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THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS ON PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

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1. Introduction

The fact that the politics inherent in organizational behavior affect an employee's appraisal was noted more than a quarter of a century ago by behavioral scientists (e.g., Gandz and Murray 1980). Nevertheless, there is a paucity of systematic research on this subject. Thus the purpose of the present chapter is fourfold. First, the phenomenon of organizational politics is described. Second, studies on the relationship between political behavior and appraising employees are reviewed. Third, steps to minimizing its adverse effects on the appraisal of employees are outlined. Finally, a research agenda is suggested.

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2. Organizational Politics

Political behaviors in organizations consist of self-serving actions taken by an individual or group (Mintzberg 1983). They are directed toward the goal of furthering one's own self-interest without regard for the well-being of others in the organization (Kacmar and Baron 1999). Such actions are informal and, as part of an organization's culture, regulate interpersonal relationships. As Mayes and Allen (1977) noted, the actions imply a dynamic power of influence. When this influence is exercised within organizational sanctioned boundaries, the behaviors are not considered political.

Examples of political behavior in the workplace include self-promotion and ingratiation (Godfrey, Jones, and Lord 1986). Self-promotion behaviors are typically proactive. Their purpose is to gain attention, to create an image of oneself as a competent committed employee. Ingratiation behaviors are less proactive. They focus on "attention giving" to a target person or persons relative to "attention getting" from others. A recent study found that politically skilled employees who engage in ingratiatory behavior toward their supervisors were not only viewed positively by them, they were subsequently rewarded for doing so (Treadway et al. 2007). In fact, career success is typically affected by an ability to convince others that one has the requisite skills to perform higher-level jobs effectively (Rafaeli et al. 1997). Self-promotion is one way to do this.

A dramatic illustration of non-sanctioned action was provided in *The Times*:

> Deep down we all suspect that it is the brutal, simple ugly stuff that really gets us to the top of the tribal tree. You can work hard, network nicely, and try to merit everything you told the performance-appraisal team, but all the time your dark side is wheedling to get ahead. (Naish 2005)

Despite its hyperbolic overtone, this quote resonates with what has been reported in the academic literature. Wortman and Linsenmeier (1977) argued that employees engage in impression management to advance their personal interests, often at the expense of the organization. Moreover, political behavior appears to be pervasive in the workplace (Longenecker 1989). And this behavior is not confined to the employee. The employee's supervisor may also engage in this process.

Longenecker, Sims, and Gioia (1987) conducted in-depth interviews with upper-level executives employed by well-known corporations. The authors obtained an admission from these executives that they consciously manipulate their performance ratings of the people who report to them. Moreover, these executives argued that an appraisal instrument that permits discretion and flexibility was more important to them than one that facilitates accuracy. When organizational earnings were down, they frequently lowered their rating of a high-performing subordinate so as to justify a lower than deserved compensation decision. Hence, Folger, Konovsky, and

Cropanzano (1992) concluded that a performance appraisal is essentially a political process involving two or more parties with different interests regarding the allocation of resources.

Maier (1955) argued that performance is a function of ability and motivation. Similarly, Mintzberg (1983) argued that a person's political behavior is a function of political skill, namely, the ability to successfully execute political actions, and a person's political will, namely, the motivation to do so.

2.1 Measurement

Ferris and his colleagues developed and validated an instrument for assessing organizational politics, Perceptions of Organizational Politics or POPs (Kacmar and Ferris 1991). The construct and discriminant validity of the scale has been shown to be adequate. With regard to the construct, Kacmar and Carlson (1997) found that it is multi rather than unidimensional. The first dimension they labeled "general political behavior," namely, self-serving actions taken by people to attain their own goals. The second dimension, "go along to get ahead," refers to the lack of action people take (e.g., withholding needed information) in order to realize the attainment of one or more of their goals. The third dimension, "pay and promotion politics," refers to organizational practices that result in a culture in which political activity becomes commonplace.

With regard to discriminant validity, Andrews and Kacmar (2001) found that organizational politics is different from, yet negatively related to, perceptions of distributive and procedural justice (Cropanzano and Greenberg 1997), as well as perceptions of organizational support (Eisenberger et al. 1986). Although the correlation between perceptions of politics and organizational support was negative ($r = -.72$) as were the correlations between engaging in political behavior and distributive and procedural justice ($r = -.43, -.48$ respectively), a confirmatory factor analysis revealed four different concepts each having different predictors.

2.2 Predictors of Political Behaviors

Ferris, Russ, and Fandt (1989) proposed a model of predictors of organizational political behavior. In the above study, Andrews and Kacmar (2001) tested the model. They found empirical evidence that the following variables correlate with organizational politics: external locus of control ($r = .54$), co-worker cooperation ($r = -.29$), centralization ($r = .29$), formalization ($r = -.16$), and leader member exchange or LMX ($r = .11$). The latter correlation was contrary to the researcher's hypothesis. It is likely that LMX enhances perceptions of organizational politics because it makes salient to all parties the difference in treatment employees in

in-versus-out-groups receive from their supervisor. Mohrman and Lawler (1983) reported that managers are more likely to exercise discretion in their performance appraisals of employees with whom they have a close relationship than they are for those with whom they are distant.

Mintzberg's (1983) assumption that political will is an antecedent of political behavior was tested by Treadway et al. (2005b). They operationalized political will as need for achievement and intrinsic motivation because, they said, the willingness to pursue one's self-interest is likely consistent with the need to excel. The results from two questionnaires administered at two points in time revealed that 33 percent of the variance associated with political behavior was explained by a person's intrinsic motivation and need for achievement.

2.3 Outcomes

The outcomes of perceptions of an organization rife with internal political behavior are for the most part negative.

(a) Cropanzano et al. (1997) found that organizational politics correlated with turnover intentions in two studies, one with full-time employees and the other with part-time workers (.49 and .29, respectively).

(b) Using a sample from a cross-section of organizational data, Ferris and Kacmar (1992) found that organizational politics correlated negatively with job satisfaction ($r = -.29$) as well as job involvement ($r = -.19$). Moreover, in a second investigation with a sample of nurses, they found that co-workers and cliques' political behavior correlated negatively and significantly with job satisfaction ($r = -.60$).

(c) Vigoda-Gadot (2000) found that perceptions of organizational politics predicted both in-role and OCB performance six months later. Employees with lower perceptions of organizational politics tended to perform better than those with high perceptions. Higher perceptions of organizational politics are associated with strain and low morale (Vigoda-Gadot 2002). It appears that these employees feel they have to expend cognitive resources on ways to cope with the issues that arise from the self-serving behaviors of others.

(d) In a study involving two different public sector organizations, Vigoda-Gadot, Vinarski-Peretz, and Ben-Zion (2003) found that organizational politics is a precondition for the formation of a negative organizational image. Employee perceptions of politics correlated negatively with job satisfaction and organizational commitment which in turn mediated the relationship with the image employees have of their employer.

(e) Turnover intentions and counter-productive work behavior are distal outcomes of organizational politics (Rosen, Levy, and Johnson 2007).

An arguably positive outcome of perceptions of organizational politics was suggested by Harrell-Cook, Ferris, and Dulebohn (1999). They hypothesized that an upside of this behavior is that it gives employees a tacit understanding of how the organization truly works versus the way it says it works regarding its processes and procedures for obtaining hard-to-acquire resources. They reported a positive interaction between perceived organizational politics and political behaviors (ingratiation, self-promotion) on the part of nurses that appears to mitigate the negative effects on job satisfaction and intention to leave the organization.

2.4 Mediators

Given the negative consequences of engaging in political behavior, why does it occur? The explanation is at least twofold. First, perceived organizational support, or the lack thereof, has been found to fully mediate the relationship between perceived political behavior at the highest level of the organization and an employee's negative affective organizational commitment, job tension, job satisfaction, and performance (Hochwarter et al. 2003). This explanation is congruent with a second inference that can be drawn from correlational studies regarding employee perceptions of having little or no control over their job environment. Harrell-Cook, Ferris, and Dulebohn (1999) found that employees engage in political behaviors as a coping mechanism. That is, they engage in ingratiatory behavior. Giving attention to their superiors is seen as instrumental for goal attainment. If this political behavior on their part is not effective, they are likely to quit their job.

2.5 Moderators

What environmental and individual difference variables increase or decrease the likelihood of organizational politics?

2.5.1 *Environmental*

Ferris et al. (1989) developed a conceptual model that asserts that perceptions of control over one's environment buffer the effects of organizational politics. A subsequent study suggests that this is indeed the case. Ferris et al. (1996) found that perceived control moderated the relationship between perceptions of politics and job anxiety, general job satisfaction, and satisfaction with one's supervisor.

Harris and Kacmar (2005) found that a supportive supervisor acts as a buffer against the stress employees experience from organizational politics. Likewise, goal congruence between a supervisor and an employee reduces the negative consequences of organizational politics on job performance. Explaining relevant issues,

and clarifying instructions increase an employee's understanding and sense of control over the workplace (Witt 1998).

Organizational structure, in terms of centralization and formalization, is related to perceptions of political behavior. Andrews and Kacmar (2001) reported that the degree of centralization correlates positively ($r = .56$, $p < .05$) with organizational politics. Several studies support the argument that politics emerges in an environment where procedures are ill defined (e.g., Mayes and Allen 1977). These procedures include interdepartmental coordination, delegation of authority, promotion, and transfers; on the other hand, outcomes such as hiring and disciplining employees are seen as less politically motivated (Gandz and Murray 1980). Formalization correlates negatively with perceptions of politics. When there is high role ambiguity, employees often engage in organizational citizenship behaviors directed toward the organization, but not toward fellow employees. They do so to impress their respective bosses (Yun, Takeuchi, and Liu 2007). Whether their motivation to do so is a benefit to the employing organization in the same ways as are OCBs stemming from actual concern for the organization as well as one's social values is debatable.

Given these early findings, it is not surprising that perceptions of organizational justice are related to perceptions of political behavior. Implicit in the construct of organizational politics are employee perceptions that the work environment is unfair, it is unjust.

Where one is in the organizational hierarchy moderates justice perceptions (Bengley, Lee, and Hui 2006). People in higher-level jobs believe that distributive justice is more important than procedural justice because they need adequate resources for their organizational unit's effectiveness. Moreover, receiving adequate resources means having power in the organization. People in lower-level jobs believe that procedural justice is more important than distributive justice because the extent to which they are treated fairly affects their self-identity and self-esteem as important members of the organization.

Employees perceive more political behavior at higher rather than lower managerial levels. Gandz and Murray (1980) reported that lower-level employees see themselves as the victims of organizational politics.

Finally, organizational politics have been shown to be expressions and reflections of an organization's culture (Ferris et al. 1989). The "organizational context" perceived at a given point in time is the result of previous "political games" (Frost 1987). A major way that culture is communicated to employees is through its human resource procedures, including performance appraisals (Tichy 1983).

2.5.2 *Individual differences*

An external locus of control correlates positively with perceptions of politics (Andrews and Kacmar 2001; Moberg 1978). Conscientiousness has been shown to be related to job performance for only those employees who perceive a high level of organizational politics; no relationship was found for those people who perceived little or no political

behavior (Hochwarter, Witt, and Kacmar 2000). Bozeman et al. (2001) found that people with high self-efficacy regarding their job performance experience job dissatisfaction and low organizational commitment when they perceive that their peers are rewarded on the basis of political skill rather than merit. The interaction effect between perceived self-efficacy and a perceived political environment explained an additional 4 percent of the variance in the measure of job satisfaction and 5 percent of the variance in the measure of organizational commitment.

People with negative affectivity appear to be adversely affected by their perceptions of politics ($r = -.77$), relative to their peers who score high on a measure of positive affectivity ($r = -.44$). This was true, however, for job satisfaction rather than performance (Hochwarter and Treadway 2003). People who score high on negativity (negative affectivity) are predisposed to see the downsides in almost everything, including their job. Performance, on the other hand, was worse for those who scored high on positive rather than negative affect. Because of their predisposition to see that which is good in their organization, these employees expect fair and equal treatment based on merit. When events prove otherwise, they may experience dissonance and their performance drops.

Using two sets of questionnaires at two different points in time, Treadway et al. (2005a) found that age moderates the effect of perceived politics on a person's job performance. They interpreted this finding as suggesting that older people feel they have fewer resources than their younger colleagues to cope with the stress induced by a politically charged climate. Older employees often lack resiliency from their over-exposure to this source of job stress. It is also likely that older employees who have not been promoted to upper management positions are disillusioned because of their perception of having been adversely affected by organizational politics.

In a study of office and technical employees, as well as managers, Hochwarter et al. (1999) examined the moderating effect of affective organizational commitment. Their results indicate that highly committed lower-level employees experienced less job tension from organizational politics than their less committed peers. Moreover, the job tension of middle and upper-level managers who were highly committed to their organization actually decreased when they perceived an increase in organizational politics. This may be because these people have more control over their environment than do lower-level employees. This in turn may enable them to act politically to attain their desired goals. In doing so, they create and perpetuate a culture that embraces organizational politics by modeling this behavior for their subordinates. Acting politically to gain desired outcomes becomes "accepted" practice. Kacmar, Collins, and Harris (2007) examined the moderating effects of the person and the environment on political behavior. Using correlational data, involving state government employees, they found that individuals who scored high on core self-evaluation (Judge, Locke, and Durham 1997) engaged in more ingratiatory behavior than those who scored low, when they viewed their environment as

more rather than less political. This suggests that in a highly political environment, employees shift their attention from the job to less productive behaviors.

Rosen, Chang, and Levy (2006) using a person-based, interactionist approach concluded that organizational politics do not lead to negative outcomes for everyone. Some people respond in more positive ways than others to perceptions of politics. Their correlational data suggest that high self-monitors and those who score high on agreeableness see the political environment as an opportunity to enhance their image with supervisors; and do so by engaging in OCBs.

2.6 Summary

A gap in this literature is the lack of knowledge on the effect of different pay plans on the prevalence of organizational politics. Is political behavior affected differentially by pay plans that reward the individual, the team, or both the individual and the team? The answer awaits further research.

A further limitation of the extant research is that it consists for the most part of correlational studies. Hence, the direction of causality is not known. A third limitation of studies in organizational politics that all but screams at the reader is the problem of common method variance and its concomitant, percept-percept correlations. Hence, the correlations reported in many of these studies are likely inflated. Arguably, it is difficult to conduct experiments on this phenomenon where one or more independent variables are manipulated to see the effect on one or more dependent variables. Yet, two or more methods could be used in future studies (e.g., questionnaire and an interview) where data are collected at different points in time from samples from two or more populations (e.g., boss, peers, subordinates). Experiments could also be conducted using simulations similar, if not identical, to those used at the Center for Creative Leadership[1] as well as those typically used in an assessment center.

Despite the methodological limitations of many of the above studies, the consistency of the findings, collected for the most part in organizational settings, are impressive, and the expertise of the researchers (e.g., Ferris) in interpreting the data is beyond question. Organizational politics appears to be pervasive and for the most part pernicious. It is negatively related to job performance, OCB, job satisfaction, intention to remain in the organization, etc. It appears to occur for at least two reasons, a desire to gain control over one's environment and as a way to cope in an environment where organizational support is seen as lacking, an environment that lacks codified procedures. It is also likely to be found when the organization is centralized and informal, and where people have concluded they are not part of the

[1] The Center for Creative Leadership is a non-profit educational/research organization headquartered in Greensboro, NC, with branch offices in Brussels, Colorado Springs, San Diego, and Singapore.

in-group. It is moderated by where one is in the hierarchy, one's relationship with one's supervisor, and one's age. All of these factors are likely to be relevant to the process of appraising employees. Yet to date there is a paucity of studies that have systematically examined the effect of organizational politics on the conduct of performance appraisals and the subsequent behavior of the employees.

3. Performance Appraisal and Organizational Politics

Research on performance appraisal has been ongoing since the outset of the twentieth century (Farr and Levy 2007; Patterson 1922; 1923). The focus has been on improving the appraisal scale, the accuracy of the rater, the rater's cognitive processes, and feedback to the employee (Latham and Mann 2006; Latham, Sulsky, and MacDonald 2007). This may be because performance appraisals are currently used in 90 percent of organizations for making administrative decisions regarding an organization's employees (Bernthal et al. 1997).

In an enumerative review of the performance appraisal literature, Latham and Mann (2006) found studies that indicated that appraisals were a stronger reflection of a rater's overall biases than of an employee's job performance, that a person's knowledge and skill accounted for only a small amount of the variance in an appraisal decision, and that a woman's appraisal is affected by her gender, especially when the appraiser is male. In a field study of over 1,000 managerial employees, Landau (1995) reported that females were rated lower than males, and blacks and Asians were rated lower than whites even after controlling for an employee's age, education, tenure, salary grade, functional area, and satisfaction with support for one's career. Politics per se was not examined in these studies.

The role that organizational politics plays in the appraisal process is only now beginning to be studied. Identifying the social context in which a performance appraisal occurs is important for both theory and practice. The social context of a performance appraisal is typically conceptualized as the social-psychological processes operating in the relationship between a rater and a ratee (Murphy and Cleveland 1991). Because of this relationship, the procedures inherent in a performance appraisal cannot be improved solely through the development and application of appraisal scales, let alone training initiatives to minimize a rater's cognitive biases. Moreover, as discussed above, performance appraisals are affected by an organization's culture, and at the same time contribute to this culture. For this reason, a performance appraisal is an activity where organizational politics are likely to take place, yet it has been a relatively neglected area of study.

As noted earlier, Kacmar and Carlson (1997) emphasized three features of organizational politics: (1) It is a process through which individuals exercise social influence; (2) aimed at obtaining scarce resources; and (3) through social interactions involving at least two parties. On the basis of these features, the process of conducting performance appraisals would appear to be a "hot-bed" for organizational politics in that:

- It always involves at least two parties.
- One party has more power than the other in that the rater (usually the supervisor) influences important outcomes for an employee.
- This influence is expressed through the possibility of giving an employee an increase in visibility, office size, promotion, transfer, pay increase, termination, etc. These outcomes typically represent scarce resources in an organization.

In the next section, we review the few studies that have investigated this social phenomenon within the context of employee appraisals.

3.1 Appraisal Process and Outcomes

The performance appraisal is a process for making administrative decisions as well as developmental plans that affect an organization's employees (Latham and Wexley 1994). Several studies (e.g., Bjerke et al. 1987; Gandz and Murray 1980; Mohrman and Lawler 1983; Prince, Lawler, and Mohrman 1991) reported results similar to those obtained by Longenecker, Sims, and Gioia (1987). In brief, these studies suggest that politics are common in organizations and this is especially true in the conduct of performance appraisals. For example, Gandz and Murray (1980) collected incidents describing examples of workplace politics. The incidents most frequently reported were those involving an employee being bypassed for a promotion. The second most common theme in the incidents was the unfair assessment of one's work performance (e.g., perceptions of being evaluated on either "hidden" criteria, or criteria beyond a person's control).

Managers frequently review their ratings of an employee with their boss prior to giving feedback to a subordinate. They consciously utilize this prefeedback review as a way of legitimizing their appraisal to an employee (Mohrman and Lawler 1983, 183). As a result, subordinates often view such appraisals as "locked in." They do not believe that they can express their voice during the feedback process even if they believe that pertinent data regarding their performance had been omitted in the evaluation. Voice is key to perceptions of procedural justice (Greenberg 2000).

Navy officers admitted that they inflated their ratings of subordinates. This is done to improve their promotion prospects (Bjerke et al. 1987).

3.2 Measurement

All of the above findings were obtained through qualitative methodology, namely, open-ended interviews. In order to quantitatively address the incidence of political behavior influencing an appraisal, Tziner et al. (1996) developed a 25-item questionnaire (i.e., Questionnaire of Political Considerations in Performance Appraisal, QPCPA) that measures employees' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors in their organization engage in specific political considerations in performance evaluations. These considerations include: (a) acquiring personal benefits; (b) exercising control; (c) avoiding confrontation with the employees over low performance ratings; (d) motivating employees; and (e) maintaining a positive climate.

The results of this study showed that the QPCPA consists of a one-factor structure that explains 59.7 percent of variance. Its internal consistency was .97 and .98 on two administrations, respectively. The test-retest reliability between the two administrations of the questionnaire, conducted one week apart, was .86. Convergent validity was assessed with regard to measures of Need for Power and Machiavellianism, two constructs related to political considerations. The correlations with these two constructs were .23 and .33 ($p < .01$), respectively. Discriminant validity was assessed with regard to measures of organizational commitment and state-trait anxiety. The results showed a negative correlation with organizational commitment ($r = -.27$, $p < .01$). The correlation with state-trait anxiety was not significant. In a subsequent study, using confirmatory factor analysis, Tziner (1999) again obtained support for the unidimensionality of the QPCPA. The internal consistency was high (alpha = .94).

Poon (2004) explored the link between "performance appraisal politics" and the reactions of employees. Using fifteen items from the QPCPA, he found a two-factor structure. The first factor he labeled "motivational motive." This factor encompasses items regarding the supervisor's purpose for rewarding employees and maintaining a positive climate in the workgroup. The second factor he labeled "personal bias and punishment motive." This factor encompasses items related to supervisors' penchant for engaging in favoritism and using punishment tactics. The criteria in this study were job satisfaction and turnover intentions. The motivational factor did not correlate with either outcome. The personal bias and punishment factor, however, significantly and negatively predicted job satisfaction, and positively predicted turnover intentions. Moreover, the relationship between perceived politics and turnover intentions was fully mediated by job satisfaction.

Salimäki and Jämsén (2007), in a study of employees in three agencies of the Finnish government, also obtained a two-factor solution for QPCPA. The first factor, labeled "conflict avoidance," consisted of three items having to do with giving an inflated rating to avoid negative or uncomfortable feedback sessions with a subordinate. The second factor they called "interpersonal relationship."

It consisted of four items that assessed a supervisor's liking for or disliking of an employee. Unfortunately, these studies have not been followed by systematic research on the ways organizational politics are manifested in the performance appraisal process. The few studies that have measured the incidence of political considerations in a performance appraisal, however, have yielded interesting results.

3.3 Predictors, Moderators, and Causal Variables

As noted earlier, Tziner et al. (1996) and Tziner, Prince, and Murphy (1997) found that Need for Power and Machiavellianism correlate with a measure of perceptions of politics in performance appraisal. Tziner (1999) investigated whether and when political considerations distort performance appraisal evaluations. Among the personal variables he considered was raters' self-efficacy in conducting performance appraisals. Among the contextual variables he considered were perceived organizational climate, the quality of rater–ratee relationships, affective and continuance commitment. Two of these variables had a significant relationship with political behavior. Specifically, self-efficacy as a rater negatively predicted political considerations in a performance appraisal ($-.27$, $p < .01$), whereas continuance commitment positively predicted political distortions ($.15$, $p < .05$). Thus, it appears that raters with low self-efficacy may handle uncomfortable situations (such as giving negative feedback to their subordinates) by engaging in political distortions of their evaluations. In short, they inflate their ratings of performance. Raters with high self-efficacy are more confident of their capabilities to deal with negative appraisals, and hence give lower ratings than their colleagues who have low self-efficacy for doing so. On the other hand, raters who are committed to their organization for personal reasons (e.g., maximizing their own benefits) are more likely to use performance appraisal as a means to obtain additional personal returns. In summary, Tziner's finding is consistent with earlier studies that found that managers willfully inflate ratings so as to avoid potentially damaging interpersonal relationships (e.g., Harris 1994; Villanova et al. 1993). Other studies (Harris 1994; Villanova and Bernardin 1989) suggest that managers give employees high ratings when it is self-enhancing for them to do so (e.g., make themselves look competent as leaders, gain resources, enhance their group's prestige).

Rosen, Levy, and Hall (2006) obtained findings similar to those reported earlier (e.g., Harris and Kacmar 2005) on the important role a supervisor can play in mitigating the effects of organizational politics on an employee. In a study involving 150 supervisor–subordinate dyads, they found that feedback quality, delivery, and availability correlated negatively ($r = -.65$) with employee perceptions of politics. Similar to the conclusion reached by both Witt (1998) and Harris and Kacmar (2005), discussed earlier in this chapter, Rosen et al. likewise concluded

that when supervisors clarify with their employees the behaviors that are expected and will be subsequently rewarded, the process is no longer viewed by employees as politically driven.

Using a cross-section of organizations in Barbados, Nurse (2005) found that there is a positive correlation between employee perceptions of the fairness of the appraisal process and their expectations of career advancement. Where formal performance appraisal procedures did not exist, supervisors did not engage in interactional justice. This lends support to the earlier argument by Gandz and Murray (1980) that in the absence of codified systems and procedures, politically motivated behavior is likely.

As is the case with studies of organizational politics, a limitation of the above studies is that the data come from correlational studies that are cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. Mero and Motowidlo (1995), in a laboratory experiment involving college students, found that raters are sensitive to being held accountable to pressures on them to achieve certain outcomes. Those who knew that they would be required to justify their appraisal took more and better notes than those who were not given this information. Moreover, those given equity information regarding women who historically received lower appraisals than men, or were told that their subordinates had historically received lower ratings, typically increased them. Curtis, Harvey, and Ravden (2005) also conducted one of the few experiments in this research domain. They obtained evidence in a laboratory setting for two contextual factors that influence political distortions in the ratings of others, namely appraisal purpose and rater accountability. Administrative decisions were found to be more subject to political distortions than those that are developmental. Therefore, using the same rating for multiple purposes may not be appropriate. Additionally, the experimental group which was held downwardly accountable (i.e., the rater had to justify a rating to a ratee) had significantly more lenient ratings than the group which was upwardly accountable (i.e., the rater had to justify a rating to the researcher). The third group, which was held accountable both downwardly and upwardly, had the least lenient ratings, although the difference in ratings from those of the second group was not significant. The interesting implication for practice is the finding that "upward" accountability in this experiment was not represented by the participant's supervisor, but rather by the researchers. This suggests that simply holding raters accountable to a third party may be sufficient to reduce rating leniency.

Salimäki and Jämsén (2007) examined the effect of pay on the employee's political behavior in Finnish government agencies. The correlational findings suggest that highly paid individuals, in an environment that they perceive to be politically charged, do not feel comfortable speaking freely. They think twice about expressing their thoughts and feelings. The researchers concluded that these employees are motivated to preserve their interests by maintaining silence. However, a moderator variable is the type of compensation. A weaker relationship was

obtained with performance-based pay. This may be because employees knew they were being evaluated on relatively objective criteria.

4. Recommendations for Minimizing Organizational Politics in Performance Appraisal

Suggestions for minimizing organizational politics in the performance appraisal process can be inferred from the extant studies. Longenecker (1989), for instance, provided suggestions about how to manage the politics of a performance appraisal. His recommendations take into account the manager's behavior ("re-think his/her purpose of the appraisal;" "rethink his/her approach to the appraisal process;" "be sure to set the stage for subordinate performance;" "make appraisal an ongoing activity;" "use long-term strategy in writing appraisals;" "base the appraisal interview on trust") as well as the organization's leaders ("lead by example"); and the organization's practices ("performance appraisal training that addresses the topic of political behavior;" "create an open and positive appraisal environment;" "do not make organizational policy a political stumbling block for the rater;" "provide managers with feedback on their appraisal performance"). None of these suggestions is tied directly to theory.

Another atheoretical approach that may prove to be effective in mitigating politics from entering the appraisal process is the use of 360-degree feedback. This may be especially likely if supervisors are made aware that their assessments will be examined by their boss and their employee in light of the assessments an employee receives from others. Specifically, evidence would exist in the court of public opinion as to how an employee's performance is viewed by peers, subordinates, and customers in addition to one's boss. This evidence would make it more difficult for a supervisor to politicize an appraisal than is the case where the supervisor is the lone source of an appraisal.

Three theoretical frameworks suggest additional solutions: (a) Greenberg's (2000) conceptualizations of organizational justice; (b) Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986); and (c) Locke and Latham's (1990) goal-setting theory. If there is a panacea to the problems related to organizational politics, it is likely to be found in the adoption of and adherence to the principles of organizational justice, distributive as well as procedural (Greenberg 1986). Greenberg (1987) proposed a taxonomy of studies regarding principles of organizational justice. He classified these studies using two independent axes: content/process and reactive/proactive. The content/process

axis refers to the perception of fairness regarding the distribution of outcomes, and the process adopted to distribute the outcomes (i.e., distributive versus procedural justice). The second axis refers to employees' reactions to perceptions of unfairness (e.g., unequal balances as well as unjust decision-making procedures) versus the actions taken that tend to increase perceptions of justice.

A similar taxonomy should be applied to the studies of the phenomenon of organizational politics. This topic is directly related to perceptions of organizational justice, as described earlier, and hence can be considered its conceptual antonym. Studies of organizational politics can be classified using the reactive/proactive dimension. Both scientists and practitioners are interested in understanding how people react to their perceptions of workplace politics, its negative effects, and how this phenomenon can be minimized. The majority of studies on organizational politics have focused on the reactive pole. The extant research suggests the negative effects of organizational politics on employees' outcomes. With the exception of the study discussed earlier by Vigoda-Gadot, Vinarski-Peretz, and Ben-Zion (2003), little is known about the detrimental consequences that this can have at the organizational level, and also in the way an organization is seen in the external environment. Hence there is a need to conceptualize perceptions of organizational politics in a proactive framework.

Inherent in this step toward minimizing the occurrence of organizational politics entering into appraisals is to codify the procedures. This step is consistent with findings obtained by Mayes and Allen (1977) and Gandz and Murray (1980), discussed earlier. Included in this step are the establishment of an appeal process and the appointment of an ongoing champion for an employee. Extreme formalization, however, can lead to rigid bureaucracy that in turn can result in an "iron cage" (Weber 1946). Hence the principles of organizational justice must be implemented with caution. People frequently engage in strategies to avoid the excessive constraints imposed by rules. With regard to performance appraisals, Mohrman and Lawler (1983, 177) found that managers "may create informal systems to communicate such data." A formal system that uses the same performance data for all purposes (i.e., administrative, developmental, and career advancement) may not allow raters to differentiate among the data relevant for each purpose. Another caveat regarding the adoption of an adherence to procedural justice principles by managers is that employee trust in managers moderates the effect these principles have on their cooperation (De Cremer and Tyler 2007). Over time, however, managerial adherence to those principles is likely to engender trust in management.

Social cognitive theory suggests the importance of enhancing a supervisor's ability and motivation to minimize the extent to which organizational politics enters into a performance appraisal. Steps should be taken to increase a supervisor's self-efficacy in conducting appraisals particularly on how to give negative yet constructive feedback to employees. Failure to take this step will likely lead

to political manipulations of employee ratings (Tziner 1999). In addition to self-efficacy, the outcome expectancies of raters must be taken into account. They must see the relationship between conducting apolitical appraisals and the attainment of desired outcomes.

Napier and Latham (1986) showed that a rater's outcome expectancies play a critical role in shaping their behaviors in appraising employees above and beyond self-efficacy to do so. In their two-study investigation of a newsprint facility and a bank, the authors found that appraisers reported few, if any, positive outcomes for them to conduct performance appraisals. Despite the fact the appraisers had high self-efficacy that they could conduct performance appraisals, they seldom did so. This is because they did not see a positive or negative performance appraisal as having any effect on an employee's job status. Moreover, they themselves were neither rewarded for conducting performance appraisals, nor were they punished for failing to do so. Low outcome expectancies resulted in supervisors abandoning behaviors they were confident they could do well.

Changing outcome expectancies can change behavior. A practical way to do so is to use an "empathy box" (Latham 2001). The box consists of a 2×2 table for collecting data on the positive and negative outcomes people expect with regard to organizationally desired and undesired behavior. Latham interviewed employees about the "upsides and downsides" of engaging in honest versus dishonest behavior. Based on their responses, management developed an intervention to bring about honest behavior by changing the outcomes the employees expected from theft. Similarly, the empathy box should be useful for identifying what positive and negative outcomes appraisers expect from taking political considerations into account when conducting and feeding back an appraisal to their employees, as well as the positive and negative outcomes they expect from making evaluations of employees that are "fair." Understanding the outcomes appraisers expect should facilitate an understanding of their appraisal behavior. It would yield clues as to ways of changing the positive outcomes they expect from undesirable political behavior to desired apolitical behavior when appraising their direct reports.

Setting specific high goals not only leads to high performance, it makes both parties aware of what is going to be evaluated (Latham and Locke 2007). Goal setting allows for transparency and hence facilitates trust between supervisor and subordinate. Supervisors are less able to manipulate their ratings of subordinates when measurable objective standards are made known a priori to all parties involved in the appraisal process. Subordinates know exactly which behaviors are expected of them. Supervisors know what they should be looking at (Wherry and Bartlett 1982). This reduces uncertainty around the appraisal process. Hence, employees are more likely to perceive appraisal decisions as less political. This recommendation is consistent with findings reported earlier by Rosen, Levy, and Hall (2006).

Borgogni and Pettita (2003) stressed an additional benefit of goal setting. It teaches supervisors the importance of setting priorities, and of helping subordinates overcome obstacles to goal attainment. To do this effectively, they recommended that supervisors receive formal training in ways to behave as a coach of the members of their respective teams.

It is well known that feedback in the absence of goal setting has no effect on behavior unless it leads to the setting of and commitment to one or more specific high goals (Locke and Latham 1990). A novel methodology that has yet to be empirically investigated is feedforward, an intervention developed by Kluger and Nir (2006). Qualitative data from organizations in Israel suggest that employees do not haggle over an appraisal of their performance when feedforward precedes a traditional appraisal. This intervention includes the following steps: (1) An employee is asked to tell a story about when he/she was at his/her "best." Included in the story are the circumstances (personal/contextual) that made this event possible. This procedure has parallels with Herzberg's (Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman 1959) use of Flanagan's (1954) critical incident technique. (2) The employee describes the emotions experienced. (3) The person is asked to describe plans (i.e., goals) to recreate similar incidents in the immediate future. Kluger and Nir argued that the effectiveness of their intervention is based on the positive emotions it creates within the person. These emotions elicit action to re-experience them. Hence the focus by employees to reduce the discrepancy between the future goal and the current state, positive self-talk for creating that future, and the positive bond that is ultimately created between a supervisor who initiates "feedforward" and the employee who engages in it. This last aspect, the positive bond, may mitigate a desire by a supervisor and/or an employee to politicize the appraisal process. Kluger and Nir's findings are consistent with the correlational findings obtained by Rosen, Levy, and Hall (2006) discussed earlier. A high-quality feedback environment appears to diminish an environment conducive to political behaviors.

Engaging in a feedforward intervention should be investigated in concert with setting specific high learning rather than performance outcome goals (Winters and Latham 1996; Latham, Seijts, and Crim 2006). A learning goal focuses attention on the strategies/processes necessary to attain a desired end state rather than the end state itself.

5. A Research Agenda

From the vantage point of a practitioner, the primary value of a review of the literature is its suggestions on "what to do;" hence the previous section will hopefully prove helpful to practitioners. From a scientist's point of view, the

value is the path forward a review provides for future research. This is the goal of the closing section of this chapter.

1. As noted earlier, many of the correlational studies should be replicated in ways that are not susceptible to common method variance. In addition, lagged effects should be examined. For example, it would be interesting to study the lagged effects of organizational commitment and organizational politics on one another over time. Commitment is likely to moderate the adverse effect of perceived politics, but it is also likely affected by it (Maslyn and Fedor 1998). As noted earlier, employees who are highly committed to their organization respond less negatively to political behavior than their peers who are less committed. But, over time their identification with their organization may dissipate (see Mayer and Schoorman 1998).
2. Using the Perception of Organizational Politics questionnaire (Kacmar and Ferris 1991) and/or the Questionnaire of Political Considerations in Performance Appraisal (Tziner et al. 1996) as mediators or dependent variables, conduct simulated or actual field experiments, that include control groups, which examine the effects of training supervisors:
   (a) on the principles of organizational justice;
   (b) on feedforward with and without learning goals;
   (c) to be supportive coaches with emphasis on increasing their self-efficacy for doing so and strengthening outcome expectancies for desirable end states.
3. Determine the underlying factor structure of the Questionnaire of Political Considerations in Performance Appraisal. Is it uni- or multidimensional?
4. Examine whether employees in an out-group, such as women in historically male-dominated jobs, receive higher appraisal ratings of their performance than their counterparts in a control group after being trained in impression management techniques.
5. Examine the effect of organizational design and job enrichment interventions on responses to the Perceptions of Organizational Politics Questionnaire and the Questionnaire of Political Considerations in Performance Appraisal.
6. Examine organizational culture/climate as a moderator of the effects of the above suggestions.
7. In addition, examine societal culture as a moderator of the above effects as the purpose of and the reaction to an appraisal varies across societies (Fletcher and Perry 2001).

As Tichy (1983, 269) once said: "having diagnosed the state of the current corporate culture, the next step is proactive." It is the authors' hope that this section and the one that preceded it will lead to steps being taken to minimize the adverse effects of organizational politics in general, and those in performance appraisals in particular.

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