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PREDICTING EMPLOYEE-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP STRENGTH (LMX): DOES A SINGLE MOMENT MATTER?

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A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE

MASTER OF ARTS IN ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

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Abstract

The leader-member exchange (LMX; Dansereau et al., 1975) theory explains how employee-supervisor relationships form and posits that relationship strength will be established through communication-based exchanges over time as supported by the social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958). The conceptual framework of anchoring events (AEs; Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010) proposes that a single exchange may impact the strength of the relationship but has yet to be empirically tested. This study examines 1) employees' descriptions of AEs and their perceived impact; 2) whether positive and negative AEs' impact predicts LMX; and 3) if AEs account for significant variance in LMX over and above communication frequency. Participants (N = 367) consisted of a convenience sample. LMX strength was assessed with the Leader-Member Exchange scale (LMX-7; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), perceived communication frequency was determined with the Leader Communication Exchange scales (LCX-P, LCX-N; Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017), and qualitative data were gathered to explore AEs (N = 851). Exploratory factor analysis of LCX scales revealed five factors with good reliabilities (α between .89 and .97); however, positive correlations between the affect LCX factor and LMX (r = .84) indicate low discriminant validity. LCX factors explained 73% of the outcome variance of LMX, whereas AE's impact accounted for 55%; however, AE did not exhibit incremental validity. Implications from this study would help with training and developing supervisors in relationship building, improving performance management processes with employees, providing individualized recognition, and conflict resolution.

Keywords: leader-member exchange (LMX), social exchange theory (SET), anchoring events (AEs), supervisor communication

Predicting Employee-Supervisor Relationship Strength (LMX):

Does a single Moment matter?

The leader member exchange theory (LMX; Dansereau et al., 1975) serves as a relationship-based framework for explaining how supervisors and employees establish strong or weak relationships in the workplace. The introduction of this theory pivoted the focus of workplace research from examining relationship dynamics from the team level to the dyadic relationship (e.g., supervisor to employee). LMX proposes that supervisors will use various approaches and interactions to build relationships with their employees and that there will be variability in relationship strength amongst their direct reports.

The theoretical backing of LMX is the social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958) which suggests that supervisors and employees engage in a three-phase socialization process. Each phase is comprised of multiple exchanges, which establish the essential rules and boundaries for how the dyad works together. Employees with strong relationships are members of the supervisor's ingroup, whereas employees with weak relationships are outgroup members. Research shows that supervisors provide benefits to ingroup members such as access to opportunities, information, and support (Dansereau et al., 1975).

Ballinger and Rockmann (2010) propose a second framework for understanding how LMX forms with their anchoring event concept. Anchoring events (AEs) are single exchanges occurring between a focal individual (employee) and a target individual (supervisor) which disrupt the established norms of the relationship and jeopardize the perceived health of the relationship for the employee. These exchanges generate strong emotional responses within the employee, which result in the formation of a self-defining

memory. The employee uses this memory to evaluate their worth, justify any necessary changes in their communication or behaviors used with their supervisors and to judge the supervisor in their next interaction (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). Discrepancies between the desired and the actual outcome have a high impact and may damage the relationship irretrievably. Anchoring events are likely related to LMX, but this concept has yet to be empirically tested.

Communication is recognized as an essential component of every exchange between supervisors and employees, yet limited research has been conducted to examine how characteristics of communication, such as message content, unfold within exchanges (Sheer, 2014). Research suggests that communication differences between supervisors and employees may be a determining factor as to why LMX is strong or weak for employees. Omilion-Hodges and Baker (2017) developed two scales to assess positive (LCX-P) and negative (LCX-N) communication frequencies of specific topics between supervisors and employees and determined that communication frequency predicts LMX strength (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017; Sheer, 2014).

Although LMX has been researched for decades, the theory remains widely criticized for not providing clearer instructions for the processes, supervisors can use to establish stronger relationships with their employees (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Sparrow & Liden, 1997). This study proposes that a supervisor's communication with their employee both within singular exchanges and in exchanges over time influences relationship strength. First, this study will determine the topics and impact of anchoring events and assess the circumstances (e.g., private conversations versus in front of others) of these interactions. Next, this study will use the LCX-P and LCX-N scales to determine

if the frequency with which supervisors communicate with employees about specific topics predicts LMX, thus validating the scale using a different sample. Lastly, this study will explore how communication impacts LMX by assessing if AEs significantly predict LMX and to determine their incremental validity over LCX-P and LCX-N.

Leader Member Exchange Theory

The leader-member exchange theory (LMX; Dansereau et al., 1975), formerly known as the vertical dyad linkage (VDL) model, is a relationship-based framework explaining how supervisor-employee relationships form in the workplace. LMX shifted workplace research from relationship dynamics at the group level (e.g., a supervisor to a full team) to the interpersonal level (e.g., supervisor to the employee). LMX also contributed two important beliefs about how supervisor-employee relationships form. In essence, the supervisor-employee relationship will vary in quality or strength, ranging from high quality (strong) to low quality (weak), and supervisors do not leverage the exact same set of exchanges to form their relationship with each employee (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 1997). While much of the onus for this specific relationship-building process is placed on the supervisor, employees also contribute toward LMX strength (Dienesch & Liden, 1986).

LMX strength plays a critical role for the employee's workplace experience and engagement. LMX strength will impact an employee's decision to remain in their role, their job performance, organizational behaviors, perception of justice and their overall workplace satisfaction (Dulebohn et al., 2012). Employees who have stronger relationships with the supervisor will become part of the supervisor's preferred ingroup and be given benefits and rewards such as increased communication, trust, support,

opportunities for career advancement, access to information, more attention, and higher appraisal ratings from the supervisor (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Gerstner & Day, 1997). In return for these benefits, the supervisor expects ingroup members to over-communicate with them, exceed their job requirements, and remain selflessly loyal (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Gerstner & Day, 1997). Additionally, these employees are more likely to exhibit favorable job attitudes, committed organizational behaviors, and to stay in their roles in the future (Harris & Kacmar, 2006; Gerstner & Day, 1997). As a result, employees and supervisors develop an affective attachment or liking for the other person as they view them as part of their team (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Inversely, employees with weaker relationships with their supervisors are categorized as outgroup members (Dansereau et al., 1975; Koopman et al., 2015). While some supervisors may provide outgroup members with the same benefits as ingroup members, other supervisors may not, and may ensure there is a "cost" for the employee having a weak relationship with them. These costs may include less communication and support from the supervisor, less access to information or time, more critical performance ratings, lower expectations, and fewer opportunities for advancement (Harris & Kacmar, 2005; Liden et al., 1997). As a result, these employees are often less committed to the supervisor, participate in office politics or gossip, engage with their supervisor only as needed or required, while also only accomplishing the tasks outlined in their job description (Gouldner, 1960; Liden et al., 1997). Additionally, outgroup employees may become hypercritical of their supervisors and view them as unfair, which justifies their feelings and actions to detach from the relationship (Adams, 1963; Dulebohn et al., 2012; Lind et al., 2001).

Social Exchange Theory

The theoretical backing of LMX is the Social Exchange Theory (SET; Blau, 1964) which suggests that the strength of the supervisor-employee relationship is determined through a socialization process comprised of multiple exchanges. This process occurs across three phases (stranger, acquaintance, and mature partnership)each marked by specific supervisor and employee behaviors and reactions (Blau, 1964; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Wayne & Green, 1993). Throughout these phases, communication (or scripts) and behaviors help the dyad establish the norms of reciprocity and expectations for the relationship, which ultimately determine the strength of LMX (Blau, 1964; Sias & Jablin, 2001). In phase one, the stranger phase, the supervisor actively outlines and enforces job expectations and relationship parameters for the employee, then evaluates the employee's progress on those expectations, while the employee is compliant, agreeable, and seeks approval from the supervisor (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Liden et al., 1997). In phase two, the acquaintance phase, communication, feelings, and work expectations synchronize between the dyad and trust increases (Liden et al., 1997; Miller et al., 2009). Supervisors afford the employee increased benefits, such as access to information or opportunities, and employees become more active in the relationship and share their opinions and goals (Brauer & Green, 1996). In phase three, a mature partnership has developed, and the relationship achieves a state of predictability and reciprocity (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Brauer & Green, 1996). The dyad's focus also shifts from the relationship toward the greater good of the team (Gerstner & Day, 1997).

Anchoring Events

Emotions are recognized as an active part in the formation of LMX and in every exchange throughout SET (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Emotions help to make sense of current interactions and to predict what can happen in relationships in the future (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000). Emotions may become predictable or synchronized in a relationship, like operational norms or expectations, but emotions can also fluctuate for participants based on experiences or events (Brauer & Green, 1996; Brief & Weiss, 2002). Ballinger and Rockmann (2010) call the interactions that cause strong emotional reactions and shifts in the relationship anchoring events (AEs; Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Cropanzano et al., 2017).

Ballinger and Rockmann (2010) challenge years of social exchange research in their proposition of anchoring events. Anchoring events are singular exchanges that can immediately jeopardize the stability and health of a relationship. They result from disruptions in the relationship norms between a focal and a target individual. Focal individuals are the persons impacted by anchoring events (employees), whereas targets are the individuals (supervisors), groups, or networks perceived to cause the event (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). Emotions from exchanges are imprinted in an individual's autobiographical memory, where personal memories are stored (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000). Individuals use their emotions and memories together to analyze what happened in an interaction and how to respond to the target individual (supervisor) in three stages: reacting and judging the exchange, changing the relationship, and determining the durability of the new relationship with its new rules (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000)

In stage one, the employee has an interaction with their supervisor and experiences positive or negative dissonance with the outcomes of the exchange. This dissonance is likely due to the employee perceiving themselves to be overly dependent on the supervisor to make progress on their personal outcomes, or because their intended outcomes for the interaction did not match the actual outcomes (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958; Meeker, 1971). As a result of the exchange, the employee has an emotional or affective response and attributes the dissonance and the emotional reaction to their supervisor (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). The employee also decides the magnitude (intensity) of the emotional reaction in this stage (Carver & Scheier, 1999; Ortony et al., 1988; Weiner, 1985). This emotional reaction causes the employee to create a self-defining memory in their autobiographical memory (Conway et al., 2004; Shum, 1998). For example, if an employee was going to ask their supervisor for a raise (interaction with intended outcome) and their supervisor agreed (actual outcome), this result may make the employee feel happy or excited (emotion or affect, magnitude). The employee will then attribute those feelings of happiness toward their supervisor and their supervisor's response.

In stage two, the employee uses this self-defining memory as justification and guidance to update their communication (or scripts), behaviors and beliefs about their supervisor (Baldwin, 1992). The jolt of the interaction has made the relationship non-reciprocal, as the previous norms have become disrupted (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). In the time between the anchoring event and the next exchange, the employee replays this self-defining memory repeatedly to justify their feelings about the exchange outcomes, their supervisor, and their decision to engage with the supervisor in a certain way

(Conway et al., 2004; Lam & Buehler, 2009; Wilson & Rom, 2001). For example, because the supervisor honored the employee's request for a raise, the employee relives that perceived positive moment over and over and will make decisions about how to speak and engage with their supervisor in the next exchange; perhaps they will be overly eager to please their supervisor or want to affirm or honor the needs of the supervisor. In the final stage, the employee engages in another interaction with their supervisor using the new scripts, behaviors, and beliefs about the supervisor, and judges how the supervisor responds (Fisk & Taylor, 1991; Robinson, 1996).

To date, the conceptual framework for AEs has not been empirically tested. Thus, the first research question sets out to identify the specific topics of anchoring events:

Research Question 1: Which AE memories are most salient for employees?

Research suggests that individuals will experience exchanges differently; however, some communication topics may impact employees more than others (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017). For example, Omilion-Hodges and Baker (2017) found the frequency of affect-based communication had the strongest positive impact on LMX, whereas other topics (e.g., professional trust, professional development, accessibility) were less correlated. This study focuses specifically on the perceived impact of singular events; however, it is reasonable to expect similar differences (Gerstner & Day, 1997) and this study posits:

Hypothesis 1: Anchoring event content themes differ in their impact.

Exchange Quality

Ballinger and Rockmann (2010) propose that the quality of exchanges *before* an anchoring event will determine the type of impact the employee perceives the exchange

to have on the relationship. Thus, if an exchange generates a positive emotion, the employee will form a positive memory about the interaction and a positive lens to judge their supervisor in future exchanges (Forgas, 1995; Weiner, 1986). Moving forward, the employee will want to revel in this advantageous state with their supervisor by adjusting their personal goals for the relationship in altruistic or group-oriented ways (Meeker, 1971). Altruistic employees will disregard their desired needs or goals to achieve their supervisor's goals, whereas employees focused on group gains will attempt to achieve both their supervisor's and their own personal goals (Meeker, 1971). Moreover, employees will be more likely to overlook mishaps from the supervisor and less likely to attribute their behaviors as off-putting if they have perceived most exchanges as positive or advantageous (Avison, 1980; Forgas & George, 2001).

Employees, however, who experience a negative anchoring event will have a negative emotional response and generate a negative lens for viewing their supervisor in the future. They will view the exchange as costly and respond by competing, seeking revenge, or rationalizing their newly enacted scripts and behaviors with their supervisor as a form of detachment and self-preservation (Wilson & Ross, 2001). Competitive employees will work to separate their goals from those of their supervisor (Meeker, 1971). Employees seeking revenge will disregard their own goals while also trying to diminish or disregard their supervisor's goals, whereas rationalizing employees will use their new scripts and behaviors with the supervisor to achieve their personal goals while actively disregarding those of the supervisor (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Bies & Tripp, 1996; Meeker, 1971). Furthermore, employees who perceive most exchanges with their supervisor as negative are more likely to experience additional adverse anchoring

events with them due to confirmation bias (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). In future exchanges, employees will more harshly scrutinize and monitor the scripts and behaviors of their supervisor to affirm their newly internalized beliefs about the relationship (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Lawler, 2001). Furthermore, adverse events have a more substantial emotional impact than positive ones (Baumeister et al., 2001). Therefore, this study suggests:

Hypothesis 2: Negative anchoring events will have a higher impact than positive anchoring events.

Time

Ballinger and Rockmann (2010) suggest the likelihood that an anchoring event will occur decreases the longer the relationship between employee and supervisor exists. Anchoring events are likely to be more impactful if they happen early in the relationship due to the employee's dependency on the supervisor to meet their personal outcomes (Emerson, 1976). However, employees may still experience anchoring events at any point throughout the socialization process, even after multiple exchanges (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). Actual time (e.g., hours, days) since the exchange may influence how impactful the employee perceives the exchange to be. For example, if an employee recently experienced an AE, they may be still processing their experience to determine the magnitude of their emotional response and how to adapt their script and behaviors with their supervisors moving forward (stages two and three). Research suggests that the employee may overweigh aspects of the exchange, such as impact, when it is highly personal or easier to recall (Caruso, 2008; Shum, 1998; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Additionally, the actual time that passes between stage two, when the employee adjusts

their scripts, and stage three, when the employee experiences their next exchange, may vary in time from days, weeks, or months due to their established meeting cadence (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017). This study predicts that:

Hypothesis 3a: Recently occurring anchoring events will have a higher impact than events occurring some time ago.

Memory research suggests that the employee's ability to recount specific details from an interaction decreases over time, but recalling the interaction and the feelings associated with that incident can cause the employee to relive the emotion time and time again (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Chechile, 2006). Recalling the moment keeps the memory alive, even when employees have cycled through the three AE stages, have a new supervisor, or no longer work. The employee may never be able to unhinge their emotions from the memory of the interaction with the target individual, as some memories may last a lifetime (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Conway et al., 2004; Shum, 1998; Wilson & Ross, 2001). Thus, this study predicts that:

Hypothesis 3b: Anchoring events occurring a long time ago will have a stronger impact than those occurring some time ago.

Autobiographical memory research suggests that the mind forms temporal landmarks when it creates self-defining memories (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Shum, 1998). These landmarks aid persons in recalling specific events that were deemed highly personal for the employee (Schwartz et al., 1991). Conway et al. (2004) suggest that these moments infuse employees' thought patterns and beliefs about themselves, thus altering their identities. By recalling specific exchanges, employees may relive the moment that

shaped their self-identity, and it is plausible that the more moments an employee will recall, the higher their impact will be. Thus, this study suggests:

Hypothesis 4: Mean AE impact ratings will differ between responses.

Audience

An employee's perception of how they are treated by their supervisor compared to their peers may increase the likelihood of an anchoring event (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). Employees are constantly evaluating their leader's behaviors individually and in the presence of others to compare their experience to those of others (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2013; Sias & Jablin, 1995). When employees perceive their supervisors treat them equally, emotions are likely to remain stable; however, if the employee senses the supervisor treats them differently or makes them feel singled out, positively or negatively, emotions are likely to destabilize and AEs are more likely to occur (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Greenberg, 1993; Lind et al., 2001). Therefore, this study proposes that:

Hypothesis 5: Anchoring events occurring in the presence of others will have a higher impact than those occurring in private settings.

AE Impact

Research suggests that affectively tinged exchanges can occur at any time throughout the socialization process (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Cropanzano et al., 2017). As a result, employees may permanently adjust their beliefs about themselves, their supervisor, their relationship, and their possibilities in the future, either positively or negatively (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010; Cropanzano et al., 2017). AEs also have the

potential to shift reciprocal relationships into a non-reciprocal state or a previous phase of the relationship, thus directly impacting LMX strength. Therefore, this study posits:

Hypothesis 6: Anchoring events are related to LMX.

Communication Frequency and LMX

While anchoring events are memorable because of their emotional effect and impact on the relationship, supervisors and employees engage in a continuous set of communication acts that help them understand their positions, rules, roles, and systems while accomplishing organizational tasks and goals, increasing trust, solving problems, and establishing friendships (Dotan, 2009; Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012). Omilion-Hodges and Baker (2017) suggest differences in LMX relationship strength may be the result of the frequency with which supervisors communicate specific topics to their employees and developed two Leader Communication Exchange (LCX) scales. The LCX-P scale assesses the frequency of six positive communication topics (professional trust and development, verbal and nonverbal communication, affect and accessibility), whereas LCX-N measures the frequency of negative communication by assessing the frequency of communication about professional trust and development, verbal and nonverbal communication, social exclusion, and betrayal. All topics assessed with the LCX scales revealed strong significant correlations with LMX; frequent positive affectively tinged exchanges had the greatest positive impact on LMX, whereas negative verbal communication exchanges had the highest negative correlation with LMX. Employees with stronger LMX are more likely to communicate more frequently and about more topics with their supervisor, whereas employees with weaker LMX engage in less frequent conversations about fewer topics with their supervisors. Although the LCX

scales were highly correlated with LMX, confirmatory factor analysis indicated they are empirically distinct. To examine supervisor communication more comprehensively, this study will use the full LCX-P and LCX-N scales with a different sample to confirm the reliability and validity of the constructs (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017). This study posits similar findings in that:

> *Hypothesis 7: The perceived frequency of positive communication will be positively correlated with LMX, whereas the frequency of negative communication will be negatively correlated with LMX.*

Communication Frequency, AEs and LMX

Decades of research suggest that LMX strength forms over time through multiple exchanges between supervisors and employees and that adjustments are made over time to the relationship norms, communications, and behaviors (Blau, 1964; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The concept of anchoring events posits that one exchange can dramatically impact the health of the supervisor-employee relationship at any point in the socialization process (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). The AE framework offers a new perspective on how relationships develop within the supervisor-employee dyad in the workplace, thus potentially explaining additional variance in LMX strength. Therefore, this study postulates:

> *Hypothesis 8: Anchoring events account for variance in LMX over and above communication frequency.*

Current Study

This study aimed to examine how supervisors can establish strong LMX with their direct reports by strategically capitalizing on exchange communication across

multiple frameworks. First, this study explored whether specific content themes were more salient than others, how various factors of exchanges such as exchange quality, time, and audience affected the impact of the exchange, and whether anchoring events have the potential to significantly predict LMX (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). This study hypothesized that content themes would differ in impact, and negative exchanges, AEs occurring either recently or long time ago, and those in front of an audience would have higher impact than positive exchanges and AEs that occurred some time ago and in a private setting. This study also analyzed whether AEs predict LMX. Second, this study replicated the testing of LCX scales to determine if communication frequency impacts LMX, hypothesizing that the frequency of positive communication would be positively, and negative communication would be negatively related to LMX. This replication tested the reliability and validity of the scales. Lastly, this study tied the two frameworks together by examining if AEs account for variance over and above communication frequency.

Design and Methodology

Procedure and Participants

Participants consisted of a convenience sample of working adults over the age of 18 years. Upon IRB approval (see Appendix A), an anonymous online survey was administered via social networking sites and electronic messaging for four weeks (see Appendix B). Participants did not receive compensation for completing the survey.

Four hundred fourteen participants began taking the survey. Participants who answered a minimum of 88% of the questions were included in the sample, yielding an overall usable sample size of $N = 367$. Participants were primarily between the ages of 24

to 34 years of age (*n* = 204, 55.6%), female (*n* = 325, 88.6%), white (*n* = 322, 87.7%), and married (*n* = 236, 64.3%). All participants reported to be employed or previously employed and managed within the United States. The majority of participants were full-time employees (*n* = 285, 77.7%), and half the sample worked within the private sector *(n* = 184, 50.1%) with an annual salary over $80,000 (*n* = 198, 54%) and held a college degree (*n* = 167, 45.5%). Forty-four percent (*n* = 163) identified as a manager over a team or persons, and 33.5% (*n* = 123) reported having the same manager for one to two years and had stayed with their company for three to five years. See Table 1 for participant profile.

Measures

Employees reported the perceived relationship strength with their supervisor and the perceived frequency with which they engaged in specific types of positive and negative communication exchanges. Qualitative data were collected to explore the concept of anchoring events within the workplace, specifically to identify characteristics of the exchanges and their impact.

Employees' Perception of Leader-Member Exchange Strength (LMX)

The LMX-7 scale (α = .90; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), consisting of seven items (e.g., "*How well does your leader recognize your potential?*"), was used to measure the perceived strength of the employee-supervisor relationship from the employee's vantage point. This scale uses various anchors (1 = *never*, 5 = *always*; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree;* 1 = *none*, 5 = *very high*), and higher scores indicate a stronger relationship with their supervisor. The LMX-7 measure was selected due to its validity and reliability (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). See Appendix C for the full LMX-7 scale.

Employees' Perception of Positive Communication Exchange Frequencies (LCX-P)

The Leader Communication Exchange-Positive scale (LCX-P) by Omilion-Hodges and Baker (2017) measures the frequency of perceived positive communication exchanges between employees and their supervisor. It consists of six subscales comprised of 19 items, each measured on a 5-point frequency scale (1 = *never,* 5 = *always*). The authors report good reliability (Cronbach's α = .97) for the full LCX-P scale; the factor structure was confirmed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and the scale was validated with the LMX (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017).

The six subscales include professional trust with four items (α = .89; e.g., "My manager recommends me for high profile projects."), professional development with three items (α = .89; e.g., "My manager takes time to talk to me about my professional progress."), affect based communication with three items (α = .96; e.g., "My manager cares about me."), verbal communication with four items (α = .94; e.g., "My manager tells me that he/she appreciates me."), nonverbal communication with four items (α = .89; e.g., "My manager looks me in the eye when we communicate."), and accessibility with one item (α =.88; e.g., "My manager is accessible to me."). The LCX-P scale and subscales are available in Appendix C.

Employee's Perception of Negative Communication Exchange Frequencies (LCX-N)

The Leader Communication Exchange-Negative scale (LCX-N; α = .98; Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017) measures the frequency of perceived negative communication exchanges between employees and their supervisor. The scale consists of six subscales comprised of 23 items, each measured on a 5-point frequency scale (1 = *never,* 5 =

always). Omilion-Hodges and Baker (2017) report good reliability and validity of this scale. The subscales include professional trust with five items (α = .94; e.g., "My manager behaves in a way that disregards my preference."), professional development with five items (α = .95; e.g., "My manager does not give me the chance to improve the skills I need to do my job."), verbal communication with four items (α = .96; e.g., "My manager talks to me in an abrupt rushed manner."), and nonverbal communication with five items (α = .94; e.g., "My manager's body language tells me that he or she doesn't like talking to me."). Two additional subscales present on the LCX-N but not on the LCX-P include a social dimension subscale with four items (α = .94; e.g., "My manager excludes me from jokes or stories.") and a betrayal dimension with four items (α = .91; e.g., "My manager goes directly to upper management when I make a mistake instead of speaking with me first."). See Appendix C for a full list of LCX-N questions.

Anchoring Events and Characteristics

To explore the concept of anchoring events, participants were prompted to disclose three perceived positive and three perceived negative exchanges they have had with their supervisor with the following prompt: "*Please describe* 3 *positive and 3 negative (verbal or nonverbal) exchanges you have had with your supervisor that were unexpected."* Participants were asked to report approximately how much time had passed since the exchange occurred (*e.g., last year, today…)* and to include context and specific details of what occurred in the interaction *(e.g., My boss said… did…did not say/do...).* Lastly, participants answered the question, "*How much did this unexpected positive (negative) interaction impact your relationship with your supervisor?*" Impact

ratings ranged from 1 = *no impact* to 5 = *extremely impactful.* See Appendix C for the prompt.

Demographic Variables

Demographic information was collected from participants including gender, age, level of education, marital status, ethnicity, income, employment status, length of time in role, length of time with company, job sector, and if the participant managed a person or team. Race was recoded into two groups: white and person of color. Education was recoded into four groups: Associates degree or less, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate degree. Household income was recoded into three groups: < $40,000, $40,001-$80,000, $80,001+. See Table 1 for the full participant demographic profile.

Data Analyses

SPSS 25 was used to examine descriptive statistics, correlations, and to conduct ANOVA and regressions analyses to answer the research question and test the hypotheses. For the quantitative data, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the two communication frequency scales (LCX scales) and subscales due to the large number of variables, conceptual concerns about factor loadings and to compare the findings with Omilion-Hodges and Baker's (2017) results. Regression analyses were conducted using LMX as the dependent variable to determine the impact of positive and negative communication factors from the EFA results and the anchoring events.

For qualitative data, a total of 991 anchoring event examples were collected in this study. Examples that were missing impact ratings or were composed of indecipherable content were deleted, yielding a total of 851 useable perceived anchoring

events (AEs). Respondents reported 518 (60.9%) positive and 333 negative events (39.1%). Two raters analyzed the AE data independently to ascertain interrater reliability. Both raters used an open-ended word-based analysis to determine the frequency with which similar patterns in content occurred (Ryan & Bernard, 2000; Smith & Borgatti, 1998) across four variables: exchange quality, content themes, time since exchange and audience. Subcategories or subgroups were identified within each variable using the same word-based frequency indexing process (Ryan & Bernard, 2000; Smith & Borgatti, 1998). Discrepancies in coding were discussed and clarified.

Participants self-reported their perceived exchange quality as positive or negative based on the initial study prompt. Raters double-checked each example for agreement on whether the quality of the exchange was positive or negative. All data were coded for content themes that captured the literal messages exchanged between the supervisor or topic of the situation at hand. All responses referring to the time of the exchange were coded into a new variable: time since exchange. The AE data were coded for the variable of audience to examine if the presence of others influenced the impact of the exchange. Lastly, the number of reported examples by participant was accounted for to determine if reporting more than one anchoring event had any effect on impact.

Results

The results for this study are reported in the order of the research question and hypotheses, beginning with anchoring events, followed by the findings for the LCX scales, and ending with examining whether LCX and AE predict LMX.

Research Question 1: Which AE memories are most salient for employees?

In total, 851 anchoring events were collected in the study; 518 were positive and 333 were negative. Eight common content themes initially emerged across the data for both positive and negative anchoring events. Those eight themes included content regarding appreciation, praise, affect - work related, affect - personal, actual support, backing, input and feedback, opportunities, or career. A second analysis was conducted to focus the themes, resulting in four themes. These four themes included recognition, care and concern, backing and support, and career advancement. Reported frequencies for exchanges by theme varied between positive and negative examples; the highest frequencies had care and concern as positive and lack of backing and support as negative examples, the least reported were positive and negative career advancement examples. The content themes are presented in the order of their frequency.

Care and Concern

The first category to emerge in the data regarded the supervisor displaying care and concern for the employee. This category had the highest frequency (n = 258, 30.3%). The most common subthemes across both positive and negative examples focused on paid time off (PTO) and the interaction among an employee's personal challenges and successes and work. Positive subthemes included the supervisor allotting employees' PTO, taking an interest in the employee while they were out, and asking about their physical or mental health. Employees also reported high-impact exchanges occurring when the supervisor gave the employee a gift for a special occasion (e.g., birthdays, weddings, birth of child), at random, or "just because" (e.g., supervisor purchasing lunch for the team).

Positive examples include, “2 years ago I was diagnosed with cancer, my boss told me not to come to work because she didn’t want me to get sick from someone and let me work from home for 7 months”, “This morning, my supervisor gave me the opportunity to work from home because traffic was heavier than usual on my normal one-hour commute”, “My boss buys me and our whole team lunch on Fridays” and,

> February 10 my boss noticed a great amount of mental fatigue in my actions and was able to talk to me long enough to learn about some very difficult personal things I was going through with housing change and medication not being refilled and he offered me a paid leave of absence and personal advice.

Negative PTO subthemes included supervisors delaying or denying the employee’s request for time off, interrupting the employee’s time off with asks to work or help them, being insensitive to the personal or wellness challenges of the employee, disclosing information without employee permission, and ignoring important life moments (e.g., deaths, births). High-impact examples in this category included, “When I took off because my mom was having hip surgery. I only told my boss, but he told everyone in my department about why I was not at work. This was in 2018” and, “About a month ago, my boss required me to call into a meeting while I was at the hospital with my sick child”. Additionally,

> This is really all the time, he expects me to drop what I am doing, knowing I have two children, and pick up shifts at the drop of a hat, and gives me attitude when I cannot. Our only real form of communications via text or email. I only see or get a call when something is important.

or the following:

> After the company Christmas party she cornered me in the parking garage and said things like you're not scared enough of me. I never hear from you (even though we talk daily) and wouldn't listen to my request to have HR present, but instead escalated her tone and damaging words until I was reduced to tears and forced to "apologize" just to get myself out of the situation.

Recognition

Supervisor recognition or acknowledgement of the employee, their teams, or outputs was the category with the second highest frequency *(n* = 234, 27.5%). Clear subthemes emerged across all examples. Positive subthemes of appreciation and compliments included acknowledgment of the employee's personal contributions, a product of their work, or goal achievement. Positive examples include, "Jan. 15, 2019. My supervisor included my name in a letter of thanks/recognition that was being printed within a program manual", "Last year, my CEO called to tell me how much he had appreciated my honesty when we worked together", and

> About a month ago during my first week of work, my supervisor introduced me to a bunch of new colleagues and doted on all of my skills and talents. She stated that she felt that I was a good asset for the company.

Negative recognition from the supervisor included critiquing or dishonoring the employee's completion of specific tasks, their approach to their work, or judging the employee's outputs or goal. Negative examples included, "In the fall, my boss disagreed with a decision I made and complained about it publicly", "Last week, my supervisor negatively expressed concern on actions I took on a case", or "About 9 months ago, my

boss criticized the way that I carried out a task. She said the way I presented the information was not concise enough."

Backing and Support

The third theme was related to active or passive supervisor support and backing of the employee or their voice *(n* = 212, 24.8*%)*. Subthemes emerged across both groups. For positive examples, active support included the supervisor physically taking an action to support the employee or to honor an ask they had of their supervisor (e.g., purchasing materials), or paying attention to the employee when they were speaking. Active backing included examples of the supervisor "going to bat" for the employee or taking action to seek out the employee's voice or opinion. Examples included, "Two weeks ago, I had an idea for our school and my supervisor listened to my idea and helped me work out details before presenting to our Dean", "2/13/19 - We were on a phone conference with a Legal Aid attorney and my supervisor actually backed me up on my idea about my client filing a protective order." Another example is the following:

> My team and I had made a pretty significant mistake. I called my supervisor to tell her and tell her what my plan was going to be. She listened, validated that mistakes happen, and then brainstormed with me even better ways to handle the mistake.

Negative passive support examples included the supervisor acting in ways in which the employee perceived them to be unapproachable and not taking tangible action to respond to the asks or needs of the employee (e.g., materials to complete a project). Passive backing included the supervisor expressing support to the employee in one setting but not in front of others, engaging in manipulative behaviors with other

employees or superiors, and denying employees access to critical information or team meetings (e.g., consistently leaving the employee off of meeting invites or canceling touchpoints with the employee). Negative examples included, “My boss did not purchase stand up desks requested by his team but then bought one for himself this month”, “Last month, I gave him advice about an issue, and he became very defensive and was upset”, “Often (last week) - trying to improve processes or giving ideas and my manager rarely gives much consideration and declines all ideas from myself and her team”, “My boss avoids me”, or “About six months ago, my manager got aggravated in a team meeting and shut the entire conversation down.”

Career Advancement

The fourth and least often reported content theme to emerge in the data was about career advancement *(n* = 147, 17.3%). Across both positive and negative examples, subthemes emerged specifically about the future of an employee’s career, promotion, annual performance, and opportunities for development. Positive examples often included the supervisor honoring employees’ requests for raises, shifts in job responsibilities, or networking the employee to desirable experiences and development opportunities. Positive examples included, “Last week my boss said I didn’t get a position I applied for but said he could have a spot open soon and he would fight for me to get it”, “She recommended I serve on two prestigious committees”, and

> Two months ago, my supervisor called me out of the blue to encourage me to apply for a major promotion that I would have never considered myself qualified for, yet he believed that I would be an excellent choice for the position.

Negative examples included the supervisor assigning poor performance ratings to the employee, dismissing employee's asks for opportunities, or framing tasks as beneficial opportunities when the employee deemed them undesirable. Examples are, "Last week, my boss eliminated my position from the college without any notice", "A month ago boss signed me up to present to various groups without asking for feedback on previous experiences and results first." See Tables 2 to 5 for content theme and subtheme frequencies and additional examples.

Time

Four clusters emerged in the data indicating when the AE occurred: Incidents within the last month, incidents within the last year but longer than a month ago, incidents more than 12 months ago, and respondents who were not sure or did not know. The '< 1 month' group (n = 271, 31.8%) included language such as "today, yesterday, last week, two weeks ago…". The '2-11 month' time group (n = 267, 31.4%) included language such as "a few months ago, five months ago, about a year ago, etc." The third time group, 'more than 12 months ago' (n = 148, 17.4%), reported incidents which ranged in time from one to 17 years ago and included language such as "In 2016… a few years ago… five years ago". The final time group 'Unsure/I do not know' (n = 165, 19.4%), included responses with language such as "I don't know… sometime last season… once", or cases that did not list time but included context-specific details and an impact score. For hypothesis testing regarding time, "recently" was defined as exchanges happening within the last 30 days, "some time ago" were exchanges occurring in the two to 11 month time frame, and "longer ago" exchanges happened one year ago or in the unknown time ago category. See Table 2 for frequencies profile.

Audience

The data revealed two audience groupings: Incidents that occurred most likely between the supervisor and employee only (*n* = 653, 76.7%), and those that most likely happened in front of others (*n* = 198, 23.3%). Items that were most likely supervisor-to-employee only included examples such as phone calls, email exchanges, direct compliments, or conversations (e.g., "…pulled me aside to let me know" or "… called me after the presentation to…"). Audience coded as most likely occurred in front of others included information such as "… in front of visitors", "on a conference call" or "at the team meeting."

Number of reported AEs and AE Impact

The number of reported examples by participant was counted to determine if reporting more than one anchoring event had an effect on impact. Frequency counts by participants who reported anchoring event examples ranged from one event (*n* = 357, 42.0%), two events (*n* = 269, 31.6%) and three events (*n* = 225, 26.4%; see Table 2 for frequencies). The participant-reported impact for each exchange was assigned back to the example. Those impact ratings occurred on a scale from 1 = no impact (*n* = 29, 3.4%) to 5 = extremely impactful (*n* = 268, 31.5%).

Quantitative Results

Due to the newness of the LCX scales, the high number of items and methodological concerns, such as separate scales for positive and negative factors, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted with all items of both scales. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .97, above the recommended value of .70, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $x^2(861) = 15804.047$, $p <$

.001, indicating factor analysis was appropriate for the data. An oblique rotation was performed since the subscale factors are likely to be correlated with each other. The EFA pattern matrix revealed five factors accounting for 71.40% of the total variance (see Table 6).

Factor 1 explains 53.14% of the variance and was named *affect* due to the high loadings of 12 items from the positive affect, verbal and nonverbal subscales (*e.g., My manager compliments me, My manager tells me that he/she appreciates me, My manager considers my emotional wellbeing)*. Factor 2 was named *professional trust* as all four items from the LCX-P professional trust subscale comprised the factor (e.g., *My manager asks me for my opinion on projects, My manager trusts me to make recommendations to other clients*) and accounts for 8.62% of the variance. The third factor was named *social exclusion* and comprised all four items from the negative social subscale (e.g., *My manager excludes me from jokes and stories, My manager excludes me from informal gatherings*); it accounts for 3.83% of the variance. Factor 4 was labeled *professional development* and is comprised of all questions from the professional development subscales and two questions from the negative professional subscale that were reworded for participant's ease of understanding (e.g., *My boss provides me with opportunities to improve my professional skills, My boss gives me the opportunity to learn more about the industry*); it explains 3.01% of the variance. Factor 5 was labeled *disrespect* and was comprised of 13 items from the LCX-N scale including statements about supervisor betrayal, lack of trust and ignoring the employee. This factor accounted for 2.79% of the variance. Four items were eliminated due to cross loadings. The internal consistency of each factor was determined through Cronbach's alphas. Alphas were high and ranged

from .89 (social exclusion) to .97 (affect) across the five factors (trust: .90, professional development: .94, disrespect: .95).

Based on the factor loadings, five composite variables (affect, trust, social exclusion, professional development, and disrespect) were created and used for all further testing. These will be referred to as the LCX scale variables. Means for each of the five LCX variables were calculated and ranged from $M = 1.51$ ($SD = 0.83$) to $M = 3.71$ ($SD = 1.11$) with higher values indicating more frequent communication exchanges with their supervisor about the topics assessed. Trust *(*$M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.12$*)*, professional development ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.19$), and affect *(*$M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.11$*)* exchanges were perceived to occur the most frequently, whereas social exclusion ($M = 1.51$, $SD = 0.83$) and distrust ($M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.78$) had the lowest mean values. See Table 2.

Correlations

Zero order correlations were calculated for LMX and LCX scale variables. LMX was positively correlated with affect $r(367) = .84$, $p < .001$, trust $r(367) = .70$, $p < .001$, and professional development $r(367) = .75$, $p < .001$. LMX was negatively correlated with the two negative EFA factors of social exclusion $r(367) = -.57$, $p < .001$ and disrespect $r(367) = -.65$, $p < .001$. LMX and LCX correlated negatively with part time employment and not having a manager role but not with any of the other demographic variables. See Table 7.

Zero order correlations were also calculated for positive and negative AEs, LMX, the five LCX factors, and demographic variables. Positive anchoring events were positively correlated with LMX $r(851) = .64$, and negative anchoring events were negatively correlated with LMX $r(851) = -.48$, $p < .001$, respectively. Positive AEs were

also positively correlated with the three positive LCX variables of affect $r(851) = .64$, $p < .001$, trust $r(851) = .54$, $p < .001$, and professional development $r(851) = .65$, $p < .001$, and negatively with the negative LCX variables of social exclusion $r(851) = -.54$ and disrespect $r(851) = -.59$, both at $p < .001$.

Reversely, negative anchoring events correlated negatively with affect $r(851) = -.57$, trust $r(851) = .41$, and professional development $r(851) = -.36$, all statistically significant at $p < .001$. Negative AEs were positively correlated with social exclusion $r(851) = .45$ and disrespect $r(851) = .47$, both at $p < .001$. Of the demographic variables, positive anchoring events had a weak negative correlation with not having a manager role, $r(367) = -.15$, $p < .05$. No other significant correlations were present between demographic variables and the impact of anchoring events.

Discriminant Validity of LCX

The very high correlations between the five LCX factors from the EFA and LMX (e.g., affect: $r = .84$, $p < .001$) may indicate that LCX and LMX are not distinct constructs and the LCX scales are actually measuring LMX strength. For exploratory purposes, a final EFA was conducted including all questions from the LMX, LCX-P and LCX-N scales to determine the discriminant validity of the LCX scales as stated by Omilion-Hodges and Baker (2017).

The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .97, above the recommended value of .70, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, x^2 (1176) = 18724.89, $p < .001$. An oblique rotation was performed since the subscale factors are likely to be correlated with each other. The EFA pattern matrix revealed six factors, accounting for 72.33% of the total variance, with all LMX-7 questions loading or cross

loading onto four of the six factors, indicating substantial overlap between the LCX scales and LMX-7 questions. See Table 8 for factor loadings.

Hypotheses Testing

This study explored the concept of anchoring events by identifying content themes to determine if specific topics of communication affected impact, and to examine if factors such as exchange quality, time, and audience were related to impact.

Hypothesis 1: Anchoring event content themes differ in their impact.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the reported impact of AE for the four themes was not significant, $F(3,847) = .911$, *ns* and Hypothesis 1 was rejected. Means for content themes were nearly identical, with career advancement having a slightly higher mean value ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.10$) than care and concern ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.18$), recognition ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.08$), and backing/support ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.13$).

Hypothesis 2: Negative anchoring events will have a higher impact than positive anchoring events.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that negative AEs would have a stronger impact than positive ones. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare whether positive and negative AEs differed in their impact. Mean values for positive ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.10$) and negative anchoring events ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.17$) did not differ significantly, $F(1, 849) = .412$, *ns* and Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

Hypothesis 3: Anchoring events occurring recently (H3a) or a long time ago (H3b) will have a stronger impact than ones occurring some time ago.

It was hypothesized that AEs occurring recently (within the last month; Hypothesis 3a) and AEs that occurred a long time ago (more than a year ago; Hypothesis

3b) would be more impactful than those occurring some time ago (in the last two to 11 months). A one-way ANOVA found a significant effect for time on impact, $F(3,847) = 5.86$, $p = .001$. Contrary to H3a, the post-hoc Tukey test showed no significant difference between recent AEs to those occurring in the last two to 11 months ($p = .943$) and H3a was rejected. Impact values for events occurring more than one year ago, however, were significantly higher ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .99$) compared to those within the last year ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.20$; $p = .002$) and events occurring within the last 30 days ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.15$; $p = .013$) and Hypothesis 3b was supported.

Hypothesis 4: Mean AE impact ratings will differ between responses.

To examine the role of memory recall and attribution toward target, this study examined if the number of exchanges reported by participants resulted in a change in perceived impact. A repeated measures ANOVA found a significant effect of number of reported positive exchanges on impact, $F(2, 135) = 3.71$, $p < .05$, with the impact increasing from the first ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 1.13$) to the third AE ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.07$). The effect of negative AEs on impact, however, was not statistically significant, $F(2, 86) = .418$, *ns*. Mean values decreased from the first ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.14$) to the third AE ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.14$) but power was very low (.116). Hypothesis 4 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 5: Anchoring events occurring in the presence of others will have a higher impact than those occurring in private settings.

It was hypothesized that AEs in the presence of others would have a stronger impact than interactions between the supervisor and the employee alone. Means for both groups did not differ (one-to-one exchanges: $M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.15$; in the presence of

others: M = 3.75, SD = 1.05), and a one-way ANOVA found no significant effect for audience on impact, $F(1,849) = .060$, *ns*, and Hypothesis 5 was rejected.

Hypothesis 6: Anchoring events will be related to LMX.

Stepwise hierarchical regression analysis was conducted with anchoring events as predictor variables and LMX as the criterion variable. Because topics of anchoring events did not differ in their impact, positive and negative events were aggregated. In the first step, positive anchoring events significantly predicted LMX quality (β = .58, t = 10.19, p < .001) and explained 43% of the variance (adjusted R^2 = .43). In the next step, negative anchoring events were included and negatively related to LMX (β = -.36, t = -6.26, p < .001), explaining an additional 13% of the variance (ΔR^2 = .13). In total, anchoring events' impact accounted for 56% of the total variance within LMX and Hypothesis 6 was supported. See Table 9.

Hypothesis 7: The perceived frequency of positive (negative) communication will positively (negatively) impact LMX strength.

A stepwise regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the aggregate positive LCX scale variables (affect, professional development, trust) and the aggregate negative LCX scale variables (social exclusion, disrespect) with LMX as the criterion variable. Communication frequency was found to significantly predict LMX. Positive LCX variables explained 72% of the variance (β = .84, t = 18.47, p < .001; adjusted R^2 = .72), whereas negative LCX variables explained less than 1% of the variance (β = -.17, t = -2.72, p < .001; adjusted ΔR^2 = .007). In sum, communication frequency accounted for about 73% of the total variance within LMX, and Hypothesis 7 was supported (see Table 10).

Hypothesis 8: Anchoring events account for variance in LMX over and above communication frequency.

Stepwise hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine the incremental validity of anchoring events after controlling for communication frequency. In the first step, the aggregate positive and negative LCX scale variables were entered with LMX as the criterion; both were significant and explained 72% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = .72$). In the next step, the positive AEs were entered but did not significantly predict LMX ($\beta = .07$, $t = 1.02$, $p = .312$). In the final step, negative AEs were included but also failed to reach significance ($\beta = -.07$, $t = -1.26$, $p = .209$). In sum, anchoring events did not demonstrate incremental validity over communication frequency and Hypothesis 8 was rejected. See Table 10.

Discussion

This study aimed to provide clearer directions for how LMX forms through examining the unique role of supervisor communication across multiple frameworks: singular exchanges and exchanges over time. The goal was to identify how specific topics of communication from supervisors to employees influence their relationship and thus reveal greater insight about the literal content of communicative exchanges (Sheer, 2014). First, this study empirically validated the framework of AEs by identifying specific content themes of singular exchanges and exploring if factors such as exchange quality, time, and audience affect an employee's perception of how impactful one exchange may be. This study also proposed that AEs are related to LMX because they can immediately shift a stable relationship into an unstable state. Next, this study used the LCX-P and LCX-N scales to determine if the frequency with which supervisors

communicate with employees about specific topics predicted LMX strength and to examine the validity of the scales. Lastly, this study hypothesized that singular specific communication exchanges can affect the perceived quality of the supervisor employee relationship over and above communication frequency.

Research Question

The research question posed in this study aimed to examine which types of anchoring events between supervisors and employees were most salient or memorable, thus empirically testing the concept put forth by Ballinger and Rockmann (2010). Previous communication research has examined the impact of frequency of communication topics and found that affectively tinged exchanges best predicted LMX (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017). This study sought to expand communication research by discovering which types of memories were most salient for employees. Findings revealed a wide variety of broad themes for both positive and negative AE examples including recognition, care and concern, backing and support, and career advancement.

Clear subthemes emerged within each theme, which provided more insight into which topics of exchanges an employee may perceive as impactful. Care and concern-based exchanges were reported most frequently, and clear subthemes emerged across positive and negative examples with time off, personal challenges and successes, and wellness. Employees reported anchoring events within the recognition category of supervisors evaluating their skillset, outcomes and goals, or approach to work. In the backing and support category, employees were impacted positively when their supervisors were proactive in giving support or defending them in front of others, but negatively impacted when the supervisor denied them resources or engaged in dishonest

behaviors. In the professional development category, supervisors impacted the employee positively when the employee felt like their achievements warranted a promotion, raise, strong annual performance ratings or opportunities to showcase their skills, and negatively when supervisors assigned unwanted opportunities to employees, denied them access to new positions or surprised them with negative feedback and ratings on their performance reviews.

Content Themes and Exchange Quality

Hypothesis 1 predicted that content themes would vary in impact and Hypothesis 2 predicted that negative exchanges would be more impactful than positive exchanges. The data did not support the hypotheses as all exchanges were impactful, regardless of topic or perceived quality by the employee. This lack of differentiation across themes and quality indicates that all topics and both qualities have the potential to strongly impact employees (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017).

Time

Hypotheses 3a and 3b examined if the time since the anchoring event influenced the impact, proposing that events that happened more recently (within the last month; H 3a) and long time ago (a year or more; H 3b) would have higher impact than those within a year. Hypothesis 3a was not supported by the data as there was no difference in impact between exchanges occurring recently (within the month) or some time ago (within the last year). However, Hypothesis 3b was supported, revealing that exchanges occurring a long time ago (more than a year or unknown) were more impactful than those within a shorter timeframe. Autobiographical memory research indicates that employees may forget specific details of events (e.g., the exact date or time since the exchange), but

always remember the affective tone of the interaction or "temporal landmark" (Shum, 1998, p. 424.) and their belief that the supervisor was to blame (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000; Cropanzano et al., 2017). This is supported by findings that the qualitative data revealed more specific dates recalled with regard to time for AEs occurring more recently such as "On 2/9/2019, or "January 5th" and less specific details of time with use of language such as "I don't know", "once", or "back when I started my job".

Reported Events

Hypothesis 4 predicted the means for recalling anchoring events would differ. Positive anchoring events resulted in significantly higher impact assessments for subsequent exchanges compared to the first, whereas the reported impact for negative exchanges decreased from the first to the last; however, due to the low power (.116), this difference was not significant even though the increase in impact for positive exchanges and the decrease in impact for reported negative exchanges were nearly identical. Ballinger and Rockmann (2010) suggested that the quality of exchange would impact the lens with which focal individuals perceive the target. Perhaps recalling a positive exchange prompts additional positive feelings, leading to higher impact ratings, whereas the initial shock of a negative AE may have lead the employee to believe that the supervisor would not be able to meet their needs so that they were less impacted by subsequent negative exchanges.

Audience

Hypothesis 5 proposed that AEs occurring in front of an audience would be more impactful than ones occurring in a private setting and was not supported by the data as all exchanges were highly impactful. Clear trends within the qualitative data revealed

anchoring events may occur with a wide variety of audiences present, including external stakeholders (e.g., organizational boards, other companies, development teams), upper management, such as C-suite executives or the supervisor of the employee's supervisors, colleagues or direct reports, and even the employee's family members (e.g., spouse, children).

Research suggests that while supervisors are constantly sending messages toward employees in interactions, employees are sharing information with peers that were given to them by their supervisor (Bakar & Sheer, 2013; Emerson, 1976). Perhaps all exchanges were impactful for employees, regardless of who was present, because the employee is always cognizant about how their peers are treated by the supervisor. Social comparison processes indicate that employees always judge their treatment in comparison to others, regardless of whether others are present or not.

Variance of AE and LMX

Hypothesis 6 proposed a relationship between AE impact and LMX. This hypothesis was supported. Positive AE impact explained 43% of the variance within LMX and negative anchoring events explained an additional 13%. In total, the impact of AEs accounted for 56% of the total variance within LMX, confirming that AEs are an essential aspect of the relationship building process between supervisors and employees and can impact LMX (Ballinger & Rockmann, 2010). Overall, this research confirms that AEs contribute to the wellness of supervisor-employee relationships, the role of supervisors in establishing relationships with employees, and the necessity for supervisors to remain attentive and aware of the reactions and needs of their employees at the individual level.

Communication Frequency

The second focus of this study was to examine if the frequency with which supervisors engaged in specific positive and negative topics of conversation with employees would predict LMX strength, and to reexamine the validity of the Leader Communication Exchange (LCX) constructs (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017). Hypothesis 7 predicted that the perceived frequency of positive communication would impact LMX positively while negative communication frequency would have a negative impact. This hypothesis was supported by the data and mirrored previous research (Diesch & Liden, 1987; Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017). Findings in this study also revealed strong correlations between the LCX scales and LMX, especially positive affectively tinged exchanges (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2017). Thus, supervisors engaging in more frequent conversations and touchpoints with employees will likely build stronger relationships and a larger ingroup. Perhaps supervisors would benefit in their relationship-building process if they would analyze the frequency of touchpoints with their employees, assess the topics of their discussions, and provide some employees with more touchpoints or adjust their discussion topics.

Variance of AEs and LCX factors with LMX

Hypothesis 8 sought to explore if AE impact accounted for variance over and above that of communication frequency. This hypothesis was not supported. After controlling for communication frequency, which accounted for approximately 73% of the variance within LMX (positive communication: 72%; negative communication: <1%), AEs did not significantly relate to LMX. The very high percentage of explained variance by the positive LCX scales indicate a lack of discriminant validity.

Additional Findings

LCX Exploratory Factor Analyses

The LCX scales were also used in this study to further examine the reliability and validity of the scales due to their newness, large number of variables, and to examine their factor structure. Findings reveal that a more parsimonious factor structure could be achieved across the positive and negative scales as multiple items cross-loaded. The findings of this study raise questions about the validity of the scales. Only the items of the professional development subscale from the LCX-P and the social subscale from the LCX-N loaded as expected and should be used in future research, whereas the other subscales would benefit from additional testing and item adjustments.

Furthermore, the discriminant validity of the LCX scales is questionable based on the results of the exploratory EFA including LCX and LMX-7. All LMX items cross loaded with LCX factors, indicating LCX scales may be measuring LMX itself, not separate constructs as suggested by Omilion-Hodges and Baker (2017). Research would benefit from additional testing the LCX scales with LMX-7 and other LMX scales.

LCX Topics and AE Content Theme Comparison

This study provides a unique perspective for the role of communication in singular interactions (AEs) and over time (SET), addressing the need in communication research to examine the literal communication of exchanges (Sheer, 2014). There were loose agreements between the identified AE content themes and the five LCX subscales: LCX factor one, affect, was closely aligned with the AE categories of backing and support and employee recognition. Items loading on the LCX factor trust resembled AE subscale examples of supervisors seeking out employee voice or input from the backing

and support category and the subscale of opportunities from the career advancement category. Items loading on the LCX factor social exclusion most closely corresponded with the negative backing and support theme and subthemes of ignoring the employee and passive actions from the supervisor. The LCX factor professional development aligned with the career advancement category, specifically the subthemes of opportunities, promotion, and feedback. Lastly, the LCX factor disrespect aligned with the silencing employee voice subtheme from the backing and support category. These overlaps potentially provide perspectives for future scale development to examine exchange topics over time between supervisors and employees.

Implications

Supervisors and employees would benefit from the findings in this study in multiple ways. First, the data from this study could aid in the training and development of supervisors to help them understand the power they have in relationship building with their employees, the phases of relationship building with employees, and the impact that every exchange may have. Second, supervisors and employees should proactively communicate their expectations and anticipated outcomes in interactions. Through co-creating a shared understanding of intended outcomes, dyads could negotiate which aspects of their desired outcomes are achievable or not. Co-creating a shared understanding across the dyad would benefit the experience of both parties in common workplace experiences such as performance appraisals, project management, promotions, and development opportunities. Second, this study highlights the importance for supervisors to provide individualized recognition to each of their employees in a way that affirms their efforts and outputs. Third, this study acknowledges the interplay between

communication, emotions, and memory in exchanges by highlighting their symbiotic relationship within exchanges. Supervisors should observe employee's reactions during exchanges to determine if thy may be experiencing dissonance with the outcomes of the exchange, so that they can restore the relationship if negative anchoring events occur. Fourth, supervisors should consider conducting a touchpoint inventory with their direct reports to analyze which employees they are having more touchpoints with and monitor the frequency with which specific topics are discussed with each employee. This could help to ensure a more equitable workplace experience for employees.

Study Limitations

Limitations in this study may have impacted the findings. First, the study leveraged a convenience snowball sample which consisted of primarily white, female, college educated women, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study used a cross-sectional design which does not allow to assess how relationship strength was impacted by perceived anchoring events. Third, the discriminant validity of the LCX scales used in this study is questionable. Fourth, the qualitative information about anchoring events required employees to rely heavily on their memory and self-reports and did not include the perspective of the supervisor. Although interrater reliability was leveraged to code anchoring event responses, there is a possibility for error, even with cross-referencing and norming. Additionally, the study was strategically focused on the role of communication within singular exchanges and across multiple exchanges. This study focused on supervisor-employee communication exchanges and did not explore antecedents (e.g. supervisor and employee characteristics) and consequences (e.g., job performance, work engagement, turnover intentions, and job satisfaction) of these

exchanges which could serve as a focus for future studies. Lastly, the survey length prior to describing anchoring events may have resulted in survey fatigue and impacted the overall number of anchoring event examples.

Future Research

The anchoring event data collected in this study provide a foundation for future research about the autobiographical memory and essential components of high-impact exchanges. Future research should seek input from a more diverse group of participants, specifically focusing on including more male participants, persons of color, and across multiple sectors to increase the generalizability of the findings. Future research should explore anchoring events from the vantage point of the supervisor and compare findings to this study. Additional studies could benefit from leveraging focus groups to identify and confirm the content themes in this study as well. A longitudinal study assessing communication frequency and AEs from both the supervisor's and the employee's perspective could analyze how these variables relate to the perceived relationship strength, and how high impact exchanges can disrupt the stages of leadership making from stranger to partner, positively or negatively. This specific insight would provide valuable knowledge for the employee and supervisor's perceptions of exchange quality and content over time. Lastly, additional exploratory research could also include personality measures to explore how they may affect employees' and supervisors' desire to engage in specific topical exchanges and to determine their perceived impact.

Research would benefit from additional testing of the LCX scales to confirm the factor structure found in this study. Second, this study proposes to shorten the LCX scales and to combine the positive and negative subscales. Third, due to the cross loadings of

LMX and LCX items, research should explore other variations of LMX scales such as the LMX-SX with the current or updated LCX scales to determine a clearer relationship between communication frequency and LMX (Bernerth et al., 2007). In their current state, the LCX scales and LMX appear to be measuring the same construct. Employees and supervisors could use the scale to evaluate their current relationship and highlight similarities and differences, which could aid in discussing needs and preferences. In sum, this study suggests revising the LCX scales to ensure their reliability and discriminant validity.

Conclusion

In summary, this study used a mixed-methods approach to analyze the role of perceived supervisor communication and behaviors in exchanges across two frameworks: anchoring events and multiple exchanges to explain LMX relationship strength in the workplace. This study confirms the complexity of LMX and the interplay of present communication, emotions, and memory in helping employees establish and build their relationship with their supervisors. While the criticism of how LMX forms in the workplace remains, this study confirms that not only communication frequency, but also singular events, can impact a relationship, possibly forever.

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Table 1

Demographic Profile of Study Participants (N=367)

Characteristics	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-24 years old	17	4.6
25-34 years old	204	55.6
35-44 years old	66	18.0
45-54 years old	48	13.1
55-64 years old	32	8.7
Gender		
Male	42	11.4
Female	325	88.6
Ethnicity		
White	322	87.7
Person of Color	45	12.3
Education		
Associate degree or less	63	17.2
Bachelor's Degree	167	45.5
Master's Degree	122	33.2
Doctorate	15	4.1
Marital Status		
Single	102	27.8
Married	236	64.3
Divorced/Widowed	29	7.9
Household Income (annual)		
< $40,000	52	14.2
$40,001-$80,000	117	31.9
+ $80,000	198	54.0
Employment Status		
Full Time (+40 hr/wk.)	285	77.7
Part Time (< 40 hr/wk)	30	8.2
Not Employed/Retired	52	14.2

Table continues on next page

Table 1 (cont'd)

Demographic Profile of Participants (N=367)

Characteristics Cont'd	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Length of time in role		
<6 months	33	9.0
6-12 months	46	12.5
1-2 years	97	26.4
3-5 years	84	22.9
+ 5years	107	29.2
Length of time with manager		
< 1 year	111	30.2
1-2 years	123	33.5
3-5 years	83	22.6
5+ years	50	13.6
Are (were) you a manager?		
Yes	163	44.4
No	204	55.6
Time with Company		
< 6 months	30	8.2
6-12 months	82	22.3
1-2 years	90	24.5
3-5 years	123	33.5
5+ years	42	11.4
Sector		
Public	91	24.8
Private	184	50.1
Not-for-profit	73	19.9
Other/I don't know	19	5.2

Table 2

Descriptive Profile for Qualitative Anchoring Event (AE) Factors (N = 851)

AE Characteristics	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	M	SD
Exchange Quality				
Positive	518	60.9	3.79	1.10
Negative	333	39.1	3.74	1.17
Content Themes				
Care and Concern	258	30.3	3.80	1.18
Recognition	234	27.5	3.72	1.08
Backing and Support	212	24.8	3.71	1.13
Career Advancement	147	17.3	3.88	1.10
Time				
<1 month (recent)	271	31.8	3.62	1.20
2-11 months (some time ago)	267	31.4	3.68	1.15
12+ months (long ago)	148	17.4	4.03	0.99
Unsure/I don't know (long ago)	165	19.4	3.93	1.03
Audience				
Private Exchange	653	76.7	3.77	1.15
Others Likely Present	198	23.3	3.75	1.05
Reported Exchanges				
One	357	42.0	3.65	1.17
Two	269	31.6	3.82	1.08
Three	225	26.4	3.89	1.10
Participant Reported Impact of AE				
No Impact	29	3.4		
Slightly Impactful	109	12.8		
Somewhat Impactful	159	18.7		
Very Impactful	286	33.6		
Extremely Impactful	268	31.5		

Table 3

Positive Anchoring Events Themes and Subthemes (N = 518)

Content Themes and Subthemes	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Recognition	156	
Appreciation	30	19.3
Compliment	126	80.7
Care and Concern	185	
Paid Time Off (PTO)	48	25.9
For sickness/death		
Leave Early		
Family Focus		
Gifts	60	32.4
Just Because		
Special Occasion, Holiday		
Sickness		
Personal Issues	77	41.6
Wellbeing		
Sickness/Death		
Storytelling		
Personal/Family		
Accomplishment		
Backing and Support	94	
Active attention, comm.	10	10.6
Active support	28	29.7
Purchases Materials		
Takes on Employee's Tasks		
Physical Supports Task, Offers		
Defending	25	26.5
Employee to Others		
Decisions		
Seeks Employee Voice	31	32.9
On Tasks and Projects		
Incorporates Feedback		
Performance and Advancement	83	
Promotion	21	23.3
Encourages Applying for Job		
Opportunities	48	57.8
Development, Conferences		
Performance Evaluations, Feedback	14	16.8
Participant Reported Impact of AE		
No Impact	16	3.0
Slightly Impactful	61	11.8
Somewhat Impactful	99	19.1
Very Impactful	182	35.1
Extremely Impactful	160	30.8

Table 4

Negative Anchoring Events Themes and Subthemes (N = 333)

Content Themes and Subthemes	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Recognition	78	
Dishonors	36	46.1
Hypercritical	42	53.9
Care and Concern	73	
Paid Time Off (PTO)	28	38.3
Denial or Delayed Approval		
Asked to Work While Off		
Question Necessity		
Personal Issues	45	61.4
Wellbeing		
Attributes		
Storytelling		
Personal/Family		
Accomplishment		
Backing and Support	118	
Unapproachable	27	22.8
Ignores/Silences Employee Voice	33	27.9
Inaction to Support	30	25.4
Forgets Invitations/Withholds Info	28	23.7
Career Advancement	64	
Promotion	23	35.9
Denies or Avoids Employee Feedback	12	18.7
Opportunities	18	28.1
Assigns undesirable tasks		
Given excessive workload		
Micromanages Emp. Responsibilities	11	17.1
Participant Reported Impact of AE		
No Impact	13	3.9
Slightly Impactful	48	14.4
Somewhat Impactful	60	18.0
Very Impactful	104	31.2
Extremely Impactful	108	32.4

Table 5

Anchoring Events (AEs) Content Themes, Subthemes and Examples of Supervisor Communication and Behaviors (N = 851)

Themes	Positive Subthemes	Positive AEs Examples	Negative Subthemes	Negative AEs Examples
Recognition N = 234	Compliments and Acknowledges Work-related outputs from the employee (e.g. goals, approach to tasks, skills etc.)	*"Last year, my CEO called to tell me how much he had appreciated my honesty when we worked together."* *"About a month ago, my boss sent me an email saying how grateful he was for all the work I was doing and for me being a part of the team"* *"Last October my supervisor remembered the innovative way I had done my job and praised me for it."*	Exacerbated or exaggerated negative words or behaviors toward employee's work, outputs, or skills; hypercriticism, dishonorable	*"My boss credited my work to another team member repeatedly."* *"Monday he took credit for a good idea I presented to him and took it to our superiors as his own idea."* *"About 18 years ago, my supervisor assessed blame to me and my team regarding issues in testing results for a project. He never approached me about the results prior to the meeting…"*
Care and Concern N = 258	Care and Concern of employee's wellbeing, personal life, honors time off (PTO), giving of gifts	*"Two years ago, I was diagnosed with cancer, my boss told me not to come to work because she didn't want me to get sick from someone and let me work from home for seven months."* *"In January 2017, my daughter was hospitalized,, I sent my principal a text that I wouldn't be at school for a few days. She responded that family is always first and to take however much time necessary."* *"She helped me financially through an unexpected crisis during her first year as my supervisor."*	Lack of knowledge, care, or concern of employee's needs, wellbeing, personal challenges, impedes, delays or denies time off	*"Several years ago my employer announced to several what I had shared with him in confidence."* *"My boss brought the flu to work and I got it. As a healthcare professional, she should have known better than to do that to her employees."* *"About a month ago, my boss required me to call into a meeting when I was in the hospital with my sick child."*

Table 5 Cont'd.

Anchoring Events (AEs) Content Themes, Subthemes and Examples of Supervisor Communication and Behaviors (N = 851)

Themes	Positive Subthemes	Positive AEs Examples	Negative Subthemes	Negative AEs Examples
Support, Backing, N = 212	Takes action to defend the employee, solicits input on work related tasks, purchases resources or offers help to employee or team	*"In December 2018, he assisted with police reports as well as backing me with unruly (drunk) customers."* *"Last week, my supervisor came to my defense on a phone call with partners to explain how much time and effort I am already committing to the project."* *"Last week, my boss asked my opinion about a regional partnership."*	Avoids or silences employee voice, withholds information or resources, does not take action when needed, unapproachable	*"Sometimes my supervisor avoids me."* *"Two months ago, I was sharing critical feedback with my boss and she got upset so I tried to hand her a tissue and she swatted it away."* *"Several months ago my boss refused to escalation a data issue up that was important to my business because he didn't feel it was important to the overall business."*
Career Adv. N = 147	Extends opportunities for advancement or skill development to employee or promotion, gives feedback, performance reviews positive	*"Two months ago my supervisor called me out of the blue to encourage me to apply for a major promotion that would have never considered myself qualified for, yet he believed that I would be an excellent choice for the position."* *"At my first job review and wage increase, I was told that I had frequently gone above and beyond what was expected, and received the highest wage increase in the department."* *"I was nominated for a leadership program unexpectedly."*	Denies employee opportunities, assigns undesirable experiences, blocks career advancement options, denies feedback, negative performance reviews	*"About 6 years ago my boss showed up unexpectedly at a training I was intending to tell me to report after work to his boss' office, where I was reprimanded for something my immediate supervisor had not talked with me about."* *"Last week, my boss eliminated my position from the college without any notice."* *"Month ago boss signed me up to present to various groups without asking for feedback on previous experiences and results first."*

Note. Career Adv.= Career Advancement

Table 6

Pattern Matrix for Exploratory Factor Analysis on LCX-P and LCX-N scales combined

Items	Factor Loadings				
My manager …	1 Affect	2 Trust	3 Social	4 PD	5 Disresp.
compliments me	**.834**	.134	-.096	.066	.025
tells me that he/she appreciates me	**.808**	.095	-.062	-.003	-.002
considers my emotional wellbeing	**.782**	.054	-.057	-.081	-.042
demonstrates concern for me	**.773**	.061	-.075	-.082	-.057
formally recognizes my work efforts	**.751**	.114	-.121	-.059	.032
indicates through head gestures he/she is listening to me	**.711**	-.106	.024	-.122	-.126
praises me in front of others	**.680**	.208	-.054	-.095	.099
cares about me	**.667**	.129	-.132	-.084	-.087
not only hears what I say but sincerely pays attention	**.638**	.032	.008	-.101	-.246
is friendly with me	**.596**	.036	-.171	.027	-.263
looks me in the eye when we communicate	**.577**	-.140	.019	-.195	-.215
is accessible to me	**.530**	-.042	-.027	-.257	-.174
does not tell me about the ins and outs of the organization *	.394	.190	-.150	-.363	.189
recommends me for high profile projects	-.020	**.872**	.038	-.106	-.007
brings me in on projects with his/her peers	.051	**.767**	.005	-.193	.020
trusts me to make recommendations to other clients	.101	**.696**	-.046	-.009	-.092
asks me for my opinion on projects	.113	**.687**	-.010	-.173	-.035
excludes me from jokes and stories	-.142	-.051	**.801**	-.015	-.041
stops talking about his/per personal life when I'm present	-.113	.039	**.786**	.013	-.024
excludes me from conversations	-.131	.003	**.781**	.059	.019
excludes me from informal gatherings	.004	-.028	**.780**	.093	.020
goes directly to upper management when I make a mistake instead of speaking with me first*	-.046	-.213	.374	-.025	.374

Note. * = item should be deleted due to cross-loadings, PD= professional development, Disresp.= Disrespect

Table continues on next page

Table 6 (cont'd)

Pattern Matrix from Exploratory Factor Analysis on LCX-P and LCX-N scales combined

Items	Factor Loadings				
My manager …	1 Affect	2 Trust	3 Social	4 PD	5 Disresp.
provides me with opportunities to improve my prof. skills	-.130	.213	-.040	**-.826**	-.108
brings me in on projects with his/her peers	.142	.049	.027	**-.756**	-.008
takes time to talk to me about my professional progress	.167	.098	-.022	**-.740**	.035
gives me the opportunity learn more about the industry	.101	.073	-.079	**-.739**	-.036
does not give me the chance to improve on the skill I need to do my job	.148	.082	-.060	**-.707**	-.068
responds impulsively to me without thinking about the consequences first	-.112	-.070	-.144	.047	**.839**
interrupts me	-.094	.040	-.054	.084	**.778**
arrogant in our conversations	-.260	-.064	-.030	.048	**.697**
talks to me in an abrupt manner	-.119	-.183	.050	-.047	**.690**
exaggerates the severity of work-related problems	-.100	-.103	.018	.103	**.688**
critiques me harshly	-.193	-.288	.060	-.222	**.664**
gives me dirty looks	.153	-.047	.232	.103	**.656**
passes off my ideas as his/her own	-.013	.192	.087	.203	**.636**
tells others things about me that are not true	-.031	.045	.316	.039	**.520**
body language tells me that he/she doesn't like talking to me	-.045	-.108	.346	.001	**.516**
behaves in a way that disregards my preference	-.221	-.093	.230	-.009	**.507**
won't listen to my ideas	-.208	-.112	.241	.025	**.484**
tells others information I provided him/her in confidence	-.148	.139	.010	.133	**.475**
sighs when I approach him/her*	.079	-.047	.398	.124	.454
actively blocks my advancement in the organization*	.129	.009	.338	.048	.407
Eigenvalues	22.319	3.623	1.608	1.263	1.173
% of Variance	53.15%	8.63%	3.83%	3.01%	2.79%
Cronbach's Alphas	.97	.90	.89	.94	.95

Note. * indicates a question which should be removed due to cross-loadings. N = 367. Specific scale questions can be viewed in Appendix C. *PD= professional development, Disresp.= Disrespect*

Table 7

Correlations and reliabilities for LMX, LCX factors from EFA, and Anchoring Events (AEs)

Variables	M	SD	Range	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. LMX	**3.71**	**1.04**	**1-7**	**(.93)**																		
2. Affect	**3.71**	**1.11**	**1-5**	.84**	**(.97)**																	
3. Trust	**3.53**	**1.12**	**1-5**	.70**	.67**	**(.90)**																
4. Social Excl.	**1.51**	**0.83**	**1-5**	-.57**	-.63**	-.46**	**(.89)**															
5. Prof. Devel.	**3.47**	**1.19**	**1-5**	.75**	.78**	.65**	-.53**	**(.94)**														
6. Disrespect	**1.56**	**0.78**	**1-5**	-.65**	-.75**	-.47**	.71**	-.62**	**(.95)**													
7. Age	**2.66**	**1.05**	**1-5**	.05	.00	.07	.07	-.02	-.02	(--)												
8. Gender	**1.89**	**0.32**	**1-3**	-.01	.02	-.02	-.09	-.02	-.03	-.03	(--)											
9. Ethnicity	**1.13**	**0.36**	**1-3**	.05	.04	-.01	.00	-.02	.01	-.05	-.04	(--)										
10. Education	**2.28**	**0.89**	**1-4**	-.03	.03	.03	-.08	.04	-.09	-.07	.05	-.03	(--)									
11. Marital	**1.80**	**0.56**	**1-3**	.04	-.03	.09	-.03	.01	.00	.34**	.04	-.08	-.09	(--)								
12. Income	**2.40**	**0.72**	**1-3**	-.02	.04	-.12*	-.07	.06	-.12**	.20**	.08	-.11*	.18**	-.31**	(--)							
13. Emp. Status	**1.37**	**0.72**	**1-3**	-.17**	-.23	-.16**	.22**	-.18**	.20**	.10	-.14**	-.11*	-.21**	.07	-.08	(--)						
14. Tenure	**3.51**	**1.28**	**1-5**	-.02	-.04	.08	.05	-.02	.01	.43**	.03	-.07	-.05	.27**	.20**	-.01	(--)					
15. Time Managed	**2.20**	**1.02**	**1-4**	.06	-.01	.14**	-.02	.05	.00	.28**	.05	-.09	-.08	.19**	.17**	.03	.68**	(--)				
16. Manager	**1.56**	**0.50**	**1-2**	-.13*	-.09	-.23**	.05	-.12	.03	-.13*	.09	.10	-.01	.02	.00	.09	-.18**	-.17**	(--)			
17. Company Time	**3.18**	**1.15**	**1-5**	.04	-.02	.11*	.01	.02	-.03	-.59**	.08	.08	-.04	.12*	.19**	.01	.39**	.22**	-.11*	(--)		
18. Impact Pos. AE	**3.67**	**1.04**	**1-5**	.64**	.68**	.54**	-.54**	.65**	-.59**	.08	-.02	-.10	.02	.06	.06	-.13	.00	.07	-.15*	.01	(--)	
19. Impact Neg. AE	**3.62**	**1.08**	**1-5**	-.48**	-.57**	-.41**	.45**	-.36**	.47**	.05	-.01	.01	.03	.15	.13	.15	.11	.10	.11	.10	-.18*	(--)

Note. Prof. devel = professional development, Emp. = employment **Correlation is significant at $r \leq .001$, *Correlation is significant at $r \leq .05$; Cronbach's alphas in parentheses. See full Demographic Profile in Appendix C.

Table 8

Pattern Matrix from Exploratory Factor Analysis with LCX-P, LCX-N, LMX-7 Questions

Items	Factor Loadings					
My supervisor	1 Affect	2 Neg.Verbal	3 Trust	4 PD	5 Social Ex.	6 Betrayal
Compliments me	**.763**	-.004	-.162	.061	.102	-.072
Tells me they appreciate me	**.734**	-.024	-.122	-.019	.067	-.079
Considers my emotional wellbeing	**.706**	-.072	-.078	-.108	.073	-.049
Demonstrates concern for me	**.703**	-.071	-.085	-.106	.087	-.075
Recognizes my efforts	**.681**	.045	-.130	-.087	.113	-.120
Cares about me	**.610**	-.052	-.152	-.106	.136	-.125
Praises me in front of others	**.606**	.023	-.236	-.088	.065	.020
Indicates through head gestures that they are listening to me	**.605**	-.327	.088	-.170	.087	.279
Not only hears what I say, but sincerely pays attention	**.561**	-.321	-.049	-.145	.061	.080
Is friendly to me *	**.540**	-.278	-.059	.015	.227	-.017
Looks me in the eye when we communicate *	**.485**	-.347	.132	-.252	.093	.245
Is accessible to me *	**.467**	-.176	.037	-.302	.058	-.041
LMX1. Do you know where you stand with your sup. and do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do? *	**.436**	.202	-.253	-.239	.059	-.196
LMX6. I have just enough confidence in my supervisor that I would defend and justify their decision if they were not present to do so. *	**.422**	.035	-.074	-.294	.021	-.250
LMX 7. How would you characterize your relationship with your supervisor? *	**.403**	.010	-.236	-.230	.098	-.212
LMX5. What are the chances your supervisor would bail you out at their expense? *	**.375**	.067	-.338	-.186	.016	-.171
LMX 4. What are the chances that your supervisor would use their power to help you solve problems in your work? *	**.348**	.025	-.155	-.335	.130	-.172
Interrupts me	-.054	**.775**	-.013	.099	-.052	-.020
Responds impulsively to me without thinking about the consequences first	-.095	**.719**	.076	.082	.092	.191
Talks to me in an abrupt rushed manner	-.063	**.678**	.123	.109	-.112	-.013
Is arrogant in our conversations	-.224	**.640**	.085	.065	-.039	.099
Critiques me harshly	-.191	**.524**	.310	-.227	-.091	.230
Gives me dirty looks	.152	**.518**	.054	.097	-.299	.143
Exaggerates the severity of work-related problems*	-.114	**.505**	.194	-.040	-.062	.313
Uses body language that tells me they do not like talking to me *	-.018	**.456**	.122	-.003	-.432	.027
Passes my ideas off as their own *	-.004	**.426**	-.206	.242	-.087	.351
Will not listen to my ideas*	-.187	**.336**	.108	.050	-.265	.232
Behaves in a way that disregards my preferences	-.209	**.335**	.089	.006	-.241	.290
Recommends me for high profile projects	-.027	-.007	**-.895**	-.067	-.043	.031
Brings me in on projects with their peers	.035	-.005	**-.787**	-.161	-.006	.058
Trusts me to make recommendations to other departments or clients	.084	-.088	**-.713**	.005	.069	.036
Asks me for my opinion on projects	.079	-.087	**-.712**	-.136	.027	.083

Table 8 (cont'd)

Pattern Matric from Exploratory Factor Analysis with LCX-P, LCX-N, LMX-7 Questions

Items	Factor Loadings					
My supervisor	1 Affect	2 Neg.Verbal	3 Trust	4 PD	5 Social Ex.	6 Betrayal
LMX 3. How well does your supervisor recognize your potential? *	.305	.063	**-.312**	-.283	.103	-.160
Provides me with opportunities to improve my professional skills	-.192	-.095	-.209	**-.843**	.005	.001
Provides me with feedback on my work so that I can enhance my skills	.071	.001	-.037	**-.803**	-.025	-.028
Takes time to talk to me about my professional progress	.097	.043	-.094	**-.772**	.018	-.034
Gives me opportunities to learn more about my industry	.019	-.079	-.070	**-.759**	.108	.056
Gives me the chance to improve the skills I need to do my job	.071	-.087	-.083	**-.729**	.082	.013
LMX 2. How well does your supervisor understand your job?	.247	.042	.022	**-.581**	-.023	-.210
Tells me about the ins and outs of the organization*	.328	.123	-.182	-.385	.157	.065
Stops talking about their personal life when I am present	-.067	-.031	-.060	.008	**-.855**	-.052
Excludes me from jokes or stories	-.097	.082	.050	-.041	**-.843**	.033
Excludes me from informal gatherings	.052	-.001	.022	.063	**-.834**	-.015
Excludes me from conversations	-.084	-.035	-.010	.043	**-.829**	.042
Not only hears what I say, but sincerely pays attention	.112	.387	.056	.126	**-.481**	.019
Goes directly to upper management when I make a mistake instead of speaking with me first*	-.048	.188	.217	-.058	**-.375**	.294
Tells others information that I provided to them in confidence	-.160	.194	-.140	.146	.058	**.531**
Tells others things about me that are not true	-.054	.210	-.064	.043	-.284	**.504**
Actively blocks my advancement in the organization	.108	.095	-.020	.048	-.292	**.492**
Eigenvalues	26.316	3.987	1.655	1.295	1.186	1.007
% of Variance	53.71%	8.14%	3.38%	2.64%	2.42%	2.10%

Notes. * indicates a question which should be removed due to cross-loadings. ** indicates a question that was reworded for participant clarity. N = 367. Specific scale questions can be viewed in Appendix C. PD= professional development, Social Ex.= social exclusion

Table 9

Stepwise regression analyses with LMX as dependent variable and AE+ and AE- as predictors

	Model 1			Model 2			R^2	ΔR^2
	B	**SE**	**t**	**B**	**SE**	**t**		
AE+	.64	.06	10.18**	.58	.06	10.19**	.43	.43
AE-				-.36	.06	-6.26**	.55	.13

Note. *** p < .001, AE+ = Positive Anchoring Event Impact, AE- = Negative Anchoring Event Impact

Table 10

Stepwise regression analyses with LMX as dependent variable and LCX-P, LCX-N, AE+ and AE- as predictors.

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			R^2	ΔR^2
	B	**SE**	**t**	**B**	**SE**	**t**	**B**	**SE**	**t**	**B**	**SE**	**t**		
LCX-P	.85	.05	18.46***	.72	.06	11.33***	.68	.08	9.07***	.64	.08	7.90***	.71	.71
LCX-N				-.21	.08	-2.72**	-.19	.08	-2.52*	-.17	.08	-2.10*	.72	.02
AE+							.07	.06	1.02	.09	.07	1.38	.72	.00
AE-										-.07	.06	-1.26	.72	.00

Note. * p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001, LCX-P = Leader Communication Exchange – Positive, LCX-N = Leader Communication Exchange- Negative, AE+ = Positive Anchoring Events Impact, AE- = Negative Anchoring Events Impact

Appendix A

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01

Date: February 08, 2019 **IRB#:** 10340

Principal Investigator: Allison Joyce Reynolds **Approval Date:** 02/08/2019

Exempt Category: 2

Study Title: Exploring how Communication Frequency and Quality (positive and negative) impact employee-supervisor relationship strength (LMX).

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,



Fred Beard, Ph.D.
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix B

SAMPLE EMAIL:

Dear Moses,

I hope the start of your day has been great.

I would like to invite your team to take part in my Master's Thesis study by completing a 15 minute anonymous survey.

The goal of this study is to determine if the frequency of communication and/or quality of communication (positive or negative) between an employee-boss impact the strength of their relationship, from the employee perspective.

I've included the QR code and survey link for the study and would greatly appreciate it if you could share this with your teammates, colleagues, families, or friends.



Appendix C
Demographic Questions

Which category best describes you?

- White
- Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origins
- Black or African American
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- Asian
- Some other race, ethnicity, or origin

What is your current marital status?

- Single, never married
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

- Less than High School Diploma
- High School Degree/GED or Equiv.
- Some college, no degree
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree (B.A. or B.S.)
- Master's Degree (e.g. MA, MS, Med)
- Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)

What is your current household income?

- Less than $20,000
- $20,001- $40,000
- $40,001- $60,000
- $60,001- $80,000
- $80, 001- $100,000
- $100,001 +

Do you currently live in the United States?

- Yes
- No

Is/was your SUPERVISOR located in the United States?

- Yes
- No

Is/was YOUR JOB located in the United States?

- Yes
- No

What is your current employment status?

- Employed full-time (40+ hours/wk)
- Employed, part-time (1-39 hours/wk)
- Not Employed (retired, looking for work, unable to work, disabled, student, etc.)

How long have you been/were you in your current role?

- 0-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 5 years or more

How long have you been/were you managed by your current/previous supervisor?

- Less than 1
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 5 year or more

Do you/did you manage a person or team?

- Yes, I manage(d) a person or team
- No, I do/did not manager a person or team

How long have you been/were you with your company?

- 0-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 5 years or more

My job is in/was in the

- Public Sector
- Private Sector
- Not-For-Profit/Non-Profit
- I don't know
- Other

LMX-7 Scale

SECTION I: Describe your relationship with your current boss (if employed) or most recent boss if (not employed)

LMX1

Do you know where you stand with your supervisor and do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?

- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Fairly Often
- Very Often

LMX2

How well does your supervisor understand the challenges and needs of your job?

- Not a bit
- A little
- A Fair amount
- Quite a bit
- A Great Deal

LMX3

How well does your supervisor recognize your potential?

- Not at all
- A Little
- Moderately
- Mostly
- Fully

LMX4

What are the chances that your supervisor would use their power to help you solve problems in your work?

- None
- Small
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

LMX5

What are the chances that they would bail you out at their expense?

- None
- Small
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

LMX6

I have just enough confidence in my supervisor that I would defend and justify their decision if he/she/they were not present to do so.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

LMX7

How would your characterize your relationship with your supervisor?

- Extremely ineffective
- Worse than Average
- Average
- Better Than Average
- Extremely Effective

Leader Communication Scale – Positive (LCX-P)

SECTION II. Describe how FREQUENTLY these statements reflect the relationship you have with your current boss (employed) or most recent boss (not employed).
Each statement is preceded by the phrase, "MY SUPERVISOR..."

	1	2	3	4	5
Professional Trust					
• Trusts me to make recommendations to other departments or clients					
• Recommends me for high profile projects					
• Brings me in on projects with his/her/their peers					
• Asks me for my opinions on projects					
Professional Development					
• Provides me with opportunities to improve my prof. skills					
• Takes time to talk to me about my prof. progress					
• Provides me feedback on my work so that I enhance my skills					
Affect					
• Cares about me					
• Considers my emotional wellbeing					
• Demonstrates concern for me					
Verbal Communication					
• Compliments me					
• Recognizes my work efforts					
• Tells me they appreciate me					
• Praises me in front of others					
Nonverbal Communication					
• Looks me in the eye when we communicate					
• Indicates through head gestures that they are listening to me					
• Not only hears what I say, but sincerely pays attention					
• Is friendly to me					
Accessibility					
• Is accessible to me					

Notes. 1= never, 2 = sometimes, 3= About half of the time, 4= most of the time, 5- always

Leader Communication Scale – Negative (LCX-N)

SECTION II. Describe how FREQUENTLY these statements reflect the relationship you have with your current boss (employed) or most recent boss (not employed).
Each statement is preceded by the phrase, "MY SUPERVISOR..."

	1	2	3	4	5
Professional Development					
• give me opportunities to learn more about my industry					
• give me the chance to improve on the skills I need to do my job					
• actively blocks my advancement in the organization					
tells me about the ins and outs of the organization					
Social					
• excludes me from jokes or stories					
• stops talking about their personal life when I am present					
• excludes me from conversations					
• excludes me from informal gatherings					
Betrayal					
• tells others information that I provided to them in confidence					
• goes directly to upper management when I make a mistake instead of speaking with me first					
• tells others things about me that are NOT true					
• passes my ideas off as their own					
Professional Trust					
• critiques me harshly					
• exaggerates the severity of work-related problems					
• will NOT listen to my ideas					
• behaves in a way that disregards my preferences					
Verbal Communication					
• responds impulsively to me without thinking about the consequences first					
• talks to me in an abrupt rushed manner					
• is arrogant in our conversations					
• interrupts me					
Nonverbal Communication					
• responds impulsively to me without thinking about the consequences first					
• talks to me in an abrupt rushed manner					
• is arrogant in our conversations					
• interrupts me					

Note. 1= never, 2 = sometimes, 3= about half of the time, 4= most of the time, 5= always

Anchoring Event Prompt – Positive

SECTION III: Please describe 3 POSITIVE INTERACTIONS (verbal or nonverbal) you have had with your supervisor that were UNEXPECTED. Then, evaluate the IMPACT each interaction had on your relationship, from your perspective If your current boss (if employed) or most recent boss if (unemployed).

Examples Should Include:
Approximately How long ago the interaction occurred *(e.g. Last year, Today, etc...)*
Context/Specific details of what occurred in the interaction *(e.g. My boss said... My boss did.. My boss did not say/do...)*

SAMPLE RESPONSE:
-Last month, my dad had open heart surgery and my boss sent my family flowers.
-Yesterday, my boss sent me a text after work saying she thought I did a great job on my presentation.
-This week, my boss gave me their full attention (putting down her phone to look me in the eye) in my check-in, when I shared a new Idea I had about how to improve company sales

---

1. An UNEXPECTED POSITIVE INTERACTION with my supervisor happened when...
(include approximate date since exchange and specific context/details)
1b. How much did this unexpected positive interaction impact your relationship with your supervisor?

- Not Impactful
- Slightly Impactful
- Somewhat Impactful
- Very Impactful
- Extremely Impactful

2. An UNEXPECTED POSITIVE INTERACTION with my supervisor happened when...
(include approximate date since exchange and specific context/details)
2b. How much did this unexpected positive interaction (listed above) impact your relationship with your supervisor?

- Not Impactful
- Slightly Impactful
- Somewhat Impactful
- Very Impactful
- Extremely Impactful

3. An UNEXPECTED POSITIVE INTERACTION with my supervisor happened when...
(include approximate date since exchange and specific context/details)
3b. How much did this unexpected positive interaction (listed above) impact your relationship with your supervisor?

- Not Impactful
- Slightly Impactful
- Somewhat Impactful
- Very Impactful
- Extremely Impactful

Anchoring Event Prompt – Negative

SECTION IV: Please describe 3 NEGATIVE INTERACTIONS (verbal or nonverbal) you have had with your supervisor that were UNEXPECTED. Then, evaluate the IMPACT each interaction had on your relationship, from your perspective If your current boss (if employed) or most recent boss if (unemployed).

Examples Should Include:
Approximately How long ago the interaction occurred ***(****e.g. Last year, Five years ago, etc...****)***
Context/Specific details of what occurred in the interaction *(e.g. My boss said... My boss did.. My boss did not say/do...)*

SAMPLE RESPONSE:
-Last month, my dad had open heart surgery and my boss called me multiple times to get on a conference call during his surgery.
-Last year, after a presentation, my boss told me my presentation was childish and unprofessional.
-Today, my boss rolled her eyes at me when I shared my idea of how to increase profit margins during a staff meeting.

---

1. An UNEXPECTED NEGATIVE INTERACTION with my supervisor happened when...
(include approximate date since exchange and specific context/details)
1b. How much did this unexpected negative interaction (listed above) impact your relationship with your supervisor?

- Not Impactful
- Slightly Impactful
- Somewhat Impactful
- Very Impactful
- Extremely Impactful

2. An UNEXPECTED NEGATIVE INTERACTION with my supervisor happened when...
(include approximate date since exchange and specific context/details)
2b. How much did this unexpected negative interaction (listed above) impact your relationship with your supervisor?

- Not Impactful
- Slightly Impactful
- Somewhat Impactful
- Very Impactful
- Extremely Impactful

3**. An UNEXPECTED NEGATIVE INTERACTION with my supervisor happened when...**
(include approximate date since exchange and specific context/details)
3b. How much did this unexpected negative interaction (listed above) impact your relationship with your supervisor?

- Not Impactful
- Slightly Impactful
- Somewhat Impactful
- Very Impactful
- Extremely Impactful
