

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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in Psychology presented on July 14, 2003

Title: An Analysis of the Political Considerations That Influence the Performance

Appraisal Process

Abstract approved: 

This study examined what type of political influence is most prevalent in the performance appraisal process, and when political considerations are most likely to take place. Each of these topics was researched examining the differences between different sizes of organizations. Specifically, small organizations consisted of 1-200 employees, medium organizations had 201-500 employees, and large organizations required 501 or more employees. Two instruments were used to measure the level of distortions existing in job performance ratings as well as managerial support of the appraisal process. The Questionnaire for Measuring Perceived Political Considerations in Performance Appraisal (PCPAQ) was used to determine level and type of distortions in job performance ratings. The Questionnaire for Measuring Managerial Support of Performance Appraisal (MSPAQ), as designed by the experimenter, was used to gauge the amount of managerial support regarding the performance review process. Approximately 40 supervisors from each size of organization participated in the study. Seven one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) indicated no statistical differences among the three groups with the exception of hypothesis 1b, which demonstrated that large organizations had more managerial support than medium companies, which in turn had more support than small organizations. Though the remaining data did not prove to be statistically significant, there were supportive trends identified for hypotheses 1a, 2a and

3. The results of the present study are compared to previous literature and the limitations of the current study and suggestions for future research are given.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS THAT  
INFLUENCE THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Department of Psychology and Special Education

EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

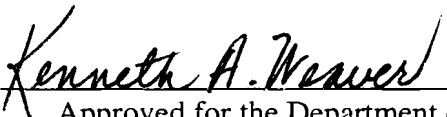
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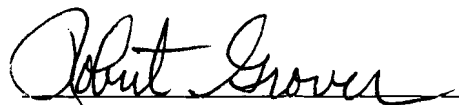
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August 2003

Thesis  
2003  
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Approved for the Department of  
Psychology and Special Education



Approved for the Graduate Council

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There have been many individuals that have encouraged, assisted, and supported me during my time at Emporia State University and throughout the completion of my thesis. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my wife, Amanda, my father and mother, Ted and Jennifer, as well as my sister Reagan. Their combined efforts helped me see this project through to its completion. I am very thankful to have such a giving and caring family.

My thanks to all of my Professors at Emporia State University. I would especially like to thank Dr. Brian Schrader for his continued guidance in completing this thesis. I also would like to thank Dr. Smith and Dr. Yancey for their participation and input on my thesis committee. I thank everyone for his or her time and hard work in assisting with the completion of my educational goal.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Though the process of formally evaluating employees has been around for centuries, it is only in the last 30 years that the interest and use of performance appraisals has risen (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). The performance appraisal is a tool used for many different reasons. According to Jacobs (1986) there are six purposes of performance appraisal: (1) disciplinary actions; (2) feedback and employee development; (3) promotion; (4) selection decisions; (5) training and supervision; and (6) organizational diagnosis. As a result, performance appraisals are typically the main source companies use when making personnel decisions. Murphy and Cleveland (1995) indicate that several surveys have shown that between 74% and 89% of those surveyed have a formal appraisal system. More specifically, larger organizations (95%) are more likely to have performance appraisal than smaller organizations (84%). Lower (74%) and middle (71%) management use performance appraisal more frequently than top management (55%).

In a performance appraisal system, raters usually attempt to evaluate employees in an accurate manner, identify an employee's strengths and weaknesses and distinguish among the good and poor employees; ratings are then followed by important organizational consequences. Formal consequences include monetary rewards and punishments to poor performers. Informal consequences may include humiliating, demoralizing feedback sessions for a ratee or an unwanted, awkward feedback session for the supervisor (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Kozlowski, Chao, and Morrison (1998) offer the viewpoint that performance appraisal can be viewed as a discretionary,

motivational, and political process that managers use to reward and punish employees and to influence organizational decision making.

There seems to be as many different types of performance appraisals as there are organizations that use them. Performance appraisal methods have evolved from the use of subjective appraisals to more hybrid and systems approaches. Interwoven among these two approaches have been graphic rating scales, behaviorally-anchored scales, behavior-observation scales, and rankings to name a few. The majority of research has been concerned with whether or not performance ratings are accurate and valid measures as well as what formats could be created to increase accuracy and validity (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

While a great amount of time and energy can go into the development of a performance appraisal process to ensure its accuracy, very little has been written on the influence politics has on the performance appraisal process. In fact it has been suggested that performance appraisal systems linked to desired outcomes such as pay, promotion, or job assignments are likely to motivate raters to modify ratings and be highly influenced by company politics (Kozlowski et al., 1998). Even though factors such as the halo effect, rating accuracy and error, and rater training are all items that need to be taken into account when developing or performing a performance appraisal, many silent factors also play an additional role. These factors include, but are not limited to, company politics, personal agendas and beliefs, as well as the role the organization itself has in the compliance of managerial practices. Typically, these things are not always given the attention they deserve. Other than a few empirical articles and mention of the topic in books and chapters on performance appraisal politics has received an inappropriate amount of attention (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

Performance appraisals are generally conducted one to two times a year. While it would be beneficial for them to be completed even more often, it may be luck that the reviews take place at this rate. Many supervisors and managers absolutely hate to give performance appraisals. For instance, one supervisor illustrating his dislike for having to give performance appraisals said that if he had to choose between performance reviews and paper cuts, he would take paper cuts every time. He would even take razor burns and the sound of fingernails on a blackboard (Stack, 1997). That statement was made regarding not only the bad reviews, but also the good ones.

For many managers, performing evaluations of their subordinates involves a risk. Swan and Margulies (1991) state that one such risk is offending someone whose continued, enthusiastic cooperation is needed in order to be successful. Stack (1997) provides an example of this situation as it occurs in the real world. An appraisal had to be done on a young general manager who just had a fabulous year. His division did three million dollars more in sales than their original goal. The division also increased its pretax profit by 150%. However, when it came time to do the review, it had to be taken into account that this particular manager had failed to achieve one of his most important goals, to diversify his customer base. In this situation, what is a supervisor to do? Being too harsh grading this manager's performance could hurt not only him but the organization as well. This political concern may influence the ratings of the performance appraisal of this young general manager.

Past evidence has suggested that political concerns provide a large influence on supervisors' ratings of subordinates (Fried, Tiegs, & Bellamy, 1992). More specifically, Fried et al. (1992) found that time under current supervisor, job experience, and subordinate-supervisor trust were strong predictors of whether to formally evaluate

subordinates on consecutive performance appraisal periods. Supervisors were least likely to conduct a formal, written performance appraisal if subordinates were working under their supervisor for a short period, subordinates had low job experience, and when subordinates had little trust in their supervisor. According to Musthaler (1997), the majority of managers fight to reward their most favored employees, while typically “throwing one or two other employees to the wolves”.

The purpose of the present study is to follow up on and continue past research conducted by Longenecker, Sims and Gioia (1987) involving the political concerns of performance appraisals. Their study concluded that political considerations influence executives when they evaluate subordinates. The research conducted by Longenecker et al. was done in a semi-structured interview format. Participants came from large organizations and as a group averaged more than 20 years of work experience and 13 years of managerial experience. In order for a “finding” to occur, a minimum of 72% of respondents had to have brought up that issue. In Longenecker et al. the four main areas addressed were (1) politics as a reality of organizational life, (2) factors influencing the political culture of the organization, (3) inflating the appraisal, and (4) deflating the appraisal. Major findings included that executives typically believed that there was a justifiable reason for altering appraisal ratings. Managers generally felt that it was within their personal discretion to do so. As a result, the appraisal process is a political process as few ratings are given without some political consideration. The most intriguing finding was that accuracy is not the primary concern of executives when appraising subordinates. Instead the main concern is how to best use the appraisals to reward and motivate subordinates.

The Longenecker et al. study took place over a decade ago. Consequently the purpose of this study is to document what changes, if any, have occurred during the past decade. While the past study primarily focused on supervisors from large companies, the present one takes into account supervisors from different sizes and types of organizations. It also looks to address what type of political influence is most prevalent in the performance appraisal process, and when political considerations are most likely to take place. What follows is a review of past research concerning political considerations and the performance appraisal process.

### *Political Strategies*

Political considerations are likely to infiltrate any area of business. The majority of organizations throughout the world are certainly no different. “Organizational politics is the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organization or to obtain sanctioned ends through non-sanctioned influence means” (Pfeffer, 1981, p. 7). Many times performance appraisal is the tool of choice for supervisors to manipulate the organizational environment to meet their own goals. Descriptions of political tactics individuals use in order to obtain the results they desire follow.

The formation of coalitions is one such tactic managers may use. Most organizations consist of independent systems of activity. Coalitions can be formed between others either inside or outside a formally designated organizational boundary (Pfeffer, 1981). Miller (1997) stated that backing for a goal in an organization comes from a clear and shared aim. As a result, when individuals within a company are able to join forces for a common cause, results are seen. Many times empowerment drives the group and allows them to act in ways which they feel are right (Scott & Drury, 1999). A

coalition may be formed when a supervisor in one system is unable to meet the objective without enlisting the help of others.

Another tactic in use is the building of external constituencies within the organization where support may be obtained. Allies within the same organization can be valuable in influencing decision outcomes (Pfeffer, 1981). A similar notion is the use of internal alliances. These alliances are typically initiated by less powerful individuals within an organization. For instance, someone in lower management may need someone from middle or top management to achieve the desired outcome. Pfeffer (1981) and Walker (1992) stated that the best way to build alliances is by finding common interests among participants. Many times a group can improve their visibility with other well-known members and increase their impact with members known to be active (Mitchell, 1997).

Referring back to the preceding discussion, another tactic used is building coalitions through the use of promotions. Murphy and Cleveland (1995) stated that employees with more power in the organization provide ratings for those in lower and less powerful positions. Therefore, the more powerful employees are able to promote those with a similar mind set into positions of influence. This may also be known as the “good ol’ boy approach” in which a supervisor promotes a similar subordinate in order to place a favored type of person in a position of power. Doing so allows the initial supervisor to build a team of individuals that share the majority of views and goals, but possibly more importantly, owe their corporate life to this same individual. Another example of such behavior is evident in the recommendation of Supreme Court Justices by the President of the United States. Not just anyone is suggested for such a position.

Typically the individual selected will share many of the same beliefs and ideologies of the president or the president's political party that recommended him/her.

Cooptation is another political tactic used in many organizations. This process involves giving a representative of the organization or subunit whose support is sought for a position on a board, committee, or other unit seeking support (Pfeffer, 1981). This may occur within a company when a group of managers seeks the support of subordinates or other managers to install a new technique or possibly change a time honored tradition. Support from this additional unit is required before the proposed changes can be made and accepted. This tactic may actually be most prevalent in higher management. Murphy and Cleveland (1995) state that the higher one rises in an organization, the more political it becomes.

Informational influence is a manner in which attitudes and perspectives can be altered. Being on a committee will bring about different information that a person would not receive otherwise (Pfeffer, 1981). Obtaining new information can lead to new beliefs. The pressure to conform to the group is another way in which beliefs can be changed. Groups pressure individuals to conform, and the tendency to avoid conflict will lead coopted individuals to downplay their differences, leading to harmonization of beliefs. In groups others are most likely to be influenced by those members who have expertise and are good speakers, likeable, trustworthy, and similar thinking (Walker, 1992).

The use of labeling is yet another change agent often used in companies. The creation of labels and their acceptance by group members increase the likelihood that changes can be made. Labeling creates a unified perception that every employee is able to identify with. Pfeffer (1981) states that by creating certain perceptions and expectations, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs can be changed.



The final result that cooptation has is providing the coopted person with a stake in the decision. The resources, status, feelings of power and influence the individual receives is what he/she uses to judge their progress and success. Consequently, the fear of losing that position and the various symbols and resources that come along with it prohibits the individual from offending the organization (Pfeffer, 1981). The individual will not risk losing all that they have gained by going against the grain.

It is through political tactics such as these that supervisors are able to alter their surroundings in order to meet their desired outcome. In fact, Baron (1993) stated that the responsibility for the formulation and implementation of political strategies rests with management. However, subordinates also use political strategies of their own to influence those in positions of empowerment. Pfeffer (1997) identified four types of influence styles: (1) shotgun, typified by the use of all kinds of influence strategies almost indiscriminately, as well as being particularly assertive; (2) ingratiation, typified by those who are extremely friendly; (3) bystander, consisting of those individuals that scored low on using influence strategies, and (4) tactician, typified by those with high levels of reason (or rationality). Through the use of these types of strategies, as well as impression management, subordinates are able to play a role in the political structure of an organization.

### *Prevalent Political Influences*

Considering that political concerns are likely to influence an executive's appraisal of subordinates, perhaps it is the supervisor's personality that dictates to what extent the reviews are influenced. In political psychology, personality affects a person's political beliefs and political activity (Krutson, 1973). Krutson also notes that behavior is a result of the interaction of personality predispositions, social and cultural influences, and the

field situation. The fact that employees constantly inquire "where they stand," can result in a significant amount of pressure on supervisors which may cause appraisals to be influenced (Henderson, 1984). Sometimes a supervisor may feel more of a need to provide immediate feedback to employees that constantly want to know where they stand. Unless that supervisor is in direct contact with those subordinates, the feedback provided may not be accurate. In order to minimize any amount of tension between an eager employee and their supervisor, the feedback given will typically be of a positive nature. When it comes time for the supervisor to complete a performance appraisal, they feel a need to remain consistent with what they said before. Therefore, regardless of the actual performance, ratings may be escalated to avoid confrontation and inconsistency.

Another concern is that uninvolved managers are often critical of the positive support they receive from other managers in the hierarchy of an organization (Daley, 1991). This feeling of dissatisfaction can then be carried over into the evaluation process, influencing the performance appraisal. A manager that is unsatisfied, or is planning to leave or quit their job, may typically be less motivated to take the performance appraisal process seriously. Consequently, ratings will be influenced in either a positive or negative manner. Any manager that is already critical of their peers and supervisors within the company, and is then told by them how important the appraisal process is to the business, is probably going to react in a detrimental fashion towards the appraisal of the employees. Unconcerned individuals conducting performance evaluations on subordinates will elicit invalid results. The inaccurate results are therefore directly related to the dissatisfaction of the person conducting the appraisal.

*Impression management and other influences.* Impression management is another factor that can play an influential role in the performance rating process. "Impression

management is concerned with the behaviors people direct toward others to create and maintain desired perceptions of themselves” (Gardner & Martinko, 1988, p. 321). As this definition illustrates, impression management is a likely technique for subordinates to use in order to put themselves in good standing come appraisal time. Morgeson and Campion (1997) make the statement that impression management is most common in situations that are especially evaluative in nature or those in which it is in the person’s best interest to make a good impression (e.g., performance evaluations). In fact, Wayne and Kacmer (1991) tested the influence of subordinate impression management on supervisor ratings of subordinate performance and supervisor verbal communication in a performance appraisal interview, results indicated that the use of impression management by employees does have an effect on performance appraisals. Results concluded that subordinates who engage in impression management tend to receive higher performance ratings than those individuals that do not use impression management. Consequently, those individuals that are the most successful at impression management have a better chance of being perceived in a positive fashion by their supervisor. Therefore, come rating time, they will also be the ones whose ratings may be inflated.

The influence process can be accomplished in a variety of ways. Highlighting an individual’s positive quality or offering oneself as a role model are just a couple of ways in which this action takes place. Others include favor doing, opinion conformity and other enhancements such as complimenting an individual to increase his/her liking (Kacmer, Wayne, & Wright, 1996). Any of these tactics can be used by themselves or in combination with one another to influence a desired person.

*Other pressures.* Many times the manager has to try and meet a variety of needs. The supervisor receives pressure from personal beliefs, the subordinates, the

organization, as well as other outside forces. Unions have been known to get disinterested in the improvement of employee performance when union members feel that employment security, chances for pay increase, or well-being are affected (Patten, 1982). Bamer-Barry and Rosenwein (1985) state that leaders are embedded in a complex framework where different individuals and groups are making contradictory demands. All of these demands represent separate political concerns that a supervisor takes into account during an appraisal. Not only are managers responsible for the daily monitoring of their subordinates, certain societal responsibilities are being passed on to them as well (Keil, 1977). For example, these multiple pressures are responsible for producing the political concerns that a supervisor must deal with when conducting a performance appraisal.

A hypothetical example of such pressures is when a supervisor is told by upper-management that employees are not being as productive as they need to be. There is too much conversation and extended breaks taking place for production to meet its requirements. Top-management wants the supervisor to pay special attention to these problems, and address them via the performance appraisal. Those individuals that continue to participate in such behavior may be terminated. This would not be a problem to the supervisor if it were not for the fact that the supervisor's brother-in-law and an expecting single mother are two of the problem employees. The supervisor's poor ratings may cause these people to lose their jobs. The supervisor does not want to see the brother-in-law lose his job. After all, this is the first job he has enjoyed and been able to keep for more than a year. The expecting single mother has expressed her concern about providing for a child, and if she were to be let go, she would lose her insurance benefits and any type of stable income. Even though both subordinates have not been ideal employees in the past, the supervisor does not want these problems and concerns on

his/her conscience. The only way to avoid all of this is to give the two employees higher ratings than they really deserve. Certainly if the supervisor pulls them aside and points out the importance of them improving their work attitudes things will change.

Unfortunately, many supervisors believe this to be true. Instead, it seems as if things are more likely to return back to how they were before, if they even change at all.

*Personal fit and conformity.* The literature has shown that political considerations are almost always part of executive processes (Longenecker et al., 1987). It is not uncommon practice for managers to influence organizational decisions to best fit their personal interests. In regard to performance appraisal, many raters first determine what they want the outcome of the appraisal to be, then they go back and complete the specific items in order to create the desired effect (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). It has also been demonstrated that supervisors take into consideration the daily pressures and interests between them and their subordinates. Pfeffer (1997) has identified several studies demonstrating that individuals' perceptions of their work are often influenced by what others say. Often time social cues for co-workers affect judgment. The interaction an individual has with others lends a hand in framing what they notice about their environment and how that environment is evaluated.

Another perspective illustrated by Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, and Wood (1995) is that the majority of people rely upon established beliefs when forming the foundation of their judgments. However, information can have an influence on judgments. People have leeway in how they express their fixed beliefs. They generally begin with what they know, then rely on current arguments and evidence to fill in the rest. As a result, people differ in how much they rely on their established beliefs. Some rely exclusively on past experiences, while others are influenced greatly by the

immediate context. Raters that fall into the latter category are less likely to give accurate ratings and are more susceptible to allowing political concerns to taint their evaluation of others. A frequent characteristic of business ethics cases in the United States have demonstrated that individuals are required to decide what is right or wrong on the basis of his or her own judgement. Often the company's goals and objectives are relevant, yet are in conflict with the individual's (Vogel, 1996).

Longenecker et al. (1987) also stated that the appraisal process results in a permanent written document that may remain significant for years to come. It can be used as a way to detail employee performance benefits by alerting them to specific problem areas, as well provide defense in discrimination cases (LeBlang, 1999). This formal process can have a significant impact on a subordinate's career and opportunities for advancement. Many personnel departments base their recommendations for promotion on end of the year performance ratings and written appraisals submitted by managers. The influence that political concerns place on these ratings can have a detrimental impact on an organization when the information does not truly reflect an employee's actual performance (Phillips, 1987). The amount of communication present within an organization is a vital part of overcoming this problem.

### *Communication Factors*

The communication between the supervisor and higher-level executives is just as important as it is between the supervisor and subordinates. This is one of the many factors that can influence the political culture of an organization. The lack of top-management support is often noted as a reason why performance appraisal programs yield disappointing results. The best conceived programs will only acquire desired results when the raters are encouraged by their supervisors to precisely follow the performance

appraisal program (Robinson, Fink, & Allen, 1996). When supervisors are not made accountable for their appraisals, inaccuracy is more likely to occur. In order for performance appraisals to work, they have to draw support from top-management. Top-down support is essential to the usefulness of performance appraisals; to be effective everyone must be in support of it (Grote, 1996). Top-down support consists of an idea, concept, or procedure being supported throughout all levels of management within an organization. In this manner support is gained at the top of an organization, then passes through all levels until everyone is supportive. Morgeson and Campion (1997) have found that when an individual feels that their contributions are not unique and valued, they will depreciate their input and contribute less. Any increased awareness in the seriousness of the appraisal processes between upper-management and those individuals conducting the performance appraisals is better. The more communication between managers and top management, the less likely that politics will play an influential role (Longenecker et al., 1987).

The same theory applies to communication between executives and subordinates. For appraisals to be effective, the relationship that a manager has with their subordinates can be critical. In a longitudinal study examining interpersonal relations between supervisors and subordinates Nathan, Mohrman, and Milliman (1991) state that the relationship between a supervisor and subordinate creates an important social context that affects the content of the review. In addition to the interpersonal relations between supervisors and subordinates, the evaluation criteria used, the opportunity for subordinate participation, and the presence of career discussion were also found to affect subordinate reactions to review. The program being used must be communicated to all levels of management (Kirkpatrick, 1986). Everyone involved with the appraisal system needs to

be familiar with it and have the necessary knowledge to reduce the amount of political concerns involved in the process.

The importance of supervisors and subordinates being on the same page within an organization can not be over estimated. The more communication between a supervisor and his/her staff the better. Having good communication lines open between the separate levels within a company allows people's perceptions to remain consistent. It is this consistency that affects the perceived relevance and validity of feedback from a performance review. When the feedback an individual receives is not consistent with their self-concept, problems arise. However, when the feedback is more positive than an employee's expectations, a more pleasant mood and satisfaction is reported (Korsgaard, 1996). When everyone within an organization from entry level positions to upper management have the same level of understanding in regard to performance on the job, accurate appraisals are more likely to occur. A supervisor should feel less inclined to give what may seem as negative remarks by the subordinate when the two have a complimentary understanding of what is to be expected.

Many times the amount of communication between two forces dictates the outcome of a situation. Herman (1986) has concluded from past research that parties are engaged in a more constructive process of conflict resolution when they have a cooperative orientation toward each other. The more communication between supervisors and others involved with the appraisal, the less likely political concerns will be as influential. Herman also reported an increased likelihood of effective cooperation when there is the availability of communication. It seems that communication of any kind is regarded in a positive manner. Gilliland (1993) found that reactions among subordinates were more favorable among those individuals that received feedback on their



performance compared to those who had not. Many times it is the talk and the response thereof that measures political potency, not the amount of force that is exerted (Mackenzie, 1978). For example, when using some of the political strategies discussed earlier, the additional information influences others to change their views. Carefully chosen words can be more influential in altering perspectives than trying to force an opinion or idea on others. The amount of knowledge and competence that a person demonstrates when speaking is more powerful than any type of force. It is important that all levels of management are in agreement and show communication. Without it, those conducting performance appraisals are more likely to fall victim to outside influences.

### *Managerial Beliefs and Practices*

Another influence on the political culture is whether or not a manager believes that the appraisal process is a necessary component of the managerial practice, instead of something that is done just to keep the personnel department off their backs. Some managers disregard performance review programs because they are not convinced that the program is a good one or that positive results will be gained (Kirkpatrick, 1986). Yet, for many others, there is a distrust in the validity of the appraisal instrument (McGregor, 1987). Many managers simply misuse or do not understand performance appraisals (Hulme, 1997). In order for the performance appraisal process to be taken seriously, a reason to do so needs to be established. Without such a reason, supervisors put forth less effort to conduct a fair and valid process. Instead, managers are more likely to use the appraisal scores to accomplish what they deem as being important. Robinson et al. (1996) focused on which of three constituent groups (supervisors, peers, and subordinates) in the workplace had the greatest influence on rater compliance with employee performance guidelines, demonstrated that supervisors had the most influence on rater compliance

with appraisal guidelines. Longenecker et al. (1987) reported that "if executives believed the appraisals will be scrutinized, reviewed, and evaluated by their superiors, the influence of political factors is likely to be reduced" (p. 186). This again provides support to the fact that these systems of analyzing employee performance and their importance needs to be stabilized at the top and dispersed throughout the rest of the organization.

For many managers it is the outcome the appraisal produces that matters the most. Accuracy of ratings is not a primary concern, rather it is the extent to which they have discretion needed to balance effectiveness and survival that matters most. In a manager's mind, if accurate appraisals can damage him/her, it is irrational to give accurate ratings (Murphy and Cleveland, 1995). For some supervisors their main concern is whether or not certain individuals should be promoted to the next organizational position. As a result, performance appraisals are completed in a manner that allows those subordinates to move upward within the corporation via the use of inflated ratings (Kozlowski, Chao, & Morrison, 1998). Supervisors reason it is necessary to alter appraisal ratings in order to accomplish predetermined goals and agendas.

Murphy and Cleveland (1995) make the statement that for those who routinely manipulate ratings in an effort to achieve important goals deny that they are being in any way political. Instead, their perception is that this political process is just part of being a good manager, especially if doing so increases the effectiveness of their unit. Many managers are not comfortable distorting their ratings. Yet there is a sense that because the majority of other supervisors alter appraisal ratings, a good manager has to play politics in order to protect his/her interests (Kozlowski, Chao, & Morrison, 1998). This supports the concept that without appropriate top-down support of a performance appraisal system and its intended uses, manipulation is certain to occur. Once the practice of using political

strategies is introduced into an organization it becomes difficult to correct because everyone feels that the use of politics is necessary in order to survive.

The manager's priorities are another factor that influences the political culture within an organization. As Fried et al. (1992) eluded to, once managers become more concerned with how ratings given during a performance review best serve their own interests, the ratings have a tendency to swell. It is not uncommon for managers to attend more to facts that support their position and remember these facts better, thus convincing themselves of the accurateness of their position (Pfeffer, 1981). For many supervisors there is a strong dislike to provide negative feedback to subordinates. Research has shown that most supervisors will avoid delivering controversial feedback until it is absolutely essential to do so (Larson, 1989). Consequently, sometimes ratings will be inflated in order to avoid having to provide unwanted information to the individual being rated. It is typical for raters to alter their ratings to avoid displeasing anyone that has shown progress. When managers choose not to change their ratings, they risk offending someone whose continued enthusiastic cooperation is vital for their own success (Swan et al., 1991). Another reason for inflating scores is to avoid any arguments or confrontations that may arise from an appraisal that the subordinate may disagree with. There is a normal dislike for having to criticize a person, then argue about it (McGregor, 1987). Anytime a drawn out debate can be dodged by a simple inflation of ratings, many supervisors would be inclined to do so.

Why are managers able to get away with such behavior? As Jordan (1990) discovered, being a supervisor allows you to maintain control over employees, make decisions regarding employees, and judge their performances. In addition to the preceding reason for inflation in ratings, Longenecker et al. (1987) listed several other

causes; some of these include: (a) to increase the ability of a subordinate to receive a raise, (b) to protect and support a subordinate whose performance may be currently lacking due to personal problems, (c) to keep knowledge of any problem within the department, because an employee's performance may have risen during the latter part of the review period, and (d) some may even inflate ratings in order to promote an individual "up and out" of the department. Sometimes a supervisor may simply rely on a gut feeling when conducting a performance appraisal (Swan et al., 1991). The manager takes into account a general sense of their employees, their ability and how hard they are trying. These are all reasons that can seem quite justifiable to a supervisor in the position of having some personal manipulation ability in an individual's career.

Obviously, the performance appraisal itself cannot be effective unless the company has trained and coached their supervisors to be productive when conducting evaluations. Performance appraisal systems fail to achieve desired results when its implementation is not properly supervised and managed (Robinson et al., 1996). Without guidelines present, it allows for personal interpretation by supervisors to critique a subordinate's performance in any manner they see fit. How ratings can best serve the interest of the managers conducting the performance appraisal often seems to be more of a concern than the accuracy of the ratings (Fried et al., 1992; Longenecker et al., 1987). The political concerns present in the appraisal process permit supervisors to manipulate reviews to obtain the results that they have deemed necessary. Often these political procedures are practiced with no remorse since doing so is an accepted norm within the organization.

## *Rating Styles*

Another explanation for inaccurate ratings is that not all managers rate the same. Many times supervisors routinely use distortion strategies to enhance or degrade ratings to satisfy competing rater goals (Kozlowski, Chao, & Morrison, 1998). Lowe (1986) has identified three different styles of problem raters. The first of these is known as the “loose rater.” They are generally the executives that try to avoid conflict and are reluctant to identify any weaknesses in an employee’s performance. The subordinate is generally given credit for doing acceptable work for what in reality is truly inferior work. Kozlowski et al. (1998) reports that leniency is a constant problem in most rating systems. When leniency is the norm, raters tend to resort to more complex distortions. For instance, rather than just altering one person’s scores, a rater will distort the majority of performance appraisals in order to insure that other employees’ scores are consistent with the distorted ratings. That is, if the supervisor wants to inflate subordinate A’s ratings, the scores of subordinates B, C, and D (who would score higher than subordinate A in a politically free atmosphere) must also be inflated. The rater partakes in a complex distortion system in order to create as accurate a picture as possible.

The second type of rater is described as the “tight rater.” Many times this type of supervisor may set standards or goals that are too difficult to obtain. They have expectations that no one can live up to. The third rater is cast as being the “competitive rater.” Here, the manager is unable to distinguish between their own performance ratings and those of their subordinates. They justify their ratings with the belief that no one under their direct authority should receive ratings any higher than they themselves receive.

The last two styles of rating can also be used to deflate the appraisal scores. This is another practice that political concerns may sometimes cause. While deflating

appraisals is less common due to some of the problems that accompany such a tactic, it is still used. Longenecker et al. (1987) has also listed some reasons why managers may deflate the appraisal. It can be done in order to awaken an underachieving employee to try and realize their potential. Deflation may also occur to teach a subordinate a lesson of who is the boss. It is also used to build a strongly documented case against a continual underachieving employee. The negative ratings are then recorded until enough of them have been collected to successfully terminate the problem subordinate. It is the judgment of Patten (1982) that a wise manager prepares the performance appraisal in a written draft that can be submitted to organizational heads in order to protect against legislation. These types of steps need to be taken to prevent against any litigation associated with the unlawful termination of an employee.

Although many supervisors may choose only one of these strategies when rating a subordinate's performance, more skillful raters may use a combination approach. As Kozlowski et al. (1998) has alluded to, especially adept raters may choose to apply various strategies differently across ratees in an effort to differentiate among them. Consequently, a manager may exaggerate, degrade, and report accurately among separate ratees. Since appraisals are reviewed separately, use of these strategies is not obvious.

An evaluation of performance is only going to be as good as the supervisor makes it. Results from a study conducted by Roberts and Pavlak (1996) state that for the most part, young supervisors with less experience are likely to conduct an appraisal in the manner dictated by literature as the correct method. Roberts (1995) agrees and continues to add that the majority of performance appraisal systems are designed to replicate the literature. Those raters that do distort their ratings are not necessarily comfortable doing so. Many feel a responsibility to provide as accurate results as possible. Yet for many

others there is a feeling that because the majority of other raters use strategies, a good rater has to play politics in order to protect their own interests (Kozlowski et al., 1998). Consequently, it is the administration of these systems that cause the problems. Without proper and correct management of an appraisal system, political concerns are sure to influence the ratings. In the past, political concerns affecting a performance review have often been overlooked. Many times there are other factors that researchers are more concerned with.

### *Perceived Considerations Political Appraisal Questionnaire*

If political considerations are so abundant in the performance appraisal process how are they to be identified? Some organizations may choose to address these difficult issues through some form of a workshop for their managers. Concerns could be discussed and common political practices could be shared with all. This, however, is not always the best answer. For many the best answer may be to rely on a developed and validated instrument that is intended to measure perceptions of the extent to which performance appraisals are affected by organizational politics. One such instrument is known as the Questionnaire for Measuring Perceived Political Considerations in Performance Appraisal (PCPAQ) developed by Tziner, Latham, Price, and Haccoun (1996). Tziner, Prince, and Murphy (1997) found the PCPAQ to be a reliable and valid measure of perceived political considerations affecting the appraisal process.

Tziner et al. (1996) developed this instrument in order to address the issue of politics influencing the performance appraisal process. They believed organizational politics to be a serious, yet overlooked problem. Tziner et al. (1996) thought of organizational politics to be an integral aspect of organizational life which relates to power, authority, and influence. The intent of organizational politics is (a) “to protect

and/or enhance an individual's self-interests", or (b) "to further another person's or a group's interests and goals, through legitimate as well as non-sanctioned means" (p. 180).

It may be that for many supervisors the performance appraisal is the method of choice when dabbling in organizational politics.

When developing the PCPAQ, a pool of items were generated by Tziner et al. (1996) capitalizing on: (a) their persual of conceptualizations, statements, and suggestions that the literature had to offer on various political considerations likely to operate on the rater while formulating performance evaluations; (b) empirical research on motivations to give false impressions about performance ratings; (c) observations coming from their consulting experience of factors attributing to intentional biasing of ratings, and (d) the general literature on organizational power politics and decision making processes. A total of 30 items were created for the initial pool, however a screening process was done resulting in the elimination of five factors. The final 25 items incorporated considerations such as rater's attempts to enhance his/her organizational posture, to avoid conflicts with subordinates to conform with social pressures, to settle personal disputes, to obtain personal benefits and so forth.

*Development.* The development of the PCPAQ consisted of two phases: (1) preliminary analysis; and (2) structure reliability and validity analyses. Pretesting was conducted by Tziner et al. (1996) in which an equivalent version of the instrument was designed and administered to a randomly selected group of 51 employees. The instrument required subjects to indicate the extent to which the content of each of the original 30 items is descriptive of raters' considerations manifest in appraising performance of their employees. At the same time, a version of the Social Desirability Scale was also given by Tziner et al. in order to explore whether subjects' responses to PCPAQ's items were



affected by social desirability considerations. This was done in order to identify those items that most accurately identified those political considerations believed as prevailing in the process of performance ratings formulation.

*Item selection.* Tziner et al. (1996) used two criteria to decide which of the original 30 items would be kept: (a) a minimum item correlation of 0.55, and (b) a lack of significant correlation with the Social Desirability Scale. This process resulted in the elimination of five items, leaving the instrument with 25 items. Their item-total correlations ranged from 0.55 to 0.81 and their correlations with the Social Desirability Scale varied between 0.01 and 0.20 (0.05).

*Factor analysis.* Tziner et al. (1996) performed a factor analysis which yielded a three-factor solution, accounting for 69.4 percent of the variance. Examples of other researchers were followed by setting a loading of 0.50 and above in order to assign an item to a factor. It was concluded that the structure of the PCPAQ can be sensibly interpreted in terms of a single general factor. Further support was gained since the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of the entire scale was 0.97.

Additional information regarding the development and validation of the PCPAQ follows in the next chapter.

### *Managerial Support Performance Appraisal Questionnaire*

The blame for lack of accuracy and the infiltration of politics in regard to the performance appraisal process can not be placed solely upon those people responsible for the execution of performance reviews. Often times the organizational structure within a company can dictate to what degree policy is followed and enforced. The accuracy of performance appraisal ratings can be greatly enhanced when all levels of management take an active role in the process.

Research has shown that managerial support or the lack thereof can have a direct influence on the performance appraisal process. Those individuals responsible for conducting performance appraisals within an organization are likely to be influenced by a variety of individuals and/or groups (Bamer-Barry & Rosenwein, 1985). For performance appraisals to work there has to be support drawn from top-management. Without the right amount of top-management support, inaccuracy is most likely to take place (Grote, 1996; Robinson et al., 1996).

Upper management may express to those individuals conducting performance reviews that an important reason for accurate results is that a permanent written file will be created for each worker evaluated. These files can then be accessed at a later date for promotion, termination, defense in discrimination cases, or a variety of other functions (Longenecker, Sims, & Gioia, 1987). Phillips (1987) further develops this point when making the statement that influenced performance appraisal results can have a negative impact on an organization.

To combat such unfavorable occurrences it is imperative that all levels of management have open lines of communication. Herman (1986) reports that the availability of communication leads to effective cooperation towards a common goal. Supportive lines of communication allow reasons for the correct use of the performance appraisal process to be delivered and understood by all. When reasons for the proper execution of performance reviews are not given or understood, inaccurate results are likely to take place (Kirkpatrick, 1986; McGregor, 1987). Longenecker et al. (1987) states that when managers believe that appraisals will be reviewed, scrutinized, and evaluated by their superiors, political influences are likely to be reduced.

It is through these research-supported statements taken from past literature, that the questions for the 15-item Questionnaire for Measuring Managerial Support of Performance Appraisal (MSPAQ) were created. The experimenter, for exclusive use in the present study, created this questionnaire. The MSPAQ is used to determine the amount of upper management support for the performance appraisal system within the organization. The questions are also intended to measure in what manner upper management supports the current performance appraisal system.

### *The Present Study*

This study is intended to further extend the work of Longenecker et al. (1987) by measuring the political considerations that affect today's organizations and are evident in their performance appraisals. The current research will also provide a more complete picture of current companies through the involvement of different types and sizes of organizations. The study is also meant to identify which types of political concerns are most common among organizations. It should also distinguish if there is a relationship between organizational politics present in the performance appraisal system and the amount of upper management support. Results of the current study are expected to somewhat resemble those of the original research.

### *Hypotheses*

The following hypotheses are offered in addition to the findings of the past:

Hypothesis 1a: Raters in large organizations will have significantly higher scores on the PCPAQ than raters in medium organizations, who in turn will have significantly higher scores than small organization raters.

Hypothesis 1b: Raters in large organizations will have significantly higher scores on the MSPAQ than raters in medium organizations, who in turn will have significantly higher scores than small organization raters.

The larger the organization, the higher the PCPAQ scores, because politics are believed to be more prevalent in larger companies. The larger the organization the more influences there are, which directly effects the accuracy of the performance appraisal. After all, do not operate in a vacuum but instead in an atmosphere of complex organizational cues (Robinson et al., 1996). It too is thought that the larger the company, the higher the MSPAQ scores. Due to size alone, an immense company is likely to have more of a managerial support staff to insure that the performance appraisal is conducted correctly. The larger the organization, the more raters there will be responsible for performance appraisals. Smaller companies are less likely to depend upon other management staff to make sure the performance appraisal is conducted efficiently and correctly. Roberts (1995) stated that it is the administration of the performance appraisal systems that is most problematic.

Hypothesis 2a: Ratings from large and medium-sized organizational raters, as measured by PCPAQ subscales, will be significantly higher than ratings from small organizational raters using politics to: (a) promote, (b) reward with advancement, and (c) inflate ratings of those who do favors and have similar core values.

Hypothesis 2b: Alteration of performance appraisal in small organizations, as measured by the Likeness subscale, will be significantly higher than large and medium organizations in the reflection of the supervisor's personal like or dislike of employees, and when the supervisor favors an employee or not.

Although it is believed that politics influence the performance appraisal process in organization regardless of their size, the reasons do vary. Supervisors within large and medium size companies have a greater need to promote, reward, and inflate ratings of subordinates than management staffs from small organizations. In sizeable organizations a supervisor's livelihood could depend upon their supporting cast. Therefore, they must make sure that people of similar values, beliefs, and goals are placed in positions of support. On the other hand, those raters from smaller organizations will alter their ratings due to their own personal like or dislike of an employee, as well as whether or not the supervisor favors an employee. Often supervisors deliberately inflate or deflate ratings due to the fact that they are more concerned with how ratings will best serve their interests as managers rather than the accuracy of their ratings (Fried, Tieg, & Bellamy, 1992).

Hypothesis 3: There will be an inverse relationship between PCPAQ and the MSPAQ ratings.

Those organizations scoring highest on the PCPAQ will score lower on the MSPAQ. Thus demonstrating that political considerations in performance appraisals are likely to occur when the performance appraisal system is not supported in a top-down fashion. Those organizations lacking top management support, as demonstrated by the MSPAQ, will be the most political. Robinson, Fink, and Allen (1996) have found that a shortage of top management support is often cited as a reason why performance appraisal programs yield disappointing results. Lack of an effective managerial support group is sure to allow politics to enter the performance appraisal process.

Hypothesis 4: Those individuals responsible for the administration of performance appraisals will be effected mostly by: (a) political concerns relating to the reluctance to

provide negative feedback to subordinates in small organizations; (b) the deflation of ratings to teach an employee a lesson in medium sized organizations; and (c) the meeting of personal objectives in large organizations, when measured by PCPAQ subscales.

Performance appraisals can be influenced by a variety of sources; the most common reasons are listed above. The literature has stated repeatedly that the majority of supervisors have a strong dislike for providing feedback of any kind, especially negative. Many managers are not convinced that the performance appraisal program is a good one or that positive results may be obtained. They may also hesitate to provide honest feedback due to the fear that subordinates will resent them, or because they believe the review will be an unpleasant experience that may cause more harm than good (Kirkpatrick, 1986). Other raters may act as a gatekeeper of sorts choosing to reward or punish an employee as they see fit. In the end though, many managers choose to alter the ratings of performance appraisals in order to meet their own personal goals.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### *Participants*

Organizations ranging in size from small (1-200 employees) to medium (201-500 employees) to large (501 or more employees) that use an annual performance appraisal were selected for use in the study. The businesses used represented different types of organizations, such as manufacturing, marketing, education, restaurants, home improvement retailers, hospitals, etc. At each organization, supervisors responsible for conducting performance reviews were identified to use in the study. Within the groups represented, managers had an average age of 44.56 years (ranging from 23 to 61 years old) the average length of work experience was 23.37 years (ranging from 4 to 45 years) and fifty-five percent of this group were males. A total of approximately 200 supervisors were approached and asked to participate in the study, and 120 participants were actually used in the study, yielding a response rate of 60%.

In order to participate in the study, managers needed to be responsible for a minimum of two subordinates. A minimum of two subordinates were needed in order for political factors such as favoritism to become relevant. Managers meeting this criterion were identified by their immediate supervisor, ensuring that those not meeting the criteria would not be asked to participate in the study. The needed criterion participants must meet was restated in the directions of the questionnaire participants were asked to complete. Participants ranged from small business owners to heads of personnel departments. Gender backgrounds were not a relevant factor concerning this study, however the sample size of each was reported. All of the organizations participating in the study were in the midwestern region of the United States.

### *Instruments*

*PCPAQ.* The first instrument used in this study, the PCPAQ, has been designed to measure to what extent distortions in job performance ratings are present. The instrument consists of twenty-five items regarding to what degree certain behaviors are common among raters. These common behaviors include: (1) avoiding the assignment of low ratings that may upset ratees; (2) inflating ratings to avoid uncomfortable feedback sessions; (3) giving low scores to teach rebellious subordinates a lesson; (4) inflating scores at employees with the intent to obtain special rewards/benefits for raters (Tziner et al., 1997).

*Reliability.* Two approaches were used by Tziner et al. (1996) to establish reliability: (a) internal consistency and (b) stability over time (an interval of two weeks between two administrations). The internal consistency for the second administration was  $\alpha = 0.98$ , and for the first administration it was  $\alpha = 0.97$ . The stability over time, measured by the correlation between the two administrations, was  $r = 0.86$ . These results indicate that the PCPAQ demonstrates high levels of stability over time and internal consistency, thus leading to the conclusion that the instrument is highly reliable.

Reliability measures from the current study indicated similar results with an  $\alpha = 0.95$ . Further implications of this result will be discussed in the next chapter.

*Convergent validity.* Examining convergent validity typically requires that a new measure of a construct should covary with prevalent measures that purport to gauge the same construct or, alternatively, with measures of theoretically connected constructs (Tziner et al, 1996). Therefore, the PCPAQ total score was compared with the Need for Power Scale and the Machiavellianism scale. These two scales were believed to



adequately measure concepts considered to be related to Tziner et al.'s. (1996) notion of political considerations in performance appraisal.

A high need for power is demonstrated in attempts to achieve control and to influence others. It was believed that a positive correlation could be expected between PCPAQ and need for power. It was found that the PCPAQ did correlate 0.23 ( $p < 0.01$ ) with the need for power score ( $M = 4.46$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ). It was also believed that a high score of Machiavellianism has typically been associated with a salient tendency to manipulate other people and to initiate and control the structure of interpersonal relations. Tziner et al. (1996) did expect to reveal a positive correlation between the Machiavellianism score and the PCPAQ score. The results did substantiate the prediction, as a reasonable high correlation ( $r = 0.33$ ) was found between the PCPAQ score and the Machiavellianism score ( $M = 5.07$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ,  $\alpha = 0.69$ ).

*Discriminant validity.* To ascertain the extent to which the PCPAQ exhibits discriminant validity, Tziner et al. (1996) used the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory because it is not theoretically related at all to the concept underlying the PCPAQ. It was also chosen because it conforms to the necessary requirements for demonstrating that a new instrument has discriminant validity (Tziner et al., 1996).

Discriminant validity was investigated by correlating the PCPAQ score and the score of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory. The latter scale provides an index score of anxiety and therefore should not covary with the score of the PCPAQ. Results showed that a correlation of 0.14 was found between the score on the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory ( $M = 1.57$ ,  $SD = 0.35$ ,  $\alpha = 0.86$ ) and that of the PCPAQ. Consequently, this result is sufficiently solid to confirm the discriminant validity of the PCPAQ (Tziner et al., 1996).

Tziner et al. (1997) found PCPAQ responses normally distributed over the six point range of the instrument. Responses to the instrument ranged from “1” (very atypical) to “6” (very typical) of raters behavior in the studied organizations. To establish the reliability of the instrument, a coefficient of internal consistency was calculated. A Cronbach’s alpha of 0.93 was calculated. Convincing evidence was also found to the discriminant validity of the PCPAQ. These results from past research demonstrate the reliability and validity of the PCPAQ. From this information it can be said that the PCPAQ will serve a vital purpose for the benefit of the present study. Tziner et al. concluded that the PCPAQ is capable of successfully uncovering the personal motivations and political considerations that affect performance appraisal outcomes.

*Subscales.* To measure specific types and occurrences of political considerations involved in the performance appraisal process subscales are used. The experimenter, for use in the current study, manufactured these subscales (Promotion, Advancement, Values, Likeness, Feedback, Lesson, and Personal). Specifically, in Hypothesis 2a, question 12 forms the “Promotion” subscale. This question distinctly refers to promotions being a reason to inflate performance appraisal ratings. Question 23 forms the “Advancement” subscale, intended to gauge reward and advancement. This question deals with the likeliness that ratings are given because of who someone is. For instance, a team leader’s ratings are superior to the team members’ simply due to the fact that they oversee a group of workers. Question 6 makes up the “Values” subscale. This subscale indicates that ratings of those individuals that do favors or have similar core values are inflated. Supervisors may be inclined to alter the scores of those people that have done a favor for them, or share the same nucleus of values as the supervisor conducting the performance appraisal.

Question 5 is the basis of the “Likeness” subscale for Hypothesis 2b. A manager’s personal liking or disliking of a subordinate can have a direct effect on the rating given. In the same manner, an employee that is believed to have passed through organizational hurdles is looked upon more favorably, thus influencing the performance appraisal rating.

Hypothesis 4 uses question 10 to form a “Feedback” subscale that measures what effect of not wanting to give negative feedback will have on the performance appraisal. This question addresses the possibility of the supervisor wanting to avoid uncomfortable feedback sessions. Teaching a rebellious employee a lesson is another reason why a low performance appraisal may be given intentionally. Question 18 provides the basis for the “Lesson” subscale intended to measure such a response. Finally, Question 13 is used for the basis of the “Personal” subscale. This question specifically addresses the practice of altering performance appraisals for meeting personal objectives. Many managers may feel that it is unnecessary to be accurate unless there is a reward for doing so or failing to do so. Consequently, performance appraisals may either be inflated or deflated depending upon which produces the best outcome for the person or persons responsible for its administration.

*PCPAQ Scoring.* The 25-item PCPAQ was scored using a 6 point likert scale. A response of “1” represents that the behavior described in the statement is very atypical within the organization of the individual participant responding, while a response of “6” shows that the statement is very typical in the organization of the participant. High scores on the PCPAQ reflected a higher likelihood that political considerations are effecting the performance appraisal system being used. The lower the score, the less likely political considerations were involved in the performance appraisal process.

Since the subscales are questions within the PCPAQ, the same six-point likert scale is used for scoring. Ratings of each subscale are recorded separately in order to determine which political influence is most likely to effect each respondent's ratings in the performance appraisal process. That subscale with the highest rating is considered to be the primary reason for influence on the performance appraisal instrument.

*MSPAQ.* The next instrument used was the 15-item questionnaire known as the Questionnaire for Measuring Managerial Support of Performance Appraisal (MSPAQ). Its primary purpose is to determine the amount and type of upper management support for the performance appraisal system within the organization. The experimenter, for sole use in the present study, devised the MSPAQ instrument. Questions were derived from: suggestions that the literature had to offer on various managerial support issues that may conceivably affect the rater, and the experimenter's experience and knowledge of performance appraisal and its intended uses.

Results and statements from previous research provided the groundwork for the creation of the MSPAQ. The 15-item MSPAQ questionnaire uses' validated results from previous research articles as a basis for the elicitation of results concerning the amount of influence managerial support has on the performance appraisal process. In the present study the MSPAQ (as devised by the experimenter) produced an alpha of 0.66, thus not demonstrating a high reliability. Further implications of this result will be discussed in the following chapter.

*MSPAQ Scoring.* The 15-item MSPAQ was scored using a six-point likert scale. A response of "1" represents that the behavior described in the statement is very atypical within the organization of the individual participant responding. While a response of "6" shows that the statement is very typical in the organization of the participant. The higher

the score on the MSPAQ, the more supportive upper management was of the performance appraisal system being used. The lower the score, the less support there was for the performance appraisal system within the organization.

The last instrument, the Rater Feedback form, consisted of five open-ended questions that will allow those supervisors participating in the study to elaborate further upon their answers to the 25 items of the PCPAQ. The experimenter also created these five open-ended questions solely for use in the current study. The questions only required short answers that could then be used as additional support regarding the prevalence of political concerns in the performance appraisal process. Participants were asked to be candid with their answers to the five questions in order to get a true representation of the political activity prominent in the majority of organizations. The information gathered from the five-question form was used for qualitative data purposes.

The five statements participants were asked to respond to were created from the experimenter's past knowledge and experience with performance appraisal, as well as results from previous research articles. More specifically, the experimenter highlighted what he found to be reoccurring themes from past results and created short answer questions for participants to reply to in hopes of further support and/or explanation to the results of the current study.

Qualitative assessment was used to measure responses to the five open-ended question form. A structured format was used in order to elicit specific responses from those individuals completing the form. The purpose of this was to compare and contrast the responses of different groups. The questions were also intended to allow respondents to state their thoughts and feelings toward the performance appraisal system in their particular organization. Each respondent's answer was thoroughly reviewed for possible

discrepancies. Responses are intended to allow the experimenter to further elaborate on the study's findings, as well as provide factual information and experiences as support.

### *Procedure*

All participants were given a packet of instruments to complete in the same order in which they are presented to them. Half of the packets had the PCPAQ preceding the MSPAQ, while the others had the MSPAQ coming before the PCPAQ. For simplicity sake, the following procedure description is given in terms of the PCPAQ being completed prior to the MSPAQ.

The packet consists of four separate forms. The initial instrument, the Demographic Information form, gathered demographic information from the participants such as their age, sex, and work experience. (see Appendix A). Next, participants were asked to complete the questionnaire for Measuring Political Considerations in Performance Appraisal (PCPAQ; Tziner, Prince, & Murphy, 1997; see Appendix B). Following the PCPAQ, participants completed the MSPAQ (see Appendix C) used for measuring the level of managerial support for the performance appraisal within the studied organization. Once the PCPAQ and MSPAQ were completed, participants were asked to answer five open-ended questions intended to elicit personal conformation and examples of political considerations in performance appraisal (see Appendix D).

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

The primary purpose of this study was to reexamine the involvement of political concerns in the performance appraisal process. Specifically, supervisors from a variety of organizations ranging in size from fewer than ten employees to more than 100,000 associates were targeted. In addition, the present study also attempted to identify what types of political influence are most prevalent in the performance review process, and when political considerations are most likely to take place. It was hypothesized that raters from larger organizations would have significantly higher scores on both the PCPAQ and MSPAQ than raters in medium organizations, which would in turn have significantly higher scores than small organizations. Additionally, using subscales it was believed that the reasons for alterations of the performance appraisal would differ according to the size of the rater's organization. Results were also thought to show an inverse relationship between PCPAQ and MSPAQ ratings. Finally, raters were expected to be effected by specific political influences depending upon the size of the company from which they are employed. The independent variable in this study was organizational size. Scores of the instruments (PCPAQ and MSPAQ) used in the study and PCPAQ subscale ratings served as the dependent variables.

#### *Hypothesis 1a*

Hypothesis 1a was analyzed using a one-way ANOVA. Organizational size was the independent variable. Organizations ranged in size from small (1-200 employees), to medium (201-500 employees), to large (501 or more employees). The scores on the PCPAQ are the dependent variable.

A between groups one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the scores of the PCPAQ where it was believed that raters in large organizations would have significantly higher scores than raters in medium organizations, which in turn would have significantly higher scores than small organization raters. The hierarchy of scores as discussed in Hypothesis 1a was not statistically significant,  $F(2, 117) = .96, p > .05$ . Such results do not support Hypothesis 1a. While these results do not demonstrate strong support to the belief that the larger the company the more political considerations alter the review process, there is a supportive general direction upholding the presumption that larger corporations are subject to a higher likelihood of political effects. Scores for the three groups studied (small, medium and large) demonstrated on average an increased score on the PCPAQ throughout groups. That is, average scores between groups based on organizational size rose as the group size increased. A summary of means and standard deviations is given in Table 1. Perhaps this would indicate that the larger the groups, the more perceived political occurrences there may be in the performance appraisal process. Results may have proven stronger with a larger sample size of each group represented. The ANOVA summary is given in Table 2.

#### *Hypothesis 1b*

Hypothesis 1b was also analyzed using a one-way ANOVA. Organizational size was the independent variable. Organizations ranged in size from small (1-200 employees), to medium (201-500 employees), to large (501 or more employees). The scores on the MSPAQ are the dependent variable.

Another between groups one-way ANOVA was used to compare scores of the MSPAQ. It was predicted that raters in large organizations would have significantly



Table 1

*Summary of Means and Standard Deviations of PCPAQ Scores*

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Organizational Size	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Small	41	70.88	22.55
Medium	39	74.49	21.41
Large	40	77.65	22.06
Total Sample	120	74.31	22.02

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Table 2

*Summary of One-Way Analysis of Variance of PCPAQ Scores*

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Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Between Groups	2	930.36	465.18	.96
Within Groups	117	56757.23	485.11	
Total	119	57687.59		

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higher scores than raters in medium organizations, which in turn have significantly higher scores than small organization raters. Raters' scores between organizations did prove to be statistically significant,  $F(2, 117) = 7.96, p < .05$ . Thus, Hypothesis 1b was supported. Results support the idea that larger organizations have more of a foundation of managerial aid to assist in the development and delivery of a quality performance appraisal. Grote (1996) demonstrated that in order for reviews to be useful, top-down support is essential. The feeling of a supportive culture can be a by-product of open communication lines between levels of management. Increased communication correlates with a decreased potential of political influence (Longenecker, Sims, & Gioia, 1987). The group means also manifested in the expected direction in support of this hypothesis (see Table 3). Results also demonstrated that small and medium sized organizations managerial support were the same while the larger companies were significantly different. These results were supported with significant Tukey post hoc test mean differences for the small sized companies (8.52) and medium sized companies (6.08) at the .05 level, while large companies (2.44) did not prove to be significant. The Tukey post hoc test demonstrated a statistical significant relationship between the small and large organizations as well as the medium and large organizations. The Tukey post hoc did not indicate a statistical significant relationship between small and medium organizational groups. Robinson, Fink, and Allen (1996) found that supervisors have the most influence regarding the compliance of appraisals. Longenecker et al. (1987) verified that political factors are reduced when raters believe their superiors scrutinize appraisals. The ANOVA summary is given in Table 4.

Table 3

*Summary of Means and Standard Deviation of MSPAQ Scores*

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Organizational Size	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Small	41	56.05	8.25
Medium	39	58.45	11.49
Large	40	64.57	9.68
Total Sample	120	59.68	10.43

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Table 4

*Summary of One-Way Analysis of Variance of MSPAQ Scores*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Between Groups	2	1550.64	775.32	7.96*
Within Groups	117	11396.84	97.41	
Total	119	12947.47		

\*p &lt; .05

### *Hypothesis 2a*

Hypothesis 2a was also analyzed using a one-way ANOVA with the different subscale ratings as the dependent variable. The promote, reward with advancement, and inflate ratings of those that do favors and have similar core values subscales from the PCPAQ were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA. It was believed that ratings from large and medium organizations would be significantly higher than ratings from small organization raters using the subscales. Promote was not significant,  $F(2, 117) = 1.24, p > .05$ . Reward with advancement,  $F(2, 117) = .21, p > .05$ , and Inflate ratings of those that do favors and have similar core values,  $F(2, 117) = .83, p > .05$ , also were not significant. The results indicated no support of Hypothesis 2a demonstrated no support. Though results did not prove to be significant, general expectations did hold for Promote and Inflate ratings of those that do favors and have similar core values demonstrating that possibly the larger the organization the more likely performance results may be biased based on these two factors. Means from Promote and Inflate ratings of those that do favors and have similar core values demonstrated higher scores progressing from small to medium organizations and medium to large (see Table 5). These scores suggest that a supportive expected direction for hypothesis 2a does exist.

Reasons to bias results of performance appraisals to promote others may occur for a variety of reasons. For instance, Walker (1992) states that individuals finding common interests among each other create alliances. Managers may also swell ratings of an associate in order to serve their own best interests (Fried et al., 1992). Kacmer et al., (1996) have stated that favor doing and opinion conformity influence ratings. This statement supports both Promote and Inflate ratings of those that do favors and have

Table 5

*Summary of Means and Standard Deviations of Promote, Reward with Advancement, and Inflate Ratings of Those That Do Favors Subscale*

Subscale	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Promote			
Small	41	2.59	1.26
Medium	39	2.69	1.32
Large	40	3.00	1.09
Total	120	2.76	1.23
Reward with Advancement			
Small	41	2.20	1.38
Medium	39	2.38	1.33
Large	40	2.30	1.24
Total	120	2.29	1.31
Inflate Ratings of Those That Do Favors			
Small	41	3.27	1.23
Medium	39	3.56	1.48
Large	40	3.63	1.29
Total	120	3.48	1.34

similar core values, demonstrating that review ratings will rise due to these common factors.

Surprisingly, Reward with Advancement did not show a supportive general direction even though previous research by Musthaler (1997) has shown that a high percentage of managers reward their favored employees through the review system. Additional studies with larger sample sizes across all organizations may demonstrate support for the belief that appraisals are altered in an attempt to show support towards favored subordinate. Reward with Advancement was believed to be similar enough to Promote and Inflate ratings of those that do favors and have similar core values that it too would show a supportive direction. The ANOVA summary is given in Table 6.

#### *Hypothesis 2b*

Similar to previous hypotheses, Hypothesis 2b was also analyzed using a one-way ANOVA with the different subscale ratings as the dependent variable. A likeness subscale was analyzed using a between groups one-way ANOVA. Predictions indicated that alterations of performance appraisal in small organizations would be significantly higher than large and medium organizations in accordance to the supervisor's personal like or dislike of employees, and when the supervisor favors an employee or not. Results were not significant,  $F(2, 117) = .01, p > .05$ . Consequently, Hypothesis 2b was not supported. Results were believed to support that smaller organizations would show a higher likeliness to alter ratings of an associate based upon the rater's personal like or dislike for the individual he/she is rating. Instead, judging by the calculated means among the three groups it seems that one organization is no more likely than the other to alter ratings based on this single factor. Perhaps this political concern transpires across all companies, regardless of size. In addition, subjects participating in the study may believe



Table 6

*Summary of One-Way Analysis of Variance of Promote Subscale*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Between Groups	2	3.73	1.87	1.24
Within Groups	117	176.26	1.51	
Total	119	179.99		

*Summary of One-Way Analysis of Variance of Reward with Advancement Subscale*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Between Groups	2	.72	.36	.21
Within Groups	117	204.07	1.74	
Total	119	207.79		

*Summary of One-Way Analysis of Variance of Inflation Ratings of Those That Do Favors*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Between Groups	2	2.95	1.48	.83
Within Groups	117	209.01	1.79	
Total	119	211.97		

that other political strategies play more of a significant role than the simple liking or disliking of an individual. It could also be said that a rater's personal liking/disliking of a subordinate might cause the rater to use other forms of politics to effect performance reviews ratings. The ANOVA summary is given in Table 7.

### *Hypothesis 3*

Hypothesis 3 was tested using a Pearson correlation. A significant negative correlation was predicted between the two tests (PCPAQ and MSPAQ).

The expected inverse relationship between PCPAQ and MSPAQ ratings was analyzed using a simple correlation. The correlation was not significant with a negative correlation of  $-.09$ . Hypothesis 3 was not supported. The correlation was however in a supportive direction, leading to the belief that with additional data collection results would indicate that the more political an organization is (causing performance appraisal results to be skewed) the less supportive that same organization's management is of the review process. The lack of clear review standards was determined by Murphy and Cleveland (1995) to be a major complaint of evaluations by the raters responsible for critiquing their subordinates. Ultimately the company itself is responsible for identifying, communicating, and upholding its standards. Increased upper management support will contribute to the consistent communication of the standards throughout all levels of an organization, while decreased involvement will lead to raters creating their own standards. Successful change implementation requires strong sponsorship (Stolovitch & Kepps, 1999). Without it top management is ineffective at holding others to the standards they have set forth, instead they subject the review process to an even greater amount of political influences.

Table 7

*Summary of One-Way Analysis of Variance of Likeness Subscale*

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Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Between Groups	2	.04	.02	.01
Within Groups	117	226.63	1.94	
Total	119	226.67		

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#### *Hypothesis 4*

Hypothesis 4 was analyzed first with a one-way ANOVA, then a Tukey's post hoc procedure was used. This allowed group comparisons to be made while the overall alpha level was held in check.

A between groups one-way ANOVA was used for each of three subscales from the PCPAQ: (a) political concerns relating to the reluctance to provide negative feedback to subordinates; (b) the deflation of ratings to teach an employee a lesson; and (c) the meeting of personal objectives. Subscale (a, political concerns relating to the reluctance to provide negative feedback to subordinates) was believed to be most prevalent in small organizations, while subscale (b, the deflation of ratings to teach an employee a lesson) would be more likely in medium organizations and subscale (c, the meeting of personal objectives) would be primary in large organizations. Neither subscale (a, political concerns relating to the reluctance to provide negative feedback to subordinates),  $F(2, 117) = .83, p > .05$ , subscale (b, the deflation of ratings to teach an employee a lesson),  $F(2,117) = 1.83, p > .05$ , or subscale (c, the meeting of personal objectives),  $F(2,117) = .35, p > .05$  was significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

The three subscales were created in order to illustrate what was believed to be a difference on political agenda dependent on the size of the organization. However, upon further review perhaps these three subscales are simply likely in any company performance review system regardless of size. For example, Kozlowski, Chao, and Morrison (1998) report that performance appraisal is a political process that any manager may use to reward and punish employees. Performance feedback sessions also can easily become awkward for the supervisor (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). These political situations do not necessarily have to be more prevalent in one size of organization over

another. What is apparent is that politics do exist in the performance review process. As with the other hypotheses in the current study, a larger number of participants may help to shed some light on this topic. The ANOVA summary is given in Tables 8, 9, and 10.

Overall only one hypothesis (1b) demonstrated statistical support. Yet, in other hypotheses such as 1a and 2a, there were general expectations supporting political influences dependent on organizational size, which suggested that with additional data collection, they too might have proven to be statistically significant. Whether it is the overall dislike of having to give performance appraisals (Stack, 1997), the need to modify ratings in order to produce desired outcomes (Kozlowski et al., 1998), the rewarding of favored employees (Musthaler, 1997), or the simple misuse or lack of understanding of performance appraisals (Hulme, 1997), political considerations are part of any performance review process regardless of organizational size. Results of the open-ended questions found that the most common political influences referenced across all sizes of organizations were monetary, relationships/friendships, profitability of company, fear of confrontation, training, longevity and supervisor opinions. Results of the present study were unable to determine which political concern was most likely to effect performance review ratings depending on company size. Results did demonstrate more of a top-down managerial support structure in larger organizations to assist with the performance appraisal process. Without managerial support of the review procedures political infiltration is more likely to take place. Additional data collection could demonstrate the inverse relationship between scores of the PCPAQ and MSPAQ.

Table 8

*Summary of One-Way Analysis of Variance of Political Concerns Relating to the Reluctance to Provide Negative Feedback to Subordinates Subscale*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Between Groups	2	2.92	1.46	.83
Within Groups	117	205.67	1.76	
Total	119	208.59		

Table 9

*Summary of One-Way Analysis of Variance of the Deflation of Ratings to Teach an Employee a Lesson Subscale*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Between Groups	2	7.28	3.64	1.83*
Within Groups	117	232.19	1.98	
Total	119	239.47		

\* $p < .05$

Table 10

*Summary of One-Way Analysis of Variance of the Meeting of Personal Objectives Subscale*

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
Between Groups	2	1.2	.6	.35
Within Groups	117	202.79	1.73	
Total	119	203.99		



## CHAPTER 4

## DISCUSSION

This study examined the political concerns involved in the performance appraisal process. Previous research has demonstrated that political considerations do influence executives when they evaluate subordinates (Longenecker et al., 1987). Many factors are believed to have an effect on the political dynamics of the performance review process. Time under current supervisor, work experience, rewarding favored employees, teaching employees a lesson and impression management have all been identified as prevalent political factors (Fried et al., 1992; Ferris, Judge, Rowland, & Fitzgibbons, 1994; Musthaler, 1997). More specifically, this study separated prevalent political factors of performance appraisal according to organizational size. The present study attempted to identify what type of political influence was most common in different sized companies as well as when political considerations were most likely to take place.

*Political Perceptions and Managerial Support*

Results indicated no significant differences in terms of perceived political considerations among raters between organizations of various sizes. Raters from large companies did have higher average scores on the PCPAQ compared to raters from medium sized organizations, which in turn produced higher scores than small organization raters. Although the differences between groups were minimal and non-significant, it is noteworthy to state that the means did support a general expected direction. The small number of participants (approximately 40) gathered to represent each size of organization might have reduced the likelihood of obtaining significant results. The trend of scores between organizational size might indicate that raters from large organizations perceive political considerations to a higher degree than raters from

medium organizations, which in turn perceive political considerations to a higher degree than small organization raters. However, recent studies have stated that even novice practitioners are capable of applying organizational assessments to diagnose performance problems (Rohn, Austin, & Lutrey, 2002). This may demonstrate that political implications are relevant in all organizations and perhaps due to other factors, such as managerial support, the analysis of these factors by individuals within the company will vary.

Significant differences were found between companies of different sizes regarding the amount of managerial support for the performance appraisal system. Results demonstrated that large corporations do provide additional support to the performance measure being used. Many times it is the larger organization that uses the appraisal process for many different types of reasons such as employee feedback/development, promotion and training (Jacobs, 1986). This additional training and support by management would then ideally lead to improved accuracy of ratings. As Spector (1996) has found in many studies, training alone will not improve the quality of reviews. The additional training and support of management though may contribute to fewer common rating errors by those individuals responsible for the rating of another. Allen, Shore, and Griffeth (2003) have shown that simply a greater amount of perceived organizational support can result in greater attachment and feelings of obligation to the organization by its employees. Any actual or perceived additional training a rater receives from a large company may contribute to improved rating accuracy once the rater has bought in to the company objectives.

Organizations with regulated training and managerial support in place can lead to a false belief in accuracy of ratings. Tiffin (1952) has gathered evidence stating that when

supervisors and others in position of authority are correctly trained, the guidance they may give can have a favorable effect on employee morale. Therefore, these participants in the current study from large organizations may believe they or their system is less prone to bias in ratings due to their superior training efforts and support from management. The amount of training and procedural communication in large companies may also lead to a positive effect on subordinate morale. The more subordinates feel that their organization supports them, the higher they believe their own performance to be (Bhanthumanuin, 2003). The more support employees see, the more accurate they feel that reviews are written and delivered correctly.

The current study was also expected to demonstrate that political considerations in performance appraisals are likely to occur when the review system is not supported in a top-down fashion. Robinson et al. (1996) found that a shortage of top management support is typically given as a reason why performance appraisal programs yield disappointing results. Tansky and Cohen (2001) also support this belief stating that organizations in which managers are developed, those same managers are more committed to the organization and are more likely to develop their own subordinates. Often times the performance appraisal instrument is a tool used in the development process. Results of the present study did not support previous research and demonstrate significance in the relationship of scores between the PCPAQ and MSPAQ in regard to organizational size. Instead, raters from companies who typically have a support system in place may have looked more favorably upon their performance appraisal system. Rather than relying on specific examples of political influences these participants could have been reporting only those influences that have been easily identified in the past. It would also be possible that those raters from smaller organizations with no training

and/or management support may suffer from ignorance in identifying and reporting political considerations effecting the performance review process.

### *Causes of Political Influence*

It was expected that certain political concerns would be more likely to occur than others would. Specifically, raters were expected to use politics to: (a) promote; (b) reward with advancement; (c) inflate rating of those that do favors; and (d) favor an individual due to a personal liking or disliking by the manager. Previous research has demonstrated that many people are dissatisfied with performance appraisals due to the above listed reasons in addition to others (Schuler, 1995; Ferris et al., 1994). Results of the study, however, were inconsistent with previous findings as no significant differences were found between organization size among those suspected causes. This conclusion indicates that although political influences do exist, they may not be pinpointed due to organizational size. Instead, it is more likely that raters are vulnerable to politics that is both intentional and unforeseen (Schuler, 1995). For instance, Balino and Turnley (2003) have found that supervisors view individuals who avoid the use of impression management or those using only positive impression management more favorably. This type of a political influence is likely to occur regardless of organizational size.

Results indicated no significant difference in causes for political influences in small organizations due to reluctance to provide negative feedback to subordinates. Medium-sized organization raters were not found to deflate ratings of a subordinate to teach them a lesson nor did large company raters demonstrate an alteration of ratings for the meeting of personal objectives. Reasons for political influence in review systems may be so widespread that the identification of specific causes for fluctuation of ratings based on organizational size may be too difficult to determine. What many researchers support

is that political influence is evident in the performance appraisal process (Fried et al., 1992; Kacmer et al., 1996; Kozlowski et al., 1998; Longenecker et al., 1987; and Wayne & Kacmer, 1991). Within that there have been many different causal factors identified such as leniency, halo error, impression management, dislike of negative feedback, promotion, and favoritism to name a few.

### *Limitations*

The reliability of the instruments used in the study may have played a role in the lack of significant results. The PCPAQ instrument was determined to have a coefficient = .95 in the current study. This finding was very similar to previous research using the PCPAQ with an alpha of .97 and .98 (Tziner et al., 1996). However, the MSPAQ was a test instrument designed by the experimenter for use exclusively in the present study. Results showed a coefficient of .66 for the MSPAQ. The lack of reliability may have effected the outcome of the study. With a stronger reliability on the MSPAQ other significant results may have been found and support for hypothesis 1b may have been even stronger.

The number of participants used in the study was 120 overall. On average 40 individuals participated in one of three categories; small, medium or large companies. Redefining what constitutes a small, medium, and large organization may have an impact on the results of the present study. There are certainly large companies with many more employees than the 501 it required in the present study. The ranges dictating the organizational sizes should be redefined in any additional research regarding the present topic. Of the 40 participants per category, not more than three associates within the same organization completed instrument. Strict measures were taken to ensure a wide sample of the population was used. In addition to the large number of separate companies

lobbied for completed instruments, participants may have been difficult to gather due to the nature of the topic. Many of the hypotheses may not have been significant, yet were supported by a general expected direction. A larger number of participants may have been able to produce higher levels of significance.

As with the majority of field research, the influences of the work environment could have placed limitations on the conclusions of the study. Although confidentiality and voluntary participation were ensured, some participants may have felt that their supervisors would somehow detect their answers. Because of this belief, participants may have answered what they felt was socially accepted rather than their actual opinions. The creation of perceptions, rather factual or not, can cause attitudes, behaviors and beliefs to alter (Pfeffer, 1981). Also, those supervisors participating with less work experience and training may have been unaware what effect political concerns truly had on their reviews. Consequently they determined their particular organization to be unaffected by all political concerns with exception to the one or two influences they themselves have personally experienced or are more aware of. Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, and Wood (1995) have shown that many people rely upon established beliefs for the foundation of their judgements. An inexperienced rater may rely upon established beliefs until they have gained enough work experience to make their own opinions.

### *Future Research*

The performance appraisal process itself is often times viewed in a negative light by many individuals responsible for conducting the reviews. Performance appraisals can be a time consuming chore (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Spector, 1996; Stack, 1997). As a result, many times political considerations influence supervisors when they evaluate subordinates (Longenecker et al., 1987). Future research needs to follow the present

study and work to identify the different causes of political influence in the performance review process. Additional data needs to be conducted concerning different demographic areas. Specifically, how male and female executives review the performance of their subordinates should be investigated. Other characteristics such as a rater's age, time in current position, number of subordinates and educational background would also be of interest.

In addition to measuring basic demographic variables, the amount of training a supervisor has received and the effect political considerations has on that person would produce interesting implications. Because newer supervisors are typically less susceptible to the political constraints, they also tend to produce more accurate ratings (Roberts & Pavlak, 1996). Newer executives, depending on their educational background, may have more quality training than supervisors that have been in position for some time. The quantity of training an executive has is not an indicator of the amount of political influence present in the performance appraisal. Instead, Schuler (1995) has found that a higher quality of training can improve rater accuracy. Therefore, investigating which rater (new or old) has a higher tendency to be susceptible to politics and that persons training background may elicit additional areas of interest.

The amount of support management gives toward the performance review process also has an effect on accuracy of ratings. Without the right amount of top-management support, inaccuracy is most likely to take place (Grote, 1996; Robinson et al., 1996). This statement should be further researched by correlating those raters reporting little to no political influence with the amount of training and upper-management support they have for the performance appraisal process. Longenecker et al. (1987) reports that when appraisals are reviewed, scrutinized and evaluated by a manager's superior, political

influences are likely to be reduced. Therefore, a significant relationship between perceived levels of political influence and management support/training should also be studied.

In addition further research regarding the type of support a rater receives would also be of interest. Mattson (2003) has found that the type of evaluation report a manager used has a significant difference in the perceived usefulness of the information used for decision making. More specifically, managers prefer information about the financial results of the human resource interventions (i.e. performance appraisal). Perhaps it is not the style of communication used on those individuals responsible for rating others, but the content of that information that will decide rather or not the performance review is influenced by political factors.

Even the purpose of the performance appraisal itself would be a topic of interest. Milliman, Nason, Zhu, and De Cieri (2002) suggest that our expectations of the performance review process are too high for what realistically can be accomplished. If organizations want to accomplish the purpose of the performance appraisal they need to devote more time and effort to the performance appraisal process. Asking those individuals responsible for rating others what they feel can be done to improve the performance review process itself would be of great interest.

The implications of future research on political considerations in the performance appraisal process could benefit organizations in many ways. Because the interest and use of performance appraisal has risen, understanding those factors responsible for inaccuracy of ratings is at a higher premium. Many factors such as halo, leniency, rating styles and even impression management can be identified and trained to correct. Yet many of the political influences go unnoticed or unmanaged thus eliciting inaccurate,



unfair reviews as well as unhappy employees with low morale. By emphasizing which political considerations are most likely to influence performance review ratings and when, active measures could be taken to improve quality of reviews and overall company performance, productivity and morale.

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## Appendix A

## Demographic Information/Instructions

Please complete the following forms in the order in which they are presented. The proper order begins with the Demographic Information form, second is either the PCPAQ form or MSPAQ form depending which packet you have received, and concludes with a group of five short answer questions. Please read the directions at the top of each form before beginning to answer the statements and/or questions.

Please complete the following demographic information prior to completing the PCPAQ or MSPAQ. The information provided will be kept strictly confidential. In order to keep each participant's identity confidential we ask for the last four digits of your social security number and the last four numbers of your home phone number.

Last four digits of social security number: \_\_\_\_\_

Last four numbers of home phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Years at current position: \_\_\_\_\_ Years with present company: \_\_\_\_\_

Total years of work experience: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of subordinates: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of employees within the entire company: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of hours involved training to use current performance appraisal system: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of performance appraisals conducted using the current system: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix B

## PCPAQ

The following is a list of 25 statements. Please indicate the degree to which each statement reflects the behavior of raters within your organization by circling the appropriate number. Raters consist of those individuals involved in the performance appraisal task of rating employee behavior, attitude, production, etc. on an annual basis. The scale ranges from "1" (very atypical) to "6" (very typical).

1. Supervisors avoid giving performance appraisals that may antagonize employees (e.g., a low rating).

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

2. Supervisors avoid giving a low performance appraisal because they fear that the employee will try to transfer to another boss.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

3. Supervisors inflate performance appraisals of those people who are able to procure for them special services, favors, or benefits.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

4. Supervisors inflate the performance appraisal of employees who have access to valuable sources of information.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

5. Supervisors' performance appraisals reflect in part their personal liking or disliking of employees.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

6. Supervisors' appraisals are affected by the extent to which employees are perceived as sharing the same basic values as they do.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

7. The performance ratings of employees are affected by their ability to inspire enthusiasm in the supervisor who appraises their performance.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

8. Supervisors give performance appraisals that will make them look good to their supervisors.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

9. The quality of the supervisor-subordinate personal relationship throughout the appraisal period (e.g., tense-relaxed; trusting-distrusting; friendly-hostile) affects the performance rating.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

10. Supervisors are likely to give an inflated performance appraisal in order to avoid negative/uncomfortable feedback sessions with a subordinate.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

11. Supervisors avoid giving performance appraisals which may have negative consequences for the employee (e.g., demotion, layoff, no bonus, salary freeze, etc.).

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

12. Supervisors inflate performance appraisals in order to maximize rewards for their subordinates (e.g., salary increases, promotions, prestigious assignments).

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

13. Supervisors produce accurate performance appraisals only to the extent that they may be rewarded for doing so or failing to do so.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

14. Supervisors produce accurate performance appraisals only to the extent that they perceive that this is the norm in their organization.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

15. Employees holding a high status position in their organization will get a higher performance appraisal than is deserved (i.e., regardless of their real performance, employee appraisals are affected by the organizational status of the positions they hold).

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

16. Supervisors give high performance ratings because they believe that their subordinates have already passed through many organization hurdles and therefore are highly competent.

(very atypical) 1    2    3    4    5    6 (very typical)

17. In assigning ratings, supervisors conform to what they believe is normative (“acceptable”) in their organization so as to avoid disapproval by their peers.

(very atypical) 1    2    3    4    5    6 (very typical)

18. Supervisors give low performance appraisals to teach a rebellious employee a lesson.

(very atypical) 1    2    3    4    5    6 (very typical)

19. Supervisors use performance appraisals to send a message to their employees (e.g., encourage risk taking, creativity, etc.).

(very atypical) 1    2    3    4    5    6 (very typical)

20. Supervisors inflate performance appraisals of those employees who possess special characteristics (e.g., a high popularity, compliancy, etc.).

(very atypical) 1    2    3    4    5    6 (very typical)

21. The fear that performance appraisals may threaten the self-esteem of subordinates discourages supervisors from giving negative-though accurate-appraisals.

(very atypical) 1    2    3    4    5    6 (very typical)

22. Supervisors give higher performance rating than is deserved in order to gain support or cooperation from their employees.

(very atypical) 1    2    3    4    5    6 (very typical)

23. Supervisors give higher performance appraisals than is deserved in order to repay favors to their employees.

(very atypical) 1    2    3    4    5    6 (very typical)

24. Supervisors give equivalent performance ratings to all their subordinates in order to avoid resentment and rivalries among them.

(very atypical) 1    2    3    4    5    6 (very typical)

25. Supervisors give higher performance appraisals than is deserved to those employees who control valuable organizational resources.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

## Appendix C

## MSPAQ

The following is a list of 15 statements. Please indicate the degree to which each statement reflects the behavior within your organization by circling the appropriate number. The scale ranges from “1” (very atypical) to “6” (very typical).

1. Management has clearly identified the purpose of the performance appraisal.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

2. Supervisors participate in performance appraisal training prior to making evaluations.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

3. Management supports the uses of the performance appraisal system.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

4. Management takes an active role in ensuring that performance appraisals are done correctly.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

5. Top management uses the same performance appraisal system as other levels of management.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

6. Your immediate supervisor overlooks your performance ratings of subordinates.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

7. All performance appraisals are concluded with written documentation of the results.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

8. Results of the performance appraisal are shared with the subordinates.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

9. Previous performance appraisals are reviewed to determine promotions within the organization.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

10. Management identifies the positive uses of performance appraisal.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

11. Supervisors receive training on how to best conduct feedback sessions with subordinates.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

12. The effectiveness of the performance appraisal system is reviewed annually by management.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

13. Performance appraisals are done by managers only to keep the personnel department off their backs.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

14. Those managers conducting the performance appraisal see no real value in the current performance appraisal system.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)

15. Management has set forth clear guidelines on how the performance appraisal system is to be used.

(very atypical) 1      2      3      4      5      6 (very typical)



4. What is your primary concern as a rater when conducting a performance appraisal?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Give an example of when politics in the performance appraisal process was the most evident.



Appendix E

Participation of Informed Consent Form

Read this consent form. If you have any questions ask the experimenter and he will answer the question

You are invited to participate in a study investigating the influence of political considerations in the performance appraisal process. At the beginning of the study you will complete a demographic form. You will then complete both the Questionnaire for Measuring Political Considerations in Performance Appraisal (PCPAQ) and the Questionnaire for Measuring Managerial Support of Performance Appraisal (MSPAQ). Upon completion of the PCPAQ and MSPAQ you will be asked to answer a series of questions regarding your experience with the administration of performance appraisals.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to terminate your participation, you are welcomed to do so at any point in the study. Termination of participation will have no bearing on your job status. There is no physical risk or discomfort involved in the study.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, feel free to ask the experimenter (Eli N. Jantz, (316) 612-4829). If you have any additional questions, please contact Dr. Brian Schrader, Division of Psychology and Special Education, 321 Visser Hall, (620) 341-5818.

Thank you for your participation.

.....  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the above information and have decided to  
(please print name)  
participate . I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at  
anytime without prejudice after signing this form should I choose to discontinue  
participation in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature of Participant)

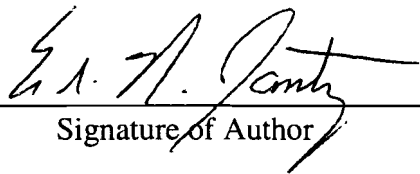
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(date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature of Experimenter)

**THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS**

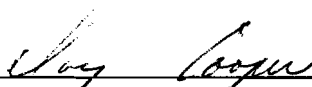
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Date

An Analysis of the Political Considerations that  
Influence the Performance Appraisal Process  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title of Thesis

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Graduate Office Staff Member

July 29, 2003  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Received

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