Human Resources Administrator Perceptions of Procedural and Distributive Justice in Performance Appraisals as Predictors of Satisfaction Among Academic Support Staff

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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

Vanessa R. Germeroth

Signature: Vanessa R. Germeroth Date: 09/30/2015

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Abstract

The roles provided by academic support staff workers are critical for institutions, yet the workgroup is often overlooked or underrepresented in scholarly research. Performance appraisal is a necessary component of employment and support staff should experience justice in the appraisal of their performance. The appraisal process for workers should match position descriptions and should align with departmental and institutional strategic goals. A qualitative, phenomenological, interview-based approach was selected for this study. One-on-one interviews occurred to explore the perceptions of human resources administrators at two-year, non-profit community colleges located in three Midwest states in the United States of America. Success in performance appraisal can be realized when all workers, at all levels of the institution, are knowledgeable of the reason for performance appraisal and use of the information. The findings of this study are consistent with existing studies, but increase the knowledgebase with new information. Data analysis resulted in identification of major themes and anomalies among the responses. Identified themes were: (a) annual performance appraisal frequency, (b) appraisal review meetings, (c) recordkeeping practices, (d) performance appraisal training insufficiencies, and (e) collaborative decision-making. Identified anomalies were: (a) probationary or orientation performance appraisal, (b) annual anniversary, or hire date, appraisal, rather than same-date annual appraisal, (c) digital management and storage of performance documentation, and (d) coaching or mentoring performance appraisal, rather than Likert-type scale or descriptive phrase performance rating practices. Perspectives and instances of injustice in the appraisal process can cause dissatisfaction and detrimental effects for workers and the institution.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

Support staff comprises one of the larger worker groups at academic institutions (Z. Mulligan, personal communication, November 15, 2011). This ancillary group includes individuals who perform clerical duties at different levels, security officers in charge of overall safety and emergencies, custodial staff whose responsibilities include a wide range of duties from cleaning, gardening, and light maintenance jobs, and maintenance workers who perform general repair and maintenance duties (Administrative Services, 2014). Support staff positions do not include executive administration or teaching positions (Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2011). Success for academic institutions is greatly impacted by the workload carried by support staff, yet this workgroup is often the most underrepresented, least compensated, and least valued group for input toward organizational goals and decision-making (Barakos-Cartwright, 2012). According to Simon (1997), "The operative employee must be at the focus of attention, for the success of the structure will be judged by his performance within it" (p. 2). Weaver and Wilson (2003) commented:

> Now is the time for education support professionals to gain the respect they deserve… there is a growing recognition of the vital role that education support professionals play as co-equal members of the team of educators within each public school. (p. 3)

Harcourt, Hannay, and Lam (2013) offered the following testament, "…fairness significantly affects employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance, which, in turn, influence workplace cooperation and effective functioning at the organizational level" (p. 311). Mudor and Tooksoon (2011) posited understanding worker satisfaction is an important component of administrative activities. Recognizing fairness or organizational justice in performance appraisal processes and practices is extremely important for organizations because relationships between employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment ultimately influence the propensity to search for another job (Cheng, 2014; Greenberg & Colquitt, 2013; Sudin, 2011).

Higher worker satisfaction levels can increase workplace commitment and productivity, improve worker relationships, and stimulate greater success for organizations through reduced turnover costs and happier workers (Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011). A perception exists dissatisfied workers will not quit their jobs because they fear not securing alternative employment (SHRM, 2012). Yet, managers should always be concerned about losing good employees. Managers who nurture interpersonal relationships and open communication patterns, both vertically and laterally, tend to show higher levels of worker satisfaction and retention (Raelin, 2012).

Performance appraisal is a process of reviewing a worker’s duties and goals and is a critical measurement for the worker and the organization (Harcourt et al., 2013). The performance appraisal provides a formal opportunity to categorize, assess, and nurture worker performance (Shaharyar, Baloch, Tariq, Mushtaq, & Mushtaq, 2014; Sudin, 2011). Employee performance assessment may include multiple perspectives such as self-assessment, perspectives of human resource administrators, supervisors, and co-workers (Brown, Lowe, Fillingham, Murphy, Bamforth, & Shaw, 2014). According to Agbola et al. (2011) performance appraisal is:

> An effective tool for enhancing employee performance to the extent that the appraisal data is used for identifying employees’ strengths and weaknesses,

> conducting job analysis and design, as well as the basis for providing training and development opportunities for employees. (p. 87)

An appraisal should include constructive feedback to help the worker satisfy goals and productivity levels (Performance Management, 2013). According to Spreitzer and Porath (2012), "If you give your workers the chance to learn and grow, they'll thrive – and so will your organization" (p. 1). In addition, employee appraisal should be perceived as fair (Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010). Sudin (2011) determined employee perception of fairness highly correlates with satisfaction, and significantly so when recently following an employee's appraisal experience. The term 'justice' or 'fairness' is not typically included in employment agreements, but is "part of the implicit psychological contract between employees and their employers" (Harcourt et al., 2013, p. 311). Javad and Premarajan (2011) described justice in an institutional setting as:

> Focusing on the antecedents and consequences of two types of subjective perceptions: The fairness of outcome distributions or allocations and the fairness of the procedures used to determine outcome distributions or allocations. Initially, researchers focused on the justice of decision outcomes, known as distributive justice. (p. 8)

Distributive justice is a phrase used to describe the level of fairness workers perceive in such matters as performance reviews, permissions, freedoms, responsibilities, opportunities, and rewards (Javad & Premarajan, 2011). Similarly, Harcourt et al. (2013) described distributive justice as an individual's level of "perceived fairness of distribution of outcomes resulting from management decisions" (p. 311). Harcourt et al. (2013) also described procedural justice as "the perceived fairness of the processes and methods of management decision making, the way decisions are made, whereas distributive justice is the perceived fairness of distribution of outcomes resulting from management decisions" (p. 311).

Greenberg (2009) purported justice in organizations has "widespread popularity as a research topic" (p. 181). Justice is the focus of many studies in the workplace where outcomes are beneficial for the organization (Ko & Hur, 2014). Justice research should take a more inward approach, focusing on workers rather than organizational constructs (Ko & Hur, 2014). Similarly, Gilliland (2009) suggested increasing numbers of justice-related studies are occurring, but the focus is often on organizational behavior. In an effort to improve justice practices in an organization, Barclay, Skarlicki, and Latham (2009) suggested a need for research that will "develop and test interventions that are focused on helping employees and organizations recover from fairness violations" (p. 201).

Background of the Study

According to Klein and Takeda-Tinker (2009), "Employee job satisfaction tends to have a large effect on organizations. When an employee has high job satisfaction, that employee may contribute more to the overall success of the organization" (p. 9). While certain researchers have focused on employee satisfaction in terms of salary, benefits, duties, management, and workplace environment, there is an observable lack of evidence of studies regarding perceptions of satisfaction with performance appraisal. Recent research involving procedural and distributive justice in regards to performance appraisal has shown innovation and the way in which managers respond to circumstances affecting job satisfaction in modern workplaces (Devonish & Greenidge, 2010; Ghazanfar, Chuanmin, Khan, & Bashir, 2011; Grant & Wrzesniewski, 2010; Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2010).

A survey of 1000 workers in the United States and Canada indicated 84% of the workers planned to change jobs in the near future suggesting an enormous impact on organizational economies (Worker Discontent, 2012). Replacing lost individuals is costly and time consuming. Institutions must pay to advertise these vacancies, review applicants, interview candidates, train new workers, and endure the loss of work hours during the transition (Annual Personnel Report [APR], 2010; SHRM, 2012a). The organizational cost of turnover for just one worker can range from $3,500 to $25,000 (SHRM, 2012a).

According to Becker, Cropanzano, and Sanfey (2012), “One challenge faced by organizations is to change and adapt in constructive ways in order to innovate and respond to circumstances” (p. 941). Some organizations are unsuccessful in satisfying this challenge (Becker et al., 2012). Specific to academia, Barakos-Cartwright (2012) noted by acknowledging employees as valuable resources within the academic system, employees have increased job enrichment and may play an important role in supporting the vision and mission of a district.

Performance appraisal management is an increasingly important component of human resource administration as it can shape the value and commitment of workers (Seiden & Sowa, 2011). Due to the importance of employee job satisfaction and the costs associated with turnover, it seems a need exists for examination of staff perceptions of performance appraisal. Available literature on performance appraisal is general, focused on other populations of workers, or from perspectives other than human resources administrators. When considering the workplace in the context of worker needs, desires, and concerns, managers can be more effective and provide a humane working experience (Guillén, Ferrero, & Hoffman, 2014). A role of human resources administrators is to improve or create new methods when existing processes and procedures are imperfect (Van Buren, Greenwood, & Sheehan, 2011). Human resource activities are particularly important in matters for which fairness is a critical concern (Sumelius, Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Mäkelä, & Smale, 2014). Knowledge gained from the perspective of these practitioners can be useful for avoidance of mishaps in the performance appraisal and related processes. Appraisal processes are more essential or challenging than any other human resource function, and "while organizations may have performance management systems in place, the practice and meaning of those systems may not resonate with staff" (Seiden & Sowa, 2011, p. 260).

Theoretical Framework

Administrative decision-making is comprised of facts and values, objective and subjective factors, respectively; and proposals of ethics are circumstantial, relative to the situation, and based on value judgments of the decision-maker (O'Reilly, 2011; Simon, 1997). Simon's (1997) seminal theory of administrative behavior is a combination of organizational and behavioral assumptions. According to Simon (1997):

> The need for an administrative theory resides in the fact that there *are* practical limits to human rationality, and that these limits are not static, but depend upon the organizational environment in which the individual's decision takes place. The task of administration is so to design this environment that the individual will

> approach as close as practicable to rationality (judged in terms of the organization's goals) in his decisions. (pp. 240-241)

As part of his theory, Simon (1997) stated a manager's job requires varying decisions and actions dependent upon the concern at hand, such as performance review procedures and processes, goal setting, and promotional opportunities for workers. These actions include administrative response behaviors and solutions, as well as rational decision-making, which may provide a more effective consequence (Simon, 1997).

Justice in an organization focused on the causes and outcomes of two types of subjectivity: the fairness of benefits and rewards, termed distributive justice, and the fairness of the methodology for reward decisions, termed procedural justice (Javad & Premarajan, 2011). Administrative decisions for processes and procedures influence worker satisfaction (Javad & Premarajan, 2011). The justice or fairness of such decision-making impacts employee attitudes toward administrative trustworthiness and prospects for fair treatment in the future (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012; Kannan-Narasimhan & Lawrence, 2012). Administrative procedures are decisive, distributed purposefully to organizational members, and establish a foundation for consistent procedures and communications (Javad & Premarajan, 2011).

In academia, decision making for performance assessment can include input from basic supervisory levels all the way up to top administrative levels (K. Farnsworth, personal communication, 2008). Planning for formal performance appraisal policies is commonly established via collaboration among human resource administrators, focus groups, other administrators, and cabinet members (K. Farnsworth, personal communication, 2008).

Human resource administrators are strategically involved in the development of the performance management process and serve as the custodian for appraisal recordkeeping (T. Baltes, personal communication, 2014). Such administrators, including directors, vice-presidents, and managers, also serve as employee advocates (T. Baltes, personal communication, 2014). Human resources administrators are concerned about all aspects of performance appraisal, including noting commonalities of issues in employee satisfaction surveys, complaints, and grievances (T. Baltes, personal communication, 2014).

According to T. Baltes, “Importantly, human resources management is not in a silo – the human resources administrator may have an ear-to-the-ground so-to-speak” (personal communication, 2014). Patterns of concerns noted in surveys, complaints, and grievances can be cause for concern and may stimulate change (T. Baltes, personal communication, 2014). Therefore, human resources administrators are valuable in performance-related decision-making activities (T. Baltes, personal communication, 2014).

According to the Educational Advisory Board [EAB] (2011), worker responses to performance appraisal may simply involve adding comments to the formal appraisal. If the worker disagrees with the appraisal, the situation must be settled between the worker and the supervisor who performed the appraisal (EAB, 2011). If the disagreement cannot be settled between the worker and the supervisor, the worker may file a formal grievance with the human resources department and request an investigation of policy compliance (EAB, 2011). For the above reasons, human resource administrators are more apt to identify problems early and can respond with policy and procedural recommendations to upper management (T. Baltes, personal communication, 2014).

Based on a review of available literature, it seems reasonable to believe justice in the workplace matters for performance appraisal processes and employee satisfaction. Simon's (1997) theory of administrative behavior seems to be an ideal guide for workplace inquiry into administrative perceptions of judicial evaluation. In one of his early studies, Simon (1997) commented:

> Managers should always select that alternative…which will lead to the most complete achievement of your goals. The need for an administrative theory resides in the fact that there are practical limits to human rationality, and that these limits are not static, but depend upon the organizational environment in which the individuals' decisions take place. (p. 240f)

Having a focus on organizational and behavioral factors in the workplace, Simon's (1997) theory served as a relevant foundation for this research. According to O'Reilly (2011), "The pre-eminence of Simon's view of ethics has left scholars looking for a foundation upon which to build an ethical system for public administrators" (p. 1). Administrative decision-making affects employee satisfaction with their performance appraisal and serves as the foundation for evaluation of worker performance outcomes (Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011; Shaharyar et al., 2014). The goal of this study was to establish a better understanding of procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisal as predictors of satisfaction among academic support staff.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers have explored aspects of procedural justice, distributive justice, performance appraisal, and related factors of satisfaction among workers for many years across a variety of employment categories (Devonish & Greenidge, 2010; Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011; Palaiologos, Papazekos, & Panayiotopoulos, 2011). This research study serves as a means to gather insight into perceptions of fairness in performance appraisal and related processes, specifically for support staff in higher education, an under-studied population of workers. An extensive review of scholarly literature indicated a lack of evidence in perceptions of performance assessment for this specific population of workers at the community college level. Related information is available, however. For example, there is evidence when workers feel their performance justly rated, they are more likely to be happy (Palaiologos et al., 2011). When workers are happy, they are more likely to meet goals and stay loyal to their organization (Devonish & Greenidge, 2010). The proposed study intended to add integral pieces of testimony to the field of research, such that academic supervisors and administrators will find value in the conclusions and recommendations stemming from the study. Specifically, the proposed study was significant because it enhanced the existing knowledge base regarding fairness in appraisal and administrators may use the information to improve appraisal processes, which, in turn, can result in improved worker satisfaction, reduced conflict, improved retention, and better performance. With no scholarly studies available, support staff workers at community colleges are not represented sufficiently in modern research. The gathered information could highlight problem areas, thereby enhancing the knowledge base for performance appraisal matters and provide data for improved decision-making.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of human resources administrators at two-year, public, non-profit community colleges located in Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska, regarding procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisal of support staff. As described in the above sections, human resource administrators are influential in performance appraisal decision making, recordkeeping, and identification of common concerns (T. Baltes, personal communication, 2014). These activities make human resource administrators ideal candidates for researching performance appraisal matters. The roles of human resource administrators require positional ethics and unbiased perspectives of employee and performance matters (Meinert, 2014). The intent of this investigation was to gather information from academic human resource administrators regarding perceived procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisal of support staff and their overall job satisfaction. Olson (as cited in Meinert, 2014), asserted human resources professionals have a unique role in promoting an ethical workplace, because the role includes employment activities influential at many levels (e.g., hiring, terminations, training, and performance appraisal). Therefore, human resources professionals serve as guardians and promoters of ethical behaviors and decisions at their institutions (Meinert, 2014).

Research questions. To provide the best examination of these perspectives, this study focused the following research questions:

1. What practices do human resources administrators at community colleges identify as fair and unfair in performance appraisal of support staff at the college?

2. How do human resources administrators at community colleges perceive support staff trust in terms of performance appraisal at the college?

3. How do human resources administrators at community colleges perceive support staff understanding of the performance appraisal process?

Definition of Key Terms

Support staff. Support staff comprises one of the largest worker groups at an academic institution, and includes secretarial, custodial, security, and maintenance workers (Salary Classification Chart, 2014); sometimes titled as classified staff (Z. Mulligan, personal communication, November 15, 2011).

Disincentive. A disincentive is a change in enthusiasm stemming from a stimulation that causes the reduction of effort and discouragement of performance (Disincentive, 2010). According to Krott et al. (2013), "Altering behaviour by means of disincentives is linked to coercive power, often forcing the subordinate to accept the disadvantages" (p. 5).

Distributive justice. Distributive justice is a phrase representing a person's "perceived fairness of distribution of outcomes resulting from management decisions" (Harcourt et al., 2013, p. 311).

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is a self-appraisal based on the interpretation or measurement of one's work, including pay, relationships, and workplace environments (Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011).

Performance appraisal/assessment. Performance appraisal or assessment is a process used to appraise worker progress, connect goals and outcomes, make hiring decisions, establish training needs, evaluate organizational processes, or establish reward procedures (Muchinsky, 2012).

Procedural justice. Procedural justice is a phrase describing the fairness of appraisal as perceived by workers involved in or affected by the appraisal process (Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011); "The perceived fairness of the processes and methods of management decision making, the way decisions are made" (Harcourt et al., 2013, p. 311).

Limitations and Assumptions

Creswell (2013) cited several potential limitations of qualitative interview approaches. Interview processes provide information based on perceptions or determinations of participants; occur in a specific environment as opposed to a natural environment; may cause biased responses because of the researcher's presence; and are uncertain, because humans vary in articulation of speech and perception (Creswell, 2013). According to Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013), the way a researcher presents questions during an interview may affect the stories told by participants. Therefore, the effect may limit or alter potential information and the value of the gathered data (Chan et al., 2013). The following limitations were identified in this study.

Integrity and credibility. Professional integrity, credibility, intellectual rigor, perseverance, insight, and competency of methodologies are of utmost importance. The reputation and employment of researchers are dependent upon the researchers' integrity and credibility (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). For integrity assurance, study processes involve modern qualitative methods and all data are reviewed to determine if the constructs, categories, explanations, and interpretations are sound representations of study phenomena (Charmaz, 2011). Thomson (2011) commented “the patterns, concepts, categories, properties, and dimensions must fit together to create the constructs, which must tell the story of the phenomena" (p. 79). Analysis of responses proceed with utmost efficiency and support the findings and recommendations of the study (Charmaz, 2011).

Sample demographics. According to Creswell (2013), a sample size of 32 community college human resources administrators is acceptable given the availability of the participants and the qualitative nature of the study. The target population for this study was human resources administrators of two-year, public, non-profit community colleges in Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska. There are 15, 12, and five community colleges/systems in Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska, respectively (Iowa Association of Community College Trustees [IACCT], 2014; Missouri Community College Association [MCCA], 2014; Nebraska Community College Association [NCCA], 2014). Some of these community college systems have one or more campuses (IACCT, 2014; MCCA, 2014; NCCA, 2014). For the purposes of this study, the states were the differentiating factor, with institutions organized under each parent state. One human resource administrator from each of the 32 colleges was invited to participate in the study (See Appendix A). The targeted colleges and the approximate number of support staff workers are shown in Appendix B.

In terms of limitations, the support staff was not interviewed directly. It was intended human resource administrators, as professionals and experts in performance appraisal, provided truthful, authentic responses containing no bias or prejudice. Another limitation was this sample occurred with specific types of higher education institutions, in specific states, which could limit the study for generalization to broader populations.

Differences in performance appraisal processes and procedures among two- and four-year institutions, public and private, in other states did exist. However, it was infeasible to gather such mass information from all human resource administrators' at all academic institutions in the United States. Even considering these limitations, the common perceptions of the targeted population and resulting recommendations were useful for workers and decision makers at other institutions and organizations.

Ethical assurances. To ensure authenticity, this study advanced in accordance with proven qualitative research guidelines (DeLyser & Sui, 2013). According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), "…three very important issues that every researcher should address [are] protecting participants from harm, ensuring confidentiality of research data, and the question of deception of subjects" (p. 63). From the start of the research process, the researcher remained attentive to the methods and conducted the study with awareness of credibility concerns (DeLyser & Sui, 2013).

Attention focused on a well-planned research process that helped participants and reviewers realize the value of the study. Early identification of concerns and needs helped provide guidance for the entire research process (Charmaz, 2011). The unbiased nature of the study assured and truthfulness was strictly upheld at all times, including the surety of impartial judgment regarding the facts obtained in the research process (DeLyser & Sui, 2013; Morgeson & Campion, 2012; Morgeson, Spitzmuller, Garza, & Campion, 2014). Professional integrity, credibility, intellectual rigor, perseverance, insight, and competency of methodologies are of utmost importance (DeLyser & Sui, 2013; Morgeson & Campion, 2012; Morgeson, Spitzmuller, Garza, & Campion, 2014). Additionally, the primary instrument in interview methodology is the researcher (Mikėnė, Valavičienė, & Gaižauskaitė, 2013). The reputation and employment of a researcher is dependent upon the researchers' integrity and credibility (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Summary

As highlighted in this chapter, procedural and distributive justice in the performance appraisal process is an important factor of the worker experience (Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). Support staff at academic institutions are vital to organizational operations and dissatisfaction can be highly disruptive and costly (APR, 2010; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2014). In the academic community, staff members are commonly referred to as the backbone of organizational operations (Barakos-Cartwright, 2012).

A review of existing literature revealed worker perceptions of justice in the workplace can influence the workforce (Kuvaas, 2011). When performance appraisal procedures are perceived as fair, workers are happier; when workers are happy with their performance appraisal, they are satisfied with their jobs (Walumbwa et al., 2010). This chapter included highlights of these factors and reasons they are important for policy and procedure decisions. It is essential to understand justice in performance appraisal to maximize worker satisfaction and retention of good workers (Collins, Mossholder, & Taylor, 2012; Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011; Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). Well-informed managers are aware of organizational processes or situations that can cause misperceptions resulting in undesirable outcomes, such as decreased productivity, moral, and motivation (Benders, 2014; Cheng, 2014; Shaharyar et al., 2014).

The above information and the literature review in the next section of this study emphasize the importance of procedural and distributive justice, performance appraisal, and job satisfaction in the workplace. Decision makers may find the information valuable for improvements in fairness in appraisal processes.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

This chapter gives consideration to procedural and distributive justice, performance appraisal, and job satisfaction in the workplace. A review of the literature helps the researcher determine what types of research and additional research are necessary for enhancing the current knowledge base. For this study, the goal is to enhance the knowledge base supporting a satisfying, productive, and long-term relationship for support staff and their institutions. In order to increase in worker satisfaction, supervisors must focus on policies and processes, and the creation and management thereof (Guillén et al., 2014). Modern organizational and behavioral theorists found individual and organizational interests are interdependent (Jirjahn & Poutsma, 2013). Appraisal of a worker's performance is necessary for an organization to determine adequate workforce, but an appraisal is generally based on the judgments and perspectives of others (Dusterhoff, Cunningham, & MacGregor, 2014; Kuvaas, 2011; Morgeson & Campion, 2012; Morgeson et al., 2014).

Managers must be cognizant of the relationships between assigned jobs, functions, and processes in the workplace, as well as workers' anticipation of changes affecting their performance (Robbins & Judge, 2012). Worker behaviors are influenced by internal and external stimuli, including workplace environments and managerial influences (Devonish & Greenidge, 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Workers use their perceptions of an organization's processes, including changes, to form opinions about their work role, the work atmosphere, and their future with the organization (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012).

Employees want to feel valued for their contributions and need to feel a sense of importance (Kuvaas, 2011). Workers' perceived fairness of their performance appraisal can adversely influence their attitude and performance (Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011). When an employee feels an unjust appraisal of personal performance has occurred, the worker may feel driven to behave in unsatisfactory or unexpected ways, causing decreased performance levels and disruption in processes (Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011; Kuvaas, 2011; Shaharyar et al., 2014). The following sections include a theoretical review of, highlights the importance of procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisals, and possible effects on job satisfaction when workers feel appraisal is unjust.

Workplace Theories

Many theories exist for organizational, social, and psychological aspects of the workplace, and organizational decisions and processes may occur in accordance with more than one theory (Watson, 2013). For example, early theorists Maslow (1943) and Herzberg (1968) studied motivation in the workplace and worker propensity to want to meet organizational goals. Maslow (1943) determined humans are motived by rewards and desires, and motivation levels will increase following feelings of fulfillment and satisfaction. Herzberg (1968), the developer of the 1959 two-factor theory of motivation, proposed in order to motivate a worker, a manager must provide an environment where workers feel their needs are satisfied.

The formal act of performance appraisal dates back to the early 20th century when managerial theorist, Frederick Taylor, proposed a 'one best way' theory of time and motion, meaning there is not a single best approach to leading and managing workers (Koumparoulis & Vlachopoulioti, 2012). Performance appraisals during that period were primarily conducted in large companies for employee advancement and compensation purposes (Hunnes, Kvaløy, & Mohn, 2012). Early literature regarding performance appraisal was based on psychological factors, such as psychometric properties of the appraisal with supervisor and employee roles in the process (Hunnes et al., 2012).

Taylor was one of few scholarly researchers of his time who considered work and efficiency in terms of time and motion relative to productivity (Koumparoulis & Vlachopoulioti, 2012). One of Taylor's most famous investigations involved the act of shoveling at Bethlehem Steel (Paxton, 2011). The workers in the study used identical shovels for the material to be moved (Burns, 2014). After some observation, Taylor determined the most efficient shovel load weighed 21.5 lbs (Burns, 2014). Workers were given shovels especially sized to hold 21.5 lbs of specific material types (e.g., 21.5 lbs. of cotton per load or 21.5 lbs. of coal per load) (Paxton, 2011). Production output increased, optimized by use of the special shovels (Koumparoulis & Vlachopoulioti, 2012). Taylor concluded maximum production efficiency occurred when employee performance was evaluated and, based on results, workers are assigned jobs that match well with their interests and skills (Koumparoulis & Vlachopoulioti, 2012).

The contingency model of leadership, presented by Fiedler (1967, 1971), focused on situational variability in organizational decision-making (Duin, Ortt, & Aarts, 2014) and provided justification for decisions from a comprehensive perspective, including a full evaluation of potential circumstances and outcomes (Hanisch & Wald, 2012). According to contingency theory, an administrator considers the entire organization, including relationships, authorities, reporting practices, communication practices, decision-making practices, and behaviors, before making decisions (Duin et al., 2014). In the last 50 years, contingency theory has been applied for many purposes, and countless contributions toward the theory have occurred in the fields of management and organizational behavior (Waters, 2013). However, although much research has resulted in important data, a concern with contingency theory is the difficult determination of organizational implications (Hanisch & Wald, 2012). When considering contingency theory, administrators should be diligent to align organizational needs with worker needs to achieve optimal organizational success (Bess & Dee, 2012).

Similarly, Giddens' (1989) theory of structuration pertains to organizational environments and integration processes. Giddens (1989) developed the theory when studying relationship problems between human interactions and organizational structures in the realm of social life. Giddens (1989) suggested the human, social aspect of the organization gives structure to such things as group work, organizational policies, and workplace norms. According to Giddens (1982), the theory of structuration is "a hermeneutically informed social theory… [recognizing] the need for connecting an adequate account of meaningful 'action' . . . with the analysis of its unanticipated conditions and unintended consequence'' (p. 7). In other words, organizational structures are rules and processes workers use as models for their actions, but not determinants of those actions (Schimpf, Mercado-Santiago, Hoegh, Banaerjee, & Pawley, 2013). Managers can use the theory of structuration to understand better how and why workers and structures develop, and how much influence the workers have on organizational elements (Heracleous, 2013). For example, Tobler (2008) used the theory of structuration as a basis for a study of human interactions among a group of physicians and the human interaction factors of health information technology. Tobler (2008) determined the attitudes and expertise of the physicians had a positive correlation with technological and social structures of the organization. Thus, it can be assumed support staff will follow institutional policies and procedures, develop guidelines or norms based on their adherence, and, ultimately, influence decision making for the same or new policies and procedures (Tobler, 2008).

The loose coupling theory is similar to the theory of structuration in that the loose coupling theory focused on the social construction of institutional structure (Weick, 1976). Reason and senselessness can exist concurrently with the loose coupling theory "without specializing those two logics in distinct locations" (Orton & Weick, 1990, p. 204). In other words, the loose coupling theory describes an institution that is "simultaneously open and closed, indeterminate and rational, spontaneous and deliberate" (Orton & Weick, 1990, pp. 204-205). The loose nature of behaviors is risky because decision-making based on social aspects of an institution can cause chaos, but it can be valuable in that decisions can occur that are most appropriate for the situation and parties affected (Bechky, 2011).

In academia, the loose coupling theory may be useful for decision making from the lower levels of workers up to the highest levels, rather than decision making from top administrative levels down (Godemann, Bebbington, Herzig, & Moon, 2014). According to Weick (1976), "People who are steeped in the conventional literature of organizations may regard Loose Coupling as a sin or something to be apologized for" but one can take a "neutral, if not mildly affectionate, stance toward the concept" (p. 6). The decentralization of power described in the loose coupling theory could influence decision making for performance appraisal processes and perceived fairness in the procedure (Huber, 2011).

Hackman and Oldham (1975; 1976; 1980) constructed the job characteristics theory for relationships between job characteristics and a worker's motivation for the work. For this theory, if a worker believes the job will bring personal satisfaction, then the worker will be motivated to do the job well (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). According to Oldham and Hackman (2010), the correlation between job characteristics and a worker's behavior was based on three cognitive states of the worker: consciousness of the importance of their work, mindfulness of their responsibility, and awareness of the outcomes of their work performance. In other words, a worker needs to feel valuable and accountable for their work; to receive consistent, helpful feedback; and to feel their role is worthwhile (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). The three states of mind distinguish the job characteristics theory from other job-based theories, because the states of mind help explain processes that occur in a worker's mind and define the relationship between the job and affective behaviors (Steger, Littman-Ovadia, Miller, Menger, & Rothmann, 2013).

Another workplace relationship theory is Adams' (1965) equity theory. The equity theory was based on the concept of fairness in a quid pro quo fashion (Adams, 1965). For example, based on this theory, if the ratio of a worker's efforts to benefits is perceived as equal, the relationship is deemed fair (Hatfield, Rapson, & Bensman, 2011). The equity theory helps show the consequences of unfairness and the tendency for workers to react in non-productive ways, such as low motivation, stress, and rebellion (Fall & Roussel, 2014). In similar foundation, the path-goal theory was based on the concept that managers can choose different methods of leadership depending on the goals for a worker or organization (Northouse, 2013). The leadership style can be "directive" for complex tasks, "supportive" for mundane tasks, "participative" for group tasks, and "achievement oriented" for priority tasks (Northouse, 2013, p. 147). The path-goal theory is focused on how leaders perceive the path to the goal and what is needed from the leader and the worker to achieve that goal, and how the performance might be improved (Dinh et al., 2014). Specific to research of academic settings, Northouse (2013) offered an excellent example of the path-goal concept:

> In a university setting where a junior faculty is apprehensive about his or her teaching and research, a department chair should give supportive leadership. By giving care and support, the chair helps the junior faculty member gain a sense of confidence about his ability to perform the work. If subordinates are uncertain whether their efforts will reach their goals, the leader needs to prove to them that their efforts will be rewarded. (p. 148)

Similar to the leadership described in the path-goal theory, the transformational leadership theory, developed by Burns (1978), was an early approach for investigation of leadership styles for differing tasks and goals. The theory was expanded by Bass (1985) who suggested the effectiveness of transformational leaders is dependent upon the level of followership from workers. The transformational leadership theory dominated organizational research for decades, but a problem with the theory is that if fails to explain, leadership behaviors that are completely altruistic in respect to the follower (Effelsberg, Solga, & Gurt, 2014: Herman & Chiu, 2014). Northouse (2013) continued to define transformational leadership as "the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (p. 186). In academia, a transformational leadership situation example may be a staff worker who finds a way to enhance or revise a key institutional process that provides great benefit to the organization.

Following the review of workplace theories, and as highlighted in the previous chapter, Simon's (1965; 1976a; 1976b; 1997) theory of administrative behavior is seems a good basis for the proposed study. The theory of administrative behavior was based on the concept that decision making in an organization must be founded on reason and human psychology (O'Reilly, 2011; Simon, 1965; 1997). With this theory, Simon (1997) developed bounded rationality. The concept of Simon's (1997) bounded rationality is explained well by MacDougall, Baur, Novicevic, and Buckly (2014):

> Individuals make decisions under a set of givens due to a cognitive inability to process all information and having specific goals and a formalized organizational structure allows for more givens to be added into the equation and therefore a more informed decision can be made that will satisfice the general expectations. (p. 185)

To further explain the value of this theory, Simon (1997) suggested that administrators are social scientists who must understand human behavior and how the workplace affects a worker. Additionally, administrators must understand how a worker will respond in a given situation (Simon, 1997). Early in his career, Simon went against classical management theories and pushed for adaptive management styles that allowed workers to be treated has humans with feelings and input (Akinci & Sadler-Smith, 2012). Simon (1976a; 1976b; 1997) explained how goals and structure influence behaviors in the workplace and criticized earlier theories asserting the administrator who pursues personal needs, cannot know all possible alternatives for a decision. The same administrator will make decisions that serve the purpose at hand, but the decisions may not be the ideal decisions (Harcourt, Hannay, & Lam, 2013). Further, Akinci and Sadler-Smith (2012) concluded Simon’s (1976a) theory is beneficial for training, communication, and straightforward routines, thereby allowing workers to enjoy their jobs with minimal interference and opportunity to excel. Overall, Simon’s (1976a) theory provided a basis for administrators to understand why a decision is needed, whom it affects, why it affects them, and what can be gained from the decision (Akinci & Sadler-Smith, 2012; MacDougall et al., 2014). Performance appraisal is a process and procedure, according to Simon (1976b), "Behavior is procedurally rational when it is the outcome of appropriate deliberation. Its procedural rationality depends on the process that generated it" (p. 131).

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal and related processes have been shown to affect employee performance levels (Shaharyar et al., 2014). Regarding performance appraisals, Kuvaas (2011) suggested managers must recognize the impact of performance appraisals on worker motivation and appraisals must be administered carefully for avoidance of negative effects on motivation, satisfaction, and organizational commitment. A manager should rely on accurate information before making or recommending any performance rating (Sumelius et al., 2014). Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin (1996) concluded, “Performance appraisal criteria and rewards should be expressed explicitly and clearly, so the rules of the game are understood by all” (p. 30). Communication with explanations of processes and procedures, including measurement ratings and input, and invitations for questions to remove confusion, is important (Cheng, 2014). Evidence of a correlation between procedural understanding and justice of performance appraisal occurred with Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin's (1996) study. They asserted:

> If managers can apply rules fairly and consistently to all employees and reward them based on performance and merit, without personal bias, then employees will have a positive perception of procedural and distributive justice… When the rules are applied fairly, it is difficult to challenge the consequence or the final results. (Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996, pp. 30-31)

Beginning in 1980, research of performance appraisal extended to include the organizational environment, such as trustworthiness of supervision (Arvey & Murphy, 1998). According to Colquitt, LePine, Piccolo, Zapata, and Rich, (2012), the term trust describes the willingness of an individual to be at mercy of the actions of another individual. Trust in supervision predicates worker attitudes and job performance, and trust in management is key to overall organizational attitudes, including commitment (Collins et al., 2012).

Trustworthiness of supervision was the focus of Grant and Sumanth's (2009) survey-based three-part study. The study was replicated across three different dimensions of manager trustworthiness: prosocial motivation, dispositional trust propensity, and perceived task significance (Grant & Sumanth, 2009). The three studies demonstrated significance of the above variables in the supervision of workers (Grant & Sumanth, 2009). In study one, the research showed manager trustworthiness enhances the relationship between workers' prosocial motivation and productivity (Grant & Sumanth, 2009). The results of study two added the finding that in cases of low manager trustworthiness, a worker's inherent trust propensity can reduce the worker's prosocial motivation and productivity (Grant & Sumanth, 2009). Finally, the findings of study three revealed perceived task importance is mediated by manager trustworthiness and highly correlated with prosocial motivation and performance (Grant & Sumanth, 2009). As evidenced from the three studies, when workers perceived their supervisors as trustworthy, the workers may be more satisfied and productive (Grant & Sumanth, 2009).

Recent research has placed a greater emphasis on worker perceptions of their performance rating and issues surrounding the appraisal (Hunnes et al., 2012; Shaharyar et al., 2014). Colquitt et al. (2012) found when workers perceive trust in supervision, regardless of lower or upper level positions, they are more satisfied and productive. Trust between workers and superiors is a predictor of overall acceptance and development of appraisal procedures (Hunnes et al., 2012). Employee reactions to the performance appraisal are considered the most important outcome of the process (Pichler, 2012).

For example, Bennett, Frain, Brady, Rosenberg, and Surinak (2009) found in order for performance appraisals to be beneficial, workers should have access to worker development, training, and transition opportunities and to achieve the greatest results in performance appraisals and job satisfaction, appraisals must include goal parameters, training requirements, goals and expectations, and clear transitional plans. Further, motivational issues have been determined to influence workplace relationships and performance appraisal processes, in terms of employee performance outcomes, organizational commitment, and decisions to resign (Cheng, 2014; Kuvaas, 2006; Shaharyar et al., 2014).

Variances in the perceptions of fairness have been shown to cause reduction in job satisfaction, affect performance appraisal ratings, and stimulate increases in intents to leave (Collins et al., 2012; Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011). Workers having low levels of job satisfaction are less productive, less motivated, and less committed to the organization (Ghazanfar et al., 2011). Mistakes in performance appraisals are too numerous to list for the purpose at hand. However, Davis (2011) and Spence and Keeping (2011) suggested common mistakes include: delayed or late evaluations, over-ratings of worker performance, confusing descriptive catch phrases, a focus on performance effort instead of results, finite terms, i.e., never and always, inconsistencies, i.e., scores should match standards, and finally, stereotyping or bias.

Worker sensitivity and reaction in regards to the performance is another area of interest. Pichler (2012) defined such reactions as “individual-level attitudinal evaluations of and responses to the performance appraisal process” (p. 710). Performance appraisals and worker sensitivities, including performance perceptions, role perceptions, and disabilities was the focus of a Bennett et al. (2009) study. The study included the evaluation of several appraisal systems and showed workers regularly rated personal work performance higher than the ratings determined by their supervisors (Bennett et al., 2009).

In terms of feedback and worker reaction to a performance appraisal, Irani (2008) found personal orientation could influence the personalization of the feedback from the appraiser and the response to the feedback from the worker. Differences in levels of personalization and individual orientation can influence the perceived fairness of performance appraisals (Sumelius et al., 2014). Several factors can affect an appraiser’s ability to conduct a good review: motivation to conduct the appraisal, bias, lack of information, and apprehension of the worker's response to the feedback, are causes of ineffective appraisals (Bipp, 2010). While Irani (2008) focused on workers' feedback perceptions, much focus on the reviewer's role and self-efficacy in performance appraisals was evident (Sumelius et al., 2014).

Causes of dissatisfaction and departures of quality workers who are vital to the success of the organization are worthy considerations for organizational commitment and workforce retention (Cheng, 2014; Ghazanfar et al., 2011). According to Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin (1996), "If employees can be guaranteed fair procedural treatment, they are more likely to become loyal, a sign of organizational commitment. When procedural justice is fair, it is more difficult to question the outcomes (distributive justice)" (p. 25). When highly personalized feedback is communicated to highly individualistic people, Irani (2008) found that individuals perceive the feedback as fairer than when less personalized feedback s received. Alternatively, when people with low levels of individualism receive highly personalized feedback, the feedback is perceived as unfair (Irani, 2008).

As time has passed and technologies have expanded, performance appraisal methods and systems have evolved. Appraisal methods can be classified as: a) individual appraisal, group appraisal and other methods, or b) traditional and modern methods. According to Tohidi (2011), payoffs for employers for effective performance measurement include increased motivation and productivity, enhancement of the workplace culture and values, rewards for excellence, establishment of a baseline for training, and improved decisions about personnel, policies, and procedures. An employee may be appraised based on traits or characteristics, such as dependability, or based on work performance and goal achievement (Davis, 2011; Tohidi, 2011).

The review of the literature showed perceived fairness of an appraisal procedure is often a greater concern for managers and workers than the intended performance measurement, because workers may not agree with the process and procedure (Palaiologos et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2010). The following section offers expanded information regarding justice.

Job Satisfaction

Early seminal studies indicate when administrators are focused on organizational relationships and worker needs, job satisfaction increases accordingly (Herzberg, 1968; Maslow, 1943, 1970). For example, both Hertzberg (1968) and Maslow (1943, 1970), stressed job enrichment is necessary for fundamental motivation and proposed the task must be dynamically stimulating for worker interest, and workers should be sufficiently challenged based on skill. In a recent study, Mudor and Tooksoon (2011) determined satisfied workers, who are committed and dedicated workers, are essential factors for attaining organizational goals. Similarly, Park and Shaw's (2013) research showed a positive correlation existed between job satisfaction and worker retention. In addition, Park and Shaw (2013) found two primary ways turnover may occur: conflict between worker self-worth and work role, and conflict when job requirements interfere with workers' personal lives.

According to Herzberg (1968), key considerations for managers include the level of satisfaction workers feel in the work context, and satisfiers or motivators. Herzberg (1968) coined the terms *dissatisfiers* and *demotivators* to contrast with *satisfiers* and *motivators*, respectively. Research shows supervisors are influential in the way workers feel about their job and knowledgeable managers should recognize which factors motivate workers, ensuring consideration for personal needs when a worker is asked to do something (Hair, 2013; Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011). For example, Bennett et al. (2009) showed workers regularly rated personal work performance at a higher level than the rating determined by the supervisor. Such misalignments in perception can influence appraisal outcomes and are worthy of further investigation, as incongruences may be evidence worker perceptions and behaviors are relevant and should be considered in appraisal decision making (Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011).

The impact of job satisfaction on retention is influenced by worker perceptions of the fit between the job and self-identity, and of how the work enriches fulfillment (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Kuvaas (2011) argued satisfaction levels are contingent upon workers' self-opinion of personal value to the organization and dissatisfaction can result when an unexpected perception of value occurs as part of the appraisal. Job satisfaction may be the most widely researched job-related worker characteristic (SHRM, 2012a). Job satisfaction is a perception of work as a balance between the workers' needs and those of the organization (Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011). When management has knowledge of why workers resign and understand workers anticipate leaving before they actually leave, managers can develop strategic response plans (Collins et al., 2012; Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011). Managers must identify key factors that influence job satisfaction (Walumbwa et al., 2010).

In a study of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, Bipp (2010) conducted a study of relationships with job performance, including an evaluation of five core job dimensions:

skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback; and three psychological needs of workers: meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge of results. Bipp (2010) showed intrinsic factors (e.g., meaningfulness of task and responsibility) vary by age and are shaped by life experiences. If people are motivated because of individual personality differences, they should be able to identify differences and help others recognize their personal strengths for work roles (Bipp, 2010). In terms of extrinsic factors (e.g., job features), Bipp (2010) determined the organizational structure can cause motivations affecting performance. While some workers may be open to experience change, others may not be as willing and will not work as effectively in a different work environment (Huang, Ryan, Zabel, & Palmer, 2013). The findings of Bipp's (2010) study provided evidence the preference for specific job characteristics correlates with personality traits, and provided support for evidence of a link between personality traits and preferential job characteristics.

In a study of faculty members at the University of Balochistan, Malik (2011) focused on achievement, advancement opportunities, demonstrated appreciation, assigned duties, and roles. Malik (2011) based the study on Herzberg's (1968) theories of job motivation and hygiene factors. The questionnaire for Malik's (2011) study was extensive, divided into three sections, including questions from: a) the Faculty Job Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction scale, which measured the dimensions of Herzberg's (1968) motivation/hygiene theory, b) the Job Satisfaction Index, which measured job satisfaction, and c) other general demographic items (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951). Malik (2011) found that most faculty members had moderate satisfaction levels, with their work role satisfaction as the most satisfying and workplace environment satisfaction as the least satisfying. A concern with the value of Malik’s (2011) study was the female participants expressed a reluctance to describe personal feelings because of possible retribution.

Administrators must be knowledgeable of options and willing to make the best decisions possible for their workers (Harcourt et al., 2013). Klein and Takeda-Tinker (2009) conducted a quantitative investigation of the relationship between job satisfaction of full-time business faculty in the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and direct supervisory leadership practices. A secondary purpose of the study was to determine a correlation among several criteria including the highest academic achievement of the faculty member, the faculty member’s satisfaction with the job, and personal perceptions of WTCS leadership. The findings of Klein and Takeda-Tinker (2009) showed a slight positive correlation between job satisfaction and the practices of direct supervisors.

Justice in the Workplace

The concept of justice exists in all aspects of human life (Jones & Skarlicki, 2013). A sense of fairness and balance permeates virtually all aspects of the human environment, including the workplace (Palaiologos et al., 2011). Employees want to be treated fairly and good managers want to treat workers fairly (Guillén at al., 2014). If a person visits a workplace and asks workers how they feel about the organization, some workers will express satisfaction and other workers will express dissatisfaction (Jones & Skarlicki, 2013).

All employees, including managers, should be concerned when fairness does not occur in the workplace (Jones & Skarlicki, 2013). The most effective modern organizations are continuously searching for innovative ways to maximize productivity and, with this effort; there is a growing interest in justice (Choudhary, Deswal, & Philip, 2013). Managers should be prepared to react promptly and effectively when such situations arise (Javad & Premarajan, 2011). Kuvaas (2011) found worker perceptions of fairness in processes, defines how those workers accept the appraisal and their level of satisfaction with the organization.

According to Collins et al. (2012) perceptions of fairness in policies and decision-making, workplace culture structure, and quality of feedback/criticism are common factors of job satisfaction. In other studies, worker satisfaction showed correlated with procedural and distributive justice, as worker perceptions of fairness in the performance appraisal processes, determined both before and after appraisal reports, affect overall satisfaction (Palaiologos et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2010). The following sections provide an overview of two prominent methods of justice in the workplace, procedural and distributive justice (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012; Palaiologos et al., 2011; Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996).

Procedural justice. Procedural justice is a phrase presumably created by Thibaut and Walker (1975), and although they used the phrase in legal contexts at that time, procedural justice has since become a topic of increasing interest for modern workers and managers. For the proposed study, procedural justice represents the extent of equity a worker perceives in terms of performance appraisals of their work and organizational factors (Palaiologos et al., 2011). Procedural justice is an important component of performance appraisal effectiveness because worker perceptions of fairness influence the outcomes of the appraisal, in the capacity of worker motivation, satisfaction, and intent to leave (Collins et al., 2012; Palaiologos et al., 2011).

Demonstrated fairness in processes helps build trust in workers and can reflect their value to the organization (Palaiologos et al., 2011). Managers need to realize the importance of employee trust in the manager's rating and decision making in the review process (Colquitt et al., 2012). Although the relationship between employee trust in management and performance is not well understood, managers realize the need to keep employees focused on organizational goals (Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011). The concept of trust is a fundamental factor of a supportive relationship between staff and managers (Kannan-Narasimhan & Lawrence, 2012). Trustworthiness is evident in organizations in which managers and workers share values and beliefs, and in such cases, employees will perform in a manner consistent with overall organizational objectives (Mullarkey, Duffy, & Timmins, 2011).

In a study of 170 participants, Palaiologos et al. (2011) sought to determine aspects of performance appraisal interconnected with distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. The study findings showed evidence of a strong relationship between the appraisal and procedural, distributive, and interactional types of justice (Palaiologos et al., 2011). For example, workers' satisfaction with their job was strongly correlated with all of three types of justice (Palaiologos et al., 2011).

With similar findings, a more recent study contained evidence most workers' perceptions of the performance appraisal system were viewed as fair and workers were generally satisfied with the system. Boachie-Mensah and Seidu (2012) discovered employee's perceptions of fairness in the performance appraisal could lead to doubt regarding the accuracy of the review. In Boachie-Mensah and Seidu's (2012) study, an examination of worker perceptions of performance appraisal accuracy occurred with the purpose of identifying pragmatic ways to prevent inaccurate ratings and methods. The sample population included 140 academic and administrative workers of a technical institution who had experienced performance appraisals after being employed for at least two years (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012). The findings suggested workers perceived subjectivity and inaccuracy in the appraisal process, and included implications of problems with the training, purposes, and processes for effective performance measurement (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012; Morgeson & Campion, 2012; Morgeson et al., 2014). The target of the study was workers at a single institution, due to funding concerns, and is therefore limited in generalizability to broader populations (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012).

The proposed study extends new information and serves to supplement information provided with the Boachie-Mensah and Seidu (2012) and Parker (2006) studies. According to Parker (2006), "A performance appraisal system would satisfy the [distributive justice] principles, if the employee and supervisor set annual performance objectives and standards providing realistic expectations" (p. 30). Parker (2006) utilized Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin's (1996) distributive and procedural justice instrument for a study of 191 state workers focused on procedural justice and performance appraisal. From the study, Parker (2006) discovered four strong correlations: between procedural justice and performance appraisal, the appraisal rating and supervisor fairness, the rating and trust in the supervisor, and between distributive and procedural justice.

Distributive justice. According to Tang and Sarsfield (1996), distributive justice is "what the decisions are" for the outcome, and the "content of fairness" for the procedure in performance appraisal (Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996, p. 25). Parker (2006) added, "Distributive fairness that involves evaluation of the outcomes received and a judgment of procedures that determined the outcomes is important to employees" (p. 45). Parker (2006) conducted a study of justice perceptions of performance appraisals among public service workers in a South African national land department. The 191 workers came from job categories including administration clerks, technologists, directors, foremen, and geographers (Parker, 2006).

According to Parker (2006), "A discrepancy in expected and actual outcomes of performance appraisals influence justice perceptions by employees" (p. 84). Parker (2006) determined a relationship exists between procedural justice, distributive justice, and performance appraisal ratings, and commented:

> It is important that organisations treat employees fairly and consistently with other employees if it were to adhere to the letter and the spirit of the Labour [*sic]* Relations Act (1995). This extends to fairness and consistency in application of all systems that the organisation may use to assess the individual's work performance and the commensurate performance bonus or reward in exchange for work done well. This consistency needs to be evident across the organisation at all times and individual employees…Should there be a discrepancy between actual and expected outcomes feelings of injustice may arise. [Distributive Justice] perceptions thus pertain to perceptions of outcome fairness. (p. 85)

Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin (1996) had two purposes for their study of distributive and procedural justice: to measure the relationship of these factors with performance appraisal and to measure perceived distributive and procedural justice prior to the appraisal. The latter was used to “predict several aspects of satisfaction (e.g., pay, promotion, supervisor), self-reported performance rating, satisfaction with performance appraisal, and commitment” (Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996, p. 25). The study participants included 200 workers at a U.S. Veteran’s Administration Medical Center (Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). The survey was distributed to the participants at timed intervals: four weeks before and after the participants’ performance appraisals (Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). The first phase resulted in a 55% response rate from 110/200 workers (Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). The second phase had an 81.8% response rate from 90/110 workers (Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). As per the study, only the workers who responded earlier were invited to respond in the second phase. Thus, the average response rate was 45% with 90/200 overall responses.

The findings of the Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin (1996) study provided evidence of five aspects of procedural justice, including fairness, two-way communication, trust in the supervisor, clarity of expectations, and understanding of the appraisal process. Another discovery stemming from the study was distributive justice was highly correlated with satisfaction with pay, promotion, performance appraisal, and organizational commitment (Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). Additionally, procedural justice was shown to be strongly correlated with satisfaction with supervision, self-rating, performance appraisal, organizational commitment, and job involvement (Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996).

Data presented by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2011) Job Satisfaction survey revealed 83% of U.S. workers were overall very satisfied with their current job; however, only 22% were very satisfied with their pay, 16% with promotional opportunities, 41% with the work itself, and 39% with relationships with co-workers. These numbers show the value of the work in relation to job satisfaction. In addition, 54% of the same respondents in the SHRM (2011) study reported the amount of pay as being very important, 36% felt promotional opportunities were very important, 53% felt satisfaction with the work was very important, and 38% felt the relationship with co-workers was very important.

In a study of relationships between satisfaction with compensation and work motivation, Ghazanfar et al. (2011) applied the expectancy theory for examination of three compensation dimensions: fixed pay, flexible, pay, and benefits. Each of the dimensions was examined in relation to satisfaction with compensation (Ghazanfar et al., 2011). Effort and performance, two additional dimensions, were used in the examination of work motivation (Ghazanfar et al., 2011). The findings of this study showed satisfaction had a positive correlation with work motivation, flexible pay was not a significant factor of motivation, and motivation for work was not highly correlated with benefits (Ghazanfar et al., 2011). Specifically, worker satisfaction with organizational compensation practices had a positive correlation with perceptions of organizational support (Ghazanfar et al., 2011) and those perceptions mediated the relationship between worker satisfaction with compensation, organizational commitment, and loyalty (Ghazanfar et al., 2011).

Focusing on job satisfaction and work place environment, Armstrong, Hawley, Lewis, Blankenship, and Pugsley's (2008) study of certified rehabilitation counselors (CRC) showed the workplace environment was influential in worker satisfaction with the job. The research revealed the CRCs at colleges and universities had the least job satisfaction in terms of promotional opportunities, with a ranking of 50.4% satisfied, while private rehabilitation workers were slightly more satisfied reporting 67.4% satisfaction ranking (Armstrong et al., 2008). Similarly, Grant and Wrzesniewski (2010) revealed workers considered personal compensation or satisfaction with the work itself as more important in relation to overall job satisfaction and consideration of others.

The results of the above studies provide evidence of the value of worker perceptions of justice, procedural and distributive, and these two types of justice correlate with worker satisfaction, commitment, and involvement (Armstrong et al., 2008; Ghazanfar et al., 2011; Grant & Wrzesniewski, 2010; Parker, 2006; Tang & Sarsfield-Baldwin, 1996). Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin (1996) determined "It is plausible that managers have some "control" over employees' perceptions of procedural and distributive justice, and, therefore, may be able to affect employee satisfaction, commitment, and involvement in the organization" (p. 30).

Employment law. Modern workplaces are evolving due to changing social and political influences, and it is ever important for administrators to learn from discrimination and employment law knowledge bases (Wood, Braeken, & Niven, 2013). Employment laws influence employee contracts, performance measurements, hiring/termination practices, and grievance procedures (Walsh, 2012). According to Galanter (2013), former Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of

Education (DOE), workers should be welcomed when they notify administrators of legal compliance concerns, as discrimination errors can be overlooked and identified only after someone has the courage to speak up or participate in an investigation (Kotkin, 2007; Wilkins, 2013). Because there are many past and current employment laws which impact organizations and employees, an overview of several employment laws are highlighted in the paragraphs below.

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) was enacted by the U.S. Congress in 1938 to eliminate work conditions causing low standards of living for workers, following the Great Depression occurring 1929 and 1933 (Kaufman, 2012). During the Great Depression workers and their families were devastated by loss of jobs, income, and other harsh economic events (Stuckler, Meissner, Fishback, Basu, & McKee, 2012). After the Great Depression, the U.S. government focused attention and energy toward such actions as taxation, industrial regulation, and social welfare (Kaufman, 2012). The FLSA was intended to provide workers with provisions such as minimum wage values, compensation for overtime, fair and equitable wages, and child labor regulations (Kaufman, 2012). The FLSA has had many changes, with provisions initially provided for workers at private organizations, but now, with few exceptions, applicable for all, including public agencies and workers (Kaplan-Wyckoff, 2012).

The FLSA governs organizations with gross sales of at least $500,000, hospitals and similar organizations providing health services, academic institutions, and public agencies (Mayer, Collins, & Bradley, 2013). To be in compliance, community colleges must meet the standards put forth in the FLSA and be aware of amendments and changes to the standards or risk claims of discrimination punishable by law (United States

Department of Labor [USDOL], 2014; Schmidt, 2011). While performance-based compensation adjustments are legal, and it is good practice to give employees pay increases and bonuses based on excellent performance, administrators must be aware of current laws and ensure minimum wages align with local and federal minimums (Kaufman, 2012; Schmidt, 2011).

Many employment laws are based on decades of history in civil rights movements (Driver, 2014). The Civil Rights Movement in the United States was heavily influenced after World War II when the U.S. Democratic political party stimulated a northward mass migration of African Americans from the southern states (Boyer, Clark, Halttunen, Kett, & Salisbury, 2011; Goldfield, 2013). U.S. President, Lyndon B. Johnson initiated protection affecting workers by signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (CRA), fifty years ago during a time when clarification was needed for employment equity (Driver, 2014). The CRA was a historic event for U.S. employers and their workers, and is considered by some experts to be the first, broad legislative act for human rights in the 20th century (Rutherglen, 2014). The CRA banned discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, or national origin; thereby clarifying for administrators what basis may be referenced for many means, including hiring, termination, discipline, promotion, and performance (Rutherglen, 2014). Title VII of the CRA bans acts of retaliation and prevents employers from retaliating against workers who demonstrate protected activities, such presenting a claim of alleged discrimination, threatening to file a discrimination claim, peacefully protesting against discrimination, denying orders which seem discriminatory, and requests for religious or disability-based requests (Gould, 2014b).

The U.S. Office of Federal Contract Compliance, a branch of the USDL, was appointed in 1978 by President Jimmy Carter to oversee compliance with Federal discrimination laws and to ensure organizations meet minimum expectations and guidelines (Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs [OFCCP], 2014; Siegel, 2014). The U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1968, enacted by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and enforced by the U.S. Department of Justice (USDJ), prohibits discrimination based on citizenship and national origin (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC], 2014; Immigration and Nationality Act [INA], 2014; Office of Special Counsel [OSC], 2014). For community colleges, employers may stimulate a retaliation claim for employment terminations, non-renewal of contracts, demotions, shift reductions, unfavourable performance appraisals, and assignment to an undesirable task (Benders, 2014; Galanter, 2013).

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 (PDA), created to provide protection for pregnant women, was expanded with the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), which provided 12 weeks of family time away from work and job protection for returning workers (Armenia, Gerstel, & Wing, 2014). Research shows that prior to the PDA, public school teachers frequently experienced discrimination due to pregnancy-related events, being forced to choose from sometimes unpleasant options, such as unpaid leave of absence with no promise of a job following the absence, termination of contract, or abortion (Widiss, 2013; Waters, 2013).

Other important employment law acts include the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) of 1967, which prohibits discrimination based on age (Van Kampen, 2013), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, which prevents discrimination based on disability (Larson, 2013). The ADEA is increasingly applicable in modern organizations because more workers are staying in the workforce later in life (Van Kampen, 2013). Despite the ADA protection, statistics show that few disabled people can find or keep employment, thus equal employment opportunities are not often realized (Hoffman, 2013). The recent Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, Title II, enacted in 2009 and praised as the first civil rights legislation of the 21st century, prohibits employment discrimination based on genetic mutations or issues that may increase the likelihood of an inherited disorder (Olick, 2014).

In terms of evaluating employees and ensuring equality, there are too many past, present, and relevant employment laws, to be adequately presented in this presentation. One of the best ways to provide adequate performance appraisal and comply with the laws is to gain knowledge (Wood et al., 2013). Case law shows that employees bring legal claims against employers (Galanter, 2013). Organizations, which have valid processes and practices of fairness and equality, are precautionary and safest from false discrimination claims (Galanter, 2013). When not prepared and claims are believed to be valid, organizations are exposed to costly litigation; punitive damages for discrimination and retaliation claims are often much greater than compensatory monetary awards, especially in cases of poor recordkeeping, training, and documentation (Galanter, 2013).

In 2010, the EEOC (2014) recorded 99,922 total discrimination charges, of which 36.3% (all statutes) and 31% (Title VII only) were claims of retaliation, 35.9% for race claims, 29.1% gender bias, 23% age bias, and 25% on disabilities. For comparison purposes, discrimination charges recorded in 2013 by the EEOC (2014) were similarly ranked, except for retaliation charges, which increased as retaliation charges rose to 41%

and 33.6%, respectively. According to 2011 data published by the Bureau of National Affairs, a private company which retrieves and publishes business and government data and statistics, discrimination cases settled with the EEOC and OFCCP cost an average of $600,000 and $670,000 per case, respectively (BNA, 2011). Claims settled before reaching EEOC and OFCCP were much less costly for organizations at an average of $12,300,000 per case (BNA, 2011). The average cost per case for claims settled in trial court was $13,300,000 per case (BNA, 2011). These figures reflect how costly employment law issues can be for an organization. It seems clear from the above data that well-planned processes and procedures would cost much less than the potential costs of dissatisfied workers (Galanter, 2013; Wood et al., 2013).

When an employee's performance is good, but acts against the worker are unfair or unwelcome, the worker may file a discrimination claim (e.g., if the worker does not receive a pay raise, is demoted, suffers wage reduction, or is terminated) (Schneider, 2010). With many employment laws and costly legal ramifications, administrators must be cognizant of legal limitations, including employee and employer rights (Galanter, 2013; Wood et al., 2013). In an attempt to avoid costly litigation, many cases of discrimination never reach the court system and are settled based on agreement of employer and employee, often in a confidential manner (Kotkin, 2007; Schneider, 2010; Wilkins, 2013). Legal fees for defending an employment-related lawsuit can cost an institution $75,000 to $125,000 and upwards of $250,000 if the plaintiff wins the lawsuit (Hannaford-Agor & Waters, 2013; Hyman, 2013). Academic institutions have policies, procedures, and specially trained staff in place for employee grievances (Policies, 2014).

A good grievance plan can help resolve issues early, prevent false claims, and protect the institution from expensive litigation (Swift, 2014).

Ensuring compliance with all laws, including satisfying EEOC requirements, for the purposes of performance appraisal, may be narrowed to a few, straightforward factors of consideration. It is critical for administrators to retain records of all hiring, promotion, reward, and termination acts (Goza, 2013). Assigned tasks and roles should include clear expectations and performance objectives (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Employee performance appraisal records must be accessible or shared with only individuals who have a lawful and valid interest in the appraisal and destroyed only when it is certain the information is no longer needed (e.g., in accordance with statutes of limitation) (Goza, 2013). Documentation should be reviewed carefully and regularly for discriminatory content, updates for changes in regulations, relevance, and errors (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Employees should have knowledge of opportunities for appraisal feedback, two-way communications with their supervisor, and access to forms and policies needed for dispute resolution (Baker, Perreault, Reid, & Blanchard, 2013). Finally, administrators may want to seek legal counsel for final review and appropriateness of performance related materials and procedures (Hayford, Prenkert, & Raymond, 2014).

Summary

Performance appraisal and common standards are becoming increasingly decentralized with processes transitioning more closely with the employee whose performance is being measured (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Legal restrictions evolve with new and updated laws to protect employee privacy and distribution of worker information, including performance appraisals (Gagné & Bhave, 2011; Goza, 2013).

Expansion of legislative governance in employment matters in the 1970s and 1980s advanced protection for discrimination toward minorities and workers with unique circumstances (e.g., disabilities, pregnancy, and age) (Walsh, 2012; Wood et al., 2013).

With the plethora of legal considerations, administrators must painstakingly, and lawfully, develop appraisal processes (Lieber, 2011). Well-planned procedures involve good decision-making that can bring success for workers, administrators, and institutions as a whole (Javad & Premajarin, 2011; Kuvaas, 2011; Simon, 1997). Good decision-making includes awareness of social structures in the workplace, collective information and input, consideration of worker and organizational needs, understanding of consequences, and sound strategies for performance levels needed to satisfy goals (Barakos-Cartwright, 2012; Bess & Dee, 2012; Fall & Roussel, 2014; Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011; Javad & Premarajan, 2011; Kuvaas, 2011).

As suggested in the above sections, the importance of procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisal is strong, and further study will enhance the current knowledge base through identification of factors helpful for improved appraisal processes and increased worker job satisfaction. Non-compliance with laws are costly for institutions, yet avoiding complications seems to be straightforward (Galanter, 2013; Schneider, 2010; Swift, 2014; Wilkins, 2013; Wood et al., 2013). Effective administrators will work diligently to find solutions to problems and to develop strategies for compliance with ever-changing employment laws (Swift, 2014). Complaints filed with federal compliance boards and court litigation can be avoided with careful preparation (Schneider, 2010; Wilkins, 2013).

The review of existing literature provided evidence worker perceptions of justice in performance appraisal affects worker motivation, job satisfaction, and loyalty to the organization. Overall, the search for empirical evidence showed research literature is scarce, however, specifically for the proposed population of workers. The proposed study is important for administrators who desire a satisfying, productive experience for workers and their institutions. The information gathered during the study will provide decision makers with a better understanding of justice in performance appraisals and impacts of poor decisions on institutions and employees.

Chapter Three: Methodology

A qualitative methodology was selected for the study of human resources administrators' perception of justice in performance appraisal of staff workers at Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska public community colleges. The qualitative methodology was selected because it offers flexibility in data collection (Maxwell, 2012) and provided value through the discovery of important descriptive patterns in phenomena (Bansal & Corley, 2011). Typically, data gathered for a qualitative study occurs via study of the participants in their natural environment (Creswell, 2013). For the proposed study, interviews occurred with participants who were actively working as human resource administrators at Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska non-profit, public community college.

Problem and Purpose Overview

Over the past seven decades, theorists have explored procedural justice, distributive justice, performance appraisal, and satisfaction across a spectrum of employment categories (Devonish & Greenidge, 2010; Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011; Palaiologos et al., 2011). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions of human resources administrators, from two-year, public, non-profit community colleges located in Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska, regarding procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisal of support staff. Extensive reviews of existing literature revealed no scholarly study of academic support staff performance appraisal and insufficient studies of performance appraisal at academic institutions, in general. Related information was available, however. For example, there was evidence when workers felt their performance was rated justly, they were more likely to be happy (Palaiologos et al., 2011). When workers are happy, they are more likely to meet goals and stay loyal to their organization (Devonish & Greenidge, 2010). An intention for the proposed study was to bring missing, integral pieces of testimony to the fields of fairness and performance appraisal. With improved performance appraisal processes, organizations can benefit from reduced turnover and increased productivity (Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011; SHRM, 2012a).

A goal for this research was to provide insight into perceptions of fairness in performance appraisal, specifically appraisal of support staff, a population of workers not often studied, from the perspective of human resources administrators. The review of literature indicated a lack of evidence of perceptions of performance appraisal for this population of workers in an academic setting. With no such scholarly information or studies available, support staff workers at community colleges are not represented in modern research. The proposed research study brought to light information that increased the knowledge base for performance appraisal matters and provided data for improved decision-making. The intent was academic supervisors and administrators could find value in the conclusions and recommendations stemming from the study. These decision makers may use the information to improve appraisal processes, which can result in improved worker satisfaction and reduced turnover costs. To provide the best examination of these perspectives (Bansal & Corley, 2011), this study focused on the following research questions.

Research Questions

1. What practices do human resources administrators at community colleges identify as fair and unfair in performance appraisal of support staff at the college?

2. How do human resources administrators at community colleges perceive support staff trust in terms of performance appraisal at the college?

3. How do human resources administrators at community colleges perceive support staff understanding of the performance appraisal process?

Research Design

A qualitative methodology was selected to study justice in performance appraisal of support staff. When deciding the ideal research method and approach for the proposed study, a comment by Richards and Morse (2012) rang true, the overreaching goal for a qualitative research study includes “learning from, and doing justice to, complex data” (p. 2). The fit of a selected methodology is dependent upon the type of desired data; intended data usage, available tools, time limitations, and researcher skill are contributing factors toward the optimal methodology choice (Bansal & Corley, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). According to Denzin & Lincoln (2011):

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world…and consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations… qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Phenomenology relies on two foremost assumptions: perceptions represent lived experiences and consciousness denotes human existence, and that perceptions are meaningful and of interest because as humans we are always conscious of something

(Hays & Singh, 2011). Qualitative researchers hope to discover meaning and explanation directly from the phenomena, from interviewees for the proposed study, rather than search for meaning based on prior knowledge or theories, as is the basis for quantitative research (Creswell, 2013). Different from quantitative methodologies, which require testing of pre-established hypotheses, phenomenological study provides a means to probe and understand better why people do things or demonstrate behaviors (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

Population and Sample

Qualitative research works well for relatively small sample sizes as this methodology represents a means to explore the depth and context of responses (DeLyser & Sui, 2013). While it is impossible to observe everything all the time, past or present observations can fill gaps with needed information (Baillie, 2013). Understanding human resources administrators' perceptions of procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisal of support staff is part of the phenomenon to be investigated in this study. These administrators are expert participants for the study because of their assigned duties, authority, expertise, and experience with the performance appraisal process and support staff (Richards & Morse, 2012).

The target population for the proposed study was human resources administrators at two-year, public, non-profit community colleges in Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska. Of this target group, Iowa has 15, Missouri has 12, and Nebraska has five such community colleges or systems (IACCT, 2014; MCCA, 2014; NCCA, 2014). Thirty-two human resources administrators, one from each of the above colleges/systems, were invited to participate in the study. While 100% participation would have been wonderful, a goal of

15-25 interview participants accounted for possible unavailability, refusal, or other barriers for participation in the study (Creswell, 2013). According to Maxwell (2012), selection of participants and tasks in qualitative research is primarily for identification of groups, activities, or people who represent best the phenomena to be investigated. A secondary selection goal was to choose the participants who were most available and beneficial to the study purpose. Participants were identified by viewing organizational charts, college directories, or by personal referral. The latter increased the likelihood of participation (Maxwell, 2012). According to Sawyer and Blitz (2011), "A personal referral may overcome both the difficulty of finding the subject and that of persuading them that taking part will not put them at risk" (p. 145). By means of an initial, brief phone conversation followed by a detailed email, participants were asked to participate, with the option of having an in-person, phone, or video interview.

Instrumentation

Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin (1996) created a questionnaire which has been used reliably in scholarly research to examine the importance of distributive and procedural justice as related to worker satisfaction and commitment, across a wide range of occupations, including academia, the transportation industry, and business. Data for this study were gathered by interview process and the questions were similar to Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin's (1996) seminal procedural and distributive justice questionnaire. The interview questions (see Appendix C) provided a means for gathering data relevant for the proposed study and may be useful for comparable studies of support staff at other academic institutions or similarly structured organizations.

For the proposed study, the interview guide contained nine demographic questions and 15 open-ended, qualitative questions. The demographic questions were designed to extract participant characteristic and qualifying information (Klingensmith, Jones, Smiley, Biester, & Malangoni, 2014). They were all qualitative questions intended to extract information specific for the study topic (Creswell, 2013; Klingensmith et al., 2014) and, in this case, the topic of justice in performance appraisal.

Validity. According to Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011), validity is an ethical relationship achieved when the researcher establishes a dialogue with the participants, encourages them to speak freely, and performs self-reflective behaviors. For qualitative research, validity is demonstrated through several strategies, including detailed description of the findings, self-reflection in terms of bias, notice of any discrepancies, peer examination of the study, and audit by a qualified, unbiased reviewer (Thomson, 2011). Creswell (2013) suggested:

> 'Validation' in qualitative research to be an attempt to assess the 'accuracy' of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants… validation [is] a distinct strength of qualitative research in that the…closeness of the researcher to participants of the study [adds] to the value or accuracy of a study. I use the term validation to emphasize a process rather than verification (which has quantitative overtones). (pp. 249-250)

Creswell (2013) further added, "I do not think that distinct validation approaches exist for the five approaches to qualitative research" (p. 250). Thomson (2011) supported qualitative validation may occur in many forms and the researcher should choose the type of validation that feels most comfortable. Validity does not pertain to the methodology itself, but to the conclusions gathered by using a particular method in a specific situation for a specific purpose (Maxwell, 2012).

Maxwell (2012) argued there were three types of validity in qualitative research: descriptive validity, interpretive validity, and theoretical validity. Descriptive validity is a phrase describing the accuracy of the data or, “that is, [the researcher] is not making up or distorting things they saw or heard” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 134). Interpretive validity describes how accurately the researcher reports the participants’ meaning of events, things, or behaviors (Maxwell, 2012). The term ‘interpretive’ is not simply describing how beliefs, concepts, and perspectives are not descriptive and potentially verifiable with adequate observational data (Maxwell, 2012). Maxwell (2012) asserted the meanings are framed in mental rather than physical terms.

Finally, theoretical validity describes the theoretical constructions of the study, and “goes beyond concrete description and interpretation and explicitly addresses the theoretical constructions that the researcher brings to, or develops during, the study” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 140). Generally, this last type of validity defines evaluation of the study concepts and hypothesized relationships between the concepts in accordance with the phenomena. In other words, theoretical validity prompts the question of whether the researcher has presented an accurate explanation of the phenomena (Thomson, 2011).

For the proposed study, validity was ensured through completion of a pilot study and input from reviewers (Lincoln et al., 2011). Further, a critical review of the project was performed by an impartial, qualified individual and all errors, revisions, or other issues were addressed (Thomson, 2011). Finally, validity was supported via consistency in the interview processes and accurate presentation of all pertinent information, including data contrary to the primary research goal and themes based on participant perspectives (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012).

Reliability. Qualitative reliability was determined by whether the findings of a study were consistent with the data collected (Creswell, 2013) and represented the likelihood of repeated outcomes, or replication (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Replication is the act of "conducting the study again; the second study may be repetition of the original study, using different subjects, or specified aspects of the study may be changed" (Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. G-7). There are many reasons why unreliable measurements may occur, including poorly crafted questions, absence of consistent test administration; and participant concerns, such as weariness and anxiety (Creswell, 2013).

To satisfy reliability concerns, a pilot test of a small sample group occurred. Specifically, individuals with some knowledge of the content, and who were not invited or allowed to participate in the study, were included in the pilot study (Toma, 2011). According to Toma (2011), a pilot study provides opportunity to evaluate the feasibility of a proposed study and helps avoid undesirable consequences, which can occur with a large study and cause failure of the project. Feasibility studies highlight important criteria critical to the proposed study, whereas pilot studies are miniature versions of the proposed study (Chenail, 2011; Kim, 2011). From the information gained during the pilot test, concerns were addressed and revisions were made before the formal study was launched (Thomson, 2011; Toma, 2011).

Data Collection

After gaining permission from the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (See Appendix D), an invitation to participate was sent to each of the human resources administrators at the targeted Midwest community colleges in Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska. The communication to the administrators included information about the study, acceptance instructions, and researcher and advisor contact information. The participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to assess perceptions of procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisal of academic support staff; that data gathered in the research process will be shared with individuals of authority for promotion of possible, needed improvements; and that shared information would contain no personally identifiable characteristics (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014).

Participants who responded to the invitation favorably were required to sign and return a Lindenwood Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities (See Appendix E). Once the form was received, the interviews were scheduled and conducted according to the schedule and participant preference, i.e., phone or in-person. After informing potential participants of the study purpose, beneficence was addressed, including statements regarding privacy and anonymity related to the study (Englander, 2012; Glogowska, Young, & Lockyer, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

The interview session began with an introduction followed by the demographic, qualifying questions. The interviews followed an informal, semi-structured style, as common practice for interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Any participant not meeting the participant qualifications was thanked and excused from participation. Instructions and goals for the forthcoming interview questions were explained to the participants (Englander, 2012; Glogowska et al., 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). All questions were asked in the same order for all participants (Qu & Dumay, 2011). As the interviews proceeded, the researcher focused on maintaining a respectful pace of questioning, per participant need (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Qu & Dumay, 2011). At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher asked participants' advice for other human resource administrators regarding performance appraisal, and whether other interview questions were missing or should have been included (Englander, 2012; Glogowska et al., 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Following a common interview guide approach (Mikėnė et al., 2013) for exploration of the research questions, interviews with human resources administrators at Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska, non-profit, public community colleges occurred. While it is important to gain candid perspectives of participants, the timing of the interview had to be convenient for the participants to avoid environmental or other influences affecting response levels/types (Mikėnė et al., 2013). Adequate time for completion of the interview was a concern due to participant availability, willingness, and permission/decision to complete the interview while on duty (Creswell, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Kim, 2011). According to Fraenkel et al., (2012), recent events in a respondent's life can cause differing interpretations and responses than if those events had not occurred. Thus, the depth of perceptions and feelings could vary among participants and represent unidentifiable differences in response choice and intensity (Bansal & Corley, 2011; Chenail, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, Kim, 2011).

Data Analysis

According to Giorgi (2009), the first step in phenomenological analysis is the gathering of verbal data. A phenomenological researcher reads, reflects, writes, and rewrites gathered verbal information to create a textual representation of the lived experiences of the study participants (Richards & Morse, 2012). The researcher transcribed recorded verbal responses gathered during the interviews for this study into document format, manually and accurately. According to Chan at al. (2013), participants have the unique personal knowledge of their own lived experiences and perceptions; no one else shares this unique knowledge. So, all of the processes used by the researcher, including bracketing personal opinions, was such that the findings represent best the true intentions and meanings of the participants (Chan et al., 2013).

Phenomenological analysis involves sorting the data into categories or meaning units based on the research questions (Giorgi, 2009). A meaning unit is a word or short phrase expressed by a participant representing a self-defining aspect of personal experience (Gill, 2014). The researcher conducted several reads of the interview transcripts marking data and noting patterns, relationships, peculiarities, and opposing factors among participant comments (Merriam, 2014). The researcher then reviewed the notations to determine categories of meaning among the data (Giorgi, 2009). This sorting process allowed delineation of the meaning units from the data (Giorgi, 1997). With the data organized in Excel, research questions were answered. The researcher placed transcribed responses, in ascending coded order, in a separate spreadsheet page for each interview question. From a review of responses for each question, and across responses for each question, the researcher identified common phrases or terms the participants expressed and similar responses regarding perceptions, processes, or practices. Unusual comments or perceptions were noted and are described in Chapter Five. The unusual comments or perceptions serve as evidence for consideration of further research opportunities.

Analysis continued with a review of the categories and respective allocations derived from the data (Charmaz, 2011; Giorgi, 2009). As the study progressed, the researcher considered whether alternative explanations might be possible for the results, and whether other perspectives might be applicable (Yin, 2014). The Unit of Analysis triangulation method was used for understanding the data, as the method allowed focus on participants' experience as a particular unit of analysis (Sousa, 2014). The participants, human resources administrators, were identified and selected based on specific criteria, in order to provide important input for the structure and character of the research topic (Sousa, 2014). In Unit of Analysis triangulation, the unit was the participant perceptions, not each person, as an individual, or the group (Sousa, 2014).

In order to discover meanings in the data, the researcher maintained an open mind, free from bias or distraction, to notice unexpected meanings in the data (Giorgi, 2011). Re-writing of the participant statements helped accurately reflect the lived experiences of the participants and remain close to the true meaning intended by the participant (Gill, 2014). Responses were analyzed for repetitive or ambiguous nature and responses meeting those criteria were deemed invariant constituents and were eliminated (Giorgi, 2009).

Comparing the recordings with the transcribed written version ensured the data were transcribed accurately and the gathered information was presented properly (Giorgi, 2009). The researcher corrected errors with each review of the data, until no further errors existed (Gill, 2014). The researcher removed identifiable words or phrases and replaced them in brackets with unidentifiable information not altering the intent of the word or phrase. The information was integrated and insights gained from the participant reflections were composed into statements describing the insights.

As described above, participant responses were reviewed and prepared by the researcher for analysis using Excel, only for interview and response organization. Modern qualitative data analysis is often organized via digital software, which invites validity questions from quantitative enthusiasts (Burns, 2012). However, such programs are not intended to replace the interpretive nature of coding; they add value in that they enhance the efficiency of analysis (Creswell, 2013).

According to Burns (2012), a criticism of using such typically quantitative methods to analyze qualitative data is the process may transform the data into a numerical style, thus, eroding the qualitative characteristics, such as variation, depth, and nature. Burns (2012) stated "analysts respond to this criticism by thoroughly expositing their definitions of codes and linking those codes soundly to the underlying data, therein bringing back some of the richness that might be absent from a mere list of codes" (p. 28). For this study, the researcher gathered data, organized the transcribed responses in Excel software, and prepared reports representing honest and reliable (Thomson, 2011). The statements of the findings are presented below in Chapter Five.

Finally, consideration was paid to the research questions. For example, it was important the research questions were appropriately addressed through the gathered data and findings (Bansal & Corley, 2011). The researcher considered if other research questions would have been more relevant (Kim, 2011; Mikėnė et al., 2013). It was important these questions produced a sound interpretation (Kim, 2011; Mikėnė et al., 2013). In future studies, new questions stemming from the study were discovered, which could prompt continued investigation and scholarly inquiry (Bansal & Corley, 2011).

Summary

In this chapter a description of the qualitative, phenomenological research methodology, to be used for the investigation of the perceptions of human resources administrators at two-year, public, non-profit community colleges in Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska, regarding procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisal of support staff, was included. A pilot study provided additional validation of the interview questionnaire and procedures (Creswell, 2013). Throughout the research project, ethical consideration and integrity prevailed (Meinert, 2014). Participants were protected, data analysis, and reporting proceeded in accordance with customary research protocol (Creswell, 2013). Permissions to proceed were obtained from appropriate personnel and authorities (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Chapter Five contains the interpretation of research findings, implications for change, and recommendations for application and further study. It is hoped these findings potentially benefit managers and administrators in decision-making for development, or improvement, in performance appraisal processes which, in turn, promote higher levels of support staff satisfaction.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

This study was conducted to provide insight into perceptions of fairness in performance appraisal, specifically regarding support staff in higher education, an under-studied population of workers. As evidenced in Chapter Two, formal studies targeting academic support staff are non-existent. Scholarly studies of perceptions of fairness, performance appraisal, and satisfaction are plentiful, but focused on faculty, students, or employees of non-academic organizations, not support-type workers at academic institutions. In the last decade, scholarly literature regarding justice and performance appraisal has increased dramatically. With no relevant scholarly studies available, support staff workers at community colleges are underrepresented in modern research, and, particularly so, for performance appraisal purposes. Thus, an examination of performance appraisal and justice for support staff may add to the existing knowledge base stimulating positive changes for support staff and their employers.

Three research questions served as the foundation for the study. Eleven interview questions were used as a guide for exploration of participant perceptions. The interview questions, derived from Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin's (1996) seminal, distributive, and procedural justice instrument, were based on the three aforementioned research questions:

1. What practices do human resources administrators at community colleges identify as fair and unfair in performance appraisal of support staff at the college?

2. How do human resources administrators at community colleges perceive support staff trust in terms of performance appraisal at the college?

3. How do human resources administrators at community colleges perceive support staff understanding of the performance appraisal process?

The literature review provided justification for the study, as themes were identified suggesting academic support staff workers may incur struggles and organizations may suffer due to levels of perceived justice in staff performance appraisals. In general, a primary combination of concerns was identified in the literature review. The concerns involved the outcomes of perceptions of performance appraisal processes in terms of satisfaction, procedural, and distributive justice. The literature review provided evidence job satisfaction might be adversely affected when a worker feels his performance appraisal is unfair in any way (Bennett et al., 2009; Cheng, 2014; Collins at al., 2012; Kuvaas, 2006, 2007; Mudor & Tooksoon, 2001; Shaharyar et al., 2014; Sumelius et al., 2014; Tang & Sarsfield-Brown, 1996.)

Research available from existing scholarly studies included no information or inference regarding if or how outcomes of performance appraisal, such as decreased motivation or productivity, may be similar for academic support staff as with participants and subjects of existing studies. The fact academic support staff are often overlooked for scholarly research is a consideration for all decision-makers and scholars interested in academic workplaces (Barakos-Cartwright, 2012). The data gathered in this study provided information regarding common practices among performance appraisal processes as well as unique differences suggesting possible value for other institutions and consideration for further study.

To ensure confidentiality and to protect the interests of the study participants and their respective institutions, each interview response was organized by a unique identification process. Numbers were used instead of names for each participant and their respective response to each interview question. The coding method guarantees no personal or institutional information is present or discernible in the data provided in this research presentation.

Demographic Analysis

Invitations to participate in this study were emailed to 32 human resources administrators at respective public, non-profit community colleges in Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska. Interview candidates were identified via public, employee directory information published on the website for each institution. Eighteen administrators agreed to participate. However, unexpected hindrances caused three of the eighteen participants to withdraw.

One of the administrators withdrew from the study due to the firm decision she had not been at the institution long enough to provide adequate responses to the interview questions. A second administrator, vice-president of human resources, withdrew realizing he was not the ideal person to respond having little tenure in the role and sufficient knowledge to benefit the study. That participant commented he was filling in due to an active human resources administrator vacancy at the institution. The third administrator to withdraw ultimately decided, since the performance appraisal process at that institution was new, and he did not have much tenure, he would not be able to respond effectively to the interview questions about perceptions of past events. Even with diligent persistence, those three administrators and remaining non-responsive prospects were unwilling to participate.

Ultimately, 15 interviews were successfully completed. The interview questions were arranged in order of category. The following legend lists the interview question categories and the corresponding identifier used in the participant responses section.

Qualifying (Q)

Fairness (F)

Communication (C)

Trust in Supervision (TS)

Clarity of Expectations (CE)

The following section provides the interview questions and analysis of responses for each question. The questions are presented in the same order as when the interviews were conducted.

Participant Responses to Interview Questions

Interview question 1 (Q). *Please describe the steps involved in the appraisal of your support staff performance.* Participant responses for Interview Question One revealed several commonalities. All of the institutions represented required at least one annual performance appraisal of support staff and most of the participants stated the annual appraisal process occurred in the spring of each academic year. Participant 108 stated performance appraisal reviews were based on the worker's hire date and Participant 113 stated the appraisal was conducted for a specific period for all new hires (e.g., ninety days after the hire date).

At the institution represented by Participant 111, supervisors conduct appraisal procedures between September and October of each year. All participants stated a review meeting between the supervisor and the worker was an important component of the review process. The following sections include highlights of common concepts gathered from participants for Interview Question One.

Another common component described by participants was the workers' self-appraisal requirement. A review meeting for the formal performance appraisal by the supervisor, including a review of the self-appraisal, was required at all participant institutions. Participants described self-appraisals were the first step in the review process and were always conducted prior to review meetings.

Participant 104 noted, "All employees, at all levels, of all positions at the institution have an opportunity to do a self-evaluation first, and that is a comparative piece for the supervisor's evaluation." The workers completed a self-appraisal and either sent the completed self-appraisal to the supervisor for consideration, in advance of the review meeting, or brought the appraisal to the review meeting for discussion. The supervisor then conducted an evaluation from an administrative perspective, using the employee's self-evaluation for consideration.

All participants suggested the self-appraisal was intended to serve as a guide for support staff to identify personal strengths and weaknesses in relation to their work, accomplishments, professional development, training needs, and training achievements completed in the last year. Participant 108 stated the performance review included three sections: goals, competencies, and a comment section for both the manager and the employee. In the performance review meeting, the support staff worker and manager were each required to comment on the goals established from the prior year, if applicable. The competency section involved ratings as determined by the manager, which were then discussed with the support staff worker. Participant 108 concluded the description by adding:

> Then, the final step is that they each sign off, the manager goes first, and the employee goes second. The employee could [make] a [written] comment before they sign off…regarding the review, or any questions, or anything that they did not agree with. It's done all electronically, they sign off electronically, and they submit it to [human resources] and then it's stored for future reference.

A common concept in the responses was the expressed value of employees self-perceived training and professional development needs. Participants in the study described how the self-appraisal was helpful for planning purposes involving trainers and human resources staff. As offered by Participant 103:

> Workers are invited to do a self-assessment and a couple of weeks ahead of their appraisal meeting and present it to the supervisor. The supervisor will review the self-assessment and the supervisory assessment, which includes constructive feedback, prior to a review meeting.

All participants described review meetings for performance appraisal and the value of the meetings for discussion purposes. According to Participant 106, "The supervisor's job is to listen while the employee presents, and then ask clarifying questions, and perform a brief summary. The goal is not to get into a debate, the goal is to listen." Participant 101 described a forthcoming collaborative component of the new appraisal process for direct reports involving the college cabinet:

> For the collaboration, the cabinet members evaluate each of their direct reports. They utilize the discussion table to decide if they are in agreement as to the final

> evaluation for each direct report. In HR [human resources], I have two people that work under me and they would do their self-evaluations. They will turn them in to me and I will write their performance evaluations. However, I go through the collaboration process with my senior leader, so we agree. The purpose for that is to make sure that we do not have a situation where maybe somebody is viewing someone else entirely negatively or entirely positively. There is an accuracy to the process. The goal is to keep the supervisor's supervisor in the loop.

All participants stated the review meeting was required to discuss performance appraisal and for the supervisor to conduct the performance review. Private meetings were scheduled for a specific date and time, as agreed between the worker and the supervisor.

Participants expressed similar descriptions of the appraisal meetings. During the meeting, the supervisor would compare the worker's self-appraisal with the completed or pending supervisory appraisal. Discussion between the worker and the supervisor ensued regarding any differences in the two appraisals, including such topics as the ratings and comments. The worker identified one goal, not part of the normal duties or responsibilities, to accomplish in the coming year. If any disagreements occur, such as with the appraisal, goals, or comments, the supervisor made notes describing the disagreement on the appraisal form. Participant 113 commented:

> We call the initial meeting the formative evaluation, the period meetings are informal meetings, and at the end of the year, is the summit evaluation. If there's a problem, the employee has the right not to sign and they have the right to talk to HR if they have a complaint about it. We don't get many of those, but once in a

while, we do, and then we step in and try to resolve the concern. That's the basic process.

According to Participant 111, the appraisal form was provided by the human resources office and the supervisors were to "look at it and grade the employee, and then, provide employee feedback." About half of the participants mentioned tracking completed appraisals each academic year to ensure appraisals were processed for each employee. Participant 110 commented appraisal documentation was sent to employees in January of each year with a due date of May One.

Similarly, Participant 112 stated the performance review process was conducted annually and forms were to be submitted to the human resources staff by July 31. Participant 104 commented, the "HR staff track and monitor to make sure that everyone completes" the process. When reviews were complete, most participants stated the employee and the supervisor sign the form. Participant 102 added the supervisor's direct administrator also signs the form. Participant 102 stated the three signatures keep all individuals in the loop regarding departmental performance.

A copy of the executed appraisal form was provided for the employee. All of the performance appraisal materials were submitted to the human resources department for filing. The final appraisal packet was filed in the employee's personnel file in the human resources office. As summarized by Participant 110, "The employee and the supervisor meet to discuss the final appraisal, signatures are required of both parties, and the form is submitted to the human resources office for addition to the employee's personnel folder."

Interview question 2 (Q). *Please describe the performance appraisal form and/or template currently utilized at your institution and why you are using that* *tool(s).*The overarching goal for performance appraisal of workers, as expressed among participants, was to ascertain if staff workers are meeting expectations. Participant descriptions of performance appraisal forms revealed performance appraisal forms used at institutions vary from very basic to customized, purchased performance appraisals forms and systems. Most of the participants commented the same performance appraisal form was used for both self-appraisal and the formal, supervisory appraisal. Participant 112 commented the self-appraisal component was built into the staff performance appraisal template such that, with the supervisor's comments, the form becomes a single, complete performance evaluation report.

Participant 104 asserted a different performance appraisal tool was used at the institution depending on the workgroup (e.g., faculty and staff). Participant 104 added a standard template form was used for all of the support staff performance appraisals. Participant 103 commented, the form "begins with the typical information of the employee's name, title, reason for evaluation, whether it's the end of an orientation period or an annual review, and an employment date". As described by Participant 103, the first section of the performance form involves employee development in the assigned role and strengths demonstrated during the current year. The section also includes a comment box for the employee or supervisor to write specific details regarding areas of improvement. Similarly, Participant 115 stated the form in use was standard and the same for all non-faculty employees who were hourly and classified exempt.

Several of the participants described recent changes in the performance appraisal form and process. Participant 101 commented the old form was based on a Likert-type rating scale of 1 to 5, but the rating was not used for any definite purpose. Participant 101 continued the workers were concerned about “the idea that if they didn’t have a solid five, that they weren’t doing their jobs, and if they got a three, which is meeting expectations, that they weren’t doing a good enough job.” With concerns escalated, the decision was made to remove the numerical rating scale. Participant 101 added the new form contains the same necessary questions, but instead of numbers, the employees were rated as “exceeding expectations, going above and beyond expectations, meeting them, not meeting them, or unacceptable.” As the form is new, sufficient feedback from workers is not available.

Similarly, Participant 107 described a rating scale for each performance category, as a three-point, Likert scale – needs improvement, average, and above average. Each rating area included a space for comments. The form also included an open-ended section where the supervisor can note areas for improvement. Participant 107 commented, “…that section is also used for positive comments, so it’s not just for areas of improvement.” Participant 107 added, the form at their institution also has an area for comments where the support staff worker can write notes, but there was no requirement to do so.

Some participants described separate parts or sections for the supervisor and the support staff worker. Participant 114 described a similar two-section form with one section for the employee self-appraisal and a second section for the supervisor’s appraisal of the employee’s performance. In the first section, the employee was required to complete a self-appraisal, within a specified timeframe, for consideration at the appraisal review meeting (Participant 114). The supervisor was then required to complete the evaluator portion of the form within the same time parameters.

Participant 107 has been evaluating support staff for over two decades. The current performance appraisal form has been utilized for at least twenty years and, as stated by the participant, “It is time for a revision and improvement.” Participant 107 highlighted some of the attributes of the current form, including job knowledge, quality and quantity of work, attitude, and effort. Participant 107 added all of the items were important attributes in the support staff role, “When I look at the attributes, and I've been using it for a long time, I really do believe the attributes are very appropriate for evaluating support staff.”

Most participants described various rating scales in their performance appraisal forms. Participant 102 described their form as using a three-point rating scale: acceptable, needs improvement, and unacceptable. The form also contained nine evaluation items, such as dependability communication, job knowledge, and potential. Participant 102 added there were specific areas for comments below the nine rated line items. Participant 105 described several ranking categories, including knowledge, skills, customer service, self-management, quality of work, and productivity. Within those categories, the employees rate themselves and comment about each rating. Participant 105 said one comment area was specifically for goals and accomplishments. A worker and supervisor may use that area to give comments regarding achievements, trainings, and goals, and to reference related documentation to be included to the appraisal packet. A second comment area provides opportunity for general notes overall and future performance status.

Most of the participants mentioned two signatures were required on the performance evaluation form. Specifically, the signatures of the staff worker and the supervisor were required. Other participants described three signature lines: one each for the employee, supervisor, and supervisor's manager or one each for the employee, supervisor, and human resources representative. As stated earlier, Participant 102 stressed the importance of the latter signature in an effort to ensure every relevant party was in the performance appraisal loop for possible departmental concerns.

Interview question 3 (Q). *Please describe other performance measurement tools that have been used at your institution and why you stopped using them.* Some participants explained the support staff appraisal necessarily differs from faculty appraisals, as faculty appraisals require teaching observations and student feedback. Participant 104 stated their institution requires different performance appraisals for support staff, professional staff, and faculty. Participant 110 noted the previous form they had used for performance evaluation was not quantifiable, not specific enough or, in some cases, too specific. Several participants explained there was an overall feeling the time consumed by performance reviews was not valuable.

Participant responses included comments that the importance of reviews was to consider what was unique and standard about a campus need or worker role. Several participants mentioned it was important to include one or more appraisal components in alignment with the unique characteristics. Participant 104 emphatically stated it was critical "to get to a performance management system where you can be forward looking instead of backward grading." Several participants agreed, from the employee standpoint, the overall opinion was the supervisor checks a box subjectively, but was not telling the employee how to improve or what the employee should be working on to improve or expand skills.

Participant 110 described how the old process was presented as a 360-degree appraisal, but it did not go well. Participant 110 stated secrecy existed in their prior process, as a portion of the appraisal would be assigned to an anonymous peer worker or other individual who would rate the reviewee. The identity of that reviewer was withheld from the worker. Participant 110 added the timing of the peer rating was not always ideal and the anonymous review sometimes was not a true reflection of the reviewee's performance. The workers were uncomfortable with the anonymity, especially if they did not agree with the comments.

Some participants described using forms and processes that have been in use for many years, but have been updated as jobs changed or new purposes were realized. Several participants responded they simply updated the current tool through the years to stay in line with modern performance appraisal needs. Participant 115 had no knowledge of prior tools, stating the current form has been used for many years with no major revisions. However, the participant added, one change was currently being considered in a question to be added at the end of the appraisal form to determine if the employee was recommended for continued employment, conditional employment, or not recommended for employment.

A common statement among participants regarding prior performance processes and tools was they decided to stop using the old tool because it was targeted solely at the employees' specific jobs and how well they did that job, Participant 109 commented "There was nothing in there that the employee was helping the institution achieve overall strategic directives. It was all about that individual. So, we took the personal aspect of the evaluation as much as we could." Participant 109 stressed, unless the workers received excellent ratings on all items, most of them would be unhappy, which caused resentment and undesired behaviors, and any of those outcomes were counter to the purpose of the appraisal.

Some participants stated they have experienced more than one version of prior appraisal forms. Participant 114 described a prior appraisal version that required short answers for every item and had no rating scale. Most employees did not like that version, because they did not like having to write all of their responses. The worker might have to write a response for such questions as listing strengths you have brought to your position, note your job accomplishments, and what are your weaknesses?

Participant 114 stated they reverted to the checkboxes, “We’ve gone away from the tools we had, more towards the rating scale. I think it’s easier for them…they have the time to check the box more than to write two pages of short answers.” Regarding checkboxes on appraisal forms, Participant 104 stated the method was ineffective. When describing the performance appraisal at the respective institution, Participant 104 stressed:

> You either have to checkmark Exceed, Meets, Does Not Meet, or N/A. What does that really mean? It depends on the supervisor. The form we are using right now is about the relationship between the employee and the supervisor. It is relationship enhancing and it is designed to be candid. It is designed to enhance productivity through nurturing, as in professionally developing people. There should not be anything inaccurate; it’s all about being real.

Not long after assuming the human resources administrator role, Participant 103 conducted an analysis of the performance appraisal tool and process. The tool and process had been in use for decades, but revised occasionally. The results of the analysis prompted changes. As described by Participant 103:

> They were using a form that was your standard template, generic to any job, any institution. It was not being used. It was just very non-specific, check the boxes, Suzy is dependable, etc. I wanted it to be a meaningful process, so I opted to work with the campus community to create accurate job descriptions, and, then, use the Duties and Responsibilities section to build a unique, evaluation tool. I did this in the private sector. I felt so strongly about it that I wanted to build it here.

Participant 103 described the importance of helping all workers, from lower level employees to the president, understand how workers go about their jobs and about the overall values-oriented component of the performance appraisal process.

When describing the prior performance appraisal process and form, Participant 101 commented, “We didn’t stop using it as much as we updated it and made it more relevant.” Other participants described using the same form for years, but modifying it based on discovered issues with the form or performance ranking needs. Participant 104 further described the current process has been in use for about four years. The prior performance appraisal process at the institution was used for over twenty years and was obsolete for the modern academic workforce.

At the institution for Participant 102, decision makers made changes because it was determined the old process was not suitable for academic workers, many portions were not relevant, the form was too long, required useless scores, and the wording of questions was repetitive. Designated individuals reviewed job classifications, analyzed available performance appraisal studies, and solicited input from affected workers.

Participant 102 described the administrative review of the appraisal process was “to address specific issues with the process and forms. We may not review the entire form. We will analyze specific duties and identify things ‘out of tune’ with the appraisal tool and processes. We revise whatever needs improvement.”

Interview question 4 (F). *How confident are you that the appraisal process accurately represents the performance of employees it is designed to measure?* In general, participants commented workers seem to feel the performance review was just a task, and felt, as reported by Participant 104, “We’re doing this just so we can check mark the boxes and say we did it.” Most participants stated there was some aspect of the performance appraisal process in use at their institution that may invite inaccurate performance ratings or was not effective in some way. Some participants expressed lack of confidence in the process noting: supervisors do not care enough to give a valid appraisal, no one was held accountable for appraisal validity, and, because most supervisors and workers want to avoid conflict, appraisal ratings were inflated favorably. The participants described an overall feeling workers were ambivalent about the process, because there was no reward component for high performance, such as a pay raise.

Participant 110 commented the process at their institution was not very good, but the accuracy was mostly correct. Participant 105 added, without a good performance appraisal process and tool, “You typically have a supervisor not paying attention during the year, so whatever you happen to do as an employee in the last month is more apt to be what got evaluated.” Participant 108 responded similarly that, over a year’s time, supervisors might forget things a worker did throughout the year. Supervisors will measure the worker based on performance over the last couple of months reporting, “’you did a great job for two months', but forgetting the worker didn't perform well for the first three months."

Several participants described they have no basis for opinion yet as the process and/or tools were so new. Participant 101 stated, "This will be our first year utilizing the new system, but I have confidence that it's going to be a lot more accurate." Participant 101 described a reason for change in procedures was evident in the prior process, which was in use for several years. Participant 101 provided an example where human resources staff may receive an exemplary performance appraisal for a worker, "Yet, we would know the worker is on a performance improvement plan. The evaluation just did not match what is really truly happening in that job performance." Participant 102 added consistent reviews of the process and forms means the institution is current with appraisal practices, which, in turn, helps ensure accuracy. Participant 103 stated, "[I am] 80% confident because there is, and will always be, a tendency to overrate. I do feel that there is a margin of error there."

Some participants stated the performance appraisal tools were fair and accurate, but the instrument does not represent the value components they want to measure. For those reasons, Participants 112 and 113 were not confident the current tool serves the purpose it was intended to serve. About half of the participants in the study described how accuracy in performance appraisal could be difficult to measure. Several participants commented the tool used for the appraisal could increase inaccurate measurements. Conversely, other participants stated the tool helps with accurate performance measurements.

Overall, there seems to be moderate confidence among the respondents the appraisal process was accurate. Two participants commented if employees have a good grasp of the concept that they need to do good work, as in the productivity and quality of the work, the appraisal will be accurate. Participant 107 asserted the current appraisal tool was accurate and has basic components that are inarguable. Participant 108 added a supervisor's perception of a worker's performance reflects on that worker's ability and value to the institution.

Several participants stated supervisors are human; they forget things and the process may not be consistent because they only do reviews on an annual basis. Participant 105 commented, "There's always difficulty in judging the accuracy of the evaluation. An evaluation instrument is only as good as the people completing it." Participant 105 stated, "I feel like our supervisors are doing a good job, are trustworthy, and always have the best interest of the institution in mind." Participant 111 stated there was a personal component to the appraisal process, as supervisors develop personal feelings about workers and those feelings will affect the a performance appraisal, "Supervisors and workers are human. They are going to view performance differently. I hope [supervisors] are treating everyone in their area fairly. All of the employees in the area should be evaluated by the same set of standards." Participant 115 echoed the above concerns:

> Each director does it differently. They have different ways of performance evaluation. For example, one director may have a philosophy that no one shall receive an outstanding, or highly anything or the highest mark, and another director may have a different feeling on that.

Participant 114 concluded the accuracy of the process depends on the human component, "if they're trying to truly do an honest and effective evaluation or just doing it to get it done and with the least amount of complexity. I think how it is being used determines the fairness of it."

Interview question 5 (F). *Have any employees challenged the accuracy of information in their performance appraisal? If so, please describe the resulting responses and/or actions.* For this interview question, two respondents stated no workers had challenged the appraisal. Participant 104 simply stated no complaints had ever occurred. Participant 114, who has been in the position a limited period, said there have been no complaints in the time they had been in this role, but the participant had heard of no prior complaints either.

However, at two institutions, the lack of disputes may be due to a newly launched appraisal process. As described by Participant 106, the prior process was based purely on the perception of the supervisor and complaints against that perception proved useless, so no disputes occurred. But, as a new process was launched this year, it was impossible to know if dispute cases would increase. According to Participant 101, performance issues were not identified often in the old appraisal process, so disputes rarely occurred. However, according to Participant 101, the new performance appraisal process was more accurate and may actually raise more questions or cause more complaints, because workers were not used to getting bad reviews. Similarly, Participant 109 stated in the past most disputes often occurred because workers did not receive an excellent rating.

Participants 107, 110, 111, and 112 stated only a few disputes had occurred regarding the accuracy of the appraisal and the concerns were usually resolved via resolution channels. Participant 107 has worked in the role for over a decade and had experienced only one challenge to the accuracy of a performance appraisal. In that case, the support staff worker did not file a grievance, but instead, made an informal report. Participant 107 solicited statements from the worker and the supervisor via separate meetings. The participant then compared the statements with the appraisal, which was upheld.

Participant 107 summarized, “In my assessment, with the steps that were taken, the support staff worker, was satisfied. In the end, the supervisor and the worker agreed to disagree on the accuracy of the appraisal from each other's perspective.” Participants 110 and 111 described similar steps in the resolution of the few disputes they had experienced. Participant 110 described the outcome of the meetings may have ended in an amended review or no change at all.

Participant 111 stated in the only instance where an employee disagreed, the appraisal was modified, and comments about the dispute and modification were added to the final appraisal file. Participant 112 commented the human resources administrator does not review every appraisal, so if comments by the support staff worker or supervisor describe a dispute, human resources staff may not necessarily be involved. Department leaders view every appraisal and sign off on them, so human resources is involved if invited or if a human resources worker noticed an investigation was needed (Participant 112).

Six of the participants confirmed in their responses that complaints or disputes do happen regarding the accuracy of an appraisal. These participants described specific areas in the appraisal form for disagreement comments or other concerns. Participant 102 described a section near the end of the appraisal where a worker can state why they disagree with the appraisal. The supervisor can do the same. All comments and related documentation become part of the employee personnel record. Participant 102 summarized each person was allowed his or her interpretation of the performance. Responses from participants 103 and 105 responded similarly as the above description.

Subjectivity in the appraisal process was understood, as explained by Participant 108. Workers at the institution represented by Participant 108 were encouraged to dispute their appraisal, if they did not agree with the rating given by their supervisor. As described by Participant 108, disputed comments were only seen by the worker and the human resources staff, “It's usually confidential, because they are the last people to see the file. Supervisors do not see the comments, unless they ask for the file later.”

Participant 103 has had a few instances where the employee disputed the appraisal, because they were evaluated on a task or factor that was not specifically identified as something for which the worker would be evaluated. Participant 103 said workers complained, “If they had known they were going to be evaluated on that part of their job, they would have been more attentive, or they would have tried harder.” Participant 115 indicated fewer complaints were occurring, maybe because processes were better now, “You shouldn't have the employee work throughout the year if you are not satisfied with the performance. A review is something that should be done all year.”

Interview question 6 (F). *Have any supervisors challenged the accuracy of the appraisal process or tool(s)? If so, please describe the resulting responses and/or actions.* Overall, the participant responses revealed few or no concerns from supervisors regarding the accuracy of the appraisal process or tool. Several participants stated input from both supervisors and workers was encouraged. Solicited input and voluntary feedback was noted as being helpful for changes or updates to the appraisal process and tool. Four participants commented they have never had supervisors complain about the accuracy of the appraisal process or tool. A reason, per Participant 107, was the appraisal form and process was “very basic” and “simple is better.”

Participant 102 stated complaints were avoided because, “We’ve kept our managers involved in the process. It allows everybody to make sure they are on the same page and supervisor and employee are moving in the same direction.” Participant 115 suggested a survey helped reduce the number of complaints about the appraisal process, “We did conduct a survey several years ago to gain input. So, everyone was asked to share with all levels what they’re expectations were of the appraisal process and shared in the decision-making."

However, other participants described experiences with supervisors who complained or were otherwise dissatisfied with the performance appraisal process or tool. Some participants in the study stated supervisors felt the rating method was ineffective or it was too subjective. Several participants also described conflicting feedback from supervisors. Some of the supervisors did not like using checkboxes for ratings, other supervisors wanted checkboxes for ratings. One participant described complaints from both support staff workers and supervisors about the rating levels. As Participant 113 described, supervisors may complain support staff rated themselves too liberally, were not objective, or were too one-sided in the self-ratings. Participant 113 continued, on the other hand, there have been complaints from some workers and supervisors who were ‘hard-nosed” or do not use the rating system as it was intended. Participant 101 stated supervisors had requested to scrap the existing appraisal tool, except the goal-setting component, as it was the only part of the entire process that made sense to them.

Participant 102 commented the addition of a third signature line to the form, the signature of the supervisor's administrator, which was the outcome of reported concerns from involved workers and administration. Participant 108 stated feedback, complaints or otherwise, was the biggest influence for adding a goal piece to the appraisal form and for changing to an anniversary based performance review cycle. Participant 110 summarized how input from supervisors and workers justified a new performance appraisal form and process:

> I've talked to many people about it since I've been here, and I must say it's broken, they want something better. They [said] the current process is too obtuse, hard to quantify, hard to measure, and not necessarily valid to being a good staff member.

An exception to usual performance was noted in one response as a concern in the appraisal process. Participant 111 stressed the importance of separating or clarifying how exceptions should be handled in the review process. Participant 111 described a situation in which a supervisor noted excessive absences on a worker's performance review, but the worker had been away due to an approved FMLA situation. Because of that one instance, the performance appraisal process was adjusted and supervisors were informed that FMLA, and similarly approved absences, cannot be rated punitively in the review. Participant 105 described supervisors expressing difficulty with understanding the ratings and what information should be reported in, for example, the strengths and opportunities area. Much discussion has transpired regarding the ratings and meanings, but some supervisors still ask for help with what information goes where on the form.

Interview question 7 (F). *Please describe incentive opportunities for support staff based on their performance achievement.* Nearly all participants stated there were no or only certain incentive opportunities for support staff based on performance achievement. Several participants described acknowledgement programs or bonuses for good performance. A few participants stated such programs invite peers and supervisors to nominate workers who have excelled in their role or presented outstanding behavior supporting the college goals and expectations. Participant 101 described that nominations were reviewed by a board appointed by the president. The board members then gather as much information as possible before making award decisions. Because of the review, only some of the nominations were approved for recognition awards. As Participant 101 described, “It is not tied at all to performance… if they’re going above and beyond in helping other people, there’s an ability to be recognized for that.”

Funding and the nature of the public, non-profit nature of community colleges was noted by Participant 112 as a reason there was no incentive program at the institution. The participant suggested the public sector was different from non-profit higher education as, “In Higher Ed. culture there is an aversion to merit programs.” The participant added there was some discussion of merit programs in higher education circles and seeming escalating interest in that regard, “I’m very interested [as having] experience in the private sector where a pay for performance evaluation system can be quite successful. Am I going to be building something? Yes, as soon as I can.”

Interestingly, Participant 104 described how much discussion transpired at the institution among representatives from all workgroups, including administration, about wage classifications and a point system based on performance. Management was ready to launch the new point system, but it did not happen. Increasing numbers of opponents with concerns about problems the point system could cause among the groups caused support staff to oppose the system. Participant 104 stated with a point system:

> You incentivize the good employees to stay by giving a larger income, and poor performers less than that increase, but they did not want to do that here. It leads back to our shared governance, which forces all of our employee groups to look at [the groups] as a whole unit.

Participant 105 described an alternative to financial incentives was an opportunity incentive, which mean a good performer will have an opportunity to complete additional assignments. The additional assignments may bring increase knowledge, skills, and abilities valuable to both the staff worker and the college. For example, excellent employees may be designated as mentors for new workers or leads for their department. Participant 107 stated simply, "The incentive is obviously a more harmonious relationship between the worker and the supervisor, job satisfaction, the feeling of a job well done." Similarly, Participant 104 stated the performance appraisal process was separate from financial incentives, such as raises or bonuses, and, instead, based on additional training and professional development opportunities for the coming year intended to help good workers expand their service to the institution and its constituencies. Participant 115 stated, "I know [training] is not necessarily an incentive, [but] we provide them with something that makes their job easier."

Interview question 8 (C). *Please describe ways support staff respond and/or react to their performance appraisal review.* When describing staff responses and reactions to the performance appraisal process and tools, most participants said neither the worker nor the supervisor like doing it. Several participants described steps staff worker could take if they were unhappy with their appraisal for any reason. Participant 102 commented when workers express dissatisfaction, it can start a conversation, which can bring about a positive outcome.

While most participants stated they know of few complaints, the consensus was the workers and supervisors feel the process was tedious and time consuming. As Participant 104 described, “It’s another piece of work to do, unfortunately. I think sometimes it’s viewed that way.” Participant 104 also stressed the intention was for the review to “be meaningful and open communication between the workers and the supervisors, but most times it’s something that has to be done and they don't put much effort into it.” Participant 104 concluded by saying no worker has come to the human resources office to say it was a great experience.

Participant 105 regrets the way staff sometimes perceive the performance appraisal. The staff resents differences in their performance review process in comparison to the faculty appraisal process, such as the faculty reviews were based on observation and staff members feel they were not fairly observed by their supervisors. Participant 106 commented staff did not like performance appraisal because it was “backward looking” and little consideration was given to what they may do going forward. The staff felt when they were rated poorly and told “don’t do that again,” no consideration was given to the chance that they won’t repeat poor performance behaviors. The participant continued that giving a worker a “C” does not provide any benefit if the worker only knows “they are meeting expectations.”

Participant 107 stated staff emotions and reactions to their performance appraisals varies greatly and depends entirely on how each worker feels about the individual performance review, but overall, it was cause for the worker and the supervisor to communicate. Participant 107 described a situation in the maintenance department, in which more males “gender-wise” were employed than females, and the clerical department, in which more females were employed than males. The participant described how the male maintenance workers perceive the performance appraisal process as “touchy feely” and something to be endured. Other participants commented most complaints from support staff had something to do with the opinion of the manager.

Participant 113 shared complaints about supervisor ratings have caused the need to transfer employees to a different area, “because it wasn’t working out in that department, the evaluation seemed to be the trigger for the situation.” In other cases, the workers complained the supervisor only checked the required boxes and provided no comments for the rating. The participant added:

> People want to hear what they have done well and not well, and if you are not providing anything other than checking a box, that is where the fairness comes into play; it is not fair to the employee. You have got more to say than just check a box. The comment section should not be left blank.

Participant 112 mentioned workers’ aversion to the self-appraisal component of the review process. Participant 112 explained varying levels of interest in completing the self-evaluation and that was directly related to how well they complete the process, "They may or may not spend enough time working on that document, and, of course, the less they work on that document, the less they realize how helpful it is for the final appraisal."

Inconsistency was a cause for worker complaints as described by one participant. Participant 107 described there have been instances where it was learned workers rarely received a performance review. Such news meant there were problems with the reporting process and improvements were needed. As Participant summarized, changes in review and recordkeeping help avoid concerns.

Participants who have initiated, or are gathering results of new appraisal processes and tools, expressed hope the staff and other workers will find value in the experience. As Participant 101 explained, "We've had kind of a misrepresentation. This year will be a test for us. This will be a new opportunity to see whether or not [the] process comes together or is a little bit better." The participant continued there were few staff workers who would "jump up and down, and say, 'I can't wait to do this.'" As the participant summarized, if the process was more about mentoring, the workers would more readily receive it.

One participant provided a positive response based on the philosophy that was in place at their institution. Participant 115 stated both the supervisor and the worker, in most cases, look forward to the appraisal and workers would contact the human resources office if the due date was approaching and the review had not been done. With that philosophy, Participant 115 commented problems with appraisal completion might be identified and corrected. As the participant described:

> I think that that by being proactive that they [supervisors and workers] support in a positive way the current process that we have. By developing a philosophy that there are no surprises, it takes away that fear or dread for both individuals.

Participant 115 explained workers want the appraisal because they want to know where they stand and how their supervisors feel about the workers' job performance.

Interview question 9 (TS). *Please describe the training requirements for supervisors who assess support staff performance.* Most participants agreed training was important for effective performance appraisal processes. Participant 101 communicated training improvements were in progress, particularly supervisory training. Other participants agreed training was an ongoing need and struggle. Participant 104 commented, "There is a tendency to just hire people, put them to work, and not really support them as supervisor. Overall, our supervisor training could use some improvement." For training to happen, supervisors must be willing to learn, as one participant stated when describing a supervisor who had been in the role for years. Participant 112 said the supervisor felt no training was needed and it was a big deal getting the supervisor to accept the information about how to conduct proper performance appraisals.

Participant 111 admitted training was lacking in regard to performance appraisal. The participant stated there was no training and the only thing they did was give the supervisors the form, invite any questions, and follow-up with the supervisors if they do it poorly. Participant 107 stressed:

> I never had a support staff come and say 'this person doesn't know what they're talking about' and I think part of it is the instrument. If a supervisor cannot assess

> if somebody is showing the proper initiatives, they do not have any business being a supervisor, but they still need orientation.

Participant 110 stated the only training their institution initiated was a new one-hour session during a professional development day. The training was optional and supervisors were encouraged to attend, but Participant 110 noted, mandatory attendance would be best and such guidelines were hoped for the future. With no incentive for the training, as described by Participant 111, employees may not come. Participant 111 stated even vice-presidents did not attend training that was offered at their institution and that it was a problem, because all workers at all levels need to know about the performance appraisal process and why it was needed. As stated by Participant 111:

> If your top administrators don't come to the training for evaluations, then it’s not important for them to evaluate their people, so it’s a challenge. If top administrators don't come to the training for evaluations, then it’s not important for them to evaluate their people, so it’s a challenge.

Some participants described meetings with supervisors, staff, and other involved parties to learn what training may be needed on their campuses. Participant 105 described a round table discussion that occurs each year with supervisors. In that meeting, performance appraisal was discussed occasionally, but the discussion alone was not appropriate training to help the supervisors. As Participant 105 stated, the discussions do not cover related topics, such as rater bias; thus, an in-depth scope of training was needed. Participant 115 stated:

> We reiterate and train that the evaluation tool, there should be training. We worked really hard with the new directors and leadership staff to help them

> understand it is meant to be beneficial and that it is not an opportunity to put a dig in an employee they do not like.

Participant 104 stated, "We do training periodically, maybe once every five years, or often enough have evaluation training take place when needed." Participant 114 said there was no training, when the time for evaluation approached, the human resources staff provide a document the supervisors can read if they were unsure or the process. Only one participant mentioned legal involvement in the performance appraisal decision making. Participant 102 mentioned that on occasion the college attorney was invited to managerial meetings to consider performance appraisal topics. The institution has union contracts, a faculty contract, and a support staff contract. When any changes are needed, including training requirements, contractual effects must be reviewed by managers.

Participant 107, who represents a unionized institution, commented when a new supervisor was hired, training was usually conducted on a departmental basis, unless the new supervisor was at the vice-president level or above, in which case the training was conducted by human resources staff (Participant 107). Participant 107 added the training was not as in depth as needed and consists only of familiarizing the supervisor with the process, the requirements of the collective bargaining agreement, and the appraisal tool. As Participant 107 concluded, a more extensive supervisor training program will be implemented and will encompass more information than was currently shared, including an explanation of the purpose of performance appraisal as a developmental tool to help employees develop and prepare for other roles at the institution, a component of training that was not currently happening.

There were instances in which participants described formal training programs. Participant 103 described a robust yearlong training program, including some managerial tracks, followed by memos and a timeline for the appraisal process. Participant 106 explained the new appraisal process requires every employee to receive formal training, including supervisors, workers, cabinet members, and the president. The training was conducted by an external company representative to ensure no bias and accurate information. The trainer provides details about the purpose of the appraisal and how it was supposed to work. The participant added the employees get the training at the same time as the supervisors and it was a good training experience.

Three participants described purchased informational materials used in lieu of or in addition to training practices. Participant 113 stated training included available materials from a subscription-based video library system. The videos are sometimes required and are based on business activities, including performance rating training, conflict resolution, improvement planning, and goal setting. As the participant described, the videos were a supplement and were considered helpful. Participants 103 and 112 stated they utilize published materials, including books about performance appraisal detailing how to rate performance and how to give effective feedback. Participant 112 shared comments received from a supervisor who appreciated a new training procedure:

> I have never approached the evaluation like you described, how it can be approached, and I have written some things that I can see now, in my career, were too generic. It would not allow someone to [understand] what I meant, because it was not specific enough.

Participant 112 stated when the new training requirements were implemented, it was challenging, but afterward, several supervisors acknowledged they appreciated the training.

Interview question 10 (TS). *What is your perception of the accuracy of performance appraisal of support staff?* In terms of accuracy of the performance appraisal of support staff, most participants expressed some degree of inaccuracy. While many participants have faith in the appraisal process and believe it works, they noted concerns about all or some parts of the process or tool. Some participants stated inaccuracies in performance appraisal can happen for varied reasons, as supervisors are overworked, conflict averse, untrained, subjective, and feel forced having no incentive other than the requirement to do effective performance appraisals. As Participant 104 commented, “I do believe that [the appraisal process] fairly accurate and that [support staff] trust that their supervisors are putting thought into their performance evaluations.” Participant 105 stated the performance appraisal process was so straightforward, supervisors do it correctly. To emphasize, Participant 105 added:

> I think supervisors are grounded in the right framework why we are here for students, and we have to help people and correct mistakes. I think that [the appraisals] are accurate in terms of that, but there is a lot we can do in terms of providing training to make this process more meaningful.

Some participants described inaccuracy in the scores, seeing mostly high scores or low scores of a consistent nature. In addition, the timing of the appraisal may be cause of inaccuracy. One participant described performance ratings may be based on a workers recent performance, rather than on a summary of the entire year. Participant 109 stated employees may complain, "'I worked hard all year but because of what happen last month, right before my evaluation, you based a whole year on what happened last month?'" Other concerns were noted in the responses, including rater bias, subjectivity, and checkboxes, which, according to one participant, invite inaccuracy. Participant 112 stated the tool was important for accuracy, "Ultimately, the ideal is to get the tool that works for them, because a better tool will give you a better outcome."

Lack of accountability from involved workers was an accuracy concern suggested in a few participant responses. Trust in the capability of the supervisors was also noted among several responses when describing accuracy. Participant 106 stated the appraisal process was dependent on the supervisor's rating and, unless there were issues with unfairness, the appraisals have been generally accurate. The participant added a new appraisal process based on a coaching format would be more accurate and help foster a positive relationship between the worker and the supervisor. Some participants stated diligence in recordkeeping and tracking appraisals may be a concern, but if supervisors take the needed time to do the appraisal, accuracy was improved. As stated by Participant 107, "I think it's imperative that we train and describe exactly what outcomes we're trying to achieve, through a reenergized effort in performance evaluation, and impress upon people the accuracy."

Some participants mentioned self-appraisals help with accuracy and reduce opportunities for subjectivity and rater bias. According to Participant 111, self-appraisals with supervisory appraisals help avoid surprises. The worker added while some workers may be disappointed with their rating, they will, hopefully, understand why they received the rating and the expectations for the job.

Niceness or the lack of candid feedback can be a caused of inaccurate performance appraisal. Participant 108 described how everyone at the institution was nice to one another and the institutional culture was such that, unless a worker does something clearly egregious, performance appraisal ratings will be inflated and, thus, not a true reflection of the workers performance. The culture causes a struggle, while it may be wonderful to have workers who work well together and are supportive of one another, difficult feedback may not be delivered adequately.

A few participants commented they came to their institution from corporate or other business backgrounds, which caused some difficulties for them adapting to the public institutional culture and processes overall. Participants shared that decision making for needed improvements was often delayed, complicated, and sometimes impossible. Participant 113 offered a summary of accuracy in performance appraisal:

> I do not think it is ever perfect, I think evaluation is such that it just simply cannot ever be perfect. It is a communication that you force on the supervisor and worker. I think it can be very useful, it can be performed in great ways, but it can also be the opposite.

Some participants were sure to mention accurate performance appraisals do occur and they know of appraisals that were thorough and in alignment with the purpose of the task.

Interview question 11 (CE). *Please describe how support staff are informed of their performance level and goals between reviews.* When asked how support staff workers were informed of their performance level and goals, most participants stated there are no required meetings between annual reviews. In general, most participants stated no feedback was required or given unless needed. Participant 105 responded, "Outside of something extremely good or something extremely bad, we are not doing a good job of talking about performance in between annual performance reviews." Participant 108 seemed to echo most participant responses for the question:

> We have no formal process. We do try to encourage them, but I doubt that it has happened with any sort of frequency from my standpoint. We do have departments that do a very good job of giving regular feedback, and we have others that just do it once a year so. The majority of supervisors do it once a year; we probably have very little communication in between.

Most participants stated such communications should occur, but with no requirements or tracking, it was not possible to know how often workers and supervisors discuss performance between reviews. Participant 109 explained, "That is one weakness in the process. [Supervisors] say they are going to do it, but they hardly ever do. It has to happen. It has to work on a periodic basis with their performance evaluation." Participant 114 imagined how a monetary incentive might help with performance appraisal requirements and accuracy of ratings, but assumed such a feature might make things worse.

Some participants described how employees were made aware of expectations for the job when hired and as part of the review process. A few participants commented regular review of job descriptions and related goals to ensure alignment with the performance appraisal process and tool. Several participants stated the job descriptions were available year-round for employees to review and to work toward meeting expectations. Participant 101 added that if the information was not available to the workers, it would not reasonable to expect good performance, because the workers would not know what they were supposed to be doing.

Communication seemed to be a common factor among participant responses in regard to information about performance level and goal expectations. Several participants stressed the annual review and performance rating should not be a surprise to the worker. Participants responses were similar in that if a performance issue exists, it should be discussed with the employee at the time and during the year, not only noted in an annual performance review.

Some participants described performance improvement plans to be checked during the year, specifically for workers not meeting expectations, and similar performance plans for new workers for evaluation during probation periods. As Participant 104 stated, the purpose was “to check on their progress and see what we can do as an institution and as supervisors to help them.” A participant from a small college credited the size of the institution with the possibility that there was no need for discussions about performance in between reviews. Participant 111 described the situation as, “We’re together daily. If you're not working together daily, maybe what you need is more frequent meetings to talk about [performance].”

Several participants have plans for new appraisal systems or recently launched new systems. A few participants described in-house, standard-packaged, or custom-packaged commercial appraisal systems, which will include regular meetings between formal reviews. As Participant 106 stated, “In this new performance management system, you’re touching base quarterly and the employees know what they’re supposed to be working on.” A different ambitious participant described an attempt to require quarterly performance reviews, but the idea was not welcomed, as it would involve too much work for supervisors.

Participant 103 suggested reducing the requirement to twice per year, but the idea remained unwelcomed. The concept evolved to informal team or departmental meetings for discussion of goals. Participant 103 continued, the concept was not intended to replace formal performance appraisal, but it would serve as an effective mechanism for performance status mid-year, between formal reviews, and help determine if the workers "have the skills and knowledge to be successful." With the performance appraisal, workers will be required to create a development plan, specifying training needs and interests, to serve as a guide of the coming year. As Participant 103 described, the workers could focus on career aspirations and their needs to reach that career goal. As added Participant 103, 20 – 30 training sessions per month would occur, using internal and external trainers, to help create the development plan process. Participant 103 concluded an appraisal was stressful and a microscopic feeling for workers, when instead, it should be a time for reflection and celebration and include an ongoing digital note file for the supervisor and worker to use throughout the year.

One participant eluded to earlier comments about differences between academia and private business when describing a review of best practices in performance management systems. Participant 112 stated performance checkpoints during the year are needed and are mentioned often in best practices, but there are hurdles even with ideal plans. As Participant 112 concluded:

> The education industry, for what we do as a business in this industry, does not move very readily or quickly. You still have to approach the success and the

> sustainability of the institution based on a business model. If you do not, you are not going to survive in the long haul.

Most assuredly, Participant 115 said if the employee was performing well, the worker should know they are doing well based on supervisory praise throughout the year.

From the responses provided by participants during the interviews, several emerging trends were identified for formal and self-appraisal requirements, goal and feedback practices, subjectivity, formal acknowledgement and recordkeeping practices, and training needs. The below paragraphs contain highlights of the emerging themes in participant responses.

Emerging theme: Formal and self-appraisal. Participant responses for this study reflected a common theme in that formal performance appraisal of support staff occurs once per academic year at 100% of the institutions represented by each participant. Among the institutions, the annual performance appraisal is usually conducted in the spring semester. In all responses, a scheduled annual performance review meeting occurs between the support staff worker and the supervisor. The meeting may include a comparison of the worker's self-appraisal and formal appraisal, discussion of differences, follow-up, improvement plan, signature acknowledgement, and distribution of original documentation to the human resources office for placement in the employee's personnel folder.

Several participants commented annual performance appraisal and review provides opportunity for establishment of goals and professional development needed for the coming year. Many of the participants described a self-appraisal component as a requirement of the formal appraisal process. The self-appraisal is generally used as a foundation or comparison for the formal performance review created by the workers supervisor. As described by participants, the self-appraisal added to the annual review meeting included discussion of goal achievement, opportunities for further development, and establishment of new goals for the coming year. Most participants expressed comments about the value of including goals and opportunities in the performance review experience.

Emerging theme: Goal and feedback practices. While all responses referenced once per annum formal performance review, some participants described informal performance meetings or casual feedback events between scheduled formal reviews. All participants indicated such practices are beneficial for continued performance measurement and growth. Throughout the interviews, participant responses revealed a shared passion for clearly defined goals, feedback toward achievement of goals, and support for further development. However, interim and ongoing feedback is not a requirement of supervisors at most of the represented institutions.

Several participants described active endeavors for adding periodic feedback and performance update meetings during the year. In some cases, new performance appraisal processes and forms are designed as such that interim performance feedback opportunities are included. Participant 106 further explained how the new coaching and mentoring performance review program launched at the respective institution was purposefully designed around ongoing opportunities for performance feedback.

Several of the participants described performance improvement plans required for new or low-performing workers and for a specific period (e.g., during orientation or probationary periods). The performance improvement plans are supplementary to the formal performance review process, but information within and the outcome of the improvement plan is useful for self-appraisal and formal performance measurement determinations.

Emerging theme: Subjectivity. Several participants commented subjectivity in performance appraisal is an ongoing concern primarily due to the human aspect of perceived performance level. Participants explained performance appraisal training and clearly defined goals help reduce subjectivity and related errors; however, worker competencies are measured necessarily from the perspective of the supervisor. Participant 113 described an instance when a worker disputed the performance ratings, because, as the worker argued, the ratings were based on a task or factor that was not specifically identified as an activity for which the worker would be evaluated. As the participant described, clear explanation of tasks and expectations could have prevented the dispute. Several participants described how forthcoming or newly launched performance appraisal forms and procedures are intended to help increase objectivity and worker involvement in performance measurement; thereby, reducing subjectivity concerns.

Emerging theme: Formal acknowledgement and recordkeeping. All participants indicated the worker and the supervisor must sign the formal performance appraisal document; thereby acknowledging receipt of the information. In some cases, respondents reported additional signatures are required, including higher administration, trustees, or human resources staff. Nearly all participants said that the executed performance document must be delivered to the human resources office for placement in each employees personnel file. A copy should be given to the worker, but the worker and supervisor may access performance appraisal documents at the human resources office, if desired.

Emerging theme: Training needs. Most participants agreed training is an important need for effective performance appraisal processes and participants agreed training is an ongoing need and struggle. Overall, the participants stated such training is missing or could be improved at their institutions. Regarding supervisory preparation for performance appraisals, participants described a wide-range of practices. Performance appraisal training is limited to: simply giving the supervisors the needed forms; answering questions from supervisors if concerns arise; optional training sessions; books; a pamphlet of information about performance appraisals; subscription video libraries; or informal, one-on-one sessions with human resources staff. A few participants described formal, group training sessions presented by professional, external trainers; yearlong training programs; and a training opportunity about every four years that included supervisory components, memos, and an appraisal timeline.

Summary

Thirty-two human resources administrators were invited to participate in the study. Seventeen participants agreed to participate in the study, with 15 ultimately participating in the interview process. Participant responses to the 11 interview questions revealed common themes in participant perceptions, including perspectives of annual performance review requirements, employee self-appraisal prior to supervisor rating, appraisal review meeting prior to finalization, recordkeeping practices, and training for performance appraisal practices and forms. Overall, participants described a good level of confidence in the performance appraisal of support staff, such as the timing of the appraisals, the value in employee self-appraisals, and supervisor ratings, but several participants described unique ideas, concerns, and wants regarding the performance appraisal practices at their institutions.

This chapter included a summary of information gathered in the 15 interviews of participating human resources professionals. All participants experienced the same interview questions without time limitations or any other restricting parameters. The responses were coded to represent anonymous data accurately representative of the participants' actual statements. The coded responses were sorted and analyzed to determine emerging themes. Information in the forthcoming Chapter Five includes further discussion of the findings noted in Chapter Four, including highlights of identified anomalies, and recommendations for further investigation of the research topic.

Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusion

This qualitative investigation occurred for the purpose of learning the perspectives of academic human resource administrators, regarding perceived fairness in performance appraisal of support staff. As described in Chapter Two, there has been increased interest in research focused on performance appraisal, fairness, and job satisfaction (Choudhary, Deswal, & Philip, 2013). However, research involving academic support staff is lacking, although research of other aspects of community college exists. Support staff are underrepresented in scholarly research, as they play a very important role in the academic workplace (Barakos-Cartwright, 2012; Weaver & Wilson, 2003). Over a decade ago, Weaver and Wilson (2003) asserted the time had come for academic support staff to receive attention and recognition for the vital role they play as part of the institutional team. Success of academic institutions is impacted greatly through support staff functions, yet support staff are seemingly the most underrepresented, least compensated, and least valued group for at the institution (Barakos-Cartwright, 2012).

In Chapter Four, the information gathered from one-on-one interviews with academic human resources administrators had enhanced the existing knowledge base regarding fairness in appraisal. It is hoped academic administrators may use the information to improve performance appraisal processes, which, in turn, can result in better worker satisfaction, reduced controversy, and higher productivity of workers. In Chapter Five the findings of the study, which highlighted problem areas and provided data for improved decision-making, are included. The conclusions, where results are discussed in regards to research in the study, are also presented. The implications of the study results are also discussed. Recommendation for future research will also be addressed and finally, a summary of the entire research study will be presented.

Findings

The interview questions, including corresponding category identifiers, are presented below. The discussion of responses for each interview question highlights the contrived themes. The categories are related to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Interview questions one through three were categorized as Qualifying (Q) questions, as they were intended to aid in determining perceptions in the performance appraisal process and forms in use at participant institutions. Questions four through 7 were placed in the Fairness (F) category. Those questions were created with the intent of gathering information regarding perceptions of fairness in the appraisal process.

Interview question eight was placed in the Communication (C) category for the purpose of investigating perceptions of support staff responses and reactions to performance appraisal. For the Trust in Supervision (TS) category, interview questions 9 and 10 were created to probe perceptions of training and accuracy in performance appraisal. Finally, for the Clarity of Expectations (CE) category, interview question Eleven was created to evaluate perceptions of performance status and feedback in gaps between formal performance appraisal events. The following paragraphs provide a discussion of participant responses in terms of assigned category and research questions.

Interview question 1 (Q). *Please describe the steps involved in the appraisal of your support staff performance.* Participant responses for Interview Question One (Q) ranged from very simple to very complex descriptions of the steps of the performance appraisal process and/or the form used for the appraisal. Commonalities were determined from the responses. All of the participants described how at least one formal, annual performance appraisal is required. Most of the participants stated the formal performance appraisal occurs in the spring of each academic year.

There were some differences noted in the timing of performance appraisal. One participant stated the annual appraisal occurs on hire date anniversary, as opposed to the same time each year for support staff, for example, in the spring. Another participant specified a performance appraisal is required during probationary periods for new hires; for example, during or at the end of the first three months a worker is performing the work. In another case, the participant stated supervisors complete performance appraisals of support staff between September and October of each year.

From several of participant responses, it was determined a self-appraisal is required from the support staff. The self-appraisal is used to establish the workers opinion of their own performance and is used for comparison purposes with the supervisor's rating of the workers performance. If needed adjustments are identified from the appraisal review, the changes occurred before the performance appraisal is signed by the worker, supervisor, and, in some cases, the supervisor's administrator. In all cases, participants stated the performance appraisal packet is submitted to human resources for placement in the worker's employment folder. All participants described a required performance appraisal review meeting to discuss the appraisal. The supervisor and support staff worker meet for the purpose of sharing information and clarifying performance ratings.

Interview question 2 (Q). *Please describe the performance appraisal form and/or template currently utilized at your institution and why you are using that tool(s).*

All of the participant responses were comparable in that a performance appraisal form, the same for all support staff at the institution, is used for appraisal. Common responses included descriptions of forms containing very basic Likert-type ranking instruments to customized tools created internally or purchased from performance tool vendors. Many of the participants stated recent changes had occurred with the performance appraisal tool or that it had been replaced. Participants indicated new processes had been launched or plans to implement were in progress. One participant specifically stressed the value of the new performance tool containing a coaching focus meant to be centered more on performance goals, thereby serving better the needs of the employee and the institution.

Most participants stated the required self-appraisal tool, if applicable, was the same as the formal performance appraisal form. There were varying statements from participants regarding what areas of the tool were mandatory. Responses differed on whether comments, in addition to the rating, were required on the form. Some participants were very descriptive, providing copies of their performance appraisal tools and forms or explicit details of the orientation period, comment areas, strengths and weaknesses, goals, or job descriptions.

Interview question 3 (Q). *Please describe other performance measurement tools that have been used at your institution and why you stopped using them*. Participant responses for this question were affected, in some cases, by tenure of the participant. Several respondents expressed how prior performance appraisal tools were not quantifiable, too specific, not relevant, or simply outdated for modern academic workplaces. There were comments from participants that prior tools had been in use for years, including a statement from Participant 107 who described how the same tool had been used for over twenty years. While the participants agreed their forms were consistent at their institutions, there were differences in the effectiveness of the type of appraisal form. The comments by participants included new performance appraisal tools and processes were needed, especially as job descriptions changed, goals evolved, departments, and new purposes were realized for performance appraisal.

Participant 110 stated the prior 360-degree appraisal process did not work due to anonymity and privacy concerns. From the comment, the peer ratings caused workers to be uncomfortable, the request for review may have been ill timed, and it was possible the anonymity prompted an invalid representation of the reviewee’s performance. According to Participant 114, short answer responses on the prior form, did not work well, as no one liked having to write out their ratings. Participant 114 stated the checkbox format worked better. Conversely, however, Participant 108 stated the checkboxes did not provide enough information, so the institution moved to descriptive phrases, which the participant stated seem to be welcomed. Participant responded the prior form lacked a value-oriented component for measuring progress and contribution toward worker and institutional goals.

Other comments noted from the interviews were that prior forms had repetitive questions, were not relevant, required useless scores, and lacked relevance to current job descriptions or classifications. Several participants stated when the need for change was realized, they performed analytic studies of performance appraisal, evaluated available alternatives, sought input from external performance appraisal experts, or solicited input from the institutional decision makers and workforce.

Several participants stated they had no experience with prior performance appraisals at their institution, as during their tenure, there have been no changes. They have not been at the institution long enough have much knowledge of prior tools and processes. Thus, because of this lack of experience, the responses were brief or turned toward topics not specifically related to the question.

Interview question 4 (F). *How confident are you that the appraisal process accurately represents the performance of employees it is designed to measure?* Most participants stated they believe the current performance appraisal process they use is overall accurate. However, there were several comments regarding components or factors of the appraisal process that raise concerns or increase chances of inaccuracy. For example, some responders indicated that while the appraisal tool may be correct, the appraisal process might not be, and vice versa. About half of the participants stated performance appraisal could be difficult to measure accurately regardless of process or tool. Because the process involves humans who can make mistakes or bring bias into a situation, the measurement may be flawed. Some participants repeated the concern that checkboxes, although simpler, do not provide good reflections of performance. The participants who described the use of descriptive phrases on the appraisal form suggested the phrases provide greater accuracy.

For the appraisal process, most participants indicated a common concern about workers and supervisors who put little thought toward the rating and who do it just complete the process. Participants stated there is a general ambivalence or dread about the process, because there are no rewards for completing them accurately or, in at least one response, no reward for completing the appraisal at all. Other noted concerns were there was little accountability or lack of confidence in the appraisal process, as the assigned rating may not be provable and it can be difficult to determine if the ratings accurately reflect the worker performance.

Conflict avoidance was described as reason for inaccuracy when workers and supervisors do not want to receive/give negative ratings. The conflict avoidance caused inflated ratings, which are not valuable for performance measurement purposes. Some responses from participants indicated consistency of performance appraisal in terms of review dates could be another cause of inaccuracy. Several participants suggested lack of supervisory attention between ratings might cause ratings based only on recent performance behaviors.

Interview question 5 (F). *Have any employees challenged the accuracy of information in their performance appraisal? If so, please describe the resulting responses and/or actions.* Only two participants stated no workers had challenged the accuracy of their performance appraisal. One participant clarified, having been in the role for a short period, there had been no complaints, and the participant had no knowledge of complaints at the institution prior to assuming the role. Of the remaining participants who had experienced workers challenging the performance appraisal, most stated it was a rare occurrence.

Several participants indicated a new appraisal process was launched recently and it was too soon to know about complaints. Some participants maintained the new process and tool was so accurate complaints may actually increase due to the inaccuracy of past performance review ratings. Other participants indicated past complaints were due to workers not receiving high marks, as inflated ratings created a false level of expectation.

Participant 108 stated disputes for performance appraisal ratings are encouraged. Some participants added that workers had challenged their performance measurement when they were rated on a task for which they did not know they would be evaluated.

All of the participants described a systematic approach was in place for worker complaints about their performance appraisal. Several responders emphasized due process procedures in which a selected individual(s) would review the appraisal. Depending on the review, the appraisal would be upheld or revised. Of the participants who stated complaints had occurred, they clarified comments about the dispute, including cause, investigation, and resolution, were made part of finished appraisal packet. Some participants indicated workers might not challenge the appraisal at all, if they disagree with the rating, because they see no value in the process.

Interview question 6 (F). *Have any supervisors challenged the accuracy of the appraisal process or tool(s)? If so, please describe the resulting responses and/or actions.* While some participant responses to previous interview questions included comments about dissatisfaction with appraisal processes and tool design, overall the participant responses suggested few supervisory complaints had occurred. Most participants provided simple responses that supervisors ‘just do the task.’ Simplicity and basic design of the appraisal process and tool was noted as a reason no supervisory complaints had occurred. While participants stated there was a lack of complaints by supervisors, they noted many supervisor complaints were centered on workers overrating themselves on the self-appraisal.

With so few complaints, participants provided no details regarding resulting responses or actions. Instead, the focus in responses was toward the value of feedback from supervisory input. Some participants mentioned feedback, not necessarily challenges, from supervisors was encouraged, and such comments can be helpful for improvements in the appraisal process and tool. A few participants stated keeping supervisors involved in the decision making process for performance appraisal matters helps keep complaints at a low level. From participant responses, such feedback prompted the addition of new features to the process, such as goal components. Changing the date of annual performance review to the anniversary of hire date was the result of supervisory input per one participant. Based on supervisory feedback, one participant stated it was determined misunderstandings existed regarding how to determine a performance rating. Finally, another participant stated needed training and instructions for supervisors responsible for performance appraisals was identified as a positive outcome of received supervisory concerns. Training for supervisors will be described in greater detail for Interview Question Nine below.

Interview question 7 (F). *Please describe incentive opportunities for support staff based on their performance achievement.* According to responders, there were no incentive opportunities tied to performance achievement at their institutions. However, formal acknowledgement programs or bonuses were described. From the responses, other participants described how supervisors could nominate a worker for an award for performance excellence or for contributions toward institutional goals and expectations. Responses included that tying performance appraisal to monetary incentives, could cause unhealthy competition among workers.

Interview question 8 (C). *Please describe ways support staff respond and/or react to their performance appraisal review*. Responses for this interview questions were varied and often extended into areas covered by other interview questions. Answers were similar in that participants felt worker emotions about performance appraisal are not consistent. Most statements echoed previous participants' comments that workers and the supervisors do not enjoy completing performance appraisal requirements. Interestingly, one participant revealed no workers have described the event as a great experience. On a positive note, another participant commented when worker responses and reactions to their performance appraisal can open a needed dialogue about the appraisal ratings, process, or tool.

Interview question 9 (TS). *Please describe the training requirements for supervisors who assess support staff performance.* For this interview question, nearly all participants agreed training for supervisors is lacking or insufficient in terms of performance appraisal processes and tools. Many participants noted the lack of consistent training affected the performance appraisal process. According to the varied responses, training programs varied from simple instructions to yearlong modules. Some participants noted for training to be successful, buy-in at all levels was needed. Even though some supervisors did not feel a need to be trained in conducting a performance appraisal, most participants in the study said the supervisors appreciated the professional development after the training was completed.

Interview Question 10 (TS). *What is your perception of the accuracy of performance appraisal of support staff?* Many participants referenced earlier comments made for previous interview questions. Overall, participants felt there is some degree of inaccuracy in the performance appraisal of support staff. Responders described inaccuracies may happen due to many reasons, including human factors, tools used, institutional culture, training, recordkeeping, and because there is no incentive to measure performance accurately for appraisal purposes. Coaching and mentoring were mentioned by a few participants as a way to help improve the accuracy of performance appraisal and foster nurturing relationships among supervisors and workers. Several participants described how self-appraisals can increase the accuracy of the formal appraisal and reduce other concerns like bias and subjectivity. As a summary of responses, performance appraisal is never perfect and there will be flaws, but it can be useful if thorough and aligned to aid the workers and the institution.

Interview question 11 (CE). *Please describe how support staff are informed of their performance level and goals between reviews.* The consensus among responses is that little feedback or discussion occurs between formal reviews of support staff. The core of nearly all participant responses was that the only discussions occur as part of the self- and formal appraisal process. A few participants described probationary performance reviews for new hires, which would be between formal appraisals.

According to Schultz (2015), for optimal performance improvement, feedback throughout the year is better than a single annual performance review. From the responses, most participants indicated it would be nice if supervisors would discuss performance matters with workers on a more frequent basis, but it generally does not happen unless necessary, as with some unexpected event of excellent performance or unexpected egregious behavior.

Conclusions

For this study, three research questions served as the foundation for investigation of performance appraisal and perceptions of fairness therein. The information gathered during this investigation addressed the research questions. The research questions were supported by the interview questions. Five emerging themes were identified in Chapter Four. As a reminder, the emerging themes were: a) Formal and self-appraisal, b) goal and feedback practices, c) subjectivity, d) formal acknowledgment and recordkeeping practices, and e) training needs. The emerging themes are justifiable and all support factors of each research questions.

The below paragraphs provide discussion of each research question in terms of the information gathered and research conclusions. In addition, the unexpected phenomena are included. Finally, a synopsis of all five chapters of this report will be presented in the closing summary section.

Research question 1. *What practices do human resources administrators at community colleges identify as fair and unfair in performance appraisal of support staff at the college?*

Fairness. For this research question, most responses revealed workers and supervisors felt the performance appraisal is mostly fair, but that performance is difficult to measure. Most responders stated performance appraisal is just a task to be completed, often with little value realized in the process. Kuvaas (2011) found worker perceptions of fairness in procedures explain the workers acceptance of the appraisal and satisfaction level with the organization. The findings of this study also support existing research that innovative performance appraisal processes and tools can help reduce fairness concerns (Becker et al., 2012; Choudhary et al., 2013; Collins et al., 2012).

Research provides evidence that all workers, from entry-level roles to upper administration, should be concerned about fairness in the workplace (Jones & Skarlicki, 2013). From the responses, support for existing research was identified with replies that fairness in performance appraisal and related processes can influence worker motivation (Collins et al., 2012; Palaiologos et al., 2011; Shaharyar et al., 2014).

Unfairness. The consensus among participants regarding unfairness was that when support staff are not happy with their performance rating, they find no value in the process. This finding is in line with Kuvaas' (2011) study results. Staff are not motivated to participate when they feel the appraisal is unjust, as there is no clear reason to performance better. In addition, responses from the interviews were that supervisors simply may not care enough or are not trained sufficiently to rate a worker effectively. The human aspect of appraisal, as with subjectivity and emotions, can be cause for injustice. The responses seem to support existing research of how motivational issues, in terms of performance outcomes, influenced organizational relationships and organizational commitment (Cheng, 2014; Kuvaas, 2006; Shaharyar et al., 2014).

Participant replies were mixed in regard to the type of appraisal form. Differences in performance appraisal processes and forms can be causes for injustice. In some cases, responders indicated the appraisal may not be fair if the appraisal form and process does not match the position or institutional expectations. Some participants felt Likert-scale ratings worked better for measuring performance, while others said descriptive phrases were the most effective way to rate performance levels. The timing of the appraisal was also identified as a reason for unfairness, as supervisors may rate a worker differently soon after a positive or negative behavior, thus not considering other behaviors throughout the year. Concerning timing, there were several comments that to provide a fair appraisal, the formal appraisal should be consistently completed such as annually, with performance discussions throughout the year.

Disputes. According to Javad and Premarajan (2011), supervisors should react promptly and effectively with disputes arise. From the interview responses, disputes were few, but managed in similar fashion at each institution. Generally, when a complaint was received, a human resources chairperson or director reviewed the appraisal and investigated via separate interviews with the worker and the supervisor. Most participants stated the parties met together and the outcome of that meeting would be final. The outcome may be no changes to the appraisal occur or a revision will be made. The notes of the meeting are included in the appraisal packet and placed in the employees file.

Incentives. According to responders, there were no monetary incentive opportunities tied to performance achievement at their institutions. Comments were that supervisors nominate a worker for an award for performance excellence or for contributions toward institutional goals and expectations. The consensus of replies was that monetary incentives for performance invite undesirable competition among staff. Therefore, alternatives to financial incentives, such as opportunities for advanced skill or knowledge training, provide the staff and the institution a means to achieve personal and institutional goals and to make workers' jobs better. This finding is in line with Agbola et al., (2011) and Sanchez and Levine (2012) who proposed performance appraisal can enhance a worker's performance in that the process helps identify strengths and weaknesses, aids in job description and fit, and serves as a basis for training and development.

Research question 2. *How do human resources administrators at community colleges perceive support staff trust in terms of performance appraisal at the college?*

Training requirements. A role of human resources professionals is to promote ethics in the workplace and valid employment activities (Meinert, 2014). Trust in the performance appraisal process and forms were noted concerns from the responders. The interview comments revealed overwhelming similarity in terms of trust in supervisory component of performance appraisal. All participants asserted appraisal training for supervisors is lacking, yet the training is a critical factor of performance appraisal and related processes.

Information provided by participants indicated training events or opportunities ranged from providing the appraisal form to yearlong performance appraisal training modules, with special supervisory sessions. Some trainings were presented by professional performance appraisal trainers and some trainings only occur every four years. The inconsistences in training descriptions show an ongoing need for improvement in supervisory training. The findings from this study support Boachie-Mensah and Seidu's (2012) statement that subjectivity and inaccuracy in the appraisal process do occur and training is necessary to avoid implications of ineffective performance measurement.

Research question 3. *How do human resources administrators at community colleges perceive support staff understanding of the performance appraisal process?*

Communication. Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin (1996) concluded the value of the appraisal should be clear, meaning the requirements, process, and outcomes should be understood by all. The responses from this study revealed unless all workers at the institution understand the purpose and process, and know how to properly use the information gathered in the process, there might be no value in the outcome. According to the participant responses, communication is needed for understanding why performance appraisal is required for identification of opportunities for performance improvement and why goal achievement is beneficial to the worker and the institution.

Clarity of expectations. The above communication findings highlight participant responses in terms of the awareness of ‘hows and whys’ of performance appraisal. From this study, it is clear that simply rating worker performance for a prior period is insufficient for adequate performance appraisal. For appraisal to be most effective, workers and supervisors must have a clear understanding of the expectations for performance rating. The job description should serve as an outline of the duties required for each role and the expectations for satisfaction of the duties should be presented in such a way both the supervisor and the worker know what to do and how to measure achievement (Agbola et al., 2011; Sanchez & Levine, 2012). Similar to Cheng (2014), this study showed, workers must know what aspects of the job are most important and supervisors must be trained to know what aspects are to be rated.

While it is important to provide an overall performance measurement, it is also important workers have no surprises when the formal performance appraisal is presented. As found by Parker (2006), to satisfy distributive justice, the worker and supervisor should agree to annual performance goals by agreement based on a foundation of realistic expectations. Further, assigned duties should include clear expectations and achievement objectives (Gruman & Saks, 2011). In line with existing research, participant responses in this study included that misunderstandings and causes of injustice could include a rating for a task the worker did know would be measured, ratings that did not match expectations, and unrealistic ratings for workers who are new to the job.

Anomalies. The above research and interview questions were addressed through the findings of this study. The interview instrument had specific questions written based on the research questions which served as a foundation for the study. As the interviews progressed, emerging themes were identified, as discussed in Chapter Four and listed above in the Conclusions section. In addition to the themes, some anomalies were identified. Information regarding the anomalies is important and should be presented in this chapter. The following paragraphs highlight the discovered anomalies, organized by similar topic.

Strategic goals and decision-making. Participant 109 stressed the importance of shared decision-making and described a proactive attempt to gain input from workers. Participant 109 it was determined realized value was possible when collaborative decision-making regarding performance appraisal included input from the lowest level to the top administrative level of the organizational chart, including trustees and the chancellor. The shared decision-making can help ensure performance goals are tied to strategic goals, which enhances the entire performance appraisal process.

Probation and orientation. Two participants clarified a probationary or orientation period requires a performance appraisal process that meets the needs of new employees who are learning the job and possible not fully skilled to meet full expectations of the job. The orientation performance appraisal period, as opposed to the annual appraisal, helps workers and supervisors determine fit for the job and training needs, with time for the worker to reach expected levels of performance before the annual, formal performance appraisal occurs. The probationary appraisal process is helpful for workers who have fallen below expectations and who need additional monitoring to determine continuance in the job. The probationary appraisal, such as when undesired performance behaviors occur, is helpful to avoid legal ramifications if it is determined the worker's employment should be terminated. For both the orientation and probationary appraisal periods, participants stated a performance review form should be signed at the beginning of the appraisal period and reviewed before tenure decisions are made. If termination is necessary after the review, the supervisor, the employee, and human resources administrator should meet to summarize the situation and give notice of termination.

Anniversary date review. Only one participant described that performance appraisal at the institution is based on the hire date of the worker. Participant 108 stated the institution moved from annual performance reviews completed at the end of the academic year to a process based on hire date anniversary. With the anniversary date method, human resources staff notify supervisors when an employee's appraisal date is approaching. The anniversary method was indicated as a way to reduce the number of appraisals each supervisor must complete at a given time. For example, with the academic year-end method, supervisors had to do review all employees, regardless of whether the employee had been employed for a year or less. When appraisal events are staggered, as based on hire date, supervisors may spend more quality time on the process and provide ratings that are more accurate.

Bargaining agreements. According to one participant, collective bargaining agreements with support staff place legal restrictions on several aspects of employment, including performance appraisal processes and forms. The bargaining agreement is a legal document that specifies requirements and limitations between the institution and the support staff workers (SHRM, 2012b). Preferential treatment may happen due to bargaining agreements, as with hiring and firing decisions, and for fairness and consistency, all processes must align with the agreement (SHRM, 2012b).

The respondent stated the collective bargaining agreements specifies how supervisors must acquaint new support staff workers with the appraisal process, including details of the evaluation methods and tools. Other specifications include notice of a forthcoming performance appraisal, suggestions for review time, and an invitation for any topics for discussion. The supervisor must evaluate a performance appraisal regarding the worker during the time between first notice of the pending appraisal and the agreed review meeting time. The worker then must have time to review the appraisal. In the formal meeting, the supervisor discusses the appraisal with worker and responds to questions and concerns. According to the participant, the process allows the workers an opportunity to dispute the accuracy of the appraisal and make comments. Any agreed changes are made before the appraisal form is signed by the parties. If agreement is not reached, the worker may file a formal grievance as part of the bargaining agreement.

Digital documentation. Two participants described customized performance appraisal systems and digital access for the documentation. Storage of hardcopies, cloud storage, website accessibility, and emailing are modern considerations for employment documentation (Stone & Dulebohn, 2013; Kavanagh, Thite, & Johnson, 2012). At one institution, performance appraisal forms are posted to the college website for access by all employees. Another participant described the web-based forms are easily updated, provide clear communication, and give opportunity for feedback regarding the form.

Customized and standardized performance appraisal systems. Many organizations recognize traditional performance appraisals are ineffective and can be detrimental to workplace relationships, so they are choosing alternative approaches (Bouskila-Yam & Kluger, 2011). One participant described their institution has purchased a customized method for performance appraisal that is a bold step away from the traditional appraisal process and includes coaching toward performance goals. According to participant, the approach encourages employee development and improved performance management.

The coaching focus of the method is intended to create a nurturing relationship between workers and their supervisor beneficial for the employee, the department, and the organization as a whole. The process incorporates a coaching input sheet for workers which is based on conceptual input with questions such as, “What have I been doing for the company lately, what did I set out to do and did, what did I set out to do and didn’t., and what have I done for me lately.” As the participant described, the system is simple and fully online. Although it requires funding, the participant stated the system works more efficiently and has more inherent value than traditional performance appraisal processes and forms.

Implications for Practice

From the findings described in the above sections, it seems clear that performance appraisal at community colleges is an important component of support staff employment and is influential in the strategic goals of the institution. Many of the human resources administrators felt the appraisal processes and forms are fair, but they are frustrated with some aspects of the process. The purpose and value of the appraisal process is sometimes not understood by involved individuals and training for supervisors is lacking. From the responses, the following sections provide recommendations for community college administrators in regard to performance appraisal of support staff.

Revamp the system. It seems employees want updated systems that are reflective of modern academic workplaces and roles. Administrators should improve or create new methods when existing processes and procedures are imperfect (Van Buren, Greenwood, & Sheehan, 2011). According to Gruman and Saks (2011), workers should have clear expectations and performance objectives for assigned tasks and roles (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Forms should match job descriptions and workers should be rated according to their performance with the factors of the job (Agbola et al., 2011; Sanchez & Levine, 2012). Appraisals should provide constructive feedback, thereby stimulating workers to meet goals and productivity expectations (Performance Management, 2013). Checkboxes and Likert-type scales provide little benefit about ratings. Instead, appraisals comprised of open-ended questions inviting conceptual input may be more effective.

Self-appraisals may be helpful and should complement the formal appraisal. The questions on the self-appraisal and formal appraisal should be robust to prompt workers to provide descriptive statements regarding their performance. Such descriptive statements may provide more valuable information than checkboxes and rating scales. According to Spreitzer and Porath (2012), when workers have information needed to develop, not only will the workers flourish, the institution will be more successful, as well.

As discovered by Oldham and Hackman (2010), a worker's behavior is based on three cognitive states: consciousness of the importance of their work, mindfulness of their responsibility, and awareness of the outcomes of their work performance. When the performance appraisal process includes a coaching or mentoring component, all individuals may find the process more meaningful and valuable. Relationships between workers and their supervisors may be enhanced by the coaching aspect, and areas for improvement and achievement may be managed more effectively.

Maslow (1943) determined worker motivation is stimulated by rewards and desires, and motivation levels improve with feelings of fulfillment and satisfaction. Non-monetary award or recognition programs can provide a means to increase interest in performance appraisal and reduce negative effects, such as monetary incentives. According to the Job Characteristics theory, when a worker feels personal satisfaction, the worker will be motivated to do a good job (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Finally, good leadership may be recognized, as employees feel more valued, are more motivated and loyal, and provide increased positive behaviors influencing institutional goals and effectiveness

Performance appraisal training. Studies show appraisal is based on the judgments and perspectives of others and is a necessary process for institutional effectiveness (Dusterhoff et al., 2014; Kuvaas, 2011; Morgeson & Campion, 2012; Morgeson et al., 2014). In order to increase consistency and accuracy to the performance appraisal process, training is needed. Among the responses, performance appraisal training was noted as lacking or insufficient. Training should occur so everyone at the institution knows what a true performance appraisal is and that the appraisal should contain goals, procedural steps, and be meet the strategic goals of the institution.

Supervisors are influential on workers in terms of how the workers feel about their job (Hair, 2013). Knowledgeable managers should recognize which factors motivate workers and show care for the workers needs when asked to do something (Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011). Supervisors who nurture relationships with workers and provide open communication can realize increased worker satisfaction and retention (Raelin, 2012). From the responses, all employees can benefit from performance appraisal training. Such training can increase compliance, understanding, and accuracy. Institutional decision makers should ensure performance appraisal training is provided. All workers who are responsible for appraisal should participate, including employees at all levels of the institution.

Feedback. In addition to an annual, formal review, ongoing feedback throughout the year seems to be a proactive step toward circumventing problems. When concerns are identified early, they are less likely to escalate, they are better for workers, and there are no disappointing surprises presented during the appraisal review. According to Kuvaas (2011), satisfaction levels are contingent upon a workers' feeling of personal value to the organization and they become frustrated when a different value appears on the appraisal. Cheng (2014) stated good communication could increase performance appraisal effectiveness. During the year, feedback from the supervisor could help workers progress toward goal achievement and reduce grievances. Similarly, supervisors may become better leaders with a coaching approach, as helpful feedback can foster improved communication and worker-supervisor relationships.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study contributes to the existing knowledge base regarding justice in performance appraisals and satisfaction among academic support staff. Support staff was identified as critical to overall institutional success (Barakos-Cartwright, 2012). It is not assumed that this study was the final investigation of the subject matter for all workplaces. Future studies could expand the awareness and understanding of issues of justice in performance appraisal and worker satisfaction. Further, additional investigation of community college practices could contribute to application of existing organizational and behavioral theories and identification of new theories.

For this study, 15 human resources administrators participated from 32 two-year, public, non-profit community colleges located in the Midwestern region of the United States. Of the participating administrators and respective institutions, seven were in Missouri, six were in Iowa, and two were in Nebraska. To continue the investigation of the subject, further research should investigate other regions of the country and community colleges with other organizational characteristics. Community colleges in other areas may have differing organizational policies, profit orientations, or geographical implications. Additionally, this study followed a standard, qualitative, interview approach. Investigations with similar or alternative approaches could be conducted to increase knowledge of perceptions of the subject.

Organizational policy. Future investigation of organizational policies, which greatly affect workplaces, should be ongoing. Policies are the product of administrative decision-making, which specifies the parameters of performance appraisal and related factors, such as job descriptions, expectations, processes, and strategic goals (Davis, 2011; Dusterhoff et al., 2014; Javad & Premarajan, 2011; Kuvaas, 2011; Tobler, 2008; Tohidi, 2011). The administrators should be skilled and knowledgeable in matters of employee relations, management, and regulations (Bennett et al., 2009; Bipp, 2010; Hunnes, Kvaløy, & Mohn, 2012; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Oldham & Hackman, 2010; Sumelius et al., 2014).

Employment laws have expanded over the years and changes are likely to continue to grow as workplaces evolve with societal changes and issues (Gagné & Bhave, 2011; Goza, 2013; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Walsh, 2012). As employee expectations and institutional needs change, so should organizational policies to avoid possible grievances and litigation (APR, 2010; BLS, 2014; Benders, 2014; Cheng, 2014; Galanter, 2013; Kotkin, 2007; Lieber, 2011; Shaharyar et al., 2014; Wilkins, 2013; Wood et al., 2013). Ongoing investigation of employment laws affecting community college workforces is needed to maintain a current knowledge base for decision-making.

While only one of the represented institutions described a support staff bargaining agreement, collective bargaining activities and unionized representation influence organizational policies of workforce management (Cooper & Mishel, 2015; Gerber, 2015; SHRM, 2012b). Bargaining agreements and union contracts specify clear workplace expectations for workers and employers (Boris, 2014; Cooper & Mishel, 2015; Gerber, 2015). Administrators should be aware of possible workplace representation and be prepared for related implications for the institution (Cooper & Mishel, 2015; Javad & Premajarin, 2011; Gould, 2014a; Kuvaas, 2011; Simon, 1997). Future investigation of community colleges, which have collective bargaining agreements and unionized workforces, will expand the existing knowledge base and provide information helpful for policy and procedural decisions.

Profit orientation. The targeted population for this study was administrators at two-year, public, non-profit community colleges. Research shows there are differences in the policies and procedures of public community colleges, private, for-profit institutions, government entities, and private and publicly held corporations (Newton, 2015; Pusser, 2015). Future investigation of performance appraisal at different organizations may reveal unique characteristics that will increase scholarly information for decision-makers; and thereby, influencing policies and procedures for performance appraisal matters.

Geographical region. Community colleges in the Midwest region of the United States were represented in this study. There are many community colleges in the United States that may have differences from those located in the Midwest. Community cultures vary across the United States and, as such, institutional workforces may have different needs and expectations (Saichaie & Morphew, 2014; Stephens, Markus, & Phillips, 2014). Further, some institutions are utilizing remote support staff workforces, which may represent differing perspectives and procedures for performance appraisal (Fassoulis & Alexopoulos, 2015; Gibson, 2014). Ongoing research in the performance appraisal of support staff, including workers onsite and remote, and evolving community cultures should occur to meet the needs of modern institutions.

Methodology. This research study followed a phenomenological, interview-based, qualitative investigation methodology for gathering perceptions of human resources administrators at targeted institutions. For continued investigation, support staff should be studied directly via the same qualitative methodology or alternative methodologies, such as quantitative survey, direct observation, or mixed-methodology. The gathering of information from different methodologies will add to the data presented in this study and may reveal new factors for continued investigation.

Summary

This research investigation provided information for questions regarding justice in performance appraisal of support staff from the perspective of human resources administrators. While the study was limited in scope for the targeted population, it provides a basis for future investigation of the subject matter at other workplaces. From the literature review and study findings, it is clear performance appraisal is a complex and important process for all employees and administrators.

Performance appraisal and worker satisfaction are important factors for policy and procedure decisions. The information presented in Chapter One introduced procedural and distributive justice in the performance appraisal process and worker satisfaction of the process. Support staff at academic institutions were identified as critical workers for the success of an institution. Worker dissatisfaction was noted as cause for dispute, morale issues, and decreased retention. It is essential that decision makers understand justice in appraisal in order to maximize satisfaction and retention of good workers. When workers are satisfied and have opportunity to learn and expand their skills, their motivation and performance increases; thereby, increasing the success of the institution. Informed supervisors must be aware of misunderstandings or misperceptions and possible negative outcomes.

The literature review described in Chapter Two provides evidence that performance appraisal and fairness has become an increasing topic of interest in recent decades. Appraisal standards are changing and transitioning to involve more focus on worker perceptions, needs, goals, and expectations. Existing behavioral and organizational theories provided a basis for exploration of worker satisfaction and perceived fairness. Studies of performance appraisal include evidence that human and procedural factors influence the success of appraisal.

Due to the growth in legal considerations, there are ongoing challenges for academic administrators, including regulations affecting performance appraisal and worker satisfaction (Galanter, 2013; Schneider, 2010; Swift, 2014; Wilkins, 2013; Wood et al., 2013). Non-compliance is costly; however, avoidance of legal issues can be avoided with careful preparation (Goza, 2013). Decision makers must be diligent in the creation and administration of performance appraisal (Sumelius et al., 2014). Well-planned processes and procedures can benefit employees and institutions with increased worker satisfaction and reduction of litigious concerns (Galanter, 2013; Javad & Premajarin, 2011; Kuvaas, 2011; Simon, 1997; Swift, 2014; Wood et al., 2013). This study provides administrators with a better understanding of justice in performance appraisals and the impacts of decisions on institutions and employees.

Chapter Three provided a description of the qualitative, phenomenological research methodology used to investigate perceptions of human resources administrators at two-year, public, non-profit community colleges regarding procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisal of support staff. A piloted study occurred providing validation of the interview questions. Ethical consideration and integrity for the research protocols and participants prevailed. Permissions to proceed were obtained from appropriate personnel and authorities. This study ensued as intended to provide information needed for the research questions.

The analysis of participant responses was presented in Chapter Four. Of the 32 human resources administrators invited to participate, 17 agreed to participate, with 15 ultimately participating in the interview process. All of the participants responded to the same interview questions presented in the same order. The responses were coded to ensure anonymity of respondents and are accurately representative of participant comments. Most participants stated some level of confidence in the appraisal practices.

Both emerging themes and anomalies were identified in the responses. Participant responses reflected commonalities in annual performance appraisal frequency, self-appraisal requirement, required appraisal review meetings, recordkeeping activities, and the need for appraisal training for all workers. Collaborative decision-making and goal setting was described as having great influence on the effectiveness of performance appraisal. Only a few participants mentioned probationary or orientation performance appraisals in addition to annual, formal appraisals. Anniversary date, as in hire date, performance appraisal was described as the method at one institution. One participant described how a support staff collective bargaining agreement is a factor of performance appraisal decisions and processes. Digital documentation for performance appraisal is utilized at two institutions, providing easy access for involved employees. Finally, one participant described a customized, coaching performance appraisal system purchased to replace a traditional appraisal method that was ineffective. Per the participant, the coaching the system works more efficiently and has more inherent value than traditional performance appraisal processes and forms.

Chapter Five provided evidence this study enhances existing research in that perceived fairness in performance appraisal of support staff does influence worker satisfaction and affects achievement of both worker and institutional goals. As described in the Implications for Practice section, decision makers should evaluate existing appraisal processes for improvement or replacement. Training for all workers, top level to lower level, should occur covering all aspects of the performance appraisal process. The frequency of performance appraisal should be considered, including continual feedback during the year, orientation appraisal for new hires, probationary appraisal for underperforming workers, and anniversary date appraisal should be considered to increase accuracy and workloads for supervisors.

The importance of procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisal and resulting worker satisfaction is clear. Future investigations should focus on organizational policies as they have are critical in the effectiveness of performance appraisal and worker satisfaction. Studies comparing for-profit, private, and other non-profit community colleges in other geographical locations could further enhance the knowledge base for best practices in performance appraisal. Finally, future performance appraisal studies of support staff, using similar or alternative research approaches, will add to the findings presented in this study, and identify yet unidentified factors for continued investigation.

While faculty and administration play critical roles, support staff workers are deemed the backbone of an academic institution as they provide many services at the institution for the benefit of students, employees, and the community. As such, support staff workers deserve increased attention for the betterment of their work experiences, including justice in the appraisal of their performance and satisfaction in related processes.

Appendix A

Recruitment Letter to Human Resources Administrators

Subject: Research Participation Request

Dear (Dr./Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms.) ______________:

I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri, pursuing a degree in Higher Education Administration. I am also an administrator and former faculty member at Ozarks Technical Community College in Springfield, Missouri. The purpose of my study is to examine the perceptions of human resources administrators at two-year, public, non-profit community colleges regarding procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisal of support staff.

For the study, I plan to invite 32 human resources administrators to participate in individual interviews no later than April 30, 2015. The interviews will involve a series of 11 questions. All personal information provided during the interviews and your identity will be kept strictly confidential. I promise to be respectful of your time and availability.

If you are willing to participate in my study, please respond to this email as soon as possible. If you have any questions about the process, please do not hesitate to contact me at [redacted] or [redacted]. You may also contact my Lindenwood University doctoral chairperson, Dr. Rhonda Bishop at rbishop@lindenwood.edu. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Vanessa R. Germeroth
Candidate for Doctorate of Education in Higher Education Administration
Lindenwood University
[redacted]

Appendix B

Support Staff at Public, Non-Profit Community Colleges in Three Midwest States

Table 1. ***Full-Time Support Staff at Iowa Public, Non-Profit Community Colleges***

Number of Full-Time Support Staff at Iowa Public, Non-Profit Community Colleges

Name of Institution	Full-time Staff
Des Moines Area Community College	457
Eastern Iowa Community College	234
Hawkeye Community College	163
Indian Hills Community College	236
Iowa Central Community College	226
Iowa Lakes Community College	135
Iowa Valley Community College	158
Iowa Western Community College	264
Kirkwood Community College	573
North Iowa Area Community College	148
Northeast Iowa Community College	182
Northwest Iowa Community College	68
Southeastern Community College	143
Southwestern Community College	91
Western Iowa Tech. Community College	158
Total Full-time Staff	2,987

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. (2012). IPEDS employment survey, 2012. *U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics.* (2014). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/

Table 2. ***Full-Time Support Staff at Missouri Public, Non-Profit Community Colleges***

Number of Full-Time Support Staff at Missouri Public, Non-Profit Community Colleges

Name of Institution	Full-time Staff
Crowder College	168
East Central College	142
Jefferson College	181
Metropolitan Community College	614
Mineral Area College	121
Moberly Area Community College	161
North Central Missouri College	71
Ozarks Technical Community College	336
Saint Louis Community College	860
St Charles Community College	236
State Fair Community College	114
Three Rivers Community College	110
Total Full-time Staff	3,114

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. (2012). IPEDS employment survey, 2012. *U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics.* (2014). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/

Table 3. *Full-Time Support Staff at Nebraska Public, Non-Profit Community Colleges*

Number of Full-Time Support Staff at Nebraska Public, Non-Profit Community Colleges

Name of Institution	Full-time Staff
Central Community College	282
Mid-Plains Community College	101
Northeast Community College	203
Southeast Community College	295
Western Nebraska Community College	111
Total Full-time Staff	992

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. (2012). *IPEDS employment survey, 2012*. *U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics*. (2014). Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/

Appendix C

Interview Protocol - Justice in Performance Appraisal Study

Introduction (Read Aloud): Performance appraisal is an important component of employee management. For this study, I am interested in exploring your perceptions as a human resources professional. Please keep this goal in mind when responding to the interview questions.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND QUALIFYING QUESTIONS:

1. Please describe the steps involved in the appraisal of your support staff performance.

2. Please describe the performance appraisal form and/or template currently utilized at your institution and why you are using that tool(s).

3. Please describe other performance measurement tools that have been used at your institution and why you stopped using them.

SECTION 1: FAIRNESS

4. How confident are you that the appraisal process accurately represents the performance of employees it is designed to measure?

5. Have any employees challenged the accuracy of information in their performance appraisal? If so, please describe the resulting responses and/or actions.

6. Have any supervisors challenged the accuracy of the appraisal process or tool(s)? If so, please describe the resulting responses and/or actions.

7. Please describe incentive opportunities for support staff based on their performance achievement.

SECTION 2: COMMUNICATION

8. Please describe ways support staff respond and/or react to their performance appraisal review.

SECTION 3: TRUST IN SUPERVISION

9. Please describe the training requirements for supervisors who assess support staff performance.

10. What is your perception of the accuracy of performance appraisal of support staff?

SECTION 4: CLARITY OF EXPECTATIONS

11. Please describe how support staff are informed of their performance level and goals between reviews.

Question 11 concludes the interview process. Do you have any questions or comments for me? Thank you for participating in this research study!

Appendix D

Lindenwood University IRB Approval Letter

LINDENWOOD

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

DATE:	March 17, 2015
TO:	Vanessa Germeroth, Ed.D
FROM:	Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board
STUDY TITLE:	[701414-1] Human Resources Administrator Perceptions of Procedural and Distributive Justice in Performance Appraisals as Predictors of Satisfaction Among Academic Support Staff
IRB REFERENCE #:	
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	March 17, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE:	March 17, 2016
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research project. Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the completion/amendment form for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of March 17, 2016.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

If you have any questions, please contact Robyne Elder at (314) 566-4884 or relder@lindenwood.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

If you have any questions, please send them to relder@lindenwood.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board's records.

Appendix E

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S. Kings Highway
St. Charles, Missouri 63301

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

"Human Resources Administrator Perceptions of Procedural and Distributive Justice in Performance Appraisals as Predictors of Satisfaction Among Academic Support Staff"

Principal Investigator __Vanessa R. Germeroth______
[redacted]

Participant ________________________Contact info ________________________

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Vanessa R. Germeroth under the guidance of Dr. Rhonda Bishop. The purpose of this research is to examine the perceptions of human resources administrators at two-year, public, non-profit community colleges regarding procedural and distributive justice in performance appraisal of support staff.

2. a) Your participation will involve participating in a succinct telephone, in person, or internet-based video conference during which you will be asked to respond to questions regarding your experiences as a college human resources administrator. The interviews will be conducted once, and at a time and location of your convenience.

   b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 30 minutes.

   c) Approximately 32 human resources administrators at two-year, public, non-profit community colleges located in Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska s will be invited to participate in the study.

3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the knowledge about justice in performance appraisal. The findings are anticipated to provide information helpful for administrators at similar institutions and organizations.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Vanessa R. Germeroth, [redacted], or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Rhonda Bishop, [redacted]. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Jann Weitzel, Vice President for Academic Affairs at 636-949-4846.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature	Date	Participant's Printed Name
Signature of Principal Investigator	Date	Vanessa R. Germeroth

Revised 1-21-2010

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Vita

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Vanessa Germeroth currently serves as Director of Online Student Affairs at Ozarks Technical Community College in Springfield, Missouri. She has held the position since 2008. Prior to the director position, Germeroth served as the Assistant Director of eLearning Outreach, department chairperson, full-time instructor, and adjunct instructor of Business and Accounting at Ozarks Technical Community College. Before entering academia, Germeroth developed and owned private businesses and worked as a corporate regional trainer.