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Checking in?

A dyadic and dynamic perspective on feedback conversations

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Checking in?

A dyadic perspective on feedback dynamics over time

With their *Harvard Business Review* article "Reinventing Performance Management", Buckingham and Goodall (2015) seem to have given the starting signal for a worldwide trend of companies reconsidering the fundamentals of their performance management systems. Seeking to reverse a trend towards an ever-increasing structuring of the performance management process (i.e., ratings, rigid protocols, etc.), companies are increasingly moving towards more fluidity and flexibility in their performance management processes. In doing so, they are recognizing that employee feedback should not be a yearly isolated event, but rather part of an ongoing, informal conversation between employees and their managers (Levy, Tseng, Rosen, & Lueke, 2017). This is best exemplified by "Check in's". Software developer Adobe introduced check-in's as an informal, ongoing dialogue between managers and their direct reports with no formal written review or documentation. The goal of check-in's is to move towards an organizational routine of frequent feedback exchanges throughout the year that may be instigated by both employees and managers.

The trend to 'unstructure' feedback processes in organizations has led to a renewed interest for evidence-based guidelines on how to organize such check-in's and how to gauge their effectiveness. Fortunately, scientific interest on feedback dates back to the early 1900s (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996) and a rich body of knowledge can be drawn from it to inform both our understanding and management of these contemporary approaches to feedback. For the purpose of the chapter, we identified three broad streams of feedback research that specifically pertain to these novel 'formats' of feedback processes in organizations.

First, formal feedback intervention studies using both experimental and field survey studies have provided important insights as to when and how people respond to feedback affecting their performance (e.g., Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Second, in the past 30 years we have gained a relatively good understanding of when, why and how people seek feedback from their supervisors (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015). Third, the research line that probably comes closest to studying informal feedback conversations is the study of the feedback environment and its outcomes (Rosen, Levy, & Hall, 2006). This line of research has explained what type of feedback-supportive behaviors leaders need to engage in to produce favorable employee outcomes. Together, these lines of research provide an initial basis for understanding some aspects of informal feedback conversations.

However, despite this rich body of research, there remains a dearth of knowledge on two fundamental properties of feedback processes as they are now being reflected in current trends in organizations. First, feedback is *dyadic* in that both employee and supervisor are active agents in a feedback exchange and either can initiate and shape feedback conversations and respond to the other agent's actions. Secondly, and building upon its dyadic property, feedback is *dynamic*. Feedback conversations are seldom isolated and punctual events but are almost always connected in time to previous and future conversations with the outcomes of one feedback episode potentially providing input for the next conversation. Reoccurring feedback conversations between two individuals represent fundamental characteristics of feedback processes in organizations and the lack of studies that have systematically explored the dyadic and dynamic elements of feedback is problematic.

One of the most likely reasons why research has neglected the dyadic and dynamic elements of feedback processes are the methodological and statistical hurdles in capturing, simultaneously, two actors' perspectives and modeling their exchanges over time. As a result, feedback-seeking behavior and feedback-giving behavior have been studied mostly in isolation, with some studies focusing on the act of seeking feedback and others on the response to feedback provided (Anseel, 2017; Anseel, Lievens, & Levy, 2007; DeNisi & Sockbeson, in press). For instance, the first theoretical model depicting the dynamic interplay between employees' feedback-seeking strategies and supervisors' delivery of performance feedback dates back to 1989 (Larson, 1989), but the propositions advanced have remained largely untested.

However, in recent years, conceptual and methodological advances in studying dyadic and dynamic processes have become available, benefiting from insights in communication and relationship research amongst others (e.g. Gooty & Yammarino, 2001; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012; Liden, Anand, Vidyarthi, 2016). These now allow researchers to systematically address previously unexplored research areas and to paint a more complete picture of how informal feedback exchanges in organizations unfold over time. Therefore, the aim of the current contribution is to bring together the feedback-seeking, feedback-giving and feedback environment literatures to advance a dyadic and dynamic perspective on feedback processes in organizations. To this end, we first provide a brief overview of how each of the three research lines provides an overly static and one-sided picture of the feedback process. However, at the same time, we identify studies in each of these research streams that have started to shed initial light on the dynamic and dyadic nature of feedback exchanges. Next, we explain how adopting an approach that is both dyadic and dynamic might advance our understanding of feedback

conversations in organizations. To inspire future research, we provide examples of studies that have begun to study feedback processes in such a way highlighting new methodological and statistical approaches. By sequentially incorporating dyadic and dynamic aspects in the feedback process, we advance previously unaddressed questions in a new feedback research agenda and highlight how the answer to these questions has the potential to inform the current practice of informal feedback exchanges.

Feedback intervention research

Giving feedback is one of the most widely applied psychological interventions with conventional wisdom suggesting that feedback is necessary for motivation, well-being and growth and is generally beneficial for performance. Not surprisingly, a wealth of studies have studied how formal feedback interventions affect subsequent motivation and performance. Kluger and Denisi (1996) shaped the domain with an influential historical and systematic meta-analytic review of feedback studies, showing that the effects of feedback, although generally positive, are not easily understood and show large variation. With the risk of oversimplifying the domain, we identify two broad types of feedback studies in organizations that inform contemporary feedback practices and that have preliminarily touched upon dyadic and dynamic aspects of feedback exchanges.

A first line of feedback studies examines how employees perceive and respond to feedback given by others, typically supervisors in a performance appraisal context (e.g., Lam, Yik, & Schaubroeck, 2002), or a (developmental) assessment setting (Ryan, Brutus, Greguras, & Hakel, 2000; Woo, Sims, Rupp, & Gibbons, 2008). This research however, approaches feedback processes from the unique

perspective of the feedback receiver and lacks a true dyadic perspective. For instance, in a prototypical example of this line of research, Kinicki, Prussia, Wu, & McKee-Ryan (2004) found that after performance appraisal, favorable perceptions of credibility, specificity, frequent and positive feedback were predictive of performance one year later. Further, these relationships were mediated by perceptions of accuracy, desire to respond and actual response. While the feedback receivers' perceptions and responses are measured in the context of a feedback exchange, there is no attention to the perspective and actions of the feedback giver (except as seen by the feedback receiver) nor for their potential interplay. A theoretical exploration of both giving and receiving narrative comments in the context of appraisals has been developed (Brutus, 2010), but no empirical work has examined these propositions. Furthermore, these types of studies will typically focus on a single feedback event, without taking into account previous or future exchanges between the same actors over time.

The second prototypical feedback study examines this phenomenon as a punctual intervention. These studies, mostly experimental in nature, were summarized in Kluger and Denisi's (1996) meta-analysis but have also been regularly conducted in subsequent years (e.g., Anseel, Lievens, & Schollaert, 2009; Kim, Atwater, Patel, & Smither, 2016; Oc, Bashshur, & Moore, 2015). Typically, these studies adopt a between-person design with one group receiving one type of feedback while other group(s) receiving another type(s) of feedback or no feedback at all. The efficacy of the specific feedback intervention is inferred from the difference in performance or behavior between the two or more experimental conditions. The more sophisticated experimental designs have also included repeated measures tracking feedback effects on performance over time (e.g., Ilies & Judge, 2005). By

including longitudinal aspects in their design, these studies provide some initial leads for developing a dynamic perspective on feedback processes. For instance, using a managerial decision-making task Goodman, Wood, & Hendricks (2004) found that increasing the specificity of feedback increased performance, but the benefits did not endure over time. Similarly, using a multiple trial decision-making task, Lam, DeRue, Karam, & Hollenbeck (2011) found that feedback frequency exhibited an inverted-U relationship with learning and performance over time. The take away from this line of research is that, unequivocally, people respond strongly to feedback interventions with general positive effects of feedback on performance ($d = .41$, Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). However, while highly informative as to the basic cognitive and motivational underpinnings of receiving feedback information, these types of studies do not explain how the exchange unfolds over time. Furthermore, as these studies did not examine actual feedback conversations, they did not allow to examine the feedback recipient's role in dynamically shaping the feedback exchange.

Feedback-seeking research

Complementary to the research on structured feedback interventions is the research stream on feedback-seeking behavior instigated by Ashford and Cummings in the early 1980's. This research posits that employees are not passively waiting for feedback to be provided to them but that they will also actively pursue feedback themselves. In the past 35 years, feedback-seeking research has rapidly grown to seek to understand (a) what methods individuals use to seek feedback, (b) how frequently they seek feedback, (c) when people seek feedback, (d) from whom they seek feedback, and (e) what type of performance feedback is being sought (for a meta-analytic review, see Anseel et., 2015). While there is obviously quite some

variety in feedback seeking studies, a prototypical study aims to better understand the antecedents and consequences of the frequency with which employees seek feedback through inquiry and monitoring (e.g., Ashford, De Stobbeleir, & Nujella, 2016). Inquiry involves seeking feedback by directly asking others for feedback. Monitoring involves screening the work environment and the behavior of colleagues in order to gain insight in how one's behavior would be assessed by others without directly asking anyone. Studies would then focus on identifying and understanding individual differences such as learning goal orientation or self-esteem (e.g., Northcraft & Ashford, 1990; VandeWalle & Cummings, 1997), situational aspects such as the presence of others when seeking feedback (Williams, Miller, Steelman, & Levy, 1999), and interactions between individual and situational antecedents (e.g., Levy, Albright, Cawley, & Williams, 1995; Sijbom, Anseel, Crommelinck, De Beuckelaer & De Stobbeleir, 2018). Having determined what drives or hinders people to seek feedback, studies have in turn sought to examine the outcomes of seeking feedback, with task performance and job satisfaction as the most studied outcomes (Anseel et al., 2015).

A range of ingenious research designs have been adopted to investigate these research questions, but they have almost invariably focused on only one actor in the feedback-seeking process: the person seeking feedback. It is surprising to observe that virtually no studies have also included the perspective and behavior of the source from whom feedback is been sought, be it a supervisor or a colleague. This is a crucial oversight when looking to understand the relationship between feedback-seeking behavior and performance outcomes. The underlying, seemingly evident assumption of this relationship is that people who seek feedback will improve their performance *because* their supervisor will respond to their seeking attempt by

giving useful feedback, which will then be listened to and used by the feedback seeker to adjust his or her behavior. However, asking for feedback does not automatically imply receiving useful feedback nor listening to the information provided (Kluger & Malloy, in press). To date, no studies have actually tested these assumptions and there is little evidence of how the feedback-seeking process unfolds after the initial feedback-seeking and subsequent feedback-giver's responses. Given the mixed findings regarding the effects of seeking feedback on performance (Anseel et al., 2015), a more detailed examination of the intermediate processes involving the perspectives and actions of both actors involved in the feedback exchange could help solve this puzzle.

In terms of developing a dyadic perspective, it is important to acknowledge that a number of studies have already looked at the attributions supervisors make when they are being asked for feedback. For instance, Ashford and Tsui (1991) found that feedback sources' reporting of negative feedback seeking was associated with a higher perception of effectiveness, while positive feedback seeking was associated with a lower perception of effectiveness. Similarly, when feedback seekers had a favorable performance history, seeking feedback led to more positive impressions of the seeker's personal characteristics and performance potential (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992). For top performers, managers also interpreted feedback seeking as being motivated by performance improvement motives but less so for mediocre employees (De Stobbeleir, Ashford, & Sully de Luque, 2010). Such supervisor attributions about the motives of employees to seek feedback are important as subordinates' feedback seeking has been found to relate to supervisor-rated work performance only when supervisors interpreted the feedback-seeking behavior as being driven more by performance enhancement motives and less by

impression management motives (Lam, Huang, & Snape, 2007). Together, these findings indicate that the feedback source plays an active role in the feedback-seeking process in how they interpret the feedback-seeking intentions. While none of these studies involved both the perspective feedback-seeker and feedback-giver simultaneously, they provide a preliminary basis to inform future research that aims to take a closer look at the dyadic interplay of their behaviors.

In terms of developing a dynamic perspective, previous feedback-seeking research has provided a relatively static depiction of the feedback-seeking process. Experimental studies have mostly adopted between-person designs, providing different situational cues to look at whether people would seek feedback or not in a given situation. Field studies rely mostly on cross-sectional designs (multiple source), wherein individuals look back at their behavior over a period of time and provide an indication of the frequency of their feedback-seeking behavior. These perspectives, however, do not consider the iterative nature of feedback exchanges. As mentioned earlier, seeking feedback in organizations is most often not a one-time, isolated event, but a reoccurring exchange with the same actors, thus connecting each feedback cycle with previous and future feedback exchanges. Combined with the earlier dyadic shortcoming, it could very well be that increases or decreases in feedback-seeking behavior are determined by the earlier responses of the feedback-giver or by previous attempts or future prospects to seek feedback. As concluded by Anseel et al., (2015), longitudinal designs that take the iterative nature of feedback into account are sorely needed to address some of the unsolved puzzles in the feedback-seeking domain. A good example of this is the fuzzy relationship between uncertainty reduction and feedback seeking, which could result from uncertainty being both an antecedent and outcome of seeking feedback.

While only a handful of studies have adopted a process or longitudinal perspective, these have been quite informative for developing such a dynamic account of feedback-seeking behavior. Levy et al. (1995), for example, remains one of the only studies that measured intention to seek feedback, subsequent feedback seeking, and the tendency to change initial intentions, thus providing an in-depth process view of how individuals flexibly navigate through one feedback cycle. People intending to seek feedback, reconsidered and refrained from seeking feedback when they became aware that they had to do so in public to avoid face loss. A few other studies have examined how the frequency of feedback-seeking behavior may fluctuate over time (and thus, over feedback cycles). In a longitudinal study with data collected three times over a year, Callister, Kramer and Turban (1999) found that monitoring for feedback from peers and supervisors remained constant over time, as did inquiry from supervisors, but that inquiry from peers declined. In a study of 205 new accountants that were surveyed one, three, and six months into their jobs, Morrison (1993) found that feedback seeking remained relatively stable over time. In two longitudinal studies of organizational newcomers, Vandenberghe, Landry, Bentein, Anseel, Mignonac & Roussel (submitted) found that declining levels of feedback-seeking behavior resulted in decreased organizational commitment across time and ultimately greater turnover. Combined, these studies suggest that there might be substantial intra-individual variation in the frequency of feedback-seeking behavior over time and, at present, research has not sufficiently looked at how the iterative nature of the feedback process might affect feedback-seeking behavior.

In sum, research on feedback-seeking behavior has extended feedback research by advancing our understanding of the organic nature and informal aspects of feedback exchanges in organizations. However, with its predominant focus on the

feedback-seeker's side of the feedback exchange at a single point in time, the feedback-seeking research does not allow to fully capture the dynamics of both actors in shaping the feedback conversation over time.

Feedback environment research

Research on the feedback environment seeks to address some of the previously mentioned limitations by providing an holistic perspective on how supervisors, and to a lesser extent colleagues, may support employee development through informal feedback behaviors. The feedback environment refers "to the contextual aspects of day-to-day supervisor-subordinate and coworker-coworker feedback processes rather than to the formal performance appraisal feedback session" (Steelman, Levy, & Snell, 2004, p.166). A favorable feedback environment is characterized by managers and employees feeling comfortable seeking, providing and receiving feedback for development. Feedback environment studies have typically adopted a survey approach with employees reporting on their perceptions of the (supervisor) feedback environment by means of a composite score of seven feedback environment facets (e.g., feedback quality, feedback delivery, favorable feedback, feedback credibility, unfavorable feedback, source availability, promotion of feedback seeking). Overall, studies examining the outcomes of a favorable feedback environment have shown that it is related to job satisfaction (Anseel & Lievens, 2007), affective commitment, organizational citizenship behavior (Norris-Watts & Levy, 2004), psychological empowerment (Gabriel, Frantz, Levy, & Hilliard, 2014), various aspects of work performance (Rosen, Levy, & Hall, 2006) and increased employee feedback seeking (Whitaker, Dahling, & Levy, 2007).

The feedback environment approach has been particularly valuable in demonstrating the utility of conceptualizing informal feedback-supportive behavior of

supervisors. It has explicitly acknowledged how supervisors continuously give informal feedback and may be responsive to feedback-seeking attempts from their subordinates, thus opening up for the possibility of both dyadic and dynamic exchanges over time. However, by only tapping into the feedback perceptions of feedback receivers, this perspective suffers to some extent from the same limitation as earlier discussed; a lack of attention for the dynamic interplay between feedback-giver and feedback-seeker. Furthermore, the global assessment of the feedback environment and the lack of longitudinal designs do not allow for a process approach acknowledging the iterative nature of feedback exchanges.

Towards a dyadic and dynamic perspective on feedback

To complement and extend previous feedback perspectives, we propose a dyadic and dynamic perspective on supervisor-employee exchanges by drawing on recent advances in the study of dyads in the fields of organizational behavior, personal relationship and communication.

Dyadic considerations

We first examine dyadic aspects of feedback processes in more detail. Dyadic constructs involve relationships, interactions, and exchanges that occur between two members of a dyad (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). As the dyad is the essential building block of two-way communication, feedback exchanges should in essence be analyzed as dyadic constructs. While it is possible to isolate and study the individual behaviors of each of the two actors involved in the exchange, as previous feedback research has mostly done, both perspectives are dependent on each other. An employee seeking feedback from a supervisor aims to elicit a response of the supervisor, leading him or her to give feedback or not, which in turn is expected to instigate a response by the initial feedback seeker (or not). Therefore,

a feedback exchange should be conceptualized as a multilevel construct because the exchanges occur between lower level units (feedback giver and seeker) nested within a higher-level unit (supervisor-employee dyad). This higher-level unit, in turn, has its own attributes influencing the perspectives and actions of both actors within it such as the history of the relation, the frequency of exchange, the timing and duration of the conversation amongst others. Three key characteristics of dyadic relationships stand out as having been overlooked by previous feedback research.

A first dyadic aspect central to feedback exchanges is relational dependency. The actors are dependent on each other in their actions and are aware of this dependency when anticipating and engaging in the exchange. Both employee and supervisor may be responsive to each other's feelings, thoughts and behavior and change their own behavior accordingly, for instance to shape their relationship towards valued end goals or to accommodate the other person. Indeed, a supervisor who is solicited for feedback is not a computer that provides an automated feedback message. As previously demonstrated, supervisors make cognitive attributions about the motives to seek feedback. When being approached by an employee, a supervisor may feel that his or her subordinate is simply seeking attention or is looking for an ego boost. As a result, keeping dependency in mind, this supervisor may either choose to forego the opportunity to give diagnostic feedback or choose to give in and bolster the employee's self-esteem with positive feedback. Similarly, before or after initiating a feedback conversation, employees may try to forecast changes in the supervisor's thinking during the feedback episode or over multiple feedback episodes and adapt their actions accordingly. These dependency considerations are shaped by their feedback history, relationship characteristics (e.g., the quality of the relationship) or the timing of their exchange, which are all dyadic properties. In sum,

the relational context of feedback episodes and the associate dependency considerations form an important aspect of feedback exchanges that need to be taken into account to understand how feedback episodes unfold.

In addition to dependency, behavioral reciprocity is a second important characteristic of feedback dyads that seems currently misunderstood. Feedback does not emerge from any individual as a standalone actor, but is co-created and embedded within the reciprocal interplay between employee and supervisor. When studying feedback exchanges and asking supervisors to report on their feedback giving behavior, that self-reported behavior is dependent on the employee's feedback seeking behavior. In turn, a supervisor's report of an employee's feedback seeking behavior is also dependent on his or her own feedback giving behavior. Conversely, questionnaires measuring employee self-reports of feedback seeking behavior are dependent on the supervisor's actual feedback giving behavior, in the same way as an employee's report of a supervisor's feedback giving behavior is dependent on his or own feedback seeking behavior. To date, no studies have statistically or methodologically accounted for this behavioral reciprocity. This concurrent influence between both actors implies mutuality, the reciprocal influence both feedback giver and feedback seeker have on each other's behavior, which has been identified as one of the basic elements of a dyadic relationship (Ferris, Liden, Munyon, Summers, Basik, & Buckley, 2009).

Third, in most cases both feedback-giver and feedback-seeker in a feedback exchange share a common past and future. Their attitudes, cognition and behavior in any given feedback conversation may be (partly) driven by their experience with the other party in a previous exchange or by their anticipation of future exchanges. For instance, if a manager has the feeling that the feedback s/he

gave a couple of months has not been acted upon by an employee, s/he might be reluctant to respond constructively to questions for feedback in a new situation. Also, an employee might feel satisfied with a brief and incomplete feedback conversation with his or her supervisor, knowing that s/he will have many further opportunities for seeking feedback in the upcoming days. As most feedback research to date has overlooked relational dependency, behavioral reciprocity and shared time perspective, it may be that we are misunderstanding or are not fully capturing the true nature of the relationships between feedback and employee outcomes (Tse & Ashkanasy, 2015; Kenny et al., 2006).

Dynamic considerations

Logically following from these dyadic considerations, it becomes clear that a second important characteristic of feedback exchanges that has not been incorporated to its full potential is the dynamic aspect of feedback processes. Despite the recognition of and continuous interest in feedback as a central driver of individual's growth trajectories, our collective understanding of how feedback processes unfold over time remains surprisingly incomplete. For instance, it remains unclear why and when individuals follow up on initial feedback-seeking decisions; how various cognitive, motivational, and behavioral processes result from seeking and receiving feedback and how they together promote (and, in some cases, inhibit) a developmental trajectory. Along those lines, we know very little about the decisions of when and how to expand on feedback received throughout one's development process as well as when and what feedback interventions by a feedback-giver are most appropriate throughout this development trajectory. In other words, we know a lot about what matters in the feedback process but relatively little about *when* or *why* it matters. One of the primary reasons for the slow progress in this area is a

fundamental misalignment of theory and research with the dynamic nature of the feedback process. Feedback and the learning resulting from it are dynamic processes that occur at the within-person level and unfold over time and across multiple levels of analysis. Theoretically, learning from feedback is a cyclical process (Taylor, Fisher & Ilgen, 1984) in which individuals experience performance-goal discrepancies, which they try to solve by seeking or listening to feedback. They channel cognitive resources towards understanding and learning from the feedback, develop metacognitive strategies to filter and apply the feedback received, and subsequently modify their self-regulatory processes over time potentially needing additional feedback at indeterminate times (Carver & Scheier, 2000; Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989; Pintrich, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000). Thus, it is a within-person process that evolves over time. However, the picture emerging from our partial review is that the majority of research on feedback processes thus far has been conducted at the between-person rather than within-person level. As Dalal and Hulin (2008, p. 69) cautioned “the distinction between within-person and between-person structures of behaviors is ignored at the researcher’s peril”. Indeed, findings derived from between-person methodologies alone present an incomplete and occasionally misleading picture of the dynamic phenomena in question. For instance, a current assumption in the feedback-seeking domain is that newcomers seek frequent feedback to learn the ropes of their new jobs. As tenure increases, they are increasingly feeling more comfortable in their work environment and jobs, resulting in less need for and thus less feedback seeking. However, the underlying evidence about this assumed within-person decline in feedback-seeking frequency is almost entirely build on between-subject correlations (Anseel et al., 2015). In other words, while we are observing that individuals high in tenure are seeking less feedback than

their counterparts low in tenure, we conclude that newcomers actually *change* their feedback-seeking behavior over time. Of course, various other explanations could also account for such a between-person correlation with reversed causality (i.e., people who frequently seek feedback are more likely to stay in the company) as one of the more plausible ones. Thus, switching from a between to a within-person level of analysis requires researchers to rethink feedback theories. For instance, one of the main theories driving feedback-seeking research has been uncertainty reduction theory, predicting that one of the main motives for people to seek feedback is to reduce work-related uncertainty (Ashford & Cummings, 1986). However, research on uncertainty reduction in communication research (Brashers, 2001) has raised the possibility that uncertainty may actually be sought after (i.e., the motives of feedback seekers, in some situations, may not be to reduce it but to increase it). To increase uncertainty (e.g., around performance levels or social evaluation), people may deliberately seek out information that contradicts their and other beliefs or introduce new alternatives for consideration (Kruglanski, 1989). The current dominant between-person approach taken in feedback research does not allow tackling such research questions. Thus, new longitudinal research methodologies and analytic techniques are needed to more accurately depict how feedback processes evolve over time and how work environments may disrupt or accelerate employees' feedback trajectories.

Recent methodological advances have allowed researchers to address such dyadic and dynamic research questions in more depth and in novel ways (see Bliese & Lang, 2016; Lehmann-Willenbrock & Allen, 2017; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012; Tse & Ashkanasy, 2015). Implementing these advanced techniques may allow feedback research to make substantial progress in addressing previously unexplored questions and shed new light on old questions. Below, we describe these

approaches and explain how applying them to feedback research may inspire various new research questions, bringing previous strands of research together. We summarize the new research questions that may be examined through new methods in Table 1. Most of the approaches described below allow examination of both dyadic and dynamic aspects of feedback exchanges. However, we first discuss approaches that have initially put most emphasis on dyadic aspects and then discuss approaches that were originally developed to study dynamic patterns.

A Research Agenda

Social Relations Approach to Dyadic Research

Within the domains of communication and personal relations the social relations model and its variants (SRM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006) has been advanced as an approach to disentangle dyadic phenomena in four variance components: actor, partner, relationship, and error. When dyadic scores are not partitioned, actor, partner and relationship effects might be confounded. This means that it is impossible to determine whether unique behavior occurs in specific dyads, whether there is a stability of behavior exhibited (i.e., actor effects) or provoked (i.e., partner). A particularly relevant example of a study in the interpersonal relations domain is Kluger and Malloy's (in press) examination of how asking questions may lead to better liking by conversation partners. Using SRM procedures, they reanalyzed Huang, Yeomans, Brooks, Minson, & Gino's (2017) experiments on question-asking behavior, a true dyadic phenomenon. When taking into account the dyadic nature of asking and responding questions, the researchers reached fundamentally different conclusions than the original study. Whereas Huang et al. (2017) concluded support for a trait-level model of question-asking behavior, Kluger and Malloy found that a third of the variance in question-asking behavior can be

attributed to the specific dyad, and a smaller portion of the variance can be attributed to the partner's tendency to elicit question asking.

When seeking to apply an SRM model to the study of feedback-seeking behavior, as proposed by Anseel, Vossaert, & Corneillie (in press), it becomes clear that previous research might have been overly narrow in modeling the drivers of feedback-seeking behavior. Actor variance would reflect individual differences in one's tendency to frequently seek feedback, a frequently studied relationship. However, partner variance would reflect a different trait, that is, the tendency of some people to elicit feedback seeking attempts; relationship variance would reflect the tendency to frequently seek feedback in the presence of a specific partner. Finally, error variance is distinguished from relationship variance when more than one measure is available. When scores are not partitioned, actor, partner and relationship effects are confounded, as has been mostly the case in previous feedback research. To date, virtually no studies have looked at feedback givers who would elicit more or less feedback-seeking behavior and what relationship characteristics would uniquely predict more feedback exchanges.

A special case of SRM is the one-with many (OWM) model (Kenny et al., 2006; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012). It is designed to analyze data collected from an individual who forms multiple relationships (dependent dyads) in a team. Adopting this method, Venkataramani, Green, and Schleicher (2010) for example asked team members to list the extent to which they sought advice from different supervisors and looked at how their network centrality shaped leader-member exchange and members' work attitudes. A similar approach focusing on network centrality in feedback seeking could further unravel feedback seeking and feedback giving dynamics. An example might clarify the type of feedback research questions that

adopting OWM could inspire. For instance, if Mike gives feedback to Mary, this could be a consequence of (a) his feedback giving behavior (e.g., Mike generally gives a lot of feedback), (b) her feedback seeking behavior (e.g., Mary generally seeks feedback a lot) or (c) their relationship-specific feedback behavior (e.g. Mike gives Mary more feedback than others while Mary seeks more feedback from Mike than with others). Observing Mike and Mary in multiple dyads over multiple feedback episodes would enable us to disentangle drivers of feedback giving and feedback seeking behaviors. Moreover, this approach would also allow us to look at the extent to which the supervisor personalizes his/her feedback giving approach and explore the effect on the effectiveness of feedback. Do supervisors respond uniformly to feedback seeking or do they adopt feedback-seeker or relationship-specific feedback styles? Feedback studies addressing these questions would need to collect data from individuals who form different feedback relationships with multiple feedback sources. Typically, a “round-robin” technique could be used, in which an employee lists all the feedback sources from whom he or she receives, seeks or give feedback. This would, for example, allow research questions focusing on differences in status, relationship qualities, or expertise among feedback sources and how they determine feedback seeking and giving behaviors.

While SRM and OWM focuses on multiple existing relationships, the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM, Kenny et al., 2006) enables data analysis collected from two individuals who belong to the same dyad and allows testing of reciprocal effects. Hence, APIM is uniquely suited to analyze one-on-one feedback interactions and can help determine whose and which attitudes or behaviors influence particular outcomes (in the actor or the partner), while taking into account the characteristics of the dyad. Partner-oriented models (Kenny & Cook, 1999)

assume that an actor's outcome is a product of a partner effect, meaning in this context that feedback-seeking behavior is largely determined by another one's feedback-giving behavior (or responsiveness). For instance, research questions could focus on how a leaders' personality or supportive behavior affects an employee's feedback seeking or an employees' acceptance and use of feedback. Switching the actor and partner roles, feedback-giving (as an actor's outcome) could be the product of feedback seeking (as a partner effect.) Research questions could examine the characteristics and types of feedback-seeking behavior and how they relate to different patterns of feedback giving.

Dyadic mediation effects can also be assessed via the actor-partner interdependence mediation model (Ledermann, Macho, & Kenny, 2011) shedding light on the intermediate mechanisms such as actor and partner attributions and exchange goals. Various interaction models can be distinguished (Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012) such as APIM with actor–partner interaction, where an actor effect varies across levels of partner's scores on the independent variable and/or that partner effects vary across levels of actor's scores on the independent variable. For instance, feedback-seekers could report more useful feedback exchanges when both feedback-seeker and feedback-giver have high scores on learning goal orientation. Moderators can also be situated at the dyad level, where for instance relationships could be different depending on the status of the dyad. An example would be examining if someone's feedback-seeking within teams or across teams yields different outcomes. Thus, these models allow for the inclusion of characteristics of both the actors and the dyads in the feedback conversation and examine how they co-produce partner, actor and dyad outcomes.

Before discussing new approaches to study dynamic process, it is important to understand that SRM approaches have also been developed to study dyadic phenomena over time. For instance, repeated measures APIM (Kenny et al., 2006) not only examine reciprocal effects between actor and partner but it also incorporates dynamic effects by examining how actor's and partner's variables change between two points in time. This analytical approach opens up the possibility of a range of research questions examining how a leader's feedback-giving behavior and a subordinate's feedback-seeking behavior at time 1 affects their own and each others' behaviors at time 2 (for a more systematic discussion, see Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012).

Temporal Social Interaction Approaches for Dynamic Processes

In recent years, a number of researchers have developed advanced dynamic social interaction analysis techniques for studying temporal interactions in organizations such as leader-follower dynamics (for an overview, see Lehmann-Willenbrock & Allen, 2017). Rather than one specific model, this line of research encompasses a wide range of methodologies for quantifying temporal interaction pattern to study actual interactions in the field as they unfold over time. Examples include lag sequential analysis, pattern analysis, statistical discourse analysis and visualization methods. A recent study of Meinecke, Lehmann-Willenbrock, and Kauffeld (2017) takes a detailed process perspective on the appraisal interview and provides a good example of the promise of these methods for studying new research questions in feedback conversations. By modeling micro-patterns of supervisor-employee interactions in the appraisal interview, they captured the dynamic interplay between both interview partners as the interview progresses. By coding different behaviors, such as the extent to which the supervisor shows task or relation-oriented

behaviors, and adopting lag-sequential coding to analyze the data, they unraveled the patterns of interaction that led to higher interview success ratings. Emphasizing the importance of the dyadic nature of the interview, they found that relation-activation patterns in which there were reciprocal relationships between relation-oriented supervisor communication and active employee involvement were linked to higher interview success ratings by both supervisors and employees. The frequencies of isolated supervisor or employee behaviors did not determine the success' perceptions of supervisor and employees.

As will be clear from this example, the emphasis in this paradigm lays on the study of actual behavior. To capture behavioral aspects of feedback conversations, video or audio recordings, use of app-based analytics, observation and coding, or wearable sensors might be advisable. These approaches seem most appropriate for a temporal sequence micro-analysis of feedback conversations to see how one feedback episode unfolds and how various verbal and non-verbal micro behaviours may provoke responses in the other party. Much like analyzing how both partners in a dance co-create a dance sequence, feedback episodes can be minutiously broken down in a temporal sequence of micro-actions by each of the actors. Imagine the following episode being videotaped and analyzed: When Gareth is uttering some doubts to Laura about an ongoing shared project, Laura might lean forward to express openness and support. In turn, this might trigger Gareth to openly voice his concerns and ask Laura for feedback about how he is doing. Laura may seemingly jump in too quickly with a disapproving message, but upon seeing a defensive reaction in Gareth's bodily posture she quickly adapts and reconfirms her confidence in the abilities of Gareth.

Event-based Approaches to Dynamic Processes

While the previous approach seems particularly appropriate to study within-episode dynamics, relational event modeling can help incorporate dynamic aspects over sequences of events and examine how they lead to emergent feedback patterns between members of a dyad (DuBois, Butts, McFarland, & Smyth, 2013; Kozlowski, Chao, Grand, Braun, & Kuljanin, 2013). Relational event modeling has been mostly applied to study the emergence of group constructs as an unfolding process. The assumption is that actions of and interactions between groups members coalesce into collective psychological states. The manner by which one interaction follows another one describe a group's behavior, with different temporal patterns being characteristic for different groups. Similarly, the specific pattern of encounters between a feedback-giver and feedback-seeker over time may be predictive of a unique feedback relationship. Each feedback seeking and feedback giving interaction can be seen as driven by the situational context, the attributes of the partners within the dyad, and the preceding sequence of feedback seeking and giving episodes (Leenders, Contractor, & DeChurch, 2016). For example, Schechter, Pilny, Leung, Poole, and Contractor (in press), use relational event modeling to analyze sequences of interactions within teams to study emergent processes in a team such as knowledge sharing and cooperation. Frequent reciprocal interactions between team member were found to be associated with greater perceived knowledge sharing and cooperation in the team. However, an inclination towards preferential attachment had a negative effect on perceived process quality. While to our knowledge no feedback studies have adopted relation event modeling, we suggest that feedback relationships between managers and employees can be seen as emergent processes that are shaped by previous actions and that may enable and constrain employees to accomplish their tasks and goals (Schechter et al., in press). The

feedback pattern within a dyad develops and evolves over iterations which ultimately results in an idiosyncratic feedback pattern. Thus, adopting such an event-based perspective could be key to understanding detrimental feedback conditions. Similar to Tolstoy's famous observation that "happy families are all alike but every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way", it could be that the key to understanding detrimental feedback conditions is a better understanding of idiosyncratic feedback dynamics over time: Every ineffective feedback dyad might be ineffective in its own unique way.

A second approach to examine how events may impact feedback conversations is the use of discontinuous growth modeling (Bliese & Lang, 2016). By using experience sampling methodology, researchers would be able to collect repeated measures of the feedback-seeker's, feedback-giver's, or ideally both perspectives over longer periods of times. An untested assumption in feedback research is that feedback behaviors demonstrate linear growth or decline. For instance, feedback-seeking research has hypothesized that as newcomers in an organization learn the ropes and decrease uncertainty, their feedback-seeking behavior would steadily decline (Vandenberghe et al., submitted). However, change can also happen abruptly. Events in the wider organizational environment may trickle down to the dyad level and disrupt the routine trajectory of feedback conversations (Morgeson, Mitchell, & Liu, 2015). For instance, the introduction of a new performance management system, an organizational crisis or even more proximal events such as a team conflict or a promotion or the firing of a co-worker may all affect regular feedback patterns in a non-linear way. Future feedback research could test for differences in feedback patterns prior to an event (e.g., before a restructuring), in reaction to an event (e.g., during restructuring), and following an

event (e.g., after restructuring). In doing so, one can propose and examine whether different response patterns in the longitudinal process reflect properties of one of the actors or of the dyadic entity (e.g., resilience of the feedback relationship). To date, there is a paucity of feedback studies taking a longitudinal approach, let alone testing the possibility that change over time may not happen in a linear fashion.

Summary

We believe that feedback research could be considerably advanced by better aligning conceptualization, measurement and analysis of feedback as a dyadic and dynamic process. Given the promise for advancing our understanding of feedback processes in organizations, we encourage a feedback research agenda adopting a dyadic and dynamic approach. To attain this goal, future research should try to include at least one or more of the following elements in dyadic and dynamic studies of feedback. First, feedback researchers should include the perspectives or actual feedback behaviors of *both* feedback actors to study the interplay between feedback-seekers and feedback-givers in shaping feedback exchanges. Second, characteristics at the dyad level (e.g., intensity, frequency, duration, history) are informative to account for the multi-level structure of feedback conversations. Third, future research should include *a temporal perspective* by examining feedback behavior(s) over time. A temporal perspective can be focused on one feedback episode mapping the micro-behaviors of one or both feedback actors or may seek to model the iterative nature of feedback conversations by following a feedback dyad across multiple feedback cycles. Depending on the predominant focus they take, these studies could help in advancing our understanding of feedback-seeking behavior, feedback-giving behavior, and their outcomes. To summarize the new perspective and provide examples of new research questions to explore, Table 1,

provides an overview how including dyadic and dynamic aspects and their combination may advance the study of feedback-giving behavior, feedback-seeking behavior and feedback outcomes.

Suggestions for practice

The starting point of the current chapter was the observation that we currently lack strong evidence-based guidelines for informing informal feedback processes in organizations. In the last years, performance management practices in organizations have seen a clear trend towards emphasizing the value of continuous feedback exchanges between employees and their managers. The lack of specific research on the topic precludes the proposition of very specific practical recommendations to date. However, on the basis of the our review and methodological analysis, a number of general steps seem advisable to organizations.

First, provided that organizations want to follow the trend towards encouraging more fluid and flexible feedback exchange, they may want conduct a thorough evaluation of the current feedback culture in place. In doing so, it would be most important to monitor the actual feedback conversations by asking questions such as: how many feedback exchanges occur between employees and their managers? What is the quality of those conversations? How long do conversation usually take? Who instigates the feedback conversations - is it mostly employees asking for feedback or managers approaching their employees?

Second, consistent with the dyadic aspect of feedback exchanges, it seems particularly important to map the viewpoints of both parties. It could be that employees have quite different views about the prevalence and quality of feedback exchanges than supervisors. Potential disagreements in perceptions and in reporting

objective factors of feedback exchanges could be an indicator of a malfunctioning performance management process. Similarly, organizations may want to monitor the more dynamic aspects of feedback exchanges: Do conversations refer back to previous conversations and the agreements or intentions that were articulated in them? Is there continuity, a common understanding and/or a sense of progress in the feedback relationship by employees and managers referring back or looking forward to future conversations? Alternatively, organizations may also want to adopt a micro-perspective and monitor the dynamics within one specific feedback conversation. It is not uncommon when strengthening feedback processes in organizations to have an external coach, with a background in interpersonal dynamics, present for one or more conversations to help employees and managers getting (re)started.

Third, once organizations have a good sense of the current status of their performance management system and the feedback conversations happening, they may want to decide on the balance between structure (i.e., more classic approaches) and fluidity (i.e., following the new trends) in their performance management strategy. It is clear that abandoning performance management altogether is not the preferred option for most companies but most organizations will want to supplement their formal system with some flexibility.

Fourth, in doing so, managers will need to assess whether managers and employees are ready, willing and able to engage in a more organic feedback process. If not, HR can look for ways to better equip them with training and/or incentives to do so. Again, a previously underexplored theme that should be part of a training interventions is increasing awareness of the dyadic and dynamic aspects of feedback conversations. For instance, leaders might not be fully aware how they inadvertently respond and customize their feedback behaviors in response to

feedback-seeking tactics of employees. Similarly, employees may learn how to adopt feedback-seeking strategies that have a higher likelihood of yielding the type of feedback they need from their manager. Both managers and employees may together need to discover a workable routine and rhythm in the feedback conversations, while at the same time making connections with past and future conversations.

Conclusion

In summary, a dyadic and dynamic perspective can contribute to a better understanding of how feedback exchanges unfold over time and develop their own unique dyadic pattern through various cycles of feedback seeking and feedback giving. Previous research has provided valuable insights into the basic principles of feedback intervention effects, feedback-seeking behavior and the feedback environment. Although these have provided some initial leads for the new feedback perspective articulated in this chapter, these lines of research have not explicitly taken into account the dyadic and dynamic nature of feedback conversations in organizations. Our review of the literature suggests that the overly static and one-sided perspective limits our understanding of how feedback unfolds in organizations. Methodological developments, however, may now allow for a more systematic study of the dyadic and dyadic aspects of feedback. We propose that the characteristics of the feedback giver and receiver, the characteristics of the feedback relationship between them, and the previous and future sequences of feedback together shape the effectiveness of feedback processes. Hence, we conclude and hope that future research will benefit from taking a more fine-grained dyadic and time-bound perspective on feedback dynamics that will allow to provide stronger evidence-based recommendations to guide informal feedback practices in organizations.

Table 1. *Overview of dyadic and dynamic perspectives in generating new research questions for feedback research.*

	Dependent variable	Illustrative research questions	Recommended approach for research question
Dyadic perspective			
	Feedback-seeking behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do characteristics of the feedback-giver elicit different types of feedback-seeking behavior? – How do characteristics unique to the dyad elicit feedback-seeking behavior? 	Social Relations Model Actor-Partner Interdependence Model
	Feedback-giving behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do specific feedback-seeking strategies elicit different types of feedback-giving behavior? – Do leaders give feedback in different ways to different employees? 	Social Relations Model Actor-Partner Interdependence Model
	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do various feedback-giving behaviors relate to increased feedback use by employees? – How do specific combinations of characteristics of both feedback-seeker and feedback-giver lead to increased performance? 	Social Relations Model Actor-Partner Interdependence Model
Dynamic perspective			
	Feedback-seeking behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How does the work environment affect feedback-seeking behavior over time? 	Growth/ Longitudinal Modeling
	Feedback-giving behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do managers adapt their feedback-giving behavior to external events? 	Discontinuous Growth Modeling
	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How many feedback conversations are optimal for sustaining motivation and performance? 	Growth/ Longitudinal Modeling
Dyadic and dynamic			

Feedback-seeking behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do employees adapt their feedback-seeking strategies on the basis of the feedback they received in a previous feedback exchange? – How do employees follow up their initial feedback-seeking attempts on the basis of the response of their manager? 	Repeated measures Actor-Interdependence model Growth/ Longitudinal Modeling
Feedback-giving behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Do leaders compensate for a decline in feedback-seeking behavior by giving more feedback? – Do people give different feedback on the basis of employees not having listened to previous feedback? 	Repeated measures Actor-Interdependence model Growth/ Longitudinal Modeling
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do previous feedback exchanges unfold into an effective or ineffective feedback relationship? – How does the dynamic interplay between seeking and responding to feedback within a feedback episode lead to enhanced employee performance? 	Relational event modeling Temporal social interaction approaches

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