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## Social Identity Threat: Implications for Coachability

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Social Identity Threat: Implications for Coachability

A Dissertation

Presented in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Lauren Sophia Zervos

June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022

Presented to

The Department of Psychology

College of Science and Health

DePaul University

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## Biography

The author was born in the south suburbs of Chicago, Illinois, on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1995. Lauren graduated from Marist High School in Chicago, Illinois, in 2013. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology with a concentration in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from DePaul University in 2017. She received her Master of Arts degree in Industrial-Organizational Psychology from DePaul University in May of 2020.

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## Abstract

A key predictor of employee performance and effective coaching interactions, coachability is defined as an individual's willingness and ability to seek, be receptive to, and act on constructive feedback from others (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021). As such, it was predicted that there are certain social-psychological phenomena that impact one's coachability. One phenomenon, social identity threat, referring to a threat to the self-aspect derived from membership in a particular social group or category (Steele et al., 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 2004), was used to explain the link between certain contextual and individual variables and employee coachability behaviors. Specifically, it was predicted that the contextual variables of trust in supervisor and psychological safety positively relate to employee coachability behaviors through decreased social identity threat. The individual level variable of stigma consciousness was predicted to negatively relate to employee coachability behaviors through increased social identity threat. Further, these relationships were expected to be stronger for racial-ethnic minorities given the high stigmatization and unique experiences associated with membership in a minority group (Crocker et al., 1998). Data collected from a management consultancy firm was tested through structural equation modeling. Results indicated a significant, positive effect of psychological safety on employee coachability behaviors and non-significant effects of trust in supervisor, stigma consciousness, and social identity threat on employee coachability behaviors. No significant differences in social identity threat were found across racial-ethnic minority group members and Whites (i.e., racial-ethnic majority group members). Finding implications as well as future research directions are discussed.

## Social Identity Threat: Implications for Coachability

Coachability, or an individual's willingness and ability to seek, be receptive to, and act on constructive feedback to drive individual development and improve performance, is a significant predictor of effective coaching interactions, employee performance, and promotability (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021). As a recent empirically established construct, coachability has yet to be studied extensively, with researchers calling for examinations into potential antecedent variables that may undermine or inhibit coachability (Shannahan, Bush, et al., 2013; Weiss & Merrigan, 2021). For instance, given that coachability manifests as an individual's willingness and ability to seek out, be receptive to, and act on feedback from *others*, there are likely social-psychological variables and processes at play. This inherent social nature of coachability calls for additional examinations as there are likely relational and contextual features that undermine or inhibit coachability. Further, these contextual and relational features are likely to have unique implications for the coachability of employees from different demographic backgrounds (e.g., minority groups).

This dissertation seeks to develop and test a model of the impact of the social-psychological experience, social identity threat, on coachability behaviors. First, coaching and the concept of coachability are introduced. Then, social identity threat and its theorized effects on coachability are discussed. Specifically, individual characteristics and contextual features that may impact coachability and prompt perceptions of identity threat, with a specific focus on the experience of employees from racial-ethnic minority groups, are discussed. The proposed model was tested with data collected through Prolific by a management consultancy firm specializing in organizational psychology.

## **Managerial Coaching**

Managerial coaching (i.e., manager-as-coach) is a developmental practice that prompts employee learning, growth, and subsequent performance improvements (Ellinger, Ellinger, Hamlin, et al., 2010; Joo et al., 2012). This practice poses managers as coaches to their subordinates, fostering development through empowering, supporting, and providing guidance to employees (Ellinger, Ellinger, Hamlin, et al., 2010; Joo et al., 2012). Research indicates that managerial coaching is a powerful predictor of performance improvements, employee learning, and advanced development (Ellinger, Ellinger, Bachrach, et al., 2011; Joo et al., 2012; Ladyshevsky, 2010; Orth et al., 1987). Despite the evidence pointing to its importance, however, managerial coaching is often viewed at in isolation, focusing solely on the coach rather than the individual being coached (i.e., the coachee) (Shannahan, Bush, et al., 2013; Shannahan, Shannahan, et al., 2013). This viewpoint is limited given that the engagement and participation from the individual being coached (i.e., the coachee) significantly impacts the success of coaching interactions (Gregory & Levy, 2010; Weiss & Merrigan, 2021).

## **Employee Coachability**

To address this gap in coaching literature and practice, research has recently established coachability, an individual's willingness and ability to seek, be receptive to, and act on constructive feedback to drive individual development and improve performance (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021). While the behavioral tenants of coachability focus on the individual in question, research thus far has failed to thoroughly explore the social nature of coachability. Specifically, to display coachability behaviors, the focal individual has to seek feedback from others, display receptivity to that feedback received

from others, and subsequently act on this feedback. Coachability behaviors are therefore inherently social in that the individual in question is interacting with their environment, including the individuals and specific contextual features around them, to drive development.

This social nature of coachability suggests that the distinct relational and contextual features of one's work environment, and the unique psychological experiences that are derived from such features, may impact an employee's coachability. For example, the interaction between coachees and their environment, such as the coach-coachee relationship or manner in which coaches offer feedback, is likely to play a major role in an individual's coachability (Shannahan, Bush, et al., 2013; Weiss & Merrigan, 2021). Further, the overarching context in which individuals work, including the organizational culture and whether or not employees feel safe and able to seek out development, is also expected to have an impact on employee coachability (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021). Thus, coachability behaviors, and whether or not they are displayed, likely heavily hinge upon social-psychological processes. I will discuss social identity threat, one social-psychological phenomena that is relevant for coachability behaviors, in the next section.

### **Social Identity Threat**

Social identity threat refers to a threat to the self-aspect derived from membership in a particular social group or category (Steele et al., 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Conceptualizations of social identity threat posit that there are different social groups (e.g., gender, race, age, occupation) individuals belong to that may prompt perceptions of threat under certain individual and contextual features (Brascombe et al., 1999; Steele et

al., 2002). Individuals are said to experience social identity threat when they are concerned that the *positive* image of their group is threatened by cues that signal devaluation or stigmatization (Steele et al., 2002).

For example, research posits that Black Americans in managerial positions may experience social identity threat deriving from their group's largely overwhelming underrepresentation in such positions (Emerson & Murphy, 2014), or cues that signal stereotypes regarding their group's low intellectual ability (Steele & Aronson, 1995). By seeing themselves as one of few Black Americans in managerial positions, and possibly contending with the fear of confirming a stereotype that their racial/ethnic group holds less intellectual ability compared to White Americans, they may therefore perceive threat towards their social identity (Belmi et al., 2015; Emerson & Murphy, 2014). Conversely, in an athletic setting, White Americans exhibited worry that they were being evaluated on the basis of a stereotype that deems their group less physically capable than Black Americans (Stone et al., 1999). By being in a setting which makes negative stereotypes about their group salient, White Americans experienced social identity threat, or the fear that they were being judged on the basis of their racial/group membership. Thus, social identity threat can occur across racial/ethnic groups.

I propose that social identity threat can be present among individuals of any racial/ethnic background given relevant antecedent variables. As discussed later, I propose that in a traditional work context, these effects will be stronger for those of racial/ethnic minority groups.

**Social Identity Threat Effects on Coachability.** Perceptions of social identity threat can have negative motivational consequences (e.g., disengaging from a task, role,

or setting), making it a relevant focal point of study for coachability (Major & O'Brien, 2005). When individuals make appraisals of identity threat, they respond in involuntary and voluntary ways (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Voluntary responses include conscious coping efforts intended to regulate emotions, cognitions, and behavior, whereas involuntary responses include to automatic, emotional, cognitive, physiological, and behavioral responses such as anxiety (Spencer et al., 2002) and increased blood pressure (Blascovich et al., 2001; Major & O'Brien, 2005). Both voluntary and involuntary responses can impact one's motivation and subsequent performance in any particular domain.

For instance, Schmader and Johns (2003) explored involuntary responses to a specific form of social identity threat, stereotype threat (i.e., the threat induced by fear of conforming to a stereotype about one's group) (Steele & Aronson, 2000) in women and Latinos. When presented with a manipulation of stereotype threat (e.g., describing a test as an assessment of quantitative/math ability), women and Latinos experienced decreased working memory capacity, further leading to a decrease in test performance (Schmader & Johns, 2003). Thus, perceived threat may constrain cognitive capacity in which individuals are focusing on the threat rather than the task at hand, negatively impacting subsequent performance. For coachability, this means that social identity threat may direct attention *away* from development (i.e., seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback) and *towards* managing the threat.

Other research shows that individuals will cope with identity threat by voluntarily disengaging or withdrawing from identity threatening experiences (Crocker & Major, 1989; Steele, 1997). For instance, Roberson et al. (2003) found that Black managers



experiencing stereotype threat were more likely to utilize a monitoring strategy for feedback seeking, which are strategies centered around indirectly seeking feedback from cues or signals in the environment. The monitoring strategy of feedback seeking typically produces more ambiguous information compared to direct feedback seeking, thus is likely to be less informative in terms of how the focal individual can improve their performance (Ashford et al., 2016; Ashford & Tsui, 1991). Perceived identity threat can therefore decrease an individual's motivation to actively engage in development, and instead disengage completely or passively seek out developmental experiences that may be less useful for performance improvements. In terms of coachability, this may mean that under conditions of social identity threat, individuals are less apt to seek out feedback, the first critical component of coachability.

In addition to being less likely to seek out feedback, social identity threat has implications for feedback receptivity and acting on feedback, two other aspects of coachability. Roberson et al. (2003) found that under conditions of threat, not only were Black managers utilizing the monitoring strategy of feedback seeking more than direct feedback seeking, they were also discounting feedback to a greater degree. In other words, they were more likely to perceive the feedback as less informative and not useful for improving their performance (Roberson et al., 2003). When presented with feedback, individuals experiencing social identity threat may cope by reacting defensively, or attributing the feedback to an instance of discrimination or mistreatment rather than valid information they can use to develop. Further, demonstrating receptivity to feedback, or deeming the feedback as valid and useful, is critical in prompting movement or action on that feedback (Ashford et al., 2016). If an employee does not perceive feedback as useful,

they're less likely to be motivated to actually act on it. Thus, in conditions of social identity threat, individuals may be less receptive to feedback they receive, and subsequently less likely to act on or implement the feedback.

It is therefore predicted that:

*Hypothesis 1. Employee social identity threat appraisals negatively relate to employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback.*

### **Antecedents of Social Identity Threat**

Social identity threat theory posits that there are certain contextual or situational cues and individual characteristics that may increase an individual's propensity to make an appraisal of social identity threat (Steele et al., 2002). In the following sections, I outline several contextual and individual level variables that are expected to impact coachability through perceptions of social identity threat.

**Contextual Variables: Trust in Supervisor.** Trust is defined as “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the trustee will perform a particular action” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712). Existing literature delineates three key forms of trust; ability, benevolence, and integrity-based trust (Mayer & Davis, 1999; Mayer et al., 1995). Ability-based trust refers to the degree to which a trustor perceives the trustee as competent and skilled, benevolence-based trust centers around the trustor's belief that the trustee seeks to treat them well, and integrity-based trust focuses on a trustor's perception that the trustee ascribes to acceptable, fair values (Mayer & Davis, 1999; Mayer et al., 1995). Within supervisor-subordinate relationships, trust in supervisor refers to subordinate's positive expectations of

supervisor competence, reliability, and benevolence (i.e., ability, benevolence, and integrity-based trust) (Basit, 2017; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Mayer et al., 1995).

The presence of trust within relationships is said to yield more risk-taking behavior (Mayer et al., 1995). In the context of supervisor-subordinate relationships, exhibiting coachability behaviors, or seeking, receiving, and implementing feedback is inherently risky as employees pursuing development put themselves at jeopardy of appearing inefficient or unable to perform their jobs effectively (Huang, 2012).

Researchers have applied this lens in testing whether or not trust plays a critical role in the feedback seeking process. For example, Chuang et al. (2014) found that employees who had a high degree of trust in their supervisors were more likely to seek critical (i.e., negative) feedback from them. Trust in supervisor, in this case, enabled employees to feel comfortable enough to take the supposed risk of appearing incompetent by asking for critical, hard-to-hear feedback.

Relatedly, Choi et al. (2014) found that high levels of supervisor trust increased the perceived value of the feedback. In other words, the more an employee trusts their supervisor, the more likely they are to perceive any feedback received from them as valid, informative, and useful for improving their performance. This increased receptivity to feedback is further expected to motivate action on it. Thus, trust in supervisor is expected to positively impact each aspect of coachability; when employees have a high degree of trust in their supervisors, they're less likely to be concerned about maintaining an image of perfection, and more likely to seek out, be receptive to, and enact the critical feedback they need to grow.

It is therefore predicted that:

*Hypothesis II. Trust in supervisor positively relates to employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback.*

Social identity threat offers an explanation for the link between trust in supervisor and coachability behaviors. The existence of trust can decrease the likelihood that individuals perceive social identity threat. For example, increased anticipated belonging and trust has been shown to mitigate concerns related to social identity threat (Johnson et al., 2019). In this experimental study, researchers sought to examine Black women's experience in STEM careers (i.e., Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Given that Black women are one of the least represented in STEM careers, contending with difficulties related to both racial and gender identities, this context is considered especially threatening (Smyth & McArdle, 2004; Johnson et al., 2019). By increasing anticipated belonging and trust through identity-safe cues such as displaying a successful Black female role model, social identity threat was minimized in this case (Johnson et al., 2019). Thus, trust plays a role in whether or not individuals perceive identity threat, even in especially difficult contexts.

Under trusting conditions, the detrimental effects of social identity threat on coachability behaviors are expected to be minimized. In other words, the more trust that an employee holds towards their supervisor, the less likely they are to perceive identity threat, and the more likely they are to engage in coachability behaviors.

It is therefore predicted that:

*Hypothesis III. Employee social identity threat appraisals mediate the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback. Specifically, the more employees trust their*

*supervisor, the less likely they are to make appraisals of social identity threat (HIIIa). This decrease in employee social identity threat is expected to yield an increase in employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback (HIIIb).*

**Contextual Variables: Psychological Safety.** Another relevant antecedent to social identity threat is psychological safety. Psychological safety refers to a belief held by employees that the organizational context is safe for interpersonal risk taking (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). In essence, psychologically safe work environments are those in which employees feel comfortable making mistakes, speaking up, asking for help, and taking risks as there is a lack of fear of being punished, rejected, or embarrassed for doing so. Research suggests that psychologically safe environments facilitate open communication, employee interaction, and feedback inquiry (Baer & Frese, 2003; De Stobbeleier et al., 2020).

For instance, De Stobbeleier et al. (2020) found that employees were more likely to seek feedback from their peers when their working environment was considered psychologically safe. In other words, when employees felt safe enough to take interpersonal risks, they were more apt to seek feedback from others. Further, psychological safety has been shown to positively relate to the quality of peer feedback (van der Rijt et al., 2012). Psychologically safe environments both motivated employees to provide each other with more constructive feedback *and* prompted employees to deem each other's feedback as more useful (van der Rijt et al., 2012). Again, perceived value of feedback is an indicator of receptivity to, and motivation to act on feedback. This evidence suggests that psychological safety will not only encourage the first tenet of

coachability, feedback seeking, but will also increase individuals' receptivity to feedback and their subsequent action on it, the remaining coachability tenants. When individuals perceive high psychological safety and deem their organization as a safe place to take interpersonal risks, they're more likely engage in coachability behaviors, seeking, being receptive to, and acting on constructive feedback.

It is therefore predicted that:

*Hypothesis IV. Psychological safety positively relates to employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback.*

The relationship between psychological safety and coachability behaviors is expected to be mediated by social identity threat. Psychologically safe environments can mitigate against social identity threat concerns as these environments encourage participation, engagement, and risk taking, valuing all individuals' unique thoughts and ideas (De Stobbeleier et al., 2020; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Cues signaling a psychologically safe environment such as inviting candid feedback and thoughts during team meetings, encouraging idea sharing, noting errors or mistakes are acceptable and even desirable for the sake of learning, and discussing failures and challenges openly have been shown to minimize the adverse effects of identity threatening situations (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Singh et al., 2013). Thus, psychological safety plays a role in whether or not employees make appraisals of social identity threat. The more psychologically safe the work environment is, or the more that employees feel safe to take risks, speak up, and make mistakes, the less likely they are to perceive social identity threat. In psychologically safe environments, the negative effects of social identity threat on coachability behaviors are expected to be minimized. In other words, the more

psychologically safe the environment is, the less likely employees are to make appraisals of social identity threat, and the more likely they are to seek out, be receptive to, and act on constructive feedback.

It is therefore predicted that:

*Hypothesis V. Employee social identity threat appraisals mediate the relationship between psychological safety and employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback. Specifically, the more employees perceive psychological safety, the less likely they are to make appraisals of social identity threat (HVa). This decrease in employee social identity threat is expected to yield an increase in employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback (HVb).*

In addition to the contextual antecedents, there are two individual level variables of interest, stigma consciousness and demographic status.

**Individual Variables: Stigma Consciousness.** Stigma consciousness is the extent to which an individual anticipates being negatively stereotyped and treated by others on the basis of his or her membership in a particular group (Pinel, 1999). Research indicates that stigma consciousness predicts the likelihood that individuals will perceive incivility, discrimination, and disrespect from others (Pinel, 1999; Pinel, 2004; Pinel & Paulin, 2005). In other words, the more someone anticipates being negatively stereotyped by others, the more likely they are to perceive situations and other individuals as negative and discriminatory. Further, evidence suggests that stigma consciousness can impact individuals' behavior and prompt disengagement in given domains.

For instance, in academic settings, individuals of color (e.g., Black Americans, Latinos) are considered targets of “academic stigma,” as their groups are historically stereotyped as underperforming in school (Major & Schmader, 1998; Major et al., 1998; Schmader et al., 2001). High stigma consciousness in these cases led to disengagement in school, where students of color deemphasized the importance of academic achievement (Major & Schmader, 1998; Major et al., 1998; Schmader et al., 2001). Behavioral indicators of disengagement in this case can include not showing up to classes, studying an inadequate amount, and/or not seeking out additional resources (e.g., tutors) to succeed in school. This disengagement further served to negatively impact academic performance, meaning that stigma consciousness has negative, distal consequences for performance outcomes.

While academic settings are distinct from work settings, stigma consciousness operates similarly at work. For example, when presented with critical feedback, female employees high in stigma consciousness were more likely to attribute the feedback to instances of discrimination versus actual developmental information (Pinel, 2004). In other words, holding high levels of stigma consciousness makes it more likely that individuals react poorly to feedback, viewing it as an attack rather than information provided to help boost growth and performance.

The above evidence suggests that stigma consciousness can lead individuals to disengage in a variety of forms. With respect to coachability, this means that when employees are high on stigma consciousness, they may experience disengagement by failing to seek out the developmental feedback needed to grow. In addition, in situations



where they do receive feedback, they may be less apt to be receptive to it and view it as helpful, and more likely to discount it, opting to not implement the feedback.

It is therefore predicted that:

*Hypothesis VI. Stigma consciousness negatively relates to employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback.*

Social identity threat is expected to mediate the relationship between stigma consciousness and coachability behaviors. Individuals who anticipate being stereotyped and treated on the basis of their group membership (i.e., individuals holding high levels of stigma consciousness) are more likely to make appraisals of social identity threat as they typically hold heightened vigilance to threatening situations (Inzlicht et al., 2008; Major & O'Brien, 2005). For instance, research suggests that people high in stigma consciousness are more likely to perceive themselves as targets of discrimination (Pinel, 1999), more likely to expect negative treatment from others (Pinel, 2002), and more likely to interpret critical feedback as discriminatory (Pinel, 2005). Thus, stigma consciousness plays a role in whether or not individuals make appraisals of social identity threat. The higher levels of stigma consciousness an employee holds, or the more an employee anticipates being stereotyped or treated on the basis of their group membership, the more likely they are to perceive social identity threat. This increase in social identity threat is expected to negatively impact coachability behaviors such that employees will be less apt to seek out, be receptive to, and act on constructive feedback.

It is therefore predicted that:

*Hypothesis VII. Employee social identity threat appraisals mediate the relationship between stigma consciousness and employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being*

*receptive to, and acting on feedback. Specifically, the higher stigma consciousness employees perceive, the more likely they are to make appraisals of identity threat (HVIIa). This increase in employee social identity threat is expected to yield a decrease in employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback (HVIIb).*

In the following section, I propose a moderator to the model, the individual level variable of demographic status.

**Individual Variables: Demographic Status.** Racial and ethnic minorities experience the workplace through a different lens than their White counterparts (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2012). For example, Black American workers have been found to have significantly lower levels of happiness and overall satisfaction with work than Whites (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2012). Even within higher status and power positions such as managerial roles, Black workers report lower levels of perceived acceptance from their organizations, less job satisfaction, and feel as though they have little discretion within their jobs (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2012). Similar patterns exist for other racial/ethnic minorities, such as Latinos and Asian Americans, who have been shown to be less satisfied with their jobs and feel a decreased sense of belonging with their workplace (Hersch & Xiao, 2016; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2012).

These disparate experiences highlight minorities' particularly high stigmatization given their membership in a historically socially devalued group (Crocker et al., 1998). This devaluation, and assumption that they hold a devalued social identity which will impact how others treat them, puts minority group members at a particularly high risk of perceiving social identity threat. For instance, in a series of experimental studies, Belmi

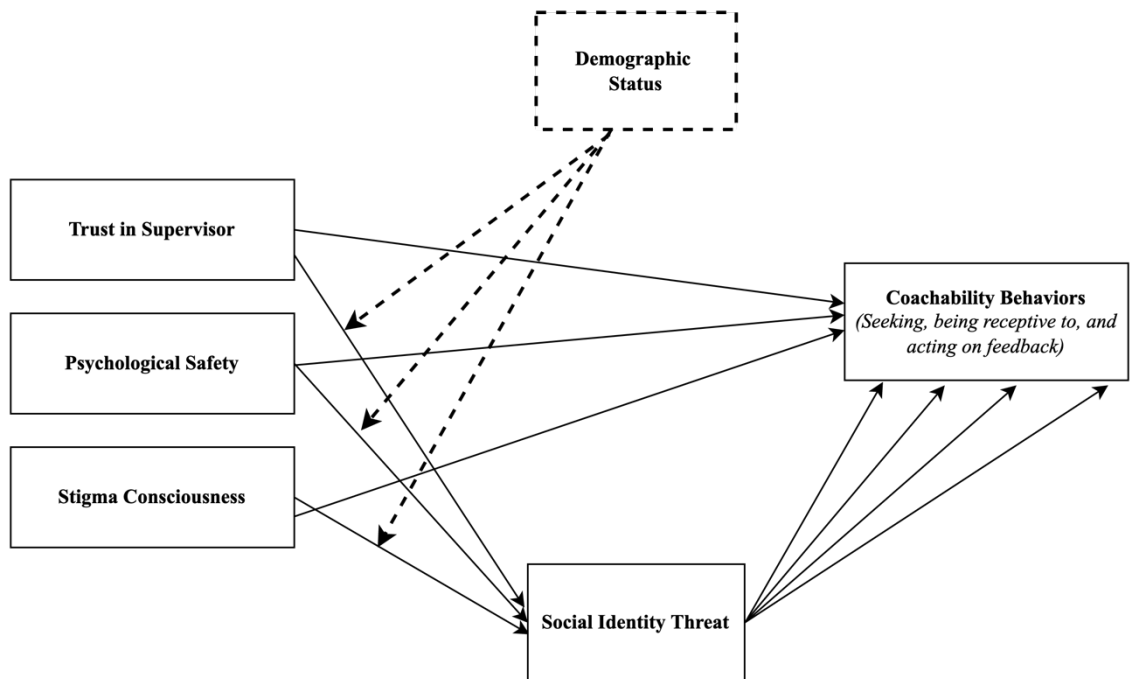
et al. (2015) found that while social identity threat can arise in individuals belonging to minority or majority groups, the minority group members experienced social identity threat to a greater degree. That said, the proposed relationships between trust in supervisor, psychological safety, and stigma consciousness are expected to be moderated by demographic status such that racial-ethnic minorities will experience a higher degree of social identity threat than racial-ethnic majorities. More specifically, racial-ethnic majorities are less likely to attribute a low trust or low psychologically safe environment as a threat to their identity, whereas racial-ethnic minorities are more apt to view these situations as identity threatening. Further, in conditions of high stigma consciousness, racial-ethnic majorities are still less likely to make appraisals of social identity threat than racial-ethnic minorities. It is therefore predicted:

*Hypothesis VIII. Employees' identification as members in racial-ethnic minority groups moderates the relationship between trust in supervisor and social identity threat. Specifically, racial-ethnic minority group members are more likely to make appraisals of social identity threat than racial-ethnic majority group members in the case of low trust in supervisor.*

*Hypothesis IX. Employees' identification as members in racial-ethnic minority groups moderates the relationship between psychological safety and social identity threat. Specifically, racial-ethnic minority group members are more likely to make appraisals of social identity threat than racial-ethnic majority group members in the case of low psychological safety.*

*Hypothesis X. Employees' identification as members in racial-ethnic minority groups moderates the relationship between stigma consciousness and social identity*

*threat. Specifically, racial-ethnic minority group members are more likely to make appraisals of social identity threat than racial-ethnic majority group members in the case of high stigma consciousness.*



*Figure 1.* Hypothesized model. This figure illustrates the path relationships between trust in supervisor, psychological safety, stigma consciousness, social identity threat, and coachability behaviors, with demographic status as a moderator between the predictors (i.e., trust in supervisor, psychological safety, stigma consciousness) and the mediator (i.e., social identity threat).

### Rationale

Coachability is exhibited by an individual's willingness and ability to seek out, be receptive to, and act on feedback (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021). Given that focal individuals must seek out this development from others, there are likely heavy social-psychological

influences at play. One social-psychological phenomenon, social identity threat, or the threat that one is being perceived on the basis of their membership in a particular group, is expected to impact coachability (Steele et al., 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). When individuals perceive social identity threat, they're likely to disengage, shifting their attention away from development and towards managing or coping with the threat. Subsequently, social identity threat may keep individuals from putting themselves out there to seek out, be receptive to, and act on feedback. Thus, social identity threat is expected to negatively impact coachability.

Furthermore, social identity threat is expected to be either prompted or hindered by certain contextual and individual variables (Steele et al., 2002). For instance, it is expected that the more trust an employee feels towards their supervisor, the less likely they are to perceive social identity threat, and the more likely they are to engage in coachability behaviors. Similarly, it is expected that the more psychologically safe a work environment is, the less likely individuals are to perceive social identity threat, and the more likely they are to engage in coachability behaviors. Conversely, it is expected that the more stigma conscious an individual is, the more likely they are to perceive social identity threat, and the less likely they are to engage in coachability behaviors.

These relationships between trust in supervisor, psychological safety, stigma consciousness, and social identity threat and coachability are expected to operate differently for racial-ethnic minorities (Belmi et al., 2015; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2012). For one, it is expected that although trust and psychological safety may minimize social identity threat, racial-ethnic minority group members will still experience a degree of social identity threat, specifically to a much larger degree than majority members. In

addition, stigma consciousness will prompt greater appraisals of social identity threat for minority members than majority group members.

### **Statement of Hypotheses**

Hypothesis I. Employee social identity threat appraisals negatively relate to employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback.

Hypothesis II. Trust in supervisor positively relates to employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback.

Hypothesis III. Employee social identity threat appraisals mediate the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback. Specifically, the more employees trust their supervisor, the less likely they are to make appraisals of social identity threat (HIIIa).

This decrease in employee social identity threat is expected to yield an increase in employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback (HIIIb).

Hypothesis IV. Psychological safety positively relates to employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback.

Hypothesis V. Employee social identity threat appraisals mediate the relationship between psychological safety and employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback. Specifically, the more employees perceive psychological safety, the less likely they are to make appraisals of social identity threat (HVa). This decrease in employee social identity threat is expected to yield an increase in employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback (HVb).

Hypothesis VI. Stigma consciousness negatively relates to employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback.

Hypothesis VII. Employee social identity threat appraisals mediate the relationship between stigma consciousness and employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback. Specifically, the higher stigma consciousness employees perceive, the more likely they are to make appraisals of social identity threat (HVIIa). This increase in employee social identity threat is expected to yield a decrease in employee coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on feedback (HVIIb).

Hypothesis VIII. Employees' identification as members in racial-ethnic minority groups moderates the relationship between trust in supervisor and social identity threat.

Specifically, racial-ethnic minority group members are more likely to make appraisals of identity threat than racial-ethnic majority group members in the case of low trust in supervisor.

Hypothesis IX. Employees' identification as members in racial-ethnic minority groups moderates the relationship between psychological safety and social identity threat.

Specifically, racial-ethnic minority group members are more likely to make appraisals of identity threat than racial-ethnic majority group members in the case of low psychological safety.

Hypothesis X. Employees' identification as members in racial-ethnic minority groups moderates the relationship between stigma consciousness and social identity threat.

Specifically, racial-ethnic minority group members are more likely to make appraisals of

identity threat than racial-ethnic majority group members in the case of high stigma consciousness.

## **Method**

### **Participants and Design**

Data was sourced from Prolific, an online crowdsourcing research platform that sources high-quality participants, providing researchers quality data while ethically rewarding, sourcing, and handling participants. Participants are compensated on a case-by-case basis, with Prolific calculating appropriate compensation based on time and effort spent on surveys (e.g., \$6.50-\$15.00/hour), ensuring fair participant treatment and reward. Further, Prolific provides a wide variety of pre-screening filter controls (e.g., employment, demographic status, education level) to ensure researchers are able to adequately source participants within unique study parameters. In the current examination, participants were rewarded at a rate of \$12.00/hr and recruited on the basis of currently working in an organization which utilizes coaching and feedback practices as a means of employee development and holding a minimum education level of a college degree (e.g., Bachelor's Degree)

The initial participant pool included 203 participants. Of this pool, two participants failed the manipulation check, and three other participant responses were eliminated for failing to respond to at least 85% of the study items. After eliminating respondents with substantial missing responses and/or failed manipulation checks, the total participant pool for this study was 198. Of the sample, 63.6% of the participants identified as racial-ethnic minorities ( $n = 126$ ), and 36.4% identified as racial-ethnic majorities ( $n = 72$ ). Further, 54.5% ( $n = 108$ ) identified as male, 42.9% ( $n = 85$ ) identified



as female, >1.0% (n = 1) identified as trans female/trans woman, and 1% (n = 2) identified as genderqueer/gender non-conforming. See Table 1 for a full breakdown of demographic statistics.

## **Procedure**

This data collection effort occurred through the management consultancy firm who agreed to provide data for this dissertation. Specifically, there was a data sharing agreement in place between myself (i.e., the principal investigator) and the management consultancy firm granting full, unlimited access to the data once collection was complete.

Participants were invited to participate in the study online through an email link from Prolific, which directly filters and sources participants. Participants provided informed consent by selecting “agree to participate” in the email invitation, which directed them to the online questionnaire on the Prolific platform. Each participant then completed an online questionnaire, with 51 total items related to this study (Appendix H). The study items consisted of demographic questions and the following measures: coachability behaviors (i.e., feedback seeking, feedback receptivity, feedback implementation), social identity threat, trust in supervisor, psychological safety, and stigma consciousness.

## **Measures**

**Coachability Behaviors.** As coachability is defined as an individual’s willingness and ability to seek out, be receptive to, and implement constructive feedback (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021), it was assessed through participants’ self-report on the three key measures: feedback seeking (Dahling et al., 2012), feedback receptivity (Ryan et al., 2000), and feedback implementation (Facteau et al., 1995). Each of these three scores

were averaged to create a composite score of coachability behaviors, with higher scores representing higher coachability behaviors. Reliability coefficients and descriptive statistics were calculated for each scale (see Appendix A for items).

***Feedback seeking.*** Feedback seeking was measured using Dahling et al.'s (2012) feedback seeking scale. The measure consists of six items scored on a 5-point scale, with responses ranging from 1 = Very infrequently, to 5 = Very frequently. Sample items include "I seek feedback on my performance after assignments" and "I ask for my superior's opinion of my work." Scores were averaged across the six items to represent employees' levels of feedback seeking behaviors, with higher scores indicating more feedback seeking.

***Feedback receptivity.*** Feedback receptivity was measured using Ryan et al.'s (2000) receptivity to feedback scale. The original scale is framed towards managerial reports of coachee behaviors, and was adapted to reflect coachee self-reports. The measure consists of six items scored on a 5-point scale, with responses ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree, to 5 = Strongly agree. Sample items include "I accept feedback presented to me" and "I make a lot of excuses during feedback interviews," (*reverse coded*). Scores were averaged across the six items to represent employees' levels of feedback receptivity, with higher scores indicating more receptivity to feedback.

***Feedback implementation.*** Feedback implementation was measured using Facticeau et al.'s (1995) perceived transfer of training scale. The measure consists of four items scored on a 5-point scale, with responses ranging from 1 = Very infrequently, to 5 = Very frequently. Sample items include "I apply the skills/learning principles discussed during coaching interactions in a way that improves my productivity" and "I change my

job behavior in order to be consistent with the content I discuss during coaching interactions.” Scores were averaged across the four items to represent employees’ levels of feedback implementation, with higher scores indicating higher propensity to implement feedback.

**Psychological Safety.** Psychological safety refers to employees’ belief that their work context is safe for risk taking (e.g., openly questioning or challenging a historical/standard approach to work) (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Psychological safety was continuously measured using Edmondson’s (1999) team psychological safety measure. The measure consists of six items scored on a 7-point scale, with responses ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree, to 7 = Strongly agree. Sample items include “It is safe to take a risk on this work team” and “If you make a mistake on this work team, it is often held against you.” Scores for psychological safety were averaged across the six items, with higher scores indicating higher levels of psychological safety (see Appendix B for items).

**Trust in Supervisor.** Trust in supervisor is the extent to which an employee holds positive expectations regarding their supervisor’s ability, benevolence, and integrity (Basit, 2017; Mayer & Davis, 1999; Mayer et al., 1995). Trust in supervisor was measured using Mayer and Davis’s (1999) ability, benevolence, and integrity-based trust measure. The measure consists of sixteen items scored on a 5-point scale, with responses ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree, to 5 = Strongly agree. Sample ability-based trust items include “My supervisor is very capable of performing their job” and “I feel very confident about my supervisor’s skills.” Sample benevolence-based trust items include “My supervisor will go out of their way to help me” and “My needs and desires are very

important to my supervisor.” Sample integrity-based trust items include “I never have to wonder whether my supervisor will stick to his/her word” and “I like my supervisor’s values.” Scores for ability-based trust were averaged across the six items, scores for benevolence-based trust were averaged across five items, and scores for integrity-based trust were averaged across five items with higher scores indicating higher levels of trust in supervisor on each respective dimension. Further, each of these sub-scale scores were averaged to create a composite trust score, with higher scores representing higher levels of overall trust in supervisor (see Appendix C for items).

**Stigma Consciousness.** Stigma consciousness is the extent to which an individual anticipates being negatively stereotyped and treated by others on the basis of his or her membership in a particular group (Pinel, 1999). This construct was measured through Pinel’s (1999) stigma consciousness measure. The measure consists of ten items scored on a 7-point scale, with responses ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree, to 7 = Strongly agree. Sample items include “My racial/ethnic background does not influence how people act with me” (*reverse coded*) and “I never worry that my behaviors will be viewed as stereotypical of my race/ethnicity,” (*reverse coded*). Scores were averaged across ten items, with higher scores indicating higher levels of stigma consciousness (see Appendix D for items).

**Social Identity Threat.** Social identity threat is an individual’s concern that they are being perceived by others through the lens of membership in a particular group. This dissertation specifically examined individuals’ concern that they are being perceived by others through the lens of their racial/ethnic background (i.e., racial/ethnic based social identity threat). Social identity threat was measured using Belmi and colleague’s (2015)

social identity threat appraisal measure adapted from Cohen and Garcia (2005). The measure consists of five items scored on a 7-point scale, with responses ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree, to 7 = Strongly agree. Sample items include “At work, I worry that people will draw conclusions about me, based on what they think about my racial group” and “I often feel that people’s evaluations of my performance at work are affected by my race.” Scores were averaged across the five items to represent employees’ perceived levels of social identity threat, with higher scores indicating more social identity threat (see Appendix E for items).

**Demographic Status.** Racial-ethnic minority status was identified through participants’ self-report using the demographic scale provided by Prolific, adapted from the 2020 US Census (Appendix F). Minority identification was dummy coded, with 0 representing racial-ethnic minorities (i.e., participants indicating belonging in any racial/ethnic group aside from “White/Caucasian”), and 1 representing racial-ethnic majorities, or Whites (i.e., participants indicating belonging in the “White/Caucasian” racial/ethnic group). Specifically, the “White/Caucasian” response option was considered as identifying as “White” or within a racial-ethnic majority group. Conversely, any response option aside from solely selecting “White/Caucasian” was considered “Non-White” or within a racial-ethnic minority group, which includes “African,” “Black/African American,” “Caribbean,” “East Asian,” “Latino/Hispanic,” “Middle Eastern,” “Native American or Alaskan Native,” “South Asian,” “Black/British,” “Romani/Traveller,” “South East Asian,” and “Mixed.” “Mixed” was coded as a racial-ethnic minority as participants are subsumed to identify with one or more of the response options, all of which represent racial-ethnic minority groups aside from the

“White/Caucasian” option, and identifying with at least one racial-ethnic minority group qualifies as racial-ethnic minority membership in this study.

In addition to the demographic status question, an additional item was asked as a manipulation check to ensure appropriate qualification in either a racial-ethnic minority or Whites group. Specifically, participants were asked “Do you identify as a racial-ethnic minority in the US?” Two participants were discarded due to indicating racial-ethnic minority membership in the first demographic question but answering no to the manipulation check question. This suggests that generally, this study’s coding of racial-ethnic majorities and minorities worked well. In other words, the majority of participants considered themselves a minority or majority group member as qualified by the study’s demographic coding parameters.

**Additional Variables.** Though not a formal part of the proposed model, additional variables of interest include gender identity and tenure organizational (Appendix G). Specifically, gender identity was measured by participant self-report of gender identity. Tenure was measured by participant self-report of how long they have been employed at their current organization.

## **Results**

Descriptive analyses were run for demographic variables (see Table 1). The means and standard deviations of the primary variables are displayed in Table 2.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics*

Demographic Variable	n	Percentage
Sex		
Male	111	56.1%
Female	87	43.9%
Gender Identity		
Male	108	54.5%
Female	85	42.9%
Trans male/trans man	0	0%
Trans female/trans woman	1	>1.0%
Genderqueer/gender non-conforming	2	1.0%
Prefer not to say	2	1.0%
Race/ethnicity		
Black/African American	24	12.1%
Caribbean	2	1.0%
East Asian	21	10.6%
Latino/Hispanic	28	14.1%
Middle Eastern	3	1.5%
Mixed	30	15.2%
Native American or Alaskan Native	4	2.0%
South Asian	10	5.1%
South East Asian	4	2.0%
White/Caucasian	72	36.4%
Demographic Status		
Racial-ethnic minority	126	63.6%
White	72	36.4%

Table 1 continued

*Descriptive Statistics*

Demographic Variable	n	Percentage
<b>Organizational Tenure</b>		
Less than 2 months	6	3.0%
2-4 months	6	3.0%
5-6 months	6	3.0%
7-12 months	4	2.0%
1-2 years	26	13.1%
2-5 years	48	24.2%
More than 5 years	67	33.8%
Don't know	1	0.5%



Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations of the Primary Variables*

Variables	<u>Total Sample</u> (n = 198)		<u>Racial-ethnic</u> <u>minority</u> (n = 126)		<u>White</u> (n = 72)	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Trust in Supervisor – Ability <sup>a</sup>	5.9	1.2	6.0	1.1	5.8	1.4
Trust in Supervisor – Benevolence <sup>a</sup>	5.2	1.3	5.2	1.3	5.2	1.3
Trust in Supervisor – Integrity <sup>a</sup>	5.4	1.3	5.4	1.2	5.3	1.4
Trust in Supervisor – Composite	5.5	1.1	5.5	1.0	5.4	1.2
Psychological Safety <sup>a</sup>	3.9	0.7	3.9	0.7	3.9	0.7
Stigma Consciousness <sup>a</sup>	2.7	0.7	2.8	0.7	2.6	0.7
Social Identity Threat <sup>a</sup>	2.1	1.1	2.2	1.1	1.9	1.1
Coachability – Feedback Seeking <sup>b</sup>	3.4	1.2	3.5	1.1	3.3	1.2
Coachability – Feedback Receptivity <sup>b</sup>	4.0	0.5	4.0	0.4	3.9	0.5
Coachability – Feedback Implementation <sup>b</sup>	3.7	0.8	3.7	0.8	3.8	0.7
Coachability – Composite	3.7	1.2	3.7	1.1	3.6	1.2

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Trust in supervisor, psychological safety, stigma consciousness, and social identity threat measures were scored on a 7-point scale, with higher scores representing higher levels on each respective variable. <sup>b</sup> Feedback seeking, feedback receptivity, and feedback implementation measures were scored on a 5-point scale, with higher scores representing higher levels on each respective variable.

## Measure Quality

To evaluate the quality of measures in this study, I calculated the internal consistency reliability for each scale. I also utilized confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) on each scale to ensure the factor structures previously established fit appropriately on the current dataset.

**Reliability.** To determine internal consistency reliability, I calculated omega total ( $\omega_t$ ) and omega hierarchical coefficients ( $\omega_h$ ). The omega coefficient was chosen given its superiority to alpha. Specifically, Cronbach's alpha is associated with internal consistency inflation and attenuation issues which omega compensates for (Dunn et al., 2014). Thus, omega total was utilized to estimate the total reliability of each single-construct scale, and omega hierarchical was utilized to estimate the reliability of the general, overarching factor for the multi-dimensional scales in this study (i.e., Trust Composite, Coachability Behavior Composite) (Flora, 2020).

The internal consistency reliability of all measures in this dissertation ranged from acceptable to strong, with the exception of one scale, feedback receptivity, which exhibited questionable reliability. I address this and describe the scale reliabilities for each measure in the following sections. Table 3 lists the reliability estimates for each scale.

**Coachability Behaviors.** To assess employee coachability behaviors, three measures were utilized: feedback seeking (Dahling et al., 2012), feedback receptivity (Ryan et al., 2000), and feedback implementation (Faction et al., 1995). Omega total ( $\omega_t$ ) ranged from 0.60 to 0.78. Specifically, omega total ( $\omega_t$ ) for feedback seeking was 0.78, feedback receptivity was 0.60, and feedback implementation was 0.70. Thus, feedback

seeking and feedback implementation exhibited acceptable to good reliability, while feedback receptivity exhibited marginally acceptable or questionable reliability. This questionable reliability for the feedback receptivity scale (Ryan et al., 2000) might stem from the measure's referent. Previous utilizations of the scale were framed from other-report, whereas this study framed the items as self-report, and individuals may be less apt to answer items pertaining to their to their receptivity to feedback in a true, authentic manner (e.g., I make a lot of excuses in feedback interviews). However, omega hierarchical ( $\omega_h$ ) for the composite coachability score, including each of the three preceding scales, was 0.70. This suggests good reliability for the overall coachability composite, and thus supports the utilization of this operationalization.

***Psychological Safety.*** Edmondson's (1999) scale was used to evaluate psychological safety. Omega total ( $\omega_t$ ) was 0.69. Thus, reliability calculations for psychological safety suggest acceptable fit.

***Trust in Supervisor.*** Trust in supervisor was assessed using Mayer and Davis's (1999) ability, benevolence, and integrity-based trust measure. Given that this scale is multidimensional, I calculated internal consistency on each scale dimension (i.e., ability, benevolence, and integrity), as well as the overall measure (i.e., trust composite). Omega total ( $\omega_t$ ) for the three scale dimensions ranged from 0.73 to 0.80, suggesting good reliability. Further, omega hierarchical ( $\omega_h$ ) for the overall measure was 0.72, suggesting good reliability for composite trust measure.

***Stigma Consciousness.*** To evaluate stigma consciousness, Pinel's (1999) stigma consciousness measure was utilized. Omega total ( $\omega_t$ ) was 0.76. Thus, the stigma consciousness measure exhibited good reliability.

***Social Identity Threat.*** Social identity threat was measured using Belmi and colleague's (2015) social identity threat appraisal measure adapted from Cohen and Garcia (2005). Omega total ( $\omega_t$ ) was 0.76. The social identity threat measure therefore exhibited good reliability.

Table 3

*Scale Reliability for Study Measures*

Variable / Scale	Omega Total	Omega Hierarchical
Trust in Supervisor - Ability	0.80	-
Trust in Supervisor - Benevolence	0.74	-
Trust in Supervisor - Integrity	0.73	-
Trust in Supervisor - Composite	-	0.72
Psychological Safety	0.69	-
Stigma Consciousness	0.76	-
Social Identity Threat	0.76	-
Coachability - Feedback Seeking	0.78	-
Coachability - Feedback Receptivity	0.60	-
Coachability - Feedback Implementation	0.70	-
Coachability - Composite	-	0.70

*Note.* n = 198

**Factor Analysis.** To confirm the factor structures of each measure from this dissertation, I ran confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs). The following statistics were calculated to examine and report model fit: Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). CFI and TLI evaluate and compare the specified

model's fit to the baseline or independence model, and researchers suggest scores above 0.90 indicate acceptable fit, whereas scores above 0.95 suggest good fit (Kline, 2015). For RMSEA, an absolute fit index, scores below 0.08 indicate good fit (Kline, 2015). SRMR, which assesses exact fit using the square-root of the difference between the sample covariance matrix and the hypothesized covariance matrix, indicates good fit with values under 0.08 (Klein, 2015). Multiple fit statistics (e.g., CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SRMR) were utilized to take a holistic approach to examining factor structures (Schreiber et al., 2006). The CFA findings for each scale can be found in Table 4 and are further described in the following section.

***Coachability Behaviors.*** Coachability was operationalized in this study as an average composite score of the three coachability measures: feedback seeking (Dahling et al., 2012), feedback receptivity (Ryan et al., 2000), and feedback implementation (Fecteau et al., 1995). Specifically, the composite coachability behavior score was calculated by averaging scores on each of the three measures. Fit indices for the three separate measures signal good fit (see Table 4). Further, CFA results for the composite coachability score signal good model fit: CFI = 0.988, TLI = 0.980, RMSEA = 0.062, SRMR = 0.081. These findings support the operationalization of coachability as combination of the three behaviors of seeking, receiving, and implementing constructive feedback (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021).

***Psychological Safety.*** The psychological safety measure (Edmondson, 1999) exhibited acceptable fit. Specifically, the fit indices represent poor to good fit: CFI = .0945, TLI = 0.908, RMSEA = 0.103, SRMR = 0.048. The CFI and TLI scores signal

acceptable fit while the RMSEA indicate poor fit. However, the SRMR indicates good fit. Re-examining the omega total of 0.69, acceptable fit for the factor structure is concluded.

***Trust in Supervisor.*** Trust in supervisor was operationalized in this study as an average composite score of Mayer and Davis' (1999) three subscales of trust, ability, benevolence, and integrity. Specifically, the three subscale scores were averaged to represent an overall trust in supervisor score. Each subscale of trust (i.e., ability, benevolence, and integrity) exhibited good fit (see Table 4). Further, the overall composite score exhibits good fit: CFI = 0.977, TLI = 0.972, RMSEA = 0.061, SRMR = 0.042. In conclusion, the factor structure for the trust in supervisor measure is supported.

***Stigma Consciousness.*** The CFA results for the stigma consciousness measure (Pinel, 1999) indicated poor to acceptable fit. Specifically, the fit indices were: CFI = 0.911, TLI = 0.881, RMSEA = 0.109, SRMR = 0.059. The CFI and SRMR indicate acceptable fit, while the TLI and RMSEA indicate poor fit. However, referring to the omega total of 0.76, the factor structure for this measure is confirmed.

***Social Identity Threat.*** The social identity threat measure (Belmi et al., 2015) exhibited poor to good fit. Specifically, the CFA results were: CFI = 0.968, TLI = 0.936 acceptable, RMSEA = 0.178, SRMR = 0.031. The TLI indicates acceptable fit and the RMSEA indicates poor fit. However, the CFI and SRMR indicate good fit. The omega total of 0.76 for this measure suggests that overall, this measure's factor structure is supported.

Table 4  
*CFA Results for Study Measures*

Variable / Scale	df	$\chi^2$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Trust in Supervisor - Ability	9	0.039	0.993	0.988	0.070	0.014
Trust in Supervisor - Benevolence	2	0.369	0.992	0.985	0.075	0.019
Trust in Supervisor - Integrity	5	0.507	1.000	1.002	0.000	0.015
Trust in Supervisor - Composite	87	0.000	0.977	0.972	0.061	0.042
Psychological Safety	9	0.001	0.945	0.908	0.103	0.048
Stigma Consciousness	27	0.000	0.911	0.881	0.109	0.059
Social Identity Threat	5	0.000	0.968	0.936	0.178	0.031
Coachability - Feedback Seeking	9	0.017	0.988	0.980	0.079	0.020
Coachability - Feedback Receptivity	9	0.012	0.951	0.918	0.083	0.045
Coachability - Feedback Implementation	2	0.590	1.000	1.006	0.000	0.008
Coachability - Composite	101	0.000	0.956	0.948	0.062	0.081

*Note.* n = 198

Based on the confirmatory factor analyses and overall reliability findings, I moved forward with hypothesis testing utilizing all measures, associated items, and operationalizations. The correlations between all study variables are listed in Table 5.

Table 5  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Primary Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Trust in Supervisor – Ability	4.2	0.9	-														
2. Trust in Supervisor – Benevolence	3.7	0.9	0.62**	-													
3. Trust in Supervisor – Integrity	3.8	0.9	0.73**	0.78**	-												
4. Trust in Supervisor – Composite	3.9	0.8	0.86**	0.90**	0.92**	-											
5. Psychological Safety	3.9	0.7	0.40**	0.58**	0.71**	0.68**	-										
6. Stigma Consciousness	2.7	0.7	-0.22*	-0.19	-0.16	-0.21	-0.38**	-									
7. Social Identity Threat	2.1	1.1	-0.19	-0.18	-0.13	-0.19	-0.29**	0.51**	-								
8. Coachability – Feedback Seeking	3.4	1.2	0.25*	0.31**	0.25*	0.30**	0.30**	-0.08	-0.08	-							
9. Coachability – Feedback Receptivity	4.0	0.5	0.29**	0.19	0.20	0.25*	0.38**	-0.28**	-0.34**	0.21*	-						
10. Coachability – Feedback Implementation	3.7	0.8	0.30**	0.33**	0.34**	0.35**	0.32**	-0.21	-0.20	0.25*	0.20*	-					
11. Coachability – Composite	4.7	1.6	0.29*	0.31**	0.24*	0.30**	0.30**	-0.08	-0.07	0.85**	0.23*	0.25*	-				
12. Age	36.7	11.5	0.04	0.08	0.20	0.12	0.11	-0.03	-0.06	-0.07	0.02	0.01	-0.07	-			
13. Tenure <sup>a</sup>	3.7	1.6	-0.03	-0.01	-0.05	-0.03	-0.05	0.06	0.09	-0.05	0.03	0.03	0.10	-0.12	-		
14. Gender <sup>b</sup>	-	-	0.11	0.10	0.18	0.15	0.13	-0.02	-0.02	0.03	0.14	0.03	0.03	0.13	0.01	-	
15. Demographic Status <sup>c</sup>	-	-	0.09	0.03	0.02	0.05	-0.03	-0.12	-0.13	0.08	0.04	-0.05	0.08	-0.28*	-0.06	-0.09	-

Note. <sup>a</sup>Tenure was calculated in years. <sup>b</sup>Gender was dummy coded: 0 = female, 1 = male. <sup>c</sup>Demographic status was dummy coded: 0 = racial-ethnic minority, 1 = white. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$



## Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypothesized model, I utilized structural equation modeling (SEM). SEM is commonly utilized to test and analyze theoretical assumptions pertaining to the complex relationships between variables (Hoyle, 2011; Kline, 2015). Thus, it is particularly relevant for the current model given it provides a means to model multivariate phenomena.

**Model Comparison.** Given my moderated mediation hypotheses, I started by testing and comparing three different SEM models, which combined their respective measurement and structural models in each, with varying constraints. Specifically, I first tested a pure, full group constraint model, or a pure mediation model where all group parameters were set to equal. Then, I tested an unconstrained model in which all parameters could freely vary per group (e.g., regression estimates, latent means, loadings). Finally, to test specific first stage moderation (HVIII-HX), I tested a model that constrains regressions to vary, aside from the interaction effect of demographic status, to see if this model was significantly different than allowing parameters to vary freely by group.

To determine whether or not there were significant differences between models, I ran a chi-squared difference test, which indicated that the second, unconstrained model was significantly different than the first, full constraint model,  $\chi^2(2516, 198) = 4273.3, p < 0.001$ . In examining the fit indices, the pure full group constraint model exhibited better fit than the second, unconstrained model, suggesting moderation to be unlikely. The final model that constrains regressions to vary aside from the interaction term of demographic status was not significantly different from the unconstrained model, therefore suggesting

that first stage moderation was not supported,  $\chi^2(2517, 198) = 4274.3, p = 0.334$ . In examining these three models and their subsequent differences, I determined that the pure model with all group parameters set to equal best fit the data, and used this model as the basis for interpreting my data.

**Full SEM Model.** After evaluating each model and determining that the pure, full group model exhibited optimal fit, I tested the full SEM model, including the regressions and relationships for each path within the proposed model.

The fit indices elicit some questions regarding model fit: CFI = 0.886, TLI = 0.880, RMSEA = 0.059, SRMR = 0.076. The CFI and TLI results indicate slightly below acceptable fit, whereas the RMSEA and SRMR indicate good fit. Differing CFI/TLI and SRMR/RMSEA indices may result given they evaluate the magnitude of the model's fit from varying theoretical perspectives (Lai & Green, 2006). Further, researchers note that sampling variability may prompt low or bad CFI/TLI values, but high or good SRMR/RMSEA values (Lai & Green, 2006). Thus, the nature of responses within this study may not effectively represent other samples or the true, overall population. The differing fit indices for this model may therefore appear as a result of the nature of the data rather than the model itself.

To observe the relationships between observed variables, I examined the relationships within the path portion of the SEM model. Specifically, I evaluated the standardized regression coefficients for each path estimated in the model (Table 6) and calculated the indirect and total effects to examine the proposed mediations. Using Baron and Kenny's (1986) four steps to mediation, for each relationship I first examined if the predictor variables significantly impacted the outcome variable of employee coachability

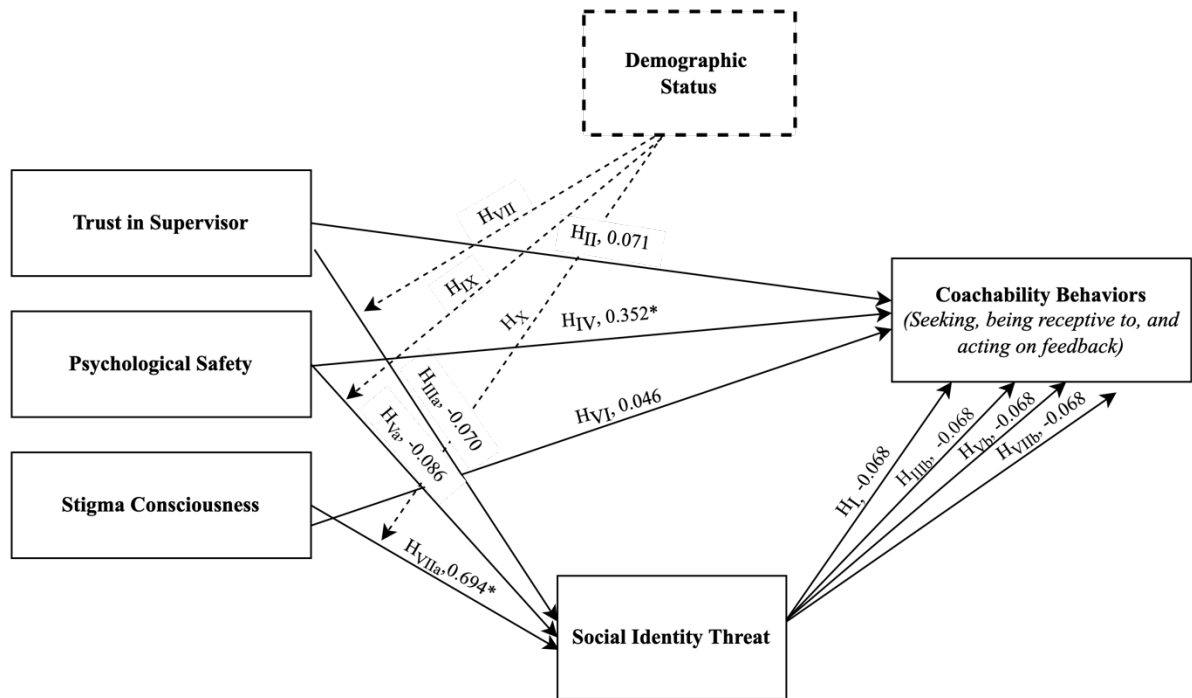
behaviors. Next, I examined if the predictor variables significantly affected the mediator variable of employee social identity threat appraisals (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Then, I examined the degree to which the mediator variable of social identity threat appraisals significantly impacted the outcome variable of employee coachability behaviors (Baron & Kenny, 1986). See Figure 2 for a visualization of the hypothesized model, including the regression coefficients for the estimated relationships.

Table 6

*Regression Results for Estimated Paths*

Regression	$\beta$	SE	95% CI	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Social Identity Threat</b>					
Trust in Supervisor	-0.070	0.136	[-0.338, 0.198]	-0.517	0.605
Psychological Safety	-0.086	0.141	[-0.364, 0.192]	-0.615	0.539
Stigma Consciousness	0.694	0.108	[0.481, 0.907]	6.451	0.000**
<b>Coachability</b>					
Social Identity Threat	-0.068	0.055	[-0.176, 0.040]	-1.224	0.221
Trust in Supervisor	0.071	0.090	[-0.107, 0.249]	0.792	0.428
Psychological Safety	0.352	0.110	[0.135, 0.569]	3.203	0.001**
Stigma Consciousness	0.046	0.069	[-0.090, 0.182]	0.663	0.507

*Note.*  $\beta$  represents standardized regression estimates, \*\*  $p < .01$



*Figure 2.* Hypothesized model with standardized regression coefficients. This figure illustrates the results of the path relationships between trust in supervisor, psychological safety, stigma consciousness, social identity threat, and coachability behaviors, with demographic status as a moderator.

Hypothesis I, predicting that employee social identity threat appraisals negatively relate to employee coachability behaviors, was not fully supported ( $\beta = -0.068, p = 0.221$ ). While the direction or negative impact of social identity threat appraisals on employee coachability behaviors was in line with the hypothesis, the data was not significant.

Hypothesis II, predicting that trust in supervisor positively relates to employee coachability behaviors, was not fully supported ( $\beta = 0.071, p = 0.428$ ). Directionally, the

positive impact of trust in supervisor on employee coachability behaviors was supported, but the data did not show a significant impact.

Hypothesis III, predicting that employee social identity threat appraisals mediate the relationship between trust in supervisor and employee coachability behaviors, was not supported as the main effect of trust in supervisor (i.e., the predictor variable) on employee coachability behaviors (i.e., the outcome variable) was not significant (HIII) ( $\beta = 0.071, p = 0.428$ ). Additionally, both the total effect of trust in supervisor on coachability behaviors ( $0.076, p = 0.400$ ), and the indirect effect of trust in supervisor on coachability behaviors through social identity threat appraisals, were not significant ( $0.005, p = 0.646$ ).

Hypothesis IV, predicting that psychological safety positively relates to employee coachability behaviors, was supported. Specifically, the regression results ( $\beta = 0.352, p = 0.001$ ), indicate a significant, positive relationship between psychological safety and employee coachability behaviors.

Hypothesis V, predicting that employee social identity threat appraisals mediate the relationship between psychological safety and employee coachability behaviors, was not fully supported as the effect of psychological safety (i.e., the predictor variable) on social identity threat (i.e., the mediator variable) was not significant ( $\beta = -0.086, p = 0.539$ ). In addition, the total effect of psychological safety on coachability behaviors was significant ( $0.357, p = 0.001$ ), while the indirect effect of psychological safety on coachability behaviors through social identity threat was not significant ( $0.006, p = 0.558$ ). This indicates that while psychological safety was a significant predictor of

employee coachability behaviors, this relationship was not due to social identity threat appraisals.

Hypothesis VI, predicting that stigma consciousness negatively relates to employee coachability behaviors, was not supported ( $\beta = 0.046, p = 0.507$ ).

Hypothesis VII, predicting that employee social identity threat appraisals mediate the relationship between stigma consciousness and employee coachability behaviors, was not fully supported as the main effect of stigma consciousness (i.e., the predictor variable) on employee coachability behaviors (i.e., the outcome variable) was not significant (HVI) ( $\beta = 0.046, p = 0.507$ ). Further, both the total effect of stigma consciousness on coachability behaviors ( $-0.001, p = 0.980$ ) and the indirect effect of stigma consciousness on coachability behaviors through social identity threat were not significant ( $-0.047, p = 0.234$ ). However, the regression results showed a significant, positive relationship between stigma consciousness and social identity threat appraisals ( $\beta = 0.694, p = 0.000$ ). This indicates that while stigma consciousness and social identity threat appraisals were not significant predictors of employee coachability behaviors, stigma consciousness remains a critical driver of employee social identity threat appraisals.

Hypotheses VIII-X, predicting that employees' identification as members in racial-ethnic minority groups moderates the relationship between trust in supervisor (HVIII), psychological safety (HIX), stigma consciousness (HX), and social identity threat were not supported given the lack of significant differences between the third, constrained model I tested (i.e., model that constrained regressions to vary aside from the interaction term of demographic status) and the second, unconstrained model (i.e., model

that in which all parameters could freely vary per group)  $\chi^2(2517, 198) = 4274.3, p = 0.334$ .

### **Discussion**

This study investigated how certain individual variables and contextual features within an organization impact employee coachability behaviors (i.e., seeking, being receptive to, and acting on constructive feedback). Complimenting social identity threat theory (Steele et al., 2002), I examined the impact of such individual and contextual variables on employee coachability behaviors, mediated by social identity threat, or a threat to the self-aspect derived from membership in a particular social group or category (Steele et al., 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Specifically, I theorized that the contextual variables of trust in supervisor and psychological safety would positively relate to employee coachability behaviors through decreased social identity threat, whereas the individual level variable of stigma consciousness would negatively relate to employee coachability behaviors through increased social identity threat. In essence, trust in supervisor and psychological safety were expected to decrease employee appraisals of social identity threat, which would prompt greater employee coachability behaviors. Conversely, stigma consciousness was expected to increase employee appraisals of social identity threat, which would prompt less employee coachability behaviors.

Further, the relationships between the predictor variables (i.e., trust in supervisor, psychological safety, and stigma consciousness) and the mediator of employee social identity threat appraisals were expected to be moderated by demographic status. More specifically, racial-ethnic minorities were theorized to make more appraisals of social identity threat than Whites (i.e., racial-ethnic majorities) in situations of low trust in

supervisor, low psychological safety, and high stigma consciousness. Overall, racial-ethnic minorities were expected to experience significantly more social identity threat than Whites.

This study did not find support for this moderated mediation model.

**Demographic Status.** Firstly, in comparing SEM models, there were not significant differences in social identity threat appraisals between racial-ethnic minorities and Whites. This is surprising given that historically, racial-ethnic minority groups have been shown to experience a significantly larger degree of social identity threat compared to racial-ethnic majority groups (Belmi et al., 2015). The lack of significant differences between racial-ethnic minorities and Whites in the current study may stem from the study approach, specifically with respect to the methodology for examining social identity threat. The current study measured social identity threat sans a manipulated condition, whereas previous research has typically manipulated a specified condition to examine social identity threat (Belmi et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2019). For example, Belmi and colleagues (2015) presented participants in the threat condition with a written article on ethnic differences in math aptitude, noting that White Americans perform at a significantly higher level than Black Americans on intellectual aptitude tests, and such differences may be attributable to genetics. Manipulating social identity threat by constructing a threatening condition like such may be necessary to parse out any probable differences across groups. However, the lack of significant differences in social identity threat appraisals across racial-ethnic minorities and Whites may illuminate on a broader issue attributable to study design, specifically with respect to the social identity threat construct.



**Social Identity Threat.** Examining social identity threat as a mediator within the model, results indicated a negative, non-significant effect on employee coachability behaviors. In line with the hypothesis and research that showcases the negative motivational effects (e.g., disengaging from a task) of social identity threat (Major & O'Brien, 2005), social identity threat was shown to decrease employee coachability behaviors. While directionally aligned with hypotheses, social identity threat did not have a notably significant impact on employee coachability behaviors. Further, descriptive analyses note low variability in the social identity threat measure ( $M = 2.1$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ), meaning that the vast majority of individuals within this study, regardless of demographic status, exhibited low appraisals of social identity threat. This absence or relatively low presence of social identity threat overall may be due to the contextualized nature of social identity threat, such that individuals were not apt to perceive social identity threat within the context of this study given the lack of a specified, manipulated condition designed to be identity-threatening.

Another consideration for the low manifestation of social identity threat centers more theoretically around the complex, multifaceted nature of identity. For example, social identity threat refers to an individual's concern that they are being perceived by others through the lens of a particular identity (Steele et al., 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 2004), in this case their racial-ethnic identity, yet individuals can hold several identities (e.g., gender, religion, work identities) at once with varying degrees of strength (Corrington et al., 2020; Resnicow et al., 2009). In the case that participants in this study did not strongly identify with their racial-ethnic background, it is unlikely that they would feel subsequent threat towards this identity, and the negative effect of social identity threat on

employee coachability behaviors would be decreased. Given the complex nature of identity, it is possible that social identity threat may not have been the appropriate identity-related social-psychological construct to examine in isolation in the context of the current study, with respect to explaining how individual (e.g., stigma consciousness) and contextual variables (e.g., psychological safety, trust in supervisor) impact employee coachability behaviors.

**Psychological Safety.** One prediction that found support was the positive effect of psychological safety on employee coachability behaviors. This finding is aligned with the literature that notes psychological safety, or the belief held by employees that their work context is safe for risk taking (e.g., providing dissenting opinions, trying out new approaches without the fear of being punished for possible failure), motivates employees to seek out feedback and view feedback as useful for their development, which further increases the probability of feedback implementation (van der Rijt et al., 2012). The more psychologically safe the work environment is, the more likely employees are to engage in the coachability behaviors of seeking, being receptive to, and acting on constructive feedback. Although psychological safety showed a significant, positive effect on coachability behaviors, it was not significantly related to employee social identity threat appraisals. That said, psychological safety proved to be critical in predicting employee coachability behaviors, but this relationship was not explained by social identity threat, further supporting the notion that social identity threat may not have been the optimal social-psychological variable to elucidate the impact of the predictor variables on employee coachability behaviors within this study.

**Trust in Supervisor.** Results indicated a positive, non-significant effect of the predictor variable of trust in supervisor on employee coachability behaviors. While directionally aligned with research that found support for the positive effect of trust in supervisor on employee feedback seeking (Chuang et al., 2014) and employees' perceived value of feedback (Choi et al., 2014), study results did not indicate a significant impact of trust in supervisor on employee coachability behaviors. Furthermore, congruent with the literature noting that trust mitigates against concerns related to social identity threat (Johnson et al., 2019), trust in supervisor was negatively related to social identity threat. However, this relationship between trust in supervisor and social identity threat was not significant.

These non-significant results may result from the study design, with specific respect to the sample, such that data was collected from a wide variety of individuals spanning several different industries, organizations, and unique work contexts. For example, it is important to consider that some participants may work in team-based, flat organizations where feedback is often exchanged horizontally (e.g., peer to peer) vs. vertically (e.g., supervisor to direct report) (Miles & Snow, 1992; Walker & Lorsch, 1968). Given that increasingly popular structure, trust in supervisor may not have been as important for encouraging employee coachability behaviors as much as knowledge sharing, or the degree to which peers share ideas, information, and feedback or suggestions with one another (Srivastava et al., 2006). Further, in these flatter organizations, affect-based intra-team trust, or the degree to which individuals perceive their teammates and/or peers to be concerned about their welfare, may have been more important than trust in supervisor in mitigating against social identity threat concerns (de

Jong et al., 2014; McAllister, 1995; Marks et al., 2001). The importance of trust in supervisor may be too context-specific, requiring a true, isolated organizational sample with controlled parameters (e.g., vertical structure, performance management system with high emphasis on supervisor to direct report relationship in development) to examine how specifically it impacts outcomes such as social identity threat and employee coachability behaviors.

**Stigma Consciousness.** In examining the predictor variable of stigma consciousness, results showed a positive, non-significant impact of stigma consciousness on employee coachability behaviors. These results are directionally contrary to the hypotheses and literature on stigma consciousness that notes individuals who are highly stigma conscious, or highly anticipative of being negatively stereotyped and treated by others on the basis of their group membership, disengage from performance contexts (e.g., stop seeking out feedback or attempting to learn, attribute constructive feedback to discrimination vs. help from others) (Major & Schmader, 1998; Major et al., 1998; Pines, 2004). Again, such results may be indicative of limitations to the study design and sample. For instance, in order to detect stigma consciousness in individuals, a stigma-inducing situation or manipulation may have been needed. However, in line with research that found stigma consciousness plays a critical role in whether or not individuals make appraisals of social identity threat (Inzlicht et al., 2008; Major & O'Brien, 2005), results indicated support for the prediction that stigma consciousness positively relates to social identity threat. Thus, while the mediator of social identity threat was relatively weak at predicting employee coachability behaviors and may have been too contextualized to

effectively assess through the study parameters, stigma consciousness remained critical in impacting appraisals of social identity threat.

### **Practical Implications**

This study demonstrated that contextual features within an organization can foster employee coachability behaviors (i.e., seeking out, being receptive to, and acting on feedback). Specifically, psychological safety was shown to be a key driver of employee coachability behaviors, confirming the pattern in the feedback literature that notes psychologically safe environments prompt such behaviors (van der Rijt et al., 2012). This is especially important for practitioners to consider, as fostering psychologically safe environments can not only prompt more coachability behaviors in employees, but also promote the distal, positive impact of coachability behaviors on performance (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021).

To foster psychological safety in organizations, leaders should encourage employees to share dissenting opinions, discuss preliminary “half-baked” ideas, and frame errors as a means for learning and development (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson, 2018). By communicating to employees that it is safe to disagree, speak up during meetings, and make mistakes for the sake of learning, managers subsequently create a psychologically safe environment in which employees feel safe to take risks and learn from their experiences and one another. Further, research notes the importance of reinforcement and leadership modeling in developing psychologically safe environments (Edmondson, 2018; O’Donovan & McAuliffe 2020; O’Leary, 2016). For instance, leaders should find avenues to share their own dissenting, novel opinions, and/or publicly praise those employees who do the same. Through exhibiting and reinforcing the

behaviors indicative of psychologically safe environments, leaders signal to employees that these behaviors are important and expected, further serving to encourage these behaviors in employees and build a psychologically safe workplace conducive of employee coachability behaviors.

Although not significant, the study did indicate a positive relationship between trust in supervisor and employee coachability behaviors. That said, the significant moderate correlation between trust in supervisor and employee coachability behaviors ( $r = .30, p = < .01$ ) suggests that the relationships between supervisors and employees, specifically the degree of trust employees have in supervisors, can drive or inhibit employee coachability behaviors. Again, this is an important consideration for practitioners given the evidence noting the significant, positive influence of employee coachability behaviors on performance outcomes (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021).

To increase trust in organizations, leaders should seek to behave consistently in alignment with their stated and enacted values (Palanski et al., 2015). For instance, if a leader states they value collaboration and idea sharing, they should seek to exhibit consistent behaviors such as visibly collaborating with others (e.g., asking peers or team members for their input on a project), encouraging idea sharing within meetings (e.g., asking a team member who hasn't spoken up yet to contribute), and displaying receptivity to others' thoughts (e.g., thanking team members for their ideas). Further, research emphasizes the importance of leaders following through on commitments to build trust (Palanski et al., 2015). For example, if a leader commits to following up on an employee's question regarding an upcoming technology change, the leader should seek to fulfill that commitment by seeking out the necessary information and coming back to the

employee with an answer. Lastly, it is important to note that interpersonal justice, or the degree to which employees are treated with politeness, dignity, and respect plays a critical role in fostering trust (Colquitt et al., 2001; Colquitt & Rodell, 2011). Leaders should seek to respect and treat employees well, exhibiting fairness, using kind language, and showing sincere concern regarding employee welfare. By behaving in consistent alignment with stated values, following through on commitments, and seeking to treat employees well, leaders can foster the trust within their teams essential to promoting employee coachability behaviors.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

One possible limitation lies in the isolated utilization of social identity threat as a mediating variable to explain the relationship between the contextual (i.e., psychological safety, trust in supervisor) and individual (i.e., stigma consciousness) variables and employee coachability behaviors. Racial-ethnic based social identity threat refers to an individual's concern that they are being perceived by others through the lens of their racial-ethnic identity (Steele et al., 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). However, individuals can hold several identities at once with varying degrees of strength (Corrington et al., 2020; Resnicow et al., 2009). For instance, an individual may identify as Black, but the strength of their identity as Black, or the degree to which they are attached to their membership in this group, could be relatively low (Corrington et al., 2020; Phinney, 2000; Resnicow et al., 2009). Rather, they may be more attached to other identities (e.g., work roles, religious backgrounds), and hold less identity strength towards their Black racial-ethnic identity. This varying, fluid nature of identity strength could have implications for social identity threat, such that when individuals have lower identity

strength, they would be less likely to be concerned about being perceived through the lens of that identity, or less likely to make appraisals of social identity threat, thus minimizing the negative impact of social identity threat on employee coachability behaviors. Furthermore, from a racial-ethnic minority lens, in the case that participants did not strongly identify with their membership in a racial-ethnic minority group, the expected differences in social identity threat between minority group members and Whites would be subsequently minimized. However, it is important to re-emphasize that the vast majority of participants in this study, regardless of racial-ethnic identity, exhibited low appraisals of social identity threat.

The overall low variability in social identity threat across all participants ( $M = 2.1$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ) further insinuates that social identity threat may be too perceptually based and contextualized to detect and measure within the parameters of this study. For example, social identity threat typically manifests within identity-threatening situations, and studies have historically constructed such situations within experimental manipulations to measure or detect social identity threat (e.g., providing women with a description of a test as an assessment of quantitative/math ability, something stereotypically identity threatening for women) (Schmader & Johns, 2003). The current examination was absent of any purposefully identity-threatening manipulations, which may have posed a challenge to measuring and detecting social identity threat. Thus, even if participants did hold high identity strength to their racial-ethnic identity, social identity threat may have been too abstract to detect, requiring a prime or specific identity-threatening situation to prompt a measurable degree of social identity threat.



Other possible limitations center around the study design and methodology, with specific respect to the sample and frame of measures. Data was collected via Prolific, with participants selected on the basis of currently working in an organization which utilizes coaching and feedback practices as a means of employee development, and holding a minimum education level of a college degree. Given these selection parameters, the sample was highly random, with data coming from individuals who work variety of organizations, characterized by widely varying contextual features (e.g., cultures, employee development programs, performance management systems, promotion structure), and spanning across several industries. Thus, I was not able to control and/or account for the specific organizational contexts that individuals work in.

Similarly, the measures within the study were each framed as self-report, with participants reporting on their own perceptions of their coachability behaviors. The perceptual nature of such ratings poses a risk to a number of responses biases (e.g., social desirability, consistency) (Podsakoff et al., 2012). This can compromise the integrity of the data as the extracted findings may be biased or contaminated (Podsakoff et al., 2012). For example, in assessing scale quality, the feedback receptivity scale (Ryan et al., 2000) exhibited marginally acceptable or questionable reliability ( $\omega_t = 0.60$ ), contrary to previous examinations which indicate good reliability. However, previous utilizations of the scale were framed from an other-report, with supervisors providing ratings of their employees' feedback receptivity (Ryan et al., 2000; Weiss & Merrigan, 2021). The self-report framing of this measure may have contaminated study results as individuals may be hesitant to respond to items pertaining to their feedback receptivity in a true, unbiased

manner. Thus, the overarching self-report survey design approach poses as a limitation of the current study.

First, to account for the unique complexities of individuals' working environments, future research should consider studying employee coachability with a controlled sample in an isolated setting (e.g., one organization). The current examination utilized a random sample, with participants working in a number of different organizations, and thus was unable to control for the unique environments in which those individuals worked. While isolated examinations pose a risk to the generalizability of results, it is important for researchers to wholly consider how each feature within an organization operates and interacts with another to impact employee coachability. Further, in measuring employee coachability behaviors, future research may consider utilizing both a "self" (e.g., employee report of their own behavior) and "other" (e.g., supervisor report of employee behavior) referent to control for biased responses in self-report of coachability behaviors, as well to examine any possible incongruence between self and other ratings of coachability behaviors.

From a theoretical perspective, future research may seek to broaden the proposed model of how individual level variables and contextual features within an organizational environment impact employee coachability specifically through identity-related perceptions. In the current examination, social identity threat was the primary identity-related construct, posed as the mediator between the individual and contextual variables and employee coachability behaviors. However, social identity threat exhibited substantially low variance and did not have a significant impact on employee coachability behaviors, suggesting that examining social identity threat alone may not be sufficient

enough to explore how identity, and threats to identity, relate to coachability. Thus, it would be advantageous for future research to incorporate different measures that tap into the nuances of identity. For example, researchers can measure ethnic identity strength, which evaluates the degree to which individuals are attached to a particular identity (Phinney, 2000; Resnicow et al., 2009), or identity salience, which describes the attention someone is ascribing to a certain identity. By understanding how strongly an individual is attached to their identity, and/or how much they attune to this identity, researchers can possibly parse out the nuances of identity needed to extract a more holistic understanding of individuals' identity-related experiences, including what situations may prompt appraisals of threat and how this threat relates to employee coachability.

Research may also seek to take a qualitative approach to more comprehensively examine which individual level variables and contextual features within an organizational environment impact employee coachability behaviors. Results from the current examination suggested a significant, positive relationship between psychological safety and employee coachability behaviors, yet trust in supervisor, stigma consciousness, and social identity threat yielded insignificant results. It is possible that there are other features both on an individual and organizational level that impact employee coachability, such as learning goal orientation (i.e., individual) or leader modeling of coachability behaviors (i.e., contextual). However, the highly social nature of coachability and the wide variety of variables that may affect whether or not an employee engages in coachability behaviors calls for a broader, more exploratory approach. Researchers can conduct semi-structured interviews to parse out the employee

experience, and what specifically within their environment either hinders or promotes employee coachability.

Further, future research can explore this qualitative approach to explore the unique experiences of racial-ethnic minorities in the workplace to better understand how coachability may operate for such individuals. The current study yielded no significant differences between racial-ethnic minorities and Whites in appraisals of social identity threat, yet historically, racial-ethnic minority groups have experienced disparate work outcomes compared to majority groups (e.g., Black American workers reported significantly lower levels of job satisfaction than White American workers) (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2012). In addition, recent events have triggered a major call to action for both researchers and practitioners with respect to understanding and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within the workplace (Pennington, 2020). Exploring the unique experiences of racial-ethnic minorities in the workplace, with specific respect to what hinders or promotes employee coachability behaviors in these groups, can help fill a void in both the research and applied world. For example, as employee coachability behaviors have been shown to directly, positively relate to outcomes such as promotability, examining group differences in such behaviors, and what may prompt such differences, can possibly illuminate on any gaps or racial disparities within roles (e.g., lack of racial-ethnic minority representation in senior leadership) (Weiss & Merrigan, 2021). Thus, it is important for future research to assess any possible differences in coachability behaviors across racial-ethnic groups, and what types of antecedent variables either promote or hinder coachability behaviors.

## **Conclusion**

This study showed the significant impact of psychological safety on employee coachability behaviors. While not significant, trust in supervisor was also positively related to employee coachability behaviors, suggesting that individuals may engage in more coachability behaviors under trusting conditions with their supervisor. In addition, a lack of significant differences in social identity threat across racial-ethnic minorities and Whites (i.e., racial-ethnic majorities), overall low variability in social identity threat, and an insignificant impact of social identity threat on employee coachability behaviors suggests that there may be other identity-related constructs to examine when assessing how individual level variables and contextual features within an organizational environment impact employee coachability through identity-related perceptions and experiences. Future research could consider expanding the proposed model to include additional identity related measures (e.g., identity strength) and/or take a qualitative approach to comprehensively explore the contextual features within an organization that may impact employee coachability as well as to parse out the unique experiences of racial-ethnic minorities and how employee coachability may manifest differently for these groups.

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Appendix A: Coachability Measures

***Feedback Seeking.*** (Dahling et al., 2012)

1. I seek feedback on my performance after assignments
2. I solicit critiques from supervisors
3. I seek out feedback on my performance during assignments
4. I ask for supervisor opinion of my work
5. I ask for information about what is required for me to function successfully on the job
6. I ask how well I am performing on the job

*Scored on a 5-point scale. 1 = Very infrequently, 5 = Very frequently*

***Feedback Receptivity.*** (Ryan et al., 2000)

1. I tend to deny the existence of concerns at work (R)
2. I recognize potential negative consequences of my behavior at work
3. I express great concern about feedback I receive at work (R)
4. I am receptive to feedback I am provided with at work
5. I accept the feedback presented to me at work
6. I make a lot of excuses during feedback interviews (R)

*Scored on a 5-point scale. 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree*

***Feedback Implementation.*** (Facteau et al., 1995)

1. My behavior has improved following coaching interactions
2. I apply the skills/learning principles discussed during coaching interactions in a way that improves my productivity
3. I transfer the skills/principles learned during coaching interactions back to my job
4. I have changed my job behavior in order to be consistent with the content discussed during coaching interactions

*Scored on a 5-point scale. 1 = Very infrequently, 5 = Very frequently*

Appendix B: Psychological Safety Measure

***Psychological Safety.*** Edmondson (1999)

1. If you make a mistake on this work team, it is often held against you. (R)
2. Members of this work team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
3. People on this work team sometimes reject others for being different. (R)
4. It is safe to take a risk on this work team.
5. It is difficult to ask other members of this work team for help. (R)
6. Working with members of this work team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

*Scored on a 7-point scale. 1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree*

Appendix C: Trust Measure

**Trust.** Mayer & Davis (1999)

***Ability.***

1. My supervisor is very capable of performing their job.
2. My supervisor is known to be successful at the things s/he tries to do.
3. My supervisor has a lot of knowledge about the work that needs done.
4. I feel very confident about my supervisor's skills.
5. My supervisor has specialized capabilities that can increase our team's performance.
6. My supervisor is well qualified.

***Benevolence.***

1. My supervisor is very concerned about my welfare.
2. My needs and desires are very important to my supervisor.
3. My supervisor would not knowingly do anything to hurt me.
4. My supervisor really looks out for what is important to me.
5. My supervisor will go out of their way to help me.

***Integrity.***

1. My supervisor has a strong sense of justice.
2. I never have to wonder whether my supervisor will stick to his/her word.
3. My supervisor's actions and behaviors are not very consistent. (R)
4. I like my supervisor's values.
5. Sound principles seem to guide my supervisor's behavior.

*Scored on a 7-point scale. 1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree*

Appendix D: Stigma Consciousness Measure

***Stigma Consciousness.*** (Pinel, 1999)

1. Stereotypes about my race/ethnicity have not affected me personally. (R)
2. I never worry that my behaviors will be viewed as stereotypical of my race/ethnicity. (R)
3. When interacting with people of other racial/ethnic groups, I feel like they interpret all my behaviors in terms of the fact that I belong to a different racial/ethnic group.
4. Most people in racial/ethnic groups different than my own don't judge other people on the basis of their race/ethnicity. (R)
5. My racial/ethnic membership does not influence how people of other racial/ethnic backgrounds act with me. (R)
6. I almost never think about my racial/ethnic background when I interact with individuals of other racial/ethnic backgrounds. (R)
7. My racial/ethnic background does not influence how people act with me. (R)
8. Most people have more racist thoughts against my racial/ethnic group than they actually express.
9. I often think that people are often unfairly accused of being racist against my racial/ethnic group. (R)
10. Most people have a problem viewing my people in my racial/ethnic group as equals.

*Scored on a 7-point scale. 1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree*

Appendix E: Social Identity Threat Measure

***Identity Threat Appraisals.*** Belmi et al. (2015)

1. I often feel that people's evaluations of my performance at work are affected by my race.
2. At work, I worry that people will draw conclusions about my competence based on my racial group.
3. At work, I worry that people will draw conclusions about me, based on what they think about my racial group.
4. At work, I worry that other people will draw conclusions about me based on stereotypes about my race.
5. At work, I worry that people will draw conclusions about my race based on the performance of other people in my racial group

*Scored on a 7-point scale. 1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree*

Appendix F: Demographic Status Measure

***Demographic Scale. (Prolific; Adapted from US Census, 2020)***

**Please indicate your race/ethnicity:**

- African: \_\_\_\_\_
- Black/African American: \_\_\_\_\_
- Caribbean: \_\_\_\_\_
- East Asian: \_\_\_\_\_
- Latino/Hispanic: \_\_\_\_\_
- Middle Eastern: \_\_\_\_\_
- Mixed: \_\_\_\_\_
- Native American or Alaskan Native: \_\_\_\_\_
- South Asian: \_\_\_\_\_
- White/Caucasian: \_\_\_\_\_
- Romani/Traveller: \_\_\_\_\_
- South East Asian: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (Please indicate): \_\_\_\_\_



Appendix G: Additional Variables

***Gender Identity.***

**Please indicate which of the following describes your gender identity:**

- Male: \_\_\_\_\_
- Female: \_\_\_\_\_
- Trans male/trans man: \_\_\_\_\_
- Trans female/trans woman: \_\_\_\_\_
- Genderqueer/gender non-conforming: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say: \_\_\_\_\_

***Tenure.***

**Please indicate how long you have been employed at your organization:**

- Less than 1 year: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1-3 years: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3-5 years: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5+ years: \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix H: Study Questionnaire

The following items contain phrases describing your behaviors. Your responses will be anonymous and remain confidential, so please answer honestly to the best of your ability. Use the rating scale to indicate how frequently you engage in the following behaviors.

	<b>Very Infrequently</b>			<b>Very Frequently</b>	
1. I seek feedback on my performance after assignments	1	2	3	4	5
2. I solicit critiques from supervisors	1	2	3	4	5
3. I seek out feedback on my performance during assignments	1	2	3	4	5
4. I ask for supervisor opinion of my work	1	2	3	4	5
5. I ask for information about what is required for me to function successfully on the job	1	2	3	4	5
6. I make a lot of excuses during feedback interviews	1	2	3	4	5
7. My behavior has improved following coaching interactions	1	2	3	4	5
8. I apply the skills/learning principles discussed during coaching interactions in a way that improves my productivity	1	2	3	4	5
9. I transfer the skills/principles learned during coaching interactions back to my job	1	2	3	4	5

Use the rating scale to indicate how much you agree with each statement regarding your work experiences.

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>			<b>Strongly Agree</b>	
1. I tend to deny the existence of concerns at work	1	2	3	4	5
2. I recognize potential negative consequences of my behavior at work	1	2	3	4	5
3. I express great concern about feedback I receive at work	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am receptive to feedback I am provided with at work	1	2	3	4	5
5. I accept the feedback presented to me at work	1	2	3	4	5
6. I make a lot of excuses during feedback interviews	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		
1. If you make a mistake on this work team, it is often held against you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Members of this work team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. People on this work team sometimes reject others for being different.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. It is safe to take a risk on this work team.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. It is difficult to ask other members of this work team for help.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Working with members of this work team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. My supervisor and I have a sharing relationship. We can both freely share our ideas, feelings, and hopes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I can talk freely to my supervisor about difficulties I am having at work and know that (s)he will want to listen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My supervisor and I would both feel a sense of loss if one of us was transferred and we could no longer work together.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. If I shared my problems with my supervisor, I know (s)he would respond constructively and caringly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I would have to say that my supervisor and I have both made considerable emotional investments in our working relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. My supervisor and I have a sharing relationship. We can both freely share our ideas, feelings, and hopes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. My supervisor approaches his/her job with professionalism and dedication.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Given my supervisor's track record, I see no reason to doubt his/her competence and preparation for the job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I can rely on my supervisor not to make my job more difficult by careless work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Most people, even those who aren't close friends of my supervisor, trust and respect him/her as a coworker.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17. Other work associates of mine who must interact with my supervisor consider him/her to be trustworthy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. If people knew more about my supervisor and his/her background, they would be more concerned and monitor his/her performance more closely.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Stereotypes about my race/ethnicity have not affected me personally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. I never worry that my behaviors will be viewed as stereotypical of my race/ethnicity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. When interacting with people of other racial/ethnic groups, I feel like they interpret all my behaviors in terms of the fact that I belong to a different racial/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Most people in racial/ethnic groups different than my own don't judge other people on the basis of their race/ethnicity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. My racial/ethnic membership does not influence how people of other racial/ethnic backgrounds act with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. I almost never think about my racial/ethnic background when I interact with individuals of other racial/ethnic backgrounds.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. My racial/ethnic background does not influence how people act with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Most people have more racist thoughts against my racial/ethnic group than they actually express.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I often think that people are often unfairly accused of being racist against my racial/ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Most people have a problem viewing my people in my racial/ethnic group as equals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I often feel that people's evaluations of my performance at work are affected by my race.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. At work, I worry that people will draw conclusions about my competence based on my racial group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. At work, I worry that people will draw conclusions about me, based on	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

what they think about my racial group.							
32. At work, I worry that other people will draw conclusions about me based on stereotypes about my race.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. At work, I worry that people will draw conclusions about my race based on the performance of other people in my racial group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Please indicate your race/ethnicity:**

- African: \_\_\_\_\_
- Black/African American: \_\_\_\_\_
- Caribbean: \_\_\_\_\_
- East Asian: \_\_\_\_\_
- Latino/Hispanic: \_\_\_\_\_
- Middle Eastern: \_\_\_\_\_
- Mixed: \_\_\_\_\_
- Native American or Alaskan Native: \_\_\_\_\_
- South Asian: \_\_\_\_\_
- White/Caucasian: \_\_\_\_\_
- Sephardic Jew: \_\_\_\_\_
- Romani/Traveller: \_\_\_\_\_
- South East Asian: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (Please indicate): \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate which of the following describes your gender identity:**

- Male: \_\_\_\_\_
- Female: \_\_\_\_\_
- Trans male/trans man: \_\_\_\_\_
- Trans female/trans woman: \_\_\_\_\_
- Genderqueer/gender non-conforming: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate how long you have been employed at your organization:**

- Less than 1 year: \_\_\_\_\_
- 1-3 years: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3-5 years: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5+ years: \_\_\_\_\_