

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This study investigated if cultural differences between the United States and the People's Republic of China affect (1) the rating errors/bias of performance appraisal (PA) feedback employees receive from their supervisors, (2) how employees in these two countries respond to their PA feedback, and (3) supervisors' attitudes about using different PA feedback strategies. One hundred twenty-six participants were involved in the present study, 54 American employees from a teaching college in the Midwest, and 72 Chinese employees from a teaching college in Northeast China. The American employees received more lenient performance ratings from their supervisors than did the Chinese employees. Also, the American employees were more satisfied with lenient PA feedback, while Chinese employees were more satisfied with severe PA feedback. In addition to the main findings, it was also discovered that the male employees received higher rating than the female employees in both countries, American men were the least motivated by their PA feedback, and American minorities were the least motivated and satisfied with their PA feedback. The findings of the present study could be used for training supervisors who work in cross cultural (America and China) situations so they would have a better understanding of how PA feedback impacts subordinates in different countries.

How Cultural Differences in Responses to Feedback Affect  
Leniency and Severity Rating Error/Bias in Performance Appraisals

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## CHAPTER 1

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

It has been shown in laboratory studies with university students that Westerners (e.g., Americans) and Easterners (e.g., Japanese) react differently to self-efficacy feedback. When told that they are above average performers, Westerners try even harder at that task. When told that they are below average performers, Westerners relax their efforts at that task. Easterners react in the opposite direction (Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, Ide, Leung, & Matsumoto, 2001).

Also, it has been shown in field studies that Western managers tend to commit leniency errors when providing their subordinates with performance appraisal feedback (Jawahar & Williams, 1997). This makes sense in light of previous research by Heine et al. (2001). Telling a Western subordinate that he or she is doing a good job will motivate him or her to try harder, even if that employee is not doing a good job. On the other hand, negative feedback does not correct the poor performance of Westerners, it just decreases their motivation (Barron & Sackett, 2008). If Eastern employees react differently to feedback, working harder when given negative feedback and easing off when given positive feedback, it would make sense for Eastern managers to commit severity errors instead of leniency errors in order better to motivate their subordinates.

One purpose of this study was to examine whether managers from China and America differ in severity/leniency errors when rating their subordinates. Another purpose of this study was to explore how Chinese and American subordinates respond to critical versus positive feedback. Do the Chinese employees prefer critical feedback and



does it motivate them more than positive feedback? Do the American employees prefer positive feedback and does it motivate them more than critical feedback? Finally, this study examined what the Chinese and American managers think about the motivational impacts of critical versus positive feedback. This research has implications on the ways to appraise and motivate employees in different cultural contexts. The review of the literature is divided into a series of questions which set up the hypotheses that will be explored at the end of the literature review.

### **What is Performance Appraisal and Why is it So Important for Organizations?**

A performance appraisal is a method which organizations use to measure employees' job performance. It communicates employees' recent successes and failures, the strengths and weaknesses in their work. It is a very important part of human resource management because it provides a useful informational resource for identifying employees' training needs, for rewarding good performance, for disciplining inappropriate work behaviors, and as a criterion in employee selection research. Organizations should collect appraisal data that is both objective (e.g., quantity, quality, cost, and time) and subjective (e.g., performance expectation, motivation, and attitude) (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

Performance appraisal is not only important for human resource management, it is also important for the organization. The information from performance appraisals has various uses for the organization's development. There are two kinds of popular uses of performance appraisal in organizations. The first one is that a performance appraisal system could be used as a decision aid. Based on the information from performance appraisal, human resource could decide who should be terminated, promoted, rewarded,

and so on. It could also help to explain the decision making, which is evidenced by promoting, rewarding, firing, and so forth (Khan, 2007; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

The other one is that a performance appraisal system could be seen as a feedback system. Performance feedback delivery is very important for the employees' later performance. People tend to seek positive performance to improve their self-efficacy, which could help them feel good about themselves. Frequent and accurate performance feedback is very needed in improving employees' performance. The information from performance appraisal could be used for performance feedback (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

Previous researches discuss how to apply the performance feedback to affect employees' subsequent performance. David (2011) presented the important role of the narrative performance feedback of employees' performance change. He also believed that it would help employees' self-efficacy for future work if managers delivered the negative comments in the right way. He discussed that a positive and specific feedback, which does not describe ability in negative vocabulary and always includes self-reflection, would result in positive attitudes and high performance outcomes. For example, managers should always mention employees' positive ability during the work, when talking about his/her negative performance. Meanwhile, a "sandwich" procedure of the feedback delivery would also be good, which is positive-negative-positive feedback. In other words, it is necessary to protect the employees' self-efficacy and provide motivation when doing the performance feedback. In addition, performance feedback, which includes few developmental needs and a few amounts of unfavorable comments would lead to positive employee attitudes and future performance. A favorable

performance feedback should not be too long, but state enough detail of employee's current work states and how to make an improvement in the future. Delivering the performance feedback face to face is the most effective way, compared to writing a summary or talking over the phone. Additionally, performance feedback should not only contain enough correct information and be motivating, but it also needs to be provided frequently (Kuvaas, 2010). Delivering daily feedback can increase work attitude, employee commitment, and job satisfaction.

Murphy and Cleveland (1995) summarized three types of uses which performance appraisal provide. First, between-person uses, which include employees' promotions, retention/terminations, layoffs, administrating salary, recognition of individual job performance, and identification of poor performers. Second, within-person uses, which predict performance feedback, determining transfers and assignments, identifying an individual's strengths and weakness, and finding out the individual's training needs. Finally, systems maintenance uses, which include assessing workforce plans, goal achievement and goal identification, as well as organizational training and development needs, evaluating personnel systems, and reinforcing authority structure.

As was mentioned before, a good performance appraisal system is very important for organizational development. It is also important for the employees in the organization. Several researchers explained the important relationship between performance appraisal satisfactions and employees' job satisfaction (Bhatti & Qureshi, 2007; Brown, Hyatt, & Benson, 2009; Karimi, Malik, & Hussain, 2011).

The relationship between the quality of performance appraisal and employees' organizational efficacy was also studied by Brown, Hyatt, and Benson in 2009. They

showed that the quality of the performance appraisal would significantly affect employee's job satisfaction, job attitude, and turnover intention. Specifically, employees who have poor qualified performance appraisal experiences reported low job satisfaction and attitude, and high intent to leave the organization. In other words, designing a qualified performance appraisal system would increase employees' organization efficacy and the organization would be less likely to lose good employees. In 2011, Karimi, Malik, and Hussain studied the relationship between performance appraisal satisfaction and employees' job satisfaction. They found that performance appraisal would affect employee job satisfaction significantly and positively for both female and male employees. And Bhatti and Qureshi found in 2007 that increasing employees' job satisfaction would increase their work attitude, productivity, and overall job performance.

Furthermore, if the performance appraisal is run fairly and based on reality, even employees receiving negative feedback in a higher goal setting situation will still work hard in the future (David, 2011). It would also increase employees' work attitude if it gives them opportunities to provide their personal idea of the job during the performance appraisal. It would also positively affect the supervisor's rating during the performance appraisal.

### **What are Rating Errors and How do They Impair the Performance Appraisal Process?**

The most common rating errors in performance appraisal are leniency/severity errors, central tendency/range restriction errors, and halo errors (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Leniency error exists when raters who want to be liked are unwilling to give negative feedback. Severity error exists when a rater has higher standards than other

raters and almost all rates are seen as below average (Saal & Knight, 1988). Central tendency/range restriction error happens when raters are unwilling to give high or low ratings. Sometimes it is because they do not have enough opportunities to observe, or they are unwilling to justify high or low ratings to the organization or the rate (Cascio, & Aguinis, 2005). Halo error is created by the rater's general impression of the rate. In other words, the rater does not judge each performance dimension separately, but simply rates each dimension according to a general overall impression (Cascio, & Aguinis, 2005).

Knowing the rating errors of performance appraisal would be helpful for performance rater training. Training could minimize the errors existing during the appraisal and produce more valid and accurate ratings for employees' performance. When human resource people make important decisions based on the performance appraisal, they need the results of the appraisal to be accurate for aiding decisions (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

There are two types of rating bias which could make most of the employees be rated above average. They are leniency error and halo error and they occur frequently (Murphy & Balzer, 1989). Since multisource performance feedback is more and more popular these days, scholars argue that it could increase the possibilities of performance rating biases (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Employees receive and give feedback from and to different levels in the organization, which could impact employees' rating accuracy. Employees might evaluate each other higher than their true performance in order to make a more harmonious work environment (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). Of course, it depends on who is evaluating who. For example, Ng, Koh, Ang, Kennedy and Chan (2011) proposed that there were two main concerns which raters would have during

the multisource performance rating process. One is that raters want to help ratees to improve their performance, and the other is the relationship between raters and ratees. Compared to peers and subordinates, supervisors have the most responsibility to help employees improve their performance and they are the least concerned with the negative outcomes of the relationship. Thus, they tend to have less leniency and halo in their ratings. On the other hand, subordinates tend to have the most leniency and halo bias when they are evaluating their supervisors, because they are concerned the most with the relationship and less concerned with helping their supervisors' development. Furthermore, peers would provide less bias than subordinates and more bias than supervisors, because they have less concern for ratees' relationship than subordinates, but more concern for ratees' development than supervisors. Their findings partially support the hypothesis that compared to supervisors, subordinates and peers are more likely to provide leniency ratings, and subordinates would also more like to give halo ratings. Compared to peers, subordinates tend to provide more leniency and halo ratings for ratees.

Barron and Sackett (2008) studied managers' personal rating bias/error during performance rating. They found that managers from the United States tend to have leniency bias/error when rating their own performance. However, Japanese managers have modesty (severity) bias/error when they evaluate their personal performance. The results showed that Japanese self-ratings were significantly lower than other perspectives (boss, peer, and subordinates). Barron and Sackett discussed that based on the Japanese culture (collectivism), the modesty bias exists due to their self-enforcement. Japanese

always want to know the un-perfect part of their performance so that they can improve it later.

Wilson (2010) studied the appraisals of 667 bank employees from a national bank in the United Kingdom, 8.5% of the employees were black, 6.7% were Asian employees, 70.3% were white employees, and 2.3% were from other ethnic groups. Compared to the white and black staff, the Asian staff were more likely to be mentioned positively on working accuracy and learning skills. Furthermore, the Asian staff were seen as more adaptable and committed than white and black staff. The author suggested that the halo rating error might exist because of the small sample size of Asian staff compared to other ethnic groups. In the study, raters might have had some positive stereotype of Asian employees, which was reflected in their overall positive performance evaluations for Asian employees. In addition, the study found a lack of consistency between supervisors' comments and their numerical ratings of employees from different ethnic groups. Although supervisors gave lower ratings for non-white employees in the numerical ratings, they provided positive comments in the written summaries. In other words, supervisors, especially white supervisors, tended to make primarily positive comments to their employees in the narrative portion of the assessment. Moreover, it was difficult for supervisors who are ambivalent towards ethnic minority groups to deliver negative feedback to the minority groups.

Though leniency rating could make high performing employees feel that the procedure is unfair because everyone is seen as excelling, supervisors want to please employees. Previous researchers have listed some reasons for leniency ratings during performance appraisal. Bernardin, Cooke, and Villanova (2000) argued that supervisors

with different personalities would rate employees differently. Based on the Big Five factor theory of personality, people who score higher on conscientiousness would like to be excellent on everything and, thus, have higher standards on performance ratings. However, people who score higher on agreeableness would be more dependent and cooperating. They tend to avoid social conflict when having to solve a problem. Thus, they would tend to be more lenient when evaluating employees (Bernardin, Cooke, & Villanova, 2000). Bernardin, Cooke, and Villanova (2000) hypothesized that people who are lower on conscientiousness but higher on agreeableness would be the most likely to make leniency ratings. In their study, they asked 111 students to complete the NEO Five Factor Inventory. The students were divided into groups and each group worked many kinds of human resources management problems. Finally, the students were asked to evaluate their group members' performance. The true score of each participant's performance was the professor's rating. They ran a *t* test for the statistical analysis and found that the students with high agreeableness and low conscientiousness ( $M = 5.83$ ) had significantly higher ratings than everyone else ( $M = 5.43$ ) ( $t(109) = 2.45, p < .05$ ). This result confirmed their hypothesis.

Farh and Werbel (1986) argued that there were reasons for leniency ratings during the self-appraisal. Their study found that different appraisal purposes and different appraisal situations will change the possibility of leniency during the self-appraisal. They proposed that the self-lenieny rating increased when the appraisal was based on administrative purposes, such as grading purposes, whereas when self-appraisal was based on research purposes, the possibility of leniency ratings would decrease. They ran an experiment with 62 undergraduate students. Their findings supported their hypothesis



that individuals would have higher leniency ratings of their self-appraisal in the administration-purpose situation than those individuals in the research-purpose situation ( $F(1,58) = 6.4, p < .02$ ). Additionally, individuals in a low-expectation-for-accuracy situation had higher levels of leniency ratings during the self-appraisal than those individuals under a high-expectation-for-accuracy situation ( $F(1,58) = 6.8, p < .02$ ). They explained that people tend to rate themselves higher when they know that the appraisal will affect their rewards on the job, and rate themselves more fairly when the rating do not affect their future rewards. On the other hand, people are more careful on their self-rating when they know that there are high expectations for their ratings, because they might get punished for providing falsified information.

### **What is Self-Efficacy?**

Self-efficacy, the central variable of social cognitive theory, has been studied in more than 10,000 investigations in the last 25 years (Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott, & Rich, 2007). Bandura (1994) defined self-efficacy as people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance. Self-efficacy is influenced by social content, verbal coaching, information about performance norms, future expectations, and past performance (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (2001) argued that self-efficacy has a triadic relationship among three factors: cognitive (goal setting, personal evaluation of performance, and quality of analytical thinking), environmental (the situation and level of challenge when the act takes place), and behavioral (choices that are executed).

As Bandura (1997) stated, self-efficacy is a belief in one's capability of doing the given tasks. There are four main sources that could form the self-efficacy belief. First, mastery or enactive experience could affect the efficacy belief most. Second, vicarious

experience, which people learn from experiences of similar others, could affect self-efficacy beliefs for performing a given task. For example, watching other people's success could improve one's belief of successfully doing the task. However, watching them fail could produce uncertainty of successfully doing the task. Third, social persuasion could support people to believe that they can complete the task successfully. Finally, people's physiological and emotional states could affect their self-efficacy beliefs.

Seo and Ilies (2009) hypothesized that self-efficacy would be positively related to positive effects and negatively related to negative effects. They recruited 118 private stock investors as participants who took a 20 day experiment. These stock investors were asked to invest from 12 given stocks. They allowed checking the information about each stock every day from the stock investment simulation website. They would get rewarded if their investments gained money. The researchers studied these stock investors' pre self-efficacy, goal setting, and performance expectancy before their investment, and post self-efficacy of performance outcome at the end of every day. The results showed that self-efficacy was positively related to the effects which support their hypothesis.

### **What is the Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Job Performance?**

Bandura (1986) stated that self-efficacy could affect job performance by increasing a person's effort and persistence. Compared to low self-efficacy people, people who have high self-efficacy would tend to work harder and longer on tasks. Additionally, high self-efficacy employees have higher work self-esteem and are more likely to believe that they can work successfully on tasks (Gardener & Pierce, 1998). When people have high self-efficacy, they tend to set high challenges for themselves. As

a result, if people's self-efficacy increased, then they will increase their amount of effort and time on a task, which could lead to performance improvement (Moore & Chang, 2009). Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott, and Rich's (2007) research showed that self-efficacy was studied in a variety of industrial-organizational psychology areas, such as training, leadership, newcomer socialization and adjustment, performance evaluation, work stress, political influence behaviors, creativity, negotiation, and group-team processes. According to Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott, and Rich's study, self-efficacy and work-related performance have a higher correlation when the job or task complexity is low (.42) than when job or task complexity is high (.30).

Nease, Mudgett, and Quinones (1999) studied the relationship between feedback-sign, self-efficacy, and acceptance of performance feedback. They found that self-efficacy could moderate people's acceptance of received performance feedback. Specifically, compared to the low self-efficacy people, high self-efficacy individuals decreased their acceptance of received performance feedback when they had received repeated negative performance feedback. Researchers argued that individual with high self-efficacy question the accuracy of the negative performance feedback because their high self-efficacy is built on their internal and stable attributions for successful performance. High self-efficacy individuals tend to believe that their unsuccessful performance is because of external factors or bad luck, and that their successful performance is because of their competence and hard work. On the other hand, low self-efficacy individuals decrease their interest in receiving positive performance feedback after they have received repeated positive feedback, whereas high self-efficacy individuals always prefer positive feedback no matter how often it happens. Overall, their

study suggested that both high and low self-efficacy individuals have a personally consistent belief about themselves. When the evaluation or feedback differs too much from their personal evaluation, they will question the accuracy of the evaluation or feedback.

According to Vancouver, Thompson, and Williams (2001), successful past performance enhances self-efficacy and affects personal goal setting. People who have high self-efficacy set higher level goals, which could positively contribute to performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). Seo and Ilies (2009) also found that if people have more positive changes in their performance goal setting, then it could strengthen the within-person relationship between self-efficacy and performance. However, self-efficacy could also affect performance negatively. Vancouver and Kendall (2006) predicted that self-efficacy could produce optimism or overconfidence about one's ability to do the task, which could lead to decreased allocation of resources for the given task, thus, leading to poor performance.

The relationship between self-efficacy and performance is not always positive. In 2009, Moores and Chang conducted a field study on the relationships between self-efficacy, overconfidence, and subsequent performance. They found that, generally, prior self-efficacy (first impressions of self-efficacy) positively impacted subsequent performance and subsequent self-efficacy. However, for participants in the overconfident group, the prior self-efficacy negatively related to subsequent performance. Based on the perceptual control theory, increasing people's self-efficacy might not always result increase performance because it might lower motivation for change (Vancouver, Thompson, Tischner, & Putka, 2002).

### **Are Cross-Cultural Differences in How Self-Efficacy Influences Performance?**

People from different countries have different cultures. In different living environments, people will have different beliefs, values, norms, and behaviors according to their social practices. Hofstede (2001) stated four general dimensions that could differentiate cultures: (1) power distance, the amount of power an individual accepts and distributes from the society; (2) uncertainty avoidance (i.e., risk avoidance), for example, employees in a high uncertainty avoidance culture tend to have more contingency plans than those in a low uncertainty avoidance culture (Chong, 2007); (3) individualism versus collectivism, for example, people from Western cultures tend to define themselves separate from others as distinct individuals and evaluate themselves based on achievements through personal autonomy, while people from Eastern cultures tend to define themselves in relation to others and evaluate themselves based on the opinion of others (Brewer & Chen, 2007); and (4) masculinity versus femininity, for example, people who are in masculine cultures want to be in control and set more quantifiable objectives than those in feminine cultures (Chong, 2007).

Cross cultural differences might influence how Eastern and Western employees like to motivate themselves. Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, Ide, Leung, and Matsumoto (2001) researched the different self-enhancing motivations between North Americans and East Asians. Generally, North Americans view themselves as independent, unique, and relatively immutable. They define themselves through a distinctive set of attributions and qualities which are built internally through their previous positive behaviors. They tend to choose to evaluate themselves from positive aspects and also use their previous successful performance to motivate themselves. In

another words, they prefer a positive focus as the way of motivation. On the other hand, East Asians view themselves interdependent, embedded and malleable. This contains a belief from Confucianism in which an individual should not evaluate himself or herself without understanding his or her role in the situation. People in Eastern cultures tend to evaluate themselves by comparing themselves with other people. They are not always focused on the positive aspects of their performance, but also pay attention to the negative aspects. They believe the way to improve their overall performance would be to correct the wrong things or mistakes, or improve the negative parts in the previous performance, because this is how best to help the team. In another words, East Asians tend to motivate themselves by improving their performance failures. Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, Ide, Leung, and Matsumoto found that their Japanese participants preferred working on their task weaknesses after receiving feedback, whereas their Canadian and North American participants preferred confirming their strengths by continuing to work on successful tasks. All three groups, Japanese, Canadian, and North American, were eager to succeed, but they motivated themselves differently. Among their four studies, Japanese samples worked harder on their failures than their successes. They focused on their shortcomings (self-criticism). However, Canadian and North American samples had more confidence when they worked on their strengths and neglected their failures (self-enhancement).

While Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, Ide, Leung, and Matsumoto (2001) did not advocate one approach over another, focusing on failures or strengths, Kononovas and Dallas (2009) found that students (e.g., American) who scored higher on individualism had higher scores on self-efficacy and lower scores on perceived stress

than students (e.g., Japanese) who score higher on collectivism. Thus, the Western way of being in the world may be less stressful, but that does not mean it is more successful, as the relationship between arousal and performance is in the shape of an inverted U. This is sometimes referred to as the Yerkes-Dodson law (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908).

Eaton and Dembo (1997) designed a study to test the different levels of achievement and motivation of Asian-American and non-Asian American high school students. They found that Asian American students tend to measure their self-efficacy significantly lower than non-Asian American students. However, Asian American students performed significantly better than non-Asian American students. They argued that Asian American students want to have high achievement because of their fear of academic failure, which was the highest predictor of achievement. The second highest predictor was self-efficacy. For the non-Asian American students, self-efficacy was the strongest reason for them to achieve their goals. The fear of academic failure could be an aspect of collectivism, because Asian-American students have learned to have responsibility not just for their own reputation, but also for their family and community's reputation. The family and community's needs and expectations are much more important than personal desires. Asian culture focuses on goals the group values more than personal goals. In this respect, while the collectivistic focus on overcoming failure may be more stressful (Kononovas & Dallas, 2009), it may also yield higher performance.

Earley (1994) found that people in individualistic cultures (e.g., the United States) tend to have higher self-efficacy and better performance under self-focused training conditions compared to group-focused training conditions. However, people in

collectivistic cultures (e.g., Hong Kong, China) tend to have higher self-efficacy and better performance under group-focused training conditions compared to self-focused training conditions. Earley also suggested that individualist people enhance their self-efficacy based on their personal references, whereas collectivist people develop their self-efficacy from the information gained from their work group.

Previous studies showed that collectivistic Chinese employees prefer critical performance feedback (Bond, Wang, Leung, & Giacalone, 1985), and the collectivists valued performance feedback, which could improve later performance (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Earley, Gibson, and Chen (1999) studied cultural contrasts of performance feedback use and self-efficacy. They hypothesized that individualists would focus on the self-reference feedback from both individual and group-based performance feedback to evaluate their self-efficacy, while collectivists would focus on the group-reference feedback from both individual and group-based performance feedback to evaluate their self-efficacy. Their findings supported part of their hypothesis.

Individualists considered self-focused performance feedback for building their self-efficacy, whereas collectivists considered both self and group performance feedback for developing their self-efficacy. As a result, collectivists could develop a strong sense of self-efficacy from either individual or group successful performance feedback.

Because Easterners prefer more critical feedback and Westerners prefer more positive feedback, it stands to reason that their respective co-workers would accommodate their wishes. In other words, do Easterners commit more severity errors and do Westerners commit more leniency errors?



### **Are There Cross-Cultural Differences in Leniency Errors?**

Avoiding the main question for a moment, Chong (2007) found that Eastern managers provided less direct feedback than their Western counterparts. They predicted that managers in high power distance cultures would be less likely to communicate with their subordinates directly about their performance on the job than those in low power distance cultures. In addition, in high power distance cultures, people would be more likely to play their role according to their position in the social hierarchy. On the other hand, people in the low power distance cultures care less about the social status and hierarchy level. Chong found that the American managers had significantly higher scores on listening, organizing, giving clear information, getting unbiased information, training, coaching, delegating, appraising people, disciplining, and counseling than East Asian managers. Ng, Koh, Ang, Kennedy, and Chan (2011) also proposed that power distance could influence rating biases based on rater sources. For example, their findings indicated that East Asians might be less more lenient with rating supervisors than Westerners because of a greater concern for maintaining relationships and because of the supervisor's greater perceived power in the East. Thus, the relationship between culture and leniency/severity errors might be more complex than the simple idea of more severity in the East and more leniency in the West.

In addition to power distance, Bandura (1997) suggested that people who are individualists would judge their behaviors, self-efficacy, beliefs, and set goals based on their personal knowledge and experience of the task. However, people who are collectivists would evaluate their behaviors, self-efficacy, and goal setting depending on the contexts. Additionally, people from individual cultures would have higher

productivity when they managed things themselves, whereas collectivistic people would perform better when they worked within a group. On the other hand, collectivists perform differently when they are in different groups. They would prefer homogeneous groups over mixed groups. Furthermore, individualism and collectivism cultures could have different impacts on performance rating. In individualistic cultures, people tend to focus on their personal opinions, values, and goals more. However, people in collectivistic cultures desire agreement with each other in order to enhance the group harmony. As a result, the individualism or collectivism of a culture could affect performance rating.

Culture differences in self-ratings of performance have been seen. Farh, Dobbins, and Cheng (1991) found that Taiwanese employees tend to evaluate themselves lower than their supervisors' rating; whereas Western employees tend to evaluate themselves higher than their supervisors' rating. This finding was partially opposite from previous research that found self-ratings usually more lenient or higher than supervisor and peer ratings (Farh & Werber, 1980). However, the previous research used Western participants. The explanation of the result was that the Taiwanese employees and some other Eastern employees contain collectivism values which pressure the employees to understate their own performance level and rate themselves lower than others' ratings. For example, some Chinese employees value their personal goals lower than other work goals, such as training and relationships with co-workers. People in Eastern countries tend to value their success according to their family, their colleagues, and even the whole society. However, it is quite different for people in Western countries in which people value their success mainly on their personal behavior and projects (Farh, Dobbins, & Cheng, 1991). However, new research by Yu and Murphy (1993) found a different result.

Yu and Murphy used samples of Chinese employees from Nanjing, China, which contains strong traditional Eastern values. These employees rated themselves from three perspectives: work duties, work skills, and desire to work. All of their self-ratings were higher than their supervisor or peer ratings, opposite from the result of Farh, Dobbins and Cheng's (1991) study. Yu and Murphy (1993) argued that the result from Farh, Dobbins and Cheng's (1991) research could only explain the performance rating differences between Taiwanese and Western employees' self-ratings, but overall, both Eastern and Western employees tend to evaluate themselves higher than their supervisors and peers. Thus, the research on this topic has produced mixed results.

### **Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1.** American employees will receive more lenient performance ratings from their supervisors than Chinese employees receive from their supervisors.

The current study is designed to determine if the rating error/bias in performance appraisal feedback is different for employees from the United States compared to employees from China. Previous studies showed that people in Western cultures focus more on their personal goals and development, whereas in Eastern cultures people tend to value themselves based on their societies (Christopher, 1994; Earley, Gibson, & Chen, 1999; Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, Ide, Leung, & Matsumoto, 2001). Moreover, Western managers tend to commit leniency errors when providing their subordinates with performance appraisal feedback (Wilson, 2010). As a result, I propose that during the performance appraisal, American supervisors will provide lenient ratings, which enlarge the positive aspects of the employees' work to make them feel good about themselves and motivate them for future performance.

**Hypothesis 2.** The relationship between the leniency of the employee's supervisory rating and the employee's motivation to improve after receiving performance appraisal feedback will be moderated by the employee's country; American employees will be more motivated by lenient feedback, while Chinese employees will be more motivated by severe feedback.

The current study is designed to explore whether employees from different countries (America versus China) will have different responses to receiving evaluations that are either lenient or severe. Previous researchers argued that Western people increase their self-efficacy when they get positive evaluations and perform better on tasks at which they succeed. On the other hand, people in Eastern cultures prefer negative feedback of their task performance to show them how to make improvement in the future (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Bond, Wang, Leung, & Giacalone, 1985; Earley, Gibson, & Chen, 1999). Thus, I propose that employees from America and China will respond differently to lenient or severe evaluations. In other words, American employees will prefer lenient evaluations and will be motivated by lenient performance appraisal feedback, whereas Chinese employees will be more motivated by severe feedback.

**Hypothesis 3.** The relationship between rating leniency and employees' satisfaction with their performance appraisal feedback will be moderated by the employee's native country; American employees will be more satisfied with lenient feedback and less satisfied with severe feedback, while Chinese employees' satisfaction with their performance appraisal feedback will not be strongly related to whether the feedback is lenient or severe.

Research has shown that Western people prefer positive feedback and are more likely to increase their effort on future tasks with the positive evaluation, whereas Eastern people respond better to critical evaluation to increase their effort on future tasks (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Bond, Wang, Leung, & Giacalone, 1985; Earley, Gibson, & Chen, 1999). Thus, it stands to reason that the Western employee would be more upset by a severe rating than the Eastern employee, and less satisfied with the appraisal experience. While I proposed that compared to Chinese employees, American employees will be more satisfied with lenient performance feedback, I do not think Chinese employees would be dissatisfied with a lenient evaluation, or as upset as a Westerner with a severe evaluation.

**Hypothesis 4.** Chinese supervisors will have a more positive attitude toward the use of negative feedback (severe ratings) to improve subordinate performance than the American supervisors.

Compared to Western culture, Eastern culture is usually seen as collectivistic and high in power distance. Collectivism and power distance culture influence the nature of the supervisor-subordinate relationship on the job. Specifically, supervisors in Eastern cultures feel more responsibility for their employees' development on the job than for taking care of supervisor-subordinate's relationship (Ng, Koh, Ang, Kennedy, & Chan, 2011). I propose that during the performance appraisal, Chinese supervisors will evaluate employees based on the group's benefit, which might cause supervisors to be more severe during the ratings than American supervisors.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### **Participants**

The university from which I collected surveys in the United States is a regional state university located in the American interior in a small, rural town with mainly manufacturing companies. It is primarily a teaching college. Fifty-four fulltime and part-time classified employees from this university completed the survey. Most of the participants (94%) reported that their performance was reviewed with a formal performance appraisal at least once a year. Seventy-nine percent of the participants were women and 21% were men. Twenty percent of the participants were 25 years old or younger, 4% were 26 to 30 years old, 6% were 31 to 35 years old, 4% were 36 to 40 years old, 13% were 41 to 45 years old, 9% were 46 to 50 years old, 24% were 51 to 55 years old, 11% were 56 to 60 years old, 7% were 61 to 65 years old, and 2% were 66 years old or older. Four percent of the participants were African American, 64% were European American, 6% were Hispanic, 4% were Native American, and 23% self-reported as “other” (a combination of ethnic categories). For the participants’ citizenship status, 98% of the participants were American citizens, and 2% were Aliens (e.g. Green card holder, on a VISA, etc.). Ninety-six percent of the participants had never lived outside of the United States for more than one year, but 4% of the participants had lived outside of the United States for more than one year, one in Micronesia and Canada, and one in Romania. Six percent of the participants were executives, 30% were middle management or professional employees, 50% were office/clerical employees, 6% were blue collar employees, and 9% self-reported as “other” (e.g., student assistant). For

supervisory status, 46% of the participants had at least one subordinate he or she directly managed and 54% of the participants were not supervisors.

The university from which I collected the survey in the People's Republic of China was also a teaching college. It is located in a coastal city in northeast China with a strong tourism economy. It has about three times more undergraduates and graduates as the American university I surveyed. Seventy-two fulltime employees from the university completed the survey. Ninety-six percent of the participants receive a formal performance appraisal at least once a year. Eighty percent of the participants were women and 20% were men. This was similar to the American university. Eighteen percent of the participants were 25 years old or younger, 14% were 26 to 30 years old, 25% were 31 to 35 years old, 11% were 36 to 40 years old, 19% were 41 to 45 years old, 6% were 46 to 50 years old, and 7% were 51 to 55 years old. They were younger than their American counterparts. Regarding the Chinese participants' nationality, 83% of the participants were Han and 17% were Chinese minorities. The American sample was more diverse. Ninety-nine percent of the participants had never lived outside of China for more than one year. Only one participant had lived outside of China for more than one year, but he or she did not indicate where. The Chinese sample was similar to the American sample regarding living abroad. One percent of the participants were executives, 9% were middle managers, 67% were office/clerical employees, 3% were team leaders, 6% were professional or technical employees, and 11% self-reported as "other" (e.g., teacher or cook, etc.). For supervisory status, 8% of the participants had at least one subordinate he or she directly managed and 92% of the participants were not supervisors. The Chinese

sample had fewer managers and executives and more office workers than the American sample.

### **Measures**

The instruments used in this study were created by me. To check the reliability of each measure I conducted a test-retest reliability study with a small sample of employees from the American university. These results are reported below.

Furthermore, the instruments were first created in English, and then they were translated into Chinese so that they would be available for both American and Chinese participants. To check the reliability of the translations, I had my measures translated from English to Chinese by means of the back-translation method (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992). The translation team was made up of three Chinese students who had lived in the U.S. for at least three years. The first member translated the instruments from English into Chinese. The second member translated the instrument from Chinese into English. Then the third member repeated the first process. With each iteration, the team looked for translations that did not work well. They worked as a team until a consensus was reached regarding the best translation for the Chinese versions of the instruments.

**Country.** Each employee's country was determined by whether the survey was in Chinese or English.

**Supervisors' leniency and severity bias.** This variable was measured with a single item (see Appendix A). First, the subordinates were asked whether they were compared to peers or a standard of excellence on their performance appraisals. Then they were simply asked how they were rated, either compared to their peers or compared to a



standard of excellence, on their last performance appraisal on a seven-point Likert scale with ratings from “much below average” to “much above average.” Participants were also able to indicate if they had not yet been evaluated or if their supervisor did not indicate where they stood.

In a pilot test of this measure, ten subordinates at the American university were asked to report their last job performance rating. A week later, they were asked the same question again. The test-retest reliability was .82. Also, as a result of the pilot test, I decided to change the scale from a six-point scale to a seven-point scale because several subordinates complained that there was not a neutral or “average” rating in the middle.

**Subordinates motivation to perform better after performance appraisal feedback.** To measure this variable, subordinates were asked if they agreed or disagreed with four statements using a seven-point Likert scale with ratings from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (see Appendix B). The first three of the statements claim that the subordinate feels motivated by his or her last performance appraisal. The fourth statement, however, claims that the subordinate feels demotivated by his or her last performance appraisal. This item was reverse scored. In a pilot test, the same ten subordinates from the American university were asked to complete this measure twice, a week apart. The test-retest reliability was .89. I also examined the internal consistency of this measure by calculating coefficient alpha for all of the participants in my study (alpha = .37). I thought that the Americans and the Chinese might approach these questions differently so I calculated coefficient alpha separately for each sample. Alpha was .58 for the American sample and only .23 for the Chinese sample.

**Subordinate satisfaction with performance appraisal.** To measure this variable, subordinates were asked if they agreed or disagreed with four statements using a seven-point Likert scale with ratings from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (see Appendix C). Three of the statements expressed satisfaction with the content provided by the supervisor during the subordinate’s last performance appraisal. The second item expressed dissatisfaction. This item was reverse scored. In a pilot test, the same ten subordinates from a non-profit organization in Kansas were asked to complete this measure twice, a week apart. The test-retest reliability was .86. I also examined the internal consistency of this measure by calculating coefficient alpha for all of the participants in my study ( $\alpha = .81$ ). Alpha was .85 for the American sample and .78 for the Chinese sample.

**Supervisor’s attitude about the effectiveness of negative feedback.** To measure this variable, managers were asked if they agreed or disagreed with four statements using a seven-point Likert scale with ratings from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (see Appendix D). The statements examined whether the manager prefers to give positive feedback or critical feedback, and which type of feedback he or she thinks is the most motivating for his or her subordinates. Items one and three advocate for positive feedback while items two and four advocate for critical feedback. Items two and four were reverse scored so that a high score indicated that the participant preferred positive feedback, while a low score indicated that the participant preferred critical feedback.

In a pilot test, four supervisors from the same non-profit organization in Kansas were asked to complete this measure twice, a week apart. The test-retest reliability was - 0.33, which is dreadful. Several questions had two sentences and were perhaps asking

two things. Consequently, I reworded many of the questions to make them simpler and more direct. Also, in an effort to increase reliability, I increased the length of the measure by 50% from four items to six items. Hopefully, these changes provided me with a more reliable measure of the supervisors' attitude about feedback content. I also examined the internal consistency of this measure by calculating coefficient alpha for all of the participants in my study ( $\alpha = .59$ ). Alpha was .66 for the American sample and only .03 for the Chinese sample. However, remember that the latter sample only had six people in it.

**Demographics.** Eight demographic questions were asked (see Appendix E). I asked the participants about their employee level in the organization, their supervisory status, how often their organization had performance ratings, their gender, their age, and their race/ethnicity.

The survey had two sections, one for subordinates and one for managers. The reason I put these two sections together instead of having separate surveys is because some employees are both subordinates and managers. Each section was labeled either "Performance Appraisal Questions for Subordinates" or "Performance Appraisal Questions for Supervisors."

### **Procedure**

Before I collected any data, I applied for IRB approval to make sure all ethical safeguards were in place (see Appendix F). I used a convenience sample for the data collection. In both China and America, each participant got a survey packet, including a cover letter that explained informed consent (see Appendix G), the complete survey with all of the instruments described in the methods section, and an envelope. With the

American sample, I first asked the participants to read the cover letter and respond whether they agreed to participate. If they agreed, then I handed out the survey to the participant. The participants were instructed not to write their names anywhere on the survey. Finally, I instructed the participants to place their surveys in the envelope provided and seal it. For those participants who did not have time to finish the survey right away, I asked them to finish it and mail it to me one or two days later. For the Chinese data, I recruited a former psychology student from the university to do the same work as I did in the United States. After he collected all the surveys from the school, he scanned the surveys into PDF documents and emailed the scanned copies to me.

After entering the data in my computer for data analysis, I placed the original surveys from American sample and the electronic copies from the Chinese sample in a folder. Then I deleted data that I received from emails. This folder will be kept in a safe place and disposed of after three years. Only summarized findings will be shared.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

#### **Main Hypotheses**

My first hypothesis was supported. The American employees received more lenient performance evaluations ( $M = 5.9$ ) than the Chinese employees ( $M = 4.7$ ). I used an independent samples t-test to analyze the data ( $t(104) = 6.33, p < .001$ ). While I had 126 participants overall, four participants did not answer the question about how they were evaluated, nine reported that they had not yet been evaluated, and seven indicated that their supervisor did not make it clear to them where they stood on their evaluation. Therefore, only 106 participants were used for this analysis and for the analyses in hypotheses two and three. The significant t-test result indicated that the American employees received significantly more lenient performance ratings from their supervisors than the Chinese employees received from their supervisors.

My second hypothesis was not supported. The relationship between the leniency of the employee's supervisory rating and the employee's motivation to improve after receiving performance appraisal feedback was not significantly more positive for the American employees ( $r = .19$ ) compared to the Chinese employees ( $r = -0.09$ ). I used Fisher's  $r$  to  $Z$  transformation to compare the two correlations ( $Z = 1.36, p = .09$ ). Although the difference between American employees' correlation and the Chinese employees' correlation between leniency and motivation was not significant, it was in the expected direction and close to significant. The American employees who were most motivated by their performance appraisal feedback had received high evaluations (a positive correlation), while the Chinese employees who were most motivated by their

performance appraisal feedback had received low evaluations (a negative correlation). However, these relationships were all non-significant.

My third hypothesis was supported. The relationship between rating leniency and employees' satisfaction with their performance appraisal feedback was significantly more positive for American employees ( $r = .27$ ) compared to the Chinese employees ( $r = -0.34$ ). I used Fisher's  $r$  to  $Z$  transformation to compare the two correlations ( $Z = 3.02$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The difference between American employees and Chinese employees' satisfaction with lenient performance appraisal feedback was not only statistically significant, it was even wider than expected. I had expected lenient performance appraisal feedback to be positively related to the American employees' satisfaction with performance feedback, but I had expected close to a zero correlation between lenient performance appraisal feedback and the Chinese employees' satisfaction with performance feedback. I thought, nobody likes negative feedback, even if it is motivating. But apparently Chinese workers feel that negative feedback is superior in accuracy and fairness to positive feedback.

My last hypothesis was not supported because there were not enough supervisors in my samples to fully test this hypothesis. For example, I had only four supervisors in my Chinese sample and only 21 supervisors in my American sample. As a result, I could not determine whether American supervisors had a significantly more positive attitude toward the use of positive feedback ( $M = 4.7$ ) to improve subordinate performance than the Chinese supervisors ( $M = 4.5$ ). I did run an independent samples t-test, but the results were non-significant ( $t(23) = .47$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

## Exploratory Analyses

I wanted to explore how several of my demographic variables, such as gender, age, and minority status, interacted with country in their impact on the leniency of performance appraisal rating received, motivation from performance appraisal feedback, and satisfaction with performance appraisal feedback.

I first examined how gender and country affected the leniency of performance appraisal rating received. Using a 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA, I found significant main effects for gender ( $F(1, 98) = 6.45, p < .01$ ) and for country ( $F(1, 98) = 25.56, p < .001$ ), but there was not a significant interaction ( $F(1, 98) = .001, p > .05$ ). The results show that male employees ( $M = 6.4$  in America,  $M = 5.2$  in China) received higher performance ratings than female employees ( $M = 5.8$  in America,  $M = 4.5$  in China) in both America and China. Also, as I found with my first hypothesis, American employees received higher ratings than Chinese employees. See Table 1 for a depiction of these results.

Next, I examined how gender and country affected the employees' work motivation after receiving performance appraisal feedback. While the main effect for gender was not significant ( $F(1, 96) = 3.54, p = .06$ ), it was close to significance. I found a significant main effect for country ( $F(1, 96) = 4.81, p < .05$ ) and a significant interaction between gender and country ( $F(1, 96) = 6.43, p < .01$ ). Specifically, the Chinese employees were more motivated by their performance appraisal feedback than the American employees were, even though they had received lower ratings. This difference between the countries seems to have been driven by the American men who were the least motivated by their performance appraisal feedback ( $M = 4.1$ ) compared to

Table 1

*How Gender and Country Impacted the Leniency of Performance Appraisal Ratings*

Gender	Country	n	M	SD
Female	USA	34	5.8	1.05
	China	47	4.5	.93
Male	USA	8	6.4	.52
	China	13	5.2	1.07



the American women ( $M = 5.0$ ), the Chinese men ( $M = 5.1$ ), and the Chinese women ( $M = 5.0$ ). See Table 2 for a depiction of the results.

I also tested whether gender and country affected the employees' satisfaction with their performance appraisal feedback. The results showed that neither the employees' gender ( $F(1, 95) = 1.16, p > .05$ ) nor their country ( $F(1, 95) = 2.16, p > .05$ ) significantly affected the employees' satisfaction with their performance appraisal feedback. There was no interaction between gender and country either ( $F(1, 95) = .05, p > .05$ ). See Table 3 for a depiction of the results.

In addition, I examined how the employees' minority status (e.g., European Americans are the dominant group in America and the Han nationality is dominant group in China) and country impacted the amount of leniency received in performance appraisal ratings. Using a 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA, I found a significant main effect for country ( $F(1,100) = 22.16, p < .001$ ). Specifically, Chinese employees were rated lower than American employees, as I had found in my first hypothesis. I did not find a significant main effect for minority status ( $F(1,100) = 1.33, p > .05$ ) or a significant interaction ( $F(1,100) = .99, p > .05$ ). See Table 4 for a depiction of the results.

When examining how the employees' minority status and country impacted their motivation after receiving their performance appraisal feedback, no significant main effects were found for country ( $F(1,98) = 2.94, p = .09$ ) or minority status ( $F(1, 98) = .30, p > .05$ ). However, the main effect for country was close to significance. When examining the interaction between the employees' minority status and country, the result was not significant ( $F(1,98) = 3.07, p = .08$ ), but it was close to significance.

Table 2

*How Gender and Country Impacted Work Motivation after Receiving Appraisal*

*Feedback*

Gender	Country	n	M	SD
Female	USA	34	5.0	.94
	China	47	5.0	.83
Male	USA	8	4.1	1.02
	China	11	5.1	.52

Table 3

*How Gender and Country Impacted Employees' Satisfaction with Their Feedback*

Gender	Country	n	M	SD
Female	USA	34	5.5	1.17
	China	46	5.2	1.07
Male	USA	8	5.3	1.31
	China	11	4.8	.84

Table 4

*How Minority Status and Country Impacted the Leniency of Performance Appraisal**Ratings*

Country	Minority Status	n	M	SD
USA	Dominant Group	29	6.0	1.02
	Minority Group	12	5.5	1.57
China	Dominant Group	52	4.7	1.66
	Minority Group	11	4.6	1.44

Specifically, the American minority employees were the least motivated by their feedback ( $M = 4.5$ ), the two dominant groups were equally motivated by their feedback (American non-minorities  $M = 5.0$ , Chinese Non-minorities  $M = 5.0$ ), and the Chinese minorities were the most motivated by their feedback ( $M = 5.3$ ). However, none of these differences were statistically significant. See Table 5 for a depiction of the results.

The employees' country and minority status produced a significant interaction ( $F(1, 97) = 5.93, p < .05$ ) for the employees' satisfaction with their performance appraisal feedback. Specifically, the American minorities were the least satisfied with their feedback ( $M = 4.8$ ), while American non-minorities were the most satisfied with their feedback ( $M = 5.7$ ). There were no significant main effects for country ( $F(1, 97) = .00, p > .05$ ) or minority status ( $F(1, 97) = 1.11, p > .05$ ). See Table 6 for a depiction of the results.

Finally, the correlations between the employees' age and the leniency of their performance appraisal ratings were calculated for each country. In China, older employees received slightly higher ratings than younger employees ( $r = .18$ ), but this tendency was slightly reversed in the America ( $r = -0.04$ ). In both countries, older employees were less motivated by their performance appraisal feedback than the younger employees were ( $r = -0.27$  in China,  $r = -0.29$  in America). The older employees were also less satisfied with their performance appraisal feedback than the younger employees were in both countries ( $r = -0.22$  in China,  $r = -0.12$  in America).

Table 5

*How Minority Status and Country Impacted Motivation after Receiving Appraisal*

*Feedback*

Country	Minority Status	N	M	SD
USA	Dominant Group	29	5.0	1.06
	Minority Group	12	4.5	.70
China	Dominant Group	50	5.0	.82
	Minority Group	11	5.2	.80

Table 6

*How Minority Status and Country Impacted Employees' Satisfaction with Their Feedback*

Country	Minority Status	N	M	SD
USA	Dominant Group	29	5.7	1.17
	Minority Group	12	4.8	1.41
China	Dominant Group	49	5.0	1.08
	Minority Group	11	5.4	.67

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

#### **Main Hypotheses**

The current study indicated that compared to Chinese employees, American employees received more lenient performance appraisal ratings from their supervisors. The findings are consistent with those of Jawahar and Williams (1997) who found that Western managers tend to commit leniency errors when providing their subordinates with performance appraisal feedback. Ng, Koh, Ang, Kennedy, and Chan (2011) wrote that raters from the East and the West have two main concerns: helping ratees to improve their performance and improving the relationship between raters and ratees. They contend that supervisors are most concerned with the former and less concerned with the latter. Just because American and Chinese managers have the same goals for performance feedback, does not mean they use the same psychological strategies.

In laboratory studies by Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, Ide, Leung, and Matsumoto (2001) with university students, American and Japanese students reacted differently to self-efficacy feedback. When told that they were above average performers, the Americans tried harder but the Japanese relaxed their efforts, and when told that they were below average performers, the Americans relaxed their efforts but the Japanese tried harder. If Western and Eastern employees are similar to these students, then American supervisors might feel that higher ratings are more likely to motivate their subordinates to improve. They might also feel that higher ratings are more likely to improve the quality of the relationship between them and their subordinates. On the other hand, Chinese



managers might feel that more constructive criticism will be the best way to motivate their employees and build a trusting relationship.

This cultural difference may be due to individualism and collectivism. Western societies, such as America, have individualistic cultures which focus more on individual accomplishment and self-interest compared to Eastern cultures which are more likely to consider the group's interest (Earley, Gibson, & Chen, 1999; Hofstede, 2001). David (2011), in writing about Western employees, suggested that a favorable performance feedback for an employee needs to involve positive evaluations of the employee's previous performance. At the same time, the supervisor wants to make suggestions for how the employee can improve his or her future performance. Therefore, the supervisor needs to make the feedback a "sandwich" of positive and negative information by starting with a positive evaluation, then telling the employee what needs to change (negative evaluation) to improve performance, and finishing with an overall positive conclusion for the employee. While telling a Western subordinate that he or she is doing a good job will motivate him or her to try harder, even if that employee is not doing a good job, negative feedback does not correct the poor performance of Westerners, it just decreases their motivation (Barron & Sackett, 2008).

I did not find any studies from a Chinese or Eastern perspective to suggest that it is necessary for supervisors to involve positive evaluations in the performance feedback to help employees improve their future performance. In fact, Bond, Wang, Leung, and Giacalone (1985) found that collectivistic Chinese employees prefer critical performance feedback. In a collectivistic culture, one's duty is directed more towards the group than towards oneself. Therefore, when a Chinese employee receives negative feedback, he or

she may worry that he or she is letting the team down and be more motivated to improve. The American employee may feel, on the other hand, that his or her supervisor is criticizing him or her, not just his or her performance. Kashima and Triandis (1986) found that American students were more prone to the self-serving bias than were Japanese students. This means that when the Americans received negative evaluations, they blamed it on external causes (my boss is a jerk), while the Japanese participants were more likely to attribute the negative evaluations to internal causes (I screwed up). The person with the lower self-serving bias would be more likely to accept responsibility and want to do something to reverse the negative evaluation. In addition, because the Chinese people are collectivists, they evaluate their behaviors, self-efficacy, and goal setting depending on the context. They desire agreement with each other in order to enhance the group harmony (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, when they receive a lower rating of their performance evaluation, they are driven to figure out the negative parts of their performance and improve them in the future to make sure their performance will not hurt their team or group's performance in the future.

Although the second hypothesis was not supported, the American employees who received higher ratings had a slight tendency to feel more motivated by their performance appraisal feedback from their supervisors, whereas Chinese employees who received higher ratings had a slight tendency to feel less motivated by their performance appraisal feedback. Although not significant, these results are consistent with the implied motivational strategies alluded to in the previous paragraphs. If a Western manager believes that positive feedback is more motivating, the data are somewhat supportive of that idea because higher ratings were slightly more motivating. If an Eastern manager

believes that negative feedback is more motivating, the data are somewhat supportive of that idea because lower ratings were slightly more motivating. However, these interpretations are tentative. Ashford and Cummings (1983) found that people from collectivist cultures valued performance feedback which could improve future performance.

In Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, Ide, Leung, and Matsumoto's (2001) research on how Western and Eastern students respond differently to self-efficacy feedback, they argued that Westerners view themselves as independent, unique, and relatively immutable. They tend to use their previous positive behaviors to build their self-efficacy. Thus, by receiving a positive evaluation, an American employee will have more confidence about performing successfully in the future. However, Easterners do not always focus on the positive aspects when they perform tasks. They also want to know the weak parts of their work. They believe that to improve performance, it is necessary to improve the negative parts. There is a saying in China that how much water a kit will hold depends on how long the shortest piece of batten is. It means that if people want to have more water in their kit, they need to make the shortest piece of batten longer. Applying it to the current study's result, it could help us to understand why Chinese employees would like to learn which are the "shortest battens" in their performance, and how much they need to improve in the future.

The result for my third hypothesis suggested that American employees and Chinese employees were quite different in their satisfaction with receiving lenient performance appraisal feedback. Delivering lenient performance appraisal feedback to American employees was related to higher satisfaction with performance feedback.

However, delivering lenient performance appraisal feedback to Chinese employees was related to lower satisfaction with performance feedback. As mentioned earlier, Ng, Koh, Ang, Kennedy, and Chan (2011) wrote that raters from the East and the West have two main concerns: helping ratees to improve their performance and improving the relationship between raters and ratees. While delivering lenient feedback to Americans might improve their motivation only a little, it is more likely to improve their satisfaction with the performance review. This in turn could improve the quality of the subordinate-supervisor relationship in America. On the other hand, delivering more critical feedback to Chinese employees might not improve their motivation very much, but it is likely to improve their satisfaction with the performance review, which in turn could improve the quality of the subordinate-supervisor relationship.

My last hypothesis was not supported. I had wanted to examine the supervisors' preferences for focusing on either positive or negative feedback. I did find that the American supervisors had a slightly more positive attitude toward the use of positive feedback for improving subordinate performance than the Chinese supervisors did, but I did not have enough supervisor data, especially from my Chinese sample, to get a useful answer to my question.

### **Exploratory Findings**

I found that men received higher performance ratings than women in America and China. I also found that the Chinese employees were more motivated by their performance appraisal feedback than the American employees were, even though they had received lower ratings. This difference between the countries was driven by the American men who were the least motivated by their performance appraisal feedback

(see Table 2), even though they had received the highest performance ratings (see Table 1). Gender and country were not significantly related to satisfaction with performance appraisal feedback.

One reason American men were the least motivated by their performance feedback, in spite of receiving the highest ratings, might be because American men have higher pressure from both job and family. According to Nahapetyan (2009), many American men work overtime due to job pressure. While 69% of American men worked overtime, only 42% of American women had to work overtime. Moreover, the men who worked overtime worked an average of seven extra hours, compared to the women who worked an average of five extra hours. In addition to spending more time on the job, American women reported that their husbands play a great role in their families as fathers and husbands. As a result, American men may be less motivated by their performance feedback because working harder cannot change their situations about working overtime, and neither will it increase their income. If someone is already working hard, it may be difficult to motivate them to work even harder.

Another explanation for why the American men might have been less motivated by their performance feedback is because men have more of a self-serving bias than women (Deaux & Emswiller, 1974; Nicholls, 1975). In other words, because the men are less likely to attribute negative feedback to internal causes, they are less motivated to change their behavior. This male-female difference may not be as noteworthy in the East because Easterners are less prone to the self-serving bias than Westerners (Kashima and Triandis, 1986).

The results of present study also showed that the Chinese employees were more motivated by their performance appraisal feedback than the American employees were, even though they received lower performance ratings. Farh, Dobbins, and Cheng (1991) found that Taiwanese employees evaluated themselves lower than their supervisor. This is consistent with Kashima and Triandis' (1986) finding that American students are more prone to the self-serving bias than Japanese students. Therefore, perhaps the Chinese employees had more severe ratings for themselves and did not expect to receive a lenient rating from their supervisors. Thus, they would not be disappointed with a lower performance rating, while American workers may expect higher ratings and be disappointed when they do not receive them.

Another difference between American and Chinese culture is that the latter has greater power distance between supervisors and subordinates (Hofstede, 2001). Chong (2007) argued that Eastern managers provide less direct feedback than their Western counterparts because of this large power distance. Chong predicted that managers in high power distance cultures would be less likely to communicate with their subordinates directly about their performance on the job than those in low power distance cultures. Because Chinese employees do not receive feedback about their performance as frequently as American employees, and because they care about fixing any negative part of their performance, which could affect their team or group's performance, perhaps they would be more appreciative of and motivated by the performance feedback than American employees, even though they received lower ratings.

The family styles between America and China are quite different. According to a review on China Daily (2004), which examined cultural differences between these two

countries, college students usually need to have a job while they are studying to pay off their tuition and the higher daily costs in America. Their families will not support them very much after they are 18 years old. However, because Chinese culture values family a great deal, students in China usually do not need to worry about their tuition and daily costs until they finally graduate from school. Most of the time their families take care of their bills. Thus, many young American workers, both men and women, might be under greater financial strains than young Chinese workers, especially in an economy suffering from high unemployment. As I stated earlier, if someone is already working hard, it may be difficult to motivate him/her to work even harder.

In addition to gender, I also examined minority status. In America, European Americans are the dominant group and in China the Hans are the dominant group. I did not find any difference in performance ratings between the dominant groups and the minority groups. In other words, there was no evidence of adverse impact in performance ratings. In addition, there were no main effects for minority status for either motivation by or satisfaction with performance appraisals. On the other hand, some interesting interactions emerged. The American minority participants were the least motivated by their performance appraisal feedback, while the Chinese minority participants were the most motivated by their performance appraisal feedback (see Table 5). Even though this interaction was not significant, it nearing significance. The interaction between minority status and satisfaction with performance appraisal feedback was significant. Similar to motivation, the American minority participants were the least satisfied with their performance appraisal feedback. The American non-minority participants were the most satisfied with their performance appraisal feedback. With the Chinese participants, the

difference between non-minority and minority participants was not as great, but the difference was reversed. The minority participants were more satisfied with their performance appraisal feedback than the non-minority participants were (see Table 6).

Although the American government passed a law to protect minority employees from discrimination in employment decisions such as recruiting, hiring, promoting, training, and appraising (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964), discrimination against minority employees in the workplace is still a serious issue in the United States. According to the Human Rights Record of the United States in 2010 issued by the Chinese government, because black employees can be easily identified as members of a minority group by their appearance, they are easier to treat unfairly or to exclude from employment, promotion, and welfare on the job (Xinhua, 2011). The continuing workplace discrimination against people of color, especially those of African descent, in Western societies is well documented in chapter five of Sidanius and Pratto's (1999) book, *Social Dominance*. Therefore, although American minority employees might receive supervisory ratings that are just as lenient as their non-minority counterparts, they might be treated worse than majority employees on the job. This could impair their relationship with their supervisor and/or their organization. Their poor treatment could lower the American minority employees' motivation to improve and lower their satisfaction with their performance evaluation.

The Chinese government also has some societal policies to protect Chinese minority people. For example, there were many policies that allow minority workers to observe their traditional cultural practices, such as allowing different minorities to learn their traditional language, to dress and eat in their traditional fashion, and to observe days



with special significance. These values of tolerance are transmitted in school, news reports, and through other government institutions. Chinese minorities also enjoy other benefits from government policies. For example, minority students get 5 to 10 extra points on their “college entrance examination,” which is the hardest and most important exam in Chinese students’ academic lives (Quan, 2005). Moreover, compared to American minorities, most Chinese minorities cannot be quickly identified as minorities based on physical appearance. While there are no Chinese laws as powerful as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to protect minorities in the workplace, because no specific evidence showed that Chinese minorities are treated unfairly on the job, the Chinese government does not need laws to protect them. This may explain why the Chinese minorities were equal to or even slightly more motivated and satisfied with their performance feedback than the Han people, unlike the American minorities.

Finally, although the results were not significant, the older employees got slightly higher ratings than younger employees in China, while in America the younger employees got slightly higher ratings than the older employees. This might be because Chinese culture is based on Confucianism which venerates the wisdom of older people (China Daily, 2004). Perhaps older workers receive higher ratings in China because they are perceived as possessing more wisdom, or it could simply be a sign of respect. On the other hand, in the youth based culture of America, perhaps older workers receive lower ratings because they are perceived as less capable, set in their ways, and out of date. These are tentative interpretations because the difference between the Chinese and American samples was not that great.

In both America and China, older employees were less motivated by and satisfied with their performance appraisals compared to their younger co-workers. Because older people have more work experience and performance appraisal experience, maybe they have a better idea of the quality of their performance. Maybe they value their self-evaluation over their supervisor's evaluation of their performance. As a result, older employees may be less motivated by what their supervisor has to say and less satisfied with what their supervisor has to say. On the other hand, younger employees may be more eager to hear what their supervisors think about their performance and they may be more eager to follow up on their supervisor's ideas on how to perform better on the job.

Another possible explanation is that older workers are simply closer to retirement and less motivated to impress their supervisor and to get ahead. It must be noted that the Chinese sample did not have any employees older than 55, while 20% of the American sample was older than 55. With fewer elderly workers in China, it is more difficult for negative age-related stereotypes to emerge. The reason the Chinese sample was younger is because the retirement age in China is 60 for men, 55 for female civil servants, and 50 for female workers (Retirement Age, 2011). However, the Chinese government is considering older thresholds.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

One limitation for the current study was the homogeneity of the two samples. I only used participants from one college in America and one college in China. Both America and China are large countries, which also have different cultures in different states and areas. For example, the American participants for the current study were from the mid-west which has more traditional values than the more avant garde coastal

regions. They were also from a small town. The Chinese participants were from a fairly large city in the northern part of China that deals with a lot of international businesses. Nonetheless, the people from this town have more traditional Chinese values than people living in Beijing, Shanghai, or Guangzhou. For the future study, it would be better to collect surveys from participants in different cities and areas in both America and China.

Another limitation of the current study is that I did not survey enough supervisors, especially in China. I was unable to fully examine my last hypothesis. If I want to proceed further with this research, I will need to collect additional data from supervisors so I can test whether Chinese supervisors would have a more positive attitude toward the use of negative feedback to improve subordinate performance than the American supervisors.

I also did not survey enough people who had lived outside of their home country (America or China) for more than one year. I wanted to know if people who had different cultural experiences would respond differently to receiving lenient or severe performance feedback. Future researchers could collect more data on this potentially interesting subset of the two populations.

Because this is a correlational study, I was not able to uncover any causal relationships. Just because American workers who received higher appraisals were more satisfied with their appraisals, this does not mean that giving American workers higher appraisals will increase their appraisal satisfaction. The same goes for the Chinese workers, except in the opposite direction.

Another limitation to the internal validity of my study was the instrumentation. All of my measures were handmade and, therefore, not fully validated. Reliability was

also an issue. In the current study, the internal consistency of the motivation and supervisor attitude measures was low for the participants in both countries (coefficient alpha values were far lower than .70). On the other hand, the measure of subordinate satisfaction with the performance appraisal enjoyed both high test-retest reliability and internal consistency. Nonetheless, future researchers may need to develop better measures.

### **Practical Implications**

In 2008, there were 1,600,000 Chinese living in the United States as immigrants (Li, 2010). Since 2010, China has become the fourth largest source of immigration for the United States. America has made inroads into China as well. According to the US-China Business Council (USCBC), there are 230 American firms that are conducting business in China (Zhou, 2011). A survey by the US-China Business Council (2012) found that human resource management is the number one problem for these American companies working with a Chinese workforce over the past five years. They need help recruiting new employees and keeping valuable employees in the organization. The findings of the present study could be a valuable reference for these American companies in training their American supervisors, who are working in China, how to communicate with the Chinese employees about their performance. Also, the present study could help Chinese supervisors who are working in American companies to learn how to better motivate American employees so that they will be more satisfied with their performance appraisal feedback.

Specifically, an American supervisor who works in China, especially in the northern part of China, needs to know that when he or she provides performance

appraisal feedback to Chinese employees, the supervisor needs to point out the negative aspects of the employees' work in order to improve in the employee's future performance and to make the employee happy with the feedback received. Also, the American supervisor in China needs to cast out any negative stereotypes he or she might have about older people and show respect for elders. As a result, the American supervisor needs to be careful when he or she delivers performance feedback to older employees. On the other hand, a Chinese supervisor working in America, especially in middle America, needs to know that when he or she rates an American employee's performance, he or she may need to be more lenient, otherwise, the American employee may not respond well.

On a final note organizations in both countries need to be on guard against sexism and racism in the workplace. Specifically, the Chinese society should provide more job opportunities for women and provide women with equal rights on job recruiting and promotion. Also, American society needs to learn to treat some of its minority groups' better, as legal protections of working opportunities are not enough.

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Appendix A  
Supervisors' Leniency and Severity Bias  
English and Chinese Versions

## Performance Appraisal Questions for Subordinates

**1. On your organization's performance appraisal instrument, are subordinates compared to their peers or are they compared to a standard of excellence?**

- Peers                       a Standard of Excellence

If you answered "Peers," then answer question 2 below.

If you answered "a Standard of Excellence," then answer question 3 below.

If your organization's rating scale was not exactly the scale below, or if you cannot clearly remember how you were evaluated, simply make your best estimate.

**2. On your last performance review, how were you rated compared to your peers?**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Much below average   | <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly above average |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Below average  | <input type="checkbox"/> Average                | <input type="checkbox"/> Above average      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly below average   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Much above average |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have not been reviewed <input type="checkbox"/> It was not made clear to me how I compared to my peers |   |   |

**3. On your last performance review, how were you rated compared the standard? Did you fail to meet expectations (below average), meet expectations (average), or exceed expectations (above average)?**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Much below average   | <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly above average |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Below average  | <input type="checkbox"/> Average                | <input type="checkbox"/> Above average      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly below average                                     |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Much above average |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have not been reviewed                                   |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It was not made clear to me how I compared to the standard |   |   |

## 由□□回答的关于□效考核的□□

1. □□位使用的□效考核的方式，是将您的□□与您的同僚相比□，□是将您的□□与□定的□准相比□？

同僚

□定□准

如果您□□“同僚”，□只回答下面的“2”号□□

如果您□□“□定□准”，□只回答下面的“3”号□□

如果□□位使用的□效考核方式不符合我□上面所提到的两种，或者两者都有使用，又或者您不是很清楚的□得您所得到的□效考核□□，那么□您根据□□情况尽可能□□符合您感受的□□

2. 在您上一次的□效考核□□中，与您的同僚相比，您的□□如何？

□重低于平均□□

□高于平均□□

低于平均□□

高于□□

□低于平均□□

□著高于平均□□

属于平均□□

未收到任何□价

我不是很清楚和同僚相比我的□□如何

3. 在您上一次的□效考核□□中，与□定□准相比，您的□□如何？

□重低于平均□□

□高于平均□□

低于平均□□

高于□□

□低于平均□□

□著高于平均□□

属于平均□□

未收到任何□价

我不是很清楚和□定□准我的□□如何

Appendix B

Subordinates' Motivation to Perform Better after Performance Appraisal Feedback

English and Chinese Versions



### Performance Appraisal Questions

**Directions:** Please indicate the degree to which you disagree or agree with the following statements. Circle a number between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree) for each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Nether Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. As a result of my last job performance review, I feel more motivated to improve my performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. As a result of my last job performance review, I feel more confident that I will be able to improve my performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. As a result of my last job performance review, I feel more pressure to improve my performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. The suggestions made by my supervisor during my last job performance review actually reduced my motivation to improve my performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## 有关绩效考核的□□

提示：□圈□下面的数字来表示您□于所□述的□点的□同与否。从1-7表示□于□点的“非常不同意” - “非常同意”。

	非常 不同意	不同意	有点 不同意	不同意也 不否定	有点 同意	同意	非常 同意
1. 通过了解我的上一次的绩效考核测评，我更加有□力提高我的□□。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. 通过了解我的上一次的绩效考核测评，我对于提高我今后的业绩很有信心。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. 通过了解我的上一次的绩效考核测评，我对于提高我的工作业绩有了很大压力。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. 在我的上一次的绩效考核测评中，我的领导对于我的工作提出的建议消减了我提高工作业绩的动力。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C

Subordinates' Satisfaction with Performance Appraisal

English and Chinese Versions

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Disagree</b>	<b>Nether Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Slightly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
5. I feel that my last job performance review was a fair appraisal of my overall performance.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
6. I feel that my supervisor overlooked important factors that impacted my performance.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
7. I feel that my supervisor's depiction of my performance in my last job performance review was accurate.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
8. I was satisfied with my last job performance review.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

	非常 不同意	不同意	有点 不同意	不同意也 不否定	有点 同意	同意	非常 同意
5. 我□□我的上一次的 □效考核□□非常的 公正	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. 我□□我的□□在□ 我的考核中忽略了一些能□影响到我的□ □的重要因素	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. 我□□我的□□在上 一次的□效考核中□ 我的□价（描述）非 常的准确	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. 我□上一次在□效考 核中得到的□价非常 □意	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix D

Supervisors' Attitude about the Effectiveness of Negative Feedback

English and Chinese Versions

### Performance Appraisal Questions for Supervisors

Directions: **Do not answer these questions unless you are a supervisor.** If you are a supervisor, please indicate the degree to which you disagree or agree with the following statements. Circle a number between 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree) for each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Nether Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. When discussing job performance with a subordinate, I prefer to focus more on the positive aspects of his or her performance rather than the negative.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. When evaluating a subordinate, if you are too positive, his or her motivation to improve will be lower.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Most of my subordinates respond better to positive feedback than to negative feedback.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I am more comfortable telling my subordinates the areas in which they need to improve, rather than telling them about their strengths.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. It is important to inform subordinates about their weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My subordinates respond better to negative feedback than to positive feedback.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Have you ever received formal training in how to evaluate subordinates' performance and provide feedback?

Yes       No

## 由□□回答的□效考核的□□

提示：如果您不是□□的□位（□□工□行□效考核）□不用回答下列□□。如果你是一位□□，□圈□下面的数字来表示您□于所□述的□点的□同与否。从1-7表示□于□点的“非常不同意” - “非常同意”。

	非常不同意	不同意	有点不同意	不同意也不否定	有点同意	同意	非常同意
1. 在与下属交流□效考核□果的□候，我通常着重□□□工在□□□上的突出表□，而不是□多的指出他工作上的不足。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. 在□下属□行工作□价的□候，如果□价□于正面，那他□的削减他□提高工作□□的□力。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. 相□于□面的工作□价，大多数下属□于正面的工作□价表示□极的回□。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. 我希望□□工通□了解他□工作中的不足来提高以后的工作□□，而不是一味的表□。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. 向下属指出他□工作中的不足非常重要。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. 相□于正面的工作□价，我的下属□于□面的工作□价表示□极的回□。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. 您是否接受□□□系□的关于□□工□效考核及考核信息反□的培□？

是的，接受□相关培□

没有接受□相关培□



## Appendix E

### Demographics

#### English and Chinese Versions

### Demographics

**Directions:** Answer the following questions by checking the appropriate boxes below.

**Gender:**    Female    Male    Other (e.g., transgendered)

**Age:**

25 or younger    31-35    41-45    51-55    61-65  
 26-30    36-40    46-50    56-60    66 or older

**How would you describe your Racial or Ethnic category: (please check one)**

African American    European American    Native American  
 Asian American    Hispanic    Other (e.g., a combination of the categories above)

**Employee level:**

Executive level    Middle Management or Professional  
 Blue-collar    Office/Clerical    Other (Please specify)

---

**Supervisory status:** Do you have any subordinates who you are directly managing on the job?

Yes (How many subordinates do you supervise? \_\_\_\_\_ )  
 No

**How often does your organization collect performance appraisal data?**

less than once a year    twice a year  
 once a year    more than twice a year

**What is your citizenship status?**

American citizen    Alien (e.g., Green card holder, on a VISA, etc.)

**Have you ever lived outside of the United States for more than a year?**

Yes (Please specify where) \_\_\_\_\_    No

## □工基本□料

提示：□跟据你的□□情况□行□□。

1. 性□：      女                  男                  其他
  
2. 年□：25□以下      31-35      41-45      51-55      61-65  
                          26-30      36-40      46-50      56-60      66□以上
  
3. 民族： □族                  少数民族  
                  其他（外籍）（若□□此□□具体列出国籍或地区：\_\_\_\_\_）
  
4. □位：高□管理      中□管理      □目□理      技□工程□      普通□□  
                  其他（□具体表明：\_\_\_\_\_）
  
5. □□□□：您有几位直属下属？  
                  有\_\_\_\_\_位  
                  无
  
6. 您所在的□位多久□行一次□效考核？  
                  一年不到一次                  一年两次                  一年一次                  一年两次以上
  
7. 您是否有□一年以上在中国以外的国家或地区生活的□□？  
                  有（□具体□明国家或地区：\_\_\_\_\_）                  无

Appendix F  
IRB Form

## APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL TO USE HUMAN SUBJECTS

<b>For R&amp;G Use Only</b>	Date approved _____	Approved by _____
Protocol No. _____	Full Review _____	Expedited Review _____
_____	Exempted Review _____	

This application should be submitted, along with the Informed Consent Document and supplemental material, to the Institutional Review Board for Treatment of Human Subjects, Research and Grants Center, Plumb Hall 313F, Campus Box 4003.

**Before approval can be given to use human subjects, applicants must review the Human Subjects Training Module and achieve at least 80% on the Human Subjects Training Quiz. Instructions for the Training Module and Quiz are available at <http://www.emporia.edu/research/irb.htm>.**

Human Subjects Training Quiz was taken on: Date October 3, 2012

Score (will be entered by Research and Grants Center): \_\_\_\_\_

1. Name of Principal Investigator(s) Xiuyi Guan
2. Departmental Affiliation: Department of Psychology at Emporia State University
3. Person to whom notification should be sent: Xiuyi Guan

Mailing Address: 2603 Westridge Court, Emporia, KS, 66801

Telephone: (620)8032618 Email address: xguan@g.emporia.edu

4. Title of Project:

**How Cultural Differences in Responses to Feedback Affect Leniency and Severity Rating Bias in Performance Appraisals**

5. Funding Agency (if applicable):

6. This is a: \_\_\_\_\_dissertation     thesis    \_\_\_\_\_class project  
 \_\_\_\_\_other research study

7. Time period for which you are requesting approval (maximum one year): from 10/01/2012 to 11/01/2013. *If the research project extends past the end date requested, you will need to submit a request for a time extension or an annual update. This form is available at [www.emporia.edu/research/docs/irbmod.doc](http://www.emporia.edu/research/docs/irbmod.doc).*

8. Project Purpose (*please be specific*):

**One purpose of this study is to examine whether managers from China and America differ in severity/leniency errors when rating their subordinates. Another purpose of this study is to explore how Chinese and American subordinates respond to critical versus positive feedback.**

9. Describe the proposed subjects: (*age, sex, race, expected number of participants, or other special characteristics, such as students in a specific class, etc.*)

**The proposed subjects will include working individuals from a range of both private and public organizations in United States and China. The sample will consist of male and females, and participants of different ages, races, educational levels, and occupations.**

10. Describe how the subjects are to be selected. *If you are using archival information, you must submit documentation of authorization from applicable organization or entity.*

**A snowball approach will be used to gather participants. At first I will recruit the help of ten friends in the United States and ten family member and friends in China to administer my structured survey. I will train each family member and friend on how to administer and collect the informed consent forms and the surveys. Following the training, each person, including myself, will randomly recruit 10-20 individuals to take the survey.**

11. Describe in detail the proposed procedures and benefit(s) of the project. This must be clear and detailed enough so that the IRB can assure that the University policy relative to research with human subjects is appropriately implemented. Any proposed experimental activities that are included in evaluation, research, development, demonstration, instruction, study, treatments, debriefing, questionnaires, and similar projects must be described here. Copies of questionnaires, survey instruments, or tests should be attached. (*Use additional page if necessary.*)

**Participants will first be asked to read the cover letter that informs them what the study is about and makes clear that they are free not to participate. Then they will be asked to complete the survey. After completing the survey, they will be instructed to place it in an envelope and seal the envelope. The survey will be collected by my research team members who will then return them to me. No one will open the envelopes except me.**

**The five instruments are attached: Supervisors' Leniency and Severity Bias, Subordinates' Motivation to Perform Better after Performance Appraisal Feedback, Subordinates' Satisfaction with Their Performance Appraisal, Supervisors' Attitude about the Effectiveness of Negative Feedback, and Demographics.**

**The results of the study will enhance understanding about cross-cultural differences between the United States and China in the managerial field. It would also benefit those managers who have employees from both America and China understand that they may need to take different approaches when providing performance appraisal feedback. This will hopefully help to better motivate employees to improve their subsequent performance.**

12. Will questionnaires, tests, or related research instruments not explained in question #11 be used?  Yes  No (*If yes, attach a copy to this application.*)

13. Will electrical or mechanical devices be applied to the subjects? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No

*(If yes, attach a detailed description of the device(s) used and precautions and safeguards that will be taken.)*

14. Do the benefits of the research outweigh the risks to human subjects?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No *(If no, this information should be outlined here.)*

15. Are there any possible emergencies which might arise in utilization of human subjects in this project?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  No *(If yes, details of these emergencies should be provided here.)*

16. What provisions will you take for keeping research data private/secure? *(Be specific – refer to the section Safeguarding Information in the IRB Policies.)*

**The raw data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the home of the Principal Investigator. The electronic data will only be shared with Principal Investigator's thesis committee. In addition the employees' names will not be asked.**

17. Attach a copy of the informed consent document, as it will be used for your subjects.  
**The cover letter of informed consent is attached**



INVESTIGATOR'S ASSURANCE: I certify that the information provided in this request is complete and accurate. I understand that as Principal Investigator I have ultimate responsibility for the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects and the ethical conduct of this research protocol. I agree to comply with all of ESU's policies and procedures, as well as with all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding the protection of human subjects in research, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The project will be performed by qualified personnel according to the research protocol,
- I will maintain a copy of all questionnaires, survey instruments, interview questions, data collection instruments, and information sheets for human subjects,
- I will promptly request approval from ESU's IRB if any changes are made to the research protocol,
- I will report any adverse events that occur during the course of conducting the research to the IRB within 10 working days of the date of occurrence.

---

Signature of Principal Investigator

---

Date

FACULTY ADVISOR'S/INSTRUCTOR'S ASSURANCE: By my signature on this research application, I certify that the student investigator is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing research with human subjects and has sufficient training and experience to conduct this particular study in accord with the approved protocol. In addition,

- I agree to meet with the student investigator on a regular basis to monitor study progress,
- Should problems arise during the course of this study, I agree to be available, personally, to supervise the principal investigator in solving them,
- I understand that as the faculty advisor/instructor on this project, I will be responsible for the performance of this research project.

---

Faculty advisor/instructor on project (if applicable)

---

Date

Appendix G

Cover Letter of Informed Consent

English and Chinese Versions

*Cover Letter*

Dear Employee,

Please be so kind as to help me collect data for my thesis project about cross-cultural differences in responding to feedback on your performance appraisal. Although this survey is voluntary, I hope you will participate because it is an opportunity for you to communicate your thoughts about performance evaluations in a safe manner that protects your confidentiality.

The attached survey is short and should only take you a few 10 minutes to complete. Please do not put your name on this survey. To protect your confidentiality, your individual surveys will only be seen by me and my thesis committee. Be sure to place your survey in the envelope and seal it. The surveys will be kept in a locked file and disposed of after 3 years. Only summarized findings will be shared.

Again, participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask before completing the survey, during the survey, or after the survey. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you want to contact me to ask questions about the research, please contact me at the phone number or email address listed below. Thank you for your help in my research efforts.

Sincerely,

Xiuyi Guan  
I/O Psychology  
Graduate Student  
xguan@g.emporia.edu  
1-620-803-2618

## 附言

□□的□工：

非常感□您能□帮助我完成研究□□：□工的文化背景与其回□□效考核□果的关系。□份□卷□□是自愿参与填写的，我希望在参与□份□□后您能□□□效考核的回□有更深入的了解。

此□□□匿名□行，□会占用您十几分□□□，在完成□卷后，□您确保将□卷□妥装在信封里并封好。□卷的内容□会被参与本□目的研究人□看到。我□将只□外□表研究□果，您的信息将会被□格保密。此□卷将会在保存三年后□□。

再次重申，□份□□完全是基于您的自愿，您有□随□停止填写□卷。如果您有任何疑问□，或者希望了解关于此□□□的任何信息，□通□□□或者□件与我□系。再次感□您□于本次□□研究的支持。

此致敬礼

关岫一  
美国恩伯利□州立大学  
工□□□心理学  
□士研究生  
□箱：[xguan@g.emporia.edu](mailto:xguan@g.emporia.edu)  
□□：1 (620) 803-2618

PERMISSION TO COPY

I, Xiuyi Guan, hereby submit this thesis to Emporia State University as partial fulfillment of the requirement for an advanced degree. I agree that the Library of the University may make it available for use in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I further agree that quoting, photocopying, or other reproduction of this document is allowed for private study, scholarship (including teaching) and research purposes of a nonprofit nature. No copying which involves potential gain will be allowed without written permission of the author. I also agree to permit the Graduate School at Emporia State University to digitize and place this thesis in the ESU institutional repository.

---

Signature of author

---

Date

How Cultural Differences in Responses to  
Feedback Affect Leniency and Severity  
Rating Error/Bias in Performance Appraisal

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Title of Thesis

---

Signature of Graduate Office Staff Member

---

Date Received