orientation. While the person-environment interaction of feedback environment and feedback orientation was not observed in this multinational sample, the findings largely support and replicate the results found in the prior studies. In line with the initial studies, the results confirm a conditional effect (the interaction effect is in the same direction) of individual-level power distance in the mediational chain between the feedback environment, reactions, and supervisor inquiry. This effect reveals stronger relationships between the reactions and supervisor inquiry when individual-level power distance is higher.

Taken in sum, the aforementioned stream of research informs a number of initial conclusions. The feedback environment may generate distinct attitudinal reactions, which are related to a number of organizationally relevant behaviors and outcomes. Feedback environments are theoretically and empirically supported to work through the reactions to predict important outcomes. Specifically, supportive feedback environments are positively associated with all three attitudinal reactions and linked to various positive organizational outcomes. The supported conceptual models indicate that reactions to the feedback environment are explanatory mechanisms that link the social context (i.e., the feedback environment) to behaviors and outcomes (i.e., engagement, embeddedness, feedback seeking). Thus, this demonstrates the importance of considering not only the social context but also employees' reactions to the social context as well, to potentially change or improve key work variables. Further, the consideration of an individual's overall receptivity to feedback (i.e., feedback orientation) has become increasingly prevalent, as the field has garnered evidence of its reliability and construct validity (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010). The research summarized here supports the person-environment interaction proposed by London and Smither (2002) by demonstrating an environment-orientation interaction in predicting reactions to the feedback environment. However, these findings are based on correlational data and, hence, do not assess causality; therefore, further research in this domain should be conducted. With these findings in mind, a number of research and practical recommendations will be outlined in the following sections.

Practical Implications: Using Reactions to the Feedback Environment in the Workplace

Favorable feedback environments are related to positive employee and organizational outcomes. It is important to note that the hypothesized relationships were developed based on theoretical rationale presented in prior sections, explaining conceptually how this happens through, or because of, employee reactions to the feedback environment, while also dependent upon feedback orientation and individual-level power distance. Managers need to keep this in mind and pay attention to the individuality of their employees. Some employees will be higher and some lower on feedback orientation. Those higher will respond more positively to favorable feedback environments. Employees lower in feedback orientation will not respond as positively to environments high in knowledgeable supervisors who provide quality feedback and encourage feedback seeking. Managers can coach employees to nurture a stronger feedback orientation, in order to best leverage the benefits of a supportive feedback environment. As proposed by London and Smither (2002), feedback orientation can be considered a malleable trait that can change over time, conceivably within a window of 6–12 months (Dahling & O'Malley, 2011). One possible avenue to achieve such changes in feedback receptivity is to foster consistent, positive feedback experiences by targeting the social context in which these exchanges occur (Dahling & O'Malley, 2011).

Studies consistently highlight that regular feedback is more likely to change employee behavior (Pulakos, Hanson, Arad, & Moye, 2015). Given its informal nature, the feedback environment can sidestep the problems associated with rigid, formal performance management systems where feedback is offered once or twice a year (Dahling & O'Malley, 2011). Dahling and O'Malley (2011) contend that many of the communication barriers that deter traditional performance management interventions can be ameliorated in workplace contexts in which supervisors have created an environment that is consistently supportive of constructive feedback exchanges. Fortunately, improving such perceptions is fairly straightforward: managers can become more accessible for feedback conversations and remind subordinates that feedback seeking is encouraged and supported (Dahling & O'Malley, 2011). One of the key recommendations regarding feedback environment interventions suggests that managers need to be trained to understand the value of feedback and the dynamics involved in giving and receiving feedback (Dahling & O'Malley, 2011). Providing "feedback about feedback" is an important way to train supervisors to provide tactful, quality performance information for subordinates (Dahling & O'Malley, 2011). This training may be particularly important for managers with low feedback orientations as their natural inclination is to see less utility in giving or receiving feedback.

Additionally, organizations can assess employee reactions to the feedback environment in different departments. This may be particularly useful for fostering supportive feedback environments. Each individual reaction (fit with, satisfaction with, and fairness of) can serve a diagnostic function by providing insight into aspects of the perceived environment that require attention. Reactions to the feedback environment should be assessed alongside interventions targeted at these informal feedback exchanges. These global attitudinal reactions should be considered important criteria for practitioners who want to nurture supportive feedback environments. The present program of research also highlighted an important person-environment interaction such that an individual's overall receptivity toward feedback interacts with the feedback environment such that these relationships are differentially stronger and more positive for individuals with high feedback orientation compared to low. The more receptive an individual is to feedback, the more positively that person reacts to environments consisting of more frequent informal interactions that promote feedback. On the other hand, among those lower on feedback orientation, the feedback environment is not related as strongly to reactions. Organizations may also focus on individuals who are not positively predisposed toward feedback. Over time, positive feedback experiences are expected to improve feedback orientation, thereby increasing positive attitudinal reactions.

Also of note, recent research has turned attention to the role that cultural values play in the feedback process. Accordingly, our results suggest that power distance at the individual level strengthens the relationship between attitudinal reactions to the feedback environment and feedback-seeking behavior (monitoring, inquiry). Organizations should pay particular mind to variation in this cultural value, especially in global or cross-cultural contexts in which in individuals may be relatively high on this value. For these individuals, compared to their lower individual-level power distance counterparts, reactions to the feedback environment may serve a greater informational function in that reactions indicate the costs and value associated with seeking feedback. Given that some research has indicated a negative relationship between individual power distance and feedback seeking (see Taras, Kirkman, & Steel, 2010), creating a favorable feedback environment, resulting in positive reactions, is particularly important.

Future Research Directions

Future research should include employee reactions to the feedback environment as important explanatory mechanisms as well as criteria for evaluating interventions targeting the feedback environment. Using a global assessment of embeddedness, the described program of research suggests that individuals find themselves more closely tied to an organization in which informal feedback is more likely to be provided and supported (Graham & Elicker, 2014). This observed effect is in part attributed to positive attitudinal reactions to the feedback environment. This suggests that individuals build stronger relationships that "embed" them in the organization or that they may develop more knowledge and expertise regarding their job or the organization, making it more difficult to leave (Graham & Elicker, 2014). Similarly, reactions to the feedback environment mediated the relationship between the feedback environment and feedback seeking for both supervisors and peers (Cubrich et al., 2019a, 2019b).

This program of research offers a number of promising avenues for future investigation. Given the interpersonal nature of feedback seeking and giving, future research should examine relational antecedents (i.e., leader-member exchange) or outcomes associated with positive attitudinal reactions. Given that the supervisory feedback environment is most commonly assessed (Dahling & O'Malley, 2011), much less is known about the social, contextual factors that lead individuals to seek feedback from their peers and the potential ramifications for organizations. The feedback literature has moved from a static view that focuses on the proximal effects of feedback to a more dynamic view that emphasizes the role of time, continuous feedback, and multisource feedback. While experimental or quasi-experimental designs may not be possible to test these relationships in organizations, longitudinal designs with several measures collected at multiple times are needed to increase our understanding of these processes over time. Considering the role of time in these processes may provide insight into how changes in reactions over time, or reaction trajectories, relate to key outcomes.

Future research should further examine other individual differences and cultural variables likely to be particularly important in terms of feedback environment reactions, such as uncertainty avoidance, long- or short-term orientation, and tolerance for ambiguity. While the present findings address extant research gaps and aid our understanding of the feedback process, the studies described utilize primarily self-report measures completed by subordinate employees and was correlational. Hence, inferences regarding causality cannot be made. And, consequently, there is a possibility that common method bias influenced some of the findings. With the limitations in mind, more research and practices should consider these important reactions to the feedback environment. A summary of key recommendations for research and practice is presented in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2 Summary of future research and practice recommendations

Conceptual research issues
1. Examine relational antecedents (i.e., liking, leader-member exchange) or outcomes likely to be associated with reactions to the feedback environment.
2. Examine other individual differences and cultural variables likely to influence or interact with feedback environment reactions, such as uncertainty avoidance, long- or short-term orientation, and tolerance for ambiguity.
3. More research is needed regarding the social, contextual factors that lead individuals to seek feedback from their peers rather than their supervisor.
4. Explore whether attitudinal reactions are formed primarily from interactions with supervisors or coworkers.
5. More work is needed to understand the unique associations of each individual reaction as well as the usefulness as a composite reaction indicator.
Research design issues
1. Adopt a multisource research design, rather than relying exclusively on self-report, survey-based designs.
2. Examine reactions at the group or unit level and incorporate multilevel theories and data analysis techniques.
3. Consider the role of time in these processes as it may provide insight into changes in reactions over time, or reaction trajectories, and how they relate to key outcomes.
Practice recommendations
1. Managers can coach employees lower in feedback orientation, as they will respond less positively to supportive feedback environments that encourage feedback seeking.
2. Organizations can assess reactions to the feedback environment when conducting interventions aimed at improving the feedback environment.
3. Fit with, satisfaction with, and fairness of the feedback environment can be used as criteria for a favorable feedback environment.

Summary

Taken together, the results of this initial program of research indicate a clear role for reactions to the feedback environment in employee job engagement and organizational embeddedness (Chen et al., 2019; Graham & Elicker, 2014) and in employee feedback seeking from supervisors (Chen et al., 2019; Cubrich et al., 2019a) as well as from organizational peers (Cubrich et al., 2019b). Additionally, this research supports London and Smither's (2002) proposed interaction between the feedback environment and individuals' feedback orientation as well as a link between the favorability of feedback environments and important employee experiences. Reactions to the feedback environment, including satisfaction with, fit with, and perceived fairness of the feedback environment, are more positive in more favorable environments. Organizations working on interventions to enhance the feedback environment may consider assessing reactions to this social context as they may serve as a key diagnostic role. Moreover, the attitudinal reactions are important criteria for practitioners with goals to build supportive feedback environments.

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Chapter 11
One Size Does Not Fit All: A Review of How Personal Influences Affect Workplace Feedback Processes

Emily S. Corwin, Lauren S. Simon, and Christopher C. Rosen

Practitioners are often interested in learning best practices, with the intent of using those practices to enhance organizational effectiveness. A potential pitfall associated with this approach is that between-person differences might explain variation in employee perceptions of and reactions to organizational practices, systems, and routines. Thus, one-size-fits-all approaches to the adoption of best practices, where it is assumed that employees perceive and respond to workplace practices in similar ways, are likely to result in suboptimal outcomes and might even have unintended negative consequences. This has led organizational scientists to encourage scholarship that identifies between-person differences that explain employee perceptions and reactions to organizational processes and procedures.

One organizational process that is particularly relevant to those interested in enhancing organizational effectiveness is the giving and receiving of performance feedback, which has consistently been described as valuable resource that employees are motivated to obtain and use to improve their performance (Ashford, 1986; Ashford, De Stobbeleir, & Nujella, 2016; Crommelinck & Anseel, 2013). In this chapter, we review research that provides insight into how between-person differences (which we refer to as personal influences) affect workplace feedback processes. In particular, we provide a comprehensive review of research linking personality traits, demographic variables, and other individual differences to feedback-seeking behavior, recipient reactions to feedback, and feedback giving. Our primary focus is on identifying trends and gaps in this literature. Drawing from our review, we identify areas that are in need of further research and, importantly, we provide recommendations for practitioners who may be interested in tailoring feedback systems and processes to their workforce.

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Personal Influences on Feedback-Seeking Behavior

Feedback-seeking behavior (FSB) refers to strategies consciously enacted within the workplace environment to obtain personally relevant information regarding the acceptability of behavior, with a desired end state in mind (Ashford, 1986). Employees are active participants in the feedback-seeking process and utilize different strategies to obtain information they desire. Two of the most common feedback-seeking tactics are *monitoring* and *inquiry* (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). *Monitoring* involves paying attention to the organizational environment (e.g., situations and other employees), which provides information about how one should perform. Some researchers refer to this as a "covert" strategy (Parker & Collins, 2010), while others have used the term "reflective appraisal" to refer to similar behaviors (Krasman, 2010). *Inquiry*—also referred to as an "overt" tactic (Finkelstein, Kulas, & Dages, 2003)—involves directly asking supervisors, coworkers, or subordinates for their evaluations of specific behaviors or overall performance (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Miller and Jablin (1991) introduced *indirect inquiry*, a tactic that falls somewhere between the first two mentioned tactics. When using an indirect inquiry strategy, employees attempt to attain feedback by hinting, joking around, or asking ambiguous questions.

Employees are motivated to seek feedback for several reasons, including a desire to (a) reduce uncertainty, (b) self-evaluate, (c) defend one's ego following an error, and (d) affirm competence (Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Employees may also seek feedback to convey information. For example, employees may engage in FSB following successful performance in an effort to enhance their image (Morrison & Bies, 1991). Regardless of the underlying motivations, some employees may be more motivated to engage in FSB than others due to personality traits, demographic variables, or other individual differences. Further, such between-person differences may influence which FSB strategies and feedback sources employees prefer. We review this literature in the section that follows.

Personality Traits

The five-factor model of personality (i.e., the Big Five) is one of the most well-established taxonomies of personality. Despite the popularity of the Big Five in industrial and organizational psychology research (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, Mount, & Li, 2013), only a handful of studies have considered the relationship between Big Five traits and FSB, and these studies have been conducted in a somewhat piecemeal fashion. For example, Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller (2000) found that extraversion and openness to experience positively influenced newcomers' FSB during the organizational socialization process. Likewise, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism have all been found to be related to be direct inquiry and monitoring behaviors (Krasman, 2010; Parker & Collins, 2010), albeit likely for different reasons. Conscientious individuals tend to be achievement striving (McCrae & Costa Jr., 1992) and therefore may be likely to seek feedback in whatever manner they believe allows them to increase job performance. In comparison, the social nature of feedback interactions relates to extraverts' tendencies to seek out social exchanges (Krasman, 2010). Finally, those with high levels of neuroticism are more likely to experience uncertainty (Gunthert, Cohen, & Armeli, 1999) and role ambiguity (Organ, 1981), which may lead them to use multiple FSB strategies to alleviate these experiences. Individuals high in openness to experience were more likely to use reflective appraisal (similar to monitoring tactics) as their preferred strategy. Employees who are high in openness may avoid more direct feedback-seeking behaviors because they have an innate aversion toward conformity and obtaining feedback holds them accountable to conforming to suggestions of others (Krasman, 2010).

Beyond the Big Five, proactive personality (i.e., an inclination for taking initiative and acting to bring about change; Bateman & Crant, 1993) has also been examined in relation to FSB. Research indicates that those who are more proactive tend to be more likely to engage in FSB (Chiaburu, Baker, & Pitariu, 2006; Parker & Collins, 2010), perhaps because feedback is valuable for guiding their behavior to bring about desired change (Frese & Fay, 2001). However, a study of organizational newcomers found that the relationship between proactive personality and FSB only held when employees had higher perceptions of fairness and received supervisor feedback (Kim & Wang, 2008). Thus, proactive employees may be more likely to engage in FSB when they believe doing so will bring about desired outcomes. Further supporting this perspective, research indicates that proactive personality strengthens the relationship between self-efficacy and career self-management such that individuals with a proactive personality are more likely to seek developmental feedback (Srikanth, 2012).

Research suggests that feedback can alter employees' feelings of self-worth in both positive and negative ways (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009). As such, a number of studies have considered the impact of self-esteem—a global evaluation of one's self-worth (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003)—on FSB. In general, researchers have speculated that a positive relationship exists between self-esteem and FSB because those with high self-esteem are better able to handle negative feedback and, therefore, seek it when necessary (Karl & Kopf, 1994; Northcraft & Ashford, 1990). However, some have challenged this perspective, showing that high self-esteem was related to reduced/modified FSB as these individuals attempted to protect their egos (Fedor, Rensvold, & Adams, 1992; Knight & Nadel, 1986; Levy, Albright, Cawley, & Williams, 1995). Interestingly, a recent meta-analysis indicated a nonsignificant relationship between self-esteem and FSB (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015).

Bernichon, Cook, and Brown (2003) provided a possible explanation for these mixed findings by differentiating between *global self-esteem* (i.e., overall evaluations of the self) and *specific self-views* (i.e., how one evaluates a specific personal ability/attribute). Bernichon et al. (2003) demonstrated that self-esteem and specific self-views interact to predict FSB, such that individuals high in self-esteem would seek feedback that verified a negative self-view, while those low in self-esteem would not. In general, these findings were supported—low self-esteem participants with negative self-views sought positive feedback, even though it was inconsistent with their self-views. This is consistent with arguments that those who are high in self-esteem can better manage the detrimental impact of negative feedback, while those who are low in self-esteem are less resilient and thus tend to avoid FSB. Relatedly, studies that considered organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) have found positive correlations with feedback-seeking frequency (Van Dyne, Earley, & Cummings, 1990). Research further indicates that this relationship is influenced by leadership style such that subordinates with high OBSE are less influenced by the quality of the relationship with their supervisor, while subordinates with low OBSE are more likely to seek developmental support when they report to transformational leaders (Madzar, 2001). Together, these findings suggest that global self-esteem may not be a consistent predictor of FSB due to its lack of context specificity.

In contrast to self-esteem, self-efficacy is a context-specific appraisal of one's capability to complete tasks (Anseel et al., 2015). The context specificity of self-efficacy may explain why previous studies have provided evidence for a positive relationship between self-efficacy and FSB. Supporting this perspective, a 15-year assessment center study conducted by Dimotakis, Mitchell, and Maurer (2017) indicated that initial receipt of feedback is positively related to employees' self-efficacy regarding their ability to improve their skills, which in turn positively impacts future feedback seeking, ultimately resulting in promotions (Dimotakis et al., 2017). Likewise, research by Brown, Ganesan, and Challagalla (2001) demonstrated that relative to employees low in self-efficacy, those who are high in self-efficacy are more effective in using a combination of monitoring and inquiry FSB to increase role clarity (Brown et al., 2001).

"Dark" personality traits such as narcissism have also begun to receive some attention from feedback scholars. In a two-part study, Atlas and Them (2008) found that individuals who scored higher on a measure of overt narcissism—characterized by need for recognition, feelings of superiority, and a preoccupation with success/grandiosity—were more likely to seek (rather than avoid) feedback. In the second study, covert narcissism, which involves self-centeredness but is characterized by a markedly negative emphasis and is more related to narcissistic personality disorder, was also measured. Individuals high in overt narcissism were more likely to seek rather than avoid opportunities for feedback as in Study 1. Conversely, those higher in covert narcissism tended to avoid feedback opportunities.

Demographic Variables

Research indicates that demographic variables such as age, experience, gender, race/ethnicity, and tenure predict FSB. With regard to age, older individuals tend to seek less feedback due to greater role certainty and impression management tendencies (Anseel et al., 2015). In addition, age impacts the FSB strategies employees utilize. For example, research (Finkelstein et al., 2003) indicates that older organizational newcomers are less likely to use indirect inquiry than others. One explanation for these findings is that younger individuals may perceive more costs to direct inquiry due to a fear of being viewed as inexperienced.

Individuals tend to engage in FSB when they are in new situations or experience heightened uncertainty (Ashford, 1986). Employees with longer tenure are typically more accustomed to their daily work situations and therefore experience lower levels of uncertainty, which may lead them to place less value on feedback (Anseel et al., 2015). Further, longer tenured employees may avoid FSB because they believe asking for feedback could negatively impact their image since they are no longer a newcomer (Ashford, 1986). Research is generally supportive of this view, indicating that new employees tend to seek more feedback than longer tenured employees, with feedback inquiry decreasing as tenure increases (Ashford, 1986; Barner-Rasmussen, 2003). Tenure can also impact the types of FSB strategies employees utilize. For example, a longitudinal study that considered FSB over employees' career transitions found that monitoring behaviors remained the same over time (from both supervisors and coworkers) but that direct inquiry from coworkers declined as employees progressed through their careers (Callister, Kramer, & Turban, 1999). However, research by Morrison (2002) challenged this perspective, indicating that organizational newcomers tended to use monitoring strategies because they perceived social costs of using direct inquiry early in their organizational tenure. Taken together, these mixed findings indicate that impression management concerns can be impactful, regardless of tenure length.

Research has also provided insight into how gender differences might influence FSB. For example, there is evidence that women are more likely to seek feedback than men (Fletcher, 1999). There is also evidence that gender interacts with team gender composition and task gender orientation to predict FSB. In particular, findings from a laboratory study by Miller and Karakowsky (2005) indicate that men are most likely to seek performance-related feedback when in a group of mostly male members performing a male-oriented task, whereas women tend to seek performance-related feedback when in a group of predominantly men and performing a male task, but not when in a group of predominantly women working on a female-oriented task. Women may be more incentivized to seek feedback when engaging in gender-incongruent tasks or roles (Holder, 1996), because feedback serves to reduce uncertainty when in a group of predominantly men performing male-oriented tasks (Miller & Karakowsky, 2005).

Race can also influence the FSB strategies used by individuals. For example, Roberson, Deitch, Brief, and Block's (2003) study of African-American managers and professionals indicates that when individuals experience a stereotype threat, they prefer covert FSB strategies (e.g., monitoring) that have lower perceived costs. This relationship is affected by *solo status* (i.e., when only one representative of a certain social category is represented in the work group; Lord & Saenz, 1985) and may also be influenced by the general level of representation within the organization and the organization's stance on diversity. Thus, when it comes to race and FSB, it is important to consider aspects of the work context that might influence this relationship.

Other Individual Differences

Other individual differences, such as abilities, attitudes, and preferences, may also explain variance in FSB. For example, a number of researchers have considered the relationship between goal orientation and the tendency to engage in FSB, the type of feedback sought, and cost/benefit perception of FSB. In general, individuals with a learning goal orientation (i.e., an orientation to developing one's competence for the sake of mastery; Dweck & Leggett, 1988) seek more feedback than those with a performance goal orientation (Renn & Fedor, 2001). Moreover, learning goal orientation has been found to be related to seeking both positive (Vandewalle & Cummings, 1997) and negative feedback in addition to seeking positive feedback about others (Gong, Wang, Huang, & Cheung, 2017). With respect to the type of feedback sought, individuals with a learning goal orientation tend to seek improvement or process-based feedback rather than validation feedback (Janssen & Prins, 2007; Park, Schmidt, Scheu, & Deshon, 2007). Further, learning goal orientation has also been positively related to both monitoring and inquiry tactics (Cho, 2013). Finally, when individuals with a learning goal orientation are performing poorly, their tendencies for FSB increase (Tuckey, Brewer, & Williamson, 2002). The explanation for such relationships is that individuals with a learning goal orientation perceive greater benefits and fewer costs of FSB because they see it as more instrumental for performance improvement and mastery (Anseel et al., 2015; Vandewalle & Cummings, 1997).

Performance goal orientation refers to a disposition toward demonstrating competence with a focus on social comparison (Elliot & Church, 1997). Compared to learning goal orientation, performance goal orientation has different and less predictable outcomes for FSB (Anseel et al., 2015). Traditionally, researchers have argued that individuals with a performance goal orientation perceive greater costs to FSB, especially during times of uncertainty or potential failure because engaging in FSB indicates a lack of competence (Anseel et al., 2015). Some findings support this view. For example, research indicates that individuals with a higher performance goal orientation are more likely to engage in FSB via monitoring rather than direct inquiry because of greater perceived costs (Teunissen et al., 2009). However, other researchers have speculated that those with a higher performance goal orientation may be interested in FSB from an impression management standpoint when they expect the feedback to be positive. In addition, seeking feedback to truly become better performers may allow them to demonstrate competence (Anseel et al., 2015; Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). In support of this perspective, Anseel et al.'s (2015) meta-analysis indicated a positive relationship with FSB.

These contradictory findings may be reconciled by further considering the performance goal orientation construct, which is often separated into two categories: performance-approach and performance-avoidance. Those with a performance-approach motivation strive to display competence, while those with a performance-avoidance orientation desire to avoid negative judgments (Elliot & Church, 1997; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). Research indicates that those with a performance-avoidance orientation prefer either no feedback at all or assurance feedback (Park et al., 2007), while individuals with a performance-approach orientation prefer to seek self-positive and other negative feedback (Gong et al., 2017) and are less likely to seek self-improvement feedback (Janssen & Prins, 2007). Surprisingly, performance-avoidance goal orientation is positively related to seeking self-improvement, likely because avoidant individuals fear failure and want to learn how they can improve (Janssen & Prins, 2007).

Tolerance for ambiguity, defined as “one’s preference for clear-cut answers and expectations in uncertain situations” (Anseel et al., 2015, p. 323), is one of the first constructs considered in the feedback-seeking literature (Ashford & Cummings, 1985). Research indicates that those who have a low tolerance for ambiguity are more likely to seek feedback to clarify expectations and reduce uncertainty as this is a source of discomfort for them (Bennett, Herold, & Ashford, 1990; Levy et al., 1995). However, individuals with a high tolerance for ambiguity tend to be less motivated to seek feedback in the face of uncertainty (Ashford & Cummings, 1985; Madzar, 2001). Research by Ashford and Cummings (1985) further indicates that tolerance for ambiguity moderates the relationships between uncertainty and FSB, such that when employees find themselves in an ambiguous role, the use of proactive FSB increased. Similarly, when employees experience uncertainty regarding the link between their job performance and the attainment of desired organizational rewards (e.g., promotions or raises), they also increase their use of FSB (Ashford & Cummings, 1985).

Public self-consciousness is another long-standing variable in the feedback literature. Employees who are publicly self-conscious have a heightened awareness of audiences and thus are prone to feeling observed by others, adept at inferring perceptions of others, and tend to be more sensitive to others’ reactions (Argyle & Williams, 1969; Fenigstein, 1979). Individuals who are high in public self-consciousness desire more feedback because they are concerned with how others view them (Levy et al., 1995). Further, social anxiety has been found to affect this relationship, such that the link between public self-consciousness and intent to seek feedback is stronger when individuals are high on social anxiety. For those low on public self-consciousness and high on social anxiety, feedback intentions were the lowest. Levy et al. (1995) speculated that uncertainty reduction explains this finding. Finally, research (Chiaburu et al., 2006) also indicates that public self-consciousness interacts with proactive personality, such that employees scoring high on proactive personality and low on public self-consciousness are more likely to engage in developmental FSB (Chiaburu et al., 2006).

More recently, feedback orientation, which refers to “an individual’s overall receptivity to feedback” (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010, p. 1372), has emerged as an important predictor of FSB. Linderbaum and Levy (2010) developed this construct and validated a measure that has four dimensions: utility (i.e., whether employees believe feedback is useful for goal attainment), accountability (i.e., whether employees hold themselves responsible for using the feedback), social awareness (i.e., the employees’ tendency to be cognizant of how others view them and to be sensitive to that information), and feedback self-efficacy (employees’ perceived ability to understand and act on feedback appropriately). Across multiple studies, feedback orientation has been shown to relate positively to FSB, as well as subsequent performance outcomes (Dahling, Chau, & O'Malley, 2012; Linderbaum & Levy, 2010; Whitaker & Levy, 2012).

Cognitive style, which refers to individuals' unique ways of gathering, structuring, and applying information, has also been linked to FSB (De Stobbeleir, Ashford, & Buyens, 2011, p. 816; Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004). The most widely employed cognitive style framework indicates a continuum with two general orientations: the adaptive style, which indicates a preference for "accurate information, facts, figures, and conventional theories and procedures," and the innovative style, which indicates a preference for "more personal information and divergent thinking and problem solving" (De Stobbeleir et al., 2011, p. 816). De Stobbeleir et al. (2011) proposed and found that a more innovative style led to more feedback inquiry and monitoring behavior.

Finally, organizational scholars have also considered the relationship between attachment style and FSB. Attachment styles develop during early childhood based on interactions with caregivers and are relatively stable throughout adulthood, affecting individuals' needs, emotions, expectations, and behavior (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Research indicates that individuals with an anxious attachment style are less likely to seek feedback from their mentors than those with more secure attachment styles (Allen, Shockley, & Poteat, 2010). Interestingly, however, Wu, Parker, and Jong (2013) found that anxiously attached individuals not only sought more feedback from peers than those higher in attachment avoidance but also potentially made better use of the feedback as evidenced by subsequent performance improvements. Although these seemingly conflicting results are interesting, it is worth noting that in addition to the mentor versus peer distinction, Allen et al. (2010) measured anxious attachment on continuous scale, while Wu et al. (2013) were comparing a dichotomy of attachment styles. Attachment style may also affect the type of feedback sought. In a two-part study (Hepper & Carnelley, 2010), individuals with secure attachment chose the most positive feedback across both studies while those high in attachment avoidance sought negative feedback over positive. Further, individuals high in attachment anxiety did not seek positive interpersonal feedback but still pursued interpersonal feedback rather than competence feedback.

Personal Influences on Reactions to Feedback

Beyond their effects on FSB, individual differences are also valuable in our understanding of how employees react to feedback. For example, some employees may be predisposed to reach more negatively (or more positively) to feedback, which might have implications for the efficacy of feedback in improving the performance of different employees. The following section reviews personal influences on employee reactions to feedback.

Personality Traits

A number of studies have considered the impact of Big Five traits on feedback reactions. In general, those higher in emotional stability tend to be more motivated to use feedback (Smither, London, & Richmond, 2005) and are not affected as negatively by negative feedback (Niemann, Wisse, Rus, Van Yperen, & Sassenberg, 2014). In a study examining leader reactions to multisource feedback (Smither et al., 2005), a component of openness to experience (i.e., breadth of interest) demonstrated a positive relationship to perceptions of feedback value and conscientiousness was related to feedback reactions. Moreover, the responsibility component of conscientiousness showed a positive relationship with an obligation to use feedback and with engagement in developmental behaviors following feedback. Overall, research suggests that Big Five traits may moderate relationships between feedback receipt and reactions by weakening the negative association between negative feedback and job performance (Guo et al., 2017).

Several scholars have also considered how narcissism relates to feedback reactions. Consistent with the perspective that those with narcissistic tendencies are more sensitive to criticism and negative feedback, research indicates that individuals high on narcissism tend to be more hostile toward the source of the feedback, evaluate the feedback source more negatively, respond with more anger to negative feedback, and demonstrate more aggression (Barry, Chaplin, & Grafeman, 2006; Bushman et al., 2009; Smalley & Stake, 1996; Stucke & Sporer, 2002). Research by Atlas and Them (2008) further indicates that compared to covert narcissists, overt narcissists are less sensitive to criticism, less likely to obsess over their performance following feedback, and less likely to internalize negative emotions in response to negative feedback. Alternatively, covert narcissists demonstrated nearly opposite reactions, showing sensitivity to criticism and high levels of internalized negative emotions and expectations of obsessing over performance following feedback (Atlas & Them, 2008). Interestingly, in a study which considered the bright side of narcissism, Nevicka, Baas, and Ten Velden (2016) found that nonclinical narcissism *enhanced* performance following negative feedback. Essentially, narcissistic individuals demonstrated a greater willingness to engage in tasks that would demonstrate their abilities and creativity.

Self-concept clarity has been shown to interact with narcissism in response to negative feedback. Narcissistic individuals with high self-concept clarity are convinced about their “grandiosity” (Stucke & Sporer, 2002, p. 514), while non-narcissistic individuals with a low self-concept clarity already have a negative self-view, thus neither group should experience an ego threat in response to negative feedback. However, narcissistic individuals with low self-concept clarity reacted with anger/aggression in response to negative feedback, likely due to an inflated yet unstable sense of self, while non-narcissistic individuals with high self-concept clarity experienced more feelings of depression, possibly because they have a stable sense of self (Baumeister, 1997; Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Stucke & Sporer, 2002).

Self-esteem has been shown to influence reactions to both positive and negative feedback. Following positive feedback, those with high self-esteem display stronger beliefs of self-competence, exert more effort, and improve their performance more than those with low self-esteem (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979; Shrauger & Rosenberg, 1970). Those with low self-esteem demonstrate stronger affective reactions to positive feedback (Ilies, De Pater, & Judge, 2007). Research further indicates that following negative feedback, high self-esteem individuals are more likely to persist, expend greater effort, and display higher levels of positive affect, whereas low self-esteem individuals tend to view such feedback as less favorable and are more likely to reflect over their failure, reduce beliefs of self-competence, and experience a performance decline (c.f., Bernichon et al., 2003; Brockner, Derr, & Laing, 1987; Smalley & Stake, 1996). With regard to the frequency of performance feedback, employees with high self-esteem report greater levels of job satisfaction when frequency is greater, while those low in self-esteem respond to frequent feedback with lower performance and higher levels of absenteeism and job search intentions than those high in self-esteem (Renn & Fedor, 2001; Renn & Prien, 1995). This myriad of findings can be explained in that individuals with high self-esteem are less likely to take negative feedback personally, therefore lowering the negative outcomes those with lower levels of self-esteem may experience (Brown, 2010).

Research has, however, challenged this view by demonstrating that high self-esteem individuals attempt to protect their self-esteem by denying the feedback source's credibility and evaluating feedback sources more harshly in response to negative feedback (Markus, 1977; Shrauger & Rosenberg, 1970; Swann Jr., Griffin, Predmore, & Gaines, 1987). Interestingly, Smalley and Stake (1996) observed that those high in self-esteem were more likely to be critical of the task itself rather than the person feedback source. Bernichon, Cook, and Brown (2003) found that individuals performed the same following positive feedback, regardless of self-esteem levels, while another study found an interactive effect between feedback source power and recipient self-esteem on performance improvements, but no significant main effect for self-esteem (Fedor, Davis, Maslyn, & Mathieson, 2001). Finally, there is evidence that self-esteem interacts with narcissism such that narcissistic individuals with high self-esteem demonstrate the highest levels of aggression following negative feedback (Bushman et al., 2009).

Overall, self-efficacy is associated with increased effort and improved performance following receipt of feedback (Heslin & Latham, 2004; Karl, O'Leary-Kelly, & Martocchio, 1993), and there is evidence that this effect persists regardless of whether the feedback is positive or negative (Bandura & Cervone, 1983; Krenn, Wuerth, & Hergovich, 2013; Podsakoff & Farh, 1989). While feedback (regardless of sign) has been shown to be more beneficial for individuals with high self-efficacy in terms of performance, self-efficacy is also associated with decreased feedback acceptance in response to repetitive negative feedback (Karl et al., 1993; Nease, Mudgett, & Quiñones, 1999). Further, there is evidence that feedback can impact self-efficacy, such that self-efficacy increases for those who receive feedback (as compared to no feedback), and this effect is greater the more positive the feedback is (Karl et al., 1993). Another study (Nease et al., 1999) found that feedback acceptance had implications for future self-efficacy as individuals who had high levels of feedback acceptance showed self-efficacy that was consistent with the positive or negative feedback they were receiving after several trials. In regard to interactive effects, self-efficacy following performance feedback has been shown to interact with causal attributions in determining subsequent goal revision (Tolli & Schmidt, 2008). Specifically, self-efficacy was strongly related to goal setting, and within-person fluctuations of self-efficacy were related to goal changes throughout time.

Locus of control refers to beliefs about the extent to which individuals have control over events that happen to them. Individuals who have an internal locus of control are more likely to attribute successes and failure to themselves, while those with an external locus of control tend to attribute success and failure to outside forces in their environment (Rotter, 1966). Early studies in this literature indicate that internals had better subsequent performance following task-based feedback or feedback gained through self-discovery. Alternatively, externals performed better following personal feedback or feedback provided by an experimenter (Baron, Cowan, Ganz, & McDonald, 1974; Baron & Ganz, 1972; Ilgen et al., 1979). In general, employees with an internal locus of control tend to view feedback more positively, regardless of sign, and are more likely to accept feedback and take action as a subsequent result of feedback (Feather, 1967; Funderburg & Levy, 1997; Ilgen et al., 1979). Employees with an external locus of control tend to demonstrate less effort, show symptoms of depression, and make more excuses in response to negative feedback (Basgall & Snyder, 1988). Further, externals show more negative attitudes toward multisource feedback (Funderburg & Levy, 1997). Despite this finding, research indicates that locus of control is not a significant predictor of multisource feedback acceptance (McCarthy & Garavan, 2007). As an explanation for this finding, the authors suggested that more stable personality traits such as self-efficacy and goal orientation may be more useful predictors. One study that considered the influence of goal orientation on feedback reactions found that, in response to positive feedback, those with a performance-approach (performance-prove) orientation experienced less satisfaction with regard to the feedback (Culbertson, Henning, & Payne, 2013).

Core self-evaluations (CSE) are a higher-order personality trait that encompass several individual traits reviewed above, including general self-efficacy, self-esteem, locus of control, and emotional stability/neuroticism (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997). The few studies that have considered the overall impact of CSE on reaction to feedback have yielded mixed results. In a study on multisource feedback, there was a positive relationship between CSE and subsequent goal commitment, but only when self-ratings were higher than other ratings (Bono & Colbert, 2005). While Kamer and Annen (2010) found a positive relationship between CSE and feedback satisfaction, a later study investigated how CSE impacts the effects of positive and negative feedback on subsequent performance and found that CSE did not significantly influence the relationships between feedback interventions and performance—only the self-esteem dimension of CSE had a positive influence on performance following feedback (Krenn et al., 2013). Given the relationships that all dimensions of CSE have demonstrated on feedback reactions, these null findings suggest that more research may be needed.

Demographic Variables

Several demographic variables relate to employees' feedback reactions. For example, age has a negative relationship with feedback acceptance and receptivity (McCarthy & Garavan, 2007; Ryan, Brutus, Greguras, & Hakel, 2000; Wang, Burlacu, Truxillo, James, & Yao, 2015). This may be because as individuals age, they experience less uncertainty about role expectations and therefore attach less value to feedback. Further, older individuals may come to believe that accepting feedback is inappropriate because they should know how to do their job without having to rely on others (Anseel et al., 2015). Age differences have also been found in dimensions of feedback orientation such that older workers demonstrate higher social awareness while younger workers show higher levels of utility, which may aid in explaining differences in feedback reactions (Wang et al., 2015). Specifically, the positive relationship between feedback favorability and feedback reactions was stronger for older workers, as was the positive relationship between feedback delivery and feedback reactions. For younger workers, the positive relationship between feedback quality and feedback reactions was stronger.

While some research suggests that organizational tenure is unrelated to lower levels of feedback acceptance (Fedor, Bettenhausen, & Davis, 1999), other studies have found tenure to be negatively related to the acceptance of peer appraisals (McEvoy & Buller, 1987). A study by Raemdonck and Strijbos (2013) demonstrated that early-career employees did not differ in their willingness to improve in response to supervisor-provided feedback, regardless of the feedback content. However, in response to coworker-provided feedback, they were more willing to improve when feedback was elaborated and specific (rather than concise and general). In comparison, mid-career employees demonstrated near opposite effects—there were no differences in reaction to coworker-provided feedback, but they were more willing to improve in response to supervisor-provided feedback when it was elaborate and specific. Finally, late-career employees did not differ based upon sender status when receiving elaborate specific feedback, but concise general feedback from a supervisor was related to less willingness to improve than had it been received from a coworker. The authors suggest this is because as employees move through career phases, there is a shift in focus from authority to feedback content. With regard to positive affect, those early in their careers displayed more positive affect when receiving supervisor-provided, concise general feedback, while those in the middle-career phase displayed more positive affect when receiving elaborated specific feedback.

The educational level of feedback receivers can affect their reactions to feedback as well. MacKeracher (2006) speculated that employees with less education may be more motivated to protect their self-concepts due to frequent experiences of failure in their previous educational experiences. This may mean these employees are more likely to reject negative feedback and make external attributions regarding poor performance in an effort to protect their self-esteem (Feys, Anseel, & Wille, 2011; Raemdonck & Strijbos, 2013). In contrast, others have suggested that individuals with more education may react in a more hostile manner to peer feedback (McEvoy & Buller, 1987). Raemdonck and Strijbos (2013) found that employees with less education were more likely to show positive affect when receiving elaborated specific feedback from a supervisor rather than when receiving concise general feedback, but negative affect was the response to any feedback received from coworkers. Alternatively, employees with more education were more concerned about feedback content than feedback source status, with more positive affect stemming from more elaborated feedback.

Gender has demonstrated interesting effects with regard to feedback reactions. Although some studies suggest gender is not an important determinant of feedback reactions (Lizzio, Wilson, Gilchrist, & Gallois, 2003; Roebuck, Bell, & Hanscom, 2016; Terborg & Shingledecker, 1983), others suggest the opposite. For instance, when receiving negative feedback, both men and women experienced drops in their self-confidence levels, but men overall were still more confident about their future successes than women; men demonstrated the same confidence levels in a feedback absent condition as did women who received strong positive feedback (McCarty, 1986). Taken together, these studies indicate that gender does have some influence on feedback reactions.

There is also evidence that race impacts reactions to feedback. Findings by Geddes and Konrad (2003) showed that all employees responded more favorably to feedback provided by Caucasian managers, regardless of their own race/ethnicity. The authors explain this finding in terms of status characteristics theory, which states that certain groups of people (e.g., women or African-Americans) have erroneously attributed specific traits or assumptions that all individuals unconsciously work to uphold, regardless of their own group memberships (Ridgeway, 1991; Webster Jr. & Hysom, 1998). Thus, Caucasian supervisors reap the benefits of enhanced perceptions of credibility due to their long-standing presence in such roles which minimizes negative reactions to performance feedback.

Two studies have considered the influence of culture on feedback reactions. Although findings suggested individualists' self-efficacy beliefs were more influenced by personal-based referents while collectivists' self-efficacy beliefs were influenced not solely by group-based referents as expected, but by a combination of both, people in general experienced more satisfaction in response to individual-level feedback (Earley, Gibson, & Chen, 1999). Shu and Lam (2016) found in a student sample that success feedback was more motivating for students from a Western culture with a promotion focus, while failure feedback was more motivating for students from an Eastern culture with a prevention focus.

Other Individual Differences

Individuals vary in their mindsets about the pliability of human attributes such as ability, intelligence, or morality (Dweck, 2000). Those who believe that attributes can change with effort are referred to as incremental theorists, while those who believe that human attributes are not malleable are referred to as entity theorists (Zingoni & Byron, 2017). Focusing on the malleability of ability specifically, Zingoni and Byron (2017) found that incremental theorists saw value in negative feedback and found it relatively unthreatening to their self-concept. As a result, incremental theorists had positive associations with effort and learning. While entity theorists also perceived negative feedback as valuable, they found it quite threatening which inhibited their learning. Interestingly, these effects held for induced beliefs as well, suggesting that this individual difference can vary in response to environmental pressures such as leadership style or organizational culture. Such beliefs impact self-efficacy following feedback—in a managerial assessment center field study, when individuals believed ability was malleable, the detrimental impact of negative feedback on employees' self-efficacy was reduced (Dimotakis et al., 2017).

As mentioned, research has indicated perceptions of feedback utility are dependent, in part, on perceived costs and benefits (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Korsgaard, Meglino, and Lester (1997) theorized that individuals with other-oriented values would be less likely to focus on these personal perceived costs and benefits when processing information than individuals with more self-oriented values. In a series of studies, Korsgaard et al. (1997) demonstrated that participants low in concern for others showed more of an increase in satisfaction as their evaluations improved when compared to those with a high concern for others. Further, individuals high in concern for others were more likely to follow recommendations that would lead to a lower evaluation for themselves, while those low in concern for others were more likely to disregard this information in order to achieve a higher evaluation. Finally, those low in concern for others were more likely to act on a specific recommendation when it was provided within a favorable evaluation but not when it was provided in an unfavorable evaluation.

Overall, employees with a high feedback orientation tend to respond more favorably to feedback from multiple sources, are typically more open to feedback, and are more likely to utilize it upon receipt (Fedor et al., 1992; London & Smither, 2002). All dimensions of feedback orientation have exhibited a positive association with in-role performance and feedback satisfaction (Rasheed, Khan, Rasheed, & Munir, 2015). Further, feedback self-efficacy specifically demonstrated a positive relationship with performance appraisal sessions and participation in development following feedback. Finally, the accountability dimension showed a positive relationship with intention to use feedback and role clarity (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010).

Feedback orientation has also been found to affect the relationship between feedback environment and outcomes such as meaning, competence, and self-determination (Gabriel, Frantz, Levy, & Hilliard, 2014). When feedback orientation was high, the feedback environment demonstrated positive relationships with these outcomes, but when feedback orientation was low, the relationship between the feedback environment and meaning was weaker while the impact of the environment on competence and self-determination became negative.

In terms of self-regulation, some individuals tend to be more promotion-focused (i.e., sensitive to gains, focused on achieving rewards) while others are more prevention-focused (i.e., sensitive to loss cues, focused on avoiding punishment; Higgins, 1998). In general, positive feedback has been found to be more motivating and resulting in improved performance for promotion-focused individuals than negative feedback, while the opposite has been found for those who are prevention-focused (Idson, & Higgins, 2000; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). However, subsequent research suggests that while promotion-focused individuals tended to have more positive reactions to positive feedback and demonstrated greater levels of both task performance and innovation in response to high frequencies of positive feedback, negative feedback did not actually benefit prevention-focused individuals (Sparr & Sonnentag, 2008).

The process model of emotional regulation suggests that people use various emotion response tendencies to manage their emotions (Frijda, 1986). Two of the most common strategies investigated in the literature are *cognitive reappraisal* and *expressive suppression* (Rafferty & Bizer, 2009). Cognitive reappraisal involves reframing of a situation to change its emotional effect, while expressive suppression involves inhibiting emotionally expressive behavior, affecting emotion response tendencies that have already occurred (Gross & Levenson, 1993). Rafferty and Bizer (2009) investigated the effects of individual differences in emotion regulation on responses to negative feedback and found that for cognitive reappraisers who received negative feedback following an ambiguous test, performance was quicker and better overall than for cognitive reappraisers who received moderate feedback. No differences were found for expressive suppressors.

Individual needs have also been linked to feedback reactions. For individuals high in need for achievement, there is a positive relationship between feedback frequency and performance (Steers, 1975). For these individuals, it may be more important for the feedback source to be another individual (rather than a task/non-person source) because this is more likely to meet achievement needs, at least when feedback is positive (Ilgen et al., 1979). High need for structure has been linked to worse subsequent performance and lower perceptions of control in response to receiving severe negative feedback (Mikulincer, Yinon, & Kabili, 1991). Those with a high need for structure have a tendency toward definite knowledge. Thus, when individuals have a high need for structure, their previous beliefs may persevere regardless of negative feedback (Mikulincer et al., 1991).

Personal Influences on Feedback Giving

Although feedback has been positioned as an important driver of individual and organizational effectiveness (Larson, 1984), concerns about employees' feelings or the desire to avoid difficult interpersonal situations can prevent managers from providing feedback (Harris, 1994; Larson, 1984). Yet, despite recognizing that the provision of feedback can be a challenging endeavor, and that over three decades ago, Larson (1984) argued that individual differences were likely to play an important role in influencing the provision of feedback via effects on motivation, affect, and information processing; relatively little research has explored individual differences associated with factors such as the frequency, timing, style, and quality feedback. Nonetheless, we take account of current knowledge in this area below.

Personality Traits

Research focused specifically on personality and feedback giving has been scant. However, research from the performance ratings literature may offer some insight. With respect to the Big Five, research has focused on conscientiousness, neuroticism, agreeableness, and extraversion. Interestingly, arguments involving conscientiousness have been mixed. While some researchers have suggested that conscientious individuals are likely to have higher performance expectations and thus to provide lower performance ratings (Harari, Rudolph, & Laginess, 2015), others have argued that conscientious individuals should be more motivated to accurately provide feedback (Pelgrim, Kramer, Mokkink, & van der Vleuten, 2014). Contrary to the former perspective, meta-analysis revealed a small, *positive* correlation between conscientiousness and performance rating favorability (Harari et al., 2015). Moreover, in another study focused specifically on feedback, conscientiousness was unrelated to feedback frequency, quality, and use by recipients (Pelgrim et al., 2014). There is, however, evidence which suggests (a) a positive association between conscientiousness and the extent to which raters discriminate among ratees' performance and (b) that conscientiousness attenuates the effects of rater attitudes and beliefs on various aspects of performance ratings (Tziner, Murphy, & Cleveland, 2002), providing some support for the accuracy perspective.

Regarding neuroticism, because it can lead to frustration and lower-quality relationships among feedback sources and recipients, researchers have argued that it fosters lower performance ratings (Harari et al., 2015) and lower-quality feedback (Pelgrim et al., 2014). However, Pelgrim et al. (2014) also argued that feelings of insecurity about entrusting work tasks to subordinates could result in the provision of more feedback and in ensuring that subordinates use the provided feedback. While meta-analysis supports the view that neuroticism is negatively associated with the favorability of performance ratings (Harari et al., 2015), the one study we located examining the effects of neuroticism specifically on feedback giving found it to be positively associated with the quality of feedback content as well as the frequency of providing feedback (although it was unassociated with recipients use of the feedback) (Pelgrim et al., 2014).

Like neuroticism, agreeableness has strong theoretical linkages to feedback provision. Given that avoidance of negative interpersonal exchanges and concern for other peoples' feelings are hallmarks of the trait, it has been argued that agreeable individuals are more likely to inflate performance ratings to avoid conflict and to protect ratees from the potential consequences of receiving a negative evaluation (Harari et al., 2015). Moreover, Pelgrim et al. (2014) argued that agreeable individuals' concern for others should drive them to provide higher-quality feedback that is more likely to be used by recipients. Yet, whereas meta-analysis supports the relationship between agreeableness and more lenient ratings (Harari et al., 2015), Pelgrim et al. (2014) found agreeableness to be unrelated to feedback frequency, quality, or use by recipients.

With respect to extraversion, the enthusiastic and social nature of extraverts can lead to the formation of higher-quality dyadic relationships, which are associated with higher performance ratings (Harari et al., 2015; Martin, Guillaume, Thomas, Lee, & Epitropaki, 2016). Moreover, given the interpersonal nature of providing feedback, it has been argued that extraverts may provide feedback more frequently and that their feedback is more likely to be used by recipients (Pelgrim et al., 2014). As with agreeableness, meta-analytic research has confirmed that extraversion is rated to more favorable performance ratings, but findings in Pelgrim et al.'s (2014) study were nonsignificant for feedback frequency, content, and use.

Moving beyond the Big Five, research has also focused on self-concept-related traits such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and locus of control. Arguments for self-efficacy in the broader performance appraisal literature center on its motivational role, suggesting that raters with lower self-efficacy are less motivated to provide high-quality (e.g., accurate) feedback (Tziner, Murphy, & Cleveland, 2005), but findings have been mixed. Whereas self-esteem (categorized as a dimension of self-efficacy by Tziner et al., 2005) and self-efficacy have been linked to higher confidence in appraisals and lower perceived difficulty in giving feedback (Kogan et al., 2012; Tziner et al., 2005), another study found nonsignificant effects of self-efficacy on feedback frequency, quality, and recipients' use of feedback (Pelgrim et al., 2014). Still other studies have found self-efficacy or self-esteem to be positively associated with aspects of the upward feedback process, including the desire to provide upward feedback (Kudisch, Fortunato, & Smith, 2006), more favorable attitudes of 360-degree feedback systems (Funderburg & Levy, 1997), and intentions to provide honest upward feedback (Smith & Fortunado, 2008). Also, worth noting is that one study found a positive association between internal locus of control and more favorable views of 360-degree feedback (Funderburg & Levy, 1997).

Demographic Variables

Among demographic individual differences, gender has been the most well studied with respect to feedback giving. Interestingly, there are some arguments to suggest that the salience of gender has decreased in organizations, resulting in gender neutral managerial roles (Blum, Fields, & Goodman, 1994; Lizzio et al., 2003) that should render gender a weak influence on the provision of feedback. However, other researchers have developed sound arguments for gender as a more influential factor. For instance, Bear, Cushenberry, London, and Sherman (2017) argued that power dynamics within organizations can differentially influence feedback given to men and women and that feedback, in turn, can reinforce and strengthen existing power differences in organizations. In certain contexts (e.g. when gender differences in power are salient and/or when cultural norms favor men as leaders), the feedback given to women, they argue, is likely to be of lower quality—more patronizing, less challenging, and interpersonally focused (rather than task-focused)—than that given to men. Thus, to the extent that higher-quality feedback is needed to advance, disparity in feedback quality might stifle women's advancement to leadership positions—a proposition that, if subsequently supported by empirical evidence, suggests that more attention needs to be paid to gender disparity in feedback giving.

Despite the aforementioned powerful assertions, there is little research as to whether feedback sources provide feedback differently for men than for women, and the evidence that is available is mixed. In one study involving faculty who were training medical residents (van der Leeuw, Overeem, Arah, Heineman, & Lombarts, 2013), being female was related to receiving more positive comments on teaching evaluations, while being a male was associated with receiving more suggestions for improvement on teaching evaluations—a finding which may be consistent with the notion that women are likely to receive more patronizing feedback where men are more likely to receive task-related feedback. However, other research has found gender to be unrelated to endorsements and ratings of feedback strategies and to feedback approach (Brewer, Socha, & Potter, 1996; Lizzio et al., 2003), although one study found that males tended to receive more feedback than females (Brewer et al., 1996).

With regard to whether men and women provide feedback differently, evidence suggests that men and women differ with respect to feedback-giving style, although less is known about other aspects of the feedback-giving process. For example, in one study, female medical residents provided more positive narrative comments and more suggestions for improvement on faculty teaching evaluations (van der Leeuw et al., 2013). In another study, Lizzio et al. (2003) found gender differences in the strategies men and women endorsed for providing performance feedback, with male managers tending to endorse a direct (vs. indirect) and unilateral (vs. participative) approach and female managers tending to endorse a more participative approach that progressively escalated in directedness. Consistent with the view that males may be more direct in their feedback strategies, Brewer et al. (1996) found that males were more likely to give specific corrective feedback to poor performers and were quicker than women to provide feedback to poor performers, although there were no gender differences in feedback giving with respect to general feedback. Other research has shown that women give less feedback then men (Roebuck et al., 2016) but that women place higher value on providing effective verbal feedback (Powers, Jennings, & DeCarlo, 2014). Finally, Smith and Fortunado (2008) found that gender was unrelated to employee intentions to provide honest upward feedback.

Beyond gender, very little research has examined the effects of demographic variables. With respect to indicators of time, such as tenure, experience, and age, one study examining faculty training medical residents found that more positive comments on teaching evaluations were given to faculty who had more experience, although experience was not associated with the frequency or number of suggestions for improvement received (van der Leeuw et al., 2013). Neither age of the faculty nor year of rater residency (tenure) impacted the number of positive comments or amount of suggestions received. Smith and Fortunado (2008) also found no effects for age (or race or education) on employee intentions to provide honest upward feedback.

Other Individual Differences

A few other individual traits in relation to feedback giving have also been examined in the literature, although there is insufficient research to draw conclusions on their effects. Of the other individual differences examined, attributions for performance have perhaps been the most discussed. In general, arguments center around the idea that supervisors are more likely to give feedback when poor performance is attributed to effort rather than ability, because effort is likely to be viewed as more malleable (and thus fixable) than performance due to ability (c.f., Larson, 1984). Consistent with this view, medical faculty members reported in a qualitative study that they felt feedback was easier to give when they believed residents were receptive and had the ability to change (Kogan et al., 2012). Likewise, Ilgen and Knowlton Jr. (1980) found that equal performance was rated more harshly if it was attributed to lack of effort vs. lack of skill. Interestingly, DeCarlo and Leigh (1996) found that sales managers' effort and ability attributions were both positively associated with corrective feedback (e.g., scolding), whereas external attributions were unassociated with such feedback. Conversely, ability and effort attributions were unrelated to the nonpunitive feedback (e.g., meeting to discuss problems), but external attributions were negatively related to such feedback. Also worth noting is that Adams (2005) found that liking for a subordinate and supervisor attributions for performance interacted to predict the types of feedback provided to subordinates, suggesting that liking and attributions play a joint role in influencing feedback giving.

Two other individual differences (i.e., power distance orientation and individualism—collectivism orientation) have also been examined. Ng, Koh, Ang, Kennedy, and Chan (2011) proposed that these characteristics would interact with hierarchical status in the organization to influence rater leniency and halo in a multisource feedback setting. They argued that, because power-distance-oriented individuals believe they should defer to those with authority (Hofstede, 2001) and because providing feedback to a superior would violate the established status hierarchy, high-power-distance-oriented individuals are more like to bias feedback in the form of halo and leniency when they are of lower status (i.e., subordinate) than of higher status (i.e., supervisor). A similar argument is put forth for individualism-collectivism orientation—or how one views oneself in relation to the collective (Hofstede, 2001)—in that having a collectivistic orientation should more strongly influence lower-status vs. higher-status employees' rater leniency and halo, because collectivistic subordinates are more motivated to avoid damaging their relationships with supervisors than to provide accurate feedback. Overall, their findings tended to support the idea that ratings of subordinates and peers vs. supervisors are more impacted by power distance and individualism-collectivism orientation, suggesting that 360-degree feedback may be less effective when high levels of these traits are present.

Dyadic Similarity in Individual Differences

Beyond looking at individual differences in feedback sources and recipients in isolation, some research has considered them in tandem. Most research examining the effects of similarity between supervisors and subordinates has been grounded in similarity attraction theory (Byrne, 1971), which proposes that similarity between individuals breeds attraction, compatibility, and mutual regard. Consistent with this view, evidence suggests that supervisor-subordinate similarity influences their relationship quality (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012), and relationship quality, in turn, has been meta-analytically linked to FSB (Anseel et al., 2015), performance appraisal reactions (Pichler, 2012), and performance ratings (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Martin et al., 2016). Despite strong theoretical underpinnings and indirect empirical linkages, there is little research on this topic specific to feedback per se. Accordingly, in reviewing the similarity literature below, in some instances, we also draw from related literature, such as the literature on performance ratings and mentoring, to point out information that could be potentially promising for our understanding of feedback.

Research has generally distinguished between surface- and deep-level similarity well as objective and subjective similarity. Surface-level similarity is reflected in "overt, biological characteristics that are typically reflected in physical features" (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998, p. 97), such as age, race, and gender, whereas deep-level similarity is reflected by similarity in factors such as attitudes, values, and personality. Subjective or perceived similarity focuses on direct perceptions of similarity, whereas objective similarity refers to actual similarity between individuals on a given attribute.

Findings from research on surface-level similarity, which has tended to use objective measures of similarity, have been mixed with respect to feedback reactions (c.f., Behrend & Thompson, 2011; Geddes & Konrad, 2003; Ryan et al., 2000). Interestingly, a meta-analysis of the mentoring literature found a small but significant positive effect on surface-level similarity (a composite of race and gender similarity) and what they termed experiential similarity (e.g., similarity in education, job tenure, and functional area) on mentee perceptions of mentorship quality (Eby et al., 2013). Thus, to the extent features of the mentoring environment mirror those of the feedback environment; it is possible that with more research, similar relationships will be uncovered for perceived quality of and reactions to feedback. Although we did not locate any studies on surface-level similarity and FSB or feedback giving, studies looking at objective surface-level similarity on performance ratings—which may be relevant to feedback giving—have yielded mixed results (Bates, 2002; Bauer & Green, 1996; Judge & Ferris, 1993; Wayne & Liden, 1995). In sum, although some insight is provided from closely related literatures, it is safe to say that more research is needed before any definitive conclusions can be drawn regarding the influence of surface-level similarity on most aspects of the feedback process.

With respect to deep-level similarity, research has shown both objective and subjective similarity in feedback-giving style to be positively associated with feedback reactions (i.e., training outcomes (Behrend & Thompson, 2011)). Likewise, Eby et al.'s (2013) mentoring meta-analysis revealed deep-level similarity (i.e., a composite of similarity in attitudes, beliefs, values and other characteristics) to be positively associated with perceptions of mentoring quality, and these effects were substantially stronger than those for other forms of similarity. Little research has been done on similarity and FSB or feedback giving, although one study found that the more managers perceived their superiors had a shared vision (e.g., shared interpretations, representations, language, etc.), the more likely they were to seek feedback using a monitoring strategy (Barner-Rasmussen, 2003). However, shared vision was not significantly related to FSB using a direct strategy. As with surface-level characteristics, we can turn to the literature on performance ratings to offer some clues regarding the influence of deep-level similarity on feedback giving. Interestingly, although research has been mixed with respect to objective deep-level similarity and performance ratings (e.g., Bauer & Green, 1996; Strauss, Barrick, & Connerley, 2001), perceived deep-level similarity has generally been positively associated with performance ratings (Bates, 2002; Strauss et al., 2001; Wayne & Liden, 1995).

Worth noting is that, in addition to similarity, research has begun to examine how rater traits may impact preferences for different types of ratee characteristics, which could have implications for the feedback process. For example, Erez, Schilpzand, Leavitt, Woolum, and Judge (2015) found that introverted peers tended to evaluate performance of disagreeable and extraverted peers as lower and to provide them with fewer rewards even when accounting for objective performance differences. These authors argued that extraverts are more likely to pay attention to interpersonal traits than extraverts and, thus, are prone to considering this information when appraising performance and distributing rewards. If, as this study suggests, the effects of others' characteristics on individuals can vary as a function of their own traits, then certainly a better understanding of how various combinations of supervisor and subordinate characteristics influence the feedback process in organizations is warranted.

Discussion, Future Directions, and Practical Implications

Our review suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach to understanding workplace feedback processes is not appropriate, given research which has demonstrated that personal influences affect feedback processes (i.e., feedback seeking, recipient reactions, and feedback giving) in organizations. In particular, accumulating evidence indicates that individual differences impact the frequency and type of feedback employees seek as well as employees' preferences for feedback strategies and sources. While some personal influences (e.g., age, self-efficacy, and feedback orientation) are consistently related to FSB, others (e.g., goal orientation, gender, and self-esteem) demonstrate somewhat contradictory effects. The mixed effects that were identified in our review further demonstrate the importance of taking additional boundary conditions (e.g., organizational context or supervisory relationship) into consideration when studying FSB. Our review also indicates that other theoretically relevant personal influences (e.g., race and beliefs about ability) have received relatively little research attention in the FSB literature, suggesting that these areas may represent fruitful opportunities for future research.

With regard to recipient reactions, research has demonstrated that personal influences impact affective, behavioral, and cognitive reactions to feedback. While this line of research has established consistent relationships between traits such as emotional stability, narcissism, and various demographic variables, future research should address mixed findings regarding core self-evaluations and self-esteem. Further, there is ample opportunity to extend what is currently known about the Big Five traits and how these relate to feedback reactions. Finally, demographic variables (e.g., age, race, culture) demonstrated relationships to feedback reactions, though some of the findings (e.g., gender, tenure, education) were mixed across studies. Given the diverse nature of today's workforce, a greater awareness of how these demographic variables affect reactions to feedback may be quite useful in practice.

Relatively few studies have considered how personal influences impact feedback giving. Given the scarcity of research, inconsistent findings, and varied study designs and outcome variables in this area, few conclusions about this literature can be drawn with any real measure of confidence. There is, however, some research to suggest the importance of considering contextual factors when examining individual differences. For instance, with some exceptions, Harari et al. (2015) found that when appraisals were performed for developmental or research (vs. administrative) purposes and when raters were held less accountable, the effects of personality on performance ratings tended to be larger. Likewise, studies performed in the lab (vs. field) also tended to have smaller effect sizes. Thus, future research and practical applications involving feedback would be wise to take these contextual factors into account.

Also, worth noting is that, although in some cases we discussed literature on performance ratings to provide additional insight where research on feedback giving was sparse, given findings that only 4–10% of the variance in feedback sign is explained by performance ratings (Culbertson et al., 2013), we argue that more in-depth research specifically focused on the feedback-giving process is warranted before any practical recommendations can be made. For example, understanding the individual characteristics that influence a manager's tendency to provide feedback and the circumstances under which individual traits are likely to be "activated" to prompt the provision of feedback (Tett & Burnett, 2003), as well as how individual differences influence the extent to which providing feedback affects the providers themselves in terms of factors such as stress and affect, should give us a much more comprehensive understanding of the feedback-giving process and thus of how to better tailor training programs focused on enhancing feedback delivery to individual managers' needs.

Finally, with regard to dyadic similarity in individual differences, our review indicates that no substantial conclusions can yet be drawn directly linking similarity in deep- or surface-level characteristics to the feedback process. However, that meta-analyses have linked perceived similarity to relationship quality (Dulebohn et al., 2012) and relationship quality to FSB (Anseel et al., 2015), performance appraisal reactions (Pichler, 2012), and performance ratings (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Martin et al., 2016) suggests that there is little doubt that high-quality relationships can result in better feedback outcomes and that, to some extent, similarity fosters these high-quality relationships. Nonetheless, within the feedback literature specifically, different operationalizations and conflicting results make it difficult to offer practical guidance involving similarity with respect of feedback at this juncture. We do argue, however, that a deeper understanding of surface- and deep-level similarity (and diversity) is a crucial area for future research, with potential implications of great practical import. For example, to the extent that groups are unequally represented at various levels of the organizational hierarchy, it is possible that (dis)similarity can impact the feedback process in ways that are likely to disadvantage women and minorities (c.f., Bear et al., 2017). However, only when we have comprehensively assessed the magnitude, mechanisms, and boundary conditions of the effects of (dis)similarity on feedback processes will we be equipped to better address this issue.

In terms of practical implications, our review leads us to three recommendations. First, our results suggest that some employees (e.g., those who are high in conscientiousness, proactive personality, public self-consciousness, feedback orientation; those who are low in tolerance for ambiguity; well as newer/younger employees; and those with a learning goal orientation) are more likely to seek feedback than others. This provides insight into which employees (e.g., those who are low in conscientiousness, proactive personality, public self-consciousness, feedback orientation; those who are high in tolerance for ambiguity; well as longer tenured/older employees; and those with a performance goal orientation) may be unlikely to seek out and, hence, receive feedback that can be used to improve performance. Managers should, therefore, be mindful that employees who are high in these traits are at a disadvantage and seek out opportunities to provide them with high-quality performance feedback.

Second, our review indicates that certain employees demonstrate more positive reactions to feedback relative to others. In particular, employees who are conscientious, open to new experiences, high in self-efficacy and emotional stability, low in narcissism, possess an internal locus of control, younger, incremental theorists, and high in feedback orientation tend to demonstrate more positive reactions to feedback that they receive and, as a result, are more likely to reap intended performance benefits. As such, feedback may not be as useful to employees who are low in or lacking in these traits and, in some instances, feedback may have deleterious effects on these employees. Managers should, therefore, take this into consideration and offer additional training to at-risk employees who are predisposed to react negatively to feedback.

Finally, relatively little research has considered how individual differences affect feedback giving. The studies that we did review generally provided mixed findings across different personal influences that were considered. However, one noteworthy finding is that contextual factors (e.g., appraisal purpose, accountability) play an important role in determining how, when, and why personal influences impact performance ratings. Thus, practitioners should recognize that there are different situational "levers" that can be used to enhance the quality (and accuracy) of feedback that is provided to employees and these levers (e.g., enhanced accountability) should be strategically incorporated into the design of feedback interventions.

Conclusion

To conclude, much progress has been made in terms of understanding how between-person differences affect feedback-giving processes in organizations. Researchers have examined how several different types of individual differences relate to feedback-seeking behaviors, recipient reactions to feedback, and the giving of feedback. Studies have also explored complex relationships between individual differences and these aspects of the feedback process, indicating that it is important to consider both the person and the situation when developing feedback interventions aimed at enhancing employee performance. Nonetheless, several questions and research opportunities remain. In particular, many of the individual differences that have been considered in the feedback literature have demonstrated mixed or inconsistent effects. Scholars should, therefore, devote additional attention to understanding these inconsistencies and clarify how, when, and why different personal influences affect feedback processes in organizations. This would provide useful information to managers who are interested in tailoring feedback systems and processes to their employees.

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Chapter 12
Delivering 360-Degree Feedback

John W. Fleenor

Providing feedback to leaders is a critical concern for organizations today as they seek to create and maintain high-performing cultures. Feedback provides corrective information for both leaders and the organization as a whole (Katz & Kahn, 1978). An important tool for supporting organizational feedback is 360-degree feedback. Over the past 30 years, 360 feedback (also known as multisource or multirater feedback) has gained increasing popularity and importance in organizations (Silzer & Church, 2009).

A primary purpose of 360 feedback is to provide accurate and relevant feedback on leadership effectiveness for leaders and their organizations (Fleenor & Brutus, 2001). The 360 feedback process involves collecting and reporting of quantitative ratings of a leader's effectiveness that are provided by coworkers (i.e., raters). The process includes providing facilitated feedback and coaching for each individual leader, thus creating behavior change that is valued by the organization (Bracken, Rose, & Church, 2016). Research has found that implementing 360 feedback can improve the financial performance of organizations. Kim, Atwater, Patel, and Smither (2016) reported that 360-degree feedback has a positive effect on organizational financial performance through increased employee effectiveness.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide evidence-based, practical recommendations for delivering 360 feedback in a leadership development context. These recommendations are organized around a model of 360 feedback characteristics presented in Bracken and Rotolo (2019, p. 258) (see Fig. 12.1). This model has been refined over the years by Bracken and his colleagues (Bracken & Rose, 2011; Bracken & Timmreck, 2001). The model focuses on the quality and nature of 360 feedback provided to recipients and their organizations. Unlike assessments where the test taker generates the data (e.g., cognitive tests, personality tests), 360 feedback falls into a class of methods that includes assessment centers and performance

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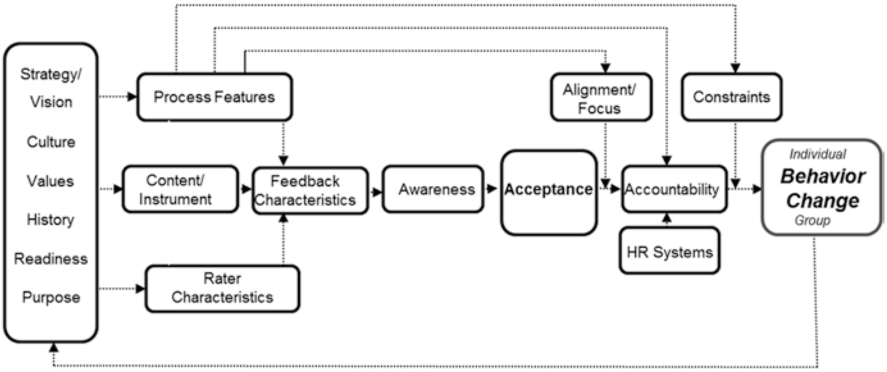

Fig. 12.1 Characteristics of 360 feedback. (Adapted from Bracken and Rotolo (2019))

appraisals, where the feedback is produced by raters who add additional sources of measurement error to the process. Feedback characteristics, therefore, are an interactive product of both the 360 instrument and the raters (Bracken & Rose, 2011).

This chapter discusses the implications of a new process model for delivering 360 feedback, focusing on central components of Bracken and Rotolo's (2019) model: (a) characteristics of the feedback; (b) awareness of the feedback (e.g., reactions and receptivity); (c) acceptance of the feedback; and (d) accountability for acting on the feedback.

The 360 Feedback Process

Most 360-degree feedback processes share the following characteristics (Fleenor & Taylor, 2018):

- Multiple raters (manager, peers, direct reports, the recipie1t himself or herself, and others such as customers) provide ratings of the recipient's effectiveness using a numerical rating scale. These ratings are collected anonymously and reported in the aggregate, so the recipient does not know who provided specific ratings. Because most employees have only one direct manager, however, it is usually not possible to keep the ratings of managers anonymous.
- A feedback report is provided to recipients that summarizes the results of their assessment. With the assistance of feedback coaches, the recipients examine their high ratings (strengths) and low ratings (development needs), as well as differences between their own and others' perceptions of their effectiveness.
- Recipients create a development plan and work with feedback coaches on a strategy to act on the feedback to improve their effectiveness.

The Validity of 360 Feedback

In 2001, Bracken, Timmreck, Fleenor, and Summers proposed a comprehensive model of components that affect the validity of 360 feedback. This model, which was recently updated by Fleenor (2019), identifies a number of key factors that influence the validity and therefore the success of a 360 implementation. The factors in this model are directly related to the characteristics of a successful 360 process: (a) the content is derived from the organization's strategy and values, (b) the ratings collected in process are sufficiently valid and reliable, (c) the feedback is integrated into development systems, and (d) participation is inclusive.

In Bracken, Timmreck, Fleenor, and Summers's (2001) model, the success of a 360 process is determined by the validity of the feedback that is produced. The validity of a 360 process, however, is much more complex than the traditional notions of validity associated with standardized assessment, such as employment testing. These traditional definitions do not address the factors that affect the validity of a process that depends on multiple sources of data (i.e., raters). A supposedly valid 360 process may be become invalid if it is implemented poorly (e.g., raters are not sufficiently familiar with the feedback recipient's behavior; the resulting feedback is not used appropriately).

Using 360 Feedback for Leader Development

The success of 360 feedback for leadership development stems from its ability to create desired changes in leaders' behaviors based on the resulting feedback. There is an extensive body of research (e.g., Bracken et al., 2001; Bracken & Rose, 2011; Fleenor, 2019; McCauley & Brutus, 2019) describing the processes for designing and implementing 360 feedback for leader development. Many of these processes are targeted at providing feedback to leaders on the specific changes they need to make to increase their effectiveness and motivate them to pursue these changes.

To maximize its developmental impact, 360 feedback should be implemented within a broader leadership development system (McCauley & Brutus, 2019). For example, feedback from a 360 process can be integrated into the organization's development and succession planning systems to identify developmental goals that will enable leaders to contribute better to the success of the organization. This process includes creating situations where feedback recipients receive ongoing feedback along with novel job assignments that stretch their current skillsets. Additionally, mentors can be provided who can assist the feedback recipients in working on their targeted skills. The implementation of these plans and monitoring of progress should be jointly owned by the recipient, the manager, and the 360 process owners (McCauley & Brutus, 2019).

Developing a Competency Model for 360 Feedback

The first component of the Bracken and Rotolo (2019) model (Fig. 12.1) includes consideration of the organization's strategy and culture before implementing 360 feedback. When creating a customized 360 feedback instrument, the first step is to develop a competency model specifically for that particular organization (Byham, 2004). A competency model articulates the competencies that are critical for effectiveness in the organization. Once created, the competency model is implemented in various talent management processes across the organization including 360 feedback. This ensures the competencies considered important by the organization are measured by the 360 process, and recipients receive feedback on relevant competencies.

A successful leadership competency model requires considerable detail. Using evidence-based practice, organizations develop clearly articulated, well-implemented, and widely accepted models of effective leadership by involving numerous stakeholder groups that decide what the most important competencies are for that organization. The goal is to arrive at an integrated set of competencies that are relevant, meaningful, and understood across the organization (Fleenor & Taylor, 2018).

Characteristics of 360 Feedback

Several critical characteristics of 360 feedback affect its acceptance by the recipient. First, the feedback must be credible—credibility is derived from characteristics that include accuracy, clarity, timeliness, rater characteristics, awareness, and acceptance (Bracken et al., 2001). Each of these characteristics is discussed individually below, and presented in Table 12.1 with design considerations for improving the factors.

Accuracy This includes the accurate collecting/processing of the data and reporting of the feedback. Errors in the feedback reports will negatively affect the recipient's confidence in the results and acceptance of the feedback. Design factors that will increase accuracy include scoring systems capable of handling high volumes with secure reporting, quality control to eliminate errors, and prepopulating important information such as demographic data (especially the rater's relationship to the feedback recipient).

Clarity Raters must be given clear information on how to fulfill the role of a feedback provider (e.g., carefully completing the instrument and returning it in a timely manner). Other errors that raters may commit include miscoding (or misunderstanding) who they are rating, misusing the response scale, and providing inappropriate write-in comments. Raters must simply understand what they are supposed to do.

Table 12.1 360 feedback characteristics with design recommendations

Characteristic	Design Recommendations
Accuracy	Capacity to do high-volume and secure reporting. Processes to ensure zero errors. Precode important information (e.g., demographics).
Clarity	Clear instructions and readability. Conduct training sessions to provide rating instructions. Test understanding of participants.
Timeliness	Administer as frequently as is reasonable/needed. Train raters to avoid recency error. Deliver results as soon as possible.
Rater characteristics	Keep instrument short (40–60 items). Implement policy on rater overload (limit number of surveys). Provide rater training.
Reliability	Write items that are clear, specific, behavioral, relevant, actionable. Conduct reliability analyses. Use clearly defined anchors. Select raters with opportunity to observe. Train on proper use of rating scale. Report rater groups separately.
Awareness	Communicate the importance of full participation in the 360 process. Provide feedback reports that capture the interest of recipients. Integrate feedback with important talent management processes. Be aware of individual differences in feedback receptivity.
Acceptance	Require participation. Allow recipient to select raters; agreed to by the organization. Administer consistently across the organization. Treat process as a business priority. Content clearly tied to strategy and goals. Train on how to use feedback for development. Provide support for development (workshops, coaches, etc.).
Feedback recipient accountability	Communicate expectations of feedback recipient. Set consequences for noncompliance. Require meeting with raters.
Rater accountability	Communicate expectations of raters. Require raters to meet with recipient to discuss feedback. Use system that provides real-time feedback to raters.

Adapted from Fleenor (2019)

Clear instructions, good communications, and rater training can go a long way toward a successful implementation (Fleenor, 2019).

Timeliness Timeliness in providing feedback is important both for accuracy and acceptance by the recipients. According to Bracken et al. (2001), delays in gathering feedback can increase rating error, particularly when evaluating specific behaviors. Many 360 feedback processes are administered on an annual basis; therefore, raters are likely to exhibit recency error in their ratings. One method that attempts to mitigate this particular type of rating error involves collecting feedback at the completion of each project during the year. At the end of the year, recipients receive cumulative feedback on all projects worked on during that period. While this addresses the timeliness issues leading to rater error, it does not solve the problem of delayed feedback to the recipient and the implications for acceptance of the feedback.

Rater characteristics The quality of feedback is dependent on the motivation of the raters to participate, as reflected in response rates and in the quality of their responses. Process factors such as survey length and the number of surveys a given rater must complete will affect the quality of the responses. Symptoms of poor quality include unreturned surveys, incomplete surveys, and the effects of rater fatigue on the feedback.

Reliability While raters can be reliable observers of behavior, the challenge is to motivate them to do so in the context of a 360 feedback process in an organization (Pulakos & Rose, 2019). For example, there may be forces in the organization, such as cultural factors, which discourage accurate ratings (e.g., a culture of providing inflated ratings).

Related issues include the importance of reliability in the 360 context, how it should be measured, and what level of reliability is acceptable. Some common reliability indices, such as test-retest reliability, are not appropriate for 360 ratings. These reliabilities may be affected by changes in a feedback recipient's behavior in the intervening time, practice effects, and changes in the raters themselves (e.g., attitudes and opportunity to observe). For these and other reasons, it is not recommended that test-retest reliability be used for 360 feedback (Fleenor, 2019).

Measures of internal consistency, such as coefficient alpha, provide evidence that items on a scale (i.e., a dimension or competency) are internally reliable. The internal consistency reliability of 360 ratings may be threatened by poorly written items. The use of "double-barreled" items in an attempt to shorten the length of questionnaires can reduce the reliabilities of the instrument. Low reliabilities may obscure meaningful interpretation of the results, further reducing the validity of the feedback (Bracken et al., 2001).

Other factors affecting the reliability of 360 feedback include the type of response scale used, and how raters interpret the response scale (Bracken & Rotolo, 2019). For example, frequency rating scales may interact with opportunity to observe to create unreliable measures (Bracken & Paul, 1993). More systematic research on response scales is needed, including accepted standards of reliability.

With 360 feedback, interrater reliability is often used to determine the level of agreement between and within rater groups. Moderate levels of interrater reliability have typically been found within groups, although direct reports are often found to have the lowest reliabilities. To increase the reliabilities within rater groups, all available raters should be used (particularly direct reports)—more raters will result in more reliable ratings (Fleenor, 2019).

The feedback should be broken out by rater group (e.g., self, manager, peers, direct reports, etc.). While breaking out the results by rater group may be questioned because of low interrater agreement, these groups represent an important reality in the organization. Meaningful comparisons between rating groups is an essential element of the 360 feedback process (Bracken et al., 2016). Feedback recipients expect to see separate rater groups in their feedback reports. During the feedback sessions, recipients should be made fully aware of the implications of the differences between rating sources, especially when manager ratings differ from the other rating sources. Peers have a unique position in the organization and often have a perspective of a feedback recipient's behavior that other raters are not aware of. This is likely the reason peers have been found to provide the most valid 360 ratings (Braddy, Gooty, Fleenor, & Yammarino, 2014).

Typically, the agreement between rating sources is low. One reason for conducting 360 feedback is to provide insights into the ratings from the various rater groups that bring different perspectives to the feedback process (Bracken & Church, 2013). While the rating groups may disagree, each group has a valid perspective of a recipient's performance. For 360 feedback, it is expected that rater groups will differ and these differences provide valuable feedback for the recipients.

Often in 360 feedback, self-ratings are found to differ from the ratings of others. For this reason, the use of self-ratings in isolation is not recommended. The level of agreement between self- and others' ratings, however, can provide important and useful information (Furnham, 2019). Self-other rating agreement can potentially be used as a measure of self-awareness. While the accurate measurement of self-awareness can be problematic, self-other agreement shows promise as a measure of this construct. Additionally, there appears to be a relationship between self-other agreement and leader effectiveness. In general, leaders who rate themselves similarly to others (in-agreement raters) appear to be more effective than leaders who rate themselves differently (Fleenor, Smither, Atwater, Braddy, & Sturm, 2010). The relationship between self-other rating agreement and leader effectiveness is nonlinear however, and more complex than originally thought. For example, leaders who underrate themselves appear to be more effective than those who overrate themselves (Braddy et al., 2014). For 360 feedback, the challenge is to develop a relatively simple index of self-other rating agreement that recipients can easily understand in their feedback reports.

To increase the reliability of 360 feedback, the following design factors are recommended (Bracken et al., 2001):

- Items are clearly written, behavioral, and actionable.
- Reliability analyses of the ratings are conducted (e.g., interrater reliability).
- Clearly defined anchors on the response scale are used.
- Raters are selected who have opportunities to observe the feedback recipient.
- Raters are trained on using the rating scale.
- Rater groups are reported separately.

In summary, there are several process factors related to raters that will affect the quality of their feedback: (a) having a sufficient number of raters, (b) selecting raters who have sufficient opportunity to observe the recipient, (c) having the recipient choose the raters with manager approval, (d) providing a 360 instrument that is scientifically developed with clear behavioral items, (e) using a rating scale that is relevant, clear, and reduces rating errors (e.g., leniency and halo), and (f) providing rater training (Bracken & Rose, 2011).

Awareness of the Feedback

Awareness is a precursor to the acceptance of 360 feedback. Recipients cannot act on feedback they are not aware of. Awareness is the process of bringing the information to the attention of the recipients. Awareness of their 360 feedback can result in recipients recognizing their weaknesses and taking action to correct them. According to Bracken and Timmreck (2001), 360 feedback can be a unique, novel experience for recipients that captures their attention and increases their awareness of development needs they were previously oblivious to.

Related to awareness is receptivity to the feedback. Because recipients play an active role in the feedback process, individual differences in their orientations and reactions to the feedback are crucial. One important difference is an individual's receptivity to feedback, which London and Smither (2002) define as feedback orientation. Dahling, Chau, and O'Malley (2012) found that feedback orientation has positive relationships with both emotional intelligence and perceptions of the feedback environment. Additionally, Braddy, Sturm, Atwater, Smither, and Fleenor (2013) found that feedback orientation is related to implicit person theory and achievement motivation, and predicted recipients' reactions to their 360 feedback. As noted by Dahling et al., however, relationships between feedback orientation and performance outcomes may be indirect, operating through mediating variables such as feedback-seeking behavior.

Acceptance of the Feedback

Acceptance is the recipients' belief that the feedback represents an accurate representation of their behavior (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979). Acceptance is crucial to Bracken and Rotolo's (2019) model, because when the feedback is not accepted, no behavior change will result. Acceptance is the keystone event in the model—when the recipient decides to accept the feedback as valid and useful information (Bracken & Rose, 2011).

Recipients must accept the feedback before they can act on it in a manner consistent with individual and organizational goals. First-time feedback recipients may experience shock, anger, and rejection of the feedback before finally accepting it

(Brett & Atwater, 2001). To help ensure acceptance of the feedback, resources for helping recipients work through these stages should be implemented by the organization. For example, many organizations provide experienced coaches to help the recipients deal with their feedback. Often these coaches are external consultants who have an unbiased view of the recipients and their feedback. Some organizations provide workshops to help prepare the participants to receive and accept their feedback. The bottom line is to provide an environment where the recipients feel safe in openly and honestly discussing their feedback and the associated emotional reactions.

To increase acceptance of the feedback: (a) all leaders in the organization should be required to participate in the 360 process, (b) recipients should select their raters with input from their managers, (c) assessment content should be tied to business strategy and goals, and (d) developmental support should be provided by the organization (Fleenor, 2019).

A factor related to acceptance is the recipients' reactions to the feedback. Reactions may range from being pleased with the feedback to experiencing hurt and resentment (Nowack, 2019). The recipients' feedback orientation and personality will affect their openness to and acceptance of the feedback (Joo, 2005). Receiving undesirable feedback may negatively affect a recipients' job performance, health, and psychological well-being. Feedback coaches play an important role in determining recipients' readiness to receive feedback, and in helping them work through any emotional reactions to the feedback. For these reasons, organizations may want to assess the feedback orientation (London & Smither, 2002) of the recipients during the 360 processes and make this information available to coaches prior to the feedback sessions (Nowack, 2019).

Accountability for Acting on the Feedback

Accountability is required for a sustainable 360 process. In Bracken and Rotolo's (2019) feedback model (Fig. 12.1), accountability is an important component in moving from awareness/acceptance to sustainable behavior change. It can be increased by establishing (a) recipient accountability to act on the feedback, (b) rater accountability for accuracy and usefulness of the feedback, and (c) organizational accountability for providing resources to support behavior change (London, Smither, & Adsit, 1997).

The accountability of the recipients to act on the feedback is essential for a successful 360 process. In some systems, recipients decide what to do with their feedback; they are not required to share the feedback with their raters or with their manager. Under such conditions, less behavior change is likely to occur (Goldsmith & Morgan, 2004). When recipients meet with their manager and raters to discuss the feedback, it increases their responsibility to help the recipients carry out development plans. Recipients who consistently hold sessions to clarify their feedback with direct reports have been found to improve their effectiveness compared to others.

There is a likelihood of increased behavior change when feedback is shared with the recipients' raters, thus holding the recipients more accountable for taking action based on the feedback (Goldsmith & Underhill, 2001; Walker & Smither, 1999).

A successful 360 feedback process, however, requires full accountability, not only from the recipients, but also from other primary groups involved: raters, managers, and the organization as a whole (London et al., 1997). If raters believe recipients are not being held accountable for acting on their feedback, they will be less likely to provide honest feedback in future 360 administrations. On the other hand, when raters see their feedback is being used productively, they can be expected to continue to provide accurate, honest feedback.

A critical issue is how to motivate raters to provide accurate ratings. The importance of providing honest feedback must be communicated to the raters, and further encouraged by the feedback recipient. Some 360 systems provide raters with immediate feedback on their ratings by identifying clearly invalid rating patterns (e.g., all ratings are the same value) and missing ratings.

Establishing direct rater accountability by sacrificing anonymity and requiring raters to justify their ratings is not recommended. It has been found that raters are less honest when their ratings are not anonymous (Antonioni, 1994; London & Wohlers, 1991). A better means of creating accountability is to invite raters to participate in a discussion of the feedback with the recipient (Bracken et al., 2001).

Organizations must create mechanisms to ensure that recipients will act on the feedback. Some of the primary accountability mechanisms include access to developmental resources such as job assignments, and the full support of the recipient's manager for such developmental opportunities (London, 2003). Managers need to be accountable for the "how" of performance by linking the 360 feedback to positive and negative consequences (Bracken & Church, 2013). Additionally, organizations must hold managers accountable for supporting the development of their direct reports. One method for making managers accountable is to include developmental support as a factor in the performance management system.

Accountability is difficult to observe and measure and has been identified as the "Achilles' heel" of 360 feedback by London et al. (1997). It is often seen as being primarily affected by the design of the 360 process; however, there are many other forces at work. Little research has attempted to relate the accountability created by design features to outcomes such as behavior change and development planning (Bracken & Rose, 2011). More research, therefore, is needed to fully understand the factors that affect accountability in 360 feedback.

Recommendations for Delivering 360 Feedback

This section provides recommendations for delivering 360 feedback in a leadership development context. These recommendations are based on evidence-based practice developed by the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) over the past 25 years, using a broad base of its clients. CCL's 360 practices have been fully documented in

Fleenor, Taylor, and Chappelow (2008). Emphasized in these practices are recommendations that (a) a facilitated coaching session should be conducted to help the leader understand and accept the feedback, (b) clear expectations must be set for what leaders are responsible for doing after they receive the feedback, and (c) leaders should meet with their managers to discuss their feedback and decide on next steps.

Additionally, a supportive organization culture is critical to the success of a 360 feedback process. For example, there must be full senior management buy-in and support (Fleenor & Taylor, 2018). Cultural factors should be considered when developing a 360 process for the organization. For example, the 360 instrument should measure competencies that are important for success in the culture specific to that organization. It should be recognized that leaders need different kinds of feedback at different points in their careers. Early on, they may use 360 feedback to define the specific skills that are important for their jobs. Later, they may use the feedback to assess their capacity for creating a vision for the organization (Fleenor et al., 2008).

A private consultation should be held between the recipient and an experienced feedback coach. The coach provides an introduction to the 360 instrument, an interpretive session of the individual's feedback, and assists with developmental planning based on the feedback. Many providers of 360 assessments, including CCL, require that one-on-one feedback sessions be held when using their instruments. One-on-one feedback sessions are particularly important for recipients receiving 360 feedback for the first time. They usually appreciate the opportunity to discuss their feedback with a neutral and knowledgeable third party. It is important that the coach helps the recipient understand that conflicting ratings may be valid, and comparisons between the different rating sources are a key consideration.

The feedback experience will be significantly enhanced by a coach who has experience in giving feedback on the 360 instrument used by the organization. Some providers require that coaches be certified in the use of their assessments. If internal resources are used, the coach should not be in the recipient's chain of command. Many organizations use independent consultants to deliver 360 feedback in their leadership development programs. External coaches provide additional credibility and reinforce the confidential nature of the process when no one in the organization sees the recipients' feedback reports. Organizations benefit from using the same consultants over time, who become familiar with organizations' culture and goals.

It is important to give recipients sufficient time to digest their feedback before scheduling the one-on-one session. In some cases, organizations distribute the reports to recipients and give them only a few minutes to look over their results before attending their feedback session. When this happens, recipients arrive for their session without fully understanding their feedback. Without time to reflect on their report, recipients may not be ready to fully accept the implications of the feedback. Before distributing the feedback reports, some organizations conduct a group session to provide recipients with guidance on reading their reports prior to their one-on-one sessions.

When recipients receive negative feedback, they must deal with their emotional reactions to the report. Under these circumstances, it is difficult for the feedback coach to move beyond the emotions and help the recipient closely analyze the feedback. After receiving their reports, it is suggested that recipients be given at least a day to digest their feedback before the session with their coach. Experienced feedback coaches believe this will allow recipients to understand their feedback better, deal with their emotional reactions, and be more open and accepting of the feedback. However, there may be individual differences in recipients' reactions to the feedback. Feedback coaches should focus on helping recipients from becoming too entrenched in their initial emotional reactions. While it is recommended that recipients be given some time to digest their results, feedback does have a short shelf life, so coaching sessions should be held within 4 days of receiving the report.

Feedback sessions should be held in a private office or room. The coach should prepare for the session in advance by thoroughly going through the feedback report and taking notes. Feedback coaches should allow recipients to audio-record the session so they will be fully engaged rather than focusing on note taking. The recording will also serve as a useful resource for reviewing progress on the recipients' development plans.

The coach should have a good understanding of the work context for each individual recipient. To better understand the recipient's context, the coach should ask the following questions at the beginning of the feedback session:

- How do you want to use the feedback? Individuals seeking a promotion to the next level in the organization have a different context for feedback than those who are satisfied in their current roles and wish to improve their relationships with direct reports.
- What is happening in your present job? There may be issues within the organization that are having an impact on the recipient's feedback.
- Were you surprised by any of your feedback? Disappointed? Pleased? These questions alone may be enough to get recipients talking about their reactions to the feedback.
- What overarching themes do you see emerging from your feedback? Perhaps the most valuable thing experienced coaches can do is help recipients make connections in the feedback that they do not initially see.
- How would you summarize your feedback? What are the key strengths? What are the key areas for development? Helping the recipient summarize and focus the feedback is critical. The session should progress from the general to the specific.
- What changes are you motivated to make right now? In the future? The most critical decision the recipient makes about the feedback is choosing the areas on which to focus and work.

While feedback coaches should leverage their expertise on the 360 instrument, they should not represent themselves as an expert on an individual's feedback. The recipients are the experts—they must decide for themselves what to pay attention to and how to make meaning of the feedback. Additionally, recipients often ask coaches for an interpretation of their raters' responses. While coaches can make educated guesses, there are no definitive answers to these types of questions. Effective feedback coaches see themselves as guides to the feedback, asking helpful questions and helping the recipients see connections in the information they have received. The result of these sessions will be a developmental plan that outlines a set of goals for the recipient based on the 360 feedback.

Group Feedback Sessions

Conducting a group session before the one-on-one feedback sessions provides the optimal process for 360 feedback delivery. When 360 feedback is administered to a large number of employees at the same time, it is usually more efficient to have recipients go through the introduction to the feedback process in a group setting. In this setting, an overview of the 360 instrument is provided, the individual feedback reports are distributed to the recipients, and developmental planning is introduced.

Group feedback sessions are intended to prepare recipients to receive and understand their individual feedback reports. Ideally, this session is introduced by a senior leader from the organization. A basic outline of steps in a group feedback session follows:

- Clarify purpose, goals, and expectations of the feedback process.
- Briefly discuss the research that supports the 360 feedback instrument being used.
- Provide a context for receiving feedback, including the following:
  - Feedback cannot make decisions for the recipients. They, with the help of their coaches, must make decisions about the feedback.
  - The feedback is just a snapshot of the recipient. It does not define them as a person. It is important that they consider the feedback along with other related information (e.g., their work context) to see what patterns emerge.
  - Recipients often make one of two common mistakes when they receive 360 feedback—they accept the feedback too quickly, or they reject it too quickly.
  - Recipients are the experts about themselves. They know which raters were invited to provide feedback and what their specific work contexts were. Coaches will help the recipients understand the feedback, but they must decide how their feedback is relevant to their particular situation.
- Explain how to read and interpret the report using a sample feedback report.

Group sessions are less staff-intensive and provide the opportunity to employ small-group activities to enhance the developmental experiences of the recipients. The value of this session is greatly enhanced if the recipients have substantial time to review and reflect on their feedback before their one-on-one session. Facilitators of group sessions should be available to respond to the immediate concerns of the recipients and to answer questions about their reports.

After the group session, recipients meet one-on-one with their coaches to discuss their feedback privately. Coaches are able to focus exclusively on the feedback reports, because the preliminaries have been taken care of in the group session.

What Makes 360 Feedback Successful?

There are number of factors that are common to successful 360 feedback processes. Many of these factors can be implemented through careful design and planning. A summary of the critical factors follows (Fleenor et al., 2008):

Clarity of Purpose

Organizations should consider how their business goals align with the purpose of 360 feedback—the needs of the organization should drive the process (Campion, Campion, & Campion, 2019). The purpose of assessment should be clearly defined and an appropriate instrument selected for that purpose. For example, will the feedback be used for talent identification, or is the purpose for development only?

Organizational Readiness

Senior leadership must publicly support the feedback process. A supportive organizational culture is necessary for 360 feedback to be successful. All senior leaders should participate in the process as feedback recipients. The 360 assessment should be appropriate for the organizational context—it should be based on the organization's leadership model and reinforce the behaviors that the organization wishes to encourage in its employees. Finally, the organization should create realistic expectations for the 360 process. The expected outcomes of the process should be clearly communicated (e.g., the identification of strengths and weaknesses for developmental planning).

The 360 Feedback Instrument

The organization should develop a leadership model (i.e., a competency model) that specifies what competencies are important for success in the organization. If the purpose of the assessment is to measure competencies specific to the organization, then a customized instrument that directly measures the relevant competencies should be used, rather than an off-the-shelf assessment (Conger, 2019).

The instrument must be appropriate for the level of the recipients (e.g., first level, middle level, executive, etc.). Recipients need different kinds of feedback at different points in their careers. Early on, they may use the feedback to determine what basic competencies are important for their current jobs (e.g., resourcefulness). Later in their careers, recipients may use the feedback to determine their capability for higher-level competencies such as creating a vision for the organization.

Instrument Vendor

In most cases, an external provider of 360 feedback services should be used to implement the process (Macey & Barbara, 2019). The external provider should have expertise in developing customized, research-based instruments. The primary reason for using an external provider is to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the feedback, especially the raters' individual ratings of their managers. If internal consultants are used, steps must be taken to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the results, and these steps must be communicated with the raters and the recipients.

Logistics

Conducting 360 feedback in an organization is a complex undertaking. It is critical to have a thorough communication plan in place, particularly for those in directly involved in the process (e.g., recipients, managers, and other raters). The communication plan should address three critical issues: (a) why is the organization conducting the 360 process? (b) why is it being done now? and (c) who is included in the process?

An external vendor can help the organization identify the various roles needed in a 360 process, particularly the internal administrative roles. A point person will be needed to be responsible for coordination, including scheduling, monitoring returns, and communication with the vendor.

Large 360 processes should begin with a pilot group of senior leaders. A pilot study will introduce the senior leaders to the 360 process and engage their raters to provide feedback. This will demonstrate that senior leaders are taking the process seriously, which will increase perceptions that this is an important initiative for the organization.

Feedback Recipient Preparation

Recipients should be informed why they have been selected to participate, how the process works, and the degree of confidentiality and anonymity that can be expected. Raters (e.g., peers and direct reports) should be informed their feedback is important and their ratings will remain anonymous.

Managers who provide ratings should be informed that their feedback will not be anonymous. Because most recipients have only one direct manager, manager ratings will not be aggregated with the ratings of others, as are peer and direct report ratings. Managers need to know what to expect after the feedback reports are distributed, and how to respond to recipients who wish to follow up with developmental planning.

It should be made clear who "owns" the data—the recipient, the organization, or both. In a development-only 360 process, recipients are considered to be the owners of their data. Therefore, only the recipients themselves and their feedback coaches see the data. In "development plus" 360 processes (McCauley & Brutus, 2019), organizations are able to use the 360 data to make decisions on promotions, succession planning, etc.

Rater Selection

Research suggests that raters who frequently observe the recipient provide the most accurate feedback. Raters must have sufficient time to observe the behaviors they are rating. For most feedback recipients, the best raters are the coworkers with whom they have frequent and in-person interaction (Bracken & Rotolo, 2019).

A minimum of three raters is recommended for each rating group (peers, direct reports, etc.). A sufficient number of raters must be selected to ensure each recipient has sufficient data to permit breakouts by rater group. The average ratings for each rater group are presented in the feedback report. Research suggests that raters provide more honest feedback when their anonymity is ensured. (Bracken et al., 2001).

Although it is recommended that recipients select their raters, organizations should have the option to require specific raters for each recipient. For example, all direct reports should provide feedback. If the organization unilaterally assigns raters, recipients may discount any negative feedback, believing the raters who know them best were not selected.

In summary, while an official communication plan is necessary, the feedback recipients' initial communication with their raters is essential. Recipients should notify their raters that they have been selected to provide feedback and encourage the raters to complete the 360 assessment. This will have many benefits, including motivating the raters and thus increasing survey return rates.

Postassessment Actions

The feedback recipients must have clear expectations of what they are responsible for after they receive the feedback. Feedback coaches should assist recipients in interpreting their feedback reports and creating plans for development. Recipients should meet with their managers to discuss their feedback and determine next steps in their development plan.

The 360 feedback must be tied to development planning and to an implementation and feedback loop by the recipient. Development is what happens after recipients have seen their feedback reports, come to terms with it, and decided what they are motivated to change. This involves conversations with their managers about working on developing the right competencies and what kind of support they need for development. There must be accountability and a way to evaluate behavior change, so the organization will know if the 360 feedback process is a success (Bracken & Rose, 2011).

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity are not trivial issues in 360 feedback. Rater anonymity and confidentiality must be maintained during the feedback process. Anonymity ensures the identity of the raters and the feedback they provide are protected (not known by the recipients). Raters will provide more accurate feedback when they know their ratings will remain anonymous (Macey & Barbara, 2019). Anonymity is critical for certain rater groups (i.e., direct reports and peers) to ensure honest ratings. Confidentiality ensures only certain individuals who have been approved by the organization in advance are allowed to see the recipients' feedback.

The Future of 360 Feedback

An emerging theme in 360 feedback is the effect that technology will have on the process in the future (Church, Bracken, Fleenor, & Rose, 2019). Several of these factors are already affecting its implementation. For example, technology exists that can help maintain rater anonymity, prevent rater fatigue, and generate interactive feedback reports with automated developmental recommendations (Hunt, Sherwood, & Pytel, 2019). Another effect is the application of data analytics to 360 feedback, which involves integrating 360 data with additional data sources, storing these data so that they are easily accessible, and exporting the data to various predictive analytic applications (Fink & Sinar, 2019). Using data analytics, integrated data will be leveraged to better predict what organizations need to do to accelerate development and drive business impact at both the individual and organizational levels. Additionally, the integration of 360 feedback with external data (e.g., social network data) enables the system to become more intelligent over time. For instance, this data integration could be involved in the development of a model to better predict which feedback sources will have the most impact on leader development outcomes.

The issue of integrating data sources is very relevant for 360 feedback. A first step will be to focus on key sources of feedback that are generated within the leader development context. For example, in addition to 360 feedback, an initial integrated dataset will include engagement survey data, data from the enterprise learning platform, and pulse survey data. Pulse surveys are a potentially useful technology for collecting on-demand feedback from leaders' direct reports. This feedback is useful, for example, for assessing how well leaders are meeting the goals they have set in their development plans. For example, using data analytic methods, it is possible to predict which developmental experiences would be most effective for a particular leader. Additionally, using a dataset of 360 data, personality measures, and scores on simulations such as situational judgment tests, it may be possible to add incremental validity to our predictions of leader effectiveness.

Over time, other sources of data, such as physiological measures, could be integrated with the 360 feedback, allowing for even better prediction of developmental assignments and more relevant development resources. For example, the most relevant developmental activities could be identified for recipients who show high levels of stress, yet receive positive 360 feedback.

In the near-future, machine learning analytics will be used to interpret recipients' 360 feedback. Based on their feedback, recipients will be directed to the most relevant developmental assignments. These assignments will be linked, for example, to developmental resources such as user-driven tools for providing feedback on demand (e.g., pulse surveys). Another technology that shows a lot of promise is the use of artificial intelligence (AI; machine learning) for interpreting feedback reports and making developmental recommendations to recipients. Currently, AI is being used to analyze qualitative feedback collected in the 360 process, such as open-ended comments (Church et al., 2019).

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to leverage the extant research to improve 360 feedback processes in organizations. To this end, a comprehensive model of the factors that affect the success of 360 feedback (Bracken et al., 2001) is presented in the chapter. These factors with the related design recommendations can be found in Table 12.1. A 360 feedback system that is poorly designed, and thus invalid, will not be sustainable, because it will not create sustained behavior change desired by the organization (Bracken & Rotolo, 2019).

This chapter describes evidence-based practice for implementing successful 360 feedback processes in organizations (Fleenor et al., 2008). In summary, the probability of success of the implementation will be greatly increased by

- Making a full investment of both time and resources in the process
- Aligning the 360 feedback process with business needs from the beginning
- Getting senior leader buy-in
- Planning carefully and communicating widely early in the process
- Selecting a vendor that is a good match with the organization as well as a known quantity
- Measuring relevant competencies using a competency model developed for the organization
- Using the 360 process to leverage developmental activities that bring about sustainable behavior change

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Chapter 13
The Role of Feedback in Coaching and Technology-Enabled Coaching Processes

Lisa A. Steelman, Garret Kilmer, Richard L. Griffith, and James Taylor

Coaching has become quite popular in organizations and is widely accepted (Kilburg, 1996). Both employers and employees embrace coaching. A 2019 industry market research report estimated the size of the business coaching market in the United States at $12 billion dollars. Coaching is broadly defined as a "process of equipping people with the tools, knowledge and opportunities they need to develop themselves and become more effective" (Peterson & Hicks, 1996, p. 41). Coaching is a systematic, goal-oriented process in which a coach facilitates a protégé's development. The process is predicated on a collaborative partnership between a coach and protégé (or coachee) and stresses analysis, self-reflection, self-determination, and an on-going commitment to goal achievement. The practice of coaching rests on the notion that it has a positive impact on job performance (Ellinger, Ellinger, & Keller, 2003).

There are a number of different types of coaching in the literature. Executive coaching is the process of addressing the development needs of senior leaders or executives; it is typically conducted by external consultants (Kilburg, 1996). Employee or managerial coaching refers to the process of a manager working one-on-one with a subordinate to improve performance or enhance capabilities for future roles and challenges (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999). Peer coaching occurs when employees work collaboratively with peers to learn and develop. Mentoring is a form of one-on-one coaching that is viewed as more directive and instructive, while coaching is more collaborative and facilitative (Ives, 2008). Training programs are an even more directive approach to imparting information and hoping that behavior change occurs back on the job. In this chapter, we refer to all forms of employee

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coaching in which a coach works collaboratively with an employee to facilitate a change process.

The business landscape is increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous, known as VUCA (Gerras et al., 2010), and technology has been viewed as a robust intervention to manage in this new operational environment. Technology is impacting all areas of work, and coaching is no exception. Conventional coaching processes have moved beyond traditional face-to-face approaches to technology-mediated communication. This new landscape of coaching has been referred to as distance coaching, virtual coaching, and the term we use in this chapter is electronic coaching or e-coaching. In this chapter, we will discuss first how traditional coaching has incorporated feedback processes. Second, we discuss the literature on e-coaching, as well as how feedback processes are incorporated into e-coaching. Finally, we discuss how advanced, artificially intelligent coaching systems (virtual coaching) can be applied to self-directed coaching via self-feedback and how they may change the landscape of coaching once again.

Coaching

Coaching is a one-on-one collaborative relationship between a coach and a coachee or protégé (Kilburg, 1996). The coach can be either internal or external to the organization. Coaching involves the use of practice and feedback and goal setting to improve insight, professional performance, job satisfaction, career progression, and ultimately organizational performance. In a study that compared coaching to a no-coaching control group, managers who received coaching had greater performance improvement (Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas, & Kucine, 2003). Coaching also offers improvements in leader effectiveness (Thach, 2002), self-efficacy (Evers, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2006), and engagement and promotability (Schlosser, Steinbrenner, Kumata, & Hunt, 2006). A meta-analysis reported that coaching had positive effects on employee skill development, productivity, and job satisfaction (Jones, Woods, & Guillaume, 2016).

The coaching process involves creating insight by providing feedback and asking targeted questions (Joo, 2005). These processes place the responsibility for learning and development on the learner, or coachee. A coachee does not learn passively simply by being coached, but rather learning occurs by being an active participant (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Therefore, coaching promotes personal responsibility for self-development, self-directed learning, and self-determination. In other words, coaching fosters the conditions necessary for autonomy, relatedness, and competence, which comprise self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy, the need for ownership and volition, is driven by work that feels meaningful and important. Relatedness refers to the need to belong, feel respected, and valued. Competence is the basic need to feel effective and to grow. The coaching process should fulfill the components of self-determination because it involves developing a relationship with a coachee, delivering feedback regarding actual job responsibilities and performance, and driving personal agency toward growth and development (Rigby & Ryan, 2018).

Feedback delivery and use is the foundation of coaching. Gregory, Levy, and Jeffers (2008) presented a five-stage model that integrates feedback processes with executive coaching. The first stage involves a catalyst for coaching or some event that triggers a perceived need for a coaching intervention. In this stage, the nature of the coaching need is identified and an appropriate coach is selected. The selected coach should have expertise in the competency to be coached, as well as be compatible with the coachee. Stage two involves building a relationship between the coach and the coachee. During this stage, initial feedback is provided. The coachee may experience an affective reaction when provided with early negative or constructive feedback (London & Smither, 2002). How the coach handles this response to feedback will set the expectations for the rest of the coaching engagement and the level of trust and rapport within the relationship. Stage three involves gathering data on the coachee's performance, often through multisource feedback. At this stage, the coach is again the source of feedback and it is up to the coach to promote an environment in which strong emotions are managed and feedback can be attentively processed. In stage four, the feedback is put to use. Areas of improvement are identified and goals or action plans are jointly developed. This is usually the longest stage. During this time, the coach provides feedback and helps the coachee stay focused on working toward the established goals. Finally, stage 5 is marked by observable outcomes. Behavioral and performance changes may be gradual, so this stage also involves coach feedback concerning progress and benchmarks. It is clear that executive coaching, and any coaching intervention, is deeply dependent on effective feedback processes (Gregory et al., 2008).

There are four factors that are critical to the success of coaching: the feedback process itself, individual feedback orientation or receptivity to feedback, the relationship between the coach and the coachee, and the environment for feedback (Gregory et al., 2008; Joo, 2005; Kilburg, 1996). First, feedback is a critical component of coaching. Coaches provide individualized feedback to stimulate learning and development (Gregory et al., 2008), and detailed, regular feedback has been associated with coaching effectiveness (Joo, 2005; Longenecker, 2010). The coachee's feedback orientation is an individual characteristic referring to an individual's openness to feedback and the extent to which one welcomes feedback and coaching (London & Smither, 2002). Feedback orientation has been related to learning goal orientation, which is a focus on developing competence and persistence in learning situations (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010). Furthermore, the coach's feedback orientation has been related to their coaching and feedback behaviors, the quality of the relationship they develop with the coachee, and the favorability of the feedback environment that they construct (Steelman & Wolfeld, 2018). In other words, the feedback orientation of both the coach and the coachee is important to coaching success.

The third factor is the quality of the coaching relationship. This refers to the rapport, trust, mutual respect, and caring between the two parties (Gregory & Levy, 2010). The coaching relationship is thought to lay the foundation for coaching effectiveness (Hunt & Weintraub, 2016) and is associated with effective coaching behaviors (Gregory & Levy, 2012). Evidence suggests that the quality of the coaching relationship is impacted by the match between the coach and coachee, credibility and trustworthiness of the coach, and a coach's demonstration of empathy and individualized consideration (Gregory & Levy, 2012).

Finally, feedback must be provided within a supportive environment. The feedback environment refers to the context within which feedback is provided and used (Steelman, Levy, & Snell, 2004). A favorable feedback environment is one that promotes the significance of feedback and encourages constructive dynamics for providing and using high-quality feedback. In a favorable feedback environment, coachees receive regular feedback, are encouraged to mindfully use the feedback, and seek out additional feedback as required. In general, coaching should be more effective when the organization's feedback environment is favorable (London & Smither, 2002). Furthermore, an effective coach can construct a favorable environment for feedback, and this has been related to perceptions of coaching effectiveness (Steelman & Wolfeld, 2018). To be successful, electronic coaching, or e-coaching, must support the coaching feedback process, as well as promote the four factors associated with effective coaching. In other words, e-coaching should strive to create the same conditions and features that have been shown to be successful in traditional coaching methods.

E-Coaching

E-coaching, also referred to as virtual coaching, occurs when a coaching engagement is conducted using technology such as telephone, video conferencing, or email (Hernez-Broome, Boyce, & Whyman, 2007). E-coaching can be defined as a service offering (using technology as a tool to coach remotely) on its own, or it can be used to subsidize an ongoing face-to-face coaching engagement (more of a blended approach). The latter was most likely the start of e-coaching, and as technology has improved, its prevalence has increased. Estimates indicate that in 2012, only 41% of coaching was conducted face-to-face (Geissler, Hasenbein, Kanatouri, & Wegener, 2014).

The use of e-coaching has increased as a complement to face-to-face executive coaching where executive travel and lack of availability are major impediments to coaching success. E-coaching allows the engagement to continue to progress and not get bogged down by scheduling conflicts. Through e-coaching, coaches and protégés communicate and maintain relationships anytime, anywhere, using a variety of available electronic and computer-mediated communication tools such as land-line telephones, cell phones, voice mail, e-mail, discussion boards, text chat and instant messaging, plus live web conferencing and prerecorded audio and video delivered to the desktop or mobile device of choice. The availability of such a variety of means for synchronous and asynchronous communication alters the timing, scheduling, and formality of the coaching process. For instance, coaches and protégés can have more frequent and shorter communications about specific, targeted, topics, enabling a protégé to receive quick, timely feedback. The availability of different methods to suit different clients (i.e., phone, web-based text, video conferencing) is also a major advantage that allows coaches to not only adjust their coaching style to different clients, but also utilize different methods to achieve different results. E-coaching technology also supports coaching in all industries, at all organizational levels (not just at the executive level), and can be applied to address any development issues that are covered via in-person coaching (Rossett & Marino, 2005).

E-coaching tools can promote more effective and efficient coaching in a number of ways. From the coach's perspective, e-coaching can enable a more systematic approach to the design of a coaching engagement including administering prework, scheduling, follow-up, and data management. E-coaching also supports the trend toward more individualized, flexible, and just-in-time learning and development (Brandenburg & Ellinger, 2003; Kim, Bonk, & Zeng, 2005) and makes coaching more accessible for a broader group of coachees. E-coaching technology can scale up coaching by expanding access and thus reducing talent bottlenecks.

Although the literature on e-coaching is limited at this time, e-coaching has been used successfully as an intervention on its own and as a supplement to more traditional face-to-face coaching. For instance, Wang and Wentling (2001) demonstrated that e-coaching used as a supplement to a 3-week training program was associated with significantly higher transfer of training. Another study found that coachees who met with a coach in an online chat room had significant improvements in work-life balance, and management of priorities (Otte, Bangerter, Britsch, & Wüthrich, 2014).

In a study that compared traditional face-to-face coaching with e-coaching, Berry, Ashby, Gnilka, and Matheny (2011) report no differences in perceptions of the quality of the coaching relationship or the amount of coachee progress toward their goals. Providing further support for e-coaching, results of a meta-analysis suggest no difference in coaching outcomes based on methodology, face-to-face versus e-coaching (Jones et al., 2016).

Benefits and Drawbacks to E-Coaching

Flexibility, efficiency, cost, scale, and the ability to address coaching issues on a real-time basis are some of the advantages to e-coaching (Rossett & Marino, 2005). E-coaching gives the coach and coachee the flexibility to communicate using different technology. This gives the engagement more efficiency as keeping up with issues, learning, and homework can, at times, slow down the coaching process. Asynchronous communication adds flexibility, giving the participants time to think and process information rather than coming up with a response in the moment. A blended or hybrid model of e-coaching utilizes both traditional face-to-face meetings, as well as computer-mediated communication. These multiple communication mechanisms increase opportunities for coach-protégé interactions and can increase the amount of time coaches spend with coachees (Neely, Cotton, & Neely, 2017).

E-coaching is considered a high-impact, low-cost development tool. Whereas traditional coaching can be idiosyncratic and costly, e-coaching allows organizations to provide coaching to many, making it more consistent, scalable, and cost-effective (Rossett & Marino, 2005). Furthermore, persons with disabilities, or in remote locations, could benefit from the technological advances in e-coaching. In addition, Single and Single (2005) suggested that e-coaching could be less impacted by individual characteristics and social bias than face-to-face coaching.

Matching the right coach to the right client is a crucial component in any coaching relationship, and the fit can impact the overall coaching outcome. E-coaching allows a coach and coachee to be matched based on compatibility rather than location (Sparrow, 2006), increasing the pool of coaches. Popular professional websites such as LinkedIn and associations like the International Coach Federation provide searchable profiles of certified coaches.

Another important benefit of e-coaching is the ability to facilitate learning and coaching in-the-moment, through more timely feedback. E-coaching allows a coach and coachee to have contact outside of regularly scheduled sessions. As timeliness is a key factor in the reflective learning process, the ability to contact your coach directly after an event, or if you ever have a question, is crucial to extracting the most out of each learning opportunity. Traditional coaches often may not have the luxury of spontaneous contact, so their ability to provide feedback when they need to the most may be limited. Scheduled intensive sessions are the foundation of executive coaching, but more frequent, less intensive sessions give both clients and coaches a chance to view a more comprehensive picture of the developmental process, and allows clients to view coaches as a resource and not just a scheduled meeting. Real-time, direct on-the-job learning also has the benefit of ensuring transfer of training (McCall, 2010).

While virtual communication between coach and client is a major aspect in e-coaching, the power and efficiency that virtual coaching systems can bring to an engagement should not be overlooked. Some coaching platforms allow for note taking and chat boxes that can track the coaching process and progress, which will better organize both the coach and coachee in the engagement. Leveraging tools that manage and evaluate the programs of coaches and tools that monitor client progress can further enhance learning and feedback. Some products on the market like CoachLogix (www.coachlogix.com) or CoachingDirector (www.coachingdirector.com) already leverage online tools that track the progress and goals of clients. These virtual environments promote long-term improvement and allow coaches to interact with the data around their clients.

With the implementation of virtual systems, the quality of coaching sessions may be greatly enhanced. Information can be shared more quickly, and that information is much more detailed. The extra detail and quality about client performance allow coaches to make better insights and provide better feedback. The increase in informational value is linked to how clients will receive the feedback and be willing to respond (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979). Traditional coaches are limited to any data collected during 360-feedback tools, coaching sessions, and data the client is willing to share, but this is done with much less structure and intent that virtual platforms provide. Modern virtual systems, therefore, enhance the overall quality of data, and ultimately feedback given by the e-coach. Clients can also access and analyze their own data to self-reflect and make sense of what could otherwise be perceived as a mysterious coaching process.

Each client is unique in their attitudes toward coaching methods. Otte et al. (2014) found that clients who prefer a systematic approach to coaching were more likely to believe that technology was able to enhance the coaching process. The added structure and transparency of goal setting and measured outcomes provided by virtual systems allows clients to better monitor their quantitative progress. Traditionally, coaching evaluations were centered around satisfaction outcomes and less around behavioral changes and goal attainment (Grant, 2005), but structured technological tools allow the evaluation of coaching processes to be more structured and focused on results and learning. Helping clients achieve behavioral changes that develop them outside of their current state is a key to coaching success (Stevens, 2005).

In the future, virtual systems could assist coaching methods by simulating role-play environments, use advanced software to match coaches and clients, and using AI and machine learning to analyze large quantities of qualitative data to find themes and progress across coaching sessions. Technological breakthroughs like virtual reality helmets and adaptive interactive characters can provide situations for experiential learning without the face-to-face role plays that are done with humans.

There are, of course, drawbacks to e-coaching. Asynchronous communication can result in delays and lack of spontaneity resulting in lowered motivation and weakening of momentum (Stone, 2004). Computer-mediated communication is viewed as more impersonal, lacking the richness of face-to-face communication (Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987). Studies have shown that electronic media lack the visual, social, and aural cues that face-to-face interactions provide, promoting opportunities for misunderstanding (Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984). Electronic media may also decrease involvement in the communication process. Virtual communication can also surface concerns about privacy and confidentiality (Pascal, Sass, & Gregory, 2015). As mentioned earlier, lower cost can be a benefit to e-coaching, but there can a potential dichotomy when engagements require less of an investment, participants can be less engaged, noncommittal, and tend to be distracted. Finally, technology issues and access may also be an obstacle to participation in e-coaching.

E-Coaching and the Feedback Process

It is likely that the critical success factors for coaching (feedback, feedback orientation, quality of the coaching relationship, and feedback environment) will carry over to the e-coaching framework. Similar to coaching, e-coaching should be built around the feedback process. In fact, the nature of e-coaching may lend itself to more frequent feedback and greater feedback availability. Research in computer-mediated feedback processes suggests that people trust computer-mediated feedback more than face-to-face feedback (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), and participants performed better when given feedback from a computer versus feedback from a person (Earley, 1988; Kluger & Adler, 1993). In a review of the computer-mediated feedback literature, Kiesler et al. (1984) noted that students were more likely to seek feedback via email than in person. While there are benefits to electronic feedback, nuances associated with nonverbal communication are lost for both the coach and the coachee. An e-coach may need to mindfully utilize multiple modes of communication to enhance richness and ensure the intended feedback message is received.

Consistent with traditional coaching, e-coaching should be more effective when the coach and the coachee have strong feedback orientation. Those with high feedback orientation are likely to make constructive use of feedback, no matter how it is received (London & Smither, 2002). Although it is open to empirical examination, a coachee's feedback orientation may improve over time as the relationship between the coach and coachee develops.

The third aspect of successful coaching is the quality of the relationship between the coach and coachee. The quality of the coaching relationship may be even more important in e-coaching when face-to-face interactions are few or nonexistent and particular attention should be devoted to building trust and rapport (Vandaveer, Lowman, Pearlman, & Brannick, 2016). Key components of a high-quality coaching relationship include genuine care, respect and authenticity, trust, effective communication, and the degree of comfort and ease between the members of the coaching dyad (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010). Studies indicate that it is possible to build rapport in distance coaching (Geissler et al., 2014). Thus far, research has demonstrated that both the client and coach can perceive a positive relationship in e-coaching frameworks (Berry et al., 2011). A hybrid model of both rich and lean media may, again, be the best approach for building trust. Many coaches do, however, purport that an initial face-to-face contact leads to stronger relationships moving forward; however, other coaches prefer the extra distance in an initial phone call meeting, as there are less extraneous factors that could influence their perceptions and therefore quality of the relationship (Rossett & Marino, 2005).

Finally, e-coaches should pay particular attention to establishing a favorable feedback environment. A feedback environment associated with feedback-friendly practices that support using feedback and seeking it out is related to growth opportunities (London, 2003). No research currently exists on the mechanisms associated with effectively promoting a favorable feedback environment in an e-coaching framework. However, evidence from research with virtual teams suggests that individual and team feedback provided via computer-mediated mechanisms has a positive impact on team member motivation and team performance (Geister, Konradt, & Hertel, 2006).

The Future of Electronic Coaching

Technology will likely move the field of e-coaching forward very quickly. We believe that if coaching via virtual communication technology is effective, having a virtual coach may also be effective. Virtual coaches (downloadable apps) are emerging in the medical field as a way to keep patient recovery from medical procedures on track and to remind patients to take their medication, stick to an exercise routine, or even ask questions about symptoms (Ding et al., 2010). One approach to a virtual coach is using technology to enable self-directed learning through self-regulation and self-feedback. One exemplar of this method is a tool called Guided Mindfulness (GM) (Griffith, Steelman, Wildman, LeNoble, & Zhou, 2017). The Guided Mindfulness (GM) platform is a technology-assisted individualized approach to experiential learning that triggers event-based preparation and reflection to increase self-regulation and self-feedback, and improve complex skill acquisition. Using an artificially intelligent platform, the learner is directed through the learning experience with prompting questions and activities before, during, and after specific experiential learning events. This just-in-time learning approach involves pre- and postassessment, preparation, reflection, and review to facilitate the self-paced directed learning of any interpersonal competency or targeted complex skill. In other words, the technological platform is the coach, using artificially intelligent algorithms to guide a coachee through a learning event. GM can be used to target any competency typically addressed by coaching including advanced interpersonal competencies such as cross-cultural competence and leadership, as well as intrapersonal competencies such as cognitive flexibility and adaptability (Griffith, Sudduth, Flett, & Skiba, 2015). While these competencies can be introduced in a classroom, they are best developed in real-world settings and experiential learning events. GM uses these events as the basis of event-based learning, similar to the approach used by a coach.

GM is based on a competency structure that is built into the platform. This structure allows for an initial assessment to develop a performance baseline, as well as performance tracking throughout the learning cycle. GM utilizes technology before (preparation phase) and after (reflection phase) learning events to focus the learner on the opportunity to learn, and captures their interaction with the system. Through a series of targeted queries, very similar to the types of questions posed by coaches to guide learning, in GM, learner focuses on relevant learning issues through self-feedback. This self-feedback is captured by the system and can be reviewed by the learners or even an external coach.

We view GM and other virtual coaches as an extension of coaching that builds on the principles and methods of feedback and reflection to enable learning and self-development. Therefore, virtual coaches should incorporate the four factors associated with effective coaching: feedback, feedback orientation, coaching relationship, and feedback environment. First, in terms of feedback, the GM platform promotes learning from on-the-job experience, similar to coaching and e-coaching. The prompts provided by the GM system are similar to a coach's line of questioning. In this case, the prompts will elicit goal-directed self-feedback. Self-reflection and self-feedback are the primary ways that on-the-job experiences are translated into learning (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). In other words, a learner reflects on an experience, gaining insights into actions or behaviors that can be changed in the future. GM theory suggests this virtual coach promotes learning through encouraging mindful attention to the experience and facilitating meta-cognition and self-regulatory processes.

Technology-aided self-feedback will be most effective when the learner is receptive to feedback (feedback orientation) and, in general, has a strong learning orientation (DeRue & Wellman, 2009). In fact, we suspect that the most successful GM coachees will have strong feedback and learning orientations. The GM platform is built around a human-like avatar that prompts the coachee with reflection questions to drive an individual's experiential learning. The third essential aspect for effective coaching is the coaching relationship. Research is needed to determine if a learner can develop a coaching relationship with an avatar, but existing evidence suggests that people do develop close relationships with virtual avatars (Zhao & Wang, 2008). The final factor that is critical for coaching success is a favorable feedback environment. The extent to which a technology application can promote an environment that is conducive to the feedback process is also an open question. Design features of the platform will need to be examined to ensure they promote a favorable environment.

Virtual coaching, of which GM is just one example, may be the future of e-coaching. These systems can leverage the best parts of e-coaching including flexibility and scalability. The GM platform can be used on any device (desktop, tablet, or phone), allowing for an agile learning environment. This agility fosters learning when you need it, rather than when you are able to schedule a meeting with your coach. Because learning is based on real life situations and previously identified competencies, it is always relevant to the learning goals of the user. In fact, a coach can review the questions and responses captured by the GM system to inform subsequent coaching sessions. Ultimately, machine learning of user-generated content can lead to a deeper understanding of learning events that may be tied to key business criteria (Griffith et al., 2017). We believe that virtual coaches, as opposed to coaching virtually, will be the next phase in the evolution of coaching.

Future Directions for Research and Practice

There is renewed interest in coaching in the literature (Joo, Sushko, & McLean, 2012) and with the increased reliance on technology in the workplace, e-coaching is likely to continue to rise in popularity. Research will need to keep up with practice by proactively examining mechanisms to improve the process and outcomes of e-coaching. For instance, there continues to be a need for research that assesses the effectiveness of coaching using measures other than subjective evaluations from the coachee. Research into coaching effectiveness also needs to explore long-term outcomes using longitudinal designs, as well as coach-coachee dyads.

Quality of the coaching relationship may be a particularly fruitful area for future research. Evidence suggests that healthy coaching relationships and learning can be facilitated through technology (Berry et al., 2011), but other research suggests that e-coaches may be viewed as lacking warmth and compassion (Pascal et al., 2015). This concern may stem from the perceived lack of emotional information transmitted over technological means (Cooper & Neal, 2015). Being considerate while giving feedback, and making a real connection, has been positively related to the coaching relationship, perceived helpfulness, and satisfaction with the feedback (Ilgen, Peterson, Martin, & Boeschen, 1981). How a coach expresses consideration, however, may be negatively impacted by the technological channel they choose to use, and extraneous factors like the location of a camera, strength of their connection, or technical failures can greatly modify how a coach and client interact.

Organizations have refocused on employee development to meet the challenges of global competition and to incorporate technological advances; thus, approaches to development have moved far beyond classroom training (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2017). Researchers estimate that 70% of learning occurs on the job (McCauley & McCall Jr, 2014). During experiential learning, individuals reflect on their experience, including others' reactions and their own internal states. Unfortunately, this self-directed learning process is idiosyncratic, in that a learner may reflect on aspects of the experience that are most personally relevant, but not aspects directly tied to performance improvement (McCall, 2010). Second, experiential learning is bound by finite cognitive and self-regulatory resources where learning and doing are competitors for those resources (Day, 2010). Although a big part of coaching is providing feedback, a good coach is able to alternate between imposing feedback and asking targeted questions that allow coachees to gain insight on their own (Joo et al., 2012). This type of self-understanding through self-feedback should promote self-determination. All forms of coaching, traditional, e-coaching, and technology-assisted self-coaching can advance the effectiveness of experiential on-the-job learning. Researchers should begin to examine coaching within the context of self-feedback and self-determination.

Our understanding of the coaching process and factors associated with success has come a long way. We contend that all coaching applications, face-to-face, e-coaching, and virtual coaching, should incorporate conditions associated with effective feedback processes including provision of constructive feedback, individual feedback orientation, a high-quality coaching relationship and a favorable feedback environment. Furthermore, since the purpose of coaching is to enable reflection, self-insight, and self-development, theories of self-determination and experiential learning should be leveraged to enhance the effectiveness of coaching. Although it may be possible for e-coaching and virtual coaching to mirror the conditions associated with effective face-to-face coaching, future research should continue to examine how to best carry out technology-enabled coaching.

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Chapter 14
User-Driven Feedback Tools for Leader Development

Stephen F. Young and Cynthia D. McCauley

Leader development is an on-going process of learning, growth, and change driven by experiences that challenge and support new ways of thinking and acting. The potential for development is greatest when these experiences stretch leaders beyond their current capabilities, yet are rich in insights about how to enhance their effectiveness and encouragement to act on those insights. The potential for development is also a function of the leader's ability to learn from experience. Learning from experience involves recognizing when new behaviors and skills are called for; taking responsibility for developing needed capabilities; experimenting with new approaches, monitoring their impact, and making adjustments; and reflecting on one's own learning process (McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010). Seeking feedback from coworkers is a core learning-from-experience practice. Regular feedback helps leaders recognize when a change in behavior or growth in skill is needed, is essential for monitoring efforts to improve, and creates a social environment that motivates change.

Although formal feedback is available to leaders in many organizations via 360 feedback, performance management processes, and employee engagement surveys, these processes rarely provide the kind of real-time feedback needed to maximize learning from experience. Informal feedback from bosses happens more regularly; however, leaders are much more likely to hear positive feedback from their boss and want more negative feedback (Gentry & Young, 2017). To increase access to real-time feedback from multiple coworkers, organizations are beginning to experiment with user-driven feedback tools that enable leaders to seek quick, targeted feedback on a more regular basis. These tools are *user-driven* to the extent that they put some aspects of feedback-seeking into the hands of individual leaders, for example, what individual leaders get feedback on, who they seek feedback from, and when they seek feedback.

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User-driven feedback tools have roots in the pulse survey industry. The use of the term “pulse surveys” first appeared in the employee engagement literature in the early 2000s. They were originally defined as a measurement technique that produces timely, quick, but limited information about the health of an organization (Colihan & Waclawski, 2006). Since then, the market for these tools has exploded with different types of pulse survey tools for different HR processes such as employee feedback and recognition, work management, employee engagement monitoring, and employee mood monitoring (Bersin by Deloitte, 2016). A number of factors have contributed to the precipitous rise of pulse survey tools, including an influx of venture capital–funded start-ups selling shiny new tools to HR, the idea that annual engagement surveys do not provide enough real-time actionable information to use at the point of disengagement, the much maligned annual performance appraisal, and a culture that loves “liking” or rating almost everything we buy (Bersin, 2015). And more recently, the power and promise of creating enduring habits for personal and organizational growth (Duhigg, 2015) has popularized new terms such as microprogress and microfeedback (Herrera, 2018)—real-time, event-based feedback leaders can receive that is close to events where their behaviors are visible (e.g., speeches given, meetings led, and difficult conversations on an organizational change).

This chapter focuses on a new subcategory of pulse survey tools called user-driven feedback tools. These tools enable leaders themselves to seek out quick, targeted, and quantitative and qualitative feedback on their own. Users decide what they need feedback on and who to seek feedback from and when. These tools allow users to track their progress toward development goals in real time.

Given the flexibility that these tools offer, organizations have numerous choices to make around how “user-driven” they want their tools to be. On the one hand, these tools can be entirely user-driven where the leader controls all aspects of the process including whether they actually use the tool or not. On the other hand, these tools can have few user-driven qualities such that leaders may only be allowed to choose what development goal to work on and from whom to seek confidential and anonymous feedback.

Regardless of the specific user-driven make-up of the process, effective use of these tools for receiving real-time feedback still depends on the willingness of others to give honest feedback and the willingness of the recipient to address it. That means real-time acknowledgment of the value of the input, real-time efforts to change problematic behaviors, and real-time follow-up conversations about performance. Fortunately, research and practice in the area of feedback offers valuable guidance for organizations aiming to implement these tools. Drawing on this literature, we discuss how the design of the user-driven feedback tool itself and the feedback process surrounding the tool impact the extent to which individuals seek feedback on their own and use it for performance improvement. Our discussion of key practices also makes use of examples collected from practitioners experimenting with these tools in organizations as well as our own experiences implementing these tools. Finally, we suggest some future directions for research in this emerging area where organizations are racing to implement tools with little evidence-based guidance to draw on.

A Process View of User-Driven Feedback Tools

Based on the feedback-seeking (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015) and feedback intervention literatures (Bracken & Rose, 2011), we developed a model to guide the understanding and application of user-driven feedback tools (see Fig. 14.1). The feedback-seeking literature suggests that individuals are more likely to seek out feedback when the costs of doing so are low and the expected value is high. Certain demographic, individual difference, and organizational context factors impact this cost-value analysis. When a user-driven feedback tool is introduced in an organization, specific features of the process will also impact the feedback-seeking cost-value analysis and can moderate the relationship between exogenous factors and the individual's cost-value analysis. The overall cost-value analysis directly impacts the extent to which individuals seek feedback using the tool and may also increase feedback-seeking in face-to-face conversations. Finally, the extent to which individuals seek feedback over time should impact contextual and individual difference factors.

Feedback Seeking and the Cost-Value Framework

Feedback-seeking behavior (FSB) is "the conscious devotion of effort toward determining the correctness and adequacy of behavior for attaining valued end states" (Ashford, 1986, p. 466). Individuals can proactively seek feedback either by directly asking for feedback (inquiry) or indirectly by observing cues in the environment to infer information from them (monitoring). According to Ashford and Cummings (1983), seeking feedback should be helpful for employees to reduce job-related uncertainty, attain goals, and overcome organizational obstacles. Though recent meta-analytic research (Anseel et al., 2015) did not support a relationship between monitoring-based FSB and performance, a positive relationship between inquiry-based FSB and performance was found. Individuals who proactively seek more feedback from bosses and coworkers are rated as better performers, because they

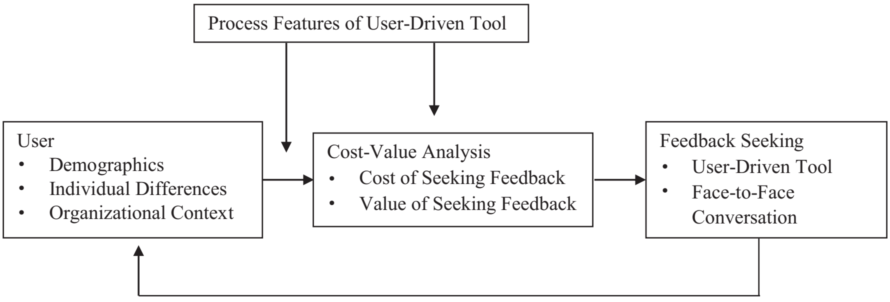

Fig. 14.1 A process view of user-driven feedback tools

gain increased role clarity around what is expected of them (Whitaker, Dahling, & Levy, 2007).

Most studies on FSB in organizations are grounded in the cost-value framework (e.g., Ashford, 1986; VandeWalle, Ganesan, Challagalla, & Brown, 2000). This framework assumes that employees consciously consider the costs and values associated with FSB. This cost-value analysis is usually the primary determinant of subsequent FSB. As an example, imagine the value of seeking feedback for a recently promoted middle manager who just attended a leader development program. Because that individual is in a new position and just participated in a development program, he or she might be motivated to seek feedback to reduce uncertainty about how skill improvement efforts are being viewed by his or her peers. On the other hand, he or she may not want to convey a negative image to peers who may think that an individual promoted to this position should already be highly skilled. Whether this manager will actually seek feedback depends on the results of a cost-value analysis: Does the value associated with FSB (uncertainty reduction) outweigh the costs of FSB (negative image)? Research supports the cost-value framework: individuals are less likely to seek feedback if they perceive the cost of feedback to be high and are more likely to seek feedback if they value the feedback (Anseel et al., 2015).

Antecedents of Feedback Seeking

Research has pointed to demographic, individual difference, and contextual factors that influence the perceived value and cost inherent in feedback seeking.

- Organizational tenure, job tenure, and age are negatively related to FSB (Anseel et al., 2015). When employees are new to the organization or job, feedback is particularly helpful to reduce uncertainty about what is expected in their roles. As employees get older and more experienced in their jobs and organization, they attach less value to feedback, because they are more likely to know what is expected of them. Older and more tenured employees may also seek less feedback because they may feel that it is no longer appropriate to ask others for help.
- An individual's external feedback propensity, feedback orientation, learning and performance goal orientation, and self-efficacy are positively related to FSB (Anseel et al., 2015). Individuals with a high external propensity for feedback (i.e., desire for obtaining feedback from an external source) or with a high feedback orientation (i.e., overall receptivity to feedback) have a tendency to respond favorably to feedback from colleagues or supervisors, to be more open to feedback, and to use it more (London & Smither, 2002). In achievement situations, individuals with a high learning goal orientation are concerned with acquiring new skills and mastering new situations, and thus are more focused on the value of feedback and less focused on the cost of seeking help (VandeWalle & Cummings, 1997). Individuals with a high performance goal orientation are concerned with demonstrating and gaining favorable judgments about their

competence. For these individuals, the value of feedback for demonstrating competence outweighs the possible cost of negative feedback in public (Anseel et al., 2015). And finally, individuals with higher self-efficacy (i.e., the assessment of one's competence to perform a task or set of tasks) are more likely to seek feedback because they see themselves as capable of using the feedback for improvement (Alicke & Sedikides, 2009).

- Several contextual factors also impact FSB: frequent feedback, transformational leadership, and relationship quality (Anseel et al., 2015). Though the interplay between costs and benefits may often be complicated, individuals perceive higher value and few costs associated with seeking feedback after receiving frequent positive and negative feedback (Anseel et al., 2015). When transformational leaders show individualized consideration for their subordinates, the costs associated with seeking feedback decreases. And when transformational leaders engage in intellectual stimulation, they create a context where employees feel safe to speak up and ask for additional information. Finally, the higher the quality of the relationship, the more likely the feedback provider will give feedback in a sensitive and constructive manner when asked (VanDeWalle et al., 2000).

These demographic, individual difference, and contextual antecedents are important to keep in mind in designing user-driven feedback processes. For those individuals who already have a high propensity to engage in feedback-seeking behaviors, the process features will have less impact on their judgment of the cost and value of feedback seeking. For those with a low propensity to engage in these behaviors, the process features will play a more central role in their cost-value judgments.

Process Features

Because the ultimate aim of any user-driven feedback process is behavior change, the 360-feedback literature offers several insights about how to design an effective feedback process. According to Bracken and Rose (2011), there are four primary process features that increase the probability that receiving 360-feedback will lead to behavior change: (1) relevant content, (2) credible data, (3) accountability for change, and (4) census participation.

Relevant content means that feedback processes use a common set of behavior-based survey questions that is relevant to current organizational strategies, culture, and role expectations (Bracken & Rose, 2011). For user-driven feedback processes, this means that all leaders should have the opportunity to access a library of organizationally relevant items that they may choose to receive quick targeted feedback on. Leaders should perceive significant value in seeking feedback on behaviors and skills strategically valued by the organization.

Credible data means leaders believe the feedback they receive accurately reflects the views of the raters. One of the most important features to ensure credibility of the data is guaranteeing raters that the feedback they provide will not be linked back to them. This practice allows raters to be honest, which also helps leaders trust the results. At the same time, leaders should be able to choose raters (with boss approval) who know their work well and can provide high-quality feedback (Bracken & Rose, 2011). In the context of user-driven feedback processes, this suggests that the leaders should choose their raters and that feedback is provided to the leader without attribution to any particular rater. When leaders have control over who they are getting feedback from, they should better value the feedback because it is coming from trusted sources.

Accountability means that feedback is provided with certain features that make people feel responsible for doing something with the results. After receiving 360-feedback and possibly discussing the results with a coach, leaders should set realistic developmental goals that, if achieved, will matter to their organizations. Then leaders should follow up with their raters and state what their goals are and ask for support in holding themselves accountable (Bracken & Rose, 2011). In a user-driven feedback setting, leaders should ideally have access to a coach or at-work learning partner who can help them set a goal(s), as well as to draw on for support when they eventually receive feedback on any progress (or lack thereof) they are making. In a study by Goldsmith and Morgan (2004), leaders who followed up with their raters (3–15 months later) to voice their development goals and affirm their commitment to change were perceived as having shown greater change in leader effectiveness. It is possible that increased usage of user-driven feedback tools may also enhance the extent to which one's colleagues provide more frequent and accurate feedback and believe the leader is positively changing over time, which would increase the value of seeking feedback.

Another aspect of accountability is the role of the boss. Though some say that 360-feedback *must* be shared with the boss to drive accountability (Bracken & Rose, 2011; Bracken, Rose, & Church, 2016), others suggest that the leader should have some choice in how much of the feedback is shared with the boss (Fleenor, Taylor, & Chappelow, 2008). Putting this choice in the hand of the leader ensures confidentiality of the data, helping leaders trust the process and increasing the likelihood that individuals accept difficult feedback and use it for performance improvement.

Census participation means that all leaders across an entire system (e.g., all leaders in a department, business unit, or even the entire company) participate in 360-feedback. Participation by all leaders sends a message that feedback is valuable for everyone. When a company is trying to achieve a specific strategy, census participation can be a powerful system-level lever used to create change by clearly identifying the behaviors expected of all leaders. When evaluating leaders on such behaviors and then examining group-level trends, an organization can also assess its capacity to achieve strategic goals and shift talent as needed to deliver on strategy (Bracken & Rose, 2011).

Applications of User-Driven Feedback in Organizations

To further inform the design of a user-driven feedback process for participants in our own leadership development programs at the Center for Creative Leadership, we sought to supplement insights gained from the feedback-seeking and 360-feedback literature with lessons from the experiences of organizations who were at the forefront of experimenting with these tools. Although we found some case examples in the published literature (Baldassarre & Finken, 2015; Boyd, 2014), we relied heavily on informal conversations, structured interviews, and a panel session organized for a professional conference (Young et al., 2018).

We quickly learned that few of these experiments were undertaken as part of formal leader development initiatives. They were more likely to be launched from efforts to improve performance management practices in the organization. A criticism of traditional performance management is its heavy reliance on an annual performance review with one's boss rather than on practices that enhance performance in day-to-day work, for example, receiving regular feedback and coaching (Pulakos & O'Leary, 2015). As a result, some organizations are experimenting with user-driven feedback as a way of increasing the frequency of performance feedback and the relevance of that feedback by involving those coworkers who interact most regularly with an employee. Other reasons organizations cite for experimenting with user-driven feedback include increasing employees' accountability for their behavior (not just for results), enhancing a culture of employee engagement, and increasing on-the-job development. Despite variations in the primary purpose that launched these experiments, supporting leader development in the organization was typically an expected outcome.

Two examples highlight the wide variation in applications of user-driven feedback. TIAA piloted and then launched company-wide an online "Get Feedback" tool that enables their employees to seek just-in-time feedback from coworkers (White, 2018). The tool is part of their Human Resource Management System (HRMS) and is one element in a broader initiative to shift the organization's performance management practices from a compliance focus to a coaching focus. This shift includes increasing the frequency of feedback and coaching, incorporating accountability for both results and behaviors, and building manager's coaching capabilities. The online tool allows employees to solicit feedback from any group of coworkers via specific open-ended questions. Examples of useful questions for seeking feedback are provided. The user has the option of seeking anonymous or identified feedback; those receiving the request are alerted to whether their feedback will be anonymous or not. The user also chooses who sees the feedback (user only, user and manager, or user and everyone asked to provide feedback). In the first year of a soft roll-out, 2600 requests for feedback were initiated (in a 10,000 employee company) with an 83% response rate from recipients of those requests. A majority of the requests occurred during the 3 months when performance reviews were being conducted. In addition to getting feedback, employees found other ways to use the tool, including getting input on goals, engaging their teams to share ideas for improving team performance, and asking for feedback on a direct report.

In contrast, an experiment at RHR International was more localized within the organization (Wiita, 2018) with the purpose of strengthening a culture of learning, feedback, and engagement. It made use of an off-the-shelf tool originally designed for employee recognition but used in this experiment to reinforce behavior consistent with a developmental goal. Individuals in the same workgroup shared a behavioral goal with each other (e.g., "more frequently voice my ideas and perspectives") and then used the tool to reinforce individuals with small monetary rewards when behavior consistent with their goal was observed. Thus, the focus was on positive feedback that points out when a desired behavior was enacted. Each workgroup member was given $5 each month to use for recognition. When individuals received a recognition message, they knew who the message was coming from; however, they were the only one who was aware of the message (i.e., feedback was confidential but not anonymous). Other noteworthy behavior beyond the stated goal could also be recognized by coworkers. The easy-to-use tool, the safety created by focusing on positive feedback, and the automated reminders was credited with regular and intentional use of the tool during the experiment.

We were particularly interested in the design choices made in each application of user-driven feedback and how the various process features chosen might impact the user's perceived value and cost of using the feedback tool (see Table 14.1). Key design choices included:

- *Integrated or stand-alone*. Organizations can build a user-driven feedback tool within their HRMS or use an existing stand-alone product. When an organization expects to make their user-driven feedback tool widely available across the

Table 14.1 Potential impact of process features on user

Process feature	Value to user	Cost to user
Integrated with HRMS	Familiarity with system, less duplication of effort	Concern about who has access to the feedback and how it might be used
Stand-alone tool outside of HRMS	Tool designed for specific use, less concern about organization access to feedback	Another tool to learn how to use
Qualitative feedback	Richer, more contextualized feedback	More challenging to integrate across feedback providers
Quantitative feedback	Information about frequency of behavior or level of skill, ability to track change over time	Limited information about how to improve
Feedback-provider anonymity	Increased honesty from feedback providers	Difficult to follow up with specific individuals for more information
Feedback confidentiality	Less concern that negative feedback will adversely impact personnel decisions	Less accountability to use the feedback for performance improvement

organization, they are more likely to build the tool into their HRMS. This makes the tool easier for employees to locate and navigate, allows for customization to the organization's needs, conveys that seeking feedback is a core HR process, and allows the organization to monitor usage. An existing product requires little upfront investment and, by not integrating it into the organization's HRMS, can create higher levels of data confidentiality, which may increase user acceptance of the tool.

- *Qualitative or quantitative feedback*. Some user-driven feedback tools only allow the user to ask open-ended questions (e.g., what one thing could I do to more effectively delegate tasks?) and thus receive feedback in the form of text responses to these questions. This approach mimics feedback that an individual would receive when having a conversation with someone providing feedback about a specific skill or behavior. Organizations using this approach often point out that employees already receive quantitative feedback via performance appraisals or 360 feedback and that it is the rich qualitative feedback that they need more regularly. Other user-driven feedback tools only allow the user to ask for ratings of their behaviors, skills, or effectiveness. Such a quantitative approach allows for more precise tracking of changes over time. Still other tools allow for both qualitative and quantitative feedback.
- *Degree of feedback-provider anonymity*. Most 360-feedback processes in organizations guarantee anonymity for raters, particularly when those raters are peers or direct reports. Such anonymity is seen as important for maximizing honest feedback from raters. Most, but not all, user-driven feedback experiments have adopted this practice of anonymity for those providing feedback. Those who are experimenting with nonanonymous feedback argue that making feedback anonymous is not consistent with the culture they are aiming for, that is, one in which employees are not afraid to provide each other with honest feedback. However, initial results in one organization indicated that the nonanonymous feedback provided was overwhelmingly positive feedback. Another option is to leave anonymity options up to the user. In some situations, the user may be seeking feedback from close colleagues who feel comfortable giving each other nonanonymous feedback, while in other situations (e.g., asking for feedback from a group of new direct reports), the user might want to opt for anonymous feedback.
- *Degree of feedback confidentiality*. Another process question is whether anyone in addition to the user will see the feedback. Organizations who see the user-driven feedback as part of their performance management process have often opted to make the feedback available to the user's manager. Those who see the user-driven feedback more as a tool to support on-going employee development tend make the feedback available only to the user. Others have left the question of who has access to the feedback up to the user. An interesting variation in the mix is allowing everyone who provides feedback to see other people's feedback.

Certain process features that support the generation of high-quality feedback were built into many of the feedback tools (Bracken & Rose, 2011). These must-have features included training on how to use the tool (as a feedback seeker and a feedback provider), clear communication about whether the feedback would be anonymous and whether it would be shared with others, libraries of items for the user to choose from in seeking ratings from others on particular behaviors and skills, and examples of open-ended questions for getting specific, actionable feedback from coworkers.

Those experimenting with user-driven feedback tools are well aware that the existing feedback culture in the organization will impact the acceptance and use of these tools, often choosing to pilot the tools in pockets of the organization that already have a stronger feedback culture. At the same time, they see the introduction of these tools in the organization as an occasion to strengthen the feedback culture by including skill-building for all employees in seeking, giving, and receiving feedback and by using the introduction as an opportunity to communicate the case for the value of feedback and to make the seeking of feedback more visible in the organization.

The dominant measure of success for these experiments was employee usage of the tool. Other aspects of the process that were monitored included users' perceptions of the tool and the value of feedback received, the percent of individuals who responded to requests for feedback, the occurrence of any abusive qualitative feedback, and demographic patterns in who was using the tool. An important next step is more rigorous examination of the impact of these tools, for example, on success with behavioral change or skill building. We will return to this issue of evaluating impact in our discussion of future research directions.

Implementing a User-Driven Feedback Tool Within a Leader Development Program

Though user-driven feedback tools can be utilized to promote development at the team and organizational levels, we focus on describing the implementation of a user-driven feedback tool within the context of traditional leader development programs. CCL's long-running leader development programs provide participants with a heavy dose of feedback in a supportive environment. Specifically, these programs assess an individual's personality and leader effectiveness and present those data to individuals in a variety of ways that facilitate greater self-awareness and motivate behavior change. It is a blend of methodologies, combining assessment for development tools (e.g., 360-degree feedback), experiential exercises, direct teaching of practical content from leadership research, peer and staff coaching as well as goal setting and follow-through (King & Santana, 2010). And yet the hard work is following through on those goals in the workplace. One of the ways to encourage ongoing application and practice of new skills is to empower leaders with a user-driven feedback tool and a structured approach for how to use it. We believe that thoughtful integration of user-driven feedback tools throughout the development experience has the potential to help leaders stay focused on their goals, continue to gain valuable insights about their behaviors and skills, and engage others in their efforts to improve.

To help individuals get the most out of these formal leader development programs, CCL uses the "Prepare, Engage, Apply" model (Reinhold, Patterson, & Hegel, 2015). The *prepare* phase is about setting the stage before attending the development program. The *engage* phase is the content and delivery component of the experience. The a*pply* phase refers to the application and sustainment of learning where reinforcement and support at work—away from the learning environment and over time—is essential for learning transfer. Though it is during the a*pply* phase that individuals will seek out and receive feedback from their user-driven feedback tool, there are important practices and procedures to utilize in the *prepare* and *engage* phases that affect successful usage of the tool within the *apply* phase. As we worked to embed a user-driven feedback tool within CCL's "Prepare, Engage, Apply" model, we deliberately sought to enhance the perceived value of user-driven feedback and reduce its cost. Though several aspects of our feedback-intensive leader development programs were already designed to set up a favorable cost-benefit analysis, we instituted several new process features that served to maintain this optimal balance.

Prepare Phase

During the *prepare* phase, CCL asks leaders to select a key leadership challenge (KLC): an existing project that aligns with the organization's strategy and that requires new approaches to be successful. To increase accountability, CCL urges leaders to talk to their boss about the KLC before coming to a development program. Bosses should see the KLC as an important one to the organization, and it should be part of the leader's work responsibilities—that is, accomplishing it should matter (Reinhold et al., 2015). When leaders choose a meaningful KLC with input from their boss and receive feedback on one's skills and style (e.g., 360-degree feedback, personality), they are better able to decide on a key goal(s) to receive high-value user-driven feedback on during the *apply* phase.

Engage Phase

Leaders are more likely to perceive feedback as valuable when it is about achievement of development goals related to a KLC. Therefore, leadership practitioners must give leaders time to reflect on and discuss how their insights from their feedback apply to their KLC during the *engage* phase. What strengths can they use in response to their KLC? What areas must they improve on or develop? (Reinhold et al., 2015). As leaders consider where their energy lies for seeking user-driven feedback on a particular goal(s) during the *engage* phase, they should be briefly introduced to the user-driven feedback process (approximately 1-hour module) including the benefits of seeking ongoing feedback from others on a goal, the different types of feedback they may be able to receive using their tool (e.g., overall goal-based vs. event-based micro-feedback), how to operationally use the tool itself, and making sense of and using the feedback they receive to achieve their goal. A particularly important part of any training module should be to help leaders understand the difference between the various types of development goals they could choose to set (i.e., behavior vs. competency vs. outcome) and the implications that choice has on how they use their feedback tool. Though the type of development goal suggests the use of different learning tactics and on-the-job resources (Scisco, McCauley, Leslie, & Elsey, 2015), we focus on discussing the frequency of feedback seeking and from whom.

Behavioral goals involve changing how others perceive the individual in directly observable terms. Effective behavioral goals are those that allow others to see leaders working on their goal and leaders know the times and places where they will act differently (e.g., participate with subordinates one time per week in informal activities to learn more about their personal lives). Feedback on behavioral goals should be sought as often as the individual encounters situations where the behavior should be displayed (Scisco et al., 2015). In most cases, this will be daily, which sets up a situation where feedback providers will be hard-pressed to provide all of the necessary feedback to change a behavior. However, some user-driven feedback tools enable leaders to seek out quick targeted microfeedback on specific behaviors (including quantitative and open-ended qualitative feedback) on their own. Microfeedback refers to the real-time, event-based feedback leaders can receive that is close to events where their behaviors are visible (e.g., speeches given, meetings led, and difficult conversations on an organizational change). For example, a leader might be working on asking others for their perspectives before stating his or her point of view in weekly meetings. Every 1–2 weeks for some period of time, the leader could ask the meeting attendees to rate him/her on the following item on a 5-point Likert scale “I asked others for their perspectives before stating my point of view in our meeting yesterday.” A complementary open-ended question might be “What is one action that I could have done differently in our team meeting yesterday to better recognize the ideas of our team members?”

Competency goals involve improving a skill, and they take longer to achieve compared to a behavioral goal; other people cannot see the changes leaders make right away. Effective competency goals have a competency label that describes and focuses the competency; these goals also describe the performance results that explain why leaders want to develop the competency (e.g., collaborate more effectively with my peers on my cross-functional projects, which will increase my chances for promotion to VP). Though it is useful for leaders to check-in within themselves weekly on these types of goals (Scisco et al., 2015), user-driven feedback tools are best utilized to seek out feedback (quantitative or qualitative) from others who are in the best position to observe their use of that skill. For example, a quantitative item on a 5-pt Likert scale could be “Relative to the best leader you can think of…I listen to the ideas of my team members so that I make higher quality decisions." The corresponding open-ended could be: "Related to my goal, what is one thing I can start doing? Please answer in the Situation-Behavior-Impact (SBI) format." In this case, the leader's raters would be his or her direct reports (minimum of 3 or more to ensure anonymity) and they would have received a basic orientation around how to provide feedback using the SBI format, which is a behavior-based method for delivering feedback that is aimed at reducing emotion-driven defensiveness on the part of the leader. The time 2 and time 3 follow-up pulses to the same raters would be rephrased to reflect the change in timeframe. For example, the 5-point Likert item might now read "Since July, I have improved on my goal (I listen to the ideas of my team members so that I make higher quality decisions). The open-ended question would be slightly changed to "Related to my goal (I listen to the ideas of my team members so that I make higher-quality decisions), what is one thing I can continue doing? Please answer in SBI format."

Outcome goals involve getting things done. They are like behavioral goals in that their achievement is visible, but they can bring permanent change in conduct and they target short-term accomplishments. Effective outcome goals describe specific accomplishments or achievements and include a timeframe (e.g., by the end of this month, I will increase sales from repeat customers by 10%). Because leaders and others can usually track accomplishment of these goals using verifiable facts and data (Scisco et al., 2015), user-driven feedback tools are neither usually well suited nor needed to track such goal progress.

Apply Phase

At the beginning of the *apply* phase (1–2 weeks following conclusion of the *engage* phase), leaders should share the goals they are considering with their boss and an at-work learning partner. An at-work learning partner may or may not be the boss (such as a mentor, coach, human resources business partner, peer, or other trusted person). The at-work learning partner provides support for learning, helps leaders reflect on ideas and insights from their program experience including feedback received, and assists leaders as they apply these insights in their work context (Cromwell & Kolb, 2004). The boss and at-work learning partner should help leaders understand the challenges in changing specific behaviors or competencies based on their feedback, support their new goals, and make a plan to hold leaders accountable for applying the learning by establishing specific check-in periods to follow up on goal progress (Reinhold et al., 2015).

After meeting with one's accountability partner, the leader needs to decide on a goal to receive user-driven feedback in the following 6–12 months. Though leaders can often have multiple development goals, the process is less overwhelming if leaders just focus on picking one goal to receive user-driven feedback as they get accustomed to using the tool. It may be most useful for leaders to pick a goal that is based on feedback from multiple people, involves engaging in new behaviors visible in multiple contexts, and difficult to sustain. Regardless of whether the goal is behavioral or competency based, it is important that the goal is specific, difficult, offers opportunities where others can see leaders physically enacting it, and is personally motivating. Who the raters are will depend on the goal itself and who is in the best position to provide feedback. For example, if one's overall goal is to develop a specific competency that is aimed at improving the team's employee engagement score, all direct reports should be raters. This does not preclude the leader from seeking out microfeedback from others with different perspectives on the topic such as peers, superiors, or a special project team. However, the feedback should come from others who can be honest, direct, and after those situations where they expect to show a particular behavior or competency (Taylor, 2014). Taking these steps sets up a context where leaders will receive feedback that is high value and low cost on a goal that matters.

Though leaders should have regular check-ins with their boss and at-work accountability partner to monitor goal progress, we believe it is the leaders' choice as to whether they share what they are learning over time from the user-driven feedback they are receiving. This ensures confidentiality of the data, helping leaders trust the process and increasing the likelihood that individuals accept difficult feedback and use it for performance improvement (Fleenor et al., 2008). And yet, people still have a tendency to react emotionally to feedback (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Therefore, it is important to prepare leaders for how to process feedback and make sense of certain feedback that may "trigger" them. Stone and Heen (2015) have put forth a nice taxonomy of triggers (truth, relationship, identity) that can help to normalize the emotional reactions people attach to feedback. *Truth* triggers are set off by the content of the feedback. *Relationship* triggers are caused by the person providing the feedback. *Identity triggers* are all about your relationship with yourself. Lack of preparing leaders in dealing with these types of triggers will definitely increase the cost of using the tool in the future and reduce its value.

Ultimately, we tell leaders that seeking feedback is simply a way to gauge progress: not a scorecard reflecting one's self worth. Leaders should be prepared to take some time over a period of 1–2 days or more to reflect on the feedback (e.g., is the feedback clear? Do I understand it?). If the feedback is not clear, they can send out a follow-up micropulse or ask a trusted source for additional insight in a face-to-face setting. We tell leaders that understanding does not equal agreement, and we recommend against defending or justifying their actions. Leaders need to own the feedback and thank the feedback givers in a follow-up email.

Though a certain percentage of leaders will receive mostly positive feedback, some leaders will receive negative feedback or the "do differently" type. Depending on what the feedback suggests, leaders should be educated on a range of options. If the feedback suggests doing things that leaders do not know how to do, then they should seek out expert knowledge (e.g., reading, getting tips from someone who does it well). If the "do differently" feedback points to actions that the leaders know they will have a hard time taking, because they go against their natural tendencies, it would be an ideal time to discuss their approach with an at-work accountability partner. Finally, if leaders are trying to practice new behaviors and it is not having any impact on how others see them, then it would definitely be a time to talk with a peer accountability partner, coach, or mentor. It would also be an ideal time to seek out more in-depth face-to-face feedback.

It is possible that leaders may want to seek feedback on more than one goal, seek frequent microfeedback about a goal, or even just use the tool periodically to seek out information on general management topics. Frequency of use should be on a leader-by-leader basis such that it depends on the type of goal they set (i.e., behavior vs. competency), their pace of work, availability of those around them to provide the feedback, and their general comfort using the tool itself. And yet, it is important to remember that leaders often only have time to focus on changing 1–2 leadership capabilities, else they will spread their time and resources thinly across too many development priorities and likely fail to achieve anything of much consequence (Goldsmith & Morgan, 2004; McCauley & Hezlett, 2001). Thus, we strongly encourage practitioners to set up realistic and practical expectations on how to use the tool where seeking of additional microfeedback is optional. There is a real risk that leaders will see this tool as just another thing being put on their already busy plates. By being very specific and targeted about how to use the tool, practitioners will increase the odds that leaders perceive high value and low cost in using this tool to collect ongoing feedback on-the-job. If not, leaders could easily file this tool away for a "rainy day" with all the other materials and job aides they could receive during their development program.

Table 14.2 summarizes the key process features we see as important when using a user-driven feedback tool in a leader development program.

Table 14.2 Key process features for user-driven feedback tools in a leader development program

Leader Development Phase	Key Process Features
Prepare	Involve boss, mentor, or coach for support early on. Assist leader in choosing a key leadership challenge (KLC).
Engage	Give leaders time to reflect on and discuss how their KLC and feedback-related insights inform goal development. Introduce user-driven feedback tool including benefits of seeking feedback, how to use the tool, and tips for using the feedback. Educate leaders on types of development goals and how choice of goal impacts effective use of the tool.
Apply	Focus leaders on selecting at least one key development goal to receive ongoing user-driven (quarterly) feedback over 6–12 months. Though goal-based feedback should follow a regular cadence with a consistent set of raters, allow leaders to seek microfeedback anytime, anywhere as needed. Provide simple on-the-job aid to remind leaders of their options for dealing with feedback received.

Introducing User-Driven Feedback Tools in Organizations

We have also gained insights about introducing user-driven feedback tools within organizations. First, organizations interested in deploying user-driven feedback tools should consider their unique organizational context. If they have employee populations (e.g., high feedback orientation) and cultures (e.g., frequent positive and negative feedback) that lead to frequent giving and receiving of high-quality feedback, then designing and implementing a user-driven feedback process should enhance the impact of a strong feedback culture. When organizations do not have these underlying conditions in place, we recommend against implementation of user-driven feedback tools. Instead, it would be more important and efficient to help leaders and employees learn the fundamentals of giving and receiving high-quality feedback in a face-to-face context where there is less opportunity for feedback messages to be misunderstood. The feedback environment scale (FES) is a useful diagnostic measure for assessing the contextual aspects of day-to-day feedback processes in the organization (Steelman, Levy, & Snell, 2004). Though the FES assesses frequency of favorable and unfavorable feedback, other dimensions such as credibility (i.e., the source's expertise and trustworthiness) and delivery (i.e., the extent to which feedback delivery is tactful and considerate) may be just as important, or more so, to assess and develop before organizations are ready to embrace a user-driven feedback process. The feedback orientation scale (FOS) is a useful individual difference measure for helping employees understand their overall receptivity to feedback so that more personalized interventions can be designed to reduce the negative instinctive reactions that people have to negative feedback (Linderbaum & Levy, 2010).

Once organizations decide that a user-driven feedback process is worth adding to their repertoire of leader development tools, we recommend conducting a pilot study with a subset of individuals to evaluate the extent to which the proposed process engenders perceptions of high value and low cost for feedback seeking. Like most interventions in organizations that involve people and unique cultures, the key issues and trade-offs associated in any user-driven feedback process must be considered at the local level (see Table 14.1). Other local contexts where instituting a user-driven feedback process may be of particular value include organizations with large numbers of distributed workers and industries where the pace of work is fast and the need for timely feedback is critical to business survival (e.g., financial trading).

Second, it is critical to ensure that process features optimize the cost-value judgment. For instance, some have concerns about the costs of "real-time" feedback tools within leadership development. They argue that receiving random ongoing feedback requests daily can lead to survey fatigue, reduced response rates, and feelings of being oversurveyed (Church & Burke, 2019). Though legitimate concerns exist, we have found that leaders use these tools prudently. From our experience, user-driven feedback processes that put control of the feedback seeking within the hands of the focal leader reduces feedback-seeking costs. Pulsing others quarterly over a 6–12-month period puts little burden on raters and is unlikely to cause perceptions of feedback overload on the part of the leaders. We also recommend that leaders use the microfeedback approach as needed depending on their context; forcing individuals to receive feedback for feedback's sake is not recommended.

Future Research Directions

When it comes to user-driven feedback tools, experimentation by practitioners is noticeably ahead of systematic research. Although practitioners draw on the broader feedback seeking and feedback interventions research literature, research is needed that examines the dynamics and impact of feedback using these new tools. Our hypotheses about how the process features of the tool affects the user's cost-value analysis need to be tested. How process features moderate the relationship between user characteristics and their use of the tool also needs to be explored more thoroughly. For example, are users with high feedback propensity who are already regularly seeking feedback in face-to-face conversations less likely to use the tool if it only helps them access anonymous feedback? Are long-tenured employees more likely to use the tool if it enables them to track progress on a goal set in a leader development program?

Clearly, the impact of user-driven feedback on leader development is another major area in need of research. It is not surprising that initial experimentation with these tools has focused on measuring usage and on learning about user's reactions to the tool and perceptions of its value. Next steps should include evaluating the degree to which using the tool enhances behavioral change or competency growth and understanding the mechanisms that contribute to these developmental outcomes.

One of these mechanisms is accountability for behavior change, which has been called the "Achilles' heel of multisource feedback." Although London, Smither, and Adsit (1997) provide several suggestions on how raters and organizations can improve accountability for behavior change, it is particularly important for leaders to follow up with raters to voice their development goals and affirm their commitment to change if others are to perceive improvement over time (Goldsmith & Morgan, 2004). Future research should examine differences in perceived behavior change between leaders undergoing a leader development program with access to a user-driven feedback tool versus leaders who do not have access to such a tool. The user-driven feedback tool could enhance the extent to which leaders are perceived as improving in their effectiveness because they are formally tracking follow-on feedback in an electronic form, which makes the commitment look and feel more tangible to others than just having a handful of face-to-face conversations.

Another mechanism for behavioral change is prompting individuals to monitor their progress toward their change goal. Recent meta-analytic research of experimental studies showed that such prompting increased the likelihood that the individuals would achieve the goal (Harkin et al., 2016). Furthermore, the more frequent the monitoring, the greater the chance of success. Moderator analyses revealed that monitoring progress had an even greater effect if the information was physically recorded or publicly reported. And goal progress monitoring had an impact on goal achievement to a similar degree of magnitude as goal intentions (Webb & Sheeran, 2006), suggesting that individuals need to not only decide upon an appropriate goal (e.g., "What is it that I want to achieve?"), but also that they compare ongoing behavior or the current status of the outcome to that goal (e.g., "Where do I currently stand with respect to this goal?").

Most of the primary studies in the Harkin et al. (2016) meta-analysis focused on personal health goals such as losing weight, quitting smoking, changing diet, or lowering blood pressure. Yet, deploying a user-driven feedback tool within a leader development program constitutes a type of goal-monitoring intervention itself, because it requires leaders to define a goal and commit to multiple time points at which they reflect on the amount of progress they are making toward achieving that goal. It also requires leaders to publically report their development goal and ask for feedback on whether they are making progress or not.

A final mechanism is sustained usage of the feedback tool over time. Research should examine the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that could also inspire usage over time. Could organizations increase motivation among leaders to use the tools if they are framed as multipurpose such that leaders can use them to seek feedback on whatever they want including leadership, team, and organizational topics? Could users become more trusting of the tool and its ability to gather accurate and confidential feedback about themselves if they have the freedom to use the tool to seek feedback on less costly topics? From an extrinsic motivation perspective, would stained usage increase if organizations required leaders to use the tool a minimum of three to four times as a part of their performance management plan?

Beyond research that helps us understand, test, and improve user-driven feedback tools, there are exciting research possibilities and potentially bigger payoffs for deploying user-driven feedback tools within leader development initiatives. Since these tools collect ongoing feedback on leaders, they can help answer broader questions with greater precision for the benefit of the field: What does the leader's learning journey look like over time? When do the dips and spikes in learning occur? What is holding leaders back from applying new learning on the job? What is helping leaders succeed such as access to mentors or executive sponsors? From an applied perspective, collecting ongoing data will also help organizations understand how leaders are applying on-the-job learning so that they can provide more personalized recommendations, tips, or tools in real time.

Conclusion

Seeking feedback from others helps individuals recognize when a change in behavior or growth in skill is needed, is essential for monitoring efforts to improve, and creates a social environment that motivates change (McCauley et al., 2010). And yet, leaders still report not getting enough regular feedback from others (Gentry & Young, 2017). In this chapter, we describe a new class of pulse survey tools called user-driven feedback tools that have the potential to give leaders more of what they want and do it in a manner that produces a positive impact on individuals and their organizational cultures. Our recommendations are based on existing research in the areas of feedback seeking (Anseel et al., 2015), feedback interventions (Bracken & Rose, 2011), organizational applications from an SIOP 2018 Panel (Young et al., 2018), and our own experience implementing these tools within leader development programs.

Though we have outlined a number of future research ideas, the effective use of these tools for receiving real-time feedback still depends on the willingness of others to give honest feedback and the willingness of the recipient to address it. That means real-time acknowledgment of the value of the input, real-time efforts to change problematic behaviors, and real-time follow-up conversations about performance. Thus, we believe that the giving and receiving of feedback will remain a deeply human-centered process. A high-value user-driven feedback process should lead to better conversations that respect individual self-worth and human dignity. It should also perpetuate a strong feedback culture and increasing receptivity to feedback as a core tool for growth and development.

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