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The Impact of Receiver Sex on Feedback Message Choice by Supervisors and the Influence on Employees' Attitudes and Behaviors

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THE IMPACT OF RECEIVER SEX ON FEEDBACK MESSAGE CHOICE BY
SUPERVISORS AND THE INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEES' ATTITUDES
AND BEHAVIORS

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Communication and Information
at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

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2016

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

THE IMPACT OF RECEIVER SEX ON FEEDBACK MESSAGE CHOICE BY SUPERVISORS AND THE INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEES' ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

The present study investigated the influence of receiver sex on supervisor's feedback message choice, and the influence of the interaction between receiver sex and feedback message type on employees' subsequent behaviors and attitudes. Participants ($N = 45$) included a representative sample from a reputable organization in the southeastern United States. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a survey methodology. This mixed-methods approach revealed that while participants in this study rated the overall atmosphere of the performance evaluation as positive and informal, the interaction between receiver sex and feedback message type did have a statistically significant influence on their perceived utility of the feedback message, retention of the feedback message, and motivation to implement the feedback. In addition, women in this sample reported receiving significantly different types of feedback than did men. Therefore, supervisors should ensure that both men and women receive more task performance related feedback messages in order to increase employees' perceived utility of the feedback message, retention of the feedback message, and motivation to implement the feedback.

KEYWORDS: organizational communication, feedback, performance evaluations, memorable messages, sex differences

Amanda Ruth Slone

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July 28, 2016

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Review of Literature	2
Women in the Workplace	3
Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT).....	6
Assumption 1: FIs regulate behavior.	7
Assumption 2: Standards are organized hierarchically.....	8
Assumption 3: Only gaps that receive attention regulate behavior.	9
Assumption 4: Attention is normally directed toward the middle.	9
Assumption 5: FIs affect behavior by changing attention.	10
Feedback as Memorable Messages	11
The Atmosphere Surrounding Feedback and Performance Evaluations	12
The Interaction Between Feedback Type and Receiver Sex.....	13
The Effect of Feedback Type on Employees' Attitudes and Behaviors	14
Chapter Three: Methodology	15
Participants.....	15
Procedures	17
Instrumentation	18
Perceived utility.	18
Retention.	19
Employee motivation.	19

Data Analysis	20
Research Question 1.....	20
Hypothesis.....	20
Research Questions 2, 3, and 4.	22
Chapter Four: Results	22
Research Question 1.....	23
Hypothesis 1.....	23
Research Questions 2, 3, and 4	24
Chapter Five: Discussion	25
Practical Implications.....	32
Limitations and Future Directions	33
Chapter Six: Conclusion	36
Appendix A: Survey.....	38
References.....	43
Vita.....	48

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 <i>Distribution of Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Feedback Interactions</i>	16
Table 3.2 <i>Select Population vs. Sample Demographics</i>	17
Table 3.3 <i>Coding Definitions and Examples</i>	21
Table 3.4 <i>Descriptive Statistics for Each Measure</i>	22
Table 4.1 <i>Distribution of Message Types by Receiver Sex</i>	24

Chapter One: Introduction

Performance evaluations are seen as an inevitable and oftentimes tedious process for all organizational members. Yearly performance evaluations are an especially stressful and difficult time for employees, considering that the nature of the feedback they receive determines their salary and perhaps even their position at the organization. Furthermore, the content of the feedback received during the performance evaluation can influence whether or not employees perceive they can exceed performance standards or even meet the organization's expectations. In other words, "feedback about the effectiveness of an individual's behavior [is]... essential for learning and for motivation in performance-oriented organizations" (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979, p. 349). Therefore, the degree to which employees remember and perceive the feedback given during performance evaluations as useful, and are motivated to implement that feedback, determines their success within the organization and, subsequently, that organization's effectiveness.

This paper investigated the impact of receiver sex on supervisor's choice of feedback messages during performance evaluations, and the influence of the type of feedback message chosen on the recipient's subsequent attitudes and behaviors. First, a brief overview of the state of women in the workplace is given, followed by a review of the suggestions and explanations for the gender gap that are asserted in popular literature. Then, the theoretical framework that guided this study, Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996) is rationalized, as well as its influence during performance evaluations and its outcomes, particularly when combined with the effect of receiver sex. After describing the methodology, including an analysis of the memorable feedback

messages provided by participants, results are presented. Finally, findings are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and practical implications are provided for the improvement of performance evaluations in organizations.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Past research (e.g., Cusella, 1980, 1987; O'Reilly & Anderson, 1980; Pincus, 1986) has produced inconsistent findings regarding the impact of feedback on job performance. O'Reilly and Anderson (1980) found a positive correlation between feedback and job satisfaction, and a weak relationship between feedback and performance. Pincus (1986), however, discovered a positive relationship between communication satisfaction, which included feedback, and job satisfaction and job performance. Furthermore, Cusella (1987) investigated the effects of supervisor feedback on employees' task interest and motivation, which are important predictors of subsequent behavior, by focusing on four variables that moderate the impact of verbal feedback on employees' intrinsic motivation: the valence of the feedback (positive vs. neutral), the source of the feedback (expert vs. non-expert), the referent of the feedback (task behavior vs. personal), and the sex of the feedback recipient. Results from this experimental study found that positive feedback increased intrinsic motivation more than did neutral feedback. In addition, referent and expertise interacted, such that positive, task-behavior feedback administered by an expert source increased intrinsic motivation more than any other combination of these three variables. Notably, significant interactions emerged indicating higher intrinsic motivation for females who received: (1) positively valenced feedback from an expert source and (2) positively valenced personal feedback. Cusella (1987) was the first to suggest the presence of gender differences in relation to feedback

messages. However, these studies concerning feedback, gender, and job performance were published over 30 years ago. Since before the turn of the century, then, no research has assessed how sex of the recipient might influence the information provided to employees during performance evaluations.

Women in the Workplace

In the past several decades, women have seen considerable improvement in the fight for gender equality. In 1963, the Equal Pay Act declared it illegal for organizations to offer inequitable compensation for men and women workers, and the Civil Rights act of 1964 proclaimed it illegal for employers to discriminate based on gender when hiring. These laws represented a major step forward in the fight for gender equality in the workplace. Many people, both men and women, “hoped that once the doors of workplace opportunity were opened for women, they would, in a short time, acquire the requisite experience to rise to positions of prominence in American businesses” (Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2011, p. 151). Women have made substantial progress in the workplace within the last 50 years; however, their progress becomes stagnated when it comes to acquiring top managerial positions (Brown, 2014).

Census data gathered in 2014 by nonprofit research organizations such as Catalyst and the Center for American Progress indicate that women represent 50.8% of the U.S. population; and those 16 and over constitute 46.8% of the U.S. Labor force (U.S. Women in Business, 2014). Despite holding almost 52% of all positions in management, professional, and related occupations, “women lag substantially behind men when it comes to their representation in [top] leadership positions” (Center for American Progress, 2014, p. 1). Only a few women have been able to rise above the ranks of middle

management; just 14.6% hold executive officer positions, 16.9% sit on the board of directors for Fortune 500 companies, 8.1% are top earners in their field, and merely 5.2% of women occupy a CEO position for a Fortune 500 company (Center for American Progress, 2014; U.S Women in Business, 2014).

These adverse statistics are comparable across industries, as well. Women make up over half of the labor force in the financial services industry (54.2%), but few occupy executive officer (12.4%) and board of director (18.3%) positions, and none have achieved a CEO title. While women workers dominate the health care and social assistance industry (78.4%), they rarely ever reach top management (14.6% are executive officers; 12.4% are on the board of directors; non are CEOs). Similarly, women constitute 45.5% of legal associates, but struggle to make equity partners (15%) or even non-equity partners (25%). About one-third of all physicians and surgeons are women (34.3%), yet about half that number become medical school deans (15.9%). Not surprisingly, the percentage of women political candidates has plateaued in the last decade; women hold about a fifth of congressional seats (18.7%), including both the Senate (20%) and the House of Representatives (18.4%; Center for American Women and Politics, 2014). Furthermore, even in growing industries, such as information technology, women only hold 9% of management positions; this does not include Silicon Valley startups, where only 14% of women ever make it to a senior management position (Center for American Progress, 2014).

Worldwide, however, America rates favorably compared to many other countries, ranking 4th in women's economic participation and opportunity and 20th overall in gender equality out of 142 countries (World Economic Forum, 2014). Nevertheless,

women are clearly still underrepresented in top leadership positions across corporate America. The horizon is still bleak, as “it’s now estimated that, at the current rate of change, it will take until 2085 for women to reach parity with men in leadership roles in our country” (Center for American Progress, 2014, p. 5). So, what is still holding women back from acquiring those top managerial positions and reaching parity with men in the workplace?

Popular literature and business advice suggests that men and women receive different feedback messages during their performance evaluations, which subsequently affects their ability to improve their performance and advance within the organization (Colantuono, 2014). For example, Leading Women, a certified women-owned business that promotes the success of women in organizations, has identified one such key intervention needed to help women break through the last panel of the glass ceiling. This intervention involves three leadership elements: (1) personal greatness, (2) engaging others, and (3) achieving outcomes. These elements, Colantuono (2014) argues, are the most common critical competencies used to identify and select executives in organizations. However, contrary to popular belief, the last competency – “achieving outcomes,” which includes business, strategic, and financial acumen – constitutes half of the career success equation (Leading Women, 2014).

Colantuono (2014) argues that bosses’ perceptions of women’s leadership abilities often differ considerably from their perceptions of men’s, albeit unintentionally; men are perceived as having a higher ability to achieve outcomes, whereas women are perceived as having a higher ability to achieve the greatness in others (Leading Women, 2014). This biased perspective creates a mismatch between the criteria sought for senior

positions and supervisors' opinions of women's leadership capabilities. Thus, when it comes time for senior management to promote their qualified employees to higher positions and possibly even to the executive suite, those skills and competencies that relate to achieving and sustaining extraordinary outcomes (i.e., business, strategic, and financial acumen) are rated twice as heavily as those other two elements of leadership. These skills have more "to do with understanding where the organization is going, what its strategy is, what financial targets it has in place, and understanding your role in moving the organization forward" (Colantuono, 2014).

Despite the existence of academic literature suggesting that different types of feedback messages impact the receiver differently (e.g., Cusella, 1987; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), this popular argument that feedback related to "achieving and sustaining extraordinary outcomes (i.e., business, strategic, and financial acumen) is missing in the feedback given to nearly half of the working population, has not yet been proven systematically. Given the complex nature of the feedback process, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) developed Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT) in an effort to more clearly explain the effects of feedback on the receiver. This theoretical framework is also useful for examining popular literature's argument for a prevailing gender bias.

Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT)

Essentially, feedback is information received by an individual about his or her performance (Annett, 1969) and provides some information about the correctness, accuracy, or adequacy of that performance (Ilgen et al., 1979). People use feedback, whether provided through a formal feedback intervention [FI] or not, to achieve goals or standards and to evaluate their performance relative to those goals or standards. In the

most comprehensive theory on feedback to date, known as Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT), Kluger and DeNisi (1996) explain the effects of FIs on task performance. FIT rests on five basic assumptions (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996): (1) individuals regulate their behavior by comparing it to standards or goals; (2) these goals or standards are organized hierarchically into three general levels: task learning, task-motivation, and meta-task processes involving the self; (3) attention is limited and, therefore, only feedback-standard gaps that receive attention actively regulate behavior; (4) attention is normally directed to a moderate level of the hierarchy (i.e., task-motivation processes); and (5) feedback interventions affect behavior by changing individuals' locus of attention.

Assumption 1: FIs regulate behavior. Assumption one of FIT states that individual regulate their behavior by comparing it to standards or goals (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Through this regulation process, the resulting “comparison of FI to a goal or a standard creates a *feedback sign* – positive or negative evaluation of one's performance relative to the goal” (as stated by Kluger & DeNisi, 1996, p. 259; Locke & Latham, 1990; Podsakoff & Farh, 1989). Positive feedback-standard discrepancies, or positive feedback-loops, give individuals the opportunity to pursue other goals. They can either raise the standard or goal and increase the amount of effort given, or maintain the standard and reduce effort (Erez, 2005; Hattie, 2002; Ilies & Judge, 2005; Krenn, Würth, & Hergovich, 2013; Locke & Latham, 1990; McCalley, de Vries, & Midden, 2011; Phillips, Hollenbeck, & Ilgen, 1996). Negative discrepancies, in contrast, motivate people to reduce the distance between the FI and the standard, which is referred to as a *negative-feedback-loop* (Podsakoff & Farh, 1989). Negative feedback prevents individuals from exerting too much energy on unnecessary or ineffective activities and failing to reach a

goal (Frandsen & Millis, 1993). During performance evaluations, for example, negative feedback is meant to correct behavior so that an individual does not continue to perform unwanted tasks and, instead, engage in those activities that will reach a goal(s).

However, in reality, this negative feedback (often in the form of disapproval, disparagement, condemnation and/or criticism) can be seen as detrimental and counterproductive to successful communication (Clement & Frandsen, 1976). Individuals often perceive negative feedback as disruptive and/or frustrating, despite the sender's best intentions. Instead of increasing effort to reduce the feedback-standard discrepancy, most individuals withdraw from the task and engage in other activities, resulting in a decline in performance and a failure to reach the goal or standard (Hattie, 2002; Ilgen & Davis, 2000; Klein, 1997; Pulfrey, Buchs, & Butera, 2011; Venables & Fairclough, 2009). Therefore, the type of feedback received, plays a crucial role in *how* and *if* individuals achieve their goals or meet standards (Brunot, Huguet, & Monteil, 2000; Lipnevich & Smith, 2009; Podsakoff & Farh, 1989; Shute, 2008; Venables & Fairclough, 2009).

Assumption 2: Standards are organized hierarchically. Assumption two of FIT states that these goals or standards are organized hierarchically into three general levels: task learning, task-motivation, and meta-task processes involving the self (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). The top of the hierarchy, consisting of meta-cognitive processes, focuses on those objectives related to the self (e.g., perceptions and sensitivities), while the bottom of the hierarchy emphasizes more task-learning processes (e.g., distinct actions and behaviors). The middle of the hierarchy, task-motivation processes, refers to the amount of effort an individual puts into performing a specific task or achieving a goal. Feedback-standard discrepancies can occur at any level of the hierarchy (Annett,

1969). But, people have a limited capacity for attention; thus, only those loops receiving attention are acted on (Carver & Scheier, 1981). Therefore, a person's attention can alternate between different levels within the hierarchy and across numerous goals or standards, depending on the manner of the prompting FI.

Assumption 3: Only gaps that receive attention regulate behavior.

Assumption three of FIT states that attention is limited and, therefore, only feedback-standard gaps that receive attention actively regulate behavior (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). For example, Higgins (1987) classified the self into three distinct categories: actual, ideal, and ought. The actual-self is what a person believes they currently are; the ideal-self is what a person believes they want to be; and the ought-self is what a person believes they are supposed to be within a given context. Higgins (1987) claims that people can perceive and alter discrepancies between these categories of self. Perceived discrepancies between the actual- and ideal-self lead people to try and attain their goals. In contrast, perceived discrepancies between the actual- and the ought-self lead people to try and simply meet a standard and to prevent further discrepancy (Higgins, 1987), such as indicated by a negative-feedback-loop (Podsakoff & Farh, 1989).

Assumption 4: Attention is normally directed toward the middle. Assumption four of FIT states that attention is normally directed to a moderate level of the hierarchy (i.e., task-motivation processes; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), balancing the goal of the self with the goals of the task. However, the exact position of this balance varies depending on the type of task, the attention commanded by the FI, and the individual's perceived implications for self (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). Correspondingly, Narciss (2008) suggested the existence of two feedback loops: (1) an internal feedback loop, in which

individuals compare self-given feedback to subjective perceptions of goal attainment or standards; and (2) an external feedback loop, in which an individual is given feedback by someone other than the self and is compared against a set of objective standards (e.g., employee performance evaluation). The external and internal feedback loops may correspond or conflict with one another, and that interaction is what ultimately determines the impact of feedback (Narciss, 2008).

Assumption 5: FIs affect behavior by changing attention. Assumption five of FIT states that feedback interventions affect behavior by changing individuals' locus of attention (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). For instance, when FIs cause attention to be directed to the self, there is an increased risk those FIs will weaken, rather than enhance, performance. Drawing attention to the self, either through praise or negative criticism, diminishes the positive effects of FIs because it redirects cognitive resources necessary for task performance (Brunot et al., 2000; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989) towards more affective reactions. In contrast, when receivers are provided with details about how to improve performance (i.e., task-learning processes), feedback is more effective (Hattie, 2002; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Lipnevich & Smith, 2009; Magill, 2001; Narciss & Huth, 2004).

However, FIs can be a double-edge sword (Kluger & DeNisi, 1998). In fact, in a meta-analysis of over 600 effect sizes, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) established that FIs, on average, led to improved performance ($d = 0.41$), but many studies failed to find an effect for FIs; they decreased performance effectiveness in over one-third of the cases examined. Since then, many conflicting and minor findings continue to exist (Shute, 2008), with some studies showing an increase in performance following feedback (Hattie

& Timperley, 2007; Mason & Bruning, 2001; Mory, 2004; Narciss, 2008) and others showing unwanted outcomes (Ilgen & Davis, 2000). To minimize the known risks associated with FIs, researchers (e.g., Erez, 2005; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Ilies & Judge, 2005; Kluger & DeNisi, 1998; McCalley et al., 2011; VandeWalle, Cron, & Slocum, 2001) argue that practitioners need to direct attention to the task rather than to the self. Consequently, being able to identify where an individual's attention is directed within the hierarchy provides researchers with a framework with which to better predict FIs' effect on performance (Kluger & DeNisi, 1998). Therefore, the question of the perception of FIs and their capacity to alter the locus of attention, leads the research to ask *what* will receive attention more than *if* it will be perceived at all (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996).

Feedback as Memorable Messages

Memorable messages, or *what* receives attention, are those “verbal messages which may be remembered for a long time and which people perceive as a major influence on the course of their lives” (Knapp, Stohl, & Reardon, 1981, p. 27). Knapp et al. (1981) found that memorable messages exhibit four characteristics: (1) are a type of brief oral injunction; (2) are personal because they regard important concerns in people's lives and occur at equivocal and often difficult points in time; (3) recommend directions for conduct and suggest strategies for dealing with varied situations; and (4) the content reflects rather conventional social values, such as those attitudes most beneficial for the maintenance and success of the organization.

In this study, feedback messages are considered a type of brief oral injunction, especially those given during typical yearly formal performance evaluations. As stated

previously, yearly performance evaluations are often a stressful and difficult time for most employees, considering that the nature of the feedback they receive influences their pay and perhaps even their position at the company. Additionally, feedback messages given during performance evaluations often concern the employee's performance on specific assignments and his or her adherence to company policies and procedures. Ultimately, feedback messages are given to employees to ensure that they continue to be productive and that their performance contributes to the organization's financial success.

The Atmosphere Surrounding Feedback and Performance Evaluations

Performance evaluations, also sometimes referred to as performance appraisals or performance reviews, are "the personnel activity by means of which an organization determines the extent to which employees are performing their jobs effectively" (Kahalas, 1980, p. 32). As stated above, the outcomes of performance evaluations often determine employees' salary, their position at the organization, and their perceptions about their ability to perform as expected. While there many different types of performance evaluations employed across organizations (e.g., numerical, objective, 360-feedback), an important factor influencing the effectiveness of the feedback messages given during performance evaluations is the organization's feedback culture. A feedback-oriented culture is one in which both managers and employees feel comfortable in both providing and receiving feedback (London, 2003). It has been argued that "the feedback culture of the organization should play a vital role in how feedback is sought, perceived, processed, accepted, used, and reacted to" (Levy & Williams, 2004, p. 895). While assessing the feedback culture of the entire organization was out of the scope of this study, it was possible to gather information regarding the context and atmosphere of the

specific performance evaluation under investigation. Thus, the following research question was posed:

RQ₁: How do employees perceive the overall atmosphere and focus of their evaluation?

The Interaction Between Feedback Type and Receiver Sex

Since the employee's performance is an important part of what determines the organization's strategic financial success, any supervisor should want their employee to improve so that the organization will continue to be more profitable. Stated simply, the end goal of feedback is to improve the bottom line. Cusella (1980) identified six interdependent feedback goals of supervisors: (1) rewarding, (2) informing, (3) cueing, (4) motivating, (5) regulating, and (6) learning. Supervisors ought to keep these goals in mind when choosing and developing feedback messages for recipients.

Commonly, these goals are described as either directional or motivational in nature (Ilgen et al., 1979). Directional goals include the specific information necessary for performing a task and the behaviors that should be enacted. In other words, "the directing function of feedback serves to clarify individuals' roles in organizations by making specific those behaviors that should be performed" (Ilgen et al., 1979, p. 352). These goals resemble the business, strategic, and financial acumen most often given to men during feedback (Colantuono, 2014). Motivational goals, on the other hand, are focused on improving the receiver's attitudes toward task performance. To increase motivation, such feedback often "provides information about outcomes associated with rewards" (Ilgen et al., 1979, p. 352). Correspondingly, these goals most resemble the conventional advice given to women. This leads to the first hypothesis:

H₁: Feedback type will vary as a function of receiver sex.

The Effect of Feedback Type on Employees' Attitudes and Behaviors

For the feedback to be useful to and valued by the recipient, they have to be able to make that message meaningful, and the feedback provided has to build upon the information already known by the recipient (Ilgen et al., 1979). If the information provided by the feedback message goes above and beyond that already known by the individual, then they are more likely to see the feedback as useful and valuable. As a result, employees then might be more motivated to employ the feedback. Accordingly, if an employee is motivated and perceives the information given during the performance evaluation as useful and valuable, then subsequently, they are more likely to retain that information and experience improved performance. But, if feedback is most effective when attention is directed to the bottom of the hierarchy (i.e., task-learning processes; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), but women are receiving feedback related to motivation and the self (i.e., meta-cognitive processes), then it is unlikely that they will see an increase in subsequent performance. At least for women, then, there seems to be a mismatch between the type of feedback messages being received and those needed to improve. Thus, the following research questions are posited:

RQ₂: How do sex and feedback message type interact to affect the receiver's perceived utility of the feedback message?

RQ₃: How do sex and feedback message type interact to affect the receiver's retention of the feedback message?

RQ₄: How do sex and feedback message type interact to affect the receiver's motivation to implement the feedback message?

Chapter Three: Methodology

Participants

Participants were recruited from a reputable utility company in the southeastern United States. This study aimed for a balanced sample with regard to the participants' gender, race, and ethnicity; no individuals were targeted or excluded on the basis of their gender, race, ethnicity, or health status. The individual was used as the unit of analysis. Following permission granted by the organization's human resources department and the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the primary researcher obtained the employees' email addresses from the organization's human resources department, who provided a random sample of 120 employee email addresses for recruitment. In order to identify this random sample of participants, the organization's human resources department pulled a report of all performance employees (exempt) in Ohio and Kentucky and used the random selection feature in excel (J. Benner, personal communication, July 19, 2016). Next, an email containing an explanation of the purpose of the study and the link for the survey was sent to each of the email addresses three months after the organization's completion of yearly performance evaluations; potential participants were asked to respond within a two-week window. Then, reminder email containing the same information was sent one week before the requested completion date stated in the original requirement email. Of the 120 original emails sent out, 45 participants fully completed the survey, which signifies a 37.5% response rate.

Of the participants who fully completed the survey, a sizeable portion of participants (40%) ranged in age from 35 to 54 years in age, followed by the age groups 26 to 34 (31.1%), 55 to 64 (26.7%), and 18 to 25 (2.2%). Most participants had been with

the company either for more than 15 years (37.8%) or less than 5 years (31.1%). The rest had worked at the company either between 5 and 9 years (28.9%) or between 10 and 14 years (2.2%). Additionally, according to most participants (93.3%), the person who evaluated them was also the same person who delivered the performance evaluation, and the evaluator was also most likely to be male (71.1%). See table 3.1 for a distribution of same-sex and cross-sex feedback interactions.

Table 3.1

Distribution of Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Feedback Interactions

Receiver Sex	Evaluator Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Male	20	6	26
Female	12	7	19
Total	32	13	45

Furthermore, there was a fairly equal distribution between males (57.8%) and females (42.2%). This distribution closely resembles the number of males (59%) and females (41%) in the organization's population (J. Benner, personal communication, July 19, 2016). When asked whether or not the participant also evaluated another person or delivered performance evaluations as part of his or her role at the company, the majority said no (51.5%). However, about one-third (31.3%) of participants said that they did perform both tasks, while 13.3% said they only evaluated others and 4.4% said they only delivered performance evaluations. These percentages align well with population data, in which 48% of employees have supervisory responsibilities, including the evaluation

others and the delivery of performance evaluations (J. Benner, personal communication, July 19, 2016). See Table 3.2 for a side-by-side comparison.

Table 3.2

Select Population vs. Sample Demographics

Group	% Male	% Female	% Supervisory Responsibilities
Sample	57.8	42.2	48.5
Population	59	41	48

Procedures

The survey (see Appendix A) was hosted on Qualtrics, an online survey program. The first screen of the survey required participants to consent to the terms and conditions of this study by selecting “Agree.” After consenting to participate in the study, participants were asked to think back to their most recent performance evaluation and to assess in general the atmosphere of the whole feedback session. Participants were also asked to estimate the percentage of the performance evaluation that was dedicated to giving feedback related to their personality (i.e., who you are as a person), motivation (i.e., how much effort you put in), or task performance (i.e., the specific behaviors you perform). Altogether, the percentage of time estimated spent on each category was required to add up to 100%. This question was asked in order to gather more information about participant’s perceptions of the feedback interaction, as these perceptions may differ from what actually occurred and what was said.

Then, participants were instructed to write in as much detail as possible the most memorable feedback message they received during that same evaluation. Participants were asked to do so in order to identify the single feedback message that had the most

lasting impact on the receiver. In other words, this memorable message or “takeaway” is the communication most likely to be used by the receiver to guide his or her subsequent attitude and behavior. Next, participants were asked to complete a series of instruments to assess perceived utility of the message, retention of feedback messages, and their motivation to use the message they were given to improve their performance. Finally, participants completed a short series of questions to provide some basic demographic information. Following the completion of the survey, participants were thanked for their time. No incentives were offered for participation in this study.

Instrumentation

The survey information collected from participants in this study derived from previously established and reliable scales. In addition, two of the scales (i.e., perceived utility, retention) are subscales of the same instrument (Feedback Orientation Scale; King, et al., 2009).

Perceived utility. To measure employees’ perceived utility of the stated memorable feedback message, the utility sub-scale from the Feedback Orientation Scale (King, Schrodt, & Weisel, 2009) was modified. The original alpha reliability for this sub-scale was acceptable ($\alpha = .88$; King et al., 2009). However, to fit the feedback context, the word “teacher” was replaced with “my supervisor” and the word “this” was added to reference the stated memorable feedback message. Items in the scale included statements such as, “I think this feedback from my supervisor is vitally important in improving my performance,” and “I think that this feedback provides clear direction on how to improve my performance.” Each item was measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1

(*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). One item was reverse coded. The alpha reliability for this sub-scale was also acceptable in this study, $\alpha = .88$.

Retention. To measure employees' retention of the stated memorable feedback message, the retention sub-scale from the Feedback Orientation Scale (King, Schrod, & Weisel, 2009) was modified. The original alpha reliability for this sub-scale was acceptable ($\alpha = .69$; King et al., 2009). Just like in the preceding instrument, to fit the feedback context, the word "teacher" was replaced with "my supervisor" and the word "this" was added to reference the stated memorable feedback message. The items from the scale read, "I can't remember what my supervisor wanted me to do when they provided me this feedback," "I tended to miss out on the details of what my supervisors wanted when they provided me with this feedback," and "I did not make notes of my supervisor's feedback." Each item was measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Initial scale reliability was low ($\alpha = .68$); removing the third item greatly increased reliability. Thus, the alpha reliability for this two-item sub-scale was acceptable in this study, $\alpha = .95$.

Employee motivation. Employees' motivation to use the feedback was measured using a modified version of Richmond's (1990) motivation scale. Historically, this scale has consistently demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = .92$; Richmond & McCroskey, 2000). Motivation was measured using four 7-step bipolar scales – motivated-unmotivated, excited-bored, uninterested-interested, and involved-uninvolved – in response to the prompt "When I think about the feedback given to me I feel..." The third item was reverse coded and alpha reliability for this scale was also acceptable in this study, $\alpha = .92$.

Data Analysis

To answer the four research questions and the hypothesis posed in this study, the following data analyses were performed. Details about each data analysis are presented in the order of the proposed hypothesis and research questions.

Research Question 1. In order to answer RQ₁, descriptive analyses to find the mean and standard deviation were run on the three items measuring the overall atmosphere of the feedback session, as well as the percentage of the performance evaluation participants estimated was dedicated to each of the designated categories: personality (i.e., who you are as a person), motivation (i.e., how much effort you put in), or task performance (i.e., the specific behaviors you perform).

Hypothesis. To test the hypothesis, the memorable messages collected from participants were coded into three mutually exclusive categories (i.e., mega-cognitive, task-motivation, and task performance) using deductive logic and guided by the principles of FIT (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Because the individual was used as the unit of analysis, one message was coded per participant. If multiple messages were provided by the participant, only the first complete message was coded for this study. Additionally, messages that were unrelated to the performance evaluation, or that did not specify what kind of feedback the participant received (e.g., “It was really more a conversation instead of direct feedback items.”), were not coded. Thus, a total of 36 memorable feedback messages were analyzed.

Initially, the author and an independent coder separately coded all of the memorable messages and compared coding. Using Krippendorff's alpha (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007) as a measure of reliability, the author and independent coder were

consistently reliable, $\alpha = .62$. Subsequently, the author and independent coder discussed all points of disagreement to settle on a final coding for each of the memorable messages.

Table 3.3 provides final coding definitions and examples.

Table 3.3

Coding Definitions and Examples

Feedback Type	Definition	Example(s)
Meta-Cognitive	Objectives related to the self (e.g., perceptions and sensitivities); personality; who the receiver is as a person.	<p><i>“You are valuable to this department.”</i></p> <p><i>“People enjoy working with me...”</i></p> <p><i>“My staff members find me valuable as a leader and role model...”</i></p>
Task-Motivation	The amount of effort an individual puts into performing a specific task or achieving a goal; affirmation of a job well done (i.e., “good work”); encouragement.	<p><i>“You’re doing good work. Keep pushing through and learning as much as you can.”</i></p> <p><i>“The work was getting done timely despite new employees.”</i></p> <p><i>“Everyone thinks very highly of your performance and appreciates you taking on extra roles outside of your day-to-day duties.”</i></p>
Task Performance	Distinct actions and behaviors to perform or not to perform.	<p><i>“My training and learning was on track”</i></p> <p><i>“That I try to do too much and need to delegate more.”</i></p> <p><i>“To focus on consistency in the work group.”</i></p>

Frequencies were run to identify the overall number of messages received in each category (i.e., meta-cognitive, task-motivation, task performance). Then, a chi-square was performed to see if there were any significant differences in the types of feedback messages (i.e., meta-cognitive, task-motivation, task performance) received by each sex (i.e., male, female). Since the chi-square was significant, the remaining analyses were conducted in reference to both sex and message type.

Research Questions 2, 3, and 4. To answer the remaining research questions (RQ₂, RQ₃, and RQ₄) and determine whether or not the interaction between receiver sex and feedback message type affected participants' perceived utility, retention, and motivation (RQ₂, RQ₃, and RQ₄), a MANOVA was performed. See Table 3.4 for an overview of the statistics on these three measures.

Table 3.4

Descriptive Statistics for Each Measure

Instrument	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<i>Perceived Utility</i>	5.66	0.81	3.11	6.89
<i>Retention*</i>	2.18	1.14	1.00	6.00
<i>Motivation*</i>	2.34	1.26	1.00	7.00

**Low score indicates positive perception.*

Chapter Four: Results

The present study investigated the influence of receiver sex on supervisor's feedback message choice, and the influence of feedback message type on employees' subsequent behaviors and attitudes. Results are presented in the order of the proposed hypothesis and research questions.

Research Question 1

RQ₁ asked how employees rated the overall atmosphere and focus of their performance evaluation. Participants felt the experience was generally positive ($M = 6.07$, $SD = .939$) and informal ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.588$). Participants also tended to agree with the evaluation of their performance ($M = 6.02$, $SD = .723$). Participants were asked to estimate the percentage of the performance evaluation that was dedicated to each type of feedback. Most feedback was perceived as being related to the participant's task performance ($M = 52.36\%$, $SD = 23.39\%$), followed by motivation ($M = 25.31\%$, $SD = 14.61\%$) and personality ($M = 22.84\%$, $SD = 17.92\%$). Thus, participants generally had an encouraging experience and felt that the feedback they received was focused on the actions and behaviors they perform as part of their role at the company.

Hypothesis 1

The hypothesis postulated that feedback type would vary as a function of receiver sex. The chi-square analysis revealed a statistically significant association between sex and feedback message type, $\chi^2(36) = 8.07$, $p < .05$. Over half of the messages received by female employees ($n = 9$; 52.9%) were meta-cognitive in nature, while males received mostly messages about their task-motivation ($n = 13$; 68.4%). Thus, the hypothesis was supported. See Table 4.1 for the distribution of message types by receiver sex.

Table 4.1

Distribution of Message Types by Receiver Sex

Sex	Statistic	Meta-Cognitive	Task-Motivation	Task Performance
Male	<i>Count</i>	2	13	4
	<i>Expected</i>	5.8	9.5	3.7
	<i>% within Sex</i>	10.5	68.4	21.1
	<i>% within Message Type</i>	18.2	72.2	57.1
	<i>% of Total</i>	5.6	36.1	11.1
Female	<i>Count</i>	9	5	3
	<i>Expected</i>	5.2	8.5	3.3
	<i>% within Sex</i>	52.9	29.4	17.6
	<i>% within Message Type</i>	81.8	27.8	42.9
	<i>% of Total</i>	25	13.9	8.3

* $p < .05$ **Research Questions 2, 3, and 4**

The remaining research questions (RQ₂, RQ₃, and RQ₄) asked about the interaction effect of receiver sex and feedback message type on perceived utility of the feedback message, retention of the feedback message, and motivation to implement the feedback, respectively. The MANOVA revealed a significant model, $\Lambda = .611$, $F(6, 54) = 2,509$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .218$, power = .793. However, there were no significant differences among the feedback message types for any of the outcome variables: utility, $F(2) = .142$, $p = .868$, $\eta^2 = .0210$, power = .070; retention, $F(2) = .046$, $p = .955$, $\eta^2 = .003$, power =

.056; motivation, $F(2) = .579, p = .567, \eta^2 = .038, \text{power} = .137$. There were also no significant differences between receiver sex for any of the outcome variables: utility, $F(1) = .165, p = .688, \eta^2 = .006, \text{power} = .068$; retention, $F(1) = .000, p = .995, \eta^2 = .000, \text{power} = .050$; motivation, $F(1) = .667, p = .421, \eta^2 = .022, \text{power} = .124$.

Moreover, the univariate effects for each of the outcome variables was not significant: perceived utility, $F(2) = .395, p = .677, \eta^2 = .026, \text{power} = .108$; retention, $F(2) = .496, p = .614, \eta^2 = .033, \text{power} = .124$; motivation $F(2) = 1.241, p = .204, \eta^2 = .079, \text{power} = .248$. However, upon examining those univariate effects that are closest to significance (motivation $F(2) = 1.241, p = .204, \eta^2 = .079, \text{power} = .248$), the model revealed that males who received meta-cognitive or task-motivation messages reported higher motivation to implement the feedback (meta-cognitive, $M = 3.38, SD = 2.30$; task-motivation, $M = 2.52, SD = 1.63$) than females (meta-cognitive, $M = 2.11, SD = 1.25$; task-motivation, $M = 1.60, SD = .76$), whereas females who received feedback messages related to task performance were more motivated ($M = 2.58, SD = 1.42$) than males ($M = 1.75, SD = .29$). Thus, results showed limited support for the interaction between receiver sex and feedback message type as having an impact on receiver motivation to implement the feedback message.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The present study investigated the influence of receiver sex on supervisor's feedback message choice, and the influence of the interaction between receiver sex and feedback message type on employees' subsequent behaviors and attitudes. While the overall atmosphere of the performance evaluation was rated as positive and informal, the interaction between receiver sex and feedback message type did have a statistically

significant influence on participants' perceived utility of the feedback message, retention of the feedback message, and motivation to implement the feedback. In addition, women in this sample reported receiving significantly different types of feedback than did men. Findings will be discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and practical implications are provided for the improvement of performance evaluations in organizations.

First, RQ₁ asked how participants rated the overall atmosphere and focus of their performance evaluation. Result revealed that participants felt the experience was generally positive and informal. Altogether, then, participant's mostly had an encouraging experience, which reflects a positive feedback-oriented culture. Likewise, this perception likely had a positive effect on employees' reception to the feedback messages given during the performance evaluations. In fact, participants generally tended to agree with the evaluation of their performance.

Moreover, when asked to estimate the percentage of the performance evaluation that was dedicated to the participant's personality (i.e., who you are as a person), motivation (i.e., how much effort you put in), and task performance (i.e., the specific behaviors you perform), most feedback was perceived as being related to the participant's task performance, followed by motivation and personality. This estimation is understandable given that performance evaluations, in theory, are supposed to give feedback on how effectively and accurately the employee is *performing* on the job (Annett, 1969; Ilgen et al., 1979; Kahalas, 1980). However, what is interesting is that the feedback messages that participants remembered three months following their performance evaluations, contradicted this estimation. When compared to participants'

estimations of the percentage of the performance evaluation that was dedicated to a particular type of feedback, it appears that even though participants stated that a significant amount of time was given to task-related feedback, the messages they remembered most were either meta-cognitive or motivational in nature. FIT can help to explain these effects.

According to FIT, individuals regulate their behavior by comparing it to standards or goals (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). This process occurs explicitly during the delivery of performance evaluation feedback. Importantly, though, it is the type of feedback received that is instrumental *how* employees respond (e.g., Lipnevich & Smith, 2009; Shute, 2008; Venables & Fairclough, 2009) and, hopefully, improve performance. Feedback related to these goals or standards are organized hierarchically into three general levels: task performance, task-motivation, and meta-task processes involving the self (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). But, people have a limited capacity for attention; thus, only those loops receiving attention are acted on (Carver & Scheier, 1981). In other words, it is more about *what* feedback message will receive attention, rather than *if* the feedback it will be perceived at all (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). The high number of a certain type of feedback message does not imply that it was also the most memorable type of feedback message.

While an individual's attention is normally directed to a moderate level of the hierarchy (i.e., task-motivation processes; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), their locus of attention can change depending on the prompting FI (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987). Consider Narciss's (2008) suggestion of the existence of two feedback loops: external and internal. The external feedback loop contains those feedback messages given by another individual compared to a set of objective standards, and resembles feedback

messages given during a performance evaluation. For example, the feedback message, “you try to do too much and need to delegate more,” given by a supervisor in reference to the standard “meets deadlines” represents the external feedback loop. In this study, participant’s estimated that, in general, the external messages they received during their performance evaluation focused mostly on feedback related to task performance (i.e., specific actions and behaviors). Nevertheless, the impact of a feedback message depends on the interaction between the external and internal feedback loops (Narciss, 2008).

The internal loop is where individuals compare the feedback they receive to their own standards and goals. If the external and internal feedback loops correspond, then an individual is most likely to internalize the objective, third-party message, which in this study would be task performance feedback. Take the previous example; the feedback given by the supervisor references the employee’s task performance. If the employee also thought that their inability to meet deadlines was a result of the specific behaviors they perform to complete a project (i.e., task performance), then the internal and external feedback loops would correspond. Consequently, the memorable message stated by the employee would also be related to task performance. But, if the external and internal feedback loops conflict, then one message becomes more salient over another (Narciss, 2008). For instance, if the employee thought their inability to meet deadlines was, in fact, a consequence of poor motivation (i.e., task-motivation) or incompetence (i.e., meta-cognitive), then the internal and external feedback loops would differ. Thus, the memorable message expressed by the employee would most likely be task-motivational or meta-cognitive in nature.

In this study, participants mostly remembered feedback messages that were meta-cognitive and motivational in nature. In other words, even though a significant portion of the overall performance evaluation included feedback messages related to an employee's task performance, additional messages related to task-motivation and the self may have overshadowed the task performance feedback provided to these participants. This is because when FIs cause attention to be directed to the self as a result of meta-cognitive messages, there is an increased risk those FIs will weaken, rather than enhance, performance because the FI redirects cognitive resources necessary for task performance (e.g., Brunot et al., 2000) towards more affective reactions. In contrast, when information and details are provided about how to improve specific behaviors through task performance messages, then feedback is more effective (e.g., Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Lipnevich & Smith, 2009; Narciss & Huth, 2004).

Second, the hypothesis postulated that feedback type would vary as a function of receiver sex. The sex of participants in this study (i.e., receivers) was shown to have a statistically significant effect on the type of feedback message given by supervisors. In particular, over half of the messages received by female employees were meta-cognitive in nature, while males received mostly messages about their task-motivation. This finding supports the argument made in popular literature that men and women receive different feedback messages during their performance evaluations (Colantuono, 2014). Interestingly, though, at least in this sample, men were given more feedback messages related to task-motivation than task performance, which is contrary to popular literature (Leading Women, 2014). Since the sample resembled the population in terms of sex demographics, perhaps the organization in this study stresses the amount of effort an

employee puts into his or her job over performance outcomes, or maybe effort has surpassed task performance in regards to an employees' ability to get promoted in general.

However, it is also possible that the type of feedback messages received by both males and females were not objectively different in their distribution, but that women and men remembered one type of feedback more than the other. In this study, women remembered more meta-cognitive messages than did men, who remembered more task-motivational messages than did women. This difference between the received and remembered messages could be a result of the individual's locus of attention. According to FIT (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), FIs change behavior by changing locus of attention. Perhaps men and women's locus of attention differ in their flexibility, which would result in remembering different messages, as well as different changes in subsequent performance.

Third, the remaining research questions (RQ₂, RQ₃, and RQ₄) asked about the interaction effect of receiver sex and feedback message type on perceived utility of the feedback message, retention of the feedback message, and motivation to implement the feedback, respectively. While the overall model was significant, suggesting that receiver sex and feedback message type interacted in this sample to affect the three outcome variables, none of the individual models showing univariate effects was significant, likely as a result of low power. However, examining the univariate effect that was closest to significance (i.e., motivation) revealed some interesting results.

On the one hand, the male participants who received meta-cognitive or task-motivation messages reported higher motivation to implement the feedback than the

female participants. On the other hand, the female participants who received feedback messages related to task performance were more motivated to implement the feedback than their male counterparts. In other words, females in this sample found task performance messages more motivating, whereas men found meta-cognitive or task-motivational messages more motivating. These findings contradict suggestions made in the literature review that directional goals, which resemble task performance feedback, are mostly given to men, while motivational goals, which focus on the receiver's attitude, are most often delivered to women (Colantuono, 2014; Ilgen et al., 1979). Perhaps women want more of the directive feedback messages that are typically given to men and, likewise, men would like more of the motivational feedback messages that are typically provided to women.

Additionally, while not significant in this study, the perceived utility and retention of feedback messages has an impact on a host of organizational outcomes. When employees perceive feedback as useful and valuable, then they are more motivated to employ the feedback and feel more job involvement (e.g., Andrews & Kacmar, 2001). Higher perceived job involvement has also been associated with occupational commitment (Cohen, 1995), higher performance (Keller, 1997), perceived effectiveness of organizational communication, as well as motivation and job satisfaction (Orpen, 1997). In other words, when an employee is motivated and perceives the information given during the performance evaluation as useful and valuable, then they are more likely to retain that information and experience improved performance.

Practical Implications

Taken as a whole, these findings imply that, at least at this organization, the overall performance evaluation process reflects a positive, feedback-oriented culture. Again, because the feedback culture of an organization can greatly affect the impact of feedback, it is important that both managers and employees feel comfortable during the feedback process (Levy & Williams, 2004; London, 2003). To continue providing this encouraging experience for employees, the organization should still provide positive and informal delivery of performance evaluation feedback. However, in order to improve employees' perceived utility, retention, and motivation regarding feedback messages following the delivery of performance evaluations, the organization should consider implementing a few changes to the content delivery of the feedback messages.

In order to maintain focus on the intended feedback message (e.g., task performance), supervisors in this organization might consider including more, if not exclusively, feedback messages related to task performance. As previously discussed (e.g., Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Lipnevich & Smith, 2009; Narciss & Huth, 2004), task performance messages are superior to meta-cognitive messages when it comes to influencing and improving employee behavior and, accordingly, could be given more focus during performance evaluations. Moreover, by focusing only one type of feedback message, supervisors may be able to eliminate any unconscious gender bias. Women's performance evaluations and promotion rationales should emphasize task performance and outcomes over subjective opinions and affective evaluations (Hoobler et al., 2011) just like men's do. Both men and women need the same quality feedback during performance evaluations for an organization to function most effectively and efficiently.

Organizations could also benefit from helping employees get the most out of their feedback post-evaluation, whether it is through goal-setting, open-dialogue with supervisors, or another type of intervention. In fact, “current models of effective training evaluation emphasize that building measures for evaluation requires a process of need analysis and goal setting” (Kluger & DeNisi, 1998, p. 71). By providing FIs in combination with clear goals, the chances increase that goals of both the person receiving the feedback and the person providing the feedback will be aligned. Moreover, if supervisors combine feedback with goal-setting interventions that direct attention to the task rather than to the self, then they can prevent against latent affective reactions, thereby increasing the practicality and efficacy of the feedback beyond the performance evaluation event itself. Training on both the content-delivery of feedback messages and goal-setting strategies could easily be learned through participation in professional development sessions.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study was primarily limited by a small sample size. The organization’s human resources department provided a random sample of only 120 employee email addresses for recruitment. Of the 120 original emails sent out, 45 participants fully completed the survey, which signifies a low response rate of 37.5%. This low response rate could have been the result of a couple different factors. First, employees at the organization had recently completed a longer employee engagement survey about two months prior to the launch of the first recruitment email in this study. Accordingly, employees in this sample could have been experiencing survey fatigue and, thus, chosen not to complete the survey. Second, while effort was made to ensure that the recruitment

email received by employees was not perceived as spam (i.e., customized Sender Name, customized Subject Line, preparatory email by human resources contact), some employees may still have questioned the authenticity of the survey and decided not to complete it. Third, even though every effort was made to ensure that participant's response to the survey would be anonymous, some employees may have feared that their supervisors or other organizational members would be able to see their responses. Altogether, the small sample size limited the ability to find statistically significant results after running certain tests. For example, the low power of the MANOVA limited the tests ability to find statistically significant results among the univariate effects. Future research should endeavor to collect more data, including among multiple organizations to gather a more diverse sample of men and women workers.

Second, because the data collected in this study was gathered three months following the time the organization conducted its performance evaluations, many employees' memories of the feedback they were given could have been altered. For example, the feedback message remembered 3 months after a performance evaluation might be more detailed (e.g., "you try to do too much and need to delegate more") than a message remembered 6 months after a performance evaluation (e.g., "you make things harder than they need to be"). Likewise, the feedback message could be even more detailed immediately following the performance evaluation (e.g., "You should start giving Sarah more responsibility and delegate some of the easier tasks to her. This will lighten your workload so you can focus on more important projects."). Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study on the feedback message(s) remembered at various intervals after the performance evaluation, and employees'

communication about that particular feedback message(s). Results gleaned from such a study could inform both researchers and practitioners alike about the nature of feedback messages post-evaluation, and how to help employees get the most out of their performance evaluations, whether it is through goal-setting, open-dialogue with supervisors, or another type of intervention.

Third, both the quantitative and qualitative data collected in this study consisted of participant perceptions of the performance evaluation process and their memories about the feedback messages they received. While this triangulation provided some valuable insights and highlighted important differences in the capabilities of both types of data, it also was limited in its subjectivity. The written performance evaluation, the conversation about and delivery of the performance evaluation feedback, and the employee's memory of the interaction could have differed significantly. Direct observation and audio or video recording of the individual performance evaluations could have addressed this limitation and revealed any false memories. As discussed above, what feedback is actually given and what feedback message(s) is remembered could be different.

Fourth, the author was unable to gather information about the exact performance feedback process at the organization in this study. While results of this study concluded that the participants perceived an encouraging feedback culture, there is no way to know whether these positive perceptions of the feedback process in this organization stem from the organization itself, or the supervisors and coworkers with whom the employees interacted. Future research could probe this area more and gather insight into the source of messages (e.g., supervisors, coworkers, organizational values) that employees receive

about the feedback process in their organization, which might affect their perceptions of the process itself.

Lastly, the author had a difficult time getting approval from the organization and gaining access to recruit employees. In all, the process took about three months from initial contact to organizational consent. This delay affected not only the IRB approval process, but also the timeliness of the data. Had the author gained access to recruit participants earlier, then the number of respondents might have been different, as well as the data collected. Nevertheless, research in organizations is important, yet rare, mainly due to access barriers. The data collected from real employees in actual organizations is more valuable and authentic than data gleaned from college students asked to respond to hypothetical situations. Therefore, just like FIs (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996), organizational research too can be a double-edged sword.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The degree to which employees remember and perceive the feedback given during performance evaluations as useful, and are motivated to implement that feedback, determines their success within the organization and, subsequently, that organization's effectiveness. As such, supervisors must keep in mind the type of feedback messages they give to their employees. Results of this study show that, participant sex unintentionally influenced the type of feedback message chosen by supervisors. In addition, female employees in this sample received more meta-cognitive message than males, who receive more task-motivational messages, during performance evaluations. Not only does this discrepancy affect female participant's motivation to implement the

feedback, but it is preventing the organization from getting the most out of half of its workforce.

Furthermore, receiver sex and feedback message type interact to affect employees' perceived utility of the feedback message, retention of the feedback message, and motivation to implement the feedback. The type of feedback message received, in particular, affects motivation to implement the feedback message differently for males and females. Therefore, in order to increase performance following performance evaluations, and to reduce the prevailing gender bias, supervisors should consider delivering more task performance related feedback messages to all employees.

Appendix A: Survey

ELECTRONIC CONSENT:

Please select your choice below. Clicking on the “Agree” button indicates that:

- You have read and agree to the information provided in the source email.
- You voluntarily agree to participate.
- You are 18 years of age or older and an employee at NiSource.

If you do not wish to participate in this research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "Disagree" button.

- Agree (1)
 Disagree (0)

If Disagree Is Selected, Then Skip to End of Survey

Please think back to your most recent performance evaluation. Answer the following questions in relation to the in-person feedback session as a whole.

How was the overall atmosphere of your performance evaluation?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)
Negative: Positive (1)	<input type="radio"/>						
Informal: Formal (2)	<input type="radio"/>						

How much do you agree with the evaluation of your performance?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)
Strongly Disagree: Strongly Agree (1)	<input type="radio"/>						

Please estimate what percentage of the performance evaluation was dedicated to feedback related to:

- _____ Your personality (i.e., Who you are as a person.) (1)
- _____ Your motivation (i.e., How much effort you put in.) (2)
- _____ Your task performance (i.e., The specific behaviors you perform.) (3)

In thinking about that same in-person feedback session, in as much detail as possible, describe the most memorable feedback message you received during that evaluation. This feedback message could be positive or negative, good or bad, helpful or unhelpful, etc. Simply type out the message that sticks out most in your memory.

Keeping in mind the memorable feedback message you just described, please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I think this feedback from my supervisor is vitally important in improving my performance. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will reflect on my supervisor's feedback. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I listened carefully when my supervisor provided this feedback. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am extremely encouraged by this feedback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<p>from my supervisor. (4)</p> <p>I think that this feedback provides clear direction on how to improve my performance. (5)</p> <p>This feedback from my supervisor is valuable. (6)</p> <p>I paid careful attention to my performance feedback. (7)</p> <p>This feedback from my supervisor motivates me to improve my performance. (8)</p> <p>This feedback from supervisor is a waste of time. (9)</p> <p>I felt relieved when I received this feedback. (10)</p> <p>I can't remember what my supervisor wanted me to</p>	<input type="radio"/>						
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do when they provided me this feedback. (11)							
I tended to miss out on the details of what my supervisors wanted when they provided me with this feedback. (12)	<input type="radio"/>						
I did not make notes of my supervisor's feedback. (13)	<input type="radio"/>						

Keeping in mind the memorable feedback message you described earlier, please indicate what best represents your feelings.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)
Motivated: Unmotivated (1)	<input type="radio"/>						
Excited: Bored (2)	<input type="radio"/>						
Uninterested: Interested (3)	<input type="radio"/>						
Involved: Uninvolved (4)	<input type="radio"/>						

What is your sex?

- Male (0)
- Female (1)

Was the person who evaluated you the same person who delivered your performance evaluation?

- No (0)
- Yes (1)

What is the sex of the person who evaluated you?

- Male (0)
- Female (1)

If Was the person who evaluated you the same person who delivered your performance evaluation? "No" Is Selected then go to question 13.

What is the sex of the person who delivered your performance evaluation? (May not be the same as the person who evaluated you.)

- Male (0)
- Female (1)

Do you also evaluate another person or deliver performance evaluations in your role at this company?

- No. (0)
- Yes, I evaluate others. (1)
- Yes, I deliver performance evaluations. (2)
- Yes, I do both. (3)

How old are you?

- 18-25 (1)
- 26-34 (2)
- 35-54 (3)
- 55-64 (4)
- 65 or over (5)

How many years have you worked at this company?

- Less than 5 years (1)
- 5 - 9 years (2)
- 10 - 14 years (3)
- More than 15 years (4)

Thank you for your time and consideration!

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doi:10.1007/s11031008-9116-y
- World Economic Forum. (2014). *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Geneva: Switzerland.

Vita

EDUCATION

M.A., University of Kentucky, Communication Studies (Expected Graduation: August 2016)

Committee: Dr. Amy L. H. Gaffney (chair); Dr. Brandy N. Frisby; Dr. Derek R. Lane

Thesis: “The Impact of Receiver Sex on Feedback Message Choice by Supervisors and The Influence On Employees’ Attitudes and Behaviors”

B.A., University of Kentucky, Organizational Communication (May 2014)

Minors: Business, Music Performance

Suma cum Laude

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Organizational and applied communication; feedback messages; organizational learning; leadership; instructional communication; classroom justice; cross-cultural differences; technology; group effectiveness; positive organizational scholarship; appreciative inquiry; training and consulting; LEAN management systems; quantitative and qualitative methods

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT/APPOINTMENTS

2015 of	Teaching Assistant, GEAR UP KY Summer Academy, University of Kentucky
2016 – present	Secretary, Communication Graduate Student Association (CGSA), University of Kentucky
2015 – 2016	M.A. Co-Chair, Communication Graduate Student Association (CGSA), University of Kentucky
2014 – present	Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Communication, College of Communication and Information, University of Kentucky
2013 – 2014	Intern, Parent Association, Office of New Student and Parent Programs, Dean of Students Office, University of Kentucky
2013 – 2014	Undergraduate Teaching Apprentice, Department of Communication, College of Communication and Information, University of Kentucky

AWARDS AND HONORS

2014 – 2015 University	Research Fellowship, Graduate Program in Communication, of Kentucky
2010 – 2014	Dean’s List

SCHOLARLY PRODUCTIVITY

REFEREED PUBLICATIONS

- Slone, A. R., & Gaffney, A. L. H.** (Accepted). Teaching professional online presence with LinkedIn. *Communication Teacher*.
- Frisby, B. N., **Slone, A. R.,** & Bengu, E. (Accepted). Rapport, participation, and learning in U.S. and Turkish student classrooms: A replication and cultural comparison. *Communication Education*.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Slone, A. R., & Gaffney, A. L. H.** (Accepted). Teaching professional online presence with LinkedIn. Paper to be presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association in Philadelphia, PA. Top Paper, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Division.
- Frisby, B. N., **Slone, A. R.,** & Bengu, E. (2016). Rapport, participation, and learning in U.S. and Turkish student classrooms: A replication and cultural comparison. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Southern States Communication Association in Austin, TX. Top Paper, Instructional Development Division.
- Slone, A. R.,** & Frisby, B. N. (2015). Classroom justice as a predictor of the instructor-student relationship. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Kentucky Communication Association in Montgomery Bell State Park, TN.
- Slone, A. R.** (2013) Understanding the effects of age on perceived management authority. Paper presented at the Clevenger Undergraduate Honors Conference at the annual conference of the Southern States Communication Association in Louisville, KY.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

- Scarduzio, J. A., Real, K. J., & **Slone, A. R.** (Under Revision). "If you work hard, anything is possible": How messages and events acculturate Generation Y to work and organizations.
- Gaffney, A. L. H., & **Slone, A. R.** (Under Revision). Using privacy management to assess students' understanding of professional online presence.
- Slone, A. R.,** & Gaffney, A. L. H. (Data Analysis). Assessment of audience analysis in business communication writing.
- Slone, A. R.,** & Frisby, B. N. (Under Revision). Classroom justice as a predictor of the instructor-student relationship.
- Beck, A. & **Slone, A. R.,** Tatum, N. T., & Frisby, B. N. (Data Analysis). Not another group project: The influence of individual conflict style on perceived group effectiveness.
- Frisby, B. N., **Slone, A. R.,** & Bengu, E. (Data Analysis). A test of the instructional beliefs model: A cross-cultural comparison of instructional communication in American and Turkish classrooms.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

PRIMARY INSTRUCTOR

University of Kentucky (Summer 2016 – present)

COM 326 Communication Strategies for Professional Excellence (~25 students)

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT

University of Kentucky (Fall 2014 – Spring 2016)

COM 313 Interpersonal Communication in Close Relationships (~175 students)

COM 314 The Dark Side of Interpersonal Communication (~175 students)

COM 326 Communication Strategies for Professional Excellence (~85 students)

UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING APPRENTICE

University of Kentucky (Fall 2013 – Spring 2014)

COM 325 Introduction to Organizational Communication (~60 students)

COM 399 Internship in Communication (~80 students)

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

- 2016 Instructional Tips and Tricks, Guest Speaker, CGSA (January)
- 2016 Applying for Ph.D. Programs, Guest Speaker, CGSA (January)
- 2015 Infidelity, Guest Lecturer, COM 314, Dark Side of Interpersonal Communication, University of Kentucky (April)
- 2014 Relationship Maintenance, Guest Lecturer, COM 252, Interpersonal Communication, University of Kentucky (November)
- 2014 Deception, Guest Lecturer, COM 313, Interpersonal Communication in Close Relationships, University of Kentucky (November)
- 2014 Secrecy and Privacy, Guest Lecturer, COM 313, Interpersonal Communication in Close Relationships, University of Kentucky (November)
- 2013 Conflict Management Processes, Co-Guest Lecturer with Tori Wolfe, COM 325, Introduction to Organizational Communication, University of Kentucky (October)
- 2013 Cultural Approaches, Co-Guest Lecturer with Logan Buren, COM 325, Introduction to Organizational Communication, University of Kentucky (September)

SERVICE

TO THE DISCIPLINE

National Communication Association

2015 – present Conference Submission Reviewer, Student Section

2015 – present Usher, NCA Annual Convention Volunteer

TO THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

Communication Graduate Student Association

2016 – present Secretary
2015 – 2016 M.A. Co-Chair
2015 – present Graduate Student Buddy

K Week Staff, Office of New Student and Parent Programs

2012 – 2014 Super Crew Leader

Delta Epsilon Iota Academic Honors Society

2012 – 2013 President

TO THE COMMUNITY

Lexington, KY

Summer 2015 Teaching Assistant, GEAR UP KY Summer Academy
2014 – present Foster Parent, Caring Hearts Feline Rescue, Versailles, KY

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2016 Certificate in Instructional Communication
2015 Workshop on “Tips for Getting Grants and More,” University of Kentucky
2014 Workshop on “Documenting Your Teaching Activities:
Assembling a Teaching Portfolio,” University of Kentucky,
2012 Certified in Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

2015 – present Kentucky Communication Association
2014 – present National Communication Association

OTHER EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

2009 – 2015 Manager, Marketing Assistant, Director of Communications,
Chick-fil-A, Lexington, KY
2012 – 2013 Street Team Member, Marketing Department, Orange Leaf,
Lexington, KY

OTHER AFFILIATIONS/ACTIVITIES

2014 – present Communication Graduate Student Association, University of Kentucky
Summer 2012 Honor’s Study Abroad in Paris, France; HON399: Theater, Art,
and Culture in Paris

2010 – 2014	Honor's Program, University of Kentucky
2010 – 2014	Delta Epsilon Iota Academic Honors Society, University of
Kentucky	
2010 – 2014	Phi Sigma Theta National Honors Society, University of Kentucky
2010 – 2012	Symphonic Band, University of Kentucky
Summer 2008	Foreign Exchange Student in Deauville, France; Lexington Sister
	Cities Program
2001 – 2012	Private Oboe Lessons