UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

META ADVICE: TRAINING ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS TO PRACTICE ADVICE-

SEEKING WITH THEIR IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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Norman, Oklahoma
2020

META ADVICE: TRAINING ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERS TO PRACTICE ADVICE-SEEKING WITH THEIR IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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Dedication

मातृ देवो भव

पितृ देवो भव

आचार्य देवो भव

- To Amma & Appa, Chithi, Gauts, Ikeda Sensei and Mrs. Ikeda

For their unconditional love, unwavering support,

and unfaltering belief in me

through the changing seasons of my life.

Acknowledgements

My eternal spiritual mentor, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda writes, "None of us can exist in isolation. Our lives and existence are supported by others in seen and unseen ways…" I am deeply grateful to each and every visible and invisible soldier of support around the globe who has believed in me, sent me prayers, and showcased their faith and support, through the years. This has been the most fulfilling journey of my life. I would like to share a few tid-bits, and express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who, showcasing their kindness and courage, played a starring role by joining me in various ways on this most challenging yet deeply joyous excursion.

I would like to begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to Dr. Daisaku Ikeda who, exhibiting great courage, set out from Japan on a mission for worldwide peace, to the United States and other countries on October 2, 1960. That step set in motion a series of events that culminated in laying the foundation of a global movement for peace, culture, and education. This encouraged me as a high school student to move to the US to pursue my dream education. I would like to thank Ikeda Sensei and Mrs. Ikeda for leading noble, value-creating lives, and their continual prayers and support through all these years.

The experience of writing this dissertation is part of a longer journey that kickstarted with a dream. I am blessed with the continuous support and acceptance of my parents (Indira & Raja Rao), grandparents, brother, and Girija *Chithi* (aunt) who encouraged and trusted in me through the pursuit of this impossible goal. I feel truly fortunate and am very grateful to each one of them. My family has provided a strong and resilient foundation of love and support for me. Through all the different circumstances and difficult challenges, they have united and found ways to ensure, I was able to unhesitatingly pursue my purpose and passion. To my parents for each of their sacrifice over the course of their lives, I have no words, शुक्रिया, நன்றி, ಧನ್ಯವಾದ, ありがとう ござ

います, Thank you. No words in any language are sufficient to fully express my gratitude to my family. They are the real Doctors of Happyness behind this dissertation. A special shout-out to my dearest grandparents, Janaki *Ajji*, Krishna Kittu *Thatha*, Rukmani *Patti*, and Mani *Thatha*, for being the wind beneath my wings, and for selflessly supporting our family behind-the-scenes. An even more special shout-out to my younger brother, CA Subhash Chandra "*Gautam*" Rao who first opened the gateway to victory in our family. He has shown me, like a true Boss, through his own life, the power of courage. We have weathered storms together and like the Japanese mountain potatoes the taro, we have and continue to hone and polish our lives together.

I am also deeply appreciative and would like to express my gratitude to all my teachers from around the globe. Starting from grade school, I have been lucky and blessed with extraordinary teachers and managers. Each of them has managed to activate my curiosity in their subject matter in addition to being a role model. By living a wonderful, cause-oriented life, each of you inspired me to be better and do better. I take this opportunity to thank all my teachers and managers from Holy Child Auxilium (HCA), Soka University of America (SUA), University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), University of Oklahoma (OU), Center for Online Development (CODe), and Infosys Leadership Institute (ILI). Your passion for truth ignited the fire of learning in my life. A special shout-out to Geography Teacher Meena Gupta Mam, Sister Dororthy, Chemistry Teacher Rajni Mam, Dr. Seiji Takaku, and Dr. Hong-Yi Chen who have been my mentors and consistently time and again showcased their steadfast support and belief in me. Their encouragement gave me the courage to always take on new challenges. Their heart and enthusiasm for their students are living examples of how I have invested and continue to engage with clients and students. Your attitude of "giving cheerfully more than what is asked," is inspirational for all your students.

Next, I would like to share my appreciation for my A-team: Dr. Michael W. Kramer, Dr. Ioana A. Cionea, Dr. Glenn J. Hansen, Dr. Shane Connelly, and Dr. Ryan S. Bisel, who advised and coached me through this dissertation. Thank you Dr. Kramer for always being a source of wisdom and providing down-to-earth advice on leading an enriching life. Thank you Dr. Hansen for your calm approach to work, I will try to emulate that in my career. Thank you Shane for being a wonderful role model, showcasing your humility. It has been an honor that you were willing to be on my committee. Thank you Dr. Cionea for being an incredible friend and guide. Your dedication to students, to our learning is unparalleled and getting to see you in-action at close quarters has been one of the highlights of my time at OU. I would also like to appreciate and thank Dr. Lindsey Meeks, and Dr. Sunny Lee who have been honorary members of my team, mentoring and supporting me throughout graduate school and beyond. Thank you both for your comradeship, time, and support.

Last but not the least, I would like to humbly express my deep gratitude to my advisor and committee chair Dr. Ryan Bisel. You inspire me to set high goals, consistent work practices, and courageously pursue the path of organizational communication leadership. I learnt the critical life, and work sustaining skill of *pivoting* from you. I am immensely appreciative of the Google software engineers and their algorithm which ensured that on the one fateful afternoon of September 15, 2014, my search led me to the right profile page. I hope I can do you proud in the coming years.

I would also like to thank my friends, individuals whose life stories have become a part of my narrative. Irrespective of the starting point of our journeys (whether at school, work or from sharing our spiritual practice within the SGI), your friendship and camaraderie has inspired me to bravely take on these challenges in the voyage towards my dissertation. Each of you has showcased

so much heroism and fearlessness in your own life, and for that, thank you. Your friendships enable me to consider myself wealthy. A special shout-out to my colleagues and peers, alongside whom I was able to pursue my PhD. Navigating this graduate school journey with each one of you, made facing the challenges, motivating and doubled the joys. We will continue to win together.

Lastly, one of my favorite quotes reads, "Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do." I am grateful to every single person that has uncovered a mission engaging with their work and shared their work-life stories with me. You are the superheroes of organizations, and listening to your stories gave me the idea for my dissertation. A special shout-out to the 250 champions who took time to participate in my study amidst the tough realities of COVID-19. You made this dream project a reality.

I would like to conclude my acknowledgements by sharing the following lines from a short poem, I penned on March 22, 2001:

That with hope and conviction,

Nothing is impossible,

Then what is there that cannot be achieved.

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Abstract

This study explores whether individuals can be trained in the skill of advice-seeking and whether upward advice-seeking shapes the quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) relationships. LMX theory posit that, through a process of role negotiation, individuals develop either an in-group or out-group relationship with their immediate supervisor. In-group relationships are often prized as they provide individuals an opportunity to develop a rich, high-quality relationship with their supervisor. This study examined whether training in communication skills, specifically advice-seeking, would help employees improve the quality of their bond with their supervisor. Full-time employees working at a university ($N = 149$) were randomly assigned to receive advice-seeking training or to a control group condition. One hundred and one immediate supervisors also responded to survey items about their direct reports who participated in the study. Data analysis revealed two patterns: (a) individuals can be trained on advice-seeking skills quickly and with little expense and (b) irrespective of training, strong self-efficacy in advice-seeking (SEAS) behaviors was positively associated with employees' sense of psychological safety with their immediate supervisor. Integrating these results in current organizational communication literature would provide prospects to overcome existing limitations, and avenues for future recommendations for both scholars and practitioners.

Keywords: advice-seeking; training and development; communication skill training; leader-member relationships

Chapter 1: Introduction

Workplace mentoring is a process of teaching and learning through which an individual (typically a direct report) has an opportunity to engage with a relevant *other* (typically an immediate supervisor) to seek guidance and support on issues relevant to organizational mission and personal development. Mentoring functions as a career management tool (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004). In a foundational study conducted by Kram (1985), mentors were found to serve in career-related and psychosocial support roles. Research in workplace mentoring demonstrated that protégés experienced "career advancement, sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection and challenging assignments" (Allen et al., 2004, p. 128). The benefits of developing a relationship with a high-quality mentor, especially with one's own immediate supervisor, are apparent. Overall, receiving encouragement and investment from a positive mentor (in the role of an immediate supervisor) tends to increase the likelihood of positive career growth.

A vital component determining an individual's success in the workplace is personal power and influence. Personal power base influences workgroup commitment, job satisfaction, and various other organizational variables significant to the optimum functioning of a team and organization (Rahim, Antonioni, & Psenicka, 2001). Furthermore, given the dynamics of today's workforce, it is clear that direct reports who are admired and liked by their supervisors tend to have a longer career and greater job satisfaction. In a mentoring capacity, employees have an opportunity to develop a trusting relationship and feel comfortable to engage in open, honest, and straightforward conversations with their supervisor. In general, developing a personal power base with one's supervisor is essential for mobility, career success, and upward influence.

An important issue that organizational members tend to neglect is that one's career is heavily reliant on decisions by *others*, specifically their immediate supervisors (Conrad, 2011). In other words, individuals' careers are largely in others' hands (Pfeffer, 2009). Successful employees have often taken the time to build strong communication skills and positive relationships with their immediate supervisors. Some of the advantages of building a strong leader-member relationship include increased opportunities to get feedback, higher pay and consistent promotions, better job satisfaction, and, generally, better treatment at work (Dunegan, Uhl-Bien, & Duchon, 2002; Harris, Harris, & Brouer, 2009). Each of these outcomes play a significant role in the overall development of individuals' careers and their upward mobility within their team and organization. However, little practical and evidence-based recommendations are available for employees who desire to build a healthy relationship with their immediate supervisors and accomplish some of the outcomes described above.

Furthermore, although scholars and practitioners are aware of the value and importance of personal power and influence, there is a paucity of empirically-based recommendations for growing and utilizing its benefits (Rahim, 2009; Rahim et al., 2001). The key challenge for several individuals is creating the communication moments needed to connect and build a healthy relationship with their immediate supervisor. Some individuals may have an introverted personality, which may cause them to be nervous around their immediate supervisors (Bauer, Erdogan, Liden, & Wayne, 2006; Mathisen, Einarsen, & Mykletun, 2011; McCroskey, 1984; Winiecki, & Ayres, 1999). Others may be willing to connect, but may feel they cannot find an opportune moment or strategy to build connections and develop familiarity with their immediate supervisors. Individuals may also merely be unfamiliar with the team or organizational culture, which may make them skeptical or anxious to approach their supervisor with relational bids.

Despite the large number of self-help books and a growing number of voices on the Internet, individuals struggle to identify and connect with powerful others with whom they could discuss challenges and uncover solutions at work (e.g., Agarwal, Datta, Blake-Beard, & Bhargava, 2012; Basuil, Manegold, & Casper, 2016; Graen & Schiemann, 2013; Hopkins, 1997; Richmond & McCroskey, 2000). One possible avenue to overcome these hurdles and build a healthy working relationship with one's immediate supervisor is through advice-seeking.

Advice is a ubiquitous form of support and influence, exchanged in various contexts (MacGeorge, Feng, & Guntzviller, 2016). Advice-seeking, in the organizational context, refers to the upward, lateral, or downward act of attempting to activate another's recommended means and resources to reach a desired future end state (Albrecht & Goldsmith, 2003; Gino, 2008; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000; Harvey & Fischer, 1997). All three of these are important, but the current study focuses on upward advice-seeking. Engaging in meaningful conversation with one's supervisor can be challenging; yet, it can be a rewarding part of work life. In this context, advice-seeking can be an ideal starting point to kickstart conversations that build a meaningful relationship with one's supervisor. Specifically, advice-seeking is one way to create trust between supervisor and direct report and strengthen the working relationship. Traditionally, scholarship on supervisor-direct report relationships tend to assume that successful working relationships are largely determined by supervisors' ability to influence direct reports (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Yukl, 1989; Yukl & Falbe, 1990). In contrast, the present study explores how the process of advice-seeking by direct reports can influence immediate supervisors to develop higher quality relationships with them.

Furthermore, advice-seeking has the potential to open pathways for help-seeking and feedback interactions between supervisors and direct reports (Lee, 2002; Liljenquist, 2010).

Additionally, employees in such relationships are more open about giving and receiving feedback, taking interpersonal risks, and voicing upward dissent (Edmondson, 1999; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Kassing, 2011) as compared to those employees who have troubled or superficial working relationships with their immediate supervisor. This back-and-forth exchange of feedback and advice can occur at all levels and in all hierarchical directions within a team and an organization. Each and every relationship an individual can foster with meaningful others to receive adequate mentoring and coaching in the workplace is important. Although both feedback-seeking and advice-seeking are centered around soliciting and requesting information from others, they are distinctive processes (Brooks, Gino, & Schweitzer, 2015). Specifically, feedback-seeking is focused on gaining information about past performances, whereas advice-seeking is more focused on gathering comments and opinions about future projects and prospects. Based on the temporal orientation of the processes, we may conclude that all advice-seeking may be viewed as feedback-seeking, however not all feedback-seeking may be an advice-seeking process.

For the present study, the focus is solely on advice-seeking with the immediate supervisor. There are several benefits associated with candid and expressive advice-seeking in these relationships including, better performance reviews, career growth recommendations, and overall better job satisfaction (Ashford & Black, 1996; Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Lam, Huang, & Snape, 2007; Larson, 1989; Whitaker & Levy, 2012). Typically, if the communication quantity and quality are high between a supervisor and direct report, the result is a trusting partnership (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Surprisingly, despite the importance of advice-seeking in helping struggling direct reports build richer relationships with their supervisors, the subject area has not received much attention from either scholars or practitioners. Rich relationships gained

through the right advice-seeking, at opportune moments, can make all the difference across the lifespan of a career. Furthermore, advice-seeking training may serve to motivate and equip direct reports with skills to obtain mentoring from immediate supervisors when they feel their career has plateaued or stagnated.

The goal of this study is to add to the literature by investigating, experimentally, whether a theoretically-designed advice-seeking training intervention can improve leader-member relationships in the workplace. Despite the discernible benefits of individuals having a richer mentorship relationship with their immediate supervisors, there has been little empirical research on methods to stimulate such mentorship communication. To date, most studies of mentorship focus on explaining the characteristics of these relationships or the benefits experienced by supervisors and direct report who are mentors or who receive mentoring (McManus & Russell, 1997; Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994; Thomas & Lankau, 2009). In contrast, this study shifts the scholarly focus to whether and how direct reports can be trained to engage in advice-seeking, which could aid them in leveraging the benefits of a healthy working relationship with their immediate supervisor. Furthermore, this study highlights the value and importance of communication training in the workplace. Communication is the central process through which organizations learn, utilize, and enhance their knowledge management (Fulk & Boyd, 1991).

Training is "the process of developing skills in order to perform a specific job or task more effectively" (Beebe, Mottet, & Roach, 2013, p. 5). Training involves "the systematic approach to affecting individuals' knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to improve individual, team and organizational effectiveness" (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009, p. 452). Communication training for advice-seeking provides an avenue through which direct reports can build relevant skills for the workplace, engage with their supervisors, and attempt to develop high-quality

relationships. In doing so, this study attempts to contribute to literature on advice-seeking. Individuals struggle with seeking advice, as they are often unaware of the importance of the approach, apprehensive about initiating conversations with powerful others, or worried that advice-seeking will make them appear less competent. Thus, despite important circumstances at work that necessitate advice-seeking, individuals are hesitant to engage in the process. As will be explained in detail below, advice-seeking initiates reciprocity and investment, which tends to result in deepening relational development (Feng & MacGeorge, 2006; Gino, Brooks, & Schweitzer, 2012; Sniezek & Van Swol, 2001; Van Swol, 2009, 2011). An engaging and efficacious training process could equip individuals with the communication tools needed to engage in advice-seeking and develop better quality relationships with their supervisors.

The following literature review explains the concepts of leader-member exchange theory and advice-seeking, which comprise the main theoretical framework for this study. Thereafter, nine hypotheses are presented alongside a method section detailing the participant sample, experimental design, and processes for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 2: Advice-Seeking and Leader-Member Partnerships

How do Leaders and Members Develop Partnerships?

The study of organizational leadership, focused on leaders and followers, has grown in popularity over the past few decades. When leaders and followers build high-quality working relationships that are characterized by trust, respect, and mutual influence, individuals, teams, and organizations flourish and thrive. LMX is a social-exchange based leadership theory, rooted in communication, that describes and explains this unique relationship shared by leaders and followers (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Fairhurst, 1993; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen, Novak, & Sommerkamp, 1982; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991; Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994). LMX is a departure from average leadership style theories (e.g., authoritarian, democratic, laissez faire), which assume leaders display a singular communication approach towards direct reports. In contrast, LMX theory proposes that leaders develop differentiated relationships with direct reports through exchanges (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Kelley & Bisel, 2014). Specifically, the exchange of goods and assets, including social resources, is key to understanding how the process of creating differentiated dyads unfolds. Furthermore, this rich exchange explains why LMX is a social exchange theory. LMX theory has strong practical applications for organizations and members. The theory explains that leaders and members tend to build one of two types of relationships based on the degree of trust shared between the leader and follower. Through the process of role-negotiation, leaders segregate followers into in-group and out-group relationships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991). The communication experiences of followers across these groups diverges. Out-group members experience very little communication with their supervisors and are often left out of decision making in the workplace. Conversely, in-group members tend to share high communication

frequency and a relationship of mutual trust and psychological safety with the leader (Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989).

An employee's in-group or out-group relationship with the supervisor plays a huge role in dictating the quality of their work-life. Furthermore, scholarship on LMX has established that leaders develop a rapport with their direct reports and co-negotiate the terms of the relationship (Kelley & Bisel, 2014). Traditionally, leaders are perceived to be those in-charge, and direct reports receive instructions and engage in follow-up action. Direct reports experience positive and negative emotions depending on the quality of the relationship they establish with their supervisor (Fisk & Friesen, 2012; Herman & Troth, 2013).

These emotions play a vital part as leaders and members engage in the process of role negotiation and resource exchange (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The role negotiation exchanges occur in the following three distinct stages: Role-taking, role-making, and role-routinization. The leader often takes initiative in relationship development during the role-taking stage (Cropanzano, Dasborough, & Weiss, 2017). The leader communicates expectations to the direct report by assigning tasks that will apprise the leader about the skills, qualities, and potential of the direct report. Thereafter, in the role-making phase, the leader and the member equally take responsibility for the development of the relationship, through exchange of resources, as they develop and clarify roles. Communication between leader and member focuses on defining and redefining how expectations may be satisfied (Fairhurst, 1993; Kramer, 2006; Olufowote, Miller, & Wilson, 2005). Lastly, in the role-routinization phase, the relationship becomes stable and roles become mundane and predictable. In other words, the exchange becomes regularized through the development of roles. These roles may be considered as in-group or out-group. LMX is, therefore, a form of social-exchange theory, which is described below.

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The resultant in-group or out-group, into which the direct reports may find themselves, are categorized by high and low trust, respectively. Often those in the in-group are referred to as trusted assistants, whereas out-group direct reports may feel akin to hired hands. Kelley and Bisel (2014) uncovered that leaders develop narratives around trust that they utilize to differentiate between followers. These role negotiation stages are characterized by communication markers: The in-group relationships are characterized by self-disclosure, high trust, psychological safety, openness to giving feedback, mutual influence, high rewards, and high support. Meanwhile, this quality of communication is much less common in out-group relationships (Fairhurst, 1993; Kramer, 2006; Lee, 2001; Mueller & Lee, 2002). The relationship with out-group reports is characterized by less self-disclosure, low trust, and one-sided (downward) influence (Zalesny & Graen, 1987). These implications of the role negotiation process—in conjunction with research that demonstrated that high-quality LMX relationships benefit both employees and the organization (Fisk & Friesen, 2012; Hackett & Lapierre, 2004; Han, 2010; Harris, Wheeler, & Kacmar, 2011; Ko & Hur, 2014)—led to a prescriptive extension of LMX theory, known as the Leadership-Making Model (LMM; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991).

An important aspect of contemporary research in LMX focuses on coworkers' third-party perceptions of others' LMX relationships. Recent work in LMX theorizing has examined the implications of high quality LMX relationships on co-worker relationships (Fix & Sias, 2006; Hsiung & Bolino, 2018; Martin, Thomas, Legood, & Dello Russo, 2018; Sias, 2005; Sias & Jablin, 1995). Some data indicates that jealousy or envy among coworkers of others' high quality LMX relationships can cause complications in coworker relationship (Chen, He, & Weng, 2018; Thompson, Buch, & Glasø, 2018). In the long-term, this envy can result in an early exit of employees from the teams and organization (Chen, Yu, & Son, 2014).

The LMM suggests that leaders should attempt to develop high-quality relationships with most of their followers rather than a select few. Furthermore, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) state that leadership-making can occur strategically over a period of time through the following three phases: stranger, acquaintance, and mature partnership. During the first phase, "the interactions in the leader-follower dyad generally are rule-bound, relying heavily on contractual relationships" (Northouse, 2019, p. 144). According to Graen and Uhl-Bien, during this phase, followers are primarily concerned with pursuing their own interests and motives. Therefore, motivated followers are willing to comply with authoritarian leaders.

The next phase commences with "an offer by the leader or follower for improved career-oriented social exchanges, which involve sharing more resources and personal or work-related information" (Northouse, 2019, p. 144). A major change during this phase involves the transition in followers' motives. Followers who are able to develop meaningful interactions with their supervisors become more focused on the motives and objectives of the team, group, and organizations. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) demarcate respect, trust, and obligation as key markers of the partnership moving to the next phase. They describe the dimensions as "(a) mutual respect for the capabilities of the other, (b) the anticipation of deepening reciprocal trust with the other, and (c) the expectation that interacting obligation will grow over time as career-oriented social exchanges blossom into a partnership" (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995, p. 237). In the last phase, relationships between followers and leaders are characterized by reciprocity and a high degree of trust, respect, and obligation (the three key markers of a quality relationship). Schriesheim, Castro, Zhou, and Yammarino (2001) uncovered that the best LMX relationships are focused on equality where both the supervisor and direct report share power.

Within the LMM, leaders are encouraged to give relational bids, or opportunities for socioemotional connections and resource exchanges, to all direct reports and team members (Graen, 2009). Teams, groups, and organizations that have a large number of high-quality leader-member relationships experience benefits, such as greater organizational citizenship behaviors and higher creativity (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012; Morrow, Suzuki, Crum, Ruben, & Pautsch, 2005; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Hui, 1993; Scandura, Graen, & Novak, 1986; Turban, Jones, & Rozelle, 1990; Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1992). Additionally, LMX relationships influence the degree of dissent direct reports may express upwardly (Kassing, 2011; Kassing & McDowell, 2008). Direct reports who share high-quality, trusting relationships with their supervisor are able to articulate their dissent and speak candidly (Kassing, 2000), which allows the organization to identify and remediate troubles while they remain small and resolvable. Overall, trust helps direct reports feel more spontaneous and honest to dissent and provide candor (Payne, 2014; Turnage & Goodboy, 2016).

To summarize, within organizations, interpersonal relationships are key to success (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Wayne, Liden, & Sparrowe, 1994). Amongst those relationships, a critical one is the unique bond one fosters with one's supervisor, which subsequently influences the individuals' job performance and attitude at work (Fairhurst & Hamlett, 2003; Kramer, 2006). However, as showcased by LMX theorists, the benefits of LMX can only be harnessed by those who are able to build a high-quality relationship with their supervisor. Individuals who may not have developed an immediate bond with their supervisors can make an effort to engage in conversations about advice. Specifically, through advice-seeking, employees can motivate their immediate supervisors to invest in them to ensure improved job performance, low turnover, and overall career success (Bauer et al., 2006; Erdogan, Kraimer, & Liden, 2004; Erdogan, Bauer, &

Walter, 2015; Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999). The following section defines and explains advice.

Conceptualizing Advice

Individuals often look to others within their support system for help in resolving both professional and personal dilemmas. These '*others*' provide and share advice with the individual, across a wide range of topics. Advice is a pervasive and universal form of social support across a wide range of relationships within organizations (MacGeorge et al., 2016; Smith & Peterson, 2007). Advice communication is ubiquitous across personal and professional contexts, in different types of relationships and in both face-to-face and online interactions. Most individuals seek advice when they are faced with difficult challenges. Thus, advice becomes instrumental in providing and accessing care, encouragement, and guidance (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; MacGeorge, Feng, Butler, & Budarz, 2004).

Additionally, advice is also central to mentoring and coaching relationships. Advice influences various aspects of individuals' lives and has multiple consequences. Furthermore, research in this area has predominantly focused on how advice reduces the beneficiaries' suffering alongside enhancing their coping (MacGeorge, Guntzviller, Hanasono, & Feng, 2016). For example, families pass care-giving strategies and core values via advice; elderly women in the family advise new mothers on infant care (Reid, Schmied, & Beale, 2010). Immediate supervisors advise peers and direct reports on how to resolve team and work-related challenges. Moreover, advice has the potential to be a reliable channel for accurate information (Barbee & Cunningham, 1995; Cutrona & Russell, 1990). Subsequently, advice creates spaces for brainstorming better strategies to deal with challenges at work (Tye-Williams & Krone, 2015).

In contrast, seeking or giving advice can also have negative reactions and consequences (Dunkel-Schetter, & Bennett, 1990; Dunkel-Schetter, Blasband, Feinstein, & Herbert, 1992; Lehman, Ellard, & Wortman, 1986; Notarius & Herrick, 1988; Pearlin & McCall, 1990). For example, the process of seeking advice can threaten face and identity positions, increase suffering, and generate resistance to proposed ideas (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000). Of course, advice can also be the source of misinformation. Face threat is one of the primary reasons for the negative reactions to advice (Goldsmith, 1999). According to Goldsmith and MacGeorge (2000), "By telling a hearer what to do, advice can threaten the hearer's identity as a competent and autonomous social actor" (p. 235). However, these threats to identity may exist or be most pronounced primarily within the context of certain relationships and social arrangements. For example, cancer patients appreciated advice from doctors but experienced discomfort if the advice giver was a nurse, family member, or friend (Dakof & Taylor, 1990).

Furthermore, whether advice was solicited or unsolicited is a major factor in whether adverse consequences, such as face threat, are likely. Recent research has highlighted the superiority of *solicited* advice as compared to unsolicited advice. Advice that was sought was more satisfying and had a higher probability to be utilized by the recipient (Chentsova-Dutton, 2012; Chentsova-Dutton & Vaughn, 2012; Lim & Bower, 1991; Van Swol, MacGeorge, & Prahl, 2017). Meanwhile, unsolicited advice is less satisfying and more face threatening for individuals, even those receiving advice within the context of a work team (MacGeorge et al., 2004; MacGeorge et al., 2016). Nevertheless, individuals often find themselves benefitting from even *unsolicited* advice. The role and value of advice as a key proponent in the process of supportive communication makes a case for individuals to engage in advice-seeking (Burleson,

2009; Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002; Caplan & Samter, 1999; Feng & MacGeorge, 2010; Goldsmith, 1994, 2000; Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000; MacGeorge, Lichtman, & Pressey, 2002). Active advice-seeking has the potential to expand the benefits of advice alongside reducing negative consequences. The next two sections describe the process of advice-seeking, conceptualized as prompting a social-exchange process. Thereafter, the role of communication training as an aid to enhance advice-seeking is explicated.

Explicating Advice-Seeking

Organizational members engage in complex and difficult tasks. During such times, the organizational structure and support from supervisor and team members can be critical in helping individuals complete these tasks successfully. Based on task difficulty and other job constraints, individuals can seek advice. Past research assumed that individuals would reach out and seek advice from credible others (e.g., supervisor) in order to complete work-related tasks (Wills & DePaulo, 1991). For example, a 2003 study involving chemical plant employees found that individuals were more likely to seek help from their supervisors as compared to their peers, friends, or family, because they perceived supervisors to be more knowledgeable (Nadler, Ellis, & Bar, 2003). For the purpose of the current study, advice-seeking in the organizational context is defined as the upward, lateral, or downward act of attempting to determine another's recommended means and resources to reach a desired future end state. Some scholars view "advice-seeking as a type of help-seeking behavior" (Brooks et al., 2015, p. 1422). Advice-seeking also functions like a foot-in-the-door (FITD) influence strategy (Van Swol et al., 2017). Using the FITD approach, individuals attempt to influence the *target* or *giver* to fulfill a small request prior to making larger requests (Burger, 1999; Taylor & Booth-Butterfield, 1993). In other words, if immediate supervisors connect with direct reports during advice-seeking

conversations and comply with a slight request to provide advice, they are more likely to continue to do so, and, ultimately, more likely to deepen their working relationship.

Individuals seek advice in instances when the task at hand is challenging (Agneessens & Wittek, 2012; Bruno, 2019; Gino, 2008; Goldsmith & Fitch 1997; Goldsmith & MacGeorge 2000; Harvey & Fischer 1997). The advice seeker is expecting the advice giver to suggest a solution that will resolve a problem or make it manageable (Brooks et al., 2015; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997). For example, when attempting to purchase a new software at work, Jane may seek advice from her supervisor to understand the purchasing protocol and get tips on making the best decision. However, in reality, individuals may avoid seeking advice for fear that others may label them as incompetent and overly dependent (Lee, 1997; Van der Vegt, Bunderson, & Oosterhof, 2006). Furthermore, a lack of advice-seeking can negatively affect work outcomes for both individuals and organizations. For example, Jane may procure the wrong software for the team and subsequently lose her own and others' confidence in engaging with distributors and software vendors (Borgatti & Cross, 2003; Morrison, 1993, 2002).

Advice-seeking has proven to be beneficial to both individuals and organizations (Mueller & Kamdar, 2011). Past studies showcased the influence of advice-seeking behavior on learning, creativity, and even job performance (Lee, 1997). Furthermore, advice-seeking enables "individuals to acquire new skills, achieve better outcomes and attain higher levels of satisfaction" (Brooks et al., 2015, p. 1422). Liljenquist (2010) investigated the consequences of advice-seeking in the workplace. The author found that advice-seeking promoted the perceived warmth and sincerity of the seeker across multiple contexts (Ji et al.,, 2017). Furthermore, extemporaneous and instinctive advice-seeking increased *future* job performances, suggesting that advice-seeking can enhance task expertise (Liljenquist, 2010). Although advice-seeking has

been found to be beneficial, individuals often shy away from engaging in the process, as they worry about incurring social costs because of advice-seeking conversations (Lee, 2002; Sniezek & Van Swol, 2001). Three main social costs that scholars and practitioners need to contend with include the ways advice-seeking may be perceived as: (a) confessing incompetence, (b) acknowledging inferiority, and (c) depending on others (Lee, 2002). Advice-seeking and its characteristics may unfold as other pro-social behaviors, especially help-seeking and feedback discussions (Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003; Morrison & Bies, 1991; Vancouver & Morrison, 1995).

Individuals' concerns with impression management also influence their comfort with seeking advice. Managing their impressions with others is an important aspect of employees' organizational life and communication. Individuals are anxious about negative impressions and, as a result, are often fearful of creating the impression of incompetence by seeking advice (Lee, 2002). Brooks et al. (2015) summarized the challenges of advice-seeking this way: "Individuals may believe that relying on advice signals weakness" (p. 1423). Counter-intuitively, however, recent studies have shown that advice givers tend to be viewed by advice seekers as *more* competent, especially if the problem faced is significantly challenging (Brooks et al., 2015). Brooks and fellow researchers divided a sample of 199 participants (engaging with a brain teaser) into two conditions (performance versus perception). In the performance conditions, individuals were paid based on the number of correct answers they generated. In the perception conditions, participants were paid for their performance based on their partner's rating of the individual's competence. Participants in the performance condition were 73.5% more likely to seek advice. Importantly, performance-incentivized participants *who sought advice*, solved the brainer teaser better and more creatively than the perception-incentive participants. Furthermore,

individuals were hesitant to seek advice in the perception condition, as they were more involved with managing impressions rather than focusing on the challenging task-at-hand. In summary, advice-seeking is an important workplace occurrence. The following paragraphs describe how advice-seeking likely determines social-exchange processes that can deepen working relationships.

Social-Exchange Processes Activated by Advice-Seeking

Social-exchange theory (SET) is an important theoretical lens to understand workplace behavior. Specifically, it shines a light on exchanges, interactions, and transactions that produce commitments (Emerson, 1976). According to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), "these independent transactions have the potential to generate high-quality relationships" (p. 875). The main premise of SET is that rich exchanges and connections generate commitments. Past research found evidence for the presence of social-exchange processes across a wide variety of circumstances and situations in the workplace. For example, social-exchange processes have been used to explain organizational phenomena as diverse as networks of interconnected social relationships (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004; Cook, Molm, & Yamagishi, 1993), organizational justice (Konovsky, 2000; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002), leadership (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997), psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995, 1998), and board independence (Westphal & Zajac, 1997).

SET proposes that exchanges and investments result in trusting, reliable, and reciprocated commitments between parties over time. The relational consequences of social-exchange processes may not be immediately apparent, but might need to unfold over time (Rousseau, 1989). Furthermore, the social exchange investment induced as a result of advice-seeking by direct reports acts as a mediator and aids individuals to develop a rich, healthy, and wholesome

relationship with their respective immediate supervisors. The favorable benefits are due, in part, to reciprocal forces (Cialdini et al., 1975). The "norm of reciprocity enables prosocial acts to flourish between otherwise disconnected groups or individuals, creating an environment in which people can expect that the costs they incur for the benefit of others will eventually be returned to them" (Zhang & Epley, 2009, p. 796).

Reciprocity norms can drive behavioral transformation (Cialdini, 2000; Keysar, Converse, Wang, & Epley, 2008). According to research by Molm, Takahashi, and Peterson (2000), reciprocity creates trust and commitment between individuals, thereby resulting in improved relationships in the workplace. One hundred forty participants were given an opportunity to participate in a series of exchanges with the eventual goal to earn rewards. The final results uncovered that reciprocal exchanges as compared to negotiated exchanges, produced deeper trust and affective commitment. Another concern within the social-exchange process is the degree of cost incurred by giver and receiver respectively. Six experiments by Zhang and Epley (2009) found that givers reciprocated based on the costs they invested, whereas receivers reciprocated based on the outcomes they experienced. The team philosophy in these situations tends to be: "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." This philosophy is especially evident in situations where teams and groups need to procure goods and/or services. For example, imagine this situation in which Jane reaches out to her immediate supervisor for advice on procuring software for the team. The supervisor provides recommendations based on a company that will provide them an incentive for sales rather than a vendor than will actually serve the needs of the team.

These exchanges may potentially create a restrictive circumstance at work, making it hard for both parties to truly be engaged in the social-exchange process and reap its benefits.

However, through participating in advice-seeking, individuals can create an occasion of dialogue in the workplace that provides giver and receiver an opportunity to overcome their individual barriers and focus on the core tasks at hand. As mentioned above, LMX is a social-exchange theory (Bauer & Green, 1996; Gouldner, 1960; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Based on the main arguments conveyed by SET, we can understand that members involved in these high-quality exchanges "gain access to resources and other benefits, which they then reciprocate by behaving in ways that benefit the leader and the organization" (Erdogan et al., 2015, p. 186).

SET proposes that the following six resources are a few of the exchanges that constitute relationships: love, status, information, money, goods, and services (Shore, Tetrick, Lynch, & Barksdale, 2006; Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997). In the context of advice-seeking, direct reports attempt to influence and engage with their immediate supervisors to activate most or all of these resources. This interpersonal social exchange between immediate supervisors and direct reports varies depending on the availability of resources (e.g., information). The potential for a higher quality of exchange will result in a higher quality relationship. Furthermore, higher quality relationships have been found to have a positive effect on job attitudes, performance evaluations, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Liden et al., 1997). Another important aspect was that direct reports who were in high-quality relationships felt motivated to do favors for the immediate supervisor. The current research attempts to further this body of literature and examine the motivation of immediate supervisors to support their direct reports. Social exchange has been found to have several benefits, which can possibly be leveraged via training. However, the question is whether communication skills, specifically advice-seeking, can be taught. Furthermore, through advice-seeking, can direct reports develop

meaningful relationships with their immediate supervisor? An affirmative response would create

hope in the workplace for direct reports, providing them a strategy for developing richer

relationships with their immediate supervisors.

   Can advice-seeking be taught? Communication skills are an important ingredient for

success in the workplace (Beebe & Frei, 2016; Fyke & Buzzanell, 2014; Maguire, 1990; Noe,

Tews, & McConnell Dachner, 2010; Tharenou, Saks, & Moore, 2007; Winsor, Curtis, &

Stephens, 1997). Several studies and practical interventions in the workplace have focused on

teaching communication skills to individuals. For example, Back et al. (2007) created a four-day

residential workshop focused on helping postgraduate physician trainees develop mastery over

communication tasks such as giving bad news.

   Developing good communication skills is an important competency for being hired and,

thereafter, being successful within the workplace (Witt, 2017). During training sessions,

individuals learn the importance of various relevant skills in the workplace through observing

and developing comfort with the skill being taught (Grant, 2002; Holt, Killough, & Koh, 2001).

Furthermore, since employees have observed the negative consequences of poor communication

skills, they are often motivated to attend trainings and improve their efficacy (Beebe et al., 2013;

Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015; Porath, Gerbasi, & Schorch, 2015). Thus, good trainings

are focused on skill development and performance enhancement (Swanson, 1995; Torraco &

Swanson, 1995).

   Advice-seeking training is a type of communication skills training. Specifically, advice-

seeking training focuses on helping employees develop improved and enhanced communication

with their immediate supervisors. Training is usually anchored in a competency that is relevant

to both individual and organizational growth. The following paragraphs describe the potential benefits of advice-seeking within the supervisor-direct report relationship.

What are the Potential Benefits of Advice-Seeking on LMX Partnerships?

Advice-seeking is expected to leverage the reciprocal exchange and investment, which subsequently builds and strengthens leader-member relations and results in benefits for both the individuals as well as groups/organizations by potentially increasing the number of high-quality partnership dyads throughout a team or organization (Brooks et al., 2015; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liljenguist, 2010; Randolph-Seng et al., 2016).

As seen through the lens of LMX theory, there are major differences in how individuals within in-groups and out-groups achieve and complete their objectives at work, engage with others and their pursuit of personal development. Depending on their presence in the in-group or out-group, individuals may or may not have a rich relationship with their supervisor. Advice-seeking training is expected to help individuals overcome these differences, and enables everyone to harness the benefits of a rich relationship with their immediate supervisor. Specifically, training is expected to equip individuals with communication skills for developing better partnerships with their immediate supervisor through both shaping relationships and enabling supervisors to view employees as coachable. The following sections explain the benefits of relationship building and coaching development as made possible by advice-seeking.

Relationship building quality. Building higher-quality leader-member relationships is critical to the development of individuals, team, and organizations. The claim is that individuals can be trained to seek advice, which, in turn, will result in a host of potential relational outcomes with management (Liljenquist & Galinsky, 2007). In summary, advice-seeking motivates better communication and relationship development. Advice-seeking increases the likelihood of

relational development by demonstrating positive regard for the other and inviting their investment. Furthermore, being sought out for advice may motivate supervisors to make regular investments in the direct reports' growth and development. As individuals seek advice from their immediate supervisor, relationship building may be indicated through employees' increased communication satisfaction, their perceptions of psychological safety with their supervisor, as well as an immediate supervisor's perception of their own direct reports' greater referent power base.

Members in an in-group partnership spend more quality time together with their supervisors (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Subsequently, they have more opportunities to engage and communicate with their respective supervisor. Communication satisfaction of employees is defined as "a measure of how well the available information fulfills the individual's requests for information pertaining to the task-role or for simply being about organizational activities" (Putti, Aryee, & Phua, 1990, p. 45). Furthermore, a high degree of employee communication satisfaction inspires their job satisfaction and work performance (Madlock, 2008). Research from Hargie, Tourish, and Wilson (2002) found that low levels of employee communication satisfaction correspond to "lower staff commitment, reduced production, greater absenteeism, increased industrial unrest, and higher turnover" (p. 415). Each is a marker of low-LMX partnership. Thus, we can deduce that individuals in a high-LMX relationship are more likely to have better employee communication satisfaction.

These interpersonal interactions with their supervisors further strengthen individuals' learning behavior and effectiveness within their teams and the organization (Argyris, 1993; Edmondson, 1999). A study of 51 teams in a manufacturing organization revealed that individuals' sense of psychological safety within the team was associated with their learning

behavior (Edmondson, 1999). Psychological safety is conceptualized as a belief that individuals are comfortable engaging in risk-taking behaviors. Psychological safety is an important component of trust in organizations (Golenbiewski & McConkie, 1975; Kramer, 1999). Edmondson (1999) defines trust as "the expectation that others' future actions will be favorable to one's interests, such that one is willing to be vulnerable to those actions" (p. 354). In-group members earn the trust of their supervisors who continue to rely on them and provide them with additional work responsibilities. These observations suggest that advice-seeking training will provide individuals an opportunity to feel safe in interactions with their supervisors.

Over time, followers' commitment generates and increases immediate supervisors' perception of the direct reports' referent power base (i.e., liking; Rahim, 2009). Rahim et al. (2001) define referent power as "interpersonal attraction to and identification with an individual because of their admiration or personal liking of the individual" (p. 194). Referent power is indicative of an individual's yearning for and personal liking of the other (Rahim, 1989). Presumably, reciprocal resource changes and investments over time will create more opportunities for individuals to build interpersonal liking and attraction. Specifically, direct reports' advice-seeking should enhance immediate supervisors' perception of direct reports' referent power because it creates occasions for supervisors to admire direct reports' personality and become familiar with their accomplishments (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006). Thereafter, these advice-seeking conversations may become avenues for supervisors to admire and appreciate the direct reports' expertise and their resourcefulness (Rahim et al., 2001; Sheridan & Vredenburgh, 1978).

Overall, these conversations should enhance friendliness, satisfaction, and pleasantness at work and within the immediate supervisor-direct report relationship (Elangovan & Xie, 2000).

Additionally, the training literature suggests that transfer of training needs to be assessed well after the training itself to ensure that transfer has occurred (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Chiaburu, Van Dam, & Hutchins, 2010; Laine & Gegenfurtner, 2013). Therefore, the author constructed a 21-day plan to give participants in the experimental condition sufficient time and opportunity to apply their newly learnt advice-seeking skills to their workplace.

Therefore, the following hypotheses regarding a proposed advice-seeking communication training were advanced (see Table 1 for a complete list of hypotheses and accompanying planned statistical analyses):

H1: Twenty-one days after training, participants who receive advice-seeking training will report [(a) higher levels of leader-member exchange quality, (b) greater communication satisfaction, and (c) better psychological safety] with their immediate supervisors as compared to control group participants.

H2: Twenty-one days after training, immediate supervisors of participants who receive advice-seeking training will [(a) report higher levels of leader-member exchange quality with their direct report, (b) report greater communication satisfaction with their direct report, and (c) perceive their direct report to possess greater referent power] as compared to immediate supervisors of control group participants.

Coaching development quality. Coaching and mentoring are key components for the development of an individual and, subsequently, the growth of a team and organization. The claim is that individuals can be trained to seek advice, which, in turn, will result in immediate supervisors viewing them as coachable. Advice-seeking creates opportunities for coaching conversations. As individuals seek advice from their immediate supervisors, opportunities for coaching development may be indicated by employees' perception that they are receiving

mentoring social support and adequate downward information as well as immediate supervisors'

perception that their advice-seeking employee is motivated to learn (i.e., coachability).

Kogler Hill, Bahniuk, Dobos, and Rouner (1989) discuss the importance of formal (e.g.,

procedural announcements) and informal (e.g., organizational grapevine) communication as tools

to help employees navigate daily life at work. Specifically, both communication channels are

essential to empower direct reports and help them develop strategies to enhance task

performance (Conrad, 1985). An important aspect of communication at work is mentoring,

which is often an essential component of an individual's success on the job (Hunt & Michael,

1983). Kogler Hill et al. (1989) define mentoring as "the process of an older, more experienced

member of the organization assuming a paternal, guiding role with a less experienced protégé"

(p. 356). Individuals often struggle with creating and sustaining mentoring relationships, despite

their importance for job and career advancement (Conrad, 1985). However, individuals in high-

LMX relationships are more likely to develop a mentoring relationship with their supervisor

(Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In this way, advice-seeking training may enable individuals to

engage with their supervisors, thereby creating avenues to develop mentoring partnerships. An

important component related to mentoring is information adequacy. Past studies revealed how

inadequate and unsatisfactory information from management about policies and practices can

cause employees to feel insecure (Spiker & Daniels, 1981; Zhu, May, & Rosenfeld, 2004) and

can reduce their capacity to perform well in their job.

As individuals increase their knowledge base about their job and the organization, their

satisfaction with their work is affected as well (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Through advice-

seeking training, individuals would be equipped to engage with their supervisors and create

opportunities to receive clear and direct information about relevant organizational policies and

practices. Training tools would provide individuals a clear pathway to connect with their

immediate supervisor so as to overcome uncertainties associated with information inadequacy

(Schein, 1991). Overall, individuals would be developing a good working relationship with their

immediate supervisor, to the extent supervisors may consider them coachable. Past research has

provided ample evidence that supervisors are often more motivated to invest their time and effort

in employees whom they consider to be coachable (Allen et al., 2004; Passmore, 2007;

Ramaswani, Dreher, Bretz, & Wiethoff, 2010; Scandura, 1992; Scandura & Pellegrini, 2007;

Wang, Tomlinson, & Noe, 2010). These perceptions of coachability are developed via

interpersonal interactions. Often individuals are cautious and uncertain in these exchanges as

they fear the repercussions and social cost of appearing incompetent (Karabenick & Knapp,

1988). However, as demonstrated by Brooks et al. (2015), individuals who ask tough and

relevant questions are, in fact, considered to be more skilled and knowledgeable. A deep

understanding of the power of advice can be harnessed by individuals to ensure they are in a

high-LMX partnership with their supervisors and, therefore, able to receive coaching. Therefore,

the following hypotheses were advanced (see Table 1 for a complete list of hypotheses and

accompanying planned statistical analyses):

> **H3**: Twenty-one days after training, participants who receive advice-seeking training
>
> will report [(a) greater mentoring and communication social support, and (b) better
>
> downward information adequacy] from their immediate supervisors as compared to
>
> control group participants.
>
> **H4**: Twenty-one days after training, immediate supervisors of participants who receive
>
> advice-seeking training will perceive their direct report to have higher motivation to learn
>
> (i.e., coachability) as compared to immediate supervisors of control group participants.

Table 1
Hypotheses

Hypothesis	IV	DVs	Analysis	Statistic
H1a: Twenty-one days after training, participants who receive advice-seeking training will report **higher levels of leader-member exchange quality** with their immediate supervisors as compared to control group participants.	Trained vs. untrained participants	Leader-member exchange	MANOVA	F
H1b: Twenty-one days after training, participants who receive advice-seeking training will report **greater communication satisfaction** with their immediate supervisors as compared to control group participants.	Trained vs. untrained participants	Communication satisfaction with their immediate supervisor	MANOVA	F
H1c: Twenty-one days after training, participants who receive advice-seeking training will report **better psychological safety** with their immediate supervisors as compared to control group participants.	Trained vs. untrained participants	Psychological safety	MANOVA	F
H2a: Twenty-one days after training, immediate supervisors of participants who receive advice-seeking training will report **higher levels of leader-member exchange quality with their direct report** as compared to supervisors of control group participants.	Immediate supervisors of trained vs. untrained participants	Leader-member exchange	MANOVA	F

H2b: Twenty-one days after training, immediate supervisors of participants who will receive advice-seeking training report **greater communication satisfaction with their direct report** as compared to supervisors of control group participants.	Immediate supervisors of trained vs. untrained participants	Communication satisfaction with their direct report	MANOVA	F
H2c: Twenty-one days after training, immediate supervisors of participants who receive advice-seeking training will report **perceiving their direct report to possess greater referent power** as compared to supervisors of control group participants.	Immediate supervisors of trained vs. untrained participants	Referent power of direct report	MANOVA	F
H3a: Twenty-one days after training, participants who receive advice-seeking training will report **greater mentoring and communication social support** from their immediate supervisors as compared to control group participants.	Trained vs. untrained participants	Mentoring and communication social support	MANOVA	F
H3b: Twenty-one days after training, participants who receive advice-seeking training will report **better downward information adequacy** from their immediate supervisors as compared to control group participants.	Trained vs. untrained participants	Receiving adequate downward information	MANOVA	F

H4: Twenty-one days after training, immediate supervisors of participants who receive advice-seeking training will perceive their direct report to **have higher motivation to learn** (i.e. coachability) as compared to immediate supervisors of control group participants.	Immediate supervisors of trained vs. untrained participants	Employee motivation	Independent-samples t-test	t

Chapter 3: Method

Power Analysis

An a priori power analysis was conducted using the G*Power software (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996) to determine the sample size requirements for the study. Three power calculations were computed to create a range of needed sample size as a function of potential and expected effect sizes (R^2 or $R^2_{adjusted}$). The computation was conducted for a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), setting the alpha level at .05, and the power level at .80, respectively. Within the context of social and behavioral research, Cohen (1992) defined a small effect size as .10 and a medium effect size as .25.

The first power calculation estimating effect size of .10 indicated a needed sample size of 152 participants. The second power calculation estimating effect size of .15 indicated a needed sample size of 104 participants. The third power calculation estimating effect size of .25 indicated a needed sample size of 66 participants. In an attempt to maximize and balance statistical power alongside the financial and logistical constraints of training working adults within the context of a participating organization, the final sample size goal was set to 150 with 75 participants per condition (experimental versus control).

Participants

Participants in this study were a 149 full-time staff and 101 of their immediate supervisors from multiple departments at a university in the West South-Central United States, who consented and were included in the analyses for this experiment, following data cleaning procedures (described in the results section). Approximately, 67.78% of their supervisors also consented and provided their input. To enhance the ecological validity of findings, the study was conducted with working adults (e.g., Back et al., 2007; Bruning & Frew, 1987; Cameron et al.,

2018). Participants performed a wide range of job tasks and activities, such as human resources, clerical work, and information technology support. The author created one question, measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *rarely*, 5 = *very often*) to assess participants frequency of interaction with their immediate supervisor. On average, participants reported speaking fairly often to their immediate supervisor ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.16$). This descriptive statistic is valuable in the context of the present study because it suggests that most employees would, indeed, have an opportunity to interact with their immediate supervisor and implement the advice-seeking training. Detailed demographic and descriptive information for employees is provided in Table 2.

Table 2
Demographic & Descriptive Information for Direct Reports

Age		
	Minimum	23
	Maximum	71
	M	44.91
	SD	11.81
Sex		
	Male	16
	Female	131
	Prefer not to answer	2
Ethnicity/race		
	American-Indian or Alaska Native	9
	Asian	2
	Black or African-American	6
	Hispanic or Latino/Latina	7
	White	116
	Combination of above ethnicities	7
	Prefer not to answer	2
Tenure in current job role (in years)		
	Minimum	0
	Maximum	34
	M	7.18
	SD	6.59
Total work experience (in years)		
	Minimum	2

	Maximum	50
	M	22.18
	SD	12.03
Work experience alongside immediate supervisor (in years)		
	Minimum	0.07
	Maximum	22
	M	3.56
	SD	4.02
Frequency of interaction with immediate supervisor		
	Rarely	7
	Occasionally	16
	Sometimes	13
	Fairly often	53
	Very often	60
Job Role		
	Academic Support	4
	Accounting	2
	Administrative	46
	Advising	8
	Clinical	9
	Data Entry	2
	Director	2
	Events Planning	4
	Facilities	2
	Finance	13
	Human Resources	9
	Instructor	2
	IT	9
	Marketing	6
	Operations	8
	Research	16
	Training	3

Detailed demographic and descriptive information for the immediate supervisors is provided in Table 3. Out of the 101 immediate supervisors who participated in the experiment, only 92 provided their demographic information.

Table 3

Demographic & Descriptive Information for Immediate Supervisors

Age		
	Minimum	24
	Maximum	74
	M	48.56
	SD	10.59
Sex		
	Male	25
	Female	67
Ethnicity/race		
	American-Indian or Alaska Native	1
	Asian	2
	Black or African-American	1
	Hispanic or Latino/Latina	5
	White	80
	Combination of above ethnicities	2
	Prefer not to answer	1
Tenure in current job role (in years)		
	Minimum	.50
	Maximum	35
	M	8.47
	SD	7.38
Total work experience (in years)		
	Minimum	4
	Maximum	55
	M	26.71
	SD	10.79
Total supervisory experience (in years)		
	Minimum	1
	Maximum	45
	M	16.51
	SD	10.85
Work experience alongside direct report and team (in years)		
	Minimum	.33
	Maximum	23
	M	6.20
	SD	5.59
Frequency of interaction with direct report		
	Rarely	0
	Occasionally	1

		Sometimes	2
		Fairly often	19
		Very often	70
Job Role			
		Academic Advising	6
		Administrative	28
		Clinical	4
		Creative	2
		Customer Service	2
		Design	2
		Events	2
		Finance	8
		Human Resources	10
		IT	6
		Operations	8
		Research	8
		Student Affairs	3

Procedure and Design

This research was conducted in partnership with a major university's organizational

wellness program. Program representatives at the university shared an announcement flyer via

email to notify all staff of the training. The announcement invited them to participate in an

advice-seeking communication training in exchange for wellness points and additional financial

compensation ($20 Starbucks gift cards awarded through raffle to 50 participants). At the

university, wellness points are used as an incentive to encourage employee participation in

various health- and wellness-related programs and workshops. At the end of every calendar year,

participants can earn monetary incentives based on the total number of wellness points

accumulated throughout the year. The research was approved by the University's Institutional

Review Board (IRB).

The announcement flyer contained a link that allowed staff members to indicate their

interest in the training. Participation was voluntary. Participants who clicked on the link in the

flyer were directed to an online informed consent. Those who agreed to participate indicated

their consent. Thereafter, individuals were randomly assigned to an advice-seeking training or control group condition. Due to technical difficulties, random assignment of equal number of participants to treatment and control groups was not possible. At the start of the recruitment process, 196 employees completed the informed consent form and were randomly assigned to treatment or control condition. There were 78 participants assigned to the treatment condition and a 118 participants to the control condition. The challenges posed by the failure of random assignment are discussed in greater detail in the discussion section. Some supervisors had multiple direct reports participating in the training, thus, to avoid fatigue and overlap, only 171 unique survey invitations were sent to immediate supervisors with a request for participation in the study. This amounted to 72 who supervised direct reports in the experimental condition and 99 who oversaw individuals in the control condition.

Individuals in both groups provided the name and email address of their direct supervisor. Additionally, individuals in the training group were able to each register for a training date right away based on their availability and schedule. Individuals in the control group had an opportunity to receive the training after the completion of the study protocol. Training was conducted synchronously online using the video conferencing application, Zoom. There were a total of ten training sessions conducted within one week. Each training session hosted a maximum of 15 participants.

During training sessions, participants were welcomed by the trainer and underwent a 45-minute advice-seeking training. The training session focused on helping participants hone and polish their advice-seeking skills using a five-component language-prompt model (labeled the A-BOAT model for short), applicable to work settings. The A-BOAT model encourages individuals to engage in advice-seeking behavior at work using specific linguistic prompts that are intended

to offer others (e.g., supervisors, peers) an opportunity to invest in their task and emotional well-being via informational social support and advice-giving. Through questions such as, "What behavior/skills do you appreciate the most?," and "I was curious about your thoughts" participants were coached to initiate dialogue with their immediate supervisor (see Appendix A for the overall training model and lesson plan).

Participants reviewed case studies on the value of building rich relationships with their immediate supervisors. Thereafter, through using group chat and break-out rooms on Zoom, they engaged in conversations with one another to create an action plan for building better relationship with their immediate supervisor. Lastly, participants learned pragmatic skills (e.g., expressing gratitude) to help them follow-up on the advice-seeking conversations, in an attempt to maximize the relationship building potential of these conversations. A total of 78 participants underwent training. There was attrition from this sample while completing the final survey items. Only 33 participants completed the final Qualtrics survey in its entirety. The most probable cause for this 58% attrition is the confusion and technical difficulty created by the online survey formatting.

Participants who received training were emailed a follow-up assignment, which functioned as a reinforcement of key training ideas and skills (i.e., a "booster-shot") one-week after training (see Appendix B for an overview of the entire prompt). The assignment asked trained participants to explain the value and practice of advice-seeking. They were asked the following question: "Please *give* advice (to a coworker and friend) about *how to get* advice from a supervisor. Be sure to explain to your coworker and friend *why* they should consider seeking advice from the immediate supervisor." In simple terms, participants were encouraged to engage in giving advice about how to get advice (i.e., meta-advice). This assignment utilized the

principle of commitment consistency common in psychology research (Cialdini, 1993). It was expected that participation in the follow-up assignment would help participants commit to a positive position about advice, thereby increasing their chances of future action corresponding with that position (Cialdini, Wosinska, Barrett, Butner, & Gornik-Durose, 1999). A majority of trained participants ($n = 80.76\%$) completed the follow-up assignment. At the end of the assignment, participants were asked to provide their name. This strategy allowed the researcher to keep track of those participants who finished the task.

Twenty-one days after the completion of the initial training all participants completed the entire battery of measures described below alongside manipulation check questions (Paeezy, Shahraray, & Abdi, 2010; Yamnill & McLean, 2001). The survey was hosted on Qualtrics. At the same time, immediate supervisors of both groups also received a link to the survey measures via email. To summarize, participants in both conditions (experimental and control) alongside their immediate supervisors completed the questionnaire at the same time. To ensure that the training materials had been administered to both groups and all accompanying data points were collected, control group participants were also given an opportunity to attend the advice-seeking training after the completion of all survey protocols.

Immediate supervisors who consented to participate in the study (on the first page of the online questionnaire) provided input on their respective direct reports based on specific measures. All measures described in this study are relevant to either individual or organizational well-being. Direct reports completed the following scales, which are described in detail below: direct reports perceptions of psychological safety with immediate supervisors, mentoring and communication social support, and receiving information adequacy scale. Immediate supervisors completed the following scales, also described in detail below: supervisor perceptions of direct

reports' referent power inventory, and supervisor perceptions of employee motivation scale.

Both direct reports and their immediate supervisors completed the following two scales in regard

to the other: leader-member exchange and communication satisfaction. All participants

responded to demographic questions (see Appendix C and Appendix D for all questions). Fifty

participants across all groups (employees in the training or control group and their immediate

supervisors) were selected through a raffle to receive a $20 Starbucks gift card. Furthermore, all

participants and their immediate supervisors earned wellness points on the health portal if they

completed the questionnaire and attended the training sessions. See Figure 1 for a chart

summarizing the entire study protocol.

Figure 1

Participation Flow Chart
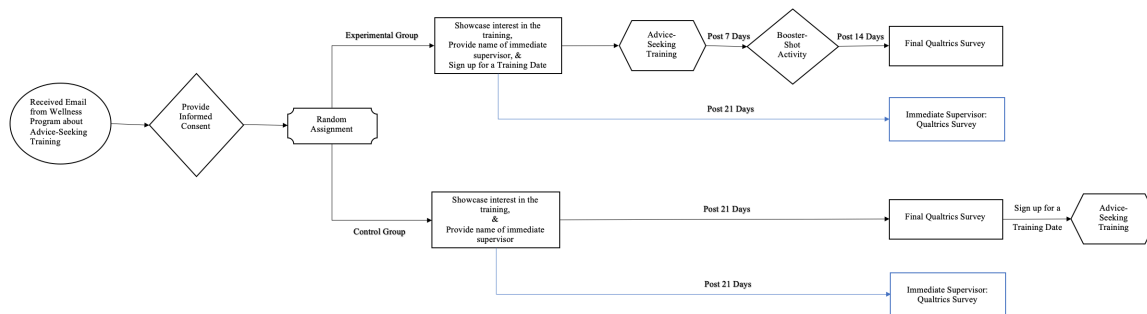
Dependent Variables

   Leader-member exchange (LMX). A 7-item measure by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) was

used to assess the perceived strength of the working professional relationship between immediate

supervisors and their direct reports (see Appendix F for all scale items). Overall items were

measured on a 5-point Likert type scale (1 = *strongly disagree/rarely*, 5 = *strongly agree/often*).

Some sample items include, "I have enough confidence in my immediate supervisor (direct

reports) that I would defend and justify his or her decision if he or she were not present to do so"

and "How well does your immediate supervisor (direct reports) recognize your potential?" The scale was determined to have strong predictive validity (Dulebohn et al., 2012). Previous internal consistency of this measure has been adequate: Cronbach's alpha values have ranged between .83 and .85 (Kacmar, Witt, Zivnuska, & Gully, 2003; Schuh, Zhang, Morgeson, Tian, & van Dick, 2018).

Communication satisfaction. The effectiveness of supervisors or direct reports' communication satisfaction at work was assessed using the communication satisfaction scale (Hecht, 1978). A total of 19 items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree;* see Appendix G for all scale items). Some sample items include "He or she lets me know that I am communicating effectively," "Has a good command of the language," and "Is sensitive to my needs of the moment." The scale was determined to have face validity (Berman & Hellweg, 1989; Steele & Plenty, 2015). Previous internal consistency of this measure was strong, Cronbach's alpha = .93 (Steele & Plenty, 2015).

Direct reports' perception of psychological safety with supervisor. A seven-item modified team psychological safety measure by Edmondson (1999) was used to assess the degree to which direct reports felt comfortable taking interpersonal risks with one another (see Appendix H for all scale items). The items were modified to capture psychological safety with the individual's immediate supervisor rather than with the team. Items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Some sample items include, "I am able to bring up problems and tough issues," "It is safe to take a risk with my immediate supervisor" and "My immediate supervisor would never deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts." The scale has strong face validity (Edmondson, 1999). Previous internal

consistency of this measure was adequate, Cronbach's alpha = .83 and McDonald's omega = .75 (Albritton et al., 2019; Harvey, Johnson, Roloff, & Edmondson, 2019).

Supervisors' perception of direct reports' referent power. A seven-item modified version of the leader power inventory by Rahim (1989) was used to measure supervisors' perceptions of their direct reports' referent power base (i.e., their yearning to connect and identify with the direct report; see Appendix I for all scale items). Items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Some sample items include, "My direct report has a pleasing personality," "I want to keep my direct report pleased with my work because I want to be his (her) personal friend," and "I don't want to identify myself with my direct report." The scale was determined to have construct and criterion-related validity (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006; Rahim, 1989). Previous internal consistency of this measure is adequate: Cronbach's alpha ranged from .72 to .82 (Rahim et al., 2003).

Mentoring and communication social support. A 15-item modified measure developed by Kogler Hill et al. (1989) was used to assess the social support provided by immediate supervisors via mentoring and communication (see Appendix J for all scale items). Items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Some sample items include, " The scale has strong face validity (Harris, Winskowski, & Engdahl, 2007). Previous internal consistency of this measure is adequate. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .75 to .89 across the four sub-dimensions (Downs, Hill, Bahniuk, & Rouner, 1994; Harris et al., 2007).

Receiving information adequacy (RIS). A 13-item modified measure from Goldhaber and Rogers (1979) was used to assess participants' perception of receiving adequate information at work. Specifically, it measured organizational members' perception and satisfaction with the

quantity of job-related information (i.e., information related to policy, pay, benefits) they *expected* as compared to the quantity of job-related information they *currently receive* (see Appendix K for all scale items). Participants responded to items across the following two categories: (1) This is the amount of information I *receive now*, and (2) This is the amount of information I *need to receive to do my job*. Items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *very little*, 5 = *very great*). Some sample items include, "How well I am doing in my job," "My job duties," and "Organizational policies." Past factor analyses have consistently revealed the following 3-dimensional structure: (a) organizational performance, (b) individual performance, and (c) policies/benefits (Spiker & Daniels, 1981; Zhu et al., 2004). Previous internal consistency of each structure within the measure ranged between .71 and .85 (Rosenfeld, Richman, & May, 2004). The RIS scale has shown consistent evidence for reliability and validity (DeWine, 1994).

Employee motivation. Employee motivation at work was measured with an adapted version of the student motivation scale (Christophel, 1990; Richmond, 1990). The scale captures the degree of attentiveness and awareness an individual has towards tasks at work. A total of 16 bipolar, semantic differential items were measured on a 7-point continuum (see Appendix L for all scale items). Some sample items are, "Motivated/unmotivated," "Involved/uninvolved," and "Interested/uninterested." The scale was determined to have construct validity (Beatty & Payne, 1985; Christophel, 1990; Richmond, 1990). Previous internal consistency of this measure is adequate. Cronbach's alpha ranged from .94 to .96 (Christophel, 1990; Richmond, 1990).

Manipulation Check

Manipulation checks were performed to assess whether trained participants reported higher behavioral self-efficacy in advice-seeking as compared to their untrained counterparts.

Four original items were created to capture this behavioral self-efficacy in advice-seeking (see Appendix E for all scale items). These items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Some sample items include, "I have the skill to engage in advice-seeking," and "I am able to seek advice in order to obtain positive benefits." Again, this manipulation check was important to assess whether the advice-seeking training exposure influenced and helped direct reports in develop better relationships with their immediate supervisor.

The descriptive statistics and reliability scores (Cronbach's alpha) for all the dependent variables and manipulation check in the current study are reported in Table 4.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Scores for Dependent Variables and Manipulation Check

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha	M	SD
Leader-member exchange ($N = 239$)[a]	7	.90	3.73	0.81
Communication satisfaction ($N = 240$)[a]	18	.96	5.40	1.08
Psychological safety ($N = 149$)	6	.87	5.16	1.25
Mentoring and communication social support ($N = 149$)	15	.94	4.21	1.17
Receiving adequate information currently ($N = 145$)	5	.86	3.00	0.87
Receiving adequate information in the future ($N = 144$)	5	.85	3.62	0.73
Referent power ($N = 101$)	4	.83	6.19	0.74
Motivation to learn ($N = 100$)	15	.95	5.97	0.79
Manipulation check ($N = 148$)	4	.92	5.76	0.99

Note. [a] = includes responses from both supervisors and direct reports

Chapter 4: Results

Data Preparation

Data cleaning was conducted to prepare the dataset for analysis. Five incomplete cases were removed, as participants did not provide any responses to the scales and demographic information. Standardized scores were computed for all items using $\pm$ 4 standard deviations from the mean as the criterion. Two univariate outliers were found within the participant sample. Furthermore, four univariate outliers were found in the immediate supervisor sample. Examination of all six individual cases indicated that these responses were inconsistent with the rest of the population and were, therefore, excluded from analyses. Furthermore, given the current employment uncertainty in the workplace due to COVID-19 pandemic, cases that demonstrated a pattern of answering 7 (highest scale point) to all questions on the dependent variables were removed, regardless of whether participants had been assigned to experimental or control conditions. Examination of the 36 cases indicated that these responses were inconsistent with the rest of the population and were therefore excluded from analysis. After the removal of outliers, extreme and incomplete cases, a total of 149 employees out of 196, were included in the analyses of this experiment. Sixty employees were in the experimental condition and 89 were in the control condition. Out of 171, only 101 immediate supervisors responded to the final survey.

Prior to conducting the confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) or exploratory factor analyses (EFAs), tests were computed to ensure the normality of all items, through an evaluation of skewness and kurtosis. Both skewness and kurtosis values were within the range of $\pm$ 2 *SE*. Therefore, no transformations were performed (Fink, 2009; Kline, 2016; Tabachnik & Fidell, 2013). Sample size informed analytical decisions about factor analyses (i.e., CFAs or EFAs). CFAs were conducted for scales the author adapted and modified substantially; hence, the author

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wanted to ensure that the measure was consistent with the definitions established within the literature (Brown, 2015; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987). Due to insufficient sample size an individual CFA was conducted for each scale, separately, rather than an overall CFA measurement model for all scales. Based on this rationale, the measure for direct report perception of psychological safety and immediate supervisor perception of direct reports' referent power were subjected to a CFA. The author conducted EFAs for the other scales to check their factor structure (Beavers et al., 2013; Kline, 2016; Russell, 2002; Tabachnik & Fidell, 2013). Thus, EFAs were conducted for the leader-member exchange, communication satisfaction, mentoring and communication social support, receiving information adequacy, employee motivation and manipulation check measures.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

After data cleaning, CFAs were conducted in LISREL 10.20 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2019). Reading from the raw data, the program generated a covariance matrix to analyze. The metric assumption was applied by setting the first item of a latent factor as the marker indicator (Brown, 2015). The following three indices were examined to assess and determine model fit: The root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Several guidelines outlined by different authors were utilized to evaluate the three fit indices. Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend that the CFI should be ≥ 0.95, the RMSEA should be $< .06$ and the SRMR should be ≤ 0.08. Other scholars provide more lenient cut-off values of fit indices. Browne and Cudeck (1993) recommend RMSEA to be ≤ 0.10 and Bentler (1990) approves an acceptable CFI cutoff to be ≥ 0.90. Model fit was considered sufficient if two of three indices met or surpassed the recommended cutoff values.

An important source of model misspecification in CFA is the relationship between indicators and the factors (Brown, 2015). To enhance the structure and fit of the model, weak items were deleted from analyses. Kline (2016) recommends retaining items whose standardized factor loadings are close to 0.70, which would mean the latent factors explains at least 50% of the variance in an item. However, this strict cutoff would have radically condensed the total number of items within a scale. Thus, a standardized factor loading rule of 0.60 (i.e., the latent factor explains at least 36% of the variance in an item) was applied (Bagozzi, Yi, & Singh 1991). Based on this standard, several items were, iteratively, removed from analyses. Furthermore, based on theoretical justifications and standards set in the field, modifications were permitted. Specifically, standards set by Brown (2015) were utilized to allow the errors of two similarly-worded items to covary. The CFA results are described in detail below.

The *direct report perception of psychological safety* scale (measured with 7 items) was revised. The initial model fit was poor, $\chi^2(14, N = 181) = 593.58$ ($p < .001$), RMSEA = .11, 90% CI [.08, .15], CFI = .94, and SRMR = .05. The second item ("I am able to bring up problems and tough issues") was problematic. CFA revealed that the latent factor explained only 29% of the variance for the indicator. Therefore, this item was dropped from analysis. The final model fit was good, as all fit indices were within accepted cutoff values, $\chi^2(9, N = 181) = 509.20$ ($p < .001$), RMSEA = .07, 90% CI [.00, .12], CFI = .99, and SRMR = .03.

The *immediate supervisor perception of direct reports' referent power* scale (measured with 7 items) was also revised. The initial model fit was poor, $\chi^2(14, N = 105) = 313.50$ ($p < .001$), RMSEA = .13, 90% CI [.08, .18], CFI = .92, and SRMR = .06. Here, the second item, ("I want to keep my direct report pleased with my work because I want to be his (her) personal friend"), the third item ("I don't want to identify myself with my direct report"), and the sixth

item ("I want to develop a good interpersonal relationship with my direct report) were problematic. CFA revealed that the latent factor explained 9%, 24%, and 34% of the variance for these indicators. These three items were dropped from analysis, iteratively. Furthermore, the errors of the fifth item ("I like the personal qualities of my direct report") and seventh item ("My direct report is not the type of person I enjoy working with") were allowed to covary as both items used similar language and attempted to capture the supervisors liking for the direct reports personality. The final model fit was good as all fit indices were within accepted cutoff values, $\chi^2(1, N = 105) = 216.87$ ($p < .001$), RMSEA = .05, 90% CI [.00, .27], CFI = .99, and SRMR = .02.

Exploratory Factor Analyses

EFA were conducted on the five remaining dependent variables and manipulation check measures. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used to assess the adequacy of conducting EFAs on the respective scales. KMO values are typically recommended to be at or above .80 (Kaiser, 1974). The estimation method used was maximum likelihood. Items across each scale were constrained to load on solely one factor. All factor loadings were at or greater than .45 (Nunnally, 1978; Russell, 2002; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987). The final factor loadings for the dependent variables are presented in Table 5. Furthermore, all factors were composed of a minimum of three indicators (Kline, 2016). The EFA results are described in detail below.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

The EFA results for the LMX scale items was adequate (KMO = .90 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, χ^2 [$df = 21$] = 910.77, $p < .001$). None of the items were deleted since all factor loadings were greater than .68 and the seven items explained 57.52% of the variance.

Communication Satisfaction

The EFA results for the communication satisfaction items was also adequate (KMO value = .96 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, χ^2 [df = 171] = 3377.44, p < .001). However, since the factor loading for the 17th item ("He or she changes the topic when his or her feelings are brought into the conversation") was less than .40, it was removed from the scale. The EFA was re-run without this item. The final EFA statistics were, KMO value = .96 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, χ^2 [df = 153] = 3273.36, p < .001). All factor loadings for the remaining items were greater than .57 and these 18 items explained 56.24% of the variance.

Mentoring and Communication Social Support

The EFA results for the mentoring and communication social support scale items was acceptable (KMO value = .91 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, χ^2 [df = 105] = 1378.39, p < .001). None of the items were deleted since all factor loadings were greater than .66 and the 15 items explained 50.42% of the variance.

Receiving Information Adequacy

This variable was computed as a discrepancy score between the following two factors: The amount of information employees were receiving from their immediate supervisors across topics and the amount of information they needed to receive on that topic in order to do their job. Each factor was examined individually and thereafter a composite was created.

The EFA results for the factor assessing the amount of information individuals were receiving currently was also acceptable (KMO value = .90 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, χ^2 [df = 78] = 945.10, p < .001). However, since the factor loadings for the seventh ("How I am being judged"), and sixth ("Mistakes and failures of my organization") items were less than .40, these items were removed from the measure. The EFA was re-run once again. The final EFA statistics

were KMO = .90 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, χ^2 [df = 55] = 846.61, p < .001. All factor loadings for the remaining items were greater than .70 and these 11 items explained 50.43% of the variance.

To ensure uniformity, items six and seven were also deleted from the measure assessing the amount of information individuals *needed* across various items. The EFA statistics for the items assessing the amount of information individuals needed to receive in order to do their job was acceptable (KMO value = .84 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, χ^2 [df = 55] = 635.36, p < .001). However, since the factor loading for the 13th ("Specific problems faced by management"), tenth ("Promotion and advancement opportunities in my organization"), fifth ("How technological changes affect my job"), fourth ("Pay and benefits"), 12th ("How my job related to the total organization"), and 11th ("Important new product, service, or program developments in my organization") items were less than .40, these items were removed from the measure. The EFA was re-run once again, without these item. The final EFA statistics were KMO = .77 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, χ^2 [df = 10] = 319.56, p < .001. The final KMO value is slightly below the recommended value of .80, and thus it is defined as mediocre (Kaiser, 1974). All factor loadings for the remaining items were greater than .45 and these five items explained 50.43% of the variance.

To ensure uniformity, items 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, and 13 were also deleted from the measure assessing the amount of information individuals were *currently receiving* across various items. Lastly, the composite showing information adequacy was created by calculating the difference between the amount of information they were receiving currently, and the amount of information individuals reported needing.

Employee Motivation (Coachability)

The EFA results for the employee motivation measure was adequate, with KMO value = .92 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, χ^2 [df = 120] = 1257.00, p < .001. However, since the factor loading for the 11th item (aroused/not aroused) was less than .40, it was removed from the scale. The EFA statistics for the revised items were acceptable, KMO = .92 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, χ^2 [df = 105] = 1225.80, p < .001. All factor loadings for the remaining items were greater than .45 and these 15 items explained 59.37% of the variance.

Manipulation Check

The EFA results for the manipulation check items was adequate, KMO = .84 and Bartlett's test of sphericity, χ^2 [df = 6] = 424.62, p < .001). None of the items were deleted since all factor loadings were greater than .82 and the four items explained 74.01% of the variance.

The experimental design presumed that trained participants would have higher self-efficacy (behavioral) in advice-seeking (SEAS) after training as compared to their untrained counterparts. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the SEAS between the treatment and control groups. Levene's test across the criterion variable was significant, $F(1, 145)$ = 17.87, p < .05, thus, the variances among the populations being compared were not homogeneous. Furthermore, results indicated trained participants' self-efficacy in advice-seeking was significantly higher than untrained participants', $t(140.79)$ = 3.95, p < .05. In other words, trained employees (M = 6.10, SD = 0.61) had higher SEAS than individuals in the control condition (M = 5.53, SD = 1.13). Thus, the experimental manipulation was successful.

Table 5

Final Factor Loadings and Reliability Scores for Dependent Variables and Manipulation Check

Variable	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha
Leader-member exchange (LMX)			.90
	LMX1	.78	
	LMX2	.73	
	LMX3	.75	
	LMX4	.81	
	LMX5	.68	
	LMX6		
	LMX7	.71	
		.84	
Communication satisfaction (COMSAT)			.96
	COMSAT1	.68	
	COMSAT2	.65	
	COMSAT3	.81	
	COMSAT4	.79	
	COMSAT5	.67	
	COMSAT6	.60	
	COMSAT7	.62	
	COMSAT8	.86	
	COMSAT9	.86	
	COMSAT10	.86	
	COMSAT11	.87	
	COMSAT12	.79	
	COMSAT13	.67	
	COMSAT14	.83	
	COMSAT15	.82	
	COMSAT16	.86	
	COMSAT18	.61	
	COMSAT19	.57	
Mentoring and communication social support (MENTSU)			.94
	MENTSU1	.66	
	MENTSU2	.75	
	MENTSU3	.72	
	MENTSU4	.75	
	MENTSU5	.66	
	MENTSU6	.70	
	MENTSU7	.67	

	MENTSU8	.73	
	MENTSU9	.68	
	MENTSU10	.67	
	MENTSU11	.67	
	MENTSU12	.75	
	MENTSU13	.74	
	MENTSU14	.76	
	MENTSU15	.73	
Receiving adequate information currently (RIA_NOW)			.86
	RIA_NOW1	.70	
	RIA_NOW2	.76	
	RIA_NOW3	.71	
	RIA_NOW8	.75	
	RIA_NOW9	.74	
Receiving adequate information in the future (RIA_NEED)			.85
	RIA_NEED1	.80	
	RIA_NEED2	.88	
	RIA_NEED3	.76	
	RIA_NEED8	.69	
	RIA_NEED9	.46	
Motivation to learn (EMPMOT)			.95
	EMPMOT1	.84	
	EMPMOT2	.85	
	EMPMOT3	.79	
	EMPMOT4	.81	
	EMPMOT5	.82	
	EMPMOT6	.72	
	EMPMOT7	.45	
	EMPMOT8	.83	
	EMPMOT9	.86	
	EMPMOT10	.72	
	EMPMOT12	.66	
	EMPMOT13	.77	
	EMPMOT14	.79	
	EMPMOT15	.79	
	EMPMOT16	.76	
Manipulation check (MANIP)			.92
	MANIP1	.86	

MANIP2	.92
MANIP3	.82
MANIP4	.84

MANOVA

A MANOVA was conducted to test hypotheses one through four and determine if participants randomly assigned to the experimental condition differed on the various relationship quality and coaching competence measures as compared to the control group participants.

H1 proposed that participants who received advice-seeking training would report higher levels of leader-member exchange quality (H1a), communication satisfaction (H1b) and psychological safety (H1c) with their supervisors as compared to those in the control condition. A MANOVA was calculated using these variables as dependent variables and the training condition as the independent variable. Box's M value (3.56) was non-significant, thus confirming the assumption of homogeneity of variance. The variances among the populations being compared were homogeneous, as Levene's test across all three criterion variables, LMX, communication satisfaction and psychological safety, was non-significant, $F(1, 142) = 0.81$, $p = .37$; $F(1, 142) = 0.86$, $p = .36$; $F(1, 142) = 1.26$, $p = .26$, respectively.

Results indicated no significant differences in advice-seeking training on direct reports' self-reported leader-member exchange quality (H1a), communication satisfaction (H1b) and psychological safety (H1c) with their supervisors, Wilks' Lambda $= .98$, $F(3, 140) = 1.11$, $p = .35$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .02$. Thus, in response to H1, advice-seeking training did not change individuals' perception of LMX quality or communication satisfaction with their immediate supervisor. The mean differences are reported in Table 6.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables across Conditions for Direct Reports

Variable	Condition	N	M	SD
Leader-member exchange	Experimental	60	3.55	0.94
	Control	84	3.58	0.82
Communication satisfaction	Experimental	60	5.06	1.27
	Control	84	5.07	1.12
Psychological safety	Experimental	60	5.26	1.26
	Control	84	5.07	1.27
Mentoring and communication social support	Experimental	59	4.18	1.19
	Control	85	4.29	1.12
Receiving adequate information	Experimental	59	0.58	1.11
	Control	85	0.62	0.90

H2 proposed that supervisors of participants who received advice-seeking training would report higher levels of leader-member exchange quality (H2a), communication satisfaction (H2b) and perceive their direct reports to have greater referent power (H2c) as compared to supervisors of individuals who were in the control condition. A MANOVA was calculated using these variables as dependent variables and the training vs. control condition as the independent variable. Box's M value (4.87) was non-significant, thus confirming the assumption of homogeneity of variance. The variances among the populations being compared were homogeneous, as Levene's test across all three criterion variables (LMX, communication satisfaction and referent power) were non-significant, $F(1, 93) = 1.18$, $p = .28$; $F(1, 93) = 1.53$, $p = .22$; $F(1, 93) = 0.45$, $p = .50$, respectively.

Results indicated no significant differences in perceptions of the trained participants' supervisors' self-reported leader-member exchange quality (H2a), communication satisfaction (H2b), and referent power (H2c) with their direct reports, Wilks' Lambda = .98, $F(3, 91) = 0.56$,

$p = .64$, $\eta^2_{partial} = .02$. Thus, in response to H2, advice-seeking training did not change

supervisors' perception of LMX quality, communication satisfaction, or referent power with

their trained direct-reports. The mean differences are reported in Table 7.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables across Conditions for Immediate Supervisors

Variable	Condition	N	M	SD
Leader-member exchange	Experimental	31	3.86	0.57
	Control	64	4.02	0.66
Communication satisfaction	Experimental	31	5.86	0.57
	Control	64	5.93	0.68
Referent power	Experimental	31	5.89	0.71
	Control	64	5.98	0.83
Motivation to learn	Experimental	32	5.92	0.73
	Control	68	5.99	0.82

H3 proposed that participants who received advice-seeking training would report higher

levels of mentoring and communication social support (H3a) alongside receiving adequate

downward information (H3b) with their supervisors as compared to those who were in the

control condition. A MANOVA was calculated using these variables as dependent variables and

the training condition as the independent variable. Box's M value (4.01) was non-significant,

thus fulfilling the assumption of homogeneity of variance. The variances among the populations

being compared were homogeneous, as Levene's test across both criterion variables, mentoring

and communication social support and receiving adequate downward information, were non-

significant, $F(1, 142) = 0.10$, $p = .75$; $F(1, 142) = 2.19$, $p = .14$, respectively.

Results indicated no significant differences in advice-seeking training affecting direct

reports' self-reported feelings of mentoring and communication social support (H2a) and

receiving adequate information (H3b) from their supervisors, Wilks' Lambda = 1.00, $F(2, 141)$ = 0.32, p = .72, $\eta^2_{partial}$ = .01. Recall that information adequacy is indicated by scores nearest to zero, whereas scores that diverge from zero indicate increasing inadequacy—either overload or underload. Thus, in response to H3, advice-seeking training did not change individuals' perception of receiving mentoring and communication social support and adequate information from their immediate supervisor. The mean differences are reported in Table 6.

H4 proposed that supervisors of participants who had received advice-seeking training would perceive direct reports to have higher motivation to learn (coachability) as compared to supervisors of individuals who were in the control condition. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the supervisors perception of their employees' motivation to learn between the treatment and control groups. The variances among the populations being compared were homogeneous, as Levene's test across the criterion variable was non-significant, $t(98)$ = 0.19, p = .66.

Results indicated no significant differences in perceptions of the trained participants' supervisors' self-reported feelings of their direct reports' motivation to learn, $t(98)$ = -0.38, p = .71. In other words, advice-seeking training did not change supervisors' perceptions of their trained direct reports' motivation to learn. The mean differences are reported in Table 7.

Post-Hoc Analyses

Follow-up analyses were conducted to understand the role of trained *and* untrained direct reports' behavioral self-efficacy in advice seeking (or SEAS) across the dependent variables. The goal was to explore the question of whether behavioral self-efficacy in advice seeking— regardless of training—was associated with any of the expected outcome variables. Five bivariate regression analyses were computed to calculate whether SEAS predicted all the other

outcome variables related to direct reports' perceptions of their relationship with their immediate supervisor.[1]

First, SEAS did not significantly predict direct reports' perception of leader-member exchange with their immediate supervisor, $R^2 = .01$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .01$, $F(1, 141) = 1.93$, $p = .17$. Furthermore, SEAS was positively associated with leader-member exchange, $\beta = .12$, $t(142) = 1.39$, $p = .17$. Second, SEAS did not significantly predict direct reports' perception of communication satisfaction with their immediate supervisor, $R^2 = .01$, $R^2_{adjusted} = -.002$, $F(1, 141) = 0.79$, $p = .38$. Furthermore, SEAS was positively associated with communication satisfaction, $\beta = .07$, $t(143) = .89$, $p = .38$.

Third, SEAS did not significantly predict direct reports' perception of mentoring and social support with their immediate supervisor, $R^2 = .003$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .004$, $F(1, 146) = 0.37$, $p = .55$. Furthermore, SEAS was positively associated with mentoring and social support, $\beta = .05$, $t(147) = .61$, $p = .55$. Fourth, SEAS did not significantly predict direct reports' perception of information adequacy with their immediate supervisor, $R^2 = .005$, $R^2_{adjusted} = -.003$, $F(1, 141) = 0.64$, $p = .43$. Furthermore, SEAS was negatively associated with information adequacy, $\beta = -.07$, $t(143) = -.80$, $p = .43$.

Importantly, SEAS was a significant predictor of direct reports' perception of psychological safety with their immediate supervisor, $R^2 = .03$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .02$, $F(1, 146) = 4.01$, $p < .05$. The strength of the associated relationship was very small. Furthermore, SEAS was positively associated with psychological satisfaction, $\beta = .16$, $t(147) = 2.00$, $p = .05$. Results suggested that individuals' self-efficacy in advice-seeking may grow alongside their sense of

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[1] Frequency of interaction between immediate supervisor and direct report was not an important indicator in analysis of the study's hypotheses.

psychological safety. The exact causal direction of the relationship between SEAS and psychological safety cannot be easily determined. Most likely they share a reciprocal relationship such that participants who feel self-efficacious in the behavioral know-how to seek advice, reveal to themselves, in practice, that they can take a chance or interpersonal risk with their supervisor, and vice versa.

Four bivariate regression analyses were also computed to calculate the degree to which employee' SEAS predicted all the other outcome variables related to immediate supervisors. First, SEAS did not significant predict immediate supervisors' perception of communication satisfaction with their direct report, $R^2 = .01$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .001$, $F(1, 94) = 1.05$, $p = .31$. Furthermore, SEAS was negatively associated with immediate supervisors perception of communication satisfaction, $\beta = -.11$, $t(94) = -1.03$, $p = .31$. Second, SEAS did not predict immediate supervisors' perception of their direct reports' referent power significantly, $R^2 = .003$, $R^2_{adjusted} = -.007$, $F(1, 99) = 0.35$, $p = .56$. Furthermore, SEAS was negatively associated with immediate supervisors perception of subordinate referent power, $\beta = -.06$, $t(100) = -.59$, $p = .56$.

Third, SEAS did not significantly predict immediate supervisors' perception of their direct reports' motivation at work, $R^2 = .02$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .01$, $F(1, 98) = 2.14$, $p = .15$. Furthermore, SEAS was negatively associated with supervisors perception of direct reports' motivation at work, $\beta = -.15$, $t(99) = -1.46$, $p = .15$. Lastly, SEAS did not significantly predict immediate supervisors' perception of leader-member exchange with their direct reports, $R^2 = .04$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .03$, $F(1, 93) = 3.39$, $p = .07$. Furthermore, SEAS was negatively associated with supervisors LMX, $\beta = -.19$, $t(94) = -1.84$, $p = .07$.

Taken together, the post hoc analyses were largely inconclusive and neither confirmed nor disconfirmed whether enhancing self-efficacy in advice-seeking will likely improve relational and mentoring communication exchanges between supervisors and direct reports.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The objective of the current study was to explore the role of advice-seeking in relational development among individuals and their immediate supervisors at work. Specifically, the study sought to answer two critical questions: First, the study sought to answer whether individuals could be trained in the skill of advice-seeking. Second, the study examined whether those skills would improve individuals' relationships with their immediate supervisor, as measured by outcomes such as leader-member exchange quality (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), communication satisfaction (Hargie et al., 2002), psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), mentoring and communication social support (Kogler Hill et al., 1989), and downward information adequacy (Zhu et al., 2004). Additionally, this study sought to examine if training on advice-seeking skills would influence an individual's immediate supervisor to view them as coachable (Allen et al., 2004) and possessing higher referent power (Rahim, 2009). This communication training experiment took an important step towards addressing the above questions, as is described below in detail. Although most of the hypothesized relationships were not supported, the manipulation check analysis revealed that employees can, indeed, be trained in the skill of advice-seeking rapidly.

An important question to consider before providing a detailed discussion, is the objective question, "Why would I seek advice if I don't need it?" Critics and skeptics of this mode of training and topic may have concerns and raise an objection stating that the entire exercise is futile unless people are convinced in advance that they need advice. The author addresses and accounts for the objection in the following ways: First, a core aspect of the training seeks to explain the benefits of advice-seeking and in doing so, begins to influence those who are convinced they do not need advice about the benefits of advice-seeking in the workplace.

Second, philosophically and theoretically, it is prudent to assume that every employed adult

could benefit from some kind of workplace and career advice, even if in the most general terms.

Furthermore, even if the *given* advice aligns with their pre-existing beliefs and current intentions,

the advice could reinforce their values and work goals. Lastly, *appropriate* advice is an

instrumental tool signaling support for the individual (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002). In today's

work environment, advice may play a critical role in ameliorating face threat concerns and

comforting and persuading the recipient about the avenues of aid and assistance available for

them while engaging in work-related activities (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000; MacGeorge et

al., 2002).

The following sections discuss how results contribute to the literatures associated with

training and development communication, advice-seeking, and leader-member relationships at

work. First, based on the significant finding from the manipulation check, this investigation

contributes to training and development communication literature an example of how employees

may be trained in the workplace on enhancing their communication skills. Second, this

investigation contributes to the advice-seeking literature the idea that behavioral self-efficacy in

advice-seeking (SEAS) could influences relational outcomes employees experience in the

workplace. Finally, this investigation provided an opportunity to reflect on the importance of

leader-member relationships in the workplace, especially during a time of severe workplace

uncertainty and within the context of a global crisis (i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic). Many

factors, outside the control of the researcher, threatened the validity of the findings. However,

anecdotal feedback implied that the relationships individuals cultivate with their immediate

supervisors play an important role in determining the health and success of their work-life during

crisis. Alternative explanations for non-significant findings are explored. The following sections describe and illuminate each of these contributions and challenges in detail.

Communication Training and Development Literature

Training is an integral part of helping individuals develop new skills to succeed in the workplace (Beebe et al., 2013; McGehee & Webb, 2009). Training programs cover a wide range of topics and are intended to equip employees with new and relevant sets of skills and abilities to enhance their effectiveness and productivity at work. Since the process of acquiring new skills is challenging and time-consuming, training programs involve a wide range of delivery techniques such as activities, readings, role-playing, and coaching sessions. In a study by Antonakis, Fenley, and Liechti (2011), participants in a leadership communication training program spent about 16 hours in-class, in addition to two hours per week for 12 weeks engaging in practicing their newly obtained knowledge and skills. Ultimately, training programs utilize various means to assist employees with circumnavigating change in the workplace and results in professional development (Chung-Judge & Holbeche, 2011). In spite of the evidence in the literature, trainers and scholars must confirm, empirically, whether newly-articulated and identified skills are trainable. In this study, the researcher asked whether the skill of advice-seeking can be taught.

The findings suggest that participants trained in advice-seeking had higher SEAS after training as compared to their untrained counterparts. This provides some hope to trainers in the workplace and contributes to the communication training and development literature the idea that individuals can be successfully trained to have an enhanced sense of their own behavioral self-efficacy in knowing how to seek advice in the workplace, in as little as one-hour, through utilizing virtual delivery modes and via low-cost methods. Analyses from the manipulation check revealed that trained participants reported significantly higher self-efficacy in advice-

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seeking behavior as compared to untrained participants. In other words, through a focused training program, employees in the workplace can be coached to feel more self-efficacious in advice-seeking with others. This finding is significant as it reaffirms that communication training in the workplace can yield measurable results quickly (Bachmann, Barzel, Roschlaub, Ehrhardt, & Scherer, 2013; Bisel & Messersmith, 2012).

In the current study, in just one week after training, based on a prompt, 83% of individuals in the trained condition provided positive, sincere reviews and encouraged their peers to pursue advice-seeking. Furthermore, this experiment demonstrated the learnability of the advice-seeking communication skill in the workplace utilizing very minimal resources. By stating that the training worked, the author implies that individuals were able to heighten their behavioral self-efficacy in advice-seeking. Two weeks post attending an hour-long webinar employees felt more self-efficacious. This is an exciting finding as it showcased that awareness increased but the COVID-19 pandemic may have made actual behavioral transfer difficult within the new remote working conditions. In summary, the current experiment provides clear evidence for the feasibility of communication training and development in the workplace. Workplaces may gain from offering a variety of programs to help employees gain new communication skills.

Advice-Seeking Literature

Modern work often requires individuals to develop new and complex skills quickly to overcome difficult challenges. Seeking advice and input from others is one avenue through which individuals accomplish the process of developing new and complex skills to meet those challenges. Individuals who tend to be successful in the workplace are able to seek input and learn from others (Larrick & Soll 2006; Nadler et al., 2003). As such, being savvy in engaging in upward communication is an essential workplace communication skill that is not shared by all

(Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Olufowote, et al., 2005). Despite the challenges individuals face communicating with their supervisors, organizational practitioners and scholars assumed that individuals would reach out and seek advice at the opportune moment (Vancouver & Morrison 1995; Wills & DePaulo, 1993). Nevertheless, individuals often fail to advice-seek altogether or fail to advice-seek competently (Lee, 1997; Van der Vegt et al., 2006). Demographics and personality factors may explain these varying behavior patterns pertaining to advice-seeking (Crant, 2000). A majority of the current research has focused on individuals giving advice and how respondents react to the *shared* advice (Jonas & Frey, 2003; Kray, 2000). The present study adds to this scarce literature an examination of whether and how employees can be trained to be more skillful in advice-seeking with their immediate supervisor.

This investigation answers the call from scholars Detert and Burris (2007) to create training programs to aid employees in their attempts to engage in upward influence and trust-building with management so that the silencing power of power can be overcome. Detert and Burris specifically state that employees share responsibility with management to speak up with corrective information to their supervisors. The scholars speculate that specialized training on communication skills may be essential for poorly performing employees who lack self-efficacy and may need coaching to develop relationships with their supervisors. In respect to the call, the current study investigates and provides evidence for the idea that individuals may be trained on the skills of advice-seeking. Furthermore, the authors speculate that advice-seeking training may provide employees an opportunity to kickstart basic conversations with their immediate supervisors. However, as is described below, the study did not yet confirm that advice-seeking training improves relational outcomes. Scholars conducting future studies need to examine and explore variables at work that are influenced by training on this specific skill.

The present study contributes to the communication literature associated with advice-seeking the idea that behavioral self-efficacy in advice-seeking (SEAS) may play a role in individuals' feelings of psychological safety with supervisors at work. While hypothesized relationships were not confirmed, post-hoc analyses revealed support for the relationship between self-efficacy in advice-seeking and participants' sense of psychological safety with their immediate supervisor. Presumably, the relationship is reciprocal, in that as individuals feel confident in their behavioral abilities to seek advice, they perceive advice-seeking as less interpersonally risky (i.e., psychological safety) and vice versa. Future studies should continue to explore this relationship as psychological safety is known to benefit voice behaviors in the organization (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Edmondson, 1999). Past studies have shown that individuals are more likely to seek advice from immediate supervisors who are dependable, reliable, and reachable (Yaniv & Kleinberger 2000). The study by Detert and Burris (2007) showcased that perceptions of psychological safety played an important role in determining employee voice, conceptualized as an organizational member's inclination to share innovative ideas and valuable suggestions.

In the present study, voice is conceptualized as the employee's desire to connect with and receive mentoring from the individual in a hierarchical position one step higher (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Using the A-BOAT model to kickstart conversations, individuals may be able to open up the pathways for such mentoring dialogues with their supervisors. Receiving advice and mentoring from powerful others seems especially critical in times of ambiguity, stress, and uncertainty. The A-BOAT model provides individuals a framework to engage in formal conversations about professional development and coaching in the workplace.

Leader-Member Relationship Literature

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Forty years of research on the LMX theory of leadership have provided evidence for the unique dyadic relationships individuals form with their supervisors. The relationships individuals foster with their supervisors are especially essential to an individual's success on-the-job (Ferris et al., 2009; Kramer, 2017). Many employees desire to have or cultivate a high LMX relationship with their supervisor as doing so improves the quality of one's experience with work and life (Lee, 2001; Sin, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2009). These relationships are constituted by high quality conversations and the social exchanges with one's immediate supervisor that follow (Fairhurst, 1993; Fairhurst & Chandler, 1989; Fairhurst, Rogers, & Sarr, 1987; Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012). Furthermore, employees in high LMX relationships also have better access to resources for personal development (Burris, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008; Walumbwa, Cropanzano, & Goldman, 2011). Employees in high LMX relationships share a strong working relationship with their supervisor, so they are often relied upon for input during critical assignments (Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen, & Rosen, 2007; Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000). Maintaining high LMX relationships can be an asset for direct reports and supervisors (Stringer, 2006; Townsend, Phillips, & Elkins, 2000; Van Dyne, Kamdar, & Joireman, 2008).

Although the results from this investigation are inconclusive, they begin to draw a picture showcasing the potential contributions of advice-seeking training on upward communication. The results were not statistically significant, but it was apparent (via qualitative and anecdotal correspondence) that many trained individuals experienced some improvements in their levels of communication satisfaction with their immediate supervisor as a result of the training and their advice seeking. Perhaps if the training intervention was lengthier and employees had been given additional time and opportunities to test out their new skills, they may have been able to experience larger, measurable changes in terms of relational outcomes. The following email

excerpt was sent to the researcher one-week after training by a participant as part of the follow-up activity:

> I would tell my coworker and friend that they should consider asking for advice from a supervisor because it could benefit them to help perform more efficient and possibly advance in their career. The first thing I would give advice on is to let them know there are keys aspects to discuss in their conversation. First ask their supervisor what advice they may have in a particular situation at work they have concerns about. This creates an open conversation starter. I would then tell my friend and coworker to ask their supervisor what is the best way they can handle that area of concern or simply just an area of improvement for self-knowledge. I would then give advice to ask their supervisor what key skills should they focus on to enhance their performance in their line of work. This creates an open discussion to also talk about what skills that their supervisor appreciates mostly about them. With the conclusion of asking their supervisor what their thoughts/take may be on that situation.

The anecdotal evidence highlights the value of the training as experienced by the participant. Furthermore, another participant described the significance of the A-BOAT model as follows: "You can use the A-BOAT model to help guide your questions [with your boss] and then be sure to listen. Asking advice from a supervisor can be a great way to strengthen relationships and bring issues to the table with the intent to solve them instead of just complain." The anecdotal evidence and interactions with participants suggest that there is potential for advice-seeking training in helping individuals develop high LMX relationships with their supervisors. The excerpts showcases individuals' desire to improve the quality of their working relationships with their supervisors by acquiring linguistic tools that will aid them in having better conversations.

Alternative Explanations Contributing to the Nonsignificant Findings

None of the study's proposed hypotheses were supported. The following section explores alternative explanations for the lack of conclusive results. The first alternative explanation for inconclusive findings involves an historical threat due to the occurrence of the global health pandemic, COVID-19. This event occurred while participants were recruited for the study. Offices at the university transitioned to remote work. This further influenced the study which had

to be converted from a planned in-person training to an online synchronous mode of delivery. However, although participants joined in the training, their learning and subsequent application of the A-BOAT model was almost certainly influenced. Participants' inclination to practice advice-seeking and opportunities to apply the model in conversation with their supervisor was almost certainly hampered by their remote work arrangements, anxiety created by the pandemic, and attention that had to be given to adapting to the unprecedented situation. Thus, this investigation may have unknowingly captured employees' anxiety in the remote workplace, thus jeopardizing the validity of the study results.

A second potential explanation for results is related to concerns around confidentiality and employment. Random assignment was initially utilized to distribute systematic differences evenly across trained and control-group conditions (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Strube, 1991). However, technical difficulties contributed to some confusion amongst participants. Several individuals accessed the initial survey a few times and signed up for both experimental and control groups. To maintain consistency, individuals were asked to participate in the preliminary group to which they had been assigned. This issue barred several participants from the experimental conditions, thereby resulting in unequal cell sizes, which means that assignment may have been less-than-random. Furthermore, correspondence received by the researcher implied that trained and untrained participants were conferring a lot with one another about the contents of the study.

High-levels of interaction between trained and untrained participants may be attributed to the workplace culture of the university and its employees. This familiarity amongst participants across the training and control conditions may have adversely affected the study findings. Also, the identity of the researcher as a fellow employee in the same workplace may have created

anxiety in the minds of the participants and prohibited them from being candid and frank in their responses to the various criterion measures in the final survey, out of occupational fear. The concerns around joblessness may have been exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic and rumors regarding furloughs at the university. Thus, this investigation may have unknowingly captured employees' concerns around employment, thus threatening the validity of the study findings.

A third possible explanation is provided by an understanding of the concept of transfer of learning. Several scholars in the training and development communication literature consider this as the most straightforward and substantial outcome of training (Noe & Schmitt, 1986; Yamnill & McLean, 2001). Transfer of learning of skills from a training program is the measure of long-term performance enhancement (Holton, 1996; Noe & Schmitt, 1986). Furthermore, transfer of learning is negatively shaped by stress-at-work and anxiety (Noe, 2000; Russ-Eft, 2001). Since trained participants had only 21 days within a worrying, remote work environment to practice their skill, transfer of learning may have been adversely affected. Moreover, participants were subjected to a 45-minute training. There might have been insufficient exposure to the training stimuli. Individual behavior may be challenging to change in a single assignment. Thus, the insufficient dose of training combined with inadequate time for participants to apply the skill to address their job needs provides a potential explanation for the non-significant findings. So, future studies need to craft trainings at a more opportune time and provide participants with more opportunities to engage in transfer of learning.

Likewise, future interventions should be designed to provide trained participants a minimum of 90 days to practice and transfer the learning from the training to the workplace through engaging in various activities to confirm whether advice-seeking training can influence

supervisor-direct report relational and mentoring outcomes (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Chiaburu, Van Dam, & Hutchins, 2010; Ignatavicius & Chung, 2016; Laine & Gegenfurtner, 2013). In the training and development literature, there is not an overall consensus on the time required for training to transfer. However, the author felt that 90 days would provide employees sufficient time to set learning goals, engage in reflection, apply the skills in real-time and make a part of their communication repertoire.

Limitations

This investigation is not without limitations. Because of several intervening circumstances and factors (including the COVID-19 pandemic), it could not be conclusively determined whether communication training on advice-seeking skills improved immediate supervisor-direct report relationships at work. Building on these limitations and alternative explanations will provide directions for future research. Three specific limitations are especially noteworthy. First, sample sizes may have reduced statistical power to detect group differences. Furthermore, there was a large discrepancy between the sample sizes of trained ($n = 60$) and untrained ($n = 89$) employees. The dataset for the supervisors also faced similar challenges. These samples sizes combined with the familiarity amongst the employees within the study could have further contributed a potential failure of attempted random assignment.

The second limitation concerns the ongoing crisis, which resulted in the training module being conducted online. Communication skills training tends to be best delivered by traditional in-person settings that offer opportunities for rich social presence, engaging interactions, and knowledge-sharing (Moreland & Myaskovsky, 2000; Servage, 2005). The online format may have been an insufficient resource for enabling rich social presence of the presenter and for allowing participants to engage in dialogue (Lim, Morris, & Kupritz, 2007). In the current study,

several participants used the online chat function to share their perspectives as opposed to engaging in real-time dialogue. Several of them were working from their homes and, given the presence of kids and others at home, preferred to discuss content in the online chat function, as opposed to sharing verbally, in real time. Usage of the chat function indicates participants may have been distracted, which may also have prevented them from total immersion in the content. Thus, given the tricky nature of the concept of advice-seeking, it may be necessary for future researchers to offer the training in a more traditional face-to-face mode, which was not an option for the current study.

A third limitation of the study was the limited exposure to the training stimuli. Participants attended a training session and, one-week later, participated in an online follow-up activity. Although each session was focused on intense learning outcomes, it appears that multiple training sessions over a long period of time may be required in order for participants to engage in effective advice-seeking that can have the potential to make measurable changes in supervisor-direct report mentoring and relationship outcomes. Furthermore, there should be opportunities created within the training program to provide one-on-one coaching to participants to help them craft their initial advice-seeking conversation starters. Several participants struggled with crafting an initial statement, relevant to their circumstance, and reached out to the researcher for individual coaching.

Future Research

This investigation offers helpful potential avenues for both researchers and practitioners. Specifically, based on the findings, alternative explanations, and limitations, several avenues of future studies are promising and are described below.

The significant finding based on the manipulation check analysis in this investigation provided support for the effectiveness of an advice-seeking training program. Thus, a practical implication of this investigation is its support to organizational trainers who intend to provide research-supported communication skills centered training programs in the workplace. These trainings should incorporate blended learning approaches and focus on providing multiple opportunities for learners to engage with the skills over a long period of time. It will be extremely important for future studies to focus on transfer of learning. This can be accomplished by ensuring that training program designs are focused on a timeline of a minimum of 90 days.

Second, future research should create a design and attempt to minimize individuals' employment concerns, while engaging in a training and research program. Additionally, individuals should get approval from their immediate supervisor prior to engaging in training. There was attrition from the study of a few participants whose supervisors had concerns about their participation in such a training at the cost of losing work time. Thus, this step may assist with kickstarting conversations to involve immediate supervisors and make them a part of their work-life decision making. Furthermore, this investigation established the importance of individuals' self-efficacy in advice-seeking (SEAS). Alongside SEAS, future research should investigate other characteristics that mediate advice-seeking behavior in the workplace.

Last, this investigation offers a simple, pragmatic, and convenient template for studying advice-seeking. Every employee, irrespective of background, should have an opportunity to develop a productive and effective workplace relationship with their immediate supervisor. Given the importance of LMX relationships in the workplace, future research should continue to explore the influence of advice-seeking and other communication skill training on shaping supervisor-subordinate connections.

Conclusion

This investigation contributed to the growing literatures of communication training and development, advice-seeking, and leader-member relationships within organizational communication. Specifically, this study explored and attempted to understand whether training on advice-seeking skills would change direct reports' relationships with their immediate supervisor, as assessed by criterion variables including communication satisfaction and psychological safety. This design attempted to answer a call by Detert and Burris (2007) for organizations to train and improve employee communication with their supervisors. Results provided only minimal support for the success of the training program. Specifically, the manipulation check showed that participants trained in advice-seeking had higher SEAS after training as compared to their untrained counterparts. Furthermore, results also indicated that irrespective of training, some individuals exhibited certain predisposed self-efficacy in advice-seeking behaviors. Likely due to challenges centered around technical complications, failure of random sampling, and the occurrence of a global health pandemic, most of the hypothesized relationships were non-significant. Analyses revealed that employees trained in advice-seeking did not develop better workplace relationships with their immediate supervisors as compared to their untrained counterparts. These inconclusive results were attributed to unforeseen circumstances that became limitations for the project. Future research needs to continue to explore the effect of training on enhancing relationships in the workplace.

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Appendix A

Training Model: The A-BOAT Model

A: Advice

What advice would you have for me?

B: Best way

What is the best way to ?

O: Opinion

In your opinion, what key skills would?

A: Appreciate

What behavior/skills do you appreciate the most?

T: Thoughts

I was curious about your thoughts?

General

↓

Specific

↓

Conversation
Starter

Lesson Plan

Time Allotted	Topic
1 minute	Introduction
1 minute	Purpose and Objectives

5 minutes	Part 1: What is Advice-Seeking?
	  - Definition
	  - Open Q&A: *Establish the significance of immediate supervisor-direct report relationships in the workplace*

3 minutes	Part 2: Why Advice-Seeking? - Discussion of Benefits

30 minutes	Part 3: How to Engage in Advice-Seeking?
	Module 1: A-BOAT model (Behavioral prompts)
	Activity a) Think-Pair-Share: Come up with a workplace scenario where you could *benefit* from advice by your immediate supervisor
	Activity b) Individual work: Craft the **consultation prompt** that you would use with your immediate supervisor
	Activity c) Role-play: To get ready for workplace utilization of your chosen prompt
	Module 2: Follow-up
	Activity: Set up a plan to ACT and seek advice from your immediate supervisor in the next 2-3 days.
5 minutes	Conclusion

Appendix B

Follow-up Assignment

Instructions: In the space provided below, provide your response to the following question:

Q. Please *give* advice (to a coworker and friend) about *how to get* advice from a supervisor. Be sure to explain to your coworker and friend *why* they should consider seeking advice from their immediate supervisor.

Appendix C

Demographic Questions: Direct Reports

What is your age?

What is your sex?

What ethnic/racial group do you mostly identify with?

How many years of experience do you have in your current role (within this organization)?

How many years of total work experience do you have?

Do you have any supervisory experience? If yes, how many years?

How long have you been working alongside your immediate supervisor?

How often do you interact with your immediate supervisor?

Please provide a self-classification of your work department that is descriptive of your job duties (for e.g. Human Resource, Marketing, IT, etc.)

Appendix D

Demographic Questions: Immediate Supervisors

What is your age?

What is your sex?

What ethnic/racial group do you mostly identify with?

How many years of experience do you have in your current role (within this organization)?

How many years of total work experience do you have?

How many years of total supervisory experience do you have?

How long have you been managing your current team and working alongside your direct reports?

How often do you interact with your direct reports?

Please provide a self-classification of your work department that is descriptive of your job duties (for e.g. Human Resource, Marketing, IT, etc.)

Appendix E

Manipulation Check

Instructions: Record your responses to each of the following statements using the scale provided below:

          1   2   3   4   5   6   7
    Strongly agree   Strongly disagree

1. I have the skill to engage in advice-seeking.
2. I am able to seek advice in order to obtain positive benefits.
3. I can seek advice in several ways.
4. I have the skill to advice seek in order to increase my sense of satisfaction with my tasks at work.

Appendix F

Leader-Member Exchange Scale (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995)

Instructions: Please circle the number that best represents your relationship to either your immediate supervisor or your direct report.

1. Do you know where you stand with your immediate supervisor (direct report) . . . [and] do you usually know how satisfied your immediate supervisor (direct report) is with what you do?

Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Fairly often	Very often
1	2	3	4	5

2. How well does your immediate supervisor (direct report) understand your job problems and needs?

Not a bit	A little	A fair amount	Quite a bit	A great deal
1	2	3	4	5

3. How well does your immediate supervisor (direct report) recognize your potential?

Not at all	A little	Moderately	Mostly	Fully
1	2	3	4	5

4. Regardless of how much formal authority your immediate supervisor (direct report) has built into his or her position, what are the chances that your immediate supervisor (direct report) would use his or her power to help you solve problems in your work?

None	Small	Moderate	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5

5. Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your immediate supervisor (direct report) has, what are the chances that he or she would "bail you out" at his or her expense?

None	Small	Moderate	High	Very high
1	2	3	4	5

6. I have enough confidence in my immediate supervisor (direct report) that I would defend and justify his or her decision if he or she were not present to do so.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

7. How would you characterize your working relationship with your immediate supervisor (direct report)?

Extremely Ineffective	Worse than average	Average	Better than average	Extremely ineffective
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix G

Communication Satisfaction Scale (Hecht, 1978)

Instructions: The following statements concern communicating at work. In responding, think of the communication relationship you have with your immediate supervisor *or direct report*. Please indicate your response by circling the number that best describes how you feel about the statement, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

When communicating with my immediate supervisor *or direct report*, I feel . . .

1. He or she lets me know that I am communicating effectively.
2. Nothing is ever accomplished.*
3. I would like to continue having conversations like ours.
4. He or she genuinely wants to get to know me.
5. Very dissatisfied with our conversations.*
6. Like I have something else to do.*
7. I am able to present myself as I want him or her to view me.
8. He or she shows me that he or she understands what I say.
9. Very satisfied with our conversations.
10. He or she expresses a lot of interest in what I have to say.
11. I do NOT enjoy our conversations.*
12. He or she does NOT provide support for what he or she says.*
13. That I can talk about anything with my immediate supervisor.
14. That we each get to say what we want.
15. That we can laugh easily together.
16. Conversations flow smoothly.
17. He or she changes the topic when his or her feelings are brought into the conversation.*
18. He or she frequently said things that add little to the conversation.*
19. We often talk about things that I am NOT interested in.*

*reverse coded items

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Appendix H

Psychological Safety Scale (Edmondson, 1999)

Instructions: Please circle the number that best represents your agreement to the statement, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

1. If I make a mistake with my immediate supervisor, it is often held against me.*
2. I am able to bring up problems and tough issues.
3. My immediate supervisor sometimes rejects me for being different.*
4. It is safe to take a risk with my immediate supervisor.
5. It is difficult to ask my immediate supervisor for help.*
6. My immediate supervisor would never deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
7. Working with my immediate supervisor, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

*reverse coded items

Appendix I

Referent Power Scale (Rahim, 1988)

Instructions: Thinking about your specific direct report who participated recently in a study, indicate how much you agree with the following statements. Please circle the number that best represents your agreement to the statement, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

1. My direct report has a pleasing personality.
2. I want to keep my direct report pleased with my work because I want to be his (her) personal friend.
3. I don't want to identify myself with my direct report.*
4. I admire my direct report because he (she) treats every person fairly.
5. I like the personal qualities of my direct report.
6. I want to develop a good interpersonal relationship with my direct report.
7. My direct report is not the type of person I enjoy working with.*

*reverse coded items

Appendix J

Mentoring and Communication Social Support Scale (Kogler Hill, Bahniuk, Dobos, and Rouner,

1989)

Instructions: Please circle the number that best represents your agreement to the statement, where 1 means strongly disagree and 7 means strongly agree.

1. My immediate supervisor has placed me in important assignments or positions.
2. My immediate supervisor frequently devotes extra time and consideration to me.
3. My immediate supervisor has shown a parental-like interest in me and my career.
4. I receive special attention from my immediate supervisor.
5. I have had my immediate supervisor teach me the informal rules of my organization.
6. I have had my immediate supervisor teach me strategies for influencing group or departmental meetings.
7. I have been coached about office politics by my immediate supervisor.
8. My immediate supervisor and I are friends as well as coworkers.
9. My immediate supervisor and I frequently listen to each other's personal problems.
10. My immediate supervisor and I share confidences with each other.
11. My immediate supervisor and I frequently exchange constructive criticism.
12. My immediate supervisor and I assist each other in accomplishing assigned tasks.
13. My immediate supervisor and I frequently exchange compliments and positive evaluations.
14. I work jointly on major projects or cases with my immediate supervisor.
15. I frequently exchange ideas with my immediate supervisor.

Appendix K

Receiving Information Adequacy Scale (Goldhaber & Rogers, 1979)

Instructions: For each item listed on the following pages, mark your responses on the answer sheet that best indicates: (1) the amount of information you are receiving on that item and (2) the amount of information you need to receive on that item in order to do your job.

Topic area	*This is the amount of information I receive now*					*This is the amount of information I need to receive*				
	Very Little	Little	Some	Great	Very Great	Very Little	Little	Some	Great	Very Great
How well I am doing in my job.										
My job duties.										
Organizational policies.										
Pay and benefits.										
How technological changes affect my job.										
Mistakes and failures of my organization.										
How I am being judged.										
How my job-related problems are being handled.										
How organization decisions are made that affect my job.										
Promotion and advancement opportunities in my organization.										
Important new product,										

service, or program developments in my organization.										
How my job related to the total organization.										
Specific problems faced by management.										

Appendix L

Employee Motivation Scale (Christophel, 1990; Richmond, 1990)

Instructions: Please circle the number toward either word, which best represents how you feel about your direct report's willingness to be coached about work-related matters.

1. Motivated   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Unmotivated
2. Interested   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Uninterested
3. Involved   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Uninvolved
4. Not stimulated   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Stimulated*
5. Don't want to study 1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Want to study*
6. Inspired   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Uninspired
7. Unchallenged   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Challenged*
8. Uninvigorated   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Invigorated*
9. Unenthused   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Enthused*
10. Excited   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Not excited
11. Aroused   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Not aroused
12. Not fascinated   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Fascinated*
13. Dreading it   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Looking forward to it*
14. Important   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Unimportant
15. Useful   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Useless
16. Helpful   1 2 3 4 5 6 7   Harmful

*reverse coded items