

A SURVEY OF PROGRESSIVE AND AFFIRMATIVE EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE
SYSTEMS IN FLORIDA'S HOSPITALS

by

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ABSTRACT

Conflict between managers and employees is inevitable in any organization, whether public or private. Often, the source of the conflict is employee non-compliance. Managers are responsible for disciplining those employees whose performance or conduct is sub-standard or inappropriate. Therefore, the ability to effectively address employee non-compliance is an essential skill for all managers.

Most employee discipline systems fall into one of three categories: traditional, progressive, and affirmative.

Traditional systems were prevalent in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An autocratic, demanding manager would mete out punishment to non-compliant employees both as an action against the employee and as a warning to other employees. Employees were often terminated for their first offense.

With the advent of labor unionism and fair labor practices in the first half of the twentieth century, organizational leaders were required to develop more progressive employee discipline systems which protected employee “due process” and which allowed time and opportunity for improvement by the non-compliant employee. Progressive employee discipline systems are the most prevalent discipline systems in America’s workforce today. These systems entail three or four steps, with each successive step usually resulting in more severe penalties for the same offense or more severe offenses. Progressive employee discipline allows the employee an opportunity

to respond to non-compliance issues and to try to improve it to the extent required to maintain their position.

A new employee discipline system, affirmative discipline, has gained adherents in the private sector primarily. Affirmative employee discipline systems do not use punishment to correct employee non-compliance but instead, ask managers to “coach” and “counsel” the non-compliant employee to better behavior and performance. Rehabilitating the employee’s non-compliance is the primary goal of affirmative systems. The emphasis is not only upon the non-compliant employee, but on rehabilitating the “marriage” of non-compliant employee and direct supervisor.

Little evidence exists to determine the extent to which progressive and affirmative employee discipline systems are being utilized in the modern organization. No evidence exists that indicates the prevalence of these systems in Florida’s healthcare institutions.

A survey-based analysis of the use of progressive and affirmative employee discipline systems in Florida’s hospitals resulted in respondents indicating frequent utilization of formal progressive employee discipline systems. Designed in three or four steps, these progressive systems allow the employee to improve his/her behavior. Two common tools in progressive systems, the verbal warning and the performance counseling statement, are utilized frequently based upon those respondents surveyed.

The use of affirmative employee discipline systems, on the other hand, is relatively rare. The use of written behavior contracts to elicit improved employee compliance is also quite rare. The vast majority of respondents appear to be unfamiliar with the use of written behavior contracts to elicit improved employee compliance.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

Managing a modern organization is a difficult task. Organizations today, whether private or public, for-profit or not-for-profit, can be very complex. Those in leadership roles are familiar with the difficulties inherent in managing the modern organization. It often seems that the one constant in the management of complex organizations is conflict.

Conflict is common in any institution and can take many different forms. Conflict can arise between customer and employee, between employee and manager, between budget limitations and the need to provide necessary services, and between profit and customer care.

Unfortunately, these conflicts appear to be "...inevitable (and abundant)" (Lieberman, Rotarius, and Kendall, 1997, p. 20). As Lieberman, Rotarius, and Kendall (1997, p. 9) noted "...conflict represents a tug-of-war between opposing perceptions of right versus wrong, often blurring the boundaries of honest judgement, and presenting a dilemma subject almost exclusively to individual interpretation." Lussier (1993, p. 53) put it in unambiguous terms when he stated "People often experience the same thing and perceive it differently." Given this inevitable "personalization" of conflict, it would appear to render workplace conflict between manager and employee as a continuous challenge.

Managers are frequently required to discipline non-compliant or poor-performing employees. Such action is often perceived by managers as one of the most distasteful tasks required of leaders. Fraught with many pitfalls and subject to the aforementioned personal interpretation or perception, a manager's duty to discipline an employee guilty of a transgression against organizational rules or standards can often result in the kind of tug-of-war mentioned by Liberman et al (1997).

Nevertheless, a manager must address employee non-compliance because such non-compliance could result in lower productivity, poor customer care, and damage to an organization's reputation or image. In fact, a good working definition of non-compliance emphasizes "...actions that are detrimental or that work against a mutually agreed upon level or goal of organizational productivity or clinical outcome" (Liberman and Rotarius, 1999, p. 2).

The opportunities for conflict are myriad in the aforementioned definition since both manager and employee may disagree on the nature or severity of the employee's misbehavior or activity, its deleterious impact on the organization's goals, or on those objectives which management and labor deem "mutual". Add such variables as differing attitudes, perceptions, prejudices, and backgrounds, and it is no small wonder that many managers find themselves facing a "...daunting task as they attempt to satisfy the specifically distinct, yet generally similar, needs of their key employee and patient stakeholders" (Liberman and Rotarius, 1999. p. 1). Effective managers/supervisors must appreciate the fact that "...employees view life's many challenges through a lens of cultural uniqueness" (Stanley, 2003, p. 6).

Since it appears that conflict is inevitable in organizations, and since one of the most common sources of organizational conflict is that between manager and employee, consideration must be given to how a manager should go about disciplining non-compliant employees. Indeed, opportunities for interpersonal conflict between a manager and an employee exist in all institutions.

Purpose of Study

Employee discipline systems can be broadly divided into three distinct types: traditional, progressive, and affirmative. Each of these systems addresses employee discipline based on certain underlying assumptions. These assumptions, by extension, are reflected in the methods or procedures used to implement and execute the system.

Traditional employee discipline systems were prevalent prior to the birth of labor unionism and fair labor legislation in U.S. history during the nineteenth-century and the first quarter of the twentieth-century. Traditional employee discipline was harsh, autocratic, and enforced without flexibility. The assumption underlying traditional systems was that employees basically eschewed hard work and had to be constantly monitored to ensure they performed and acted appropriately. Moreover, organizational leaders believed that harsh, unambiguous punishment of non-compliant employees not only corrected that particular employee's misbehavior, but boasted the additional advantage of acting as a deterrent to misbehavior on the part of his/her co-workers.

The implementation of traditional employee discipline systems, therefore, emphasized punishment for any wrongdoing or non-compliance. Organizational rules served as “commandments,” the violation of which would cost the misbehaving employee severely (Odiorne, 1984). Often, this meant that initial acts of misbehavior or non-compliance were met with immediate dismissal or termination. With no legal protection or labor union assistance, non-compliant employees often found themselves unemployed as a result of a first offense.

With the advent of fair labor standards and legislation in the late-Progressive Era and the rise of industrial unionism in the 1930s and 1940s, organizational leaders were forced to develop employee discipline systems which allowed for due process, opportunities for employee correction of the non-compliant behavior, and additional time or steps within the disciplinary process. These concerns led to the development of progressive discipline systems, changing the “...rules of the road” (Odiorne, 1984).

Progressive discipline systems are the most common type of discipline system utilized in America’s workforce. These systems make different assumptions from those of the traditional system. Progressive discipline systems assume that most employee behavior, except for the most egregious and extreme, is correctable given enough time and guidance. In addition, progressive discipline assumes that employees have the “right” to an opportunity to correct the behavior. While the goal of progressive systems is often to punish wrong-doing, it differs from a traditional approach in that it assumes that most employee non-compliance is not willful or premeditated, but is rather a result of ignorance or poor guidance.

Progressive discipline systems often take the form of three- or four-step programs designed to mete out more severe punishment given successive or more extreme violations of codes of conduct. In other words, progressive systems seek to make the “time” fit the “crime.” Initial acts of non-compliance may be met with a verbal warning; second offenses with a written warning. Often third or fourth violations involve specific corrective action plans, suspension, or possible termination.

While ostensibly designed to afford the non-compliant employee an opportunity to correct his/her misbehavior, progressive discipline systems have, in a practical sense, developed into a formal way for institutions to avoid the risk of employee-initiated lawsuits by following the “letter of the law”. By documenting each step, the manager appears to be giving ample opportunity for the employee to correct his/her behavior, but is also concurrently documenting the specific circumstances in the event a termination of employment is necessitated.

A relatively new form of employee discipline, known as affirmative discipline, is now taking hold in many private, for-profit organizations. These discipline systems perceive non-compliant employees as individuals needing rehabilitation. Instead of the focus remaining squarely on the non-compliant employee, these affirmative systems believe that it is the relationship between the employee and his/her manager that is at the heart of most non-compliance. Affirmative systems seek to save a failing “marriage” between employee and manager (Grote, 1995).

These affirmative systems emphasize employee counseling, mediation, and behavior contracting. Instead of focusing on the “bad” employee, the affirmative system

assumes that employee non-compliance is understandable, correctable, and responsive to counseling. Affirmative systems require the manager to develop counseling and communication skills in order to engage the employee in a dialogue and to establish a sense of trust and confidence in the employee.

Those private organizations that have adopted affirmative discipline systems have done so because they believe that such counseling and relationship-building will yield better employees, stronger managers, and a more positive working environment. Most importantly, for each manager-employee relationship that is rehabilitated or “saved”, the organization is saved the cost of terminating a “bad” employee and the costs of recruiting, interviewing, selecting and orienting a new employee.

While ample qualitative literature exists extolling the virtues of, or deriding the flaws in, all three systems, little evidence exists to support the proposition that institutions have wholly embraced any of the three discipline systems as better than the others in eliciting improved employee compliance with organizational rules. This researcher conducted an exhaustive literature review of this topic and the result confirmed this assertion. In addition, no study to date has surveyed hospital administrators in the State of Florida to determine the extent to which they believe that their adopted employee discipline system are effective in improving employee compliance, improving employee-manager relations, and/or improving employee turnover levels.

Although there does exist data related to the nature of employee-manager relations and to those factors which best characterize a healthy employee-manager relationship, no study has been implemented to elicit from institutional leaders the belief systems

underlying employee discipline systems and the perceptions of the relative merits of those employee discipline techniques commonly utilized within their respective organizations.

This study filled in this research gap with a survey-based research design. This study elicited opinions and beliefs on the merits of progressive and affirmative employee discipline systems, discipline techniques, and the effectiveness of adopted employee discipline systems.

This survey was conducted with Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Human Resources Directors of hospitals in the State of Florida. Those hospitals selected to receive the survey were those hospitals included in the Florida Hospital Association's web-based directory (Florida Hospital Association, 2004).

Research Questions

This research study attempted to determine the extent to which hospital leaders believe in the merits of their respective institutions' employee discipline systems. It also measured attitudes regarding the effectiveness of two commonly used employee discipline tools - a verbal warning or a written behavior contract. As the verbal warning is a staple in most progressive discipline systems, and the written behavior contract a tool utilized in affirmative employee discipline systems, the perceptions of hospital leaders yielded valuable evidence as to the strength of affirmative discipline philosophies and techniques within today's healthcare institutions. Survey results also

assisted the investigator in determining whether or not hospital leaders believe that written behavior contracts, an affirmative discipline tool, are more successful in eliciting employee compliance than verbal warnings, a progressive discipline technique.

A survey distributed to more than 300 institutions and more than 600 institutional leaders assisted the primary investigator in answering eight fundamental research questions. Though the original intent of the study was to survey Florida hospital leaders, the nature of the responses received, which promised complete confidentiality to the respondents, precluded the possibility of identifying the respondents beyond a reference to the respondents as “respondents” throughout this study. The eight fundamental research questions are as follows:

1. How many respondents believe that their institutions have formal policies and procedures detailing employee discipline philosophies and systems?
2. To what extent do respondents believe that punishment is the most effective employee discipline tool?
3. To what extent do respondents in Florida believe that employee non-compliance is correctable?
4. To what extent do respondents believe that open communication, trust, and employee participation are essential elements to ensure positive employee-manager relations?
5. How many respondents utilize verbal warnings and written performance counseling as part of a progressive employee discipline system?

6. How many respondents believe that supervisors utilize written behavior contracts as part of an affirmative employee discipline system?
7. How many respondents believe that managers must be given flexibility in executing employee discipline policies?
8. How many respondents perceive their institutions' current employee discipline system as effective in rehabilitating employee non-compliance?

This research study elicited answers to these questions from Chief Executive Officers and Human Resources Directors currently occupying leadership roles in Florida's hospitals. The primary investigator explored the extent to which affirmative discipline systems pervade Florida's healthcare institutions, the perceptions held by healthcare leaders relative the merits of affirmative and progressive discipline systems, and the underlying philosophies in ensuring healthy, positive employee-manager relations.

The survey instrument was developed by the primary investigator (Appendix A). The instrument is divided into two sections. The first few items represent basic demographic information about the administrator completing the survey. These demographic items include: position within the organization, tenure with organization, age, gender, and race. It is important to note that while this information was requested, none of the demographic information requested could be linked to any particular individual completing the survey. The survey was completely anonymous. No social security

numbers, addresses, phone numbers, names, or specific hospital names were requested from those persons completing the survey.

Items six through twenty-one on page two of the survey represented the items related to employee discipline. A 5-point Likert Scale was developed to allow the individual to identify the extent to which he or she agrees with each of the survey items on employee discipline. Since no study focusing specifically on affirmative employee discipline has been attempted prior to this time, the investigator developed a tool based on recent scholarship on employee discipline systems and those questions most salient within recent research on progressive and affirmative employee discipline systems. Each survey statement will be answered with one of five possible responses: a “5,” which means “Strongly Agree,” a “4,” which means “Agree,” and “3,” which means “Neither Agree Nor Disagree,” a “2,” which means “Disagree,” and a “1,” which means “Strongly Disagree.”

Based upon guidance from leading researchers in healthcare administration and given the investigator's familiarity with hospitals in Florida, it seemed appropriate that such a survey be conducted with leading hospital administrators in Florida. Therefore, the investigator researched hospitals in Florida using the web site of the Florida Hospital Association (Florida Hospital Association, 2004). This site houses a directory that currently identifies 304 hospitals (including acute care hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, trauma centers, and military hospitals). The investigator opted to survey the Chief Executive Officer and Human Resources Director of each of these 304 facilities. Given

this fact, the investigator distributed 608 surveys. The investigator estimated a return of 20%-30% completed surveys, approximately 122 to 182.

The survey was distributed via U.S. mail in January 2005. In order to remind administrators to complete the survey, the investigator received permission to include a message about the survey in the Florida Hospital Association's (FHA) January 2005 newsletter. The survey arrived in an envelope which also included a cover letter (Appendix B) from the investigator explaining the research and a stamped, addressed envelope into which the respondent could place the completed survey.

Completed surveys returned to the investigator were maintained in a locked, secured cabinet in the investigator's residence. Answers to the survey items from each individual survey were also tracked on a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) database system and kept in two locations: the computer desktop of the investigator, and on a compact disc at a different location than the hard copies of the survey. In this fashion, anything catastrophic that could have affected the investigator's residence would have been mitigated by the availability of this second copy in another location.

It was anticipated that all individuals who wished to complete the surveys would have done so and have returned the completed survey by January 31, 2005.

As noted in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, twelve months of discussion with multiple healthcare facilities in Florida relative the researcher's original design for the implementation of a classical experimental study within a healthcare setting resulted in rejection. Although representatives from each facility initially expressed interest in such an experimental study, further discussions related to methodology and participant

selection resulted in greater levels of anxiety and concern. These concerns were related to the lack of supervisory time to adequately track employee non-compliance and to the fact that certain employees would be subjected to a different disciplinary process than that officially adopted and implemented by that facility.

Therefore the investigator had to not only seek IRB approval for a second, revised dissertation study, but had to secure the approval of dissertation committee members to proceed with this re-design. Both approvals were secured prior to the implementation of the survey-based research design.

Definition of Terms

Traditional Discipline System - An employee discipline system that seeks to punish non-compliant employees in order to prevent future transgressions. The manager in such a system has no flexibility, but rather must rigidly impose the punishment required under the terms of the system's rules or "commandments".

Progressive Discipline System - A twentieth-century development in which employees are punished commensurate with the degree of severity of their violation. Through such a process- or step-oriented system, employees are provided opportunities to correct their non-compliant behavior at three or four steps along an increasingly severe system of punishment.

Affirmative Discipline System - A new employee discipline system developed primarily in the private, for-profit sector over the past twenty years in which “rehabilitation”, not punishment, is the goal. This type of system emphasizes “coaching” or “counseling” the non-compliant employee. The goal of such affirmative systems is to save a failing relationship between manager and employee.

Non-compliant employee behavior - Actions that are detrimental or that work against a mutually agreed upon level or goal of organizational productivity or clinical outcome.

Written Behavior Contract - A written agreement between a manager and his/her non-compliant employee within which the non-compliant behavior is identified, the plan for correction is discussed, the course of action is agreed upon, the date of contract completion is set, and the parties concur with its elements via signatures. This type of technique is commonly used in affirmative discipline systems.

Verbal Warning - A brief, one-way command given by the manager to a non-compliant employee wherein the non-compliant behavior is verbalized/identified and a desist command is given. This technique, common to progressive discipline plans, is usually very brief and does not normally allow for employee feedback or participation.

Written Behavior Counseling Statement – Often referred to as a written performance counseling statement, this tool is often utilized as the second or third step in progressive

employee discipline systems. Noting the nature of the employee non-compliance, the possible ramifications of the non-compliance, the corrective action required, and the consequences if improvement is not realized, the behavior counseling statement involves both the supervisor and the non-compliant employee in question. This tool is different from the affirmative behavior contract in that the employee rarely speaks during such an intervention and the goal is to meet the legal and documentary requirements of employee non-compliance.

Significance of the Study

To date, research on the relative effectiveness of different types of employee discipline systems and techniques has been anecdotal in nature. Ample literature and research has been devoted to the assumptions underlying the three basic types of discipline systems: traditional, progressive, and affirmative. Indeed, management and leadership theories have incorporated various progressive and affirmative discipline tools as a means of establishing a healthier workplace atmosphere between managers and employees.

Other research and academic literature on the implementation of different types of employee discipline systems is also copious. As each of the three systems is based upon fundamentally different assumptions about employee motivation and the nature of the manager-employee relationship, each system is characterized by an implementation and procedural process unique to its respective assumptions.

Unfortunately, no research effort has been attempted to measure the perceptions, positive or negative, surrounding employee discipline systems in general and employee discipline techniques in particular. Moreover, few leaders have been surveyed as to the relative merits of the employee discipline systems utilized in their own respective institutions. However, research by Liberman and Rotarius (1999) suggested that healthcare leadership would be wise to explore the possible Human Resources benefits of the use of written behavior contracts to address employee non-compliance. Clearly an organization's success in salvaging the non-compliant employee may result in more positive employee-supervisor relations and, perhaps, reduced employee turnover and lower recruitment and orientation costs for new employees.

This particular study prompted the investigator to explore a survey-based study designed to measure the attitudes among Florida's healthcare leaders as to the merits of affirmative discipline techniques relative to those more progressive or traditional discipline techniques. This research study attempted, therefore, to fill a gap in employee discipline/strategic human resources management literature. It designed a survey-based study that allowed one to determine the extent to which Florida's hospital leaders believe in the efficacy of their own institutions' employee discipline systems and the merits of affirmative discipline tools relative that of progressive discipline tools in eliciting real, improved employee compliance with employees in a healthcare organization.

This research study constitutes, therefore, a valuable addition to the literature and research on employee discipline and strategic human resources management. More

significantly, it begins to fill a void in the literature related to employee discipline with evidence of a more substantial nature.

It is also possible that organizations, concerned with the issues of employee turnover and employee retention, will be interested in the results of this research study as they begin to select an employee discipline system and estimate the potential cost savings to be gained from the implementation of affirmative employee discipline systems. After all, it is axiomatic that organizations will seek to reduce employee turnover, improve workplace morale, and eliminate as many of the sources of organizational, interpersonal conflict as possible. This study will assist these organizations in making sound judgments regarding strategic human resources management and employee discipline.

Assumptions and Limitations

This survey-based research design depended upon the alacrity with which Florida's hospital leaders completed the survey on employee discipline. More than 600 surveys were mailed out to hospital administrators throughout the state. A total of 199 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 33%. Efforts to remind these administrators to complete the survey came in the form of a reminder message included in the January 2005 newsletter of the Florida Hospital Association (FHA).

This study also assumed that traditional systems were, for all intents and purposes, obsolete and not worthy of serious academic consideration (even if this assumption was not present, finding an organization which still utilizes a traditional discipline system as a

source of information was impossible and, therefore, not conducive to rational, reasonable study).

Another assumption inherent in this study is that most, if not all, of the hospitals surveyed have established formal policies and procedures detailing employee discipline philosophies and methods. It is also assumed that employees are oriented to these procedures and that managers/supervisors would, for the most part, adhere to these formal policies and procedures. Obviously an organization which does not have formal policies and procedures related to employee discipline will most likely be an organization with significant human resource and operational pathologies, and therefore not representative of accredited healthcare facilities.

There is the possibility of threats to internal validity of the results of the research design. It is possible that the two administrators who received the surveys may have discussed the survey together and answered in a manner that invited “group think” or sycophancy. The possibility existed for diffusion of the impact of the survey’s responses if the two leaders discussed their perceptions with each other and attempted to reach “consensus” on the “right” answer to each survey item.

As with any survey design, especially that of a Likert Scale-based survey, a potential pitfall existed in the administrator answering in a falsely positive or “glowing” fashion. Answers of an affected nature that exaggerated, either positively or negatively, the sincere perceptions of the person completing the survey, would obviously yield skewed and unreliable results. The investigator attempted to account for that by using a

completely anonymous survey instrument and by directing individuals (within the context of the survey's instructions) to do so based upon their own personal convictions.

Additionally, the design of the survey itself invited the individual to include free-form comments or explanations on blank lines located on the bottom of page two of the survey in Item # 22.

Introduction Summary

How best to address employee compliance is an important question for all organizations and organizational leaders. The more effective an organization's employee discipline system, the more likely that a non-compliant employee can be salvaged or rehabilitated. For each rehabilitated employee, the organization spares itself the significant costs associated with new employee recruitment, interviewing, selection, and orientation.

While ample literature exists on the assumptions and procedures of traditional, progressive, and affirmative discipline systems, no research has been conducted with Florida's healthcare leaders that has yielded clear, valid, and reliable opinions about the efficacy of different employee discipline systems and techniques.

A survey-based research design was developed and implemented to measure the extent to which hospital administrators in Florida believe that written behavior contracts, as an affirmative discipline tool, are more effective in eliciting improved employee compliance with organizational rules than verbal warnings or written behavior

counseling statements, which are typical progressive discipline system techniques. By obtaining data regarding the perceptions and opinions of Florida's healthcare leaders, the investigator was able to explore the extent to which institutions have embraced either progressive or affirmative employee discipline systems.

Survey results indicating adherence to, and belief in, an affirmative employee discipline system gave additional credence and support to the proposition that affirmative employee discipline tools are a better means to improve employee compliance than progressive systems. Organizations searching for a means to increase employee morale or employee production and/or to reduce employee turnover and cut costs associated with new employee recruitment and orientation may find the results of this research study helpful in determining the type of employee discipline system to implement.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant Studies on Traditional Employee Discipline

Traditional employee discipline emphasized autocratic, punishment-oriented systems. In such traditional models, an autocratic leader would often impose clearly defined sanctions for violations of workplace policies, procedures, or rules. The goal of such punishment was to "...exact punishment for sins, maintain conformity to customs, and sustain the authority of the old over the young" (Odiorne, 1984, p. 6). Inevitably, however, the imposition of sanctions to punish violations of a stated code of conduct or to engender cultural conformity resulted in the sanctions acquiring a character or meaning quite distinct from that of its effects on the transgressor's behavior. As Odiorne (1984, p. 206), one of the foremost researchers in the area of workplace supervision and discipline, explained, punishment systems "...came to be regarded as an almost divinely inspired system of cause and effect, as if the crime itself had produced the punishment."

Not surprisingly, the application of this punishment-oriented system to the workplace resulted in the development of autocratic, punishment-oriented employee discipline programs. The assumption implicit in these traditional employee discipline programs was the belief that past behavior was the best predictor of future behavior; for example, employees who violated the rules in the past are the ones most likely to violate rules in

the future. Moreover, such employee-initiated transgressions of workplace policies would also serve to undermine workplace conformity and the established authority if allowed to go unpunished.

In order to deter these and future transgressions, therefore, managers or supervisors sought to sanction or punish the wrongdoers with little regard for the effect of such punishment on the employee's self-esteem or right to due process. In essence, the employee was being sanctioned according to written corporate commandments, commandments which existed separate and distinct from the particular manager's volition or will. The manager did not discipline the employee, the code or commandment disciplined the employee.

Managers acted within a proscribed organizational discipline framework. There was no room for individual managerial interpretation. With little need to take into account the feelings or needs of their particular employees or "direct reports," these managers often assumed the very characteristics that the discipline system itself manifested - cold, unambiguous, and harsh. Certainly McGregor's (1985) seminal management theory on the "Theory X" managerial style reflected the type of manager most likely to spring from such a harsh discipline system.

For McGregor (1985), the "Theory X" manager, or traditional manager, assumed a harsh, critical, and controlling demeanor relative to his/her employees. For this traditional manager, armed with the company's commandments and the authority to execute them, few impediments stood in the way of a complete and utter disregard for the individual employee's needs, desires, or issues. Managers ruled with an iron fist.

They assumed that employees must be “forced” or “made” to work hard; that they cared little for anything other than their paycheck at the end of the week. Employee rights were non-existent; concerns for their personal well-being were irrelevant.

These “traditional” managers were expected to “...control their factory, shop, or office. They led by administrative fiat. They gave orders, issued edicts...They managed by fear and motivated by invective, intimidation and coercion” (Ramsey, 2003, p. 3).

With the advent of the industrialized workplace and the subsequent rise in the number and influence of organized labor movements and unions in the twentieth-century, traditional employee discipline systems were perceived as too punitive, too autocratic, and, most importantly, too risky to an organization's legal liability from lawsuits filed by mistreated former employees. Therefore, a more progressive and legally-sound discipline system was required. These more progressive systems eschewed the old philosophy and accompanying punishments in favor of a more measured and process-oriented program of employee discipline.

Research on Progressive Employee Discipline Systems

These more progressive systems were based on more modern values. As Odiorne (1984, p. 207) stated, these modern values tended to “...turn away from physical punishment.” The vernacular of punishment, physical and otherwise, was soon replaced with terms such as “progressive”, “arbitration”, “conflict resolution”, and “due process”. This new lexicon for discipline reflected a greater concern on the part of management

for the employee's feelings, his or her sense of self-worth, compliance with federal laws governing workplace and labor relations, and for ensuring that the system was fair and allowed for a comprehensive and rational review of the behavior in question. R.L. Kahn's (1959) ground-breaking study on employee motivation was one of the first studies to allude to the fact that employees are motivated perhaps as much, or more, by social and psychological need fulfillment than by salary or promotion. Wong and Law (2002) noted that the emotional intelligence of both supervisor and employee are critical factors in job performance and satisfaction. Emotional intelligence was an a priori concept that found a receptive audience in organizational leaders who believed in progressive rather than traditional employee discipline systems.

These new discipline systems sought to punish non-compliant employees, but only to the degree that the non-compliant behavior in question violated the organization's code of conduct and only up to the point at which labor laws protecting employee due process rights were activated. Most of these progressive discipline systems were risk-averse; that is, they tended to shy away from legal confrontation with disgruntled employees or legally risky employee termination actions.

These systems allowed the non-compliant employee to correct his/her behavior. As Rubin (2002, p. 217) succinctly noted, progressive discipline systems provide the employee the opportunity to "...be made aware of the problems and what he or she must do to correct them." A process- or step-oriented system was developed -- usually three or four steps in total -- wherein initial acts of non-compliance were met with less severe sanctions and successive acts of non-compliance of equal or greater

seriousness were met with progressively more severe sanctions. While the end result of such a progressive disciplinary action could still be termination of the non-compliant employee, time and opportunities were provided by management for the employee to correct his/her behavior prior to that ultimate discipline action of the employee's termination.

The goal of progressive employee discipline systems was to "...help the employee change his or her own behavior" (Imundo and Eisert, 1982, p. 197). Two assumptions were implicit in this goal: first, that the employee must be made aware of and be punished for an initial act(s) of non-compliance in order to prevent subsequent acts, and, second, that the employee would, if given the opportunity within the three- or four-step process, rehabilitate his/her conduct/performance to an acceptable level.

In most progressive discipline systems, the "time" is designed to fit the "crime". Typically, first-time offenders of organizational rules are given verbal warnings. Subsequent violations are followed up with a second, more drastic step, such as a written reprimand or counseling statement, or even temporary suspension. Usually, following the third or fourth violation, the employee is warned that termination is likely if the non-compliance is not eliminated.

Within the private sector, and within the past three decades, a new and more affirmative employee discipline system has been applied in the workplace. These new affirmative systems emphasize three (3) essential elements: trust between manager and employee, open communication between manager and employee, and employee participation in the discipline process.

Research on Affirmative Discipline Systems

Recent research, mostly from the realm of private business management theory, has identified a third, more “affirmative,” type of discipline system -- one in which punishment is not the tool for engendering compliance. In these affirmative systems, three components are emphasized: open communication between employee and manager, trust between employee and manager, and employee participation in the discipline process. These three components in “affirmative” discipline systems appear to be markers for positive and healthy workplace environments, environments wherein employee turnover is greatly reduced. The manager who builds a workplace culture imbued with these components will most likely become the type of effective, modern “non-manager” manager for whom employees will want to perform and/or behave appropriately (Dumaine, 1993).

One of its most important theorists, affirmative discipline expert Dick Grote (1995), suggested that affirmative employee systems can replace “punishment” with “rehabilitation”. Grote has further hypothesized that the best employee discipline model is one in which there is no punishment or discipline. He has argued that the managerial concern for punishing the wrongdoer and/or following the legal mandate of progressive disciplinary step systems should be replaced with a managerial ability to “counsel” and “coach” his/her employee to improved performance and compliance. Far from blaming the employee or shackling the manager with a harsh and rigid set of organizational commandments, Grote (1995) has suggested that managers be trained in counseling,

communication, rapport-building, and coaching in order to rehabilitate non-compliant employees and to ensure the establishment of a positive, healthy workplace environment.

Affirmative Discipline and Communication

Communication occurs in every organization. Often, however, the communication occurring between employee and manager is negative or detrimental. Improving the nature and substance of employee-manager interpersonal communication is a constant in human resources literature.

One of the essential duties of any manager is to communicate effectively with his/her employee. McConnell (2002) calls the establishment of clear and open two-way communication one of the “fundamental” tasks of management. McConnell notes that for either the generalist or specialist in a management role, the ability to transport good, solid management practices across departmental lines via clear and open communication is essential.

Bruhn (2001, p. 5) states that in comparing the “easy” organization with the “tough” organization, leaders must “...maintain an open and communicative atmosphere for the total organization.” For Bruhn, organizations that are easy to manage have developed a culture wherein engagement, rather than disenfranchisement, is valued. Tracy, Van Dusen, and Robinson (1987) noted that communication is vulnerable to a myriad of

problems; it can fail in any number of ways. The lack of clarity between disputants is one source of poor communication often cited in manager-employee scenarios.

Active and open communication between employee and manager is emphasized in the concept of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and its implementation in the workplace. Byron, Holmes, Steckol, and Yager (2002) state the value of developing a work environment wherein "...disputants are actually listening to each other, instead of talking over, discounting, or contradicting one another, is a powerful way to bring about the understanding of how each person sees the situation and the conflict" (p. 61). The need for the manager and non-compliant employee to hear one another and rationally discuss an issue that is often awkward or frustrating to both parties is essential in bridging the gap between the two sides. Roberts (2002, p. 383) championed employee discipline systems which promote an atmosphere of "...trust and open communication." Mani (2002) documented that the best-laid employee performance appraisal systems can be perceived as flawed based not upon the substance of the system itself, but rather on the lack of clear communication of procedures between administration and employees.

Lieberman, Rotarius, and Kendall (1997, p. 14) posit that a seemingly irreconcilable impasse may be broached within an "...accepting atmosphere and a setting conducive to discussion..." Such an atmosphere often allows the most difficult of tasks, like that of employee discipline, to be addressed reasonably. It may also enhance the opportunity for correction of the employee behavior deemed non-compliant. Costley, Santana-Melgoza, and Todd (1994, p. 157) echoed this theory when they advocated an

approach that tries to "...create conditions in which focus of communication is on achievement through problem-solving, obtaining information, and expressing feelings." Communication, they said, is most effective when it focuses on "...positive and rewarding courses of action." (Costley, Santana-Melgoza, and Todd, 1994, p. 162).

Milkovich and Boudreau (1988) asserted that such atmospheres are often a catalyst for employee change and correction. They would argue that within progressive discipline systems "...good communication between you and your manager throughout the review period can help you keep your performance on target and your manager informed about how you are doing" (Milkovich and Boudreau, p. 218). For Bielous (2003, p. 17), the first step in disciplinary action should be "...to counsel. Counseling entails a private discussion concerning the employee's current unacceptable behavior and the behavioral change you want from them."

The effective manager must communicate the non-compliance to the employee in a manner that assures understanding. This may not always be easy or time-efficient. For example, the manager may need to employ reflective listening skills to verify that the non-compliant employee has heard the message clearly.

As important as communicating may be, it may be more important to listen. Odiorne (1984, p. 216) not only urges managers to "listen carefully to what the accused person says..." but to also "...note the substance of these remarks..." This type of listening, however, requires "...discipline and patience" (Douglas, 2003, p. 7).

Communication should be owned by everyone in an organization. It is incumbent upon all staff members to actively monitor the atmosphere within which communication

occurs, the lines of communication, and the messages that are being heard. No one employee is exempt from such concern. Chandra and Frank (2004) argued that the establishment of open communication between employee and supervisor is a critical and necessary element in improving an organization's overall performance appraisal system. Imundo (1985, p. 138) argued "...all levels of staff and management, especially supervisors, have a responsibility to communicate the organization's policies, practices, rules, and regulations to employees."

Affirmative Discipline and Employee Participation

The second essential component found in new, affirmative discipline programs is employee participation in the discipline process, its development, and its implementation. The ability of the employee to actively participate in the development of the discipline program may provide that person the necessary frame of reference from which he/she can better manage the implementation of the policies, especially those aimed at his/her own performance.

Imundo (1985) suggested that an organization which actively solicits and utilizes employee ideas in its code of conduct is more likely to engender employee acceptance of that code. He argues that "...employees' acceptance of rules and regulations can be greater if they are given a voice in their formulation and application" (Imundo, 1985, p. 133). He went on to note that although this type of employee participation is crucial, the typical manager considers discipline to be a "...management prerogative and

responsibility, and is reluctant to share this responsibility with employees or, if a union exists, with the union” (Imundo, 1985, p. 134).

The manager who eschews such a traditional, autocratic mindset can be reassured by the knowledge that utilizing employee participation in the disciplinary process may have tremendous benefits. Reber and Van Gilder (1982, p. 81) pointed out that “...even if employee’s suggestions are not accepted, the mere fact that they have been consulted can make the final decision more understandable to the employees, less likely to be misinterpreted, and generally more acceptable.” In fact, by allowing employees to participate in their own disciplinary process, the manager or supervisor is reminding the employees “...that they have a say” (Miley, O’Melia, and DuBois, 1998).

The manager need not sacrifice organizational goals on the altar of employee discipline, however. In fact, the first concern should be “...improving the quality of the decision” (Reber and Van Gilder, 1982, p. 81). The effective manager, while engaging the employee in dialogue may, upon further review, reject solutions that are “...poor or incompatible with the objectives of the organization” (Reber and Van Gilder, 1982, p. 81). Chandra and Frank (2004) also linked improved organizational and employee performance appraisals with the development of an environment conducive to employee participation.

Often the nature of the employee participation has greater impact on the workplace environment than the substantive result of that participation. Haire (1956, p. 105) noted that employee feedback to management is providing an “...opportunity for participation on the part of the recipient.” This type of participation, therefore, feeds on the nature of

the discourse between employee and manager. The greater the level of discourse, the fewer the instances of employee misunderstanding and resistance. Bruhn, Zajac, and Al-Kazemi (2001) asserted that improved discourse and employee participation in decision-making "...ensures buy-in by employees to the process" (p. 219).

Employee participation within an atmosphere of positive social relationships echoes research by Jones and Melcher (1982) which found that individuals with a strong need for social interaction and positive relationships on the job tend to handle conflict through accommodation rather than through control of the opposing party. Similarly, Kabanoff (1987) reported that those individuals who sought out and exerted control as the primary mode of competitive advantage and social interaction were less willing to compromise than their more accommodating colleagues.

In the view of the researcher, this need to exert control in order to maintain a competitive advantage over others in the workplace flies in the face of affirmative employee discipline and supervision research which clearly warns that the manager who uses such primitive, traditional methods is likely to find himself/herself in a poisonous workplace environment wherein employees are mistrustful and uncommunicative. This type of atmosphere would likely motivate a non-compliant employee to hide his/her wrongdoing, find excuses, or assign blame.

Affirmative Discipline and Trust

The third essential component found in affirmative discipline systems is trust. Trust is often associated with the clinical realm. Rapport-building, empathy, and trust are common phrases used to describe the nature of the relationship between patient and counselor. Especially in the early stages of psychotherapy, the establishment of trust between practitioner and patient is paramount. Trust can also serve as an important element in the disciplining of the non-compliant employee.

One of the conflicts inherent in many organizations is that between productivity and quality care. When the demand for quality services outstrips the supply of available services or service providers, competition for these finite resources increases. This type of breakneck competition can often lead to situations in which one side/party “wins” and the other side/party “loses”. For the employee who is providing the service, the perception that productivity or profit is a higher priority than customer service can lead to mediocre or poor customer relations and, potentially, endanger his/her position in that organization.

Malloch (2002) hypothesized that one of the outcomes of “win-lose” scenarios was the emergence of mistrust between the parties involved in the particular conflict. She contended that “...relationships are formed to satisfy basic needs for love, companionship, security, stimulation, or financial stability” (Malloch, 2002, p. 14). Since relationships essentially represent individuals trying to get their needs met, there is a “...tendency to try to control the relationship” (Malloch, 2002, p. 14). Extending this

scenario to the manager-employee relationship, therefore, results in the manager trying to control or manipulate the relationship with his/her employee, a characteristic of the “Theory X” Manager and contrary to the idea of affirmative, trust-based relationships. Managers who try to control the relationship with their employees risk reducing the sense of empowerment and trust on the part of the employee and, more importantly for the sake of workplace discipline, renders the employee less willing or likely to correct his/her non-compliant behavior. Nurse dissatisfaction in England’s healthcare system was determined to be based more upon nurse mistrust of middle and senior management than upon the nature of the nursing profession itself (Newman and Maylor, 2002).

Similarly, Malloch (2002, p. 14) noted that “...leaders desire control of employee activity to ensure the desired success. When the actions of the leader — grounded in the authority of the position — do not result in success, the level of trust or believability in the leader decreases.” She went on to illustrate the link between trust and the quality of the manager-employee relations when she stated “...trust is the emotional glue that binds leaders and employees together and is a measure of the legitimacy of leadership” (Malloch, 2002, p. 14). The legitimacy of a manager’s authority may also be more or less ensured based upon the employee’s perception of managerial “behavioral integrity”.

According to Simons (2002), employees judge whether or not their manager’s words match their manager’s deeds. The more that the manager is perceived to match words and corresponding actions, the more trust is accorded to that manager by the

employee. The employee who trusts his/her “boss” is more likely to correct any perceived non-compliance. Clearly, the more trusting the relationship between manager and employee, the more likely that the non-compliant employee will trust that his/her improved behavior or performance will be recognized and valued by the manager. Cottringer (2003, p. 6) emphasized this type of managerial consistency when she noted that “Employee discipline has to be carried out in a consistent and fair manner or otherwise it may do more harm than good.” Similarly, Douglas (2003) asserted that for the modern manager, trust is the ability to be “vulnerable” and to acknowledge some level of dependence upon their own employees.

The effective manager may wish to develop a style of supervision in which support, trust, and sincerity are not only espoused, but practiced regularly and consistently. Costley et al (1994, p. 157) believed that communication that is tailored to the specific workplace situation would ultimately “...help to create trust.” As Miller (1979, p. 178) concluded, the first step in establishing a level of trust within the supervision process, especially as it relates to the disciplining of employees, is to be “...supportive and helpful.” More in keeping with McGregor’s (1985) “Theory Y” Manager, the manager who has built a relationship with his/her employees based upon trust, open communication, and employee feedback/participation, is the more modern and affirmative type of leader who is likely to be successful in soliciting the improved behavior or performance from his/her employees. DeVries, Roe, and Taillieu (2002) stated unequivocally that leaders should “...normally be advised to be supportive and to use their skills as much as possible.”

Recent Scholarship on the Use of Written Behavior Contracting

What kind of tools exist to allow an affirmative manager to discipline his/her non-compliant employees in a way that values trust, open communication, and employee feedback? Is there a way to discipline an employee in an affirmative manner that is more likely to elicit the desired improved performance? After all, conflict between manager and employee is inevitable at some point or another within almost any workplace environment.

Often, the conflict between manager and employee is a natural outgrowth of an environment in which people of different backgrounds, cultures, attitudes, expectations, goals, education, experience, and prejudices are placed together in a work setting (Lieberman, Rotarius, and Kendall, 1997, p. 20). Baron (1990, p. 199) also noted the fact that antecedents of manager - employee conflict exist in the form of "... (1) opposed interests, (2) negative affect (e.g. anger, dislike), (3) negative conditions (e.g., stereotypes, real or imagined past wrongs), and (4) actual or anticipated thwarting." For Baron, conflicts between manager and employee can be resolved only as far as both parties are willing to acknowledge the emotions inherent in the conflict. This would appear, then, to auger well for the success of affirmative discipline tactics in resolving conflict between manager and employee since the emotional concerns of the parties are important in such a discipline system.

As mentioned previously, the manager who has nurtured the relationship with his/her non-compliant employee to the point where it is trusting, positive, and open is more

likely to encourage that employee to change inappropriate behavior or improve poor performance. Colosi (2002) asserted the importance of the manager “negotiating” with the employee. Such negotiations represent the give-and-take of corrective action, rather than the tug-of-war of “win-lose” competition. However, Colosi (2002) pointed out very clearly that these negotiations are more likely to bear fruit if employee expectations have been fairly and reasonably established. The use of a behavior contract may allow the workplace manager and the employee to “...come to a mutual understanding of the purpose and focus of their ongoing work together” (Meyer and Mattaini, 1995, p. 116). Negotiations between manager and non-compliant employee need not be hostile or one-sided, but can imply a “...process of decision-making and shared commitment to realize the agreed objectives” (Corden and Preston-Shoot, 1987, p. 26).

Non-compliant behavior is a point of negotiation in affirmative discipline systems, but not so in a traditional or progressive discipline system. There is no sense that management must yield to, or engage with, the non-compliant employee in question.

The manager in an affirmative system, however, does have tools at his/her disposal to correct or resolve employee non-compliance in a way that is trusting of the employee and his/her participation in the discipline process and that allows for open and free communication between manager and employee. One such affirmative discipline tool is the written behavior contract.

Behavior contracting within the social work or clinical realm is frequently used with non-compliant patients. Often, it represents an agreement between practitioner and patient to work together to achieve mutually-established patient goals in treatment or

therapy. These agreements, or “contracts,” serve to “...specify goals and means of accomplishing them, clarify roles of the participants, and establish the conditions under which assistance is provided” (Hepworth and Larsen, 1982, p. 257).

Traditional social work theory stated that the written nature of the agreement or contract was a way to emphasize “...the commitments both clients and practitioners make and minimize the possibility of misunderstandings” (Hepworth and Larsen, 1982, p. 271). As opposed to verbal reprimands or warnings delivered to the non-compliant employee by the manager and susceptible to selective memory by either party after the fact, written contracts appear to elicit greater levels of compliance among patients in clinical settings because the terms are clearly written. Such written behavior contracts appear to emphasize the three essential elements found in positive employee-manager relationships: good communication, participation by the employee in the development of the plan, and trust that both parties will abide by the conditions and terms of the agreement.

Liberman and Rotarius (1999) identified a new use for, and possible application of, the aforementioned clinically-based written behavior contract to the realm of the workplace and manager-employee relations. They suggested that the use of behavior contracting could be reasonably applied to employee discipline. They argued that this type of open, participatory, and rehabilitative approach to employee discipline would be more likely to yield more satisfied employees and more successfully-resolved employee discipline issues.

Applying Hepworth and Larsen's (1982) social work theories on effective behavior contracting, Liberman and Rotarius (1999) identified a modern alternative to traditional or progressive discipline systems. They identified the written behavior contract as a potentially powerful affirmative discipline tool to be used to successfully address employee non-compliance in a way that is positive, trusting, open, and participatory. They would have believed that, much like the relationship between social worker and client, contracting between manager and employee is an important employee relations intervention because it "...helps to maintain direction" (Goldstein and Noonan, 1999, p. 110). Much like the use of behavior contracts to build a "therapeutic alliance" between practitioner and client in the social work field, as described by Garvin and Tropman (1992), the manager and employee can build an alliance in addressing employee non-compliance through the use of written behavior contracting. Written behavior contracts in the workplace can, much like patient behavior contracts, clearly state what issues are to be addressed (Epstein, 1985).

Recent Research on Employee Discipline

Recent research on employee discipline in general mirrors that of affirmative discipline in particular. The key ingredients of effective supervision and discipline for today's modern manager are employee support, communication, and counseling.

Lisoski (2004, p. 18) spoke for many researchers in employee relations when he stated that "When discipline is issued in a negative manner it is seen by all as punitive,

with punishment as its key motivator rather than correction.” The abandonment of harsh discipline toward the non-compliant employee harks back to McGregor’s Theory Y Manager. Lisoski (2004) identified a number of crucial elements within an effective supervisory structure, including treating adults as adults and educating employees rather than terminating them.

Luthans and Peterson (2003) highlighted a perceived relationship between effective 360-degree feedback and the systematic coaching of employees. This emphasis on coaching/counseling mirrors affirmative discipline theory.

A recent trend in management and supervision theory is “servant-leadership.” This theory holds that the effective manager is the one who tries to “serve” the employee’s needs. Douglas (2003, p. 6) stated it very clearly when he noted that the core principle of servant-leadership is that “...supervising has less to do with directing other people and more to do with serving people.”

Ehrhart (2004) indicated that servant-leadership leadership promotes improved organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) on the part of both the individual employee and multi-person teams or units. For Ramsey (2003), a servant-leadership approach to supervision means that the individual manager or supervisor must be creative in finding ways to help his/her employees do their job more effectively. Better supervision leads to better employee performance which in turn leads to better performance for the employee, the team, and the organization.

The modern manager also must be supportive of the employee. He/she needs to be concerned with the emotional and psychological needs of the employee. Hamlin (2002)

identified a number of traits that nurses in England's National Health Service (NHS) believed to be essential for effective leadership and supervision. These attributes included actively supportive leadership and providing support to staff. Those supervisory attributes perceived to be markers for poor leadership included: undermining, ignoring, avoiding, intimidating, and being autocratic (Hamlin, 2002).

Being supportive of the employee also entails being aware of the employee's cultural background, as well as his/her motivations for doing a "good job". Research by DeVoe and Iyengar (2004) noted that while employees throughout North America, Asia, and Latin America state consistently that they are motivated more by intrinsic than extrinsic rewards, managers in each of these three regions hold differing perceptions. North American managers believe employees are more motivated by extrinsic rewards. Latin American managers believe employees are more motivated by intrinsic rewards. Asian managers took a holistic approach; believing that employees are motivated equally by both types of rewards. It would appear that where there is a discrepancy between manager and employee regarding the motivations for employee behavior, there is a greater likelihood of supervisor-employee conflict.

Empirical Studies on the Use of Written Behavior Contracting

Evidence that Florida's healthcare facilities have embraced affirmative employee discipline tools such as written behavior contracts and employee counseling is non-

existent. This paucity of research suggested that a survey-based research study would be unprecedented and long overdue.

The gap in the scholarship and literature on the use of written behavior contracts as an affirmative discipline tool is one that can potentially be filled by the survey-based research design that this study provided. The goal of this research is to determine the pervasiveness of affirmative employee discipline systems that utilize written behavior contracts and employee counseling within Florida's healthcare system as opposed to progressive employee discipline systems that utilize verbal warnings and written behavior counseling statements.

Specific Research Needs

Ample qualitative and theoretical research exists in the areas of management and leadership theory and strategic human resources management to suggest that the use of affirmative employee discipline techniques should be studied and explored more aggressively by organizations. While such qualitative scholarship does offer models or theories of manager-employee relations and employee discipline/supervision styles, it lacks the necessary supporting statistical data to indicate that healthcare institutions have adopted these relatively modern affirmative employee discipline techniques.

This study may motivate other human resources researchers and management/leadership "gurus" to explore further field-based studies of real employees

in real workplace scenarios and the impact of various disciplinary techniques on the level of employee compliance.

Grote (1995) has identified numerous private companies that have instituted affirmative employee discipline systems with notable results. Frito-Lay, the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (TDMHMR), General Electric, GTE Telephone Operations, and Tampa Electric Company, are organizations that have adopted some form or elements of Grote's (1995) "discipline without punishment" system with great success. The Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation saw turnover drop from 48.5 percent to 18.5 percent in the first two years of this affirmative system (Grote, 1995). GTE Telephone Operations reduced all grievances by 63 percent and disciplinary grievances by 86 percent after one year (Grote, 1995).

Given the number of private, for-profit organizations that have adopted affirmative discipline systems, further research is needed to determine the extent to which healthcare facilities have gravitated toward an affirmative employee discipline system as a means to reduce employee turnover, improve employee morale, and improve the overall performance and compliance with organizational goals, rules, or objectives. While anecdotal evidence exists in the form of company turnover figures and internal employee satisfaction results, further research using interview or survey formats would be helpful in identifying the real benefits to be gained from the adoption of an affirmative discipline system. A survey of Florida's healthcare professionals will allow for a more

in-depth understanding of just how committed these professionals are to affirmative employee discipline systems.

Summary of Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

While ample qualitative and theoretical research exists in the realms of strategic human resources management and organizational/industrial psychology on the nature of various types of employee disciplinary systems, these studies have lacked evidence demonstrating the ascendancy or efficacy of affirmative discipline systems within Florida's healthcare system.

Much of the qualitative employee discipline research revolves around theoretical constructs championing a particular type of employee discipline system. In the view of the researcher, a gap exists in the literature in the area of survey-based research studies which would provide evidence that affirmative employee discipline systems have been adopted and accepted by Florida's healthcare leadership. This study attempts to fill this research gap and therefore, in the researcher's opinion, is unprecedented in nature.

The lion's share of human resources literature appears to champion affirmative employee discipline systems, or systems wherein discipline occurs without punishment. These systems appear to be predicated on three fundamental and defining elements: open communication between manager and employee; employee participation in the disciplinary process; and trust between the manager and the employee. A system that

manifests these defining characteristics can, if implemented within the entire organization and if internalized by all staff, ensure the existence of a positive management-employee atmosphere and, consequently, assure that employee disciplinary action can yield positive results for both the employee and the organization.

This survey-based research design focuses on the attitudes and perceptions held by the respondents from the healthcare industry. Specifically, Human Resources Directors and Chief Executive Officers in Florida's hospitals were surveyed and asked to express the degree to which their organization's employee discipline plan is characterized by trust, open communication, and employee participation. The investigator determined whether or not affirmative discipline systems, and the affirmative philosophies upon which they are based, are prevalent in Florida's healthcare industry.

It is important to note that affirmative discipline systems need not ignore the obvious fact that the manager or supervisor is in a more powerful position than the employee. In fact, Shulman (1991) noted clearly that clinicians who use written contracts with their patients must be honest about the power differential. Similarly, an affirmative discipline system does not have to pretend that a manager and an employee are on the "same level" in trying to enforce organizational rules, but can clearly and openly acknowledge the fact that managers/supervisors have the authority to exercise and implement the organization's rules with their employees.

The question of whether or not affirmative discipline systems are pervasive within Florida's hospitals has yet to be tested in a field-based manner. The literature does clearly document the demise of traditional discipline systems in the first half of the

twentieth-century and as such discounts the efficacy of traditional discipline systems in the modern workplace.

The existing literature appears to be missing a survey-based research study that can begin to provide some rudimentary and fundamental support to the idea that affirmative discipline systems are not only explored by Florida's healthcare facilities, but have been adopted by a number of them to elicit employee compliance with organizational rules. This study will attempt to fill this apparent void.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

An investment of twelve months on the part of the investigator to find a hospital to host the original quantitative, experimental design was met with rejection from four different institutions. Given the enormous reluctance on the part of hospitals to host this original research, the investigator revised his research design, with the approval of each member of his dissertation committee, to conduct a less invasive, anonymous survey on employee discipline.

This survey-based research study was directed to hospital administrators and Human Resources Directors in the State of Florida. Currently the Florida Hospital Association (2004) lists 304 hospitals in its directory located on the FHA web site. The survey was distributed to both the Chief Executive Officer and Human Resources Director of each of the 304 facilities. A total of 608 surveys were distributed.

The hospitals that were identified as targets for this survey included acute care hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, Veteran's Administration (VA) hospitals, military hospitals located on military bases, and trauma centers located throughout the State of Florida. In fact, 58 of Florida's 67 counties were represented by at least one hospital.

The survey itself is a one-page, two-sided document with a total of 22 items (Appendix A). Items on page one request that the individual identify his/her job title,

his/her length of tenure in that hospital, his/her age, his/her gender, and his/her race. Racial categories were identified using the same categories that are currently utilized by the U. S. Census Bureau. As this survey was completely anonymous and given the fact that the primary investigator had no way of linking any one survey to the person completing it, any apprehension regarding completion of these sometimes-sensitive demographic characteristics was assuaged.

Items six through twenty-two on page two of the survey asked the respondents to circle a number that corresponded most closely to his/her degree of agreement with the statement. These statements covered whether or not their institutions have policies and procedures on employee discipline, whether or not they believe that employee behavior is correctable, their attitudes regarding the efficacy of different techniques of employee discipline, and the extent to which their institutions utilize progressive and affirmative employee discipline tools. In order to accommodate more comprehensive responses or additional commentary on their perceptions regarding their own particular institution's employee discipline system, blank lines were provided to the bottom of page two for comments.

Surveys were placed in white business envelopes with a cover letter drafted by the investigator. This cover letter (Appendix B) introduced the investigator, described in very general terms the research study design and its procedures, and requested the administrator's assistance by returning the completed survey. Additionally, a stamped, addressed envelope was included with each survey to allow the respondent to place the

completed survey in the envelope and drop it in the mail. It is assumed that this convenience facilitated a higher rate of return of completed surveys.

The surveys were mailed to the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) and Directors of Human Resources in the 304 hospitals located in the State of Florida. Given that employee discipline usually falls under some institutional policy and procedure related to code of conduct or Human Resources management, the investigator felt compelled to survey the two institutional leaders most responsible for both the Human Resources philosophy as well as the employee disciplinary procedures.

Although not all of these organizations utilize affirmative discipline techniques currently, the survey was appropriate for institutions utilizing either a progressive or an affirmative system. For those institutions not utilizing either kind of discipline system and/or possessing a formal policy or procedure related to employee discipline, this survey was most likely irrelevant. However, since all of the hospitals surveyed appear in the directory of the Florida Hospital Association, the vast majority were accredited, formally-structured facilities with very clear policies and procedures related to employee discipline.

Since the survey did not require the respondent to divulge his/her name or institutional affiliation, the investigator requested, and was granted, a waiver of informed consent from the University of Central Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix C). This request for an informed consent waiver came as part of an IRB addendum completed by the investigator in December 2004. This IRB addendum was

necessary given the investigator's modification of the research design from a quantitative, classical experimental design to a survey-based design.

Finally, the investigator requested, and was granted, an additional year of continuing review by the university's IRB department in January 2005 in order that he could complete the research.

Instruments

There was one (1) instrument utilized in this study. This instrument was a 22-item survey related to employee discipline developed by the primary investigator (Appendix A). Given the fact that there have been no empirical studies noted to date that have measured Florida hospital administrators' attitudes on employee discipline, there exist no tools or instruments from which to draw. Therefore, the aforementioned instrument was developed by the primary investigator expressly for the purpose of this research study.

The survey is a one-page, two-sided form. It was anonymous and no numbering system was utilized that could link any completed survey to the responding hospital or hospital administrator. This was done in the hope of eliciting a larger number of survey responses. Although the investigator did request some demographic information, this information was utilized only as part of a much larger aggregate data set. The demographic information collected on the respondents was nominal level data.

The survey statements related to employee discipline on page two of the survey form asked that the respondent express the level to which he/she agreed with a particular statement on employee discipline using one of a possible five responses: “5,” which means “Strongly Agree”, “4,” which means “Agree”, “3,” which means “Neither Agree Nor Disagree”, “2,” which means “Disagree” and “1,” which means “Strongly Disagree”. Although worded in such a way that the data resulting would be ordinal, the investigator treated the responses as interval level data since it is likely that the respondent would believe there to be an equal measure of agreement among and between each of the five possible response choices (Spatz, 2000).

As this study was unprecedented, there existed no instruments with established validity and reliability. As a result, the primary investigator was obliged to develop a survey tool on employee discipline that mirrored current “best practice” in the area of affirmative and progressive discipline.

Procedures

In order to measure hospital administrators’ attitudes and perceptions regarding employee discipline and employee discipline systems, a survey-based design was utilized.

The investigator-developed surveys were mailed using the U.S. Postal Service during the week of January 3, 2005. A total of 608 surveys were mailed.

The hospital administrators who volunteered to complete and return the surveys as part of this study were employees of one of 304 medical institutions in the State of Florida. These hospital administrators held positions in institutions located in 58 of Florida's 67 counties. The researcher was unable to determine the specific number of institutions represented by the respondents given the anonymous nature of the survey itself.

The primary investigator allowed five weeks for these administrators to return the surveys. In order to facilitate a higher rate of completion, the investigator received permission to include a reminder message in the Florida Hospital Association's January 2005 newsletter. This follow-up message reminded these administrators to complete the survey previously distributed and to return it to the primary investigator.

Although the investigator allowed surveys to be returned until February 9, 2005, no completed surveys were returned after this date.

Upon receipt of the completed surveys, the data were entered into a data file for data review, analysis, and manipulation. This data file was kept on the investigator's desktop computer. Additionally, the investigator maintained a copy of the data on a compact disc which was kept in a second location separate from the investigator's residence. Hard copies of the completed and returned surveys were kept by the investigator in a safe, secure location until the successful defense of this dissertation.

Statistical Analysis

The investigator was able to determine how pervasive affirmative discipline systems are within Florida's hospitals and how committed to such systems these hospital administrators were in managing employee non-compliance.

Each respondent was able to expand and clarify any specific statement included on the survey using the blank lines on the bottom of page two of the survey instrument. The investigator included selected comments for review and inclusion within the final written dissertation product. These comments added valuable detail and substance to the statistical analysis.

Approval for Research

The revised research design was submitted to the University of Central Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in December 2004. Although approval had been provided by the IRB for the investigator's original study design and accompanying instruments, the need to revise the design into a survey research design necessitated the submission of an IRB Addendum and approval of the revised materials

accompanying this new design. The investigator also requested, and was granted, a waiver of informed consent. The original IRB approval extended to February 2005.

Since the completion and defense of this research extended beyond January 2005, the investigator requested, and was granted, continuing review by the IRB program to extend his research project until January 2006.

Sample Size

A total of 199 individual administrators responded to the surveys. This represents a response rate of 33%. Therefore, the total sample size of returned surveys was 199 (N = 199). Of the 199 administrators who responded, 112, or 56.3%, were Human Resources administrators and 86, or 43.2%, were Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, the researcher is unable to determine the number of institutions represented by the responses, or the percentage of institutions responding given the total number surveyed. Nor was he able to determine the degree to which the respondent institutions represent or do not represent the population of hospitals in Florida.

Table of Operational Definitions

The employee discipline survey requested both demographic information and self-reported levels of agreement to a series of statements related to employee discipline.

Administrators were free to respond without reservation or obfuscation since the surveys were anonymous. The investigator did not employ any mechanism to trace any particular completed survey to its specific respondent since it was felt that such a device may dampen the enthusiasm of the respondents to be open and honest. It was also hoped that a completely anonymous survey would result in a higher rate of return.

The investigator defined the various respondent demographic variables and survey item responses utilized within the employee discipline survey. Employee discipline survey items were formatted utilizing very simple, concrete language targeted at a 12th grade reading level.

Responses to each survey item, whether that item was demographic or related to employee discipline, were defined in order to fully understand the choices available to the respondents and to clarify what was meant by the respondent with his/her particular answer choice. The information contained in Table 1 includes a listing of each demographic item and employee discipline survey item. For each item, a definition is provided to explain what was meant by a respondent's answer to a particular item.

Table 1 Table of Operational Definitions

Variable/Item Description	Operational Definition
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Respondent Demographics	Respondent demographics is operationally defined as the specific job title, tenure, age, gender, and race of each respondent as self-reported
Job Title	Job title is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported identification as either Human Resources (HR) Director and/or Manager, coded as "1," or Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/Senior Administrator coded "2."
Current Tenure	Current tenure is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported tenure with current employer according to ranges 0-5 years and 6-10 years, coded as "1," 11-15 years and 16-20 years, coded as "2," and 21-25 years and 26 years or more, coded as "3."
Age	Age is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported age within a given range of the age time frames: 18-29 years and 30-39 years, coded as "1," 40-49 years and 50-59 years, coded as "2," and 60-69 years and 70 years or more, coded as "3."
Gender	Gender is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported identification as either Male, coded as "0," or Female, coded as "1."
Race	Race is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported identification as either White, coded as "1," Hispanic/Latino(of any race), coded as "2," Black/African American, " coded as "3," American Indian/Alaska Native, coded as "4," "Two or More Races," coded as "5," "Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander," coded as "6," and "Asian," coded as "7."
Employee Survey Item #	Response to each employee discipline survey item 6-21 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement with each statement using one of five response options: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 2=Disagree, or 1=Strongly Disagree
Response to Item 6	Response to survey item 6 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement with the following statement: My hospital has clear, written policies and procedures related to employee discipline. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 7	Response to survey item 7 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement with the following statement: All employees are oriented to employee discipline policies and procedures upon their initial hire into the organization. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 8	Response to survey item 8 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement with the following statement: I believe that employee non-compliance can usually be corrected with punishment. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 9	Response to survey item 9 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement with the following statement: I believe that employee non-compliance can usually be corrected with performance counseling. Strongly Agree is coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 10	Response to survey item 10 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement to the following statement: I believe that most non-compliant employees are eventually terminated. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 11	Response to survey item 11 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement to the following statement: I believe that most non-compliant employees are eventually rehabilitated through performance counseling. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 12	Response to survey item 12 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement to the following statement: I believe open communication between supervisors and direct reports is important in improving employee compliance. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 13	Response to survey item 13 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement to the following statement: I believe that trust between supervisors and direct reports is important in improving employee compliance. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 14	Response to survey item 14 is operationally defined as the respondents self-reported level of agreement to the following statement: I believe that employees should participate in the development of their own discipline improvement plan. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 15	Response to survey item 15 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement to the following statement: I believe that most of our supervisors and managers ignore the non-compliance of their employees. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 16	Response to survey item 16 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement to the following statement: I believe that most of our supervisors and managers utilize verbal warnings to improve the compliance of their employees. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 17	Response to survey item 17 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement to the following statement: I believe that most of our supervisors and managers use written behavior counseling with their

	non-compliant employees. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 18	Response to survey item 18 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement to the following statement: I believe that most of our supervisors and managers use written behavior contracts with their non-compliant employees. Strongly Agree coded as "5," agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 19	Response to survey item 19 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement to the following statement: I believe hospital employee discipline policies and procedures are applied consistently to each employee. Strongly Agree coded as "5," agree coded as "4," Neither Agree nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 20	Response to survey item 20 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement to the following statement: Managers and supervisors are given latitude to apply hospital policies and procedures related to employee discipline. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."
Response to Item 21	Response to survey item 21 is operationally defined as the respondent's self-reported level of agreement to the following statement: I believe that my hospital's policies and procedures related to employee discipline are effective in correcting employee non-compliance. Strongly Agree coded as "5," Agree coded as "4," Neither Agree Nor Disagree coded as "3," Disagree coded as "2," and Strongly Disagree coded as "1."

Respondent Demographics

A total of 199 individuals indicated their job title (Table 2). One hundred and twelve (112) individuals identified themselves as Human Resources (HR) Administrators, and 86 identified themselves as Chief Executive Officers (CEO).

Tenure with the organization was noted by 198 respondents (Table 2). The vast majority (133, 66.8%) indicated that they had been with the organization from 0 – 10 years. Thirty-seven (37) respondents indicated 11 – 20 years, and 28 people noted that they had been working with their organization 21 years or longer.

Table 2 Job Title, Race, Tenure, Gender and Race of Respondents

Job Title	Frequency	Percent
HR Administrator	112	56.3
CEO	<u>86</u>	<u>43.2</u>
	198	99.5
Tenure		
0 – 10 years	133	66.8
11 – 20 years	37	18.6

21 years or more	<u>28</u> 198	<u>14.1</u> 99.5
Age		
40 – 59 years old	149	74.9
18 – 39 years old	28	14.1
60 years or older	<u>20</u> 197	<u>10.1</u> 99.0
Gender		
Male	104	52.3
Female	<u>94</u> 198	<u>47.2</u> 99.5
Race		
White	172	86.4
Hispanic/Latino	13	6.5
Black/African American	10	5.0
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	.5
Two or More Races	<u>1</u> 197	<u>.5</u> 99.0

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

The respondent's age was indicated on 197 surveys (Table 2). The majority of respondents were between 40 and 59 years of age (149, 74.9%). The second largest age range was between 18 and 39 years of age with 28 individuals (14.1%) indicating this range. Twenty people identified themselves as 60 years of age or older.

The gender of respondents was almost evenly split between males and females (Table 2). A total of 104 people (52.3%) identified themselves as males and 94 (47.2%) as female.

The majority of respondents identified their race as "White" (Table 2). One hundred and seventy-two (172, 86.4%) of the respondents were "White." The next largest racial category was "Hispanic/Latino" with a total of 13 (6.5%). Only ten (10) people identified

themselves as “Black/African-American.” One respondent was “American Indian/Native Alaskan,” and one was “Two or more races.”

Given these demographic results, the typical respondent was a White Human Resources Director between the ages of 40 and 59 with 10 years of tenure or less with their current organization.

Given the investigator’s use of the Florida Hospital Association’s (FHA) directory of hospitals, the leaders surveyed were well distributed throughout the state. Surveys went to leaders of facilities in both urban and rural areas, leaders in different geographical sectors throughout the state, leaders of large, medium and small facilities, and leaders of trauma centers, hospitals, and military installations.

The relatively small number of non-White hospital administrators in Florida does appear to mirror statistics from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) which indicate that only 6.1% of those individuals participating in the medical profession are members of under-represented minorities (Institute of Medicine, 2005), and from Evans (2004) who asserts that less than 2% of senior executive healthcare positions are filled by minorities. The overwhelmingly racially monolithic nature of administrators responding to the employee discipline survey appears to mirror this national trend as well. Survey respondent demographics are consistent with hospital administrator demographics throughout the nation.

Florida Hospitals and Formal Employee Discipline Policies and Procedures

Of those Florida healthcare facilities represented in the sample of respondents, the vast majority appear to possess both formal employee discipline policies and orientation/training mechanisms to introduce all employees to these policies.

Approximately seventy-two percent of respondents indicated strong agreement that their respective institutions possess clear, written policies and procedures related to employee discipline. Over 26% expressed agreement with this same statement. With 98% of respondents indicating agreement with the existence of this formal policy (Table 3), it would appear that hospital leaders are aware of the need for employee discipline policies and procedures.

Table 3 Belief that Hospitals have Internal Disciplinary Structure

<i>Clear, Written Policies</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	143	71.9
Agree	52	26.1
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	1	.5
Disagree	3	1.5
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	199	100.0
<i>Employee Orientation</i>		
Strongly Agree	100	50.3
Agree	65	32.7
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	22	10.7
Disagree	8	3.9

Strongly Disagree	<u>3</u>	<u>1.5</u>
	198	99.5

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

Moreover, 83% of the respondents indicated that employees are oriented to these employee discipline policies and procedures upon initial hire into the organization (Table 3). This support expressed for the importance of training team members on the importance of employee discipline reflects the fact that respondents are clearly aware of the need to train team members on these disciplinary policies and procedures in order to achieve other, significant hospital outcomes – such as lower employee turnover, greater employee morale, and reduced recruitment costs. This statistic would appear to also indicate a desire on the part of respondents to ensure that all managers/supervisors apply employee discipline policies and procedures in a standardized, consistent fashion.

The Use of Punishment

As shown in Table 4, a majority of respondents – 58.3% - expressed disagreement with the use of punishment as an effective means of improving employee compliance.

Table 4 Belief in the Effectiveness of Punishment to Correct Non-Compliance

<i>Correction Through Punishment</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	3	1.5
Agree	20	10.1
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	59	29.6
Disagree	69	34.7
Strongly Disagree	<u>47</u>	<u>23.6</u>
	198	99.5

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

It appears that respondents to the survey realize that traditional, Manager X leadership (McGregor, 1985) is no longer viable in today's workforce.

However, 29.6% of respondents to Survey Item # 8 answered with "Neither Agree nor Disagree" on the use of punishment (Table 4). This may reflect different interpretations of the word "punishment," or it may reflect that the word "punishment" is no longer applicable to the modern organization's codes of conduct and disciplinary procedures. It also signals the end of traditional systems of employee discipline and the predominance of progressive systems and accompanying vocabulary to describe progressive discipline policies and procedures.

The Philosophy of Employee Discipline: Progressive

Philosophically, respondents surveyed believe strongly in the "correctability" of employee non-compliance through standard progressive discipline tools such as the verbal warning and the performance counseling statement.

Over 83% of respondents believe that supervisors in their institutions utilize verbal warnings (Table 5). In addition, over 84% of those surveyed expressed confidence in the effectiveness of the performance counseling statement in improving employee compliance (Table 5). These disciplinary tools are a staple of progressive employee discipline systems. Often utilized as the first and second steps in a step-by-step, progressive framework, verbal warnings and performance counseling statements appear to be a tool frequently employed in Florida’s healthcare facilities. This clearly indicates that respondents are philosophically committed to progressive employee discipline systems.

Table 5 Belief in Progressive Discipline

<i>Verbal Warnings are Utilized</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	23	11.6
Agree	143	71.9
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	19	9.5
Disagree	14	7.0
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	199	100.0
<i>Performance Counseling</i>		
Strongly Agree	36	18.1
Agree	132	66.3
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	26	13.1
Disagree	4	2.0
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	198	99.5

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

There is no consensus, however, on whether or not non-compliant employees are most likely to be terminated.

The results to Survey Item # 10 (Table 6) indicate that over 35% of the respondents to this survey do believe that non-compliant employees are likely to remain non-compliant and eventually wind up unemployed. On the other hand, a significant percentage – 36.2% - believe the opposite. They would argue that non-compliant employee behavior is often, and likely, correctable. A third large group of respondents – 28.6% - remained neutral on the matter, perhaps believing that the “correctability” of the non-compliant behavior is contingent upon the specific employee and the particular non-compliance in question.

Table 6 Belief in Employee Termination versus Rehabilitation

<i>Non-Compliant Employees Terminated</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	19	9.5
Agree	51	25.6
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	57	28.6
Disagree	64	32.2
Strongly Disagree	<u>8</u>	<u>4.0</u>
	199	100.0
<i>Non-Compliant Employees Rehab</i>		
Strongly Agree	7	3.5
Agree	68	34.2
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	91	45.7
Disagree	30	15.1
Strongly Disagree	<u>1</u>	<u>.5</u>
	197	100.0

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

Similarly, the results to Item # 11 (Table 6) indicate the lack of a clear consensus on the effectiveness of employee performance counseling statements in not only improving employee compliance, but improving it enough to avoid employee termination. Whereas these same respondents expressed confidence in using performance counseling to “improve” employee behavior, there is no such confidence that the improvement is enough to prevent that employee’s eventual termination. In fact, 45.7% of respondents indicated neither agreement nor disagreement with the belief that employees are usually rehabilitated.

There would appear to be some kind of “disconnect” between the belief that performance counseling can improve employee behavior and the belief that the performance counseling to address non-compliant behavior prevents the eventual termination of the employee. This may reflect practical, “on-the-job” experience on the part of respondents who have witnessed a significant percentage of non-compliant employees being terminated by the institution.

It may also be the case that the type of non-compliant behavior that would require a performance counseling statement in the first place may represent a fairly serious violation or repeated violations of organizational conduct. This behavior may, therefore, be less susceptible to the significant improvement necessary to save one’s job, than the type of minor transgression that is more “correctable” through verbal warnings.

Perhaps those employees needing performance counseling statements are those with a greater history of non-compliance and, therefore, a greater rate of termination, suspension, and turnover than those with few or no transgressions.

The certainty among respondents that behavior can probably be improved, but jobs not necessarily saved, through the use of performance counseling statements may also reflect a “legalistic” interpretation or use of progressive discipline tools to limit employee-initiated wrongful termination litigation. The use of progressive discipline steps primarily to “prove” and “document” the organization’s compliance with due process may account for the statistical perception that an employee’s behavior can be improved, but not that the employee can ultimately save his/her job through such improvement.

Clearly, respondents believe that progressive discipline tools such as performance counseling statements are much more likely to engender employee behavior change for the better than traditional disciplinary methods such as punishment or sanctions. Yet, this certainty that such techniques “improve” employee behavior does not necessarily mean that when all is said and done, the non-compliant employee in question remains employed with the organization.

The Markers for Affirmative Discipline Systems

There are three distinct elements, or “markers,” for positive supervisor-employee relations. The presence of these markers is also a strong indicator of an organization

with the type of corporate philosophy and employee support system necessary to implement an affirmative discipline system. These three markers are open communication between supervisor and employee, trust between supervisor and employee, and employee participation in the development of discipline improvement plans.

Respondents believe strongly that open communication, trust, and employee participation are essential elements in eliciting improved employee compliance (Table 7). Over 84% of those surveyed expressed agreement with the statement that open communication between supervisor and employee is important in improving non-compliance. Over 97% of respondents believe that trust between supervisor and employee is important. Finally, almost 79% of respondents believe that employees should participate in their own discipline plan. However, more than 20 percent either did not believe in such participation or expressed neither agreement or disagreement.

Table 7 Belief that Open Communication, Trust, and Employee Participation will Ensure Positive Supervisor-Employee Relations

<i>Open Communication</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	168	84.4
Agree	31	15.6
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	199	100.0
<i>Trust</i>		
Strongly Agree	154	77.4
Agree	40	20.1
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	5	2.5
Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	199	100.0
<i>Employee Participation</i>		

Strongly Agree	64	32.2
Agree	93	46.7
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	29	14.6
Disagree	12	6.0
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	198	99.5

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

This expressed leadership support for these workplace elements indicates a deep commitment to positive supervisor-employee relations. The fact that respondents recognize and appreciate the importance of these factors in improving employee compliance indicates that they would likely support more affirmative employee disciplinary systems that emphasize such elements.

The commitment expressed by respondents to open communication, trust, and employee participation also reflects a belief in the values espoused in a number of managerial theories, including “servant-leadership” (Douglas, 2003), “Theory Y” management (McGregor, 1985), and “Discipline without Punishment” (Grote, 1995). This would appear to bode well for the opportunity of affirmative discipline advocates to sow the seeds for the future implementation of such systems in Florida’s hospitals. However, it is also clear that administrators must realize and “see” not only improved employee behavior, but also a reduced number of employee terminations to be convinced of the value of affirmative discipline systems. This is especially true given the fact that there appears to be a strong commitment to progressive discipline techniques to improve behavior, but not necessarily to reduce employee terminations and/or turnover.

Comparison of Mean Scores on Selected Survey Items

By comparing mean scores, one can determine where significant differences exist in the nature of the responses between respondent groups. A review of significant mean score differences based on respondent group yields some interesting results.

HR administrators are less likely to believe that non-compliant employees are terminated than their CEO counterparts as evidenced by the mean scores on Survey Item # 10 (Table 8). This may reflect a deeper understanding on the part of HR professionals about the tools and procedures available to supervisors in addressing employee non-compliance, and greater familiarity with its successful implementation in saving an employee from termination.

Table 8 Significant Item Mean Score Differences: Sorted by Job Title and Gender

Item	Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	T	Sig.
<i>#8: Punishment</i>	Gender					
	Male	104	3.54	.945	-2.371	.019*
	Female	93	3.87	.214		
<i>#10: Employees Terminated</i>	Job Title					
	HR Admin	112	2.81	1.119	-2.166	.032*
	CEO	86	3.14	.960		
<i>#17: Performance Counseling</i>	Gender					
	Male	104	3.80	.768	3.702	.000*
	Female	94	3.36	.890		

*Significant at the .050 level

As far as differences in responses based upon gender is concerned, two survey items present significant differences.

Female respondents appear to be more hard-nosed and traditional than their male counterparts since they believe more strongly in the value of punishment as a tool to correct non-compliance than male administrators (Table 8). Perhaps women respondents find it easier to behave harshly to women employees than male ones.

Finally, a significant difference in responses between male and female respondents occurred on Survey Item # 17. This item asked administrators to express their belief that supervisors utilize a typical progressive discipline tool, the written performance counseling statement. Male respondents expressed much greater agreement that their supervisors utilized such a tool than their female colleagues (Table 8). Male respondents responded with a mean score of 3.80 and female administrators with a mean score of 3.36 (Table 8). If there are more male than female supervisors within hospital settings, perhaps this reveals a male prejudice that male supervisors are more actively engaged with their employees than female supervisors.

The investigator will now turn to an analysis of the possible underlying relationships between individual survey items as a means of determining whether or not differences in mean scores among respondent groups may be a reflection or a result of particular groupings of survey items around heretofore unseen, underlying factors or constructs. To determine whether or not such underlying factors or constructs exist, the investigator will begin by conducting reliability testing on survey item groupings which would appear to logically go together, or measure the same factor/construct.

Reliability Testing: Cronbach's Alpha

In order to analyze whether or not individual survey items are measuring the same underlying construct or factor, the overall relationship between the individual survey items must be determined. One way to do this is to compute the Cronbach's Alpha. Cronbach's Alpha is a coefficient of reliability that allows researchers to determine whether or not the employee discipline survey items are measuring a single, unidimensional construct or a multidimensional construct. A "high" Cronbach's Alpha would indicate a "high" reliability that all or some of the survey items are measuring a single construct or factor. Conversely, a "low" Cronbach's Alpha would be indicative of a "low" reliability that all or some of the survey items are not measuring a single construct or factor. Within the social sciences, a Cronbach's Alpha of .70 or .80 is considered an "acceptable" level of reliability that individual items or variables are measuring a single construct or factor.

An analysis of survey items 6-21 of the Employee Discipline Survey would appear to indicate that certain groups of items logically "go together," or measure the same basic construct or factor. For example, Survey Items # 6, # 7, # 19, and # 21 would appear to measure a single construct: Internal Organizational Disciplinary Structure.

The reliability coefficient among these four items is .616 (Table 9). This is a moderate reliability coefficient, meaning there is a moderate reliability that these four items are, in fact, measuring the same construct.

Table 9 Reliability Coefficient of Internal Organizational Disciplinary Structure

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based On Standardized Items	N of Items
.616	.638	4

Reliability Coefficient among Survey Items 6(ClrWritPol), 7(EmpOrient), 19(ConsApplic), and 21(EffDisc)

Similarly, Survey Items # 12, # 13, and # 14 asked the administrators to express their degree of agreement that trust, open communication, and employee participation (markers for “Positive Supervisor-Employee Relations”) are valuable elements necessary to improve employee compliance (Table 10). By determining the Cronbach’s Alpha, or reliability coefficient, for each item one can determine if, in fact, these items are measuring the same construct or factor.

Table 10 Reliability Coefficient of Positive Supervisor-Employee Relations

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based On Standardized Items	N of Items
.571	.666	3

Reliability Coefficient among Survey Items 12(OpenComm), 13(Trust), and 14(EmpPartic)

The reliability coefficient for these three items is .571 (Table 10). This is a moderate coefficient and may or may not necessarily indicate that all three items are measuring the same construct. In comparison to the grouping of Survey Items # 6, # 7, # 19, and

21, this second grouping yields a lower reliability coefficient, meaning that one cannot be as certain that this second grouping of items is measuring the same construct or factor as compared to the first grouping.

A third grouping of items that appear to be related are Survey Items # 16 and # 17. Both of these items would appear to be measuring the same factor: “Progressive Discipline.” These survey items asked administrators to express their belief that supervisors use the two most common techniques in progressive discipline systems: the verbal warning and the written performance counseling statement (Table 11).

Table 11 Reliability Coefficient of Progressive Discipline

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based On standardized Items	N of Items
.473	.481	2

Reliability Coefficient among Survey Items 16(VerbWarn) and 17(WritPerfCouns)

When one calculates the reliability coefficient between these two items, one can see that the Cronbach's Alpha is only .473 (Table 11). However, while relatively low, the Alpha coefficient is often influenced by the number of factors under review. In this case, since there are only two factors, the low to moderate Alpha may be a statistical byproduct of the number of items in the scale. Thus, at this point, the investigator cannot definitively state that these items do not hold together.

A final grouping of items revolves around Survey Items # 8, # 10, and # 15 (Table 12). Each of these items, when responded to with a “5,” or “Strongly Agree,”

actually demonstrate a highly negative response. That is, a respondent's agreement with these items would represent an individual with a very traditional perception of employee discipline. Given the need to correct for this contradictory wording, we re-coded these items in order to better analyze their reliability. Table 16 provides the Cronbach's Alpha for the grouping of Survey Items # 8new, # 10new, and # 15new. This construct is titled "Traditional Discipline."

Table 12 Reliability Coefficient of Traditional Discipline

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based On Standardized Items	N of Items
.194	.188	3

Reliability Coefficient among Survey Items 8new(Punish), 10new(EmpTerm), and 15new(Ignore)

With a weak Cronbach's Alpha of .194, the three survey items that make up "traditional discipline" do not appear to be measuring the same construct. Although the investigator cannot state unequivocally, the low reliability coefficient may indicate that items # 8 and # 10 refer specifically to a "result" or "consequence" of employee non-compliance whereas item # 15 refers to a "supervisory orientation" to employee non-compliance. This may mean that the first two items measure one construct and the third item a completely different one.

Since there would appear to be at least two underlying constructs or factors, with a third and fourth factor as a possibility, as identified through reliability testing, the

investigator will now utilize factor analysis to verify or confirm whether or not these factors do indeed exist.

Factor Analysis of Survey Item Groupings

Given the previous reliability analysis, one can utilize factor analysis to confirm or verify whether or not the items in the previous four groupings are interrelated. By analyzing the values of factor loadings of the items in the aforementioned survey item groupings, one can ascertain whether or not these items really do “go together” or load onto one another. According to Spatz (2000), a factor loading value of .40 among grouped items is considered a minimally acceptable level of association.

The first grouping of survey items included Survey Items # 6, # 7, # 19, and # 21. A factor analysis of this grouping of items will verify whether or not the association among the items is significant or not. If the factor loading is .40 or higher, than one can confirm that these items are measuring the same construct or factor (Table 13). However, a factor loading of a value close to .40 is still a relatively weak association and, therefore, will require the investigator to identify the possible factor loading as limiting rather than suggesting high reliability.

Table 13 Factor Analysis for Internal Organizational Disciplinary Structure

	Component Matrix (a) Component 1
Item 6 (ClrWritPol)	.669
Item 7 (EmpOrient)	.685
Item 19 (ConsApplic)	.705
Item 21 (EffDisc)	.710

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

a. 1 components extracted

Based upon the factor analysis of this grouping of items, it is apparent that Survey Items # 6, # 7, # 19, and # 21 appear to be measuring the same underlying construct, with all four items loading together on the same factor (Table 13). All four items appear to be measuring internal organizational discipline policies. Therefore, this construct or factor can be titled “Internal Organizational Disciplinary Structure.”

If we run the same type of factor analysis of Survey Items # 12, # 13, and # 14, we find that Survey Items # 12(Open Communication), # 13(Trust), and # 14(Employee Participation) do load on one factor together with reliability coefficients of .811, .860, and .645 respectively. This confirms that these three items measure the same construct, “Positive Supervisor-Employee Relations” (Table 14).

Table 14 Factor Analysis for Positive Supervisor-Employee Relations

	Component Matrix(a) 1
Item 12 (Open Comm)	.811
Item 13 (Trust)	.860
Item 14 (EmpPartic)	.645

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis
a. 1 component extracted

The third identified construct or factor, “Progressive Discipline,” groups Survey Items # 16 and # 17. These items asked healthcare administrators to express their belief that supervisors utilize verbal warnings and written performance counseling as progressive disciplinary tools to address employee non-compliance. An analysis of this grouping confirms that these two items do load together with values of .811 (Table 15).

Table 15 Factor Analysis for Progressive Discipline

	Component Matrix (a) Component 1
Item 16 (VerbWarn)	.811
Item 17 (WritPerfCouns)	.811

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis
a. 1 component extracted

The final grouping of items was the re-coded Survey Items # 8, # 10, and # 15. Much like the previous factor analysis groupings, Survey Items # 8new, # 10new do appear to load together and measure the construct “Traditional Discipline.” However, Survey Item

#15new does not load together with a value of .318 (Table 16). This may possibly mean that there exists some other potential latent factor. Perhaps there exists another factor related to supervisor orientation to employee discipline. The fact that there may be supervisors or managers who ignore employee non-compliance may better fit into a factor related to this orientation component.

Table 16 Factor Analysis for Traditional Discipline

	Component Matrix (a)	
	Component	
	1	2
Item 8new(Punish)	.668	-.508
Item 10 new(Term)	.787	.079
Item 15new(Ignore)	.318	.872

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis
a. 2 components extracted

Based upon our factor analysis of all the employee discipline survey items, it is clear that in general terms the data set of responses measures multiple constructs or factors, meaning that the data is multidimensional. However, factor analysis did reveal at least four (4) constructs. For example, Survey Items # 6, # 7, # 19, and # 21 do appear to load together, and do appear to be measuring the same construct. This construct could be called “Internal Organizational Disciplinary Structure.”

Likewise, it would appear that Survey Items # 12, # 13, and # 14 load together and measure a second construct, “Positive Supervisor-Employee Relations.”

Thirdly, Survey Items # 16 and #17 measure the belief in “Progressive Discipline.” This construct measures the extent to which respondents believe in the value of verbal

warnings and written performance counseling statements as progressive employee discipline tools.

Finally, the factor analysis of re-coded items # 8new, # 10new, and #15new reveals that 8new and 10new are measuring the same construct or factor, “Traditional Discipline.” However, the item related to whether or not supervisors tend to ignore non-compliant behavior may, in fact, measure supervisory orientation or activity rather than a belief in traditional discipline systems to correct non-compliance.

A Comparison of Mean Scores for Survey Items 6-21

A review of the mean scores for each of the 21 items, grouped according to the four possible factors previously mentioned, will allow the investigator to determine whether or not the mean scores and standard deviations for each factor, or grouping of survey items, are similar (Table 17).

Table 17 Comparison of Survey Item Mean Scores: Sorted by Common Categories or Factors

Survey Item and Wording	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
6: My hospital has clear, written policies and procedures related to employee discipline	199	2	5	4.68	.564
7: All employees are oriented to employee discipline policies and procedures upon their initial hire into the organization	198	1	5	4.27	.920
19: I believe hospital employee discipline policies and procedures are applied consistently to each employee	199	1	5	3.45	.988
21: I believe that my hospital's	198	2	5	3.97	.656

policies and procedures related to employee discipline are effective in correcting employee non-compliance <i>Internal Organizational Disciplinary Structure</i>				4.48	.638
12: I believe that open communication between supervisors and direct reports is important in improving employee compliance	199	4	5	4.84	.364
13: I believe that trust between supervisors and direct reports is important in improving employee compliance	199	3	5	4.75	.489
14: I believe that employees should participate in the development of their own discipline improvement plan <i>Positive Supervisor-Employee Relations</i>	198	2	5	4.06	.844
				4.22	.925
16: I believe that most of our supervisors and managers utilize verbal warnings to improve the compliance of their employees	199	2	5	3.88	.693
17: I believe that most of our supervisors and managers use written behavior counseling with their non-compliant employees <i>Progressive Discipline</i>	199	2	5	3.59	.853
				3.73	.629
8: I believe that employee non-compliance can be corrected with punishment	198	1	5	3.69	.993
10: I believe that most non-compliant employees are eventually terminated	199	1	5	2.95	1.060
15: I believe that most of our supervisors and managers ignore the non-compliance of their employees <i>Traditional Discipline</i>	199	1	5	3.41	.943
				3.35	.717
9: I believe that employee non-compliance can usually be corrected with performance counseling	198	2	5	4.01	.629
11: I believe that most non-	197	1	5	3.25	.774

compliant employees are eventually rehabilitated through performance counseling					
18: I believe that most of our supervisors and managers use written behavior contracts with their non-compliant employees.	196	1	5	2.80	1.026
20: Managers and supervisors are given latitude to apply hospital policies and procedures related to employee discipline.	199	1	5	3.22	1.050

Survey Items # 6 and # 7 asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with statements related to their organizational policies and procedures related to employee discipline. The mean score on Item # 6, for example, indicates a strong belief on the part of respondents that their respective institutions have in place clear policies and procedures related to employee discipline. Similarly, the mean score on Item # 7 indicates that these same respondents are convinced that their employees are appropriately oriented to these disciplinary rules (Table 17).

The next highest mean scores occur with Items # 12 and #13 (Table 17). Strong agreement with these survey items would appear to indicate that respondents appreciate the importance of open communication between supervisor and employee, and trust between supervisor and employee. While survey item # 14 related to employee participation would appear to be logically linked to items # 12 and #13, at least philosophically, the lower mean score of 4.06 and significantly higher standard deviation of .844 would seem to signal some difference in this item. Although strong

support for the first two “markers,” the relatively tepid enthusiasm for employee participation in the employee discipline process would appear to indicate much less support for this particular supervisor-employee element.

Reflecting this same commitment to more progressive means of discipline, respondents responded favorably to Item # 9 indicating a belief in the effectiveness of performance counseling statements in correcting employee non-compliance (Table 17). These results are further supported by the uniform disagreement with the value of punishment to correct employee non-compliance as evidenced by responses to Item # 8.

It is interesting to note that the majority of respondents reported that their supervisors and managers do not use written behavior contracts as an affirmative discipline tool (Table 15). This may reflect either unfamiliarity with the use of written behavior contracts for disciplinary purposes or, perhaps, a lack of institutional experience with formal affirmative employee discipline policies and procedures. It also may reflect a lack of familiarity with the term as utilized by the investigator.

There would appear to be some survey items which factor together, or address the same basic, fundamental construct. For example, items # 6 and # 7 ask respondents to comment on “Internal Organizational Disciplinary Structure.” That is, do hospitals in Florida possess clear, written employee disciplinary policies and are employees oriented to these policies. Given the fact that these items have similar mean scores and given that they appear to elicit perceptions on policy-related matters, these two items may indeed be measuring the same construct.

Likewise, it appears that survey items #8new, #10new, and #15new load together as they reflect a traditional perception of employee discipline. These three items were ones that needed to be re-coded given that they were worded differently from all other survey items. These items seem to be measuring “Traditional Employee Discipline.”

The markers for positive supervisor-employee relations are open communication, trust, and employee participation. Again, it would appear that those items related to these markers – Survey Items # 12, #13, and #14 - are measuring the same underlying construct, “Positive Supervisor-Employee Relations.” These three items reflect fairly high mean scores as well (Table 17).

Finally, respondents were asked to what extent the typical progressive disciplinary tools of verbal warnings and written performance counseling statements were utilized within their hospital . Survey Items # 16 and # 17 would appear to be measuring “Progressive Discipline.”

Summary of Methodology

In the view of the researcher, no significant survey-based research study has been completed on the attitudes relative to employee discipline that are held by Florida’s hospital administrators. This research study fills that gap in the research.

Using a survey-based design, the primary investigator answered a number of research questions related to employee discipline. The results from this research will

be of use to hospital administrators in the future in reviewing their respective employee discipline systems and determining the value inherent in those systems. This study has represented a significant contribution to the area of strategic human resource management and to the theories related to employee discipline systems.

Given the relatively unprecedented nature of this particular study, the survey instruments and research procedures were developed by the primary investigator. Every effort was exercised to make these instruments and procedures as appropriate, yet convenient, as possible for the hospital leaders who completed the respective employee discipline surveys. These instruments did, however, mirror current theory and research in the fields of affirmative and progressive employee discipline.

A comparison of mean scores among respondents based on demographic variables revealed some significant differences.

Finally, no IRB concerns existed within this survey-based study as individual hospital administrators did not have to complete the survey, nor did they have to be concerned that their responses could be linked back to them. Therefore no informed consent was required as part of this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Summary of Descriptive Data: Sample

The response to this employee discipline survey appears to be adequate but not excellent. Close to 200 surveys were completed and returned. In the view of this investigator, the ease with which the survey could be mailed back to the investigator and the anonymous nature of the survey itself facilitated this manner of response. However, the response rate was only 33 percent thus raising the possibility that our sample of respondents may be biased.

One of the most critical questions that this research sought to answer was whether or not Florida hospital administrators and Human Resources Directors believe that their respective institutions have established an appropriate disciplinary infra-structure in terms of employee discipline policies, in general, and employee discipline orientation systems, in particular. The belief on the part of the most senior hospital leadership that their institution possesses such an internal employee disciplinary structure would be the best possible indicator that these internal disciplinary structures permeate Florida's hospitals. This belief in internal employee disciplinary structure was addressed in the first research question.

Research Question # 1: How many Respondents Believe that their Institutions have Formal Policies and Procedures detailing Employee Discipline Philosophies and Systems?

The large majority of respondents surveyed believe that their institutions possess formal internal employee disciplinary policies and procedures. In fact, 98% of respondents expressed either agreement or strong agreement with the statement that such internal disciplinary policies and procedures exist (Table 18). Moreover, 83% of respondents believe that employees are appropriately oriented to these internal employee disciplinary policies and procedures (Table 18).

Table 18 Employee Disciplinary Policies Exist in Organization

<i>Clear, Written Policies</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	143	71.9
Agree	52	26.1
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	1	.5
Disagree	3	1.5
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	199	100.0

Clearly, the Florida respondents are confident that formal written disciplinary policies and procedures exist and that their employees are appropriately oriented to these procedures. The overwhelming belief in the value of formal employee disciplinary procedures does not, however, indicate that these same administrators are strong supporters of the use of formal punishment to correct employee non-compliance. In fact,

the second research question asked whether or not hospital leaders believe that punishment is an effective disciplinary tool.

Research Question # 2: To what Extent do Respondents Believe that Punishment is the most Effective Discipline Tool?

Respondents do not believe that punishment corrects employee non-compliance. In fact, 58% of respondents expressed some level of disagreement with the belief in punishment as an effective disciplinary tool (Table 19).

Table 19 Punishment Can Correct Non-Compliance

<i>Punishment</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	3	1.5
Agree	20	10.1
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	59	29.6
Disagree	69	34.7
Strongly Disagree	<u>47</u>	<u>23.6</u>
	198	100.0

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

This would seem to indicate that traditional employee discipline systems are no longer supported philosophically or operationally by respondents. Since these respondents would have the most significant impact on internal employee disciplinary policies and procedures, their disregard for the use of punishment as an effective

disciplinary tool is a clear indicator that traditional employee discipline is non-existent in Florida's hospital systems.

In addition, respondents also appear to believe in the value of internal employee disciplinary policies and procedures to correct existing employee non-compliance. This basic progressive philosophy is pervasive among the respondents as evidenced by their strong belief in the "correctability" of employee non-compliance. This belief represented the third research question in this study.

Research Question # 3: To what Extent do Respondents Believe that Employee Non-compliance is Correctable?

Not only do the respondents believe that internal employee disciplinary systems are essential to ensuring employee compliance, they also believe that most employee non-compliance is fundamentally open to "correction." This progressive philosophy is captured in the responses provided to the two survey items related to the use of verbal warnings and written performance counseling.

Over 83% of respondents believe that the supervisors in their hospitals utilize verbal warnings as part of a progressive employee disciplinary system (Table 20). In addition, 84% of respondents believe that a second progressive discipline tool, the written performance counseling statement, is an effective tool in improving employee non-compliance (Table 20). This strongly held belief in the utilization and effectiveness of progressive disciplinary tools is a clear indicator that progressive employee discipline

systems are pervasive in Florida hospitals. Moreover, these results indicate the existence of an inherently progressive philosophy among respondents that when given the opportunity to improve non-compliance, an employee will indeed demonstrate improved compliance.

Table 20 Progressive Discipline Tools Utilized to Correct Non-Compliance

<i>Verbal Warnings</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	23	11.6
Agree	143	71.9
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	19	9.5
Disagree	14	7.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
	199	100.0
 <i>Performance Counseling</i>		
Strongly Agree	36	18.1
Agree	132	66.3
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	26	13.1
Disagree	4	2.0
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
	198	99.5

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

However, while apparently strong believers in progressive disciplinary tools to elicit improved employee compliance, respondents do not express the same level of conviction that the improved performance generated is enough to save the employee's job with the organization. No clear consensus resulted from respondents asked the question whether or not most non-compliant employees were ultimately terminated (Table 21). While over 36% of respondents disagreed with this statement, 35% agreed.

Nearly 29% of respondents expressed ambivalence to this statement with a “Neither Agree Nor Disagree” (Table 21).

Table 21 Perceptions that Non-Compliant Employees are Terminated versus Rehabilitated

<i>Employees Terminated</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	19	9.5
Agree	51	25.6
Neither agree Nor Disagree	57	28.6
Disagree	64	32.2
Strongly Disagree	8	4.0
	199	100.0
 <i>Employees Rehab.</i>		
Strongly Agree	7	3.5
Agree	68	34.2
Neither agree Nor Disagree	91	45.7
Disagree	30	15.1
Strongly Disagree	1	.5
	197	99.0

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

A similar level of dissonance is expressed in the responses to the question whether or not most non-compliant employees are rehabilitated. Nearly 38% of respondents believe that employees can be rehabilitated, whereas nearly 16% disagree. Over 45% express neither agreement nor disagreement with this statement (Table 21).

It appears that while progressive in their philosophy, respondents still maintain some cynicism over whether or not non-compliant employees can be “saved.” This may reflect a belief that non-compliant employees tend to be disproportionately represented in agency turnover rates. It also may reflect an underlying belief that progressive discipline is more effective as a means of documenting employee due process than it is as a means of rehabilitating employee non-compliance.

A fourth research question asked respondents to express their level of agreement that open communication, trust, and employee participation are necessary elements to ensure positive supervisor-employee relations. Answers to these related survey items confirm that respondents are committed, at least philosophically, to progressive and affirmative employee disciplinary procedures.

Research Question # 4: To What Extent do Respondents Believe that Open Communication, Trust, and Employee Participation are Essential Elements to Ensure Positive Employer-Manager Relations?

While respondents clearly believe in the value of progressive employee disciplinary procedures, they also appear to believe that such procedures help to ensure that supervisors and employees maintain positive relations.

The three key markers for healthy supervisor-employee relations are open communication, trust, and employee participation in the process. Aforementioned survey results demonstrate that Florida respondents are dedicated, at least philosophically, to progressive discipline. Results to the fourth research question demonstrate an overwhelmingly positive belief in the value of these markers for ensuring positive supervisor-employee relations.

One-hundred percent of respondents believe that open communication between supervisor and employee is important to ensure improved employee compliance (Table 22). Likewise, 97.5% of respondents believe that trust between supervisor and employee is important (Table 22). Finally, 79% of respondents agree that employee participation is important in improving employee compliance (Table 22).

Table 22 Commitment to Open Communication, Trust, and Employee Participation

<i>Open Communication</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	168	84.4
Agree	31	15.6
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	199	100.0
<i>Trust</i>		
Strongly Agree	154	77.4
Agree	40	20.1
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	5	2.5
Disagree	0	0.0
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	199	100.0
<i>Employee Participation</i>		
Strongly Agree	64	32.2
Agree	93	46.7
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	29	14.6
Disagree	12	6.0
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	198	100.0

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

Florida respondents appear to appreciate the need for open communication, trust, and employee participation as essential elements within their institutions' employee disciplinary systems. In most cases, this belief system is reflected in the utilization of verbal warnings and written performance counseling by supervisors to address

employee non-compliance. However, there was less agreement concerning employee participation since more than twenty percent either did not agree or expressed no opinion one way or the other.

Research Question # 5: How Many Hospitals Utilize Verbal Warnings and Written Performance Counseling as part of a Progressive Employee Discipline System?

Verbal warnings and written performance counseling statements are staples within progressive employee discipline systems. To determine how pervasive the use of these tools are within Florida's hospitals, the investigator asked administrators to respond to two items (# 16 and # 17) which are related to verbal warnings and written performance counseling statements.

The respondents expressed confidence that their supervisors are utilizing these two progressive discipline techniques to elicit improved employee compliance (Table 23). Over 83% of respondents indicated that supervisors utilize verbal warnings and 65% indicated that their supervisors utilize written performance counseling.

Table 23 Progressive Discipline Utilization in Organizations

<i>Verbal Warnings</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	23	11.6
Agree	143	71.9
Neither agree Nor Disagree	19	9.5
Disagree	14	7.0
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	199	100.0
 <i>Performance Counseling</i>		
Strongly Agree	36	18.1
Agree	132	66.3
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	26	13.1
Disagree	4	2.0
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	198	99.5

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

While clearly clinging to progressive disciplinary systems, Florida respondents appear to be willing to explore more affirmative types of employee discipline systems, including those affirmative employee disciplinary systems that utilize written behavior contracts.

Research Question # 6: How many Respondents Believe that Supervisors utilize Written Behavior Contracts as part of an Affirmative Employee Discipline System?

Written behavior contracts are a common affirmative employee discipline system tool. Respondents were asked to respond to whether or not they believed that written behavior contracts were being utilized by supervisors to elicit improved employee compliance. Results of this survey item indicate that most respondents were unfamiliar with the term “written behavior contracts,” or did not know the context within which the phrase was being used.

Only 28.6% of respondents answered in the affirmative to this item (Table 24). A total of 8 individuals (4%) answered with “Strongly Agree,” and 49 (24.6%) with “Agree.” Perhaps reflecting some unfamiliarity with the use of written behavior contracts for this purpose, 49 people (24.6%) answered with “Neither Agree nor Disagree.” Nearly 45% of respondents answered with either “Disagree” (76 respondents, 38.2%), or “Strongly Disagree” (14 respondents, 7%). It would appear that written behavior contracts are infrequently utilized as part of an affirmative employee discipline system in Florida’s hospitals.

Table 24 Belief that Supervisors Utilize Written Behavior Contracts

<i>Written Behavior Contracts</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	8	4.0
Agree	49	24.6
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	49	24.6
Disagree	76	38.2
Strongly Disagree	14	7.0
	196	98.5

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

It may well be that a contributing factor in the widespread unfamiliarity with the use of written behavior contracts to elicit improved employee compliance is a general concern for giving supervisors too much flexibility or autonomy to execute employee disciplinary procedures. Affirmative employee discipline systems require that supervisors assume and exercise greater latitude in disciplining non-compliant employees. This assumption, while one which respondents may be willing to talk about, appears not to be an assumption that they are comfortable in implementing in their respective institutions. Fear of employee-initiated wrongful termination lawsuits or civil rights law suits may be a motivation behind a general reluctance on the part of respondents to give supervisors too much autonomy in exercising employee disciplinary procedures.

This fear may represent one of the reasons while respondents expressed widely divergent opinions on the seventh research question related to supervisory autonomy.

Research Question # 7: How many Respondents Believe Managers must be given Flexibility in Executing Employee Discipline Policies?

The effective implementation of an affirmative employee discipline system requires greater flexibility and responsibility on the part of the manager/supervisor to execute organizational discipline policies and procedures. There would appear to be some level of discord among respondents on this point. Ninety (90) respondents (43.9%) answered

with “Agree” (Table 25). Eleven (11) respondents (5.4%) answered with “Strongly Agree.” However, a substantial number of respondents answered with “Neither Agree nor Disagree” (43 respondents, 21%). Forty-two (42) people (20.5%) answered with “Disagree,” and 13 people (6.3%) with “Strongly Disagree.”

Table 25 Latitude should be given Supervisors to Discipline Employees

<i>Latitude to Discipline</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	11	5.4
Agree	90	43.9
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	43	21.0
Disagree	42	20.5
Strongly Disagree	<u>13</u>	<u>6.3</u>
	199	100.0

Clearly there appear to be limits to the respondents’ willingness to allow supervisors autonomy in exercising existing employee disciplinary policies. Again, this may be a function of fear over lawsuits brought by angry, recently-terminated employees, a general lack of familiarity with the use of written behavior contracts to address employee non-compliance, or a reflection of a high level of respondent satisfaction with existing progressive disciplinary systems.

Research Question # 8: How Many Respondents Perceive their Institutions' Current Employee Discipline System as Effective in Rehabilitating Employee Non-compliance?

The final exploratory research question asked respondents to evaluate the overall effectiveness of their organizations' respective employee discipline systems in rehabilitating non-compliant employees. Respondents believe strongly that existing employee disciplinary systems are effective in improving non-compliance.

An overwhelming number of respondents expressed agreement with this statement (Table 26). One hundred and thirty-one (131) respondents (65.8%) answered with agreement, and 34 respondents (17.1%) with strong agreement. Only 6 respondents (3%) answered with disagreement. Twenty-seven (27) people (13.6%) answered with "Neither Agree nor Disagree."

Table 26 Employee Discipline Policies are Effective

<i>Effectiveness of Policies</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	34	17.1
Agree	131	65.8
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	27	13.6
Disagree	6	3.0
Strongly Disagree	<u>0</u>	<u>0.0</u>
	198	99.5

Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding error

This appears to signal a strong belief on the part of respondents in the overall effectiveness of institutional policies and procedures surrounding employee discipline in

eliciting improved employee compliance. The fact that only 3% of respondents expressed disagreement with the statement that their institution possesses effective employee disciplinary policies and procedures is significant and indicates a strong belief that their hospitals are benefiting from effective employee disciplinary practices.

A corollary to this strong belief in the effectiveness of existing employee disciplinary policies and procedures is a belief that supervisors are actively addressing recognized employee non-compliance. When asked whether or not supervisors ignore employee non-compliance, 55% of respondents answered with disagreement. However, nearly 20% expressed agreement with this statement, and 25% answered with “Neither Agree Nor Disagree” (Table 27).

Table 27 Supervisors Ignore Employee Non-Compliance

<i>Ignore Non-Compliance</i>	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	5	2.5
Agree	34	17.1
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	50	25.1
Disagree	95	47.7
Strongly Disagree	<u>15</u>	<u>7.5</u>
	199	100.0

There would appear to be a nagging suspicion among many respondents that some supervisors do in fact ignore employee non-compliance. While not necessarily believing this lack of supervisory engagement to be pervasive, many respondents believe that vestiges of this poor supervisory style exist in their institution to a degree.

This suspicion may be a function of the lack of faith in existing supervisory skill sets or a belief that the employees who currently occupy supervisory positions are not competent in the area of employee discipline. It may also be a reflection that no institutional policy, whether it be disciplinary or not, can be enforced with consistency and accuracy 100% of the time. Notwithstanding the existence of this suspicion, administrators are strong believers in the quality of their employee disciplinary policies and procedures.

Up until this point, the explanation of results has been based upon descriptive analysis of responses provided by respondents. These results allowed the investigator to describe the sample and to determine whether or not that sample is representative of the population.

Descriptive analysis also allowed the investigator to answer the eight exploratory research questions relative current perceptions held by respondents.

However, to determine whether or not more substantive or significant relationships exist within the responses to the survey items, the investigator will proceed to analyze results using inferential and quantitative statistical analysis. Inferential analysis and data manipulation will allow the investigator to determine whether or not the data is uni-dimensional or multi-dimensional. It also will allow the investigator to confirm whether or not any individual survey items “load” or “factor” together. That is, do certain survey items describe the same basic underlying construct or factor.

In order to perform these more quantitative statistical tests, the investigator must first transform those survey items worded differently from the majority of survey items. This transformation requires the investigator to ensure that all survey items are numerically coded in the same way, or in a consistent fashion.

Prior to running any further analysis of the four possible factors outlined in Chapter 3, the investigator must re-code survey items # 8, # 10, and # 15 for numerical consistency. This process is outlined in the next section.

Transformation of Data

Re-coding of Survey Items # 8, # 15, and # 10

In order to perform either reliability testing or factor analysis on the data it is necessary to re-code Survey Items # 8, # 15, and # 10. These three items differ from all the other items in that a score of “5,” “Strongly Agree,” actually represents a negative answer.

In order to render the responses to these three items analogous to those in the other 18 survey Items, the investigator re-coded the responses to these three items by simply replacing the respondent’s numeric response with the re-coded numeral on the opposite side of the Likert scale, a re-coding technique supported by Horst (1999).

Thus, a respondent score of “5” was re-coded as a “1,” a respondent score of “4” was re-coded as a “2,” a respondent score of “3” remained a “3” as this was a perfect middle score, a respondent score of “2” was re-coded as a “4,” and the respondent score of “1” was re-coded as a “5.” With this re-coding one is able to appropriately analyze the inter-item reliability among all survey items.

Data Transformation to Achieve Normal Distributions

In addition to the re-coding of the previously listed survey items, negatively skewed distributions for responses to Survey Items # 6, # 7, # 12, and # 13 had to be transformed using the square root for each item response. The use of the square root is a common method of this type of data transformation when the data in question are negatively skewed (Spatz, 2000). Once the transformations were performed, the individual survey items more closely approximated a normalized distribution.

Comparison of Means: T-Test and ANOVA

Given that the comparison of mean scores, reliability testing, and factor analysis in Chapter 3 yielded evidence of four possible factors, and given that we have transformed our data to achieve more normal distributions, one can begin the process of seeing if

there exists statistically significant differences across groups within these four new latent constructs. Generally this can be completed in one of two ways. First, T-tests can be run if we are comparing variables across two groups. However, if there are more than two samples, the investigator must rely on analysis of variance.

When two groups exist and one wants to compare the means between each group, a T-test is utilized. T-distributions are based upon the size of the sample, the number of indicators (variables), and the standard deviation of the dependent variable. Each distribution will be different depending upon these aforementioned factors.

T-distributions are identified by their degrees of freedom. There is a different T-distribution for each degree of freedom. Critical values can be determined and then deemed to be significant or not based upon the degrees of freedom. As one adds more cases to a particular sample, the more the T-distribution will approach a normal distribution. Having a larger sample is, therefore, important. As a rule of thumb, a T-value must be equal to or greater than 1.96 in order to be significant. If significant, then the investigator must reject the null hypothesis that the means between the groups is equal.

Analysis of variance, or ANOVA, will allow the investigator to determine whether or not differences in samples are significant enough to conclude that the samples under study came from different populations. ANOVA utilizes an F-test which allows the investigator to test the level of significance of means scores among two or more groups.

The use of one-way ANOVA can test differences in a single dependent variable among 2, 3, or more groups formed by an independent variable. If the F-test value or

score is less than .05 on any independent variable, then it is concluded that that independent variable does have an effect on the dependent variable. That is, an F value of less than .05 results in our ability to reject the null hypothesis that sample distributions are significantly different.

ANOVA testing and F scores depend on three basic elements: the size of the difference between group mean scores, the sample size of each group, and the variance in dependent variables. In addition, the F-test assumes that smaller sample sizes will necessarily result in group sample sizes that are more divergent and likely result in less than significant values.

For the four factors already confirmed, the investigator will run either a T-test or ANOVA against the independent demographic variables of tenure, job title, age, gender and race. An analysis of the results from this T-testing ANOVA testing should allow the investigator to determine whether or not the difference in sample means is significant enough to conclude that the real means do in fact differ.

Table 28 below represents the analysis of variance for the first latent variable or factor, "Internal Organizational Disciplinary Structure." A review of the results of this analysis reveals one significant difference across all the demographic categories (Table 28). There is a significant difference in mean scores for this factor, "Internal Organizational Disciplinary Structure," relative to the demographic independent variable of job tenure. The investigator has determined that among differently tenured employees, the mean scores do differ in terms of their responses to this factor as the F value of 4.234 has a significance of .016.

Table 28 Mean Differences New Latent Variable: Internal Organizational Disciplinary Structure

<i>Internal Disciplinary Structure</i>	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	F	Sig.
	<i>Tenure</i>				4.243	
	0-10 years	4.39	.688			.016**
	11-20 years	4.72	.400			
	21 years or more	4.59	.578			
	<i>Age</i>				.310	
	40-59 years old	4.48	.638			.734
	18-39 years old	4.43	.649			
	60 years or more	4.58	.674			
	<i>Race</i>				.621	
	White	4.49	.622			.648
	Hispanic	4.62	.618			
	Black	4.25	.920			
	American Indian	4.50	-			
	Two or More Races	4.00	-			
	<i>Job Title</i>					
	HR Administrator	4.44	.650	-1.078		.282
	CEO	4.54	.624			
	<i>Gender</i>					
	Male	4.15	1.001	1.188		.263
	Female	4.13	.811			

** Significant at the .05 level

It would appear that persons with both the shorter tenure with organizations have the least confidence that clear, written employee discipline policies exist and that employees are oriented to these policies. This is in comparison to those with tenure of 11-20 years who believe strongly in the efficacy of internal employee disciplinary structure. Given the very limited number of respondents over 60 who answered these survey items, the real difference may in fact lie between those with tenure ranges of 0-10 years and 11-20

years. Perhaps those with longer tenure, 11-20 years, are more institutionalized to the organization’s disciplinary policies and procedures and, therefore, less likely to criticize their substance or implementation.

An analysis of mean scores on the factor “Positive Supervisor-Employee Relations” reveals two significant relationships (Table 29). Persons of different genders do differ on their perceptions of positive supervisor –employee relations. The T-value stands at -2.070 and the significance value is less than .05 at .034. In addition, HR Administrators differ from CEO’s in their support of positive relations as evidenced by a T-value of 2.303 and a significance value of .022.

It would appear that female respondents and HR professionals are more likely to support trust, open communication, and employee participation in the discipline process than are their male and CEO counterparts. This may signal a generally more open and flexible attitude toward “human relationships” in the workplace setting on the part of females, or a belief in a more personal or “high touch” approach to employee relations.

Based on these data, length of tenure, age, and race do not appear to matter in terms of the responses to positive supervisor-employee relations.

Table 29 Mean Differences New Latent Variable: Positive Supervisor-Employee Relations

<i>Positive Relations</i>	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	F	Sig.
	<i>Tenure</i>				.920	
	0-10 years	4.21	.907			.400
	11-20 years	4.29	.852			
	21 years or more	4.14	1.109			
	<i>Age</i>				.259	
	40-59 years	4.22	.893			.772
	18-39 years	4.16	.955			

60 years or more	4.25	1.156		
<i>Race</i>			.838	
White	4.23	.915		.502
Hispanic	4.25	.944		
Black	4.09	.365		
American Indian	4.00	-		
Two or More Races	4.00	-		
<i>Job Title</i>				
HR Administrator	4.28	.864	2.303	.022**
CEO	4.13	.983		
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	4.15	1.001	-2.070	.034**
Female	4.29	.811		

** Significant at the .05 level

White, Hispanic and Black respondents have significantly higher scores for this construct than do respondents who self-identified as “American–Indian” or “Two or more races.” Please note, however, that the investigator violated an assumption for ANOVA since the number of “American-Indian” respondents and persons of “Two or More Races” was only one each.

A comparison of means for the third factor, “Progressive Discipline,” reveals one significant F-value of 2.652 for gender. This is a significant relationship given the significance value of .009 (Table 30). Therefore the investigator must reject the null hypothesis that all the group means scores on this dependent variable are the same for men and women and conclude that males are more likely to believe and support progressive discipline than are their female counterparts.

Table 30 Mean Differences New Latent Variable: Progressive Discipline

<i>Progressive Discipline</i>	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	F	Sig.
	<i>Tenure</i>				.068	
	0-10 years	3.72	.626			.934
	11-20 years	3.74	.732			
	21 years or more	3.77	.518			
	<i>Age</i>				.692	
	40-59 years	3.70	.057			.502
	18-39 years	3.84	.562			
	60 years or more	3.80	.523			
	<i>Race</i>				.496	
	White	3.73	.620			.739
	Hispanic	3.62	.820			
	Black	3.95	.643			
	American Indian	4.00	-			
	Two or More Races	4.00	-			
	<i>Job Title</i>					
	HR Administrator	3.74	.651	.109		.913
	CEO	3.73	.607			
	<i>Gender</i>					
	Male	3.85	.587	2.652		.009***
	Female	3.61	.656			

***Significant at the .01 level

The fourth construct, “Traditional Discipline,” also reveals no F values that are significant (Table 31). Group mean scores for this factor do not differ among the demographic variables of tenure, job title, race, gender, and age.

Table 31 Mean Differences New Latent Variable: Traditional Discipline

<i>Traditional Discipline</i>	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	F	Sig.
	<i>Tenure</i>				1.833	
	0-10 years	2.71	.786			.163
	11-20 years	2.64	.507			
	21 years or more	2.42	.580			
	<i>Age</i>				.291	
	40-59 years	2.66	.758			.748
	18-39 years	2.60	.648			
	60 years or more	2.76	.486			
	<i>Race</i>				.776	
	White	2.66	.730			.542
	Hispanic	2.48	.572			

Black	2.76	.740		
American Indian	3.66	-		
Two or More Races	2.33	-		
<i>Job Title</i>				
HR Administrator	2.68	.817	.614	.143
CEO	2.62	.566		
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	2.62	.581	-.791	.248
Female	2.70	.840		

Post Hoc Testing: Bonferroni Correction

Post hoc tests, like the Bonferroni Correction, allow the investigator to confirm if differences in values between groups is indeed significant. Bonferroni works by estimating a minimum difference between group means that is significant at some level. Then a test is run to compare this minimum difference to the real difference to confirm significance.

Bonferroni is, however, a rather conservative post hoc test with only low to moderate power. The investigator is in effect dividing the total error rate to be maintained – in this case .05 – by the total number of tests to be conducted.

A Bonferroni post hoc test comparing the means of respondents with different tenures and different ages can assist in confirming whether or not the mean difference values between groups is significant from the others.

Table 32 reveals that there is a significant difference in means between respondents with 0-10 years of tenure as compared to those with 11-20 years of tenure in the factor “Internal Organizational Disciplinary Structure.”

Table 32 Bonferroni Post Hoc Test for Internal Organizational Disciplinary Structure

Dependent Variable: DiscStruct
Bonferroni

Variable		Mean Diff.	Sig.
<i>Tenure</i>			
0-10 years	0-10 years		
	11-20 years	-.32148	.020
	21 years or more	-.19455	.417
11-20 years	0-10 years	.32148	.020
	11-20 years		
	21 years or more	.12693	1.000
21 years or more	0-10 years	.19455	.417
	11-20 years	-1.12693	1.000
	21 years or more		

Using Bonferroni post hoc testing, the investigator has confirmed the existence of significant differences in mean difference values between persons with different lengths of tenure. In other words, through this post hoc test, the investigator has confirmed that real differences exist between persons with shorter and longer tenure in the belief in internal disciplinary structures. This post hoc test also confirms and reinforces the significance of the ANOVA F-value of 4.243 and significance of .016 as noted in Table 28.

Respondents' Written Comments: A Sample

Of the 199 surveys completed and returned to the investigator, 59 (31%) included written comments to Survey Item # 22. Item # 22 offered respondents the opportunity to

offer written comments to the following prompt: “What changes (if any) would you like to see in your agency’s disciplinary processes?”

Almost one-half of the respondents who offered written comments (26 out of 59, 45%) cited the need for greater consistency in the application of the facility’s policies and procedures related to employee discipline. In fact, this one theme clearly speaks to the belief on the part of Florida’s healthcare leaders that their institutions would be better served in terms of rehabilitating employee non-compliance by better training and oversight of managers and supervisors on the specific and consistent application of organizational discipline policies and procedures.

A sample of respondents’ comments to Item # 22 regarding the issue of consistency (or the lack thereof) follows:

“More clearly defined policies and consistent application of policies across departments”

“Consistent application throughout the facility”

“Improving consistency to 100% is always an area to work on”

“More consistent application”

“Better consistency in applying”

“More training for front line supervisors so they can be more effective and consistent in applying policies and procedures”

“I would like to see all supervisors enforcing disciplinary procedures in the same manner – some are strict and others look away!”

“Consistency with all departments is difficult to achieve”

“Need to improve consistency and willingness of supervisors to counsel

positives as well as negatives”

“Consistency across the board with Directors/Supervisors”

The lack of consistency in application of existing disciplinary policies was noted in the responses to survey item # 19 in which a relatively large minority of administrators surveyed, approximately 42%, disagreed with the statement that internal employee disciplinary policies are applied consistently by supervisors and managers to each employee.

The only other theme to emerge from the respondents’ written comments included references to a need to involve Human Resources (HR) professionals in order to more effectively apply employee discipline policies.

These comments surrounding HR involvement included the following:

“Consistency is often dependent upon involvement from HR — need a process to involve HR”

“More use of human resources consultants to ensure consistency across departments”

“Prompt communication of issues to HR to guide process. Most times happens, but not always!”

“I would like disciplinary procedures to be enforced consistently, with HR being present for disciplinary action”

Although no other theme emerged from the comments elicited through Item # 22, four surveys returned had comments indicating an institution with a split civilian and military workforce.

Interestingly enough, these surveys noted that a bifurcated discipline system exists wherein military personnel were treated more rigidly than their federal civilian counterparts. Comments by the respective respondents indicated frustration with this bifurcated system, and a desire to be able to exert greater control over the federal civilian employees. These comments would appear to reflect the lack of consistency in exercising employee disciplinary procedures that is also clearly evident based upon comments from other healthcare administrators.

These comments would appear to support the pervasiveness of clearly defined progressive disciplinary systems with specific steps or responses to employee transgressions based upon the frequency and the severity of the transgression in question.

Written comments offered by Florida's healthcare leaders indicate that they favor less managerial autonomy and flexibility for supervisors and managers. Instead, these written comments indicate a desire on the part of institutional leaders to inculcate specific policies and procedures related to employee discipline and to foster an organizational atmosphere wherein those same policies and procedures are followed consistently from manager to manager, and from department to department.

Summary of Research

The majority of Florida respondents report utilization of internal progressive employee disciplinary policies and procedures. These policies not only exist, but are conveyed to employees during orientations. The use of verbal warnings and performance counseling is pervasive.

Most respondents support a flexible, open supervisory style characterized by open communication, trust, and employee participation in the disciplinary process. Although philosophically supportive of positive supervisor-employee relations and progressive discipline techniques, these same respondents appear to hold some doubt as to the ultimate success of such progressive tools in preventing a non-compliant employee's termination.

Few respondents indicated a wide-spread use of affirmative, written behavior contracts as an employee discipline tool. There is some doubt that those surveyed even appreciate that such written behavior contracts exist as an affirmative discipline tool.

A statistically significant difference exists in that female respondents expressed greater support for positive human relationships characterized by trust, open communication, and employee participation between supervisor and employee than did their male counterparts. This may very well reflect a bias on the part of female administrators toward "high-touch," personalized supervisor-employee relations. This may also reflect a greater tendency on the part of female administrators to utilize a more compassionate, empathetic management style to supervisor-employee conflict. The

investigator will speculate further on the relationship between this significant finding and the literature on gender-based differences in management in Chapter 5.

A second statistically significant difference exists in that respondents with shorter tenure on the job have less confidence than their longer tenured colleagues that internal employee disciplinary policies and procedures are in place and that employees are indeed oriented to these policies. This may reflect a greater willingness to improve or change existing processes in the name of continuous quality improvement on the part of respondents who are less invested and, perhaps, less institutionalized to the organization's corporate philosophy. It may well be that shorter tenured respondents are more likely to be agents of change within organizations than their longer tenured brethren.

Another significant gender-based difference exists in that male respondents are stronger believers in the merits of progressive employee discipline tools such as verbal warnings and performance counseling statements than are female respondents. In context with the previously mentioned conclusion that women tend to demonstrate a greater belief in a personalized, open, and empathetic orientation to supervisor-employee relations, male respondents seem to hold fast to the belief that existing, in-house progressive employee disciplinary techniques are more effective and valuable in eliciting improved employee compliance than a more free-form, personalized style of discipline. It is likely that male respondents are willing to support hard-and-fast "rules of engagement" surrounding employee discipline whereas female respondents are more

willing to allow for a more personalized, flexible style to employee discipline transactions.

A fourth, and final, statistically significant difference exists between HR Administrators and CEO's in terms of their respective belief in positive supervisor-employee relations. It would appear that HR professionals are more inclined to appreciate the value of positive supervisor-employee relations than their CEO counterparts. Perhaps HR professionals, being more steeped in those disciplinary philosophies, policies and procedures governing employee discipline, have greater knowledge and confidence in their efficacy.

The investigator will speculate further on these issues in Chapter 5.

Written comments provided by respondents revealed two other common themes or trends among Florida's healthcare elite. First, many respondents would like to see greater consistency in the application of existing employee disciplinary policies and procedures. It is apparent that respondents do not want to run the risk of employee-initiated lawsuits or other employment law actions that are based upon inconsistent application of otherwise clear and valuable policies and procedures. Second, many respondents believe that a greater involvement of Human Resources (HR) professionals within individual employee discipline actions will result in greater consistency in application and less risk to the organization legally.

The data related to employee discipline is clearly multi-dimensional; survey items are measuring a number of different underlying factors. There does appear to be at least four general factors at work, however. These four factors are internal organizational

disciplinary structure, positive supervisor-employee relations, progressive discipline and traditional discipline.

The following tables provide a summary of those items on which respondents express consensus (Table 33) and those items on which respondents do not express consensus (Table 34).

Table 33 Employee Discipline Survey Items Generating Greatest Respondent Consensus

Item	Respondents	Respondents that Agree or Strongly Agree	Percentage
<i>Organization has clear, written policies</i>	199	195	98%
<i>Employees Oriented to Policies</i>	198	165	83%
<i>Use of Verbal Warnings</i>	199	166	83.5%
<i>Use of Performance Counseling</i>	198	168	84.4%
<i>Value of Open Communication</i>	199	199	100%
<i>Value of Trust</i>	199	194	97.5%
<i>Value of Employee Participation</i>	198	157	78.9%
<i>Discipline Policies are Effective</i>	198	165	82.9%

Table 34 Employee Discipline Survey Items Generating Greatest Respondent Variability

Item	Respondents	Respondents who Strongly Agree or Agree	Percentage	Respondents who Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Percentage
<i>Non-Compliant Employees are Terminated</i>	199	70	35%	72	36%
<i>Non-Compliant Employees are Rehabilitated</i>	199	75	38%	31	16%
<i>Latitude should be given to Supervisors</i>	199	101	51%	55	28%

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF RESEARCH RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Research Results

One hundred and ninety-nine (199) employees in Florida's hospitals responded to an employee discipline survey. This represents a response rate of 33%.

Nearly 90% of the respondents to this survey identified their race as "White." The large number of "White" respondents does mirror the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) findings on the relatively small percentage of non-White professionals who participate in the medical profession. This fact may prove to be a hindrance for some hospitals in terms of adequately addressing the cultural sensitivities and needs of all of its employees, regardless of their skin color. Indeed, the lack of cultural sensitivity and diversity among respondents may reflect a failure to address different "...backgrounds, cultures, attitudes, expectations, goals, education, experience, and prejudices..." common sources of manager-employee conflict (Lieberman, Rotarius, and Kendall, 1997, p. 20).

The overwhelming majority of respondents report that their institutions have implemented very clear and specific policies and procedures related to employee discipline. Moreover, it would appear that most hospital employees are oriented to these policies and procedures upon hire into their respective hospitals. As McConnell (2002) noted, such communication of policies and procedures is a "fundamental" task of management. Open communication of disciplinary policies and procedures reflects

Lieberman et al (1997) and their contention that accepting atmospheres and settings conducive to discussion will allow managers and employees to surmount seemingly irreconcilable differences. Open communication would appear to make the job of managing employees easier (Bruhn, 2001), as well as enhance the chance that supervisor and employee will understand one another (Byron, Holmes, Steckol, and Yager, 2002). Inherent in this perception of the value of open communication is the need to listen to each other's point of view or perspective (Douglas, 2003).

The clear and open communication of employee disciplinary procedures may also result in the employee keeping his/her performance on target which is the basic goal of progressive and affirmative discipline systems (Milkovich and Boudreau, 1988). Respondents to this study's survey would appear to believe strongly that open communication will create conditions wherein positive and rewarding action is likely (Costley, Santana-Melgoza, and Todd, 1994).

The communication and inculcation of these fundamental employee discipline policies and procedures is clearly a responsibility that should be owned by all levels of staff of management (Imundo, 1985), and as a fundamental and necessary aspect of every organization's performance appraisal system (Chandra and Frank, 2004).

Florida healthcare consumers can take some level of comfort in knowing that their hospitals possesses this level of employee disciplinary structure and accompanying communication channels.

The respondents are split on whether or not employee non-compliance is "correctable" through the use of traditional discipline or punishment. While a number of

respondents surveyed perceived employee non-compliance as “correctable,” a number did not believe that punishment was the appropriate mechanism. Few respondents surveyed would argue that that the best way to address employee non-compliance is through “...invective, intimidation, and coercion” (Ramsey, 2003, p. 3). This would seem to indicate that Florida’s healthcare facilities do not fit the model of a traditional workplace wherein discipline is synonymous with punishment (Odiorne, 1984).

A number of respondents were non-committal in their response to the issue of punishment, reflecting unfamiliarity with such an obsolete employee discipline tool or concept or a basic distaste for the utilization of such traditional sanctions. Completed surveys revealed no respondents who would abide by the autocratic, harsh, and controlling “Theory X” leadership style described by McGregor (1985). Respondents appear to be willing to compromise and work with their employees over the issue of discipline, a stance in direct opposition to those leaders who seek to exert control over employees as a method to gain and keep a competitive advantage (Kabanoff, 1987).

The three markers for positive supervisor-employee relations, as well as the foundation for affirmative disciplinary systems, are open communication between supervisor and employee, trust between supervisor and employee, and employee participation in the disciplinary process. Respondents expressed wholehearted support of these markers. Agreeing in very large numbers to the three survey items regarding these markers, those respondents surveyed appreciate the value of these elements, and believe them to be very important in improving the overall level of employee compliance within their facilities.

The respondents appear to support the philosophy calling for workplace atmospheres characterized by "...trust and open communication" (Roberts, 2002, p. 383). These same respondents also appear to be committed to using open communication to problem-solve, share information, and express feelings (Costley, Santana-Melgoza, and Todd, 1994).

Instead of trying to "control" the relationship with their employees, respondents appear to appreciate the basic fact that employees and managers alike are forming relationships to "...satisfy basic needs for love, companionship, security, stimulation, or financial stability (Malloch, 2002, p. 14). Respondents appear to recognize that employees are motivated by a variety of factors including social (Jones and Melcher, 1982), psychological (Kahn, 1959), or emotional (Wong and Law, 2002).

Employees are more likely to improve non-compliant behavior if they perceive that their managers and supervisors possess "behavioral integrity" (Simons, 2002). Cottringer (2003) emphasized the need for consistency in the application of discipline by managers and supervisors. Respondents seem to acknowledge the fact that they are, to some degree, dependent on the employee (Douglas, 2003). Respondents would appear to believe that managerial integrity, consistency, and vulnerability are important to positive relations with employees given their belief that managers and supervisors in their respective institutions are actively utilizing verbal warnings and written employee behavior counseling techniques.

Additionally, most respondents surveyed believe in the value of active engagement of the non-compliant employee in his/her own discipline improvement plan or process.

This belief certainly aligns quite well with Imundo's (1985) assertion that those employees who are involved in their own discipline are more likely to accept the rules and regulations that guide their behavior. It may also portend well for the future as hospital administrators seek to gain the "buy-in" of the employees in the organization's overall disciplinary processes (Bruhn, Zajac, and Al-Kazemi, 2001).

The mere fact that respondents try to involve employees in their own discipline issues would seem to increase the likelihood that the ultimate disciplinary actions are accepted by the employees (Reber and Van Gilder, 1982). They seem to believe that employees should have a "say" in employee discipline (Miley, O'Melia, and DuBois, 1998), and that by affording them this opportunity that "buy-in" will result (Bruhn, Zajac and Al-Kazemi, 2001).

The majority of respondents report the utilization of some type of step-based, progressive employee discipline system. Current disciplinary systems would appear to acknowledge the basic tenet that employees are motivated by social and psychological need fulfillment as much as they are by financial reward (R.L. Kahn, 1959). As such, these systems provide the employee both identification of the non-compliance as well as the opportunity to correct the non-compliance. Clearly, respondents want to "...help the employee change his or her own behavior" (Imundo and Eisert, 1982, p. 197).

Two of the most common progressive employee discipline tools – the verbal warning and the written performance counseling statement – appear to be utilized frequently within the responding hospitals. Respondents appear to be committed to the notion that the use of these tools can, indeed, facilitate "improved performance" among those

employees who are non-compliant. After all, affording the employee the opportunity to correct the misbehavior is a fundamental element in all progressive employee discipline systems (Rubin, 2002).

While those respondents surveyed expressed strong belief in the values of open communication, trust, and employee participation, the use of written behavior contracts – a staple within affirmative employee discipline systems – appears to be rare. Employee discipline systems that eschew discipline for rehabilitation (Grote, 1995) are not currently being utilized in Florida's hospitals.

Moreover, a number of respondents surveyed expressed neither agreement nor disagreement with the use of written behavior contracts to facilitate employee compliance. Perhaps this is a signal that healthcare leaders are still relatively unfamiliar with the use of the behavior contracts for this specific human resource management purpose. It would appear that respondents believe that the era of the “non-manager” manager (Dumaine, 1993) is far off in the future. This attitude may signal an overall level of comfort with progressive employee discipline systems that currently appear to be working well within Florida's healthcare facilities.

The respondents agree that supervisors and managers should be consistent in executing employee discipline policies and procedures. Although appearing to be supportive of those leadership values that characterize the modern, “servant-leadership” (Douglas, 2003) type of management style – openness, flexibility, teamwork, etc. – respondents are not willing to give managers and supervisors carte blanche to exercise disciplinary policies and procedures as they see fit. While respondents believe that their

respective supervisors and managers do manifest the essential trait of treating adults as adults (Lisoski, 2004), this may not necessarily mean that they are willing to abandon long-held progressive disciplinary beliefs for more rehabilitation-oriented, affirmative discipline techniques.

Additionally, most of these respondents believe that their respective systems for employee discipline work very effectively in “improving” employee compliance. However, while strong believers in the merit of progressive employee discipline techniques to “improve” employee compliance, the respondents are not convinced that the level of improvement realized is adequate to allow most employees to save their jobs. They appear to believe in a servant-leadership atmosphere wherein supervisors “serve” the interest of their direct reports (Douglas, 2003), but not to the extent that serving the employee prevents the supervisor from directing that employee’s eventual termination. This may reflect a “disconnect” between the use of progressive tools and the actual rate of turnover among non-compliant employees. It also may signal an institution’s “legalistic” approach to progressive discipline, designed not to “save” the employee’s job, but to satisfy all legal requirements in anticipation of an employee’s eventual termination. Ultimately perhaps there is a limit to the effectiveness of either progressive or affirmative discipline systems given workplace scenarios wherein manager-employee conflict is inevitable (Baron, 1990).

It is interesting to note that many respondents expressed the need for greater consistency in the application of employee disciplinary policies and procedures. This may reflect a need for better training and oversight of front-line managers and

supervisors in the execution of existing employee discipline policies. It may indicate anxiety on the part of respondents to actually see greater flexibility being employed by managers and supervisors. Clearly Florida's healthcare leaders desire a workplace wherein managers and employees share in the decision-making and the rewards for a job well-done (Corden and Preston-Shoot, 1987). Unfortunately, the respondents may be conflicted by the desire to support middle management and concerns that a greater level of managerial flexibility could lead to a spate of wrongful terminations and employee-initiated litigation.

Four statistically significant findings lend credence to the literature indicating the pervasive utilization of progressive and affirmative employee discipline systems in Florida's healthcare institutions.

Female respondents were more likely to express agreement that trust, open communication, and employee participation were key ingredients in ensuring positive supervisor-employee relationships. It is clear that women perceive employee discipline and employee relations differently than their male counterparts. As Stanley (2003) noted, the individual's view of the workplace a positive or negative place is filtered through the individual's lens of cultural uniqueness, including one's gender. Liberman, Rotarius, and Kendall (1997) found workplace conflict to be a relatively natural outgrowth of an environment housing persons of different backgrounds and cultures.

Female respondents appear to place more stock in the type of emotion-based relationship-building that is frequently mentioned in current human resources literature. Wong and Law (2002) stated that the respective emotional intelligence of the supervisor

and employee involved in the relationship are critical factors in ensuring improved job performance. Costley, Santana-Melgoza, and Todd (1994) argued that supervisors and employees often need to engage in problem-solving that explores the emotions which bind the supervisor and employee together. Jones and Melcher (1982) confirmed the need for individual employees to engage in social interaction and positive relations. Research from this study would appear to echo the finding that supervisors and employees need to engage in open communication and social interaction in order to maintain workplace civility, productivity, and compliance.

Women respondents believe more strongly in the need for trust between supervisor and employee. This finding replicates the conclusions offered by Malloch (2002) and Douglas (2003) that trust is the emotional glue which binds the supervisor and employee together.

Women would appear to be better situated, given their expressed support of open communication, trust, and employee participation, to become future organizational leaders in the mold of Douglas' (2003) "servant-leaders." Less inclined to direct employees, women respondents seek ways of supporting employees better as a means of improving supervisor-employee relations.

Given their faith in a more empathetic approach to supervisor-employee relations, female respondents appear to better represent the type of modern organizational leader who believes that executives should be supportive and helpful (Miller, 1979). They would also appear to be adhering more stringently to the type of "coaching" orientation advocated by Grote (1995).

Male respondents were found to be stronger supporters of existing progressive employee disciplinary policies than their female counterparts. This may reflect Kabanoff's (1987) contention that some administrators exert greater control over their employees as a primary mode of interaction. This greater reliance on control and less reliance on social interaction may reflect the findings offered by DeVoe and Iyengar (2004) that organizational leaders in North America believe that employees are more motivated by extrinsic rewards such as salary and job title than are leaders in Asia or Latin America. Perhaps those male respondents surveyed believe that employees are not motivated by emotional- or social-based intrinsic rewards.

Male respondents strongly support the value of progressive disciplinary policies and procedures. They are modeling the belief noted by Rubin (2002) and Imundo and Eisert (1982) that if given clear steps to improving their behavior and allowing ample time to rehabilitate their behavior, employees will likely show the necessary performance or compliance improvement. Less confident than their female counterparts that empathy and openness will elicit the required performance or compliance improvement, male respondents stick doggedly to the value of progressive employee disciplinary systems. This also makes sense given this study's findings that the vast majority of hospitals in Florida, led primarily by male CEOs, utilize progressive employee discipline policies and procedures.

A third statistically-significant difference exists between respondents of different tenure. Those respondents with shorter tenure expressed less agreement than their longer-tenured colleagues that their organization employs clear, written employee

disciplinary policies and that their employees are effectively oriented to these policies upon their initial hire into the organization. This may reflect a greater “institutionalization” of longer-tenured respondents. Those respondents with longer tenure may see a positive view of their organization and its internal policies as a validation of their own decision to stay with that organization. Perhaps those who remain longer with an organization find it more difficult to “rock the boat” or criticize the organization and its policies for fear of reprisal or retribution.

A study by Denton and Kleinman (2001) concluded that individuals employed in blue collar jobs for longer periods of time do begin to demonstrate a greater desire for autonomy. The perception of whether or not they have, indeed, secured this desired autonomy has an impact, in turn, on job satisfaction. Although one cannot draw from this study any formal conclusions on the impact of tenure on the desire for autonomy and perceived job satisfaction among so-called white collar workers, like hospital administrators, the investigator speculates that white collar workers, especially those in positions of greater authority or leadership, would desire greater autonomy in their jobs. If these administrators believe that they have secured some level of autonomy to perform their job than perhaps this would be even greater among those administrators with longer tenures in the organization. This greater autonomy may in turn lead to greater job satisfaction.

It may well be the case that respondents with shorter tenure are more willing to question existing organizational rules and policies since they possess less

organizational loyalty and feel less validated personally and professionally by the rules and policies which govern their employer.

The fourth, and final, statistically significant difference among groups is that between HR Administrator and CEO agreement that positive relations among supervisors and employees are valuable workplace characteristics.

While both groups expressed agreement with the value of open communication, trust and employee participation in maintaining positive relations between supervisor and employee, HR professionals expressed significantly stronger agreement. This may reflect the fact that HR professionals are more knowledgeable of current practice and theories on workplace discipline. This greater knowledge base may, in turn, feed a stronger belief in the value of such systems – especially if these systems are currently at work in their particular institutions. It may also reflect the simple fact that CEO's view the organization and act on its behalf with a broader, less provincial approach than their HR counterparts.

Practical Implications of Research Results

Since progressive employee discipline is the dominant system in use within Florida's hospitals today, it follows that such a system must be effectively managed and applied by everyone within the organization, especially front-line supervisors and managers.

Research results indicated that respondents do believe that verbal warnings and performance counseling statements can “improve” employee compliance. However, there does not appear to be that same level of confidence that employee jobs are saved through the application of progressive discipline techniques. This should lead future researchers to explore the specific circumstances and scenarios surrounding the disciplining of employees in danger of immediate termination. Moreover, healthcare leaders would be wise to explore managerial philosophy behind the use of progressive employee discipline systems. If managers and supervisors utilize progressive discipline steps only to satisfy “legal” requirements and not to actually “save the failing relationship” with that employee, than perhaps this might explain the fact that administrators believe that many non-compliant employees end up unemployed despite utilization of these progressive discipline interventions.

In addition, written comments accompanying the completed surveys spoke unequivocally to the need for greater consistency in the application of existing policies and procedures related to employee discipline. A number of respondents also noted the desire to have Human Resources (HR) professionals more actively engaged in specific employee discipline actions. This desire for consistency and conformity in the execution of disciplinary policies may be a final vestige of the traditional employee discipline system and its goal to “...control the factory, shop, or office...” (Ramsey, 2003, p. 3).

Concerns regarding the lack of consistency in the execution of employee discipline policies clearly indicate some level of respondent discomfort or dissatisfaction with the

level of in-house training and oversight of front-line managers and supervisors. This was also true with relation to comments from respondents who were responsible for both military and civilian employees. All managers and supervisors, as well as the employees themselves, must be better educated on employee discipline policies and procedures. They also need constant and consistent technical assistance from Human Resources professionals in order to effectively apply these policies and procedures. Given the potential legal liability that hospitals could incur given a wrongful employee termination, healthcare leaders would be wise to not only ensure that their institutions have an employee discipline policy, but actively engage in training and orientation of managers, supervisors, and employees on the application of the policy. As Liberman and Rotarius (1999) pointed out, the managerial task of reconciling distinct yet similar needs of key employee and patient stakeholders is a daunting one. Only through effective and comprehensive employee training and re-training can such a managerial skill be taught and its appropriate, consistent application ensured.

There appears to be little confidence on the part of respondents that the existence and application of a progressive or affirmative employee discipline system yields clear and unambiguous results in terms of preventing employee terminations. Although demonstrating marked improvement in compliance, many non-compliant employees still lose their jobs. Terminating employees is a tremendous financial burden for any organization, especially hospitals. The loss of institutional memory, the loss of productivity, the costs associated with new employee recruitment, interviewing, selection, and orientation can be detrimental to the organization's financial "bottom line".

Healthcare leaders must examine their employee discipline systems – whether they are progressive or affirmative in nature – and determine whether or not the system can be improved to also “rehabilitate” employees to the point that they are not terminated. Improving employee turnover is a common strategic human resource management goal for most organizations, hospitals included. Perhaps healthcare leaders would be wise to explore the type of “discipline without punishment” policy that Grote (1995) and other affirmative theorists espouse.

The impact of affirmative discipline techniques on employee retention would appear to be positive given the experiences of the Tampa Electric Company. As already noted, this organization noted a tremendous reduction in employee turnover once affirmative discipline had been instituted throughout the organization. Not satisfied simply with “improving the levels of employee compliance” or complying with the legal requirements of employee due process, administrators in this organization dedicated themselves to utilizing affirmative discipline to reduce employee turnover.

Healthcare administrators would be wise to further explore the use of affirmative techniques such as written behavior contracts, employee mentoring, and employee coaching/counseling as means to actually saving more jobs. Administrators need to concern themselves more with rehabilitating a poor-performing employee than with documenting their transgressions in anticipation of the inevitable termination of that employee. Since the goal of affirmative discipline is ultimately to “save” the relationship between employer and employee, healthcare leaders may find that affirmative discipline not only improves employee turnover, but also saves the institution money. If the

majority of non-compliant employees end up being terminated even while under the aegis of a progressive and/or affirmative employee discipline system, then Florida's healthcare elite will have failed to build its employee discipline system in a such a way that it avoids the "personalization" of conflict. By failing to eradicate the causes of this type of "personalization," manager-employee conflict will continually devolve into a "...tug-of-war between opposing perceptions of right versus wrong..." (Lieberman, Rotarius, and Kendall, 1997, p. 9).

Given the significant differences between male and female respondents in the use of progressive disciplinary procedures, researchers may wish to develop employee relation orientations that are specifically geared to meet the needs, expectations, and personality styles of both sexes. It may also be wise to explore whether or not it is possible to develop open and empathetic rapport-building and coaching skills in male administrators.

Respondents of both sexes are open to a more flexible, employee-friendly and democratic disciplinary system. While women are more supportive of the value of open and friendly human relations, male respondents still believe in the value of clear, written progressive discipline policies and procedures. This may indicate that male administrators will be less receptive to, and require more training in, the area of affirmative employee discipline once organizations choose to adopt such a system.

Similarly, respondents with longer tenure tend to be less willing to criticize or denigrate existing organizational policies surrounding employee discipline. While this type of conservative attitude may make consensus within the leadership team easier to

achieve, it does not bode well for a fair and objective appraisal of existing employee discipline systems for the purpose of process improvement. Hospitals may be well advised to place administrators with shorter tenure on process improvement teams as a means of generating new ideas, and as a way to ensure that opposing points of view are at least articulated.

The overall support expressed by all respondents for more open communication and trust among supervisors and employees would seem to auger well for the eventual, but inevitable, exploration of affirmative employee disciplinary systems. This eventuality could be accelerated, however, if female administrators and those with shorter tenure were at least asked to “sit at the table.”

Implications for Future Research

While this research study appears to indicate that respondents are fully committed to progressive employee discipline systems, there is still no experimental-based evidence suggesting that such systems, and their accompanying techniques, actually prevent an employee from being terminated. Belief in the theories of progressive and affirmative employee discipline is evident in the responses to the employee discipline survey of Florida’s respondents. However, no data exists to confirm whether or not affirmative disciplinary tools may be more effective at not only improving employee compliance, but also saving employee jobs.

A classic, pre-test, post-test research design is needed to test the hypothesis that employee behavior is improved through the use of either progressive or affirmative employee discipline tools. By comparing the rates of employee compliance before and after an intervention of a verbal warning, counseling statement, or coaching session, one may be able to give evidence of so-called “improved” compliance.

Employees need to be surveyed and studied to determine whether or not they are more receptive to affirmative discipline techniques. Employees who are under the aegis of either discipline system could be tracked for an extended period of time to measure not only their satisfaction with the discipline system currently in use, but to evaluate whether or not the system was effective in preventing them from losing their jobs. Employee interviews could gather anecdotal and qualitative evidence as to which techniques work well and which do not.

Focus groups conducted with employees with past histories of non-compliance could assist in evaluating current disciplinary practices and help pinpoint areas needing improvement in terms of discipline training and orientation.

Hospital Education and Organizational Development departments may wish to explore on-going initiatives or performance improvement projects related to employee discipline in order to facilitate cost-savings in the area of new employee orientation, recruitment, and selection. Employee discipline orientation programs could perhaps be tailored for both male and female leaders given their differing views of the value of existing policies. It may also make sense to provide longer-tenured employees regular and consistent coaching and orientation to new research in the area of employee

discipline and employee relations so as to negate the possible “institutionalization” that may have occurred over a period of years with the same organization.

Finally, it may be worthwhile to explore what impact, if any, improved employee compliance has on consumer satisfaction. After all, many healthcare employees provide direct patient care services. If it could be proven that employee discipline practices have some level of impact on patient satisfaction, even if indirectly, this information could be used to train employees, supervisors, and administrators on how best to improve compliance and performance. If this type of improved employee compliance/performance could be linked to enhanced consumer satisfaction, the institution as a whole would make itself more competitive in an ever-changing and turbulent healthcare industry.

APPENDIX A: EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE SURVEY

No

For items 6 - 20, utilize the following Likert Scale criteria to identify the number which most closely corresponds to your feelings or perceptions:

- 5 = Strongly Agree
- 4 = Agree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 1 = Strongly Disagree

6. My hospital has clear, written policies and procedures related to employee discipline.	5	4	3	2	1
7. All employees are oriented to employee discipline policies and procedures upon their initial hire into the organization.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I believe that employee non-compliance can usually be corrected with punishment.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I believe that employee non-compliance can usually be corrected with performance counseling.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I believe that most non-compliant employees are eventually terminated.	5	4	3	2	1
11. I believe that most non-compliant employees are eventually rehabilitated through performance counseling.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I believe open communication between supervisors and "direct reports" is important in improving employee compliance.	5	4	3	2	1
13. I believe that trust between supervisors and "direct reports" is important in improving employee compliance.	5	4	3	2	1
14. I believe that employees should participate in the development of their own discipline improvement plan.	5	4	3	2	1
15. I believe that most of our supervisors and managers ignore the non-compliance of their employees.	5	4	3	2	1
16. I believe that most of our supervisors and managers utilize verbal warnings to improve the compliance of their employees.	5	4	3	2	1
17. I believe that most of our supervisors and managers use written behavior counseling with their non-compliant employees.	5	4	3	2	1
18. I believe that most of our supervisors and managers use written behavior contracts with their non-compliant employees.	5	4	3	2	1
19. I believe hospital employee discipline policies and procedures are applied consistently to each employee.	5	4	3	2	1
20. Managers and supervisors are given latitude to apply hospital policies and procedures related to employee discipline.	5	4	3	2	1
21. I believe that my hospital's policies and procedures related to employee discipline are effective in correcting employee non-compliance.	5	4	3	2	1
22. What changes (if any) would you like to see in your agency's disciplinary's processes?					

Comments:

APPENDIX B: EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE SURVEY COVER LETTER

January 3, 2005

Dear Hospital Administrator:

I am requesting your assistance with my research study on the use of affirmative employee discipline systems. I am a Ph.D. candidate in the College of Health and Public Affairs at the University of Central Florida. I have completed all of my coursework and anticipate defense of my dissertation in the Summer of 2005.

I have spent over four years studying progressive and affirmative employee discipline systems and their respective impacts on employee non-compliance. I have developed a research study design that asks that you to complete the attached survey on employee discipline. This survey has been distributed to the Chief Executive Officer and Human Resources Director at each of 304 hospitals in the State of Florida. Data collected from these surveys will be used in a large aggregate data set for analysis. The study seeks to determine the extent to which progressive and affirmative employee discipline systems are utilized within Florida's healthcare institutions.

This survey is completely anonymous. I do not ask for your name, hospital affiliation, or other demographic information that could possibly link you to any particular survey result. The demographic material requested will be used only as part of a much larger, aggregate data set and for frequency analysis only.

Please take 5 minutes to complete the enclosed survey. Once you have completed the survey, place it in the stamped, addressed envelope enclosed and drop it in the mail. The validity to be realized from this study is almost wholly dependent upon your willingness to complete this brief inquiry. An enthusiastic response to this survey by the state's hospital administrators should yield valuable data in the areas of strategic human resources management, employee discipline, and healthcare administration.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important research endeavor.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Johnson
Ph.D. Candidate, College of Health and Public Affairs
University of Central Florida

APPENDIX C: UCF IRB APPROVAL



Revised 09/14
REVISED
11/30/04 (Rev)

04-222F

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)**

IRB Addendum/Modification Request

INSTRUCTIONS: Please complete the upper portion of this form and attach all revised/new consent forms, altered data collection instruments, and/or any other documents that have been updated. The proposed changes on the revised documents must be clearly indicated by using bold print, highlighting, or any other method of visible indication. The Addendum/Modification must be sent the IRB Office: ATTN: IRB Coordinator, 12443 Research Parkway, Suite 301, Orlando, FL 32826, Email: IRB@mail.ucf.edu, Phone: 407-823-2901, Fax: 407-823-3299.

- **DATE OF ADDENDUM:** 11/23/2004 to IRB# 1728
- **PROJECT TITLE:** A Survey of Progressive and Affirmative Employee Discipline Systems in Florida's Hospitals.
- **PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Mark Johnson, Ph.D. Candidate in College of Health and Public Affairs
- **MAILING ADDRESS:** Mark Johnson, 4830 NW 43rd Street – Apt. # L177, Gainesville, Florida 32606
- **PHONE NUMBER & EMAIL ADDRESS:** 352-378-8218, markandjackiej@yahoo.com
- **REASON FOR ADDENDUM/MODIFICATION:** Revised research design entailing new qualitative survey. Elimination of quantitative, quasi-experimental research design and accompanying materials. Request for waiver of informed consent.
- **DESCRIPTION OF WHAT YOU WANT TO ADD OR MODIFY:**
 - **Modify:** 1. Revise research design from original quasi-experimental design to a qualitative, survey-based design (design change approved by all four members of candidate's committee: Dr. Fottler-Chair, Dr. Liberman, Dr. Oetjen and Dr. Holmes).

SECTION BELOW - FOR UCF OOR/IRB USE ONLY

Approved

Disapproved


IRB Chair Signature

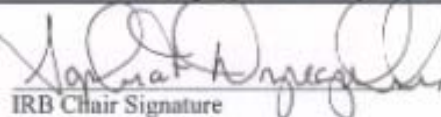
2 Dec 2004
Date

- **Modify:** Change title of dissertation to: A Survey of Progressive and Affirmative Employee Discipline Systems in Florida's Hospitals.
- **Modify:** 1. UCF IRB Human Subjects Form, specifically change study procedures/methodology in terms of survey design and distribution and waiver of informed consent (see attached).
- **Eliminate:** Elimination of Employee Behavior Tracking Form as this was part of original research design.
- **Eliminate:** Elimination of Verbal Consent format and Written Behavior Contract formats as these were accompanying materials to original research design.
- **Eliminate:** Elimination of Employee/Supervisor post-measurement phase interview format informed consent, new post-intervention employee interview format and new post-intervention supervisor interview format as these forms accompanied original research design format.
- **Add:** New "Employee Discipline Survey" form (see attached).
- **Add:** Cover letter to hospital administrators which will be included with each survey (see attached).
- **Request:** Waiver of informed consent. Surveys will be anonymous. No demographic information will be requested that can link the respondent to a particular survey. No names, social security numbers, or hospital affiliations requested. Surveys will be mailed to adult hospital administrators. No risk involved in terms of violation of privacy or linkages to the administrator's current employer.

Waiver of Consent Approved. SFD

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Approved Disapproved
 Full Board Chair Expedited


 IRB Chair Signature

2 Dec 2004
 Date

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