ACHIEVEMENT GOAL ORIENTATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR WORKPLACE GOAL SETTING PROGRAMS, SUPERVISORY/SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIPS AND TRAINING

A Dissertation in
Learning, Design and Technology

by

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ABSTRACT

Previous research on achievement goal orientation theory has considered the influence of an individual’s performance or learning goal orientation on goal setting, motivation to continue working towards a goal, and ultimate goal attainment. However, in many environments, including school and the workplace, there is a good chance that an individual is influenced or coerced to establish goals that are approved by another (e.g., individual’s teacher or manager) that may be congruent or incongruent with their own individual goal orientation. This investigation considers a broad question, what is the influence of an authority figure’s goal orientation on an individual’s established goals? The annual performance review discussion, and in particular, the annual goal review and discussion are potentially revealing or personal conversations between managers and employees. Through the lens of goal orientation theory, this investigation will use managers’ attitudes and perceptions, along with their stated goal preferences to determine if a manager’s goal orientation could have a positive or negative impact on the goals that he or she supports in his or her employees. This study explores middle management’s support of employee goals that are set as part of the Staff Review and Development process (SRDP) within the Information Technology department at a large research university and how this support may be influenced by manager’s individual goal orientations. Results of this study indicate that there was no significant difference between a manger’s goal orientation and the manager’s preference for type of employee goal (learning or performance), nor between a manager’s goal orientation and the manager’s goal discussion or goal support behaviors.
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Goal Orientation and Managers’ Preference for LGO vs. PGO Employee Goals

H_A1: There is a relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the types of employee goals that a manager will support.

Managers’ Training Attendance and Attitudes Towards Training

Goal Orientation and Frequency of Goal Discussions

H_A2: There is a relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the frequency of discussions that a manager has with his or her employees that are focused on employee progress with goal setting.

Goal Orientation and Perceptions of Organizational Goal Setting

H_A3: There is a relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and whether the manager considers goal setting as a formalized portion of the performance management process at the University to be valuable.

PGO and Managers’ Perceptions of Organizational Goal Setting

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Establishing workplace goals, according to Pinder (1984), has long been recognized as a method for motivating employees (as cited in Latham, Borgogni, & Petitta, 2008). While there are different methods for encouraging employee goal setting, some organizations choose to integrate goal setting as part of their annual performance review process – asking or requiring an employee to set goals which are then reviewed annually along with employee performance.

Goal setting and goal review conversations between a manager and an employee are potentially high-risk conversations for the employee. While an employee is most likely comfortable discussing his or her progress on various projects that the employee is working on with his or her manager, those projects are often not related to personal growth and personal goals. In contrast, an employee’s goals that are set as part of the organization’s annual performance review process could be potentially identity revealing. For example, an employee might have a goal to complete a Master’s degree in a field that is not related to the employee’s current work area. Adding this information to the employee’s list of goals may likely involve questions about why the employee is in this program, a conversation that the employee may not be prepared to have with his or her manager.

Employee goals are set in variety of ways, including those set solely by the employee influenced by the work context, those set in partnership between the employee
and the employee’s supervisor or manager, or those set by the manager or organization and assigned to the employee. The influence of supervisors on these set goals then ranges from low to high. As part of this study, information technology (IT) managers at a University completed a goal orientation instrument to determine their personal goal orientation. Next, the managers completed written interview questions regarding their perceptions and attitudes about goal setting within the formal performance appraisal process at the University. Finally, managers completed a test of goal preferences which contained sample IT employee goals. This was to determine which type of goals managers prefer in an effort to examine the potential impact that a manager’s goal orientation has on his or her relationships with subordinate employees. Implications for organizational goal setting and training are reviewed in light of these three data sets.

**Background of the Study**

This study will explore middle management’s support of employee goals that are set as part of the annual performance review program within the IT Unit at the University. This program is known as the Staff Review and Development process (SRDP). The IT Unit is the central IT department within a large, multi-campus, research university with approximately 600 full-time equivalent employees (FTE) and is part of the IT job family, which includes approximately 1,700 FTE employees. The University has a dozen colleges and twenty-four campuses that support approximately 100,000 students. According to their mission, the IT Unit (2014) “ensures that faculty, students, and staff have the information technology tools and infrastructure necessary to carry out the University's mission” (para. 1).
As part of the current SRDP process, all employees are directed to complete a Development Action Plan (DAP). The format of this plan has evolved over the years. However, in its present design, the DAP is a one-page document that employees complete by hand or by entering information into a Microsoft Word document (see Figure 1). Employees add their goals to the DAP document for the upcoming fiscal year during the annual SRDP period which runs annually from January through April.

**Development Action Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Professional Development Activities</td>
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<td></td>
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Figure 1. The IT Unit's Development Action Plan Worksheet.

**Statement of the Problem**

The present study examines University IT managers’ experiences, perceptions, and attitudes regarding the formal employee goal setting program through the lens of Dweck’s theory of goal orientation (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Prior to this study, the
following questions were unclear regarding the goal setting program for IT Unit managers:

1. Did managers in the IT Unit receive training on goal setting and/or on supporting employee goal setting in the same fiscal year prior to the 2013 performance review period? Did managers feel they received adequate training to coach their employees in writing DAP goals?

2. How were employee goals identified for their Development Action Plan? Did the employees write their goals themselves? Did managers dictate goals to employees or were they written in partnership?

3. How often did managers communicate with employees about their DAP goals for 2013? Did they feel they had regular/frequent communication with their employees about the goals the employees set for 2013?

4. Is there a relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the types of goals that end up on an employee’s DAP? Do managers with a particular goal orientation – learning or performance, tend to promote those employee goals that align with their personal goal orientation?

**Data Collection**

For convenience and to meet Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements regarding anonymity, three instruments were combined into one survey that was utilized to collect data from the IT managers. The first instrument was Vandewalle’s (1997) three-factor goal orientation instrument, which categorized IT Unit managers’ goal orientation as being learning oriented or performance oriented. The second instrument,
the Managers’ Attitudes and Perceptions’ Questionnaire (MAP-Q), was personally developed for this study to collect data regarding managers’ opinions on topics that related to the potentially moderating factors of training, goal setting conversations, and perceived value of goal setting. The third instrument, the Test of Managers’ Goal Preferences, was also personally developed for this study and asked managers to review sample IT employees’ goals and to indicate to what extent they would support these goals.

**Significance of the Study**

Besides the possible theoretical implications of manager-employee goal misalignment, establishing an explanatory relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the types of employee goals that a manager will support has significant potential practical applications for organizational goal-setting programs, goal setting and support training, as well as employee training at the organizational level.

The IT Unit presently offers training related to performance management primarily through IT Human Resources, though similar or related training is also offered at the central human resources level. For example, if it is found that managers typically support goals that match their own personal orientation, but managers’ goal orientation misaligns with the organization’s present mission, training(s) could be designed specifically to address this mismatch. Similarly, if the data demonstrated that IT Unit managers do not feel adequately prepared to coach employees through the goal setting process, then training(s) could be designed to meet this concern.
The University is presently undergoing a human resources transformation. This transformation includes taking a current and widely decentralized method of delivering human resources services, through human resources representatives in the various departments and units to centralizing many of the administrative services (i.e., moving many of the daily “paper-pusher” aspects of the a human resource generalist’s position, such as completing parking permits, assigning keys, etc., back up to the central human resources unit). In addition, as part of this transformation, a HRIM will be selected which will include the management of the annual performance review process, including employee goal setting. The goal setting features of this new system will have the option to push down organizational goals to employees, also known as “cascading goals.”

Varma, Budhwar, Pawan, and DeNisi (2008) define cascading goals as goals that are “cascaded down to every level in the organization” (p. 208). Cascading goals as an HRIM software system feature provide the impression of neatly aligning employees’ professional development activities with the organization’s mission. However, this may be at the cost of misalignment with many employees’ personal goal orientation. If organizations were aware of how managers’ goal-setting behaviors could be influenced by their goal orientation and the possible negative consequences for some employees due to this misalignment, HRIMs could be designed to support goal-setting and goal-support processes with this in mind to incorporate the appropriate prompts and scaffolds to guide employees throughout the goal-setting process.
Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the types of employee goals that the manager will support?

2. What is the relationship between the frequency of manager and employee discussions about goal setting and a manager’s goal orientation?

3. What is the relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the manager’s perceived value of goal setting at the university?

Definition of Terms

*Development Action Plan (DAP)* – The Development Action Plan (DAP) is a document that the University’s IT Unit employees use to set annual goals as part of the annual review process.

*Job Responsibilities Worksheet (JRW)* – The Job Responsibilities Worksheet (JRW) is a document that IT Unit employees update throughout the year to describe their overall responsibilities to their supervisor. This document describes each major area of responsibility for the employee, assigns percentages of no less than 5% to each area of responsibility, and elaborates on duties to explain the context to the supervisor.

*Staff Review and Development Plan (SRDP)* – The Staff Review and Development Plan is a document that is completed by staff members and supervisors annually to describe an employee’s progress on successfully performing the responsibilities that are assigned to the employee (as described by the JRW).

*Goal Orientation Theory* – Attributed to the work of Carol Dweck, this theory states that individuals tend to exhibit two types of responses in the face of possible failure
on tasks: a maladaptive "helpless" response and a more adaptive "mastery-oriented" response (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Individuals are described as having one of two types of goal orientations – performance goal orientation or learning goal orientation (also referred to as a “mastery goal orientation”).

*Management by Objectives (MBO)* – Management by Objectives is a process by which managers and supervisors are “measuring work against stated objectives” (Greenwood, 1981).

**Summary**

Employee goal setting continues to be used in a variety of organizations as a method of motivating employees. Identifying how a manager’s goal orientation can potentially influence a manager’s interactions with his or her employees has major potential implications for organizations. These implications include employee performance, potential design changes to goal setting programs within formal performance appraisal systems, organizational training offerings related to goal setting, and supporting employee goal setting, and organizational training in general.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

It became clear by examining the evolution of organizational goal setting since the 1950’s that there are two distinct theories: goal setting theory and goal orientation theory. These two topics often behaved as if they were two rivers flowing in parallel, occasionally converging over points upon which they agreed, and then separating again with their individual divergent concerns. This review begins by exploring Drucker’s often cited (1976) Management by Objectives (MBO) framework from the 1950’s and is followed by an examination of the theoretical contributions of Locke (1968), Latham (1975), and Dweck (1988), with their respective theories on goal setting and goal orientation.

This literature review will examine the impact of employee goal setting in organizations and will focus on how goal orientation has the potential to impact the employee goal setting process. This includes how goal orientation can influence the types of goals that are set and the progress employees make towards achieving their goals. The level to which employees are involved in the actual goal setting is considered as well.

Furthermore, this literature review will explore how managers’ support of employee goals can be influenced by their goal orientation. Coaching patterns of managers are reviewed as well, with an emphasis on considering whether goal orientation can contribute to differences in these managerial coaching behaviors. Finally the influence of goal orientation on employee training is also explored.
Introduction

Organizational goal setting has long been a tool utilized to increase employee motivation and performance. In fact, Pinder (1984) explained that goal setting theory (as cited in Latham, Borgogni, & Petitta, 2008) has “demonstrated more scientific validity than any other theory or approach to employee motivation” (p. 398). Furthermore, goal setting has been proven to impact employee performance. This is unequivocally supported in the literature. “More than 90 percent of empirical studies have shown positive effects of goal setting on an employee’s or a team’s performance " (Latham, Borgogni, & Petitta, 2008, p. 386). This literature review begins with a brief overview of the two main historical perspectives of goal setting – academic and organizational.

Historical Overview of Goal Setting

Researchers have examined goal setting from two main perspectives: academic and organizational. Locke, Shaw, Saari, and Latham (1981) discussed these two perspectives in their article, Goal setting and task performance: 1969-1980, which reviewed laboratory and field studies on “the effects of setting goals when performing a task” (p. 125). Locke et al. (1981) found that notable research on goal setting from the academic viewpoint is shared by G. Miller, Galanter, and Pribrani (1960) with their work regarding plans and the structure of behavior, as well as Ryan’s (1970) research regarding intention as a factor in initiating behavior.

From the organizational perspective, Locke et al. (1981) found that the main work regarding goal setting can be traced from Drucker’s Management by Objectives (MBO) approach, which was popularized in the 1950’s (Drucker, 1976), to the Scientific
Management Movement, which was founded by Frederick W. Taylor (1911; 1967). As this study focused on goal setting in organizations, that particular perspective will be the main focus of this literature review.

Goal Setting in Organizations

Management by Objectives

At its simplest level, MBO is defined as a process by which managers and supervisors are “measuring work against stated objectives” (Greenwood, 1981, p. 225). MBO is a “motivating tool that uses goal setting theory to enhance personal, and ultimately, organizational performance” (Vigoda-Gadot & Angert, 2007, p. 119). As Odiorne (1971) described it, MBO is a process whereby the superior and subordinate managers of an organization jointly identify its common goals, define each individual’s major areas of responsibility in terms of the results expected of him, and use these measures as guides for operating the unit and assessing the contribution of each of its members (pp. 55-56).

Drucker articulated the importance of goal setting in organizations when he stated “nothing destroys the effectiveness of competent individuals more than having their efforts splintered over a number of divergent concerns - a function of the frustration that results from giving part-time attention to a major task” (Drucker, 1976, pp. 14-15). Employee goal setting, when conducted in an intentional manner, aids in focusing an employee’s, department, and/or organization’s attention on a manageable number of particular tasks or projects.
Edwin Locke and Goal Setting

Locke’s early research with goal setting began with the exploration of the concept of conscious goals (Locke & Latham, 2005). While working at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), Locke published his now seminal paper, Toward a Theory of Task Motivation and Incentives. With this work, Locke (1968) explored the “relationship between conscious goals and intentions and task performance” (p. 157). He identified this area of research as a “long-neglected topic in psychology” (p. 157) and cited studies that demonstrated that: “Hard goals produce a higher level of performance (output) than easy goals. Specific hard goals produce a higher level of output than a goal of ‘do your best’. Behavioral intentions regulate choice behavior” (Locke, 1968, p. 157).

This 1968 work was the beginning of Locke’s theory, though at the time, it was not yet fully developed. Locke viewed “goals and intentions as mediators of the effects of incentives on task performance” (p. 157) and explained that goal setting, as it relates to employee performance, can be mediated by a number of factors including monetary incentives, knowledge of score, and time limits (Latham & Yukl, 1975; Locke, 1968). Locke’s (1968) view of goal setting also considered participation in the decision-making process, competition with others, and performance feedback (praise and reproof) as mediators of employee goal setting. Those factors, however, were less explored in the literature at the time of Locke’s research. Therefore, he discussed these from a less developed perspective.

Monetary incentives for employees, Locke (1968) explained, have been researched in a number of studies in the literature. He stated that “numerous industrial studies of the effects of monetary incentive systems depend on the particular production
quotas that workers have” (Locke, 1968, p. 175). It was discovered that if workers feel that their long-term self-interest, either in terms of interpersonal relations, effort, or job tenure, will be threatened by trying to go “all out” for piece-rate earnings, they will restrict production to what they consider to be a “safe” level. This “safe” level is considered a level that will protect their jobs and/or keep the time study man from retiming the job and setting new rates, etc.. (Locke, 1968). However, monetary incentives also served to encourage employees. It was found that a “well-run incentive system (providing the workers value money)” will “encourage workers to accept tasks and set goals that they would not accept or set on their own” (Locke, 1968, p. 175).

In addition to monetary incentives, knowledge of scores (KS) can also impact goal setting. Studies that explore the impact of KS with goal setting are concerned with “the effects of knowledge of overall scores on a task or knowledge of a score on a task where there are no right or wrong answers (e.g., reaction time)” (Locke, 1968, p. 175). Locke stated that KS only impacts goal setting if it is given in a form where it can be used to “set goals or to judge one’s progress in relation to a standard” (Locke, 1968, p. 177).

Two studies by Bryan and Locke (1967) explored the impact of giving time limits to employees when completing additional tasks. They learned that the “subjects given an excess amount of time took longer to complete the task than those given a minimum amount of time” (Locke, 1968, p. 177). However, when time limits were removed, both groups of subjects “set their goals at the same level and worked at the same pace” (Locke, 1968, p. 177). Therefore, it was determined by Bryan and Locke (1967), that “the
effect of the different time limits appeared to be a function of the differing performance sub goals which they induced” (Locke, 1968, p. 177).

A number of studies prior to Locke’s 1968 work considered participation and its impact as a mediator of goal setting. Locke (1968) stated that a number of those studies argued that “employee participation in the decisions that affect them motivates better job performance” (p. 178). However, the issue that concerned him was “how participation serves to motivate job performance when it does so” (p. 178). Locke (1968) was particularly interested at the time in a then recent study conducted by Meyer, Kay, and French (1965) that conducted research “where the effects of participation and goal-setting were clearly separated” (Locke, 1968, p. 179). Meyer et al. (1965) found that “while subordinate participation in the goal-setting process had some effect on improved performance, a much more powerful influence was whether goals were set at all” (p. 126).

Locke (1968) also considered competition to be an important aspect of his goal-setting theory. Long researched from both its impact on athletes and in the workplace, competition is the “case of another person’s or group’s performance is the standard by which goals are set and success and failure judged” (Locke, 1968, p. 179). Competition with and within businesses, though, is slightly different from competition in athletic endeavors. Locke described this difference when he stated that: “Unlike athletics, business is not a ‘zero-sum game’, where one man’s gain necessarily means another man’s loss. In business, wealth is created and therefore everyone benefits in the long run” (Locke, 1968, pp. 179-180). Competition, as it relates to employee goal setting, brings
up a special type of competition: self-competition. This is the “case of an individual trying to improve over his own previous performance on a task” (Locke, 1968, p. 180).

Finally, performance feedback, or praise and reproof, is part of Locke’s (1968) theory of goal setting, though he admitted that “a theory explaining the precise circumstances in which praise and reproof will lead to the setting of higher and/or lower goals is beyond the scope” (p. 181) of his research at the time. He did emphasize, however, that the “effects of these incentives” (i.e., praise and reproof) “on performance should be a function of the goals the individuals set in response to them” (Locke, 1968, p. 181).

**Edwin Locke and Gary Latham’s Theory of Goal Setting**

Locke stated many years later that he deliberately chose the word ‘toward’ as part of the title of his 1968 paper because he “did not believe there were sufficient data to develop a theory” at the time (Locke & Latham, 2005, p. 132). However, another researcher, Gary Latham, was also interested in goal setting. Latham and Locke met at a 1974 symposium at the American Psychological Association and began working together to build a theory of goal setting that worked in organizations.

Over the next twenty years, Locke and Latham worked together on numerous studies related to goal setting. They formally presented their theory of goal setting in 1990 with the publication of their book, ‘A theory of goal setting and task performance’. Their theory stated that “the simplest and most direct motivational explanation of why some people perform better than others is because they have different performance goals” (Locke & Latham, 1991, p. 213). They chose “not to close the theory to further
development” (Locke & Latham, 2005, p. 146) and since the formal presentation of their theory, they continue to learn more about goal setting, such as the “benefits of learning goals” (Locke & Latham, 2005, p. 146). However, “these discoveries do not contradict earlier findings; they add knowledge” (Locke & Latham, 2005, p. 147).

Dweck’s Theory of Goal Orientation

Carol Dweck and her colleagues examined what occurs when individuals are faced with task failure. Past work by Dweck and her colleagues (Diener & Dweck, 1978, 1980; Dweck, 1975; Dweck & Reppucci, 1973) led them to identify two responses to task failure: a maladaptive "helpless" response and a more adaptive "mastery-oriented" response (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Participants exhibiting the maladaptive response were referred to as having a “performance goal orientation” and participants exhibiting the adaptive “mastery-oriented” response were referred to as having a “mastery or learning goal orientation” (Dweck & Leggett, 1988, p. 256).

Dweck’s theory of goal orientation is based upon research that she and her colleagues conducted primarily with children. They examined the potential impact of goal orientation in academic environments (Button, Mathieu, & Zajac, 1996). While working with these children, Dweck and her colleagues asked students to work a concept formation task in which some of the problems were too difficult for the students’ age group. As students progressed through the easy problems to more difficult problems, patterns emerged.

characterized these behavior patterns as exhibiting a performance goal orientation pattern (PGO). Other children exhibited constructive self-instructions and self-monitoring, a positive prognosis, positive affect, and effective problem-solving strategies – these patterns were later identified by Dweck and her colleagues as children who exhibited learning goal orientations (LGO).

In summary, children who exhibited patterns of performance goal orientation behavior “viewed their difficulties as failures, as indicative of low ability, and as insurmountable” (Dweck & Leggett, 1988, p. 258), while in contrast, children who exhibited learning goal orientations, when confronted with the difficult problems, did not begin to offer excuses for their failure. Dweck and Leggett (1988) found that these children “appeared to view the unsolved problems as challenges to be mastered through effort” (p. 258). Dweck’s goal orientation research extended previous research on goal setting because instead of “focusing on the content of what people are attempting to achieve (i.e. objectives, specific standards), goal orientations define why and how people are trying to achieve various objectives” (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; cited in Kaplan & Maehr, 2007, p. 142).

**Performance vs. Learning Goal Orientations: Trait or Characteristic?**

Since Dweck and her colleagues first proposed their theory of goal orientation, other researchers have utilized this theory in their studies – some measured participants’ goal orientation while others manipulated individuals’ goal orientation (Button et al., 1996). Researchers have been inconsistent as to whether they considered goal orientation
to be an underlying dispositional trait of an individual or as a situational characteristic that can be manipulated in various settings or situations.

Button et al. (1996) reviewed studies utilizing goal orientation research and found that some surveys clearly examined goal orientation as a situational characteristic by virtue of how the questions were worded. An example of this would be if a survey question included the preface, “in this class” or “the teacher makes sure that…” (Button et al., 1996, p. 28). In other studies, Button et al. (1996) found that some studies may have inadvertently confounded the two variables (trait vs. situational characteristic) and illustrated this situation with the Duda and Nicholls (1992) study in which the researchers “modified a measure of dispositional goal orientation twice in the context of a single study” (p. 28). By modifying this measure within the same study, Button et al. (1996) believed that Duda and Nicholls (1992) “unintentionally confounded the personal and situational aspects of goal orientation” (p. 28).

Button et al. (1996) stated that adopting the view that goal orientations are dispositional leads to predisposing “individuals to adopt particular response patterns across situations” (DeShon & Gillespie, 2005, p. 1,100). Adopting a dispositional view of goal orientations means that one views individuals as having a general leaning towards performance or learning goal orientations, but that it is possible for those same individuals to adopt the opposite goal orientation in certain settings. Viewing goal orientations as situational characteristics may result in individuals adopting a “different or less acute response pattern for a particular situation” (Button et al., 1996, p. 28). Ojha and Nagarathna (2003) concluded in their review of goal orientation models that goal orientation “should be represented as a trait and a multidimensional construct” (p. 3) and
found that goal orientation “has emerged as an important motivational construct in organizational research reflecting individual differences in work-related behaviors and task performance outcomes” (p. 1).

Researchers’ choice of investigating goal orientation as a “state” or a “trait” had impact on the methodological approaches that they utilized for their research. Those researching goal orientation as a “state” typically employed “experimental manipulations or questionnaires that focused on engagement in a specific task” (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007, p. 142). Those who examined goal orientation as a “trait” typically employed “questionnaires and interviews that focused on cross-situational engagement such as in a domain, class, and even learning in general” (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007, p. 142).

**Goal Orientation Research in Organizations**

While Dweck and her colleagues’ research regarding goal orientation theory has focused primarily on children, other researchers have both proposed and/or examined the implications of goal orientation in organizational settings. Different definitions are utilized to describe the behavioral characteristics present in employees when utilizing goal orientation theory. Employees with performance goal orientations are described as seeking to “demonstrate and validate the adequacy of one's competence by seeking favorable judgments and avoiding negative judgments about one's competence” (Vandewalle, 1997, p. 997). Employees with learning goal orientations are described as seeking “to develop competence by acquiring new skills and mastering new situations” (Vandewalle, 1997, p. 997).
Employee Participation in the Goal Setting Process

Various studies have examined the impact of employees participating in goal setting in organizations (Carroll & Tosi, 1969, 1970; Duttagupta, 1975; French, Kay, & Meyer, 1966; Steers, 1975). Researchers’ results have been mixed regarding whether involving employees in the goal setting process has an impact on employees’ performance. In their review of studies that examined the effects of different levels of employee participation in goal setting, Latham and Yukl (1975) discussed five studies, including one of their own. Ultimately, Latham and Yukl (1975) determined that while “some evidence supporting the superiority of participative goal setting, a significant difference is found only under certain conditions or with certain types of employees” (p. 840).

Regarding certain conditions, Latham and Yukl (1975) learned that men who worked in highly participatory environments worked best with goals they set for themselves, while men who typically worked in low participatory environments worked best with goals their supervisors set for them (French, Kay, & Meyer, 1966). However, in one study, participatory involvement in the goal setting process did not seem to matter. As for certain types of employees, French et al. (1966) learned that there tended to be a positive correlation with perceived participation as compared to overall goal effort and overall performance where supervisors are concerned, as long as those supervisors had a low need for achievement. This was not found with those supervisors who had a high need for achievement (Steers, 1975).

Involving employees in the goal setting process has been found to increase employee performance. In their study of engineers and scientists in an research and
development (R&D) division of an organization, Latham et al. (2008) found that “employees who participated in setting their goals performed significantly better than their peers who were assigned goals, despite the fact that goal commitment was the same regardless of how the goal was set” (p. 388). The authors also learned that the employees in the “participative condition set goals that were significantly higher than those that were assigned” (Latham et al., 2008, p. 388).

**Supervisor and Employee Goal Setting Relationships**

Employees’ relationships with their supervisors as part of an organizationally required or promoted goal setting program have been moderately explored in the research. Janssen and Yperen (2004) examined the impact of performance and learning goal orientations on employees’ relationships with their supervisors, on employee job performance, as well as on employee job satisfaction. Upon reviewing data from 170 employees from a Dutch organization, they found that “employees with stronger mastery [sic learning] orientations are more effective on the job because they tend to establish higher-quality exchanges with their supervisors” (p. 368). As employees’ relationships with their supervisors are a critical aspect to their everyday life on the job, this finding is meaningful.

**Employees’ Feedback Seeking Behaviors**

Employees’ feedback seeking behaviors can be influenced by their goal orientation. Vandewalle and Cummings (1997) describe two methods of employees receiving feedback: inquiry and monitoring. They describe inquiry as “directly asking
others for feedback” (p. 390) and monitoring as “observing others and the environment for feedback” (p. 390).

In two separate studies, Vandewalle and Cummings (1997) were able to show that an individual’s goal orientation impacts his/her feedback seeking behaviors. They found that individuals with a learning-goal orientation had a positive relationship with feedback seeking while individuals with a performance-goal orientation had a negative relationship with feedback seeking. Also interesting to note is that Vandewalle and Cummings (1997) discovered that individuals’ relationship with feedback seeking was mediated by the individuals’ impressions of the perceived cost and value of the feedback they were seeking.

**Performance Appraisal Conversations**

An employee’s performance appraisal discussion(s), including conversations regarding goal setting, with his or her manager can be influenced by the employee’s goal orientation. As employees’ emotions certainly come into play during discussions with their managers about the progress they are or are not making with their established goals, it is important to consider the potential impact of goal orientation. Recent research as summarized by Fisher, Minbashian, Beckmann, and Wood (2013), “suggests that individual differences may sometimes moderate the strength of appraisal-emotion relationships” (p. 365). The authors identified that employees with performance goal orientation may find their performance appraisal relationship with their supervisors to be particularly impacted (Fisher et al., 2013). Those with a performance goal orientation have demonstrated having “anxiety in achievement situations” (Fisher et al., 2013),
which would likely impact the quality of their performance appraisal and goal setting discussions.

**Goal Importance**

Employees’ reactions to feedback on goals that were indicated as being more important (Fisher et al., 2013) has been found to be influenced by goal orientation. In their research, Fisher et al. (2013) found that employees with high performance goal orientations “experienced less functional emotions when task importance was high” (p. 370). These employees displayed a “stronger positive relationship between task importance and negative emotions and an insignificant relationship between task importance and positive emotions” (Fisher et al., 2013, p. 370).

Similarly, while employees’ feedback seeking behaviors have been found to be influenced by their goal orientation, the impact of whether feedback is given and the type of feedback that is given has been found to impact employee performance as well. Merriman, Clariana, and Bernardi (2012) found that individuals with a learning goal orientation had a positive relationship with task achievement even in situations where they did not receive outcome feedback. However, when individuals with a learning goal orientation received outcome feedback (e.g., performance-oriented outcome feedback, a task-by-orientation misalignment), a negative relationship was recognized. Merriman et al. (2012) attributed this negative relationship to a “decrease in task interest when initial task purpose is incongruent with the subsequent task cues provided by outcome feedback” (p. 2791). In contrast, Merriman et al. (2012) found that individuals with a
performance goal orientation maintained their positive relationship with task achievement whether or not they received outcome feedback (e.g., a task-by-orientation alignment).

Not only is giving employees’ feedback on the progress they are making with their goals important, the order in which feedback is given influences its role as being a mediator or a moderator of employees’ experiences with goal setting. Locke and Latham (2005) learned from Erez’s (1977) work that “if you start with feedback alone, goals are a mediator of its effects, but if you start with goals alone, feedback is a moderator of its effects” (p. 136).

**Employee Goal Selection**

An employee’s goal orientation has the potential to impact the difficulty level of the employee’s goals. Fisher et al. (2013) described the situation as being most apparent with those employees who hold a high performance goal orientation. “Individuals high on PGO tend to choose tasks on which they expect to do well in order to demonstrate competence” (Fisher et al., 2013, p. 366). They stated that when employees are faced with the “need to complete a work task on which they may be less confident, these individuals may be especially likely to experience negative emotions as they contemplate the possibility of failure and the permanent indictment of ability that it signals” (Fisher et al., 2013, p. 366).

In contrast, employees who are less concerned about what others think about their abilities, such as those with high learning goal orientations, “may respond to situations of low confidence with less intense negative emotions because less is at stake” (Fisher et al., 2013, p. 366).
Employee Performance

Vandewalle and his colleagues (Brett & Vandewalle, 1999; Vandewalle, Brown, Cron, & Slocum, 1999) found employees who have a performance goal orientation have a “strong desire to impress others”, which results in the employees focusing on performance outcome, while those employees with a learning goal orientation focus on “ways to master tasks so as to develop their competence, acquire new skills, and learn from experience” (as cited in Seijts & Latham, 2004, p. 228).

Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar (1994) examined learning and performance goal orientations in their study on salespeople and how they learn in the personal selling domain. The authors’ findings suggest that the salespeople’s productivity was considerably dependent on their adopting a learning goal orientation. Salespeople who adopted a learning goal orientation were motivated to “work hard while also motivating them to work smart”. In other words, salespeople with learning goal orientations demonstrated that they “engaged in planning, alter sales approaches in keeping with situational considerations, and have the confidence to enact a wide variety of sales approaches” (Sujan et al., 1994, pp. 43-44).

Performance management models are used to evaluate the performance of employees in organizations. Gruman and Saks (2011) learned that the more common models “focus on a predictable set of variables involving some variation on establishing performance goals for employees, assessing performance, and providing feedback” (p. 127). Few models go beyond this general set of factors. Bobko and Coella (1994), in their examination of the evaluative performance standards review process in organizations,
proposed that individuals with a learning orientation, which they referred to as an “incremental skill” orientation, will be “more likely to accept, and react positively to, performance standards stated in terms of change than individuals with a “fixed entity ability orientation” (p. 21).

The inclusion of goal setting in performance management models is most likely because employee goal setting has been found to be an important method of engaging employees. As Gruman and Saks (2011) stated, “goals are extremely important for initiating the employee engagement process because goals stimulate energy, focus, and intensity or the feeling of engagement” (p. 128). Companies are finding that more engaged employees can lead to more productive and higher performing employees. As Macey, Schneider, Barbera, and Young (2009) stated, “the feeling of engagement cannot occur without a specific purpose or objective” (p. 20). Goal setting can contribute to this increased employee engagement.

However, despite this emphasis on goal setting, due to the incorporation of employee goal setting in many popular performance management models, Pulakos (2009) found that “less than a third of employees believe that their company's performance management process assists them in improving their performance” (as cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 123). Furthermore, Pulakos (2009) learned that “performance management regularly ranks among the lowest topics in employee satisfaction surveys” (as cited in Gruman & Saks, 2011, p. 123). While organizational management typically seems to support the importance of employee goal setting, as evidenced in the literature, there would seem to not be equal employee support regarding the importance of goal setting by
employees, or of the link between increasing their performance as a result of their goal setting.

**Employee Training**

Farr, Hofmann, and Ringenbach (1993) proposed that goal orientation theory could have a multitude of organizational implications, particularly with training programs and the administration of performance appraisal systems. Researchers have explored how an employee’s goal orientation can impact their participation in organizational training programs. Chiaburu and Marinova (2005) conducted a study where they examined the “predictors of skill transfer from an instructional to a work environment” (p. 110). They surveyed 186 employees in a work organization on the individual dimensions of goal orientation and training self-efficacy as well as on the contextual factors of supervisor and peer support.

Chiaburu and Marinova (2005) hypothesized that individuals with “high learning goal orientations are likely to exhibit higher levels of pre-training motivation” (p. 113). Furthermore, they stated that “any mistakes or setbacks would be construed as learning opportunities that would motivate them” (Chiaburu & Marinova, 2005, p. 113). Their study sought to learn whether a learning goal orientation, specifically learning-approach, would be “positively associated with pre-training motivation, while the other dimensions either negatively related or unrelated” (Chiaburu & Marinova, 2005, p. 113). Chiaburu and Marinova (2005) learned that mastery-approach (also known as learning-approach) goal orientation “predicted pre-training motivation, while all other goal orientation sub-dimensions were unrelated” (p. 118).
Other authors have explored how motivation and goal orientation impact both individual employee and organizational learning. For example, Chadwick and Raver (2012) explored how “individuals’ motivation for different achievement goals, that is, goal orientations, shape the way they individually and collectively participate in organizational learning processes” (p. 1). They described how “groups’ goal orientation norms can become embedded in the organizational culture, which impacts the ways in which learning processes are institutionalized throughout the organization (Chadwick & Raver, 2012, p. 1).

Chadwick and Raver (2012) explained that, in line with goal orientation literature, learning and performance goal orientations influence how individuals approach the learning processes of intuiting and interpreting. Intuiting, as explained by the authors, is the process of recognizing “patterns and possibilities” (Chadwick & Raver, 2012, p. 11), while interpreting is the “process of refining and developing these intuitive insights through the development of cognitive maps, such that initial insights lead to possible explanations and understanding” (Chadwick & Raver, 2012, p. 11). The authors stated that individuals with a learning goal orientation will be motivated to “intuit and interpret their experiences in ways that generate new knowledge because these individuals believe that they can achieve by expanding their competencies through effort” (Chadwick & Raver, 2012, p. 11-12).

Similarly, individuals with a performance goal orientation, or more specifically, a performance-approach goal orientation, will also be motivated to “intuit and interpret their experiences” (Chadwick & Raver, 2012, p. 12), but the authors argued, “these learning processes will be more exploitative than explorative in nature” (p. 12). They
further described these potential exploitative behaviors by saying that these behaviors will “likely consist of the exploitation of previous learning (e.g., the refinement of ideas for existing environmental demands) that leads to quick performance results rather than the exploration of new knowledge necessary for higher levels of performance in the long run” (p. 12).

**Goal Orientation Measurement**

Researchers have utilized a variety of methodologies to investigate goal orientations. As mentioned previously, researchers typically approached this investigation from a state or trait perspective, which impacted the methodologies they utilized for their research. In addition, many researchers used Likert type scales in their goal orientation inventories (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). A variety of models have been developed to measure goal orientation, and many employ survey research. These models have been described as one of three types in the literature, one-factor or single-factor, two-factor, or three-factor.

Dweck and Leggett’s (1988) model initially was thought to have been a one-factor model as they viewed goal orientation as reflecting a “unidimensional construct, with learning goal and performance goal representing opposite ends of a single continuum” (McKinney, 2003, p. 5). Their model utilized a “single-item instrument that asked respondents which one of four task alternatives they would like to work on during an upcoming problem-solving session” (Vandewalle, 1997, p. 999). After answering these questions, participants were then classified as “having one or the other goal based on their task choice” (Vandewalle, 1997, p. 1999).
Other researchers took issue with this unidimensional view, expanding upon Dweck and Leggett’s (1988) one-factor model by developing two-factor models, most notably Button et al.’s (1996) model. Other researchers explored this two-factor idea, including Nicholls et al. (1990) and Farr et al. (1993); however, they all “argued that learning and performance goal orientations are separate dimensions” (Vandewalle, 1997, p. 999) while Heyman and Dweck (1992) wrote that individuals may hold both learning and performance goal orientations.

Employing a state or trait perspective of goal orientation also influences which measurement model researchers will select. As Button et al. (1996) explained, most of the past research related to goal orientation has focused on dispositional goal orientation. They point out that while these studies have followed Dweck’s theory of goal orientation, the “measures utilized in these studies are unlikely to be of value to organizational researchers” (Button et al., 1996, p. 29) for three reasons:

1. Some measurements fail to measure the target constructs;
2. Some measures are highly situation specific;
3. Most measures would be inappropriate for use with adults (p. 29).

In addition, because some researchers view goal orientation as a behavior in which someone exhibits one pattern or the other – adopting a performance or learning goal orientation - some researchers, as well as survey instruments, evaluate goal orientation from this perspective. Some of those researchers choose to adopt Button et al.’s (1996) two-factor model of goal orientation. This model, which expanded upon Dweck and Leggett’s (1988) one-factor model “conceptualizes goal orientation as two unrelated dimensions of learning goal orientation and performance goal orientation”
Button’s (1996) model was developed unspecific to any particular context, which means it can be used to evaluate study participants’ goal orientations in any setting. This model contains a 16-item questionnaire, with eight items representing each orientation (McKinney, 2003).

Other researchers choose to adopt Vandewalle’s (1997) three-factor model of goal orientation. His model evaluates three goal orientation dimensions: learning goal orientation, performance prove goal orientation, and performance avoid goal orientation. Vandewalle’s (1997) model utilizes a 13-item questionnaire that is administered on a 6-point Likert scale and was developed specifically to evaluate goal orientation in work settings (McKinney, 2003). Vandewalle (1997) created this model because he proposed that “goal orientation is better conceptualized as a three-factor construct because of the need to partition the performance goal orientation into two separate dimensions” (p. 999).

Heyman and Dweck (1992) explained that since performance goal orientation is “defined as both the desire to gain favorable judgments and the desire to avoid unfavorable judgment’s about one’s ability” (as cited in Vandewalle, 1997, p. 999) then the “desire to gain approval and demonstrate ability constitutes a different goal from the desire to avoid disapproval and demonstration of low ability” (Vandewalle, 1997, p. 999). Therefore, Vandewalle (1997) posited that it was necessary to create a goal orientation survey instrument that included a prove dimension (i.e., gaining favorable judgments) and an avoid dimension (i.e., avoiding unfavorable judgments).

Vandewalle supported his claim of the necessary addition of the additional third factor by referencing empirical research by Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996) who used “experimental instructions to induce the equivalent of prove and avoid goal orientations”
(Vandewalle, 1997, p. 999). They learned that the “two treatment conditions had different relationships with intrinsic motivation levels for a problem-solving task” (Vandewalle, 1997, p. 999).

Vandewalle’s (1997) three-factor goal orientation model is based on three dimensions and definitions. The first, Learning goal orientation, is a “desire to develop the self by acquiring new skills, mastering new situations, and improving one’s competence” (Vandewalle, 1997, p. 1000). The second dimension, Prove (performance) goal orientation, is a “desire to prove one’s competence and to gain favorable judgments about it” (Vandewalle, 1997, p. 1000). Finally, the third dimension, Avoid (performance) goal orientation, is a “desire to avoid the disproving of one’s competence and to avoid negative judgments about it” (Vandewalle, 1997, p. 1000).

Summary

Initially popularized by Drucker’s Management by Objectives (1976), goal setting by employees and supervisors in organizations has been a popular topic in the literature for the last sixty years. During this time, various researchers have developed theories to explain various aspects of goal setting – notably Edwin A. Locke’s and Gary P. Latham’s theory of goal setting, as well as Carol Dweck’s theory of goal orientation as it relates to goal setting.

As organizations continue to incorporate, and in many situations, mandate goal setting as part of their performance appraisal systems, it becomes increasingly important
for organizations to have a clear understanding of how goal orientation can impact:

1. employees' participation in the goal setting process
2. the types of goals that employees set and the influence of goal difficulty level
3. supervisor/employee performance appraisal discussions, including discussions on employee progress with established goals
4. employee performance
5. employee participation in organizational training
6. the relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and how a manager supports his/her subordinate’s goals
7. how organizational training can impact managers’ goal supporting behaviors

The present study seeks to identify the distribution of goal orientations – performance versus learning goal orientations – within the current population of IT Unit middle management at the University. Managers’ goal orientations will be compared with their indicated likelihood of supporting a set of given employee goals to identify what type of goal, performance versus learning, managers are more likely to support. Managers will also be asked questions regarding the potential mediating factors of communications, training, and perceptions of and perceived value of goal setting within the current performance appraisal process at the University.

While goal orientation theory began as a theory that examined the behavioral patterns of school children, it has been applied in organizational research as well. Analyzing middle management’s employee goal-setting behaviors through the lens of goal orientation may provide valuable insight into the areas previously described including goal setting training as well as organizational training in general. The next
chapter will describe who will take part in this study, how their goal orientation will be identified, and what instruments will be used to gather data.
Chapter 3

Research Methodology

The purpose of this research was to identify the goal orientation of IT Unit’s middle managers and compare their goal orientation to their indicated level of support of given employee goals. The purpose of this is to determine if an explanatory relationship exists between a manager’s goal orientation and the types of employee goals that he or she will support. This research also seeks to learn about middle managers’ attitudes and perceptions regarding the current goal setting program within the IT Unit with the goal of determining if an explanatory relationship exists between IT Unit middle managers’ goal setting support behaviors and their goal orientation. The present study utilized survey data gathered from IT Unit employees within the University.

Background Information

I became interested in the topic of employee goal setting using Development Action Plans (DAPs) while working as a Graduate Assistant in IT Human Resources. I designed face-to-face and online trainings for staff and managers regarding how to effectively complete DAPs during my first two years in my Ph.D. program. After deciding to examine the concept of goal setting through the lens of Dweck’s Goal Orientation theory for my research topic, I initially decided to examine goal setting from the non-management staff perspective, and reviewed all DAPs for non-management staff during the time period in question.
However, while conducting the literature review, I became more interested in examining managers’ goal orientations – specifically from the managers’ perspective. This brought one of the research questions to light: Will managers more frequently support employee goals that match his or her goal orientation as part of the performance appraisal process?

My original plan was to match the DAP of each employee with the employee’s assigned manager and then to compare the goal orientation of the employee’s manager (as determined by Vandewalle’s Goal Orientation Survey) to the goals that ended up on the employee’s DAP for that performance period. After submitting documentation required for the University’s IRB process, I learned that the IRB committee considered collecting managers’ names (required in order to match each employee DAP with the manager who had approved it) as a significant risk to participants because the questions asked in the survey were related to the performance review process at the University. Asking managers to disclose their names along with their opinions about processes related to the performance review process could pose potential risk to their employment status. The University’s IRB committee was not willing to classify this study as exempt from ongoing review if I collected identifying information of study participants.

After considering IRB options and the timeline I hoped to uphold in order to maintain relevance on this topic (there is an upcoming launch of the new HRIM system in the next few years), I decided that the main goal for this research was to look more generally at managers within the institution – to see how their goal orientations might impact the goals they would support of staff in general, not necessarily just their assigned staff members for DAP approval purposes.
Limitations of the Study

Manager Anonymity

There were advantages and disadvantages regarding collecting this data without including identifying characteristics of the managers, as required by IRB. The questions asked were regarding managers’ personal behaviors, preferences, and processes throughout part of the University’s mandated employee review process. Because managers were asked to disclose this information without sharing potentially identifying characteristics (i.e., no single manager could be linked to his or her department or to the employees he or she evaluated), it is my belief that managers were more open and honest with their responses. This belief was further confirmed when reviewing open-ended responses because at times their responses were quite critical of University processes. In my previous experiences, working directly with these managers, providing training on the topic of goal setting, and supporting employees with goal setting, I did not experience such openness or willingness to be publically critical of University processes.

There were potential disadvantages to not collecting identifying characteristics of the managers. I was unable to follow-up with managers’ if any follow-up questions arose from the answers given because I did not know the managers’ names. I did not collect gender or department, which prevented me from analyzing data based on those perspectives or characteristics. Given the structure of the departments with the IT Unit, collecting gender and/or department names would have provided identifying information that was prohibited by my IRB approval status.
Archived Data

The use of archived data, also known as ex post facto data or causal-comparative data, in this study also presents potential limitations to this study. According to Brewer and Kuhn (2010), the following are viewed as limitations with utilizing archived data:

1. “the researcher has no control over the variables and thus cannot manipulate them” (p. 130).
2. “there are often variables other than the independent variable(s) that may impact the dependent variable(s)” (p. 130).
3. reversal causation may occur, which “occurs when it is not clear that the independent variable caused the changes in the dependent variable, or that a dependent variable caused the independent variable to occur” (p. 130)
4. “inability to construct random samples” (p. 130).

However, there are methods to potentially counteract or minimize the potential impact of these limitations. While I no longer have control over the variables, I can test several different theories to “establish whether other variables affect the depend [sic] variable” (Brewer & Kuhn, 2010, p. 130). If I am able to demonstrate that “the other variables do not have a significant impact on the dependent variable” (Brewer & Kuhn, 2010, p. 130), then I’ll be able to reinforce my claims. Furthermore, I can account for the possibility of reversal causation by establishing “which event happened first” (Brewer & Kuhn, 2010, p. 130).
Sampling Bias

The possibility of sampling bias exists with this study. According to the literature, sampling bias occurs “when a sample statistic does not accurately reflect the true value of the parameter in the target population” (McCutcheon, 2008, p. 784). Sampling bias impacts averages and ratios. Sampling bias for averages can be caused by three sources:

- imperfect sampling frames,
- nonresponse bias, and
- measurement error (McCutcheon, 2008, p. 784).

Therefore, my study could be impacted by imperfect sampling frames if some employees were incorrectly identified by human resources as not having been managers during the 2013 performance appraisal period. This would mean that I had excluded some individuals from potentially answering the survey questions.

Nonresponse bias occurs when individuals included in the sample do not participate. Those managers who did not respond to my survey could contribute to nonresponse bias. However, the literature indicates that provided that there “is a small difference between those who respond and those who do not, the resulting sampling bias will be small or modest” (McCutcheon, 2008, p. 785). I will analyze my data to determine whether sampling bias exists, such as if, for example, more learning oriented managers responded to the survey than performance oriented managers, to determine the potential impact of sampling bias.

Measurement error occurs “when what is measured among the sample elements differs from what researchers actually wished to measure for the target population” (McCutcheon, 2008, p. 785). Measurement error, or more specifically, consistent error,
could be present if some of my questions focused on a topic that people would consistently feel the same way about.

Population and Population Sample Size

A limitation of this study is the sample size of the population. This study examined a small sample size (n = 54) of homogenous participants (IT managers) within one department (the IT Unit) at one higher education institution. This is particularly important to consider in regards to the factor analysis. While it is commonly accepted that larger sample sizes are preferred (MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999), according to Costello and Osborne (2005), “studies have revealed that adequate sample size is partly determined by the nature of the data” (p. 4). This study was specifically focused on IT managers within one university and the population of actual managers to survey was relatively small (n = 130).

Furthermore, as this study focused solely on IT managers, the managers’ respective employees were not included. IT Unit employees could not be linked with their respective managers, due to the IRB mandate to refrain from collecting identifiable characteristics, thus hypotheses could not be made regarding potential relationships between these two groups, managers and employees. Finally, the collection of data from a higher education institution may have limited generalizability.
Participants

There were approximately 600 individuals employed by the University within the IT Unit during the 2013 performance appraisal period. Of those, 130 staff members were classified as middle management, and those individuals were included as participants in this study. The 2013 performance appraisal period was selected because at the time of this research, the staff and managers/supervisors were currently undergoing the 2014 performance appraisal period. As part of this appraisal process, staff and managers/supervisors are reflecting on goals set for the previous year so it was my hope that employee goals and perceptions of the goal setting process from the previous year will be fresh in managers’ minds.

Of the 130 staff members invited, 66 individuals responded to the survey. Of the 64 managers who did not respond to the survey, there are a number of potential reasons why they did not respond including, but not limited to: lack of interest in employee goal setting as part of the performance review process at the University, potential belief that sharing their opinion would not make a difference, potential concerns over sharing criticisms of University processes, or perhaps inability to take the survey at the given time because of personal schedules.

The 66 staff members who began the survey were further qualified for this study by the first two questions in the survey. The first question was a standard consent question, explaining the study to the managers. Two managers chose not to continue with the survey and did not consent to participate. It is possible that despite the described anonymity of manager participation with this survey, two managers may have not felt
comfortable disclosing potential criticisms about the performance review process at the University.

The second question was a qualifying question. Managers were asked, “Did you complete performance evaluations for employees in 2013?” This was asked because not all employees who are classified as middle management within the IT Unit at the University have direct reports. If managers do not have direct reports, they do not work with employees on formal goal setting as part of their employees’ annual performance review process at the University. For the purposes of my study, I limited survey responses to managers who directly participated in the performance review process with direct reports during the 2013 performance appraisal period. Three managers indicated that they did not complete performance evaluations for employees in 2013, bringing my survey participation rate to 46.92% (i.e., 61 individuals) of potential middle managers within the IT Unit at the University.

Following the consent and qualifying questions, an additional seven responses were further excluded because those individuals who completed those surveys failed to complete the goal orientation survey instrument component of the survey which was critical to this study. This brought my final response rate to 41.50% (i.e., 54 individuals) of potential middle managers within the IT Unit at the University.

IRB Approval

To obtain permission to use this data for the present study, an application was submitted to the Office for Research Protections (ORP), IRB # 45710. ORP determined that this project is exempt from IRB initial and ongoing review.
Measures Used in This Study

Vandewalle’s Goal Orientation Instrument

Vandewalle’s (1997) three-factor Goal Orientation Instrument was utilized for this study to categorize IT managers’ goal orientation as performance or learning (see Appendix B). This instrument was utilized because Vandewalle’s three-factor instrument was developed specifically for determining the goal orientation of employees in organizations. Other goal orientation instruments were mainly utilized with children in school environments.

Vandewalle (1997) tested his three-factor model with four different samples. Sample A consisted of 66 university students enrolled in an undergraduate management course with an average age of 25.17 years (49.2% female). Sample B consisted of 198 university students enrolled in 5 sections of undergraduate management courses with an average age of 23.92 years (42.9% female). Sample C consisted of 239 students enrolled in 12 sections of business administration and psychology courses at two suburban community colleges with an average age of 26.69 years (67.5% female). Sample D consisted of 53 students enrolled in 4 sections of an introductory accounting course at an urban community college with an average age of 32.2 years (62.7% female).

The following forms of statistical analyses were conducted by Vandewalle (1997) to develop and validate his three-factor model, which was designed to “assess the goal orientations of adults in work settings” (p. 1012):

- Exploratory factor analysis of the Sample B data to examine the factor structure of the instrument;
• Confirmatory factor analysis to test the fit of the measurement model to the Sample C data;

• Reliability analysis (internal consistency) of the Sample C data;

• Reliability analysis (test-retest) of Sample D data (p. 1005).

From the analysis that Vandewalle (1997) conducted above, the results suggested that the “scores on the instrument and the proposed three-factor structure” (p. 1012) were valid. He went on to state that based on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis there is “strong support for the construct validity of scores from the goal orientation instrument” (Vandewalle, 1997, pp. 1012-1013).

Managers’ Attitudes and Perceptions Questionnaire

In addition to Vandewalle’s instrument, I developed an additional instrument – the Managers’ Attitudes and Perceptions Questionnaire or MAP-Q instrument (see Appendix C) with questions about the potentially moderating factors of training, communication, and perceived value of goal setting as part of the annual performance review process.

The review of the literature provided the rationale for adding the MAP-Q topics to the survey – managers and employees are not always in agreement over the employee goal setting process, including accomplishment of goals, nor do they necessarily agree that the amount of participation in the goal setting process was adequate. The MAP-Q asked managers to consider the following topics:
Training:

1. **Training Attendance:** If managers attended training on goal setting and/or on how to support employees with their goal setting.
2. **Perceived Value:** Managers’ perceived value of this training (if attended).

Communications:

1. **Frequency of Feedback:** Managers’ perceptions of how often their employees sought feedback from them on the progress they were making with their DAP goals as compared to how often they believed they approached their employees with feedback regarding the progress they were making with their goals.
2. **Participatory Involvement:** Managers were also asked about their participatory involvement in the goal setting process. Who set the goals that ended up on the employee’s DAP? The employee, the manager, or some combination of the two?
3. **Annual Goal Conversations:** Did managers discuss with their employees whether they accomplished their goals? If so, when did this meeting take place and did managers believe their employees felt comfortable sharing their progress even if they didn’t accomplish their goals?

Perceived Value of Goal Setting:

- Managers were asked if employee goal setting is taken seriously within the University.
- They were also asked if they found the inclusion of goal setting in the performance review process to be valuable.
Managers’ responses to the MAP-Q instrument will be analyzed using thematic analysis, grouping responses into categories and exploring themes that emerge, to determine how training, communication, and perceived value of employee goal setting within annual performance review programs may moderate the influence of goal orientation on the employee goals that managers will support.

Test of Managers’ Goal Preferences Instrument

I reviewed all of the IT employees’ goals (n=395) from their 2012 DAPs and categorized each as a Learning goal or a Performance goal. Of the 395 goals, I classified 239 or 61% of the IT employees’ goals as Learning goals and 156 or 39% of the IT employees’ goals as Performance goals.

Following my review and classification of these goals, I selected five learning goals and five performance goals and asked the IT Managers to review these goals in my Test of Managers’ Goal Preferences instrument (see Appendix D). They were asked to indicate their level of support for each of the given goals on a 5-point Likert scale. These ten goals were chosen because I considered them to be well representative of all the goals submitted during the 2013 performance period. A potential limitation of this study is that I did not have others confirm my categorization of these goals as Learning or Performance (i.e., no test of inter-rater reliability was conducted). However, to confirm the reliability of the goals that I selected as Learning and Performance, I will run an exploratory factor analysis on these ten goals. This will determine if the 10 goals I selected properly factor into the two orientations of Learning and Performance.
Procedures

The following steps were taken to collect data for this study:

- Vandewalle’s (1997) three-factor Goal Orientation Instrument was selected as the work-domain instrument to be used to categorize managers as “Learning Goal Oriented” or “Performance Goal Oriented” as per Dweck’s Goal Orientation Theory.
- All IT employees 2012 DAP goals were gathered and reviewed.
- Employees’ goals were classified as Learning or Performance Goals.
- I selected ten goals (five Learning and five Performance) for managers to indicate their support of in another instrument, which was named the Test of Managers’ Goal Preferences Instrument.
- I developed additional questions to learn about the potentially moderating factors of training, communications, and perceived value of goal setting and these items made up the MAP-Q instrument.
- The MAP-Q instrument was reviewed for survey design, including clarity and understanding of the items by the following individuals:
  - Another doctoral candidate with expertise in survey research;
  - An instructional designer with a PhD in Higher Education with experience developing surveys;
  - One human resources representative;
  - One human resources manager;
  - One University administrator;
• The Director of the University’s Survey Research Center.

Minor changes in grammar, order, and flow were recommended from the above individuals and were used.

• Two additional questions (one consent and one qualifying) were developed and reviewed.

• All items were added to an online survey using the Qualtrics survey tool.

• Upon receiving University IRB approval to conduct the study, along with receiving approval from IT Administration, an IT administrator emailed all 130 IT managers using a mailing list that was created for this study with an introductory message (see Appendix E).

The survey was distributed on July 8, 2014 and the last survey was submitted on August 4, 2014. Two follow up emails were sent to the original mailing list to remind individuals to complete the survey after the first and second weeks of the initial distribution.

**Research Questions**

The present study examined the relationship between a manager’s goal orientation (i.e., performance or learning) on the types of employee goals (i.e., performance or learning) the manager will typically support in an organizationally-mandated goal setting program. This study attempts to answer the question: does a manager’s goal orientation influence the type of employee goals that he or she will support as part of the performance appraisal process?
Statistical Methodology

The data collected in this study lends itself to a correlation analysis. This is because goal orientation theory does not state that individuals are purely learning oriented or performance oriented. Managers will be some degree of learning oriented and some degree of performance oriented (i.e., along a continuum). The typical basic descriptive statistics were conducted, as well as correlations, to help describe the relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the goals that the manager indicates are acceptable.
Chapter 4

Analysis of Data and Findings

Reliability of the instruments

To assess internal reliability of the instruments used in the study, Cronbach alphas were computed on each instrument. Table 1 describes the variables used in this study, along with the abbreviations used to describe these variables. Table 2 illustrates the reliabilities by instrument (Cronbach Alphas).

Table 1. Nomenclature for Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIS-EMP</td>
<td>Managers’ perceptions regarding how often their employees sought feedback from them on their 2012 Development Action Plan (DAP) goals between when they set their goals and the start of the 2013 appraisal period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIS-FREQ</td>
<td>Managers’ perceptions regarding how frequently they discussed their employees’ 2012 DAP goals with their employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIS-MGR</td>
<td>Managers’ perceptions regarding how often they approached their employees with unsolicited feedback on the progress their employees were making with their 2012 DAP goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG</td>
<td>Sample IT Employee Learning Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG-PREF</td>
<td>Managers’ Preference for Learning Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGO</td>
<td>Learning Goal Orientation (as measured by Vandewalle’s Survey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGR-SAT</td>
<td>Managers’ level of satisfaction regarding the level of support they provided to their employees to help them accomplish their 2012 DAP goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG</td>
<td>Sample IT Employee Performance Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG-PREF</td>
<td>Managers’ Preference for Performance Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGO</td>
<td>Performance Goal Orientation (as measured by Vandewalle’s Survey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG-Training</td>
<td>Training on support employees with goal setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WG-Training</td>
<td>Training on writing goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Reliabilities by Instrument (Cronbach Alphas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vandewalle’s Goal Orientation Survey</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Scale (LGO)</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prove Scale (PPGO)</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid Scale (PAGO)</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test of Manager’s Goal Preferences</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAP-Q (Concepts: DIS-EMP, DIS-FREQ, DIS-MGR)</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Churchill (1979), reliability scores are displayed on a scale of 0 to 1 with higher scores indicating greater reliability of an instrument including greater accuracy in capturing a true score. While there are differing reports of acceptable alpha values, it is generally accepted that an alpha greater than 0.70 is acceptable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). In this study, both Vandewalle’s Goal Orientation Survey and the Test of Manager’s Goal Preferences meet this standard with alphas of 0.75 and 0.92, respectively.

Alphas of the subcomponents of Vandewalle’s (1997) Goal Orientation (LGO, PPGO, and PAGO) were consistent with Vandewalle’s (1997) findings of LGO, $\alpha = .89$; PPGO, $\alpha = .85$; and PAGO, $\alpha = .88$. Nunnally (1967) offers support for the low alpha found with the MAP-Q concepts of DIS-EMP, DIS-FREQ, and DIS-MGR as he mentions that in exploratory studies, a Cronbach Alpha of .5 to .6 is acceptable.

**Sample Size and Power**

As mentioned previously, the size of the potential sample for this study (130 IT managers) was constrained by the number of managers within the organization to sample. The final response rate was 41.50% (i.e., 54 individuals). Small sample sizes often result
in increased Type I errors, as well as random effects (variances), however Hox (2002, 2010) offers support for determining minimum sample sizes needed, stating that those issues tend to arise in cases with fewer than 5 cases per group and fewer than 50 groups.

Furthermore, it is important to consider whether or not there is sufficient statistical power to find significance in the results of this study. Hox (2010) again provides guidance for considering statistical power for fixed effects as he concluded that 50 groups with 5 cases per group may be sufficient. Given the small size of the sample, as well as the response rate of this study, the results of this study should be considered exploratory and recommendations evaluated through that lens.

**Hypothesis Testing**

**Goal Orientation and Managers’ Preference for LGO vs. PGO Employee Goals**

H₁ₐ: There is a relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the types of employee goals that a manager will support.

Hₒ₁: There is no relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the types of employee goals that a manager will support.

Vandewalle’s (1997) three-factor Goal Orientation Instrument was employed to categorize managers’ goal orientation. As described earlier, Vandewalle’s instrument contains three factors: Learning Goal Orientation, Performance Prove Goal Orientation, and Performance Avoid Goal Orientation. To maintain consistency with the literature and throughout the discussion in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, Performance Prove Orientation will be referred to as Performance Goal Orientation or PGO.
As this research is focused on examining how managers’ support goals that employees included on their 2013 DAPs, this study utilizes only the first two factors of Vandewalle’s (1997) survey, Learning Goal Orientation (LGO) and Performance Prove Goal Orientation (PGO). Performance Avoid Goal Orientation was not utilized in this study. As Vandewalle (1997) explained, this factor examines to what extent individuals “desire to avoid the disproving of one’s competence and to avoid negative judgments about it” (p. 1000). Development Action Plans, or DAPs, consist of goals that an employee and/or the employee’s manager(s) made for the employee for the upcoming performance year, without any details regarding how the employee felt about him or herself regarding current competence about the skill described within the goal.

It was not possible to determine an employee’s state of mind when writing the goal (i.e., whether the employee included a particular goal to avoid negative judgments about the employee’s competence in a particular skill area) because employees were not interviewed in this study. The literature provides justification for focusing on specific factors in a goal orientation instrument. According to Senko, Hulleman, and Harackiewicz (2011), while some researchers focus on multiple dimensions (i.e., including prove and avoid), others choose to focus on approach or avoid dimensions in particular. For these reasons, the Performance Avoid factor of Vandewalle’s (1997) goal orientation instrument was not included.

To determine which type of goal managers were more likely to support, learning or performance oriented goals, managers were given ten employee goals in the Test of Manager Goal Preferences instrument (see Appendix D). This instrument was made up of five goals classified as learning goals and five goals classified as performance goals.
These goals were pulled from the 2012 IT employees DAPs because they were goals that commonly appeared on employees DAPs; however, identifying details were removed and generalized as necessary to preserve anonymity to the employee(s) who wrote the goals and/or departments that may have been mentioned. All of the 2012 employee DAPs goals were classified as “learning” or “performance” by employing components of Vandewalle’s definitions of these factors, taking into consideration the context of which the goals were written within the University (i.e., by employees and/or their managers and on DAPs which are part of the performance management process at the University).

Vandewalle (1997) described a learning goal orientation as a “desire to develop the self by acquiring new skills, mastering new situations, and improving one’s competence” (p. 1000). IT employees’ goals were classified as “learning goals” if they appeared to be written with the purpose of acquiring new skills, mastering new situations, and/or improving one’s competence in a particular skill or task area. Vandewalle (1997) described a performance prove orientation as one in which individuals have a “desire to prove one’s competence and to gain favorable judgments about it” (p. 1000). IT employees’ goals were classified as “performance goals” if they appeared to be focused on demonstrating a particular skill or concept versus focused on gaining the new skill or concept knowledge (learning goal).

The following five goals were classified as learning goals:

- Achieve at minimum a basic proficiency with XYZ job-related skill.
- Continue to become more knowledgeable about the XYZ system.
- Become more familiar with XYZ process.
• Further develop my competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities to become successful in my role/position.

• Learn about the required skills and competencies necessary to be an effective project leader.

The following five goals were classified as performance goals:

• Demonstrate proficiency with XYZ job-related skill by building a new process and/or system.

• Investigate ways to streamline the XYZ system processes and write reports/report out on findings.

• Utilize XYZ process to improve customer service experiences.

• Demonstrate knowledge of the competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to be successful in my role/position by working on projects that illustrate these.

• Project lead for future project.

Managers were given the above ten goals in a mixed unidentifiable format (i.e., goals were rearranged so that learning goals were odd number questions and performance goals were even numbered questions). The goals were not labeled as being any different from one another (i.e., managers were not told that some goals were learning and some goals were performance). Managers were asked to indicate their support of the given goals on a 5-point Likert scale (i.e., 1=Would Not Support, 5=Would be Extremely Supportive).
To determine how well the goals were classified, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. The analysis was conducted with varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization. The purpose of this analysis was to determine how well the created measures (i.e., how well how the goals were classified as learning or performance goals) actually represent a latent variable that really belongs together.

Table 3. Rotated Component Matrix Factor Analysis of Sample Employee Goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LG 4</td>
<td>0.897</td>
<td>0.269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG 3</td>
<td>0.875</td>
<td>0.297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG 2</td>
<td>0.856</td>
<td>0.249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG 1</td>
<td>0.829</td>
<td>0.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG 5</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>0.359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG 4</td>
<td>0.601</td>
<td>0.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG 5</td>
<td>0.555</td>
<td>0.465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG 1</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>0.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG 3</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG 2</td>
<td>0.444</td>
<td>0.638</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated by Table 1, all five of the learning goals (LG) most strongly loaded together on component 1. Three out of the five goals classified as performance goals (PG) most strongly loaded on component 2 (i.e., PG 1, 2, and 3). The remaining two goals classified as performance goals, PG 4 and PG 5, loaded most strongly on component 1; however, they still loaded strongly on component 2. This is referred to as 'crossloading' (Costello & Osborne, 2005).

According to Costello & Osborne (2005), "a 'crossloading' item is an item that loads at .32 or higher on two or more factors. The researcher needs to decide whether a crossloading item should be dropped from the analysis, which may be a good choice if
there are several adequate to strong loaders (.50 or better) on each factor” (p. 4). This means that the final two goals included as performance goals for the managers to review could have come across as somewhat ambiguous to managers (i.e., not clearly one type of goal or another).

Additionally, authors point to the importance of variables loading on only one factor (Comrey, 1978), as complex variables will be difficult to analyze (Reise, Waller, & Comrey, 2000). As a result of this exploratory factor analysis, PG 4 and PG 5 were removed from further analysis so that managers’ ambiguity towards these components would not impact results.

Reducing false positive results is an important consideration for researchers. While some researchers rely on conducting the Bonferroni correction to “reduce the chances of obtaining false-positive results (type I errors) when multiple pair wise tests are performed on a single set of data” (Napierala, 2012, p. 1), others disagree with its use, arguing that Bonferroni “creates more problems than it solves” (Perneger, 2012, p. 1236). Perenge (2012) stated that Bonferroni is “concerned with the general null hypothesis (that all null hypotheses are true simultaneously), which is rarely of interest or use to researchers” (p. 1236) and that by using the Bonferroni correction the “likelihood of type II errors is also increased, so that truly important differences are deemed non-significant” (p. 1236). For these reasons, the Bonferroni correction was not conducted.

Hypothesis 1 was tested by conducting a correlation analysis between managers’ goal orientation (LGO vs. PGO) and managers’ preferred type of goal (LGO vs. PGO). This analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between managers’ goal
orientation and managers’ preference for learning or performance goals in their employees (see Table 2).

Table 4. Correlation Coefficients Among Variables and Subcomponents for H1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>LGO</th>
<th>PGO</th>
<th>DIS-EMP</th>
<th>DIS-MGR</th>
<th>DIS-FREQ</th>
<th>MGR-SAT</th>
<th>LG-PREF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LGO</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGO</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIS-EMP</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIS-MGR</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIS-FREQ</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.81**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGR-SAT</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.29*</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG-PREF</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.34*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG-PREF</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.247</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>0.62**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p≤0.05 two-tailed. ** p≤0.01 two-tailed.

Despite the lack of a significant relationship between managers’ goal orientation and their preference for learning or performance goals in their employees, it is important to note that this lack of significance does not provide adequate support to accept or reject the null hypothesis (that there is no relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the types of employee goals that a manager will support. While “there is never a statistical basis for concluding that an effect is exactly zero” (Lane, n.d.), it is possible to demonstrate that the effect of managers’ goal orientation on managers’ preference for learning or performance goals in their employees is likely very small by conducting confidence intervals. Confidence intervals calculated at the 95% level for LGO vs. LG-PREF [-0.19, 0.37], LGO vs. PG-PREF [-0.04, 0.5], PGO vs. LG-PREF [-0.34, 0.23], and PGO vs. PG-PREF [-0.31, 0.26] provide support for the minimal effect. As Lane (n.d.) stated, “every value in the confidence interval is a plausible value of the parameter”, therefore since 0 is in each of these confidence intervals, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.
It is interesting to note that managers tended to be more learning oriented than performance oriented. In the current investigation, Vandewalle’s (1997) survey revealed that IT managers’ average learning goal orientation was 5.37 versus their average performance goal orientation, which was 3.48. This survey utilized a 6-point Likert-type response scale (ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 6 = strongly disagree). The scale utilized in this study was 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree to maintain consistency with the scale utilized in the Test of Manager Goal Preferences instrument (see Appendix D).

Managers’ Training Attendance and Attitudes Towards Training

When considering managers’ preferences for the type of employee goals they prefer, it is interesting to consider whether managers attended department or central human resources training on goal setting (WG-Training) and/or supporting employees with goal setting (SG-Training) and whether they considered this training to be helpful. Overall, the most commonly attended trainings (see Table 3) were those offered by the departmental human resources group.

Table 5. Training Attendance by Training by Location.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Offered By</th>
<th>% of Total Attended</th>
<th>Total Number Attended</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WG-Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept HR</td>
<td>75.90%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central HR</td>
<td>36.50%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG-Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept HR</td>
<td>44.40%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central HR</td>
<td>15.40%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Managers who indicated that they attended a particular training were asked if they considered the training to be helpful. Table 4 describes managers’ perceptions regarding whether they found the training(s) to be helpful.

Table 6. Managers’ Perceptions of Training Helpfulness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Offered By</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>% Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>% No</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WG-Training</td>
<td>Dept HR</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central HR</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG-Training</td>
<td>Dept HR</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>95.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central HR</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the majority of managers who attended training sessions, regardless of training location, found the training to be helpful, they had suggestions for training improvements. Several managers mentioned that they wished there were examples in the training that better aligned to the types of jobs that their employees had. One manager suggested “more examples of good (SMART) goals that could pertain to the employee's job classification” while another suggested providing “a bank of good and bad goals with explanations”. Another recommended more specific training, stating, “training targeted to the particular needs (subject matter) of my business unit would have been helpful”.

Another manager proposed the idea of providing time during the training to work on their actual goals instead of sample, generalized goals. “If we would have been asked to bring along [the] actual goal that we would want to refine, that would have been helpful. It also would have been helpful to know larger [organizational] goals so we could be sure to align with them”. Similarly, other managers requested hands-on time
during the training for practical application, asking for “practical instruction on how to write the goals. Examples and templates instead of handwavy generalizations”.

**Goal Orientation and Frequency of Goal Discussions**

H$_{A2}$: There is a relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the frequency of discussions that a manager has with his or her employees that are focused on employee progress with goal setting.

H$_{O2}$: There is no relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the frequency of discussions that a manager has with his or her employees that are focused on employee progress with goal setting.

Hypothesis 2 was tested by first conducting a correlation analysis (see Table 2) between managers’ goal orientation (LGO vs. PGO) and the frequency of manager and employee discussions centered on goal setting. Four questions from the MAP-Q instrument (see Appendix C) were related to frequency of manager and employee discussions on this topic:

- Approximately, how often did your employee seek feedback from you on their 2012 DAP goals between when they set your goals and the start of the 2013 appraisal period (i.e., from when they set their 2012 DAP goals to when they set their 2013 DAP goals)? (DIS-EMP)

- Approximately, on average, how often did you approach your employees with unsolicited feedback on the progress your employees were making with their 2012 DAP goals? (DIS-MGR)
• Approximately how often would you discuss your employees’ 2012 DAP goals? (DIS-MGR)

• Were you satisfied with the level of support you provided to your employees to help them accomplish their 2012 DAP goals? (MGR-SAT)

Correlation analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between managers’ goal orientation (LGO or PGO) and frequency of manager and employee conversations (DIS-EMP, DIS-MGR, DIS-FREQ). As stated previously regarding H1, lack of significance does not provide adequate support to accept or reject the null hypothesis (that there is no relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the frequency of discussions that a manager has with his or her employees that are focused on employee progress with goal setting). Confidence intervals calculated at the 95% level for LGO vs. DIS-EMP [-0.17, 0.36], LGO vs. DIS-MGR [-0.27, 0.26], LGO vs. DIS-FREQ [-0.15, 0.38], PGO vs. DIS-EMP [-0.13, 0.39], PGO vs. DIS-MGR [-0.28, 0.25], and PGO vs. DIS-FREQ [-0.13, 0.39] provide support for the minimal effect of a manager’s goal orientation on the frequency of the manager’s goal setting discussions with his or her employees. Since 0 is in each of these confidence intervals, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected.
Goal Orientation and Perceptions of Organizational Goal Setting

Hₐ₃: There is a relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and whether the manager considers goal setting as a formalized portion of the performance management process at the University to be valuable.

H₀₃: There is no relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and whether the manager considers goal setting as a formalized portion of the performance management process at the University to be valuable.

Hypothesis 3 was tested by conducting a cross-tabulation and Pearson’s Chi-square test between managers’ goal orientation, as tested by Vandewalle’s survey, and a question from the MAP-Q instrument (see Appendix C), whether they considered goal setting as a formalized portion of the performance management process at the University to be valuable (Yes/No). Cross-tabulation illustrated that overall, 77.4% of managers, regardless of goal orientation, indicated that they considered organizational goal setting to be valuable. However, Chi-square revealed that a relationship did not exist between these variables.

Cross-tabulation illustrated that of the LGO responses from managers, only one manager scored below 4.0 on the Learning Goal orientation scale (see Table 5). This indicates that of the 53 managers who responded to the goal orientation survey, the majority of managers identified with being at least somewhat learning goal orientated.

In addition, a majority of managers (40 of 53 managers, 75.5%) who indicated that they were at least somewhat or stronger learning goal oriented also indicated that they considered goal setting as part of the performance management process at the University to be valuable. Of those 40 managers, 35 managers (87.5%) were identified as
being more strongly learning goal oriented, scoring between 5.0 – 6.0 on the 1-6 goal orientation survey Likert scale. In contrast, only 12 of the 53 managers (22.6%) who were identified as at least somewhat learning oriented indicated that they did not consider goal setting as part of the performance management process at the University to be valuable.

Table 7. Cross-Tabulation Between Managers’ Average LGO and Perceptions of the Value of Organizational Goal Setting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean of Managers' LGO Responses</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
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<td>66.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson’s Chi-Square test further revealed that the association between the mean of managers’ LGO responses and managers’ perceptions of the value of organizational goal setting is not significant $\chi^2(10, N = 53) = 6.274, p = 0.792$. 

PGO and Managers’ Perceptions of Organizational Goal Setting

Cross-tabulation revealed that of the mean of performance goal orientation responses from managers, 33 managers (62.3%) did not identify with being performance goal orientated, scoring less than 4.0 on the goal orientation survey Likert scale (i.e., on average selecting strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree as their responses to the PGO questions on Vandewalle’s (1997) survey).

In contrast, 20 managers (37.7%) indicated that they identified with being at least somewhat performance goal oriented. Of those 20 managers who identified with being at least somewhat PGO, 15 managers (75%) indicated that they considered goal setting as part of the performance management process at the University to be valuable.
Table 8. Cross-tabulation Between Managers' Average PGO and Perceptions of Goal Setting Value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean of Managers' PGO Responses</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson’s Chi-Square test further revealed that the association between the mean of managers’ PGO responses and managers’ perceptions of the value of organizational goal setting is not significant $\chi^2(13, N = 53) = 8.753, p = 0.791$.

Overall, more managers (40 or 75.5%) who considered themselves to be at least somewhat learning goal oriented also considered goal setting as part of the performance management process at the University to be valuable. This is in contrast to those managers who considered themselves to be at least somewhat performance goal oriented yet also considered goal setting to be valuable (15 or 28.3%). However, as no significant difference was found between managers’ goal orientation and whether they consider goal
setting as part of the performance management process at the University to be valuable, hypothesis 3 is not supported.

**Employee Goal Setting Benefits and Challenges**

Managers shared benefits and challenges regarding goal setting as part of the performance management system at the University. Several managers shared that employee goal setting utilizing the DAP was helpful for the employees’ professional development. One stated that it is “useful to have goals to stay focused on continual improvement.” Managers felt employee goals can be helpful for motivating employees. Another manager stated, “it gives the employees something to strive for - not just come to work on a day to day basis and just put the hours in.”

However, managers also had concerns about employee goal setting. Several cited conflicting and often changing priorities as major challenges of utilizing employee goal setting. According to one manager, “while I see the potential for formalized goal setting for performance management, I've rarely seen it work in practice when it is in conflict with time allocation given to operational service duties and high priority projects”.

Another manager echoed this sentiment adding, “sometimes priorities change and they get back-burnered.”

Managers were also asked whether they feel that goal setting as a formalized portion of the performance management process is taken seriously by employees within the IT Unit. Of the 53 managers who responded to this question, 74% (39) of managers did not feel that it is taken seriously and expressed concerns. “The issues I see with the DAP is that staff do not take it serious[ly]. They view the entire SRDP process as a waste
of time. I have worked to get them to set the DAP goals per the training and have had limited success.” Other managers echoed similar concerns, stating

most people (at least those I speak with), employees and managers, feel that the SRDP and DAP process is just something we have to do as part of our job, but it is hard for them to see the value in a process that is so cumbersome.

Another manager pointed out that the current performance management system assumes that all employees want to improve themselves. This “process assumes everybody is looking to improve themselves both personally and professionally at all times throughout their career. I do not believe that is true statement and is not true for the many non-management employees.” An additional managerial response was “I feel the majority of [IT Unit] employees are completing goal setting because they are asked to - I don't feel that they have embraced it or understand the reasons it is being promoted. There is a segment of [University] employees that really are here for the paycheck and nothing else.”

Managers shared that there are sometimes specific circumstances that impact how employees feel about goal setting. One manager shared that employees “feel like they don't have time to work on the goals and in many ways, that's correct. We are down two positions and they have experienced a lot of pressure. Also, specific training was turned down impacting attitudes.” Managers also cited a lack of rewards and/or recognition as another reason why employees may not take goal setting seriously. There are “no unit specific competency standards and no direct reward/recognition for achieving new levels of performance.”
Chapter 5

Discussion and Analysis

This chapter includes a discussion of the results of this study in the context of the results of other research, and suggests directions for future research that extends current findings. Table 7 summarizes the results of the tested hypotheses.

Table 9. Results of Hypotheses Testing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There is a relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the types of employee goals that a manager will support.</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. There is a relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and the frequency of discussions that a manager has with his or her employees that are focused on employee progress with goal setting.</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. There is a relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and whether the manager considers goal setting as a formalized portion of the performance management process at the University to be valuable.</td>
<td>No significant difference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study had three key purposes. The first and primary purpose of this study was to identify the goal orientation of the IT Unit’s middle managers and compare their goal orientation to their indicated level of support of given IT employee goals. The second purpose of this study was to consider variables related to manager/employee communications as part of the current goal setting program within the University, including frequency of conversations between managers and employees and managers’ satisfaction with the level of support they provided employees to help them accomplish their 2012 DAP goals. The third and final purpose of this study was to consider the
relationship between managers’ goal orientation to several goal support variables; namely, goal setting training, managers’ perceptions regarding the value of employee goal setting, and managers’ perceptions of employee attitudes towards goal setting.

**Goal Orientation and Managers Supporting Employee Goals**

For the first and primary purpose of this study, hypothesis 1 stated that a manager’s goal orientation will influence the types of employee goals that a manager will support. Correlation analysis revealed that there is no significant difference between managers’ goal orientation (learning or performance) and their preference for learning or performance goals in their employees (hypothesis 1). There is not enough evidence from the data collected in this study to reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 1.

Regardless of managers’ goal orientation, managers may be open to supporting either type of goal from their employees. However, organizations should consider offering training to their managers regarding how an employee’s goal orientation can impact the types of goals an employee might set.

In reviewing Duda (2001) and Dweck’s (1999) work, Janssen and Van Yperen, (2004, p. 371) found that “when increased task requirements are encountered, mastery-oriented individuals direct extra effort to a task itself. They tend to view exerting great effort as a desirable attribute of the self so that, for them, exerting effort is in itself indicative of success.” As a contrasting point, upon review of other literature (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Van Yperen & Janssen, 2002), Janssen & Van Yperen (2004) learned that performance-oriented employees “believe that working hard signifies low ability which makes them uncertain about their capacities to meet their competitive standards” (p. 371).
Since individuals approach tasks in fundamentally different ways, managers and organizations must understand this distinction and the potential implications for task accomplishment.

Managers need to be aware that framing employees’ goals as learning or performance goals can influence goal outcomes. The major difference between learning and performance goals for employees is the goal directions (i.e., how the goal is stated) (Seijts & Latham, 2012). The instructions of the goal focus the employee in one of two ways – to motivate employees to reach a particular target or to encourage employees to focus on the process of learning by adding to their knowledge and skills (Seijts & Latham, 2012).

Learning goals (as cited in Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004, p. 370) tend to focus an “individual’s attention on the elaboration and development of new knowledge and deep processing strategies leading to effectiveness in complex and unfamiliar tasks” (Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Fisher & Ford, 1998; Steele-Johnson, Beauregard, Hoover, & Schmidt, 2000; Winters & Latham, 1996). Therefore, these goals may likely be more complex than performance goals as suggested by previous research (Ames & Archer, 1988; Vandewalle, 1997), which proposes that employees who are learning oriented “have a preference for challenging and complex tasks” (as cited in Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004, p. 370).

In contrast, performance goals tend to focus employees’ attention on improving specific, straightforward job competencies and skills. As Steele-Johnson et al. (2000) pointed out, “performance goal orientations have been argued to cause employees to rehearse job components and skills until they require little attention and can be performed
automatically in a very efficient and effective manner” (as cited in Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004, p. 370). More specifically, it is typically quite clear for a manager to determine if an employee accomplished most of his or her performance goals, as these goals tend to focus on tasks that are either accomplished or not. The skill/task demonstrated by the employee was adequate and/or improved or it was not. As a result, performance goals for employees may seem to be more attractive to managers as they could be simpler to evaluate employee progress.

Despite the potential challenges of evaluating employees’ learning goals, there are many significant advantages for managers’ encouraging learning goals in their employees. Perhaps the most significant of these advantages is the potential for improved employee performance. Janssen and Van Yperen (2004) discovered this in their study of non-management employees within a Dutch energy supplier company. Their survey revealed that a mastery orientation related positively to employees’ in-role job performance. In-role job performance includes those duties and formal competencies that are part of an employee’s role within the company (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004).

Organizations could mitigate the potential challenges of evaluating employees’ learning goals by offering training to their managers regarding how to best evaluate learning goals. Since learning goals typically focus on employees gaining new knowledge and/or skills, organizational training could, for example suggest that managers consider connecting employees’ learning goals to practical outcomes that could then be evaluated for evidence of new knowledge and/or additional skill acquisition.

It will be important for managers to remember that performance goals can still be effective for employee goal accomplishment. However, as Seijts and Latham (2012)
demonstrate, this is when employees “already have the requisite ability” to complete the go
al (p. 229). In that scenario, “setting a specific high performance goal result(s) in significantly higher performance” (p. 229) for the employee rather than setting a “high learning goal or urging people to do their best” (p. 229). If managers are interested in proving that employees continue to have skills and/or job competency knowledge that they should already have, performance goals would be a good option. However, if managers want their employees to gain additional skills and/or new knowledge, learning goals have been proven in the literature to be the better choice.

The literature (Kohli, Shervani, & Challagalla, 1998; Sujan, Weitz, & Kumar, 1994) has moderately explored how managers can potentially influence his or her employee’s goal orientation. Kohli et al. (1998) extended the work of Sujan et al. (1994), which examined the impact of goal orientation on sales people. Kohli et al. (1998) observed how “supervisors influence the goal orientations of salespeople” (p. 263) and “whether supervisors' influence on their salespeople's orientations is moderated by salesperson experience” (p. 263). Their study was conducted using data from salespeople in two Fortune 500 companies.

Kohli et al. (1998) explored the relationship between three supervisory orientations (i.e., end-results, activity, and capability) and employees’ goal orientation. They learned that two of the three supervisory orientations - end-results and capability orientation -“tend to inculcate a learning orientation in salespeople” (Kohli et al., 1998, p. 271). In contrast, the authors learned that activity orientation had a “negative influence on the learning orientation of more experienced salespeople” (Kohli et al., 1998, p. 271).
They commented that these findings had significant implications for “supervisory assignments and training” (Kohli et al., 1998, p. 271).

Managers would be wise to consider the potential influence that their goal orientation could have on their employees’ goal orientation. Studies have examined the potential benefits of considering goal orientation when pairing managers with employees. For example, Kohli et al. (1998) suggest that organizations must first consider the major purpose(s) and/or need(s) of the organization or department and then match managers and employees according to the manager’s supervisory orientation and the employee’s needs.

Kohli et al. (1998) offer the following example, “if the business has customers and markets that change rapidly, and the goal of the organization is to foster individual learning, supervisors who emphasize end results and capabilities can help enhance the desire to learn among salespeople” (p. 271). In this scenario, an end-results manager, which the authors (Kohli et al., 1998) proved had a positive influence on employee’s learning goal orientation, would be matched with either an employee who was already learning oriented or with a relatively inexperienced employee. Important to remember, however, is that experienced individuals, such as in Kohli et al.’s study (1998) with experienced sales people, need to be treated differently from the aspect of goal orientation. They might actually experience negative results if pushed to focus on a learning goal orientation. This is because the “performance of routine activities is likely to lower the learning orientation of more-experienced salespeople” (Kohli et al., 1998, p. 271).

Organizations may also want to consider additional support to managers by way of a mentoring and coaching program. Joo and Park (2010) suggest that using such a
program to encourage coaching and mentoring in supervisors which would lead to encouraging learning goal orientations in employees. Egan (2005) suggested that partnering high learning goal orientation managers and employees would likely result (Godshalk & Sosik, 2003) in “higher idealized behaviors, managerial aspirations, and commitment to achieving goals, and are likely to provide higher psychosocial support and career development” (as cited in Joo & Park, 2010, p. 495).

Despite there being no significant difference between managers’ goal orientation (learning or performance) and managers’ preference for learning or performance goals in their employees, organizations would be prudent to consider how managers’ goal orientation could impact employee goal setting and achievement behaviors. Managers could be coached through organizational training on how to work with employees to set goals that would help them be successful in achieving new skills and/or maintaining existing skills, based on the employee’s goal orientation. This training could also include tips and best practices for evaluating learning goals.

**Manager/Employee Goal Discussions**

The second purpose of this study was to consider the relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and manager/employee communication variables as part of the current goal setting program within the University, including frequency of conversations between managers and employees, along with managers’ satisfaction with the level of support they provided employees to help them accomplish their 2012 DAP goals.
Correlation analysis revealed that there is no significant difference between managers’ goal orientation (LGO or PGO) and the frequency of manager/employee conversations (DIS-EMP, DIS-MGR, DIS-FREQ) that centered on goal setting (hypothesis 2). There is not enough evidence from the data collected in this study to reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 2.

Recent literature widely describes how goal orientation influences employees’ feedback seeking behaviors (Culbertson, Henning, & Payne, 2013; Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004; Joo & Park, 2010; Seijts & Latham, 2012). However, research was not found that describes how goal orientation could potentially influence managers’ behaviors regarding providing feedback to employees so this finding adds to the literature.

However, managers still need to be aware that an employee’s goal orientation can impact how the employee seeks and reacts to manager feedback. Seijts and Latham (2012) support this suggestion and stated that how employees react to feedback and their resulting tension levels are impacted by employees’ goal orientation. Employees with higher learning goal orientations view negative feedback as “part of the learning process, and hence to be welcomed” (Seijts & Latham, 2012, p. 4) and tend to experience “minimum tension following negative feedback” (p. 4). Employees with high learning goal orientations also experience higher levels of organizational commitment.

In contrast, employees with higher performance goal orientations may react quite negatively, and experience high tension, to negative feedback and they “may become so apprehensive about not making a positive impression on others that they become highly upset when they receive negative feedback” (Seijts & Latham, 2012, p. 4) which can
impact employee performance. Furthermore, managers should consider the potential impact of goal orientation on an employee’s commitment to the organization. Joo and Park (2010) found that employees “demonstrated the highest organizational commitment when they had higher learning goal orientation and when they perceived higher organizational learning culture and development feedback from their supervisors” (p. 493).

Culbertson, Henning, and Payne (2013) research further supports Seijts and Latham’s (2012) claims. They conducted a study with 234 staff members at a large southwestern U.S. university. With this research, Culbertson et al. (2013) claim to have conducted the first study that examined the impact of goal orientation on how employees reacted to manager feedback. Specifically, they were interested in learning how the employees’ performance appraisal (PA) satisfaction was impacted. The authors’ findings “demonstrated that the relationship between negative feedback and PA satisfaction became stronger with higher LGO, PPGO, and PAGO” (Culbertson et al., 2013, p. 192).

Managers particularly need to be mindful that employees’ goal orientation can impact how employees respond to performance evaluations. Culbertson et al.’s finding that high learning goal oriented individuals experienced a negative relationship between negative feedback and performance appraisal satisfaction was surprising to the authors (2013) because they initially hypothesized that high LGO individuals would be appreciative of any type of performance feedback. They proposed that “negative feedback paired with developmental information would be more favorably received” (Culbertson et al., p. 192) and suggested additional research in this area. Goal orientation
was measured using Vandewalle’s (1997) three-factor goal orientation survey, which was also utilized for this study.

In the current investigation, correlation analysis revealed that there is an inverse relationship between managers who more frequently approached their employees (DIS-MGR) with feedback on the progress they were making with their DAP goals and managers’ satisfaction (MGR-SAT) with the level of support they provided ($r = -0.293^*$). This relationship was significant at the $p \leq .05$ level ($p = 0.032$). In other words, managers that were approaching their employees more often with feedback on the progress they were or were not making regarding their DAP goals, were less satisfied with the level of support that they were providing to employees.

There could be a variety of reasons why managers were less satisfied with the level of support that they provided when they were more frequently providing feedback. This could be because managers felt that they were providing too much support to their employees, or more specifically that it was taking too much time to support their employees throughout the goal setting process. It is possible that managers were not satisfied with the progress their employees were making with their goals and their increased discussions primarily provided negative feedback. However, these potentially moderating factors were not measured in this study. Despite this, the literature does demonstrate (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004; Vandewalle, Brown, Cron, & Slocum, Jr., 1999) that the amount of support required by employees as they proceed through the goal setting and goal achievement process can be impacted by their goal orientation, specifically how frequently employees approach their managers for their support versus their managers needing to approach them.
Janssen and Van Yperen (2004) shared that learning goal oriented employees may tend to seek out more frequent conversations with their supervisors in order to “discuss and learn how to better deal with emerging problems and opportunities when performing their jobs” (p. 372). This is because learning goal-oriented employees “view a challenging task as an opportunity for growth and development” (Vandewalle, Brown, Cron, & Slocum, Jr., 1999, p. 3). The authors stated that these more frequent discussions may help employees may “help employees to succeed in their goal of improving ability and skill” (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004, p. 372).

In contrast, performance goal oriented employees, suggested the authors, may “perceive supervisors as threats” (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004, p. 372) since supervisors “higher rank suggests that their attributes (such as intelligence and abilities) are superior to those of the subordinate employees” (p. 372). This is in conflict with two of the characteristics of holding a performance goal orientation, which is to “strive to outperform others and to demonstrate superiority” (p. 372). Performance goal oriented employees will likely minimize the number of conversations they have with a supervisor, preferring to limit conversations to only those “required and mandated by their formal employment contracts” (p. 372).

Despite correlation analysis revealing that there is no significant difference between a manager’s goal orientation (LGO or PGO) and the frequency of manager/employee conversations (DIS-EMP, DIS-MGR, DIS-FREQ) that centered on goal setting, organizations would be wise to consider the potential impact of goal orientation on these variables. Given the potential challenges associated with managers sharing feedback with employees due to their employees’ goal orientation (employees’
reactions to feedback, minimal employee seeking of feedback, etc.), managers could be coached through organizational training on best practices in providing feedback to employees with primarily learning or performance goal orientations.

If managers knew, for example, that a group of employees had primarily performance goal orientations and thus might perceive feedback as threatening, managers could be coached on how to provide feedback in ways that might appear less threatening to their employees. Knowing that employees with performance goal orientations might less frequently seek out feedback, because they may be concerned with being perceived as not knowledgeable or capable, managers could intentionally seek out ways to provide feedback more frequently to their employees.

**Managers and Goal Support Behaviors**

The third and final purpose of this study was to consider the relationship between a manager’s goal orientation and whether the manager considered goal setting at the University to be valuable. This study also examined managers’ perceptions regarding the value of goal setting training that was offered at the departmental and organizational levels. There is no significant difference between managers’ goal orientation and whether they valued goal setting at the University. There is not enough evidence from the data collected in this study to reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 3.

Cross-tabulation showed that significantly fewer managers identified with being at least somewhat performance oriented (see Table 5 and Table 6). Only 20 managers (37.7%) indicated that this was the case and the majority of those managers 15 (75%) also found value in employee goal setting. Even though no significant difference was
found, it is still interesting to note that there is no significant difference (as determined by Pearson’s Chi-square test) between the number of managers who tend to be more learning or performance goal oriented and the number of managers who tend to value employee goal setting (hypothesis 3).

Previous research (Johnson & Beehr, 2014; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996; Harackiewicz & Elliot, 1993) has suggested that goal orientation can impact how employees proceed through training as well as how employees perform after the training event (as cited in Stevens & Gist, 1997). For example, Johnson and Beehr (2014) found that an employee’s goal orientation “can predict not only the extent that people will voluntarily participate in CE” (continuing education) “but also the extent that they will apply the newly acquired knowledge and skills to their work” (p. 107). Employees with a learning orientation, stated Johnson and Beehr (2014) are “more likely to take initiative in developing their professional skills, which should also translate to benefiting the organizations that they work for, because they are also more likely to apply CE learning in their organizations” (p. 106).

One way to influence how employees proceed through training is by utilizing coaches and learning facilitators. McLean (2006) found that “one of the most effective ways for HRD/OD professionals to assist an organization that strives to become a learning organization is to help managers adopt new roles as coaches and learning facilitators” (as cited in Joo & Park, 2010). In order for managers to adopt these potentially new roles, they will need training, which Joo and Park (2010) suggest could be conducted by human resources professionals. They offer that “providing relevant training programs and supporting developmental relationships such as coaching and
mentoring” (Joo & Park, 2010, p. 495) would be an effective way of influencing employees’ goal orientation.

It is possible for organizations to promote a particular goal orientation in their employees. Stevens and Gist (1997) proposed that it “may be possible to foster particular goal orientations in trainees through post-training interventions designed to facilitate skill maintenance” (p. 958). They point to goal-setting as one potential post-training intervention, stating that encouraging employees to set post-training goals focusing on either performance or learning has the potential to inspire a performance or learning orientation in those employees.

It would still be wise to consider managers’ perceptions regarding the value of goal setting in organizations. Organizations should remember to clearly articulate and demonstrate the value of organizational goal setting programs to their managers, to encourage manager buy-in. Furthermore, organizations should still consider goal orientation’s potential impact on employees’ participation in training. This could include training specifically on goal setting, or training in general. As stated in the literature above, employees’ participation in training and application of skills learned in training can be impacted by their goal orientation. Knowing this, organizations would be wise to consider how employees might be best encouraged to participate in training, dependent on the employee’s goal orientation.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study provides an initial, limited characterization of the impact of goal orientation on managers’ goal preferences, manager/employee goal discussions, and
managers’ goal support behaviors. Despite the finding of no significant difference between a manager’s goal orientation and the manager’s preference for learning or performance goals in his or her employees, it is recommended that this study be conducted with a larger population of managers at multiple higher education institutions and organizations. It would be useful to see if this result is consistent with similar populations in different higher education institutions and/or organizations. Furthermore, it is also recommended that the sample employee learning and performance goals be revised as suggested by the exploratory factor analysis, which determined that PGs 4 and 5 were ambiguous and potentially influenced managers’ responses.

Additionally, it is recommended that this study be conducted with managers and the employees that they directly support within organizationally mandated goal-setting programs. This would provide the opportunity for comparison between additional variables, such as employees’ goal orientation and their managers’ goal orientation, employees’ feedback seeking behaviors as compared to their managers’ (as related to their respective goal orientations), as well as employees’ perceptions of the value of goal setting as compared to their managers’ perceptions (as related to their respective goal orientation).

Finally, it is recommended that an additional variable be added to the study – employees’ performance rating. Several studies (Fisher, Minbashian, Beckmann, & Wood, 2013; Gong & Wang, 2014; Moss & Ritossa, 2007; Porter & Latham, 2012; Preenen, van Vianen, & de Pater, 2014; Whitaker & Levy, 2012;) mention goal orientation and its impact on employee performance, but as employees were not included in this study, employees’ performance ratings were not collected and could not be
examined. Including employees, as well as their performance ratings, to future studies would further extend the relevance and usability of these findings.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the research base agrees that manager and employee goal orientations have significant potential implications for organizations. By identifying managers’ and employees’ goal orientations, organizations have the opportunity to influence the success of organizationally mandated goal setting programs. The literature widely accepts that employees’ goal orientation impact employees’ acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

Employees’ potential success with accomplishing their goals, and thereby their opportunity for potentially increased performance as a result of these goals, is impacted by the support that employees have from their supervisors. Being aware that supervisors’ goal orientation can influence the goal orientation of their employees, can help organizations plan to moderate or influence these potential effects.

Organizations can utilize their knowledge of managers’ and employees’ goal orientations to experience positive results in their goal setting programs. Previous suggestions shared, such as by pairing like goal orientations together (i.e., high learning and learning), cross pairing manager and employee goal orientations when employees are relatively inexperienced (i.e., manager high learning and employee learning or performance), and/or by offering training to managers on how to illicit a particular goal orientation in their employees, will help organizations experience the most high impact results.
References


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doi:10.1037/0033-2909.90.1.125


doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963947.n509


Online Statistics Education: A Multimedia Course of Study (http://onlinestatbook.com/).

Project Leader: David M. Lane, Rice University.


Appendix A

Development Action Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Professional Development Activities</th>
<th>Performance Measures</th>
<th>Resources and Support Needed</th>
<th>Target Dates</th>
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Appendix B

Vandewalle’s Goal Orientation Instrument

Don Vandewalle’s (1997) three-factor work domain goal orientation instrument:

Factor I: Learning Goal Orientation (LGO)

1. I am willing to select a challenging work assignment that I can learn a lot from.
2. I often look for opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge.
3. I enjoy challenging and difficult tasks at work where I'll learn new skills.
4. For me, development of my work ability is important enough to take risks.
5. I prefer to work in situations that require a high level of ability and talent.

Factor II: Performance Prove Goal Orientation (PPGO)

1. I'm concerned with showing that I can perform better than my coworkers.
2. I try to figure out what it takes to prove my ability to others at work.
3. I enjoy it when others at work are aware of how well I am doing.
4. I prefer to work on projects where I can prove my ability to others.

Factor III: Performance Avoid Goal Orientation (PAGO)

1. I would avoid taking on a new task if there was a chance that I would appear rather incompetent to others.
2. Avoiding a show of low ability is more important to me than learning a new skill.
3. I'm concerned about taking on a task at work if my performance would reveal that I had low ability.
4. I prefer to avoid situations at work where I might perform poorly.
## Appendix C

**Managers’ Attitudes and Perceptions Questionnaire (MAP-Q)**

Research Questions Aligned with MAP-Q Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Survey Question(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is there a relationship between the frequency of manager feedback to employees on goal setting and a manager's goal orientation?</td>
<td>Managers’ rate of frequency response will be compared to their goal orientation, which was identified by using the Vandewalle Goal Orientation instrument.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                                                                                  | 1. Approximately, how often did your employee seek feedback from you on their 2012 DAP goals between when they set your goals and the start of the 2013 appraisal period – i.e. from when they set their 2012 DAP goals to when they set their 2013 DAP goals?  
*never / daily / weekly / biweekly (twice per month) / monthly / quarterly / biannually (twice per year) / once per year during SRDP time* |
|                                                                                  | 2. Approximately, on average, how often did you approach your employees with unsolicited feedback on the progress your employees were making with their 2012 DAP goals?  
*never / daily / weekly / biweekly (twice per month) / monthly / quarterly / biannually (twice per year) / once per year during SRDP time* |
|                                                                                  | 3. Approximately how often would you discuss your employees’ 2012 DAP goals?  
*never / daily / weekly / biweekly (twice per month) / monthly / quarterly / biannually (twice per year) / once per year during SRDP time* |
|                                                                                  | 4. Were you satisfied with the level of support you provided to your employees to help them accomplish their 2012 DAP goals?  
*Not satisfied / somewhat satisfied / satisfied / very satisfied / extremely satisfied* |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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| 2. Do managers who have attended training related to goal setting feel better prepared to support employees with goal setting? | 1. Did you attend a face-to-face or online training regarding writing goals for your Development Action Plan from IT Human Resources prior to supporting employees with their 2012 goals?  
2. Did you attend a face-to-face or online training regarding writing goals for your Development Action Plan from Central HR (OHR) prior to supporting employees with their 2012 goals?  
3. Did you attend training from IT Human Resources specifically on methods of effectively supporting employee goal setting?  
4. Did you attend training from Central HR (OHR) or the Center for Workplace Learning and Performance (CWLP) specifically on methods of effectively supporting employee goal setting?  
5. If you attended training on writing goals prior to supporting employees with their 2012 goals, did you find this training helpful in supporting your employees throughout the goal setting process?  
6. If you attended training on supporting employee goal setting prior to supporting employees with their 2012 goals, did you find this training helpful in supporting your employees throughout the goal setting process?  
7. If you attended training on writing goals, what could have made the training more helpful to you as you were supporting employee goal setting?  
8. If you attended training on supporting employee goal setting, what could have made the training more helpful to you as you were supporting employee goal setting?  
9. If you did not attend training, why didn’t you? |
| 3. What types of scaffolds/supports/prompts could HRIM software design include to best support managers with either performance or learning goal orientations? | Managers were asked questions regarding their perceptions of goal setting, in regards to employee goal setting within the IT Unit and at the University as part of the performance appraisal process, to gain ideas regarding what potential scaffolds/supports/prompts could better support managers with the employee goal setting process.

**Regarding Perceptions of Goal Setting**

i.e. is goal setting as it exists in its current form as part of the Performance Appraisal process well regarded by employees and managers? If not, scaffolds/supports may be provided to managers to assist with perceptions that are not as positive.

1. Do you feel that goal setting as a formalized portion of the performance management process is taken seriously by employees within the IT Unit? Optional: Why or why not?

2. Do you consider goal setting as a formalized portion of the performance management process as Penn State to be valuable? Optional: Why or why not?

**Regarding employee/manager involvement in writing employee’s goals**

i.e. how do managers and employees currently work together to write goals?

1. How involved were you in the writing of your employees’? (Ranges from: Employee wrote goals in isolation and manager approved to Manager wrote goals with no employee input)

2. Were you satisfied with your level of involvement in writing employees’ DAP goals? |
3. On average, how many goals were on your employees’ 2012 DAP?

4. On average, how many goals did your employees fully accomplish?

**Regarding managers’ perceptions of end-of-year goal discussions**

If going to an online system, consider and support needs to be provided for how end-of-year goal discussions will take place.

1. Did you discuss whether or not your employees accomplished their 2012 goals at the end of the 2012 performance year?

2. If yes, did you discuss this in the same meeting as your SRDP review or in separate meeting?

3. If yes, were you satisfied with this discussion?

4. If yes, do you feel that your employees felt confident sharing their progress even if they did not accomplish all of their goals? Why or why not?
Appendix D

Test of Managers’ Goal Preferences

Managers were given the following ten goals and asked to indicate their support on a 5-point Likert scale. 0=WWould not Support, 5=WWould be Extremely Supportive

1. Achieve at minimum a basic proficiency with XYZ job-related skill.
2. Demonstrate proficiency with XYZ job-related skill by building a new process and/or system.
3. Continue to become more knowledgeable about the XYZ system.
4. Investigate ways to streamline the XYZ system processes and write reports/report out on findings.
5. Become more familiar with XYZ process.
6. Utilize XYZ process to improve customer service experiences.
7. Further develop my competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities to become successful in my role/position.
8. Demonstrate knowledge of the competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to be successful in my role/position by working on projects that illustrate these.
9. Learn about the required skills and competencies necessary to be an effective project leader.
10. Project lead for future project.
Appendix E

Introductory Letter

Dear IT Colleagues,

Monica Rysavy, graduate assistant for Human Resources, is presently conducting her dissertation research for a Ph.D. in Education. As part of her research, Monica is conducting a survey with IT staff who have direct reports. The survey questions will focus on goal setting, including your experiences supporting employees with creating Development Action Plans (DAPs). You'll have the opportunity to share feedback regarding employee goal setting as part of the formal performance management process at the University as well.

You have been selected to participate in this survey because you were identified by Human Resources as a staff member in IT who has at least one direct report, i.e. you complete a performance evaluation for at least one staff member. Participation in this survey is completely optional, however very much appreciated. Data is being collected in a confidential and anonymous manner using the Qualtrics Survey tool. You are not asked to input potentially identifying information such as your username or department.

This survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Monica is specifically focusing on the potential implications for organizational training and software design (i.e. talent management / HRIM software). In addition to using this data in her dissertation, Monica will prepare a summary report of findings which will be shared with the IT community by the end of August.

I ask you to please take a few moments to respond to the survey by clicking this link: LINK

Thanks! I will be very interested to see what Monica learns.
VITA

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Education

**PhD**
August 2011 – August 2015
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*Doctor of Education* in Educational Leadership from Wilmington University, in Wilmington, Delaware.
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- *Dissertation*: An Action Plan for the New Castle County Vocational Technical School District to Improve Teachers’ Integration of Technology into the Classroom
- *Advisor*: Dr. Pamela M. Curtiss

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