

HESITANT AT THE HELM:
THE EFFECTIVENESS-EMERGENCE PARADOX OF RELUCTANCE TO LEAD

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ABSTRACT**HESITANT AT THE HELM:****THE EFFECTIVENESS-EMERGENCE PARADOX OF RELUCTANCE TO LEAD**

Danielle V. Tussing

Adam M. Grant

Although many individuals are motivated to lead, some also experience reservations about taking on leadership roles. In this dissertation, I introduce reluctance to lead and examine its impact on leader effectiveness and emergence. Drawing from the approach-inhibition theory of power, I hypothesize that reluctance to lead has a curvilinear relationship with leader effectiveness, such that leaders who are somewhat reluctant to lead are more effective than their non-reluctant or highly reluctant counterparts, in part because they engage in more empowering leadership behavior. A field study of leaders in hospital nursing units provides general support for this model, although reluctance to lead is associated with an increase in leader effectiveness only up to a small degree. However, in an experiment, I find that even slight reluctance to lead reduces leader emergence because reluctance is inconsistent with leader prototypes. Together, these studies reveal a paradox: those who are particularly well-suited to lead are less likely to become leaders. This work informs theory on the relationship between leader emergence and effectiveness, with implications for enabling qualified yet reluctant candidates to take the reins of leadership.

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CHAPTER 1

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Introduction

Across many societies, leadership is revered, romanticized, and socially valued (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). Holding a leadership position is equated with success (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005), and in many cases, leadership comes with decision making rights, higher income, and career advancement (Yukl, 2002). Furthermore, leaders are often granted considerable power and status, leading to interpersonal and reputational rewards at work (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Given these benefits, it is of little surprise that individuals are drawn toward leadership. Indeed, there is a growing body of research on individuals' motivations around leading others (e.g., Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). In line with prescriptions for leaders to be ambitious and confident (Nichols & Cottrell, 2014), motivation to lead is viewed as a critical leader quality (Amit, Lisak, Popper, & Gal, 2007; Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004). This desire to lead can be encouraged or reinforced by leadership development programs, college admissions processes that reward leadership experience, and career trajectory planning focused on upward advancement (Cain, 2017; Day, 2000).

In contrast to this emphasis on the pursuit of leadership, scholars have recently taken interest in understanding why some qualified individuals do not actually end up in leadership positions (e.g., Gino, Wilmuth, & Brooks, 2015; Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015). This research is often focused on gender and race, as organizational and social scientists recognize that women and minorities do not pursue leadership roles as readily as White

men, not only due to structural barriers, but also because they anticipate more negative outcomes should they end up in a position of power (Carton & Rosette, 2011; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Hernandez et al., 2016; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Ryan & Haslam, 2007; Zapata, Carton, & Liu, 2016). Other scholars have examined personality traits, finding that introverts do not opt into leadership roles as readily as extraverts given that leadership is a particularly social, and often public, process (Conner & Sparks, 2002; Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2011; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Pedersen, 1982). Nonetheless, there are many downsides and risks of leadership regardless of gender, race, and personality, and little research has examined how leader dynamics are impacted when individuals internalize these challenges. In this dissertation, I ask the question, *if those who are reluctant to lead nonetheless end up in a position of leadership, how do they perform on the job?* In line with Plato's wisdom that "...the State in which the rulers are most reluctant to govern is always the best and most quietly governed, and the State in which they are most eager, the worst" (Plato, circa 380 BC), reluctance to lead may be a resource for leaders.

Interestingly, feeling hesitant about leadership does not necessarily preclude individuals from leading. For example, although he greatly wanted to be involved, Martin Luther King, Jr. was reluctant to lead the Civil Rights Movement (Carson, 2014). At the time that the Montgomery Improvement Association was forming (an organization instrumental to the Montgomery Bus Boycott), he had just moved to the area and wanted to focus on his duties as a pastor, yet he was unanimously elected to lead the organization. It took him by surprise and was over before he could respond. In King's words, "It had happened so quickly that I did not even have time to think it through. It is

probable that if I had, I would have declined the nomination” (Carson, 1998: 56). Also, Sheryl Sandberg, current COO of Facebook, holds many reservations about leadership despite being highly motivated and ambitious. Her reluctance to lead has stemmed in part from self-doubt and fear that she was not qualified enough — also known as the “imposter syndrome” (Clance & Imes, 1978; Want & Kleitman, 2006) — along with concerns about work-family conflict (Sandberg, 2013). These examples demonstrate that successful leaders may have conflicting views toward leadership; although interested in leading, they may simultaneously experience reluctance to lead (that is, have reservations about taking the reins of power). This is supported by research on approach-avoidance conflict (Lewin, 1935; Miller, 1944) and ambivalence (Ashforth, Rogers, Pratt, & Pradies, 2014; Conner & Sparks, 2002; Fong & Tiedens, 2002), which suggests that the desire to lead can coexist with concerns that make people turn away from leadership opportunities.

Although factors that discourage people from leading, including personal commitments, concerns that one’s elevated status could harm interpersonal relationships, and self-doubt, are assumed to cause poorer leader performance (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2017; Kay & Shipman, 2014; Sandberg, 2013; Williams, 1999), in this dissertation I propose that reluctance to lead, up to a certain point, can actually enhance leader effectiveness. The approach-inhibition theory of power (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003) indicates that leaders often become disinhibited by increasing levels of power that accompany organizational advancement (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Anderson & Brown, 2010), leading to excessive risk-taking, overconfidence, and egocentrism (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Kipnis, 1972). By tempering leaders’ sense of power on the

job, reluctance to lead may mitigate these negative effects of power, enhancing leader effectiveness; yet very high levels of reluctance to lead may be a liability for leaders, causing them to be overly cautious or shirk their responsibilities. To explicate this curvilinear (inverted U-shaped) relationship, I examine empowering leadership behavior, arguing that because moderately reluctant leaders are less concerned with maintaining power over others, they may be more willing to share their authority with followers. However, based on implicit leadership theories, I predict that those who are even somewhat reluctant to lead are selected less often for leadership roles.

I test my hypotheses around leader effectiveness using a multi-source field study of hospital nurses in a rotating leadership position, as described in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I test my hypotheses pertaining to leader emergence using a leader selection experiment, and also include an exploratory study to examine how people respond differently to the notion of a reluctant leader based on the precise reason why someone hesitates to lead. Finally, in Chapter 4, I discuss the theoretical and practical implications of my research. Bringing together my field and lab studies, I find that small amounts of reluctance to lead can increase leader effectiveness, but higher levels of reluctance to lead hinder leader performance. The benefit brought about by slight reluctance to lead is in part explained by an increase in empowering leadership behavior directed toward one's followers. Despite these advantages, I also find that people tend to view the idea of a reluctant leader as problematic, clashing with the assertive, unwavering leader prototype. As a result, revealing a small degree of reluctance to lead dampens the likelihood of being selected to lead by others. Combined with the likelihood that those who are reluctant to lead are less likely to self-select into leadership positions in the first place,

this indicates that those who can make great leaders, because of their slight reluctance, are less likely to be leaders in the first place, which I refer to as the “effectiveness-emergence paradox” of reluctance to lead.

This dissertation contributes to scholarship on leader emergence, effectiveness, and identity. My research challenges the zeitgeist of ambition and confidence that are often seen as critical leadership qualities (Anderson, Brion, Moore, & Kennedy, 2012; Nichols & Cottrell, 2014), pointing out that some reluctance to lead can actually be a resource for leaders. Additionally, I enrich extant research by examining the leader effectiveness of individuals who are unlikely to become leaders, addressing an important but understudied issue of identifying factors that cause individuals to under-emerge as leaders relative to their potential (Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015). Put another way, to understand what makes leaders effective, scholars typically (and understandably) study the cognitions, actions, and performance of *actual* leaders. However, leaders do not typically represent a random sample of the larger population, especially at the upper echelons, in terms of their personality and motivations (Hiller & Hambrick, 2005; Mannor, Wowak, Bartkus, & Gomez-Mejia, 2015). As a result, less is known about whether those who tend not to be leaders have unique strengths that make them well-suited to lead. I address this gap by untangling leader emergence and effectiveness across different studies, including a particularly unique field setting in which one might expect greater variation in reluctance to lead (among actual leaders) than in most circumstances.

Finally, as I describe at the conclusion of this paper, investigating reluctance to lead provides fresh practical insights for leadership selection and development. Because reluctant leaders deviate from the leader prototype (Lord, De Vader, & Alliger, 1986),

organizations may pass over qualified individuals who experience reluctance to lead. By highlighting that ideal leaders may not pursue leadership opportunities as aggressively as others, this paper indicates that organizations may need to more deliberately identify high-potential, reluctant individuals for leadership development opportunities.

Reluctance to Lead

Traditionally, research on leader emergence put a strong emphasis on identifying traits and behaviors that led certain individuals to ascend into leadership roles or to appear most “leader-like” in a group (Ensari, Riggio, Christian, & Carslaw, 2011; Zaccaro, 2007). Chan and Drasgow (2001) enhanced our understanding of leader emergence by applying a motivational lens, placing greater emphasis on how individuals themselves may be more or less inclined to pursue leadership. They introduced motivation to lead, a trait-like construct that captures the degree to which individuals have the desire and ambition to be in positions of leadership (Chan, Rounds, & Drasgow, 2000). Motivation to lead is largely predicted by an individual’s leader self-efficacy, and those with high motivation to lead are seen as more “leader-like” by others (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Although there are grounds for a general, unidimensional motivation to lead construct (Chan et al., 2000; Waldman, Galvin, & Walumbwa, 2013), Chan and Drasgow (2001) found that people can be motivated to lead for a range of reasons, from intrinsic (they enjoy it) to social-normative (they feel a sense of duty and obligation). They also discovered that some individuals have a desire to lead regardless of the costs and benefits of leadership. Although this establishes that people vary in their sensitivity to the personal consequences of leadership, scholars have not thoroughly examined how

individuals' sensitivity to the downsides and risks of leadership influence their effectiveness if they end up in a position of power.

I introduce reluctance to lead as a psychological construct that captures one's general hesitation to be a leader. Although "reluctance" is sometimes equated with unwillingness, I define reluctance as having reservations or doubts about leadership (that is, being the leader of a given group or entity). As such, experiencing reluctance to lead does not always preclude someone from becoming a leader. Some may experience reluctance to lead chronically, whereas it may be induced for others through the circumstances of a given leadership role. Given the plethora of definitions and conceptualizations of leadership (Bass & Bass, 2008; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Pfeffer, 1977), reluctance to lead is most relevant (though not exclusively applicable) when there is a "centralized leadership structure" (DeRue, 2011: 134), including designated/formal leadership positions (e.g., CEO, team coach), positions that involve active management of subordinates (e.g., manager), and public roles (e.g., president). Moreover, experiencing reluctance to lead is different from low motivation to lead or amotivation, defined as "the relative absence of motivation" (Vallerand, 1997: 273). Amotivated individuals have little reason, intrinsic or extrinsic, to take a course of action or to pursue a given activity. In contrast, individuals who are motivated to lead may also have reason(s) to question whether they can or want to do the job.

Support for the coexistence of motivation to lead and reluctance to lead is rooted in extant work on approach-avoidance conflict. Lewin (1935) laid the foundation for this stream of research by noting that objects can possess not only positive qualities (pulling a person in) or negative qualities (pushing a person away), but can possess both attractive

and repulsive facets. Approach-avoidance conflict has thus been defined as a situation in which a given goal, option, or event has both desirable and undesirable features or consequences, rendering it appealing and unappealing at the same time (Chatterjee & Heath, 1996; Miller, 1944). This work indicates that people can have strong desires to pursue something and major reasons to hold back. Relatedly, ambivalence is defined as simultaneously holding positive and negative attitudes (Ashforth et al., 2014) or emotions (Fong, 2006; Rothman & Wiesenfeld, 2007) toward a given target. Further, ambivalence can be motivational in nature, characterized by the presence of conflicting goals (Fong & Tiedens, 2002; Grant, Nurmohamed, Ashford, & Dekas, 2011). Research on ambivalence indicates that there can be different causes for positive versus negative attitudes toward an object (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994), and that opposing attitudes/motivations do not necessarily “cancel” one another out or result in a neutral attitude or moderate level of motivation. In the words of Plambeck and Weber (2010: 691), “In contrast to the measurement of temperature, where warmer means less cold, a more positive evaluation does not automatically lead to a less negative evaluation.” This is also supported by the empirical independence of other seemingly “opposite” constructs such as humility and narcissism (Owens, Wallace, & Waldman, 2015), positive affect and negative affect (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), trust and distrust (Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998), and social support and social undermining (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002). Overall, the existing literatures on approach-avoidance conflict and ambivalence warrant the possibility that people can be motivated and ambitious but simultaneously hold reservations and doubts about leading.

Although related, reluctance to lead is also theoretically distinct from leader humility and narcissism. Humility is an interpersonal quality, meaning it is manifest through socially-oriented behaviors (Owens, Johnson, & Mitchell, 2013; Owens et al., 2015). These behaviors include (a) acknowledging personal limits, faults, and mistakes, (b) spotlighting others' strengths and contributions, and (c) modeling teachability (Owens & Hekman, 2012). A key difference between leader humility and reluctance to lead is that humility, as an interpersonal characteristic, is observed by others, whereas reluctance to lead refers to an individual's own orientation toward the leadership role that may be kept hidden from others. For example, leader humility is typically measured through observations made by subordinates (Owens et al., 2013, 2015), whereas reluctance to lead is arguably best assessed through self-report (akin to motivation to lead, i.e., Clemmons & Fields, 2011). In other words, whereas humble leader behaviors are transparent (Owens & Hekman, 2016), reluctance to lead may or may not be obvious to others. Also, just as humility is orthogonal to narcissism (Owens et al., 2015), being highly reluctant to lead does not necessarily guarantee that an individual not narcissistic. Narcissism is generally defined as "complex of personality traits and processes that involve[s] a grandiose yet fragile sense of self as well as a preoccupation with success and demands for admiration" (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006: 440-441). Indeed, narcissists enjoy having authority over others and tend to seek out leadership positions (Raskin & Terry, 1988), but it is possible that some shy away from leadership positions if they fear that the spotlight would "expose" their weaknesses, and possibly, if they feel that the role is beneath them.

Reluctance to lead also shares some conceptual similarities with the need for power (theoretically, they are expected to have an inverse relationship), but there are important distinctions, as the need for power may not always equate to low reluctance to lead. The power motive refers to a desire to impact and influence other people (Atkinson, 1958; McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982), and this aspiration can be paired with other goals that make leadership less appealing. For example, among power strivers, those with a simultaneous high affiliation/communion motive (who desire cooperative, harmonious relationships with others (Bakan, 1966; Barrick, Stewart, & Piotrowski, 2002; Heyns, Veroff, & Atkinson, 1958; Wiggins & Trapnell, 1996) may be reticent to lead out of fear of being disliked following tough decisions (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982).

Additionally, although power and leadership are often intertwined (Galinsky, Jordan, & Sivanathan, 2008), they are unique constructs, as one can be a leader without power, or have power without holding a formal leadership role. Moreover, power and leadership have very different social connotations, such that the former typically carries more negative associations than the latter. Whereas many would be careful in expressing their desire for power, in the United States, being a leader is highly valued (Burton, 2014). People are encouraged to be leaders from a young age (Patel, 2017), and advice on career advancement highlights the importance of being vocal and agentic about one's desire to lead (Sandberg, 2013). Also, I analyzed the top 50 business schools (according to the 2018 U.S. News and World Report), finding that 74% of their mission statements emphasize preparing students for leadership roles after graduation. Thus, people may downplay their desire for power out of concern to not appear power-hungry, yet at the

same time, people may also downplay their reluctance to lead due to social norms to accept a leadership position when it is granted to them.

Reluctance and the Approach-Inhibition Theory of Power

Should a reluctant individual end up in a position of power, I draw on the approach-inhibition theory of power (Keltner et al., 2003) to examine how reluctance to lead may affect leader behaviors. The approach-inhibition theory of power provides a comprehensive framework for understanding cognitive, affective, and behavioral effects of possessing (and lacking) power. Although power and leadership are distinct, leadership roles are typically positions of power — they grant individuals the authority to control resources and influence others (Hackman, 2002; Schneider, 2002) from a legitimate place in the organizational hierarchy (French & Raven, 1959). Further, when individuals step into leadership roles, they gain power relative to their prior status (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Galinsky et al., 2008); even when leadership roles have low absolute power, individuals are nonetheless likely to feel more powerful than they did in their previous position.

A key tenet of the approach-inhibition theory of power is that because power is associated with “reward-rich environments and freedom” (Keltner et al., 2003: 265), increased actual or felt power signals that the environment is less threatening and liberates individuals from social constraints, thus activating agentic, approach-related processes and decreasing inhibition and vigilance (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Fiske, 1993; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). Simply put, power disinhibits. As a result, feeling powerful is linked to a number of specific cognitive and behavioral outcomes (for a review, see Galinsky, Rucker, & Magee, 2015). For example, Anderson and Galinsky

(2006) found that priming individuals with a high-power mindset increased optimism, leading to increased risk-taking. Chen, Lee-Chai, and Bargh (2001) demonstrated that power-primed individuals were more likely to take action in line with their personal goals. Furthermore, in task-focused dyads, those who had power over their partner were more likely to express their true feelings (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002). Powerholders also engage in approach-oriented behaviors in an effort to maintain their control over other people and resources (Fiske & Morling, 1996; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977). As Tost, Gino, and Larrick (2013) observe, many outcomes of experiencing power ultimately hinder a leader's success on the job.

Reluctance to Lead and Leader Effectiveness

I argue that some reluctance to lead can be beneficial for individuals who become leaders. Whereas people generally become more approach oriented and less inhibited after taking on leadership roles (Anderson & Brown, 2010; Galinsky et al., 2008), reluctance to lead may act as a “check” against these tendencies by dampening leaders' sense of power. Thus, relative to leaders who have no reservations about standing at the helm, reluctant leaders should be less susceptible to the disinhibiting effects of power (i.e., less prone to overconfidence and less likely to devalue others). By tempering the effects of power, I predict that reluctance to lead can enhance leader effectiveness, although after a certain point, it may stifle leaders. According to Kaiser, Hogan, and Craig (2008: 98), leader effectiveness “concerns the effects leaders have on the performance of the teams for which they are responsible.” Thus, leaders are effective when the groups that they oversee have optimal processes and achieve their goals.

In general, leaders' experience of power can be problematic when "unchecked" by countervailing forces. As noted by Owens et al. (2015: 1205), "when leaders are given power, the traits that helped them to emerge as leaders in the first place may be the same traits that cause them to derail if these traits go unchecked." Ambition can cause leaders to pursue their own self-interests at the expense of others, leading to tunnel vision and suboptimal interpersonal outcomes (Smith & Galinsky, 2010). Tost et al. (2013) also found that leaders with a heightened sense of power exhibited more dominant behaviors (i.e., spent more time talking in group discussions), causing subordinates to feel that their perspectives were not valued. As a result, they limited information sharing and team performance suffered. Although some enactment of approach-oriented behaviors is important for leaders to be effective (Galinsky et al., 2008) the benefits of approach eventually satiate, and the costs of approach, minor at first, quickly materialize (Coombs & Avrunin, 1977). Therefore, problems arise when leaders have an excessive sense of power, and reluctance to lead may help counteract the negative effects of power, fostering leader effectiveness.

Further, power disinhibits leaders by causing overconfidence in decision making processes and reducing more systematic, deliberate modes of cognitive processing. As stated by Keltner et al. (2003: 274-275), "Studies using varied measures of power and social judgment consistently show that elevated power is associated with more automatic, less complex styles of reasoning." I argue that with increasing reluctance to lead, leaders should engage in more deliberation during decision making processes and be less prone to excessive risk-taking. Because they were unsure about leading in the first place, they should be more cautious on the job. In a similar vein, researchers have found that anxiety

can help buffer risk-taking tendencies among top executives (Mannor et al., 2015). Also, because reluctant leaders have doubts about being in charge of others, they should be more sensitive to how their actions affect their constituents. Increased vigilance brought on by reluctance to lead not only influences leaders' decision making, but it also may play a positive role in leaders' interpersonal cognitions and behaviors, such as reducing the use of stereotypes (Fiske, 1993). Overall, this tempered approach to leading among reluctant leaders is expected to enhance leader effectiveness.

Excessive reluctance, however, may be a liability for leaders. At high levels their uncertainty may cause leaders to become overly cautious, leading to decision paralysis (Hooijberg, Hunt, & Dodge, 1997). As the core of leadership entails facilitating efforts to achieve a goal (Yukl, 2002), high levels of reluctance to lead are likely to hinder goal pursuit (Ent, Baumeister, & Vonasch, 2012), ultimately harming performance of the group or team being led (Bass, 1990). Excessive reluctance to lead may cause leaders to avoid their responsibilities altogether, a type of passive, laissez-faire leadership (Bono & Judge, 2004). From a social standpoint, leaders are expected to be confident, especially in times of uncertainty (Nevicka, De Hoogh, Van Vianen, & Ten Velden, 2013), so extremely reluctant leaders may lose the trust of their followers, which is crucial for leader effectiveness (Hogan et al., 1994). As such, moderate to high reluctance to lead should be associated with a decrease, rather than increase, in leader effectiveness.

In summary, I propose that reluctance to lead has a curvilinear (inverted U-shaped) relationship with leader effectiveness. When individuals take on a position of power with some reluctance to lead, leaders can draw on the energizing effects of power, but their reluctance serves as a "check" against common leader tendencies like excessive

confidence, hubris, and insensitivity toward others. Indeed, Galinsky et al. (2008) describe effective leaders as those who are able to reap the psychological and behavioral benefits of power while mitigating the downsides. However, as too much reluctance can cause indecision and impede goal pursuit, high levels of reluctance should hinder leader performance.

Hypothesis 1: Reluctance to lead has a curvilinear (inverted U-shaped) relationship with leader effectiveness.

Continuing to draw on the approach-inhibition theory of power, I specifically focus on empowering leadership behavior to explicate how reluctance to lead affects leader performance.

Empowering Leadership Behavior

Empowering leadership behavior refers to actions in which leaders share their power and authority with subordinates (Vecchio, Justin, & Pearce, 2010), and thus is relevant to the approach-inhibition theory of power. As stated by Raub and Robert (2010: 1751), “As the word implies, ‘empowerment’ is inextricably linked with the notion of power.” Empowering leadership behavior leaves followers more psychologically empowered (Chen, Sharma, Edinger, Shapiro, & Farh, 2011) and is distinct from transformational leadership “in its specific focus on power sharing and the facilitation of self-leadership, autonomy, and independence among employees” (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014: 785). Scholars have identified four dimensions of empowering leadership behavior: (1) providing autonomy, (2) fostering participation in decision making, (3) expressing confidence in high performance, and (4) enhancing the meaningfulness of work (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005).

I argue that reluctance to lead is initially associated with an increase in empowering leadership behavior. One way that power disinhibits leaders is by motivating them to maintain their superior standing over others (Van Kleef et al., 2008). Indeed, leaders with higher status and power have been shown to resist implementing team-based empowerment initiatives relative to leaders with lower organizational rank, as they view empowerment as threatening to their identity (Stewart, Astrove, Reeves, Crawford, & Solimeo, 2017). Thus, leaders are often unwilling to share their power with others, as relinquishing it gives them less authority over their subordinates (Martin, Liao, & Campbell, 2013). However, as argued previously, reluctance to lead may dampen a leaders' sense of power, helping to buffer against disinhibited and self-oriented behaviors associated with power. Whereas "powerful individuals think and act so as to maintain and increase power" (Sligte, de Dreu, & Nijstad, 2011: 891), reluctant leaders should be more willing to transfer their power to followers, and find more value in doing so. The dimension of providing autonomy is specifically related to giving followers discretion as to how they go about their work tasks (Pearce et al., 2003) and delegating responsibilities to them (Chen et al., 2011), which is a relinquishing of power (Leana, 1987). Thus, because they have reservations about leading, those who are reluctant to lead should be keen to hand authority over to subordinates and foster their self-leadership. Furthermore, given that reluctance to lead may prevent overconfidence, reluctant leaders may be less prone to thinking that they can do everything by themselves (Shipman & Mumford, 2011), increasing the likelihood that they engage followers in decision making.

Reluctance to lead, up to a certain point, should also increase the extent to which leaders express confidence in their followers. For example, if reluctant leaders feel

uncertain about their own abilities, they may be more mindful to remind subordinates of their strengths, and in the act of fostering self-leadership among their followers, leaders provide them with a sense of competence and self-efficacy (Ahearne et al., 2005).

Reluctance to lead can even propel leaders to enhance the meaningfulness of their followers' work. Because reluctant leaders have hesitations about leading, they may spend more time thinking about why their work is worth doing — this cognitive complexity gives them direct information to share about why the work is meaningful (Hooijberg et al., 1997; Maitlis, 2005; Rothman & Wiesenfeld, 2007). Doing more sensemaking should also sensitize reluctant leaders to the fact that they need to help employees experience their work as meaningful. Additionally, by preventing disinhibition, reluctance to lead should increase leaders' willingness to share credit with those they lead, and the meaningfulness of work is enhanced when employees see how their efforts and contributions matter to the organization (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Nonetheless, very high levels of reluctance to lead may reduce empowering leadership behavior. If leaders are so reluctant that they wish to be unburdened from their responsibilities, they may disengage from their work, leaving followers without proper guidance or support. In turn, they are unable to see how their work fits into larger organizational objectives. Excessive reluctance among leaders can also cause leaders to take actions that do little to empower subordinates; leaders may be so concerned and fearful about leading that they end up micromanaging their followers or do not trust them enough to carry out important tasks, decreasing empowering leadership behavior (Chen et al., 2011). Thus, after a certain point, there is a negative relationship between reluctance to lead and empowering leadership behavior.

In turn, empowering leadership behavior should increase leader effectiveness.

These actions communicate to employees that they are trusted (by their leader) to carry out important assignments (Chen & Aryee, 2007; Yukl & Fu, 1999) and leave followers feeling more confident and motivated to do their work (Ahearne et al., 2005).

Empowering leadership behavior also facilitates their learning and development of new skills (Klein, Ziegert, Knight, & Xiao, 2006). Thus, these actions have their intended effect of making followers feel more psychologically empowered (Chen et al., 2011; Randolph & Kemery, 2011; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Empowering leadership behavior has a host of other benefits for followers and the organization, including commitment (Dewettinck & van Amejide, 2011), creativity (Zhang & Bartol, 2010), and individual performance (Burke et al., 2006; Vecchio et al., 2010), all of which can enhance leader performance. Involving subordinates in decision making can also compensate for a leader's weaknesses and increase the amount of information that is considered (Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006). Indeed, prior research has found that empowering leadership behavior is associated with higher ratings of leader effectiveness (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014b; Hassan, Mahsud, Yukl, & Prussia, 2013; Tekleab, Sims, Yun, Tesluk, & Cox, 2008).

Bringing these arguments together, moderately reluctant leaders are likely to experience an optimal, rather than excessive, sense of power. In turn, reluctance to lead tempers the disinhibiting effects of power that typically prevent leaders from empowering their subordinates, but it can become a liability at high levels. Given that empowering leadership behavior has been shown to improve leader performance, empowering

leadership behavior helps to explain the aforementioned curvilinear reluctance-effectiveness relationship.

Hypothesis 2a: Reluctance to lead has a curvilinear (inverted U-shaped) relationship with empowering leadership behavior.

Hypothesis 2b: Empowering leadership behavior is positively related to leader effectiveness.

Hypothesis 2c: Empowering leadership behavior mediates the curvilinear (inverted U-shaped) relationship between reluctance to lead and leader effectiveness.

Having explored how some reluctance may enhance leader effectiveness, I turn to the question of how reluctance influences the likelihood of becoming a leader. Almost by definition, those with a reluctant stance toward leadership should be less likely to pursue, compete for, and opt into leadership roles when compared to those who are low in reluctance to lead. Naturally, their hesitations and uncertainty about leading may counteract any motivation to lead that they have, making them less proactive in seeking out leadership roles. For example, they may be less likely to talk to their boss about advancement into managerial positions, and when a leadership assignment is posted, ambivalent individuals may not “throw their hat into the ring” and fail to self-nominate. Beyond discouraging individuals from leaning in, I expect that reluctance also reduces the likelihood that people are selected by others to lead.

A “demand-side” perspective of leader emergence frequently highlights whom is selected to be a group’s formal leader by *others* (or whom is perceived to be most leader-like within a given group, Ensari et al., 2011). When considering demand-side forces, I

expect that if reluctance to lead is made known to those involved in leader selection decisions, individuals with increasing reluctance will be selected less readily. For example, during hiring decisions evaluators may understandably assume that the candidate does not want the job as badly as others who are not reluctant, or interpret reluctance to lead as a signal that someone will not be sufficiently committed to the job. Reluctance to lead may also be attributed to lacking confidence. Interestingly, although reluctant leaders may indeed be confident in their leadership abilities (i.e., they may experience reluctance due to demands outside of work), outsiders with little information may infer that those who are reluctant to lead are unsure of themselves. In turn, perceptions of confidence affect perceptions of competence (Anderson, Brion, et al., 2012; Anderson & Kilduff, 2009), and people may assume that if a candidate was capable to lead, he/she would be free of doubts. Thus, those who are reluctant to lead may be judged as lacking leadership abilities, decreasing the likelihood that they are selected for leadership roles.

Further, people ascribe less power to those who engage in deliberation while making decisions (Magee, 2009), and similarly, those who express reluctance may appear indecisive. Relatedly, based on theories of consistency (Festinger, 1957; Heider, 1958), people prefer interpersonal partners who exhibit consistency among their values, beliefs/attitudes, and behaviors. People tend to become skeptical of others when one set of their actions appears to contradict another (Butler, 1991; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Simons, 2002). As such, an individual who is pursuing a leadership position yet is also hesitant about leading may appear to be inconsistent, decreasing the likelihood that he/she is selected.

Hypothesis 3: Reluctance to lead is negatively associated with leader selection.

Leader Prototypicality

Perceptions of leader prototypicality should play an especially important role in explaining the negative relationship between reluctance to lead and leader selection. Implicit theories of leadership (i.e., leader categorization theory; Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984) highlight the role of leader prototypes in shaping perceptions of leader effectiveness, providing further explanation as to why reluctance should dampen leader selection. Prototypes, rooted in cognitive structures, reflect the composite of attributes expected (central tendency) for a given category (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996), such as “leader.” According to categorization accounts of leadership, during leader selection and evaluation processes a target individual is compared to the leader prototype or exemplar (Nye & Forsyth, 1991; Scott & Brown, 2006); individuals who appear more “leader like” are evaluated more positively by others (Lord et al., 1984). This applies to both physical features (Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008) and behaviors (Phillips & Lord, 1982) of the prototypical leader. Because prototypicality and leader success are intertwined (Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), people who fail to conform to expectations are penalized (Burgoon, 1993).

I argue that reluctance to lead is atypical of leaders (that is, it deviates from the leader prototype). Although the leader prototype may vary based on characteristics of a given group (Hogg, Hains, & Mason, 1998), Lord and colleagues’ research on leadership categorization theory (e.g., Lord et al., 1984) indicates that people have a general leader schema that transcends contexts; this schema reflects preconceptions of how leaders should act and who they should be (Hais, Hogg, & Duck, 1997). Extensive research

demonstrates that the prototypical leader is decisive, assertive, confident, and competitive (Schuh et al., 2014). Although reluctance to lead may stem from a variety of sources, people are likely to attribute reluctance to being insufficiently ambitious, confident, or committed, thus violating the leader prototype. Leadership is also associated with approach-oriented behaviors (Kilduff & Galinsky, 2013). Therefore, as it is governed by inhibition rather than approach, reluctance to lead is counter-normative.

As such, with increasing reluctance to lead, I predict that individuals seem less “leader like” in the eyes of others. This should be especially true during a leader selection decision in which the evaluators have limited information on the candidate, increasing salience of the leader prototype (Bar-Anan, Liberman, & Trope, 2006). In turn, those who are perceived to lack leader qualities are less likely to emerge as leaders (Hogan et al., 1994). As stated by Lord et al. (1986: 403), “consistent with the social-cognitive perspective, research on ILTs [implicit leadership theories] shows that cognitive schema composed primarily of traits are important perceptual constructs that should predict leadership perceptions or leadership emergence.” Therefore, those with a reluctant stance toward leadership should be selected less often by others to lead, in part because reluctant leaders are not prototypical (Ensari et al., 2011; Lord et al., 1986).

Hypothesis 4a: Reluctance to lead is negatively associated with leader prototypicality.

Hypothesis 4b: Leader prototypicality is positively related to leader selection.

Hypothesis 4c: Leader prototypicality mediates the negative relationship between reluctance to lead and leader selection.

In summary, I predict that reluctance to lead increases leader effectiveness up to a certain degree, and then hinders leader performance. Yet, those who are reluctant, even in small amounts, are less likely to become leaders. My hypotheses are summarized in Figure 1.

Across many contexts, it is likely that reluctant individuals occupy fewer leadership roles because they are not selected to lead or do not opt into leadership as readily as their less reluctant peers. It may thus be difficult to examine the relationship between reluctance to lead and leader effectiveness (among actual leaders) without selection bias (i.e., it is unknown how reluctant individuals that never assume the mantle of leadership actually perform on the job). To help address these concerns, I test Hypotheses 1-2 in a field study at an organization in which (a) a given leadership position rotates among different individuals and (b) there is an expectation that all organizational members step into this leadership role from time to time (Chapter 2). I separately test Hypothesis 3-4 about leader selection in an experiment in which participants evaluated a job candidate at varying levels of reluctance to lead (Chapter 3).

CHAPTER 2

A FIELD STUDY OF HOSPITAL CHARGE NURSES

Study 1 Context

To test hypotheses 1-2c, I conducted a field study of hospital nurses who are also in leadership roles. This took place at a private, non-profit hospital located in the Northeast region of the United States with over 700 beds. The hospital offers comprehensive general medical and surgical treatments with over 36,000 admissions each year, including emergency, cardiovascular, and obstetric services. At this organization (like many other hospitals), in each unit and during each shift, there is a “charge nurse” who is responsible for running operations. The charge nurse role is a position of leadership, and the specific person who assumes the charge nurse role for a given shift rotates among eligible nurses in the unit (those with sufficient experience and training). Put another way, within a unit, there is one person in the charge nurse role during a given shift, and then a different individual takes on that position next shift. As a result, there is a subset of nurses in each unit who take turns in and out of the charge nurse role. Interestingly, when in the charge nurse role, a given nurse becomes the supervisor of his/her peer nurses.

This was a fitting context for studying reluctance to lead for several reasons. All nurses in a specific unit are expected to occasionally serve as charge nurse once they have sufficient experience and training. This means that nurses do not self-select into the charge nurse position, nor are they chosen by others to lead. Instead, serving as a formal leader from time to time is an organizational norm. As a result, nurses who are reluctant

to lead nonetheless have to take on this role, helping to ensure that there is sufficient variation among the leaders being studied in terms of their motivations and hesitations around leading. Additionally, the charge nurse role is recognized as a position of leadership (by nurses, their supervisors, and hospital administrators) that is very different from the day-to-day duties of a nurse. Most individuals enter into nursing to engage in patient care, so taking on a formal leadership role represents a shift in demands and work identity. Theoretically, this also helped to ensure that there were enough reluctant leaders, and variation in strength of reluctance, among the participants involved. Finally, medical settings represent a crucial organizational context for understanding leadership (Klein et al., 2006; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2007).

Procedures and Participants

A total of 461 charge nurses were invited to participate. Nurses were recruited via flyers distributed throughout the hospital, along with emails sent by hospital administrators. Of those contacted, 178 charge nurses consented to be a part of the study (mean age = 36.25, $SD = 9.41$; mean length of time since first becoming a charge nurse = 7.68 years, $SD = 15.22$; 13 male, 165 female¹), yielding a response rate of 38.61%. Charge nurses completed an online survey asking about their reluctance about leading. Approximately two months later, I contacted each charge nurse's supervisor(s) to complete a short evaluation about the charge nurse's effectiveness (some charge nurses had two supervisors). At least one supervisor evaluation was obtained for 168 charge nurses. To obtain ratings of empowering leadership behavior, I contacted two of each

¹ The representation of male versus female nurses in this sample reflects the nursing population at large, as approximately 90% of all nurses are female (Landivar, 2013; The Kaiser Family Foundation, 2017).

charge nurse's peers with sufficient experience working under the direction of that charge nurse. The peers completed a short evaluation of the charge nurse's empowering leadership behavior. At least one peer evaluation was obtained for 167 charge nurses. Thus, I had two different sources of ratings: supervisors (for the dependent variable of overall effectiveness) and peers (for the mediator of empowering leadership behavior).

Measures

Reluctance to lead. Reluctance to lead items were based on Chan and Drasgow's (2001) affective-identity motivation to lead scale, as well as a general motivation to lead scale used by Amit et al. (2007). A subset of items (due to survey length restrictions at the field site) were adapted to the charge nurse role and underwent face validity testing with a small group of nurses who did not participate in the study. Charge nurses reported their own reluctance to lead by indicating their level of agreement with the following statements on a Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*: "If given the opportunity to lead as charge nurse, I typically experience some reservations," "When it comes to leading others as charge nurse, I consider myself a reluctant leader," and "I often hesitate to step into the charge nurse role ($\alpha = .83$).

Leader effectiveness. Leader effectiveness was assessed by the charge nurse's supervisor(s) with three items. Supervisors were instructed that these evaluations pertained to the focal participant in the charge nurse role (as nurses have different duties during shifts in which they are not charge nurse). The first two items were overall effectiveness items adapted from Bass and Avolio (1995): "This individual is effective at meeting requirements of the charge nurse" and "This individual is effective at meeting job-related needs." Supervisors rated their level of agreement on a Likert-type scale from

1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. A third question asked supervisors how often they would prefer for the individual to be in the role of charge nurse on a scale from 1 = *never* to 5 = *always*. The three items were z-scored to account for scaling differences ($\alpha = .90$).

Empowering leadership behavior. Peer nurses provided ratings of empowering leadership behavior using Ahearne et al.'s (2005) items. They indicated their level of agreement with the statements on a Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*, with the stem "This charge nurse." Items for the dimension of providing autonomy were: "allows me to do my job my way," "makes it more efficient for me to do my job by keeping the rules and regulations simple," and "allows me to make important decisions quickly to satisfy patients' needs" ($\alpha = .94$). For the dimension of fostering participation in decision making, the items were: "often consults me on important decisions," "solicits my opinion on decisions that may affect me," and "makes many decisions together with me" ($\alpha = .96$). The items for the dimension of expressing confidence were: "believes that I can handle demanding tasks," "believes in my ability to improve even when I make mistakes," and "expresses confidence in my ability to perform at a high level" ($\alpha = .94$). Finally, there were three items for enhancing the meaningfulness of work: "helps me understand how my objectives and goals relate to that of the unit and of the organization," "helps me understand the importance of my work to the overall effectiveness of the unit," and "helps me understand how my job fits into the bigger picture" ($\alpha = .97$). Cronbach's alpha for all 12 items was .98.

Control variables. I controlled for the charge nurse's leader self-efficacy to examine reluctance to lead above and beyond concerns about confidence and his/her own

perceived effectiveness, using three items adapted from Chemers, Watson, and May (2000): “As charge nurse, I know what it takes to make a group accomplish its task,” “I am confident of my ability to influence a group I lead as charge nurse,” and “When I’m in the charge nurse role, I know how to encourage good group performance” ($\alpha = .91$). I controlled for two factors related to the charge nurses’ leadership experience and training: the number of shifts in which they were charge nurse over the past month (as a measure of how frequently they recently occupied the charge nurse role) and whether or not they took a formal “charge nurse” training course (1 = yes, 0 = no). I also included a measure of the evaluator’s familiarity with the charge nurse to account for the fact that evaluators may have more knowledge about charge nurses they have worked with for longer, and because familiarity can breed liking (Reis, Maniaci, Caprariello, Eastwick, & Finkel, 2011). Specifically, in their evaluation surveys, the supervisors and peers indicated how long they have worked with the charge nurse. I controlled for each charge nurse’s shift by including a dummy variable for day shift and night shift (with rotating shift as the omitted category). Finally, I controlled for the charge nurse’s gender (1 = female, 0 = male) and race (1 = White, 0 = other), as subjective ratings of leader effectiveness are often affected by these factors (Eagly et al., 1992; Rosette et al., 2008).

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, correlations, and internal consistency reliability estimates for all variables.

Because the charge nurses were nested in units, I employed a variance components model to determine if there was sufficient variance in the dependent variable and mediator represented at the unit level. Results indicated that only 7.12% of the

variance in leader effectiveness scores was represented at the unit level, and only 2.85% of the variance in empowering leadership behavior was represented at the unit level. Also, the sample size at the unit level was small ($N=29$), which can cause biased variance estimates (Maas & Hox, 2005). Thus unit effects were not modeled in further analyses.

In Hypothesis 1, I predicted that there is a curvilinear (inverted U-shaped) relationship between reluctance to lead and leader effectiveness. To test this hypothesis, I standardized (z-scored) all continuous variables to address artificial multicollinearity concerns (Dawson, 2014). I used ordinary least squares regression (OLS), clustering errors at the individual charge nurse level, as some charge nurses received effectiveness ratings from two different supervisors. As shown in Table 2 (Model 2), after entering all control variables, the linear term of reluctance to lead was marginally significant (estimate = .20, *robust SE* = .11, $p < .10$)², and the coefficient of the squared term of reluctance to lead was significant and negative (estimate = -.14, *robust SE* = .04, $p < .01$), suggesting an inverted U-shaped relationship between reluctance to lead and leader effectiveness (Aiken & West, 1991). This relationship is plotted in Figure 2. To further probe these results, I followed Nelson and Simonsohn's (2014) guidelines, finding that reluctance to lead is initially associated with a significant (linear) increase in leader effectiveness ratings, followed by a significant (linear) decrease in ratings. These results provide some support for Hypothesis 1, as only a small degree of reluctance to lead was associated with greater leader effectiveness.

² In a model with the control variables and only the linear term of reluctance to lead (not the squared term), reluctance to lead was not significantly associated with leader effectiveness.

To test Hypothesis 2a, which proposed that the relationship between reluctance to lead and empowering leadership behavior is curvilinear, I again used OLS and clustered observations at the individual level (as some charge nurses received more than one peer rating). As can be seen in Table 3 (Model 1), after control variables were entered, the linear term of reluctance to lead was significant (estimate = .20, *robust SE* = .08, $p < .05$)³, and the coefficient of the squared term of reluctance to lead was significant and negative (estimate = -.11, *robust SE* = .05, $p < .05$). The relationship is plotted in Figure 3, showing that up to moderate levels of reluctance to lead, peers indicate that charge nurses enact more empowering leadership behavior; at higher levels of reluctance to lead though, the direction reverses. I again probed the curvilinear relationship using guidelines set forth by Nelson and Simonsohn (2014), finding that indeed both the increase and decrease in ratings were significant. Thus, Hypothesis 2a was supported. Further, I regressed each dimension of empowering leadership behavior in isolation (i.e., fostering participation, providing autonomy, expressing confidence, and enhancing the meaningfulness of work) on the same set of independent and control variables. In all cases, the squared term of reluctance to lead was significant, indicative of a curvilinear relationship (inverted U-shaped) between reluctance to lead and each dimension of empowering leadership behavior.

In line with prior research, in Hypothesis 2b I predicted a positive linear relationship between empowering leadership behavior (as rated by charge nurses' peers/followers) and leader effectiveness (as rated by charge nurses' supervisors). I added

³ In a model with the control variables and only the linear term of reluctance to lead (not the squared term), reluctance to lead was not significantly associated with empowering leadership behavior.

empowering leadership behavior (and as an additional control variable, the peer's familiarity with the charge nurse) to the model used to test Hypothesis 1 (see Table 2, Model 3). Results indicated that there was a positive, linear⁴ relationship between empowering leadership behavior and leader effectiveness (estimate = .15, *robust SE* = .07, $p < .05$), which supports Hypothesis 2b.

Together, these results indicated that there was initially a positive relationship between reluctance to lead and empowering leadership behavior that eventually became negative, and a linear (positive) relationship between empowering leadership behavior and leader effectiveness. In Hypothesis 2c I predicted that empowering leadership behavior mediates the relationship between reluctance to lead and leader effectiveness. To test this, I used the MEDCURVE application developed by Hayes and Preacher (2010). To do so, I created average leader effectiveness and empowering leadership behavior scores for any charge nurses who had two supervisor or peer ratings, as ICC (1, 2) met sufficient thresholds for reliability (leader effectiveness = .56, empowering leadership behavior = .35) (Bliese, 2000). I ran the macro using 5,000 bootstrap samples, including all previously mentioned control variables as covariates. The instantaneous indirect effect of reluctance to lead on leader effectiveness through empowering leadership was significant at the $p < .10$ level one standard deviation below the mean (.06, bias corrected bootstrap CI = 90% [.0001, .17]) and at the mean (.03, bias corrected bootstrap CI = 90% [.0002, .09]). Though, it was not significant one standard deviation

⁴ There was no evidence for a curvilinear relationship between empowering leadership behavior and leader effectiveness.

above the mean (-.0024, bias corrected bootstrap CI = 90% [-.06, .02]). This provides partial support for Hypothesis 2c.

Additional Analyses

Motivation to lead. To examine if reluctance to lead had distinct effects from motivation to lead, I included three general motivation to lead items in the charge nurse survey, adapted from Chan and Drasgow's (2001) affective-identity scale: "I have a strong interest in taking on the charge nurse role," "I am enthusiastic about leading others as charge nurse," and "I usually want to be in the charge nurse role when I come to work" ($\alpha = .89$). Charge nurses indicated their level of agreement with the statements on a Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Regressing overall leader effectiveness (as rated by the charge nurses' superiors) on motivation to lead and its squared term, reluctance to lead and its squared term, and all control variables, I found that neither motivation to lead (estimate = .06, *robust SE* = .09, *ns*) nor its squared term were significant (estimate = .06, *robust SE* = .05, *ns*), and in this analysis, the squared term of reluctance to lead remained significant (estimate = -.17, *robust SE* = .06, $p < .01$). I also examined the impact of motivation to lead in the absence of reluctance to lead. When the linear term of motivation to lead was entered in isolation (as the only independent variable), it was not significant (estimate = .09, *robust SE* = .06, *ns*). When entered with the same set of control variables used to test Hypothesis 1 (but again, excluding reluctance to lead), motivation to lead was not significant (estimate = -.03, *robust SE* = .07, *ns*). I then added the squared term of motivation to lead (again, such that reluctance to lead was not in the regression); in this analysis both the linear term (estimate = -.04, *robust SE* = .07, *ns*) and squared term (estimate = -.03, *robust SE* = .05,

ns) of motivation to lead failed to reach significance. Thus, motivation to lead was not significantly related to leader effectiveness regardless of whether or not reluctance to lead was included in the regression. Parallel analyses were conducted with empowering leadership behavior as the dependent variable. Again, motivation to lead and its squared term were not significant in any of the analyses. Additionally, I did not find a significant interaction between motivation to lead and reluctance to lead (concerning both the linear and squared terms of reluctance to lead) as related to overall leader effectiveness or empowering leadership behavior.

Leader self-efficacy. Given that self-doubt is likely a common cause for reluctance to lead, I probed the impact of leader self-efficacy on study outcomes further. As shown in Table 4 (Model 1), in the absence of reluctance to lead and its squared term, the linear term of leader self-efficacy (estimate = $-.03$, *robust SE* = $.06$, *ns*) and the squared term of leader self-efficacy (estimate = $-.01$, *robust SE* = $.03$, *ns*) were unrelated to supervisor ratings of overall effectiveness. With empowering leadership behavior as the outcome measure (see Table 5, Model 1), neither leader self-efficacy (estimate = $.07$, *robust SE* = $.07$, *ns*) nor its squared term were significant (estimate = $-.02$, *robust SE* = $.03$, *ns*). Thus, I did not find evidence for a curvilinear relationship between leader self-efficacy and the outcome variables. Also, I did not find a significant interaction between reluctance to lead (including its squared term) and leader self-efficacy as related to effectiveness (see Table 4, Model 3) or empowering leadership behavior (see Table 5, Model 3).

Supervisor-rated leader potential. In addition to asking each charge nurse's supervisor(s) to provide ratings of leader effectiveness, I asked them for their ratings of

the charge nurse's leadership potential for advanced positions⁵ with two items adapted from Rosette et al. (2008). On a scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*, they indicated their level of agreement with the following statements: "This individual has the potential to lead in advanced managerial positions (e.g., nurse manager)" and "I would recommend this individual to advance in the organizational hierarchy" ($\alpha = .92$). I first regressed leader potential on (the linear term of) reluctance to lead and all control variables. Reluctance to lead was not statistically significant (estimate = $-.04$, *robust SE* = $.10$, *ns*). I then entered the squared term of reluctance to lead into the regression, which was significant (estimate = $-.15$, *robust SE* = $.06$, $p < .05$). Plotting this relationship revealed a curvilinear, inverted U-shaped relationship between reluctance to lead and leader potential akin to the relationship between reluctance to lead and leader effectiveness.

Peer-rated satisfaction and trust. In the evaluation survey completed by each charge nurse's peer(s), I included a measure of how satisfied they felt while working under the direction of the charge nurse. Using items adapted to fit the charge nurse context from Edwards and Rothbard (1999), participants responded to the following statements using a Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*: "In general, I am satisfied with my job when working under the direction of this charge nurse," "When this person is charge nurse, I feel that the job I have is great," and "My job is very enjoyable under the direction of this charge nurse" ($\alpha = .96$)⁶. With satisfaction as the dependent variable, I first entered the linear term of reluctance to lead

⁵ The correlation between leader effectiveness and leader potential was $.69$.

⁶ Empowering leadership behavior and satisfaction under the direction of the charge nurse were correlated at $.65$.

and all control variables used to test Hypothesis 2a into the regression equation.

Reluctance to lead was not significant (estimate = .06, *robust SE* = .08, *ns*). Next, I entered the squared term of reluctance to lead. In this analysis, reluctance to lead (estimate = .18, *robust SE* = .11, $p < .10$) and its squared term (estimate = -.10, *robust SE* = .05, $p < .10$) were both significant. Plotting the relationship between reluctance to lead and satisfaction while working with the charge nurse revealed a symmetrical, inverted U-shaped relationship, closely mimicking the empowering leadership behavior analysis (Figure 3).

Peer nurses also provided an indication of their trust in the charge nurse by responding to the following items adapted from Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter's (1990) trust in supervisor scale (again, on a scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*): “I feel quite confident that this charge nurse will always try to treat me fairly,” “This charge nurse would never try to gain an advantage by deceiving coworkers,” and “I have complete faith in the integrity of this charge nurse” ($\alpha = .95$)⁷. I first regressed trust in the charge nurse on reluctance to lead and the control variables used in testing Hypothesis H2a; the linear term of reluctance to lead was not significant (estimate = .02, *robust SE* = .07, *ns*). I then added in the squared term of reluctance to lead, which was significant with a negative coefficient (estimate = -.09, *robust SE* = .04, $p < .05$). Plotting the relationship revealed that initially, reluctance to lead was associated with an increase in trust. However, with increasing reluctance to lead, the relationship

⁷ The correlation between empowering leadership behavior and trust in leader was .77; satisfaction and trust were correlated at .64.

became negative. Very high levels of reluctance to lead (beyond two standard deviations above the mean) were associated with the lowest trust scores.

Field Study Discussion

Overall Study 1 provides general support for the proposed model (the top portion of Figure 1) in that there was a curvilinear (inverted U-shaped) relationship between reluctance to lead and (a) leader effectiveness as rated by the charge nurses' supervisor(s) and (b) empowering leadership behavior as rated by the charge nurses' peer(s). However, Figure 2 demonstrates that reluctance to lead becomes a liability for leaders before even half-way through the scale, indicating that there is only a small window in which increasing reluctance to lead improves leader effectiveness. Put another way, only being slightly reluctant to lead was associated with the highest level of leader effectiveness. Nonetheless, the maximum point on the curve exceeds the average reluctance to lead score in this sample, suggesting that being slightly above average in reluctance can be beneficial. Furthermore, I conducted analyses in which I excluded the 14 charge nurses who scored over 2 standard deviations above the sample mean in reluctance to lead, resulting in a more symmetrical inverted U-shaped curve. The curvilinear relationship between reluctance and empowering leadership behavior, as shown in Figure 3, was more symmetrical, indicating that up to moderate levels, reluctance to lead increased peers' assessments of the charge nurses' empowering leadership behavior.

Interestingly, empowering leadership behavior only mediated the reluctance-effectiveness relationship on the left-side of the curve, indicating that the negative impact of reluctance to lead on leader effectiveness may be explained by other factors. For example, it is possible that some of the very reluctant leaders received low performance

evaluations because they did not fully engage in the role or provide direction to others (i.e., being slow to action, avoiding tough decisions, and shirking leadership responsibilities) akin to a passive, laissez-faire style of leadership (Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007). Alternatively, those who were extremely reluctant to lead may have felt excessively anxious on the job, leading to threat rigidity (Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981) and an inability to adapt to the ever-changing demands of the charge nurse role. Future research is thus needed to better understand the downsides of reluctance to lead.

Another limitation of this study is that it took place in a female-dominated setting, and there were very few male leaders. This limits its generalizability to other contexts, as men are more likely to occupy leadership roles in most organizational settings (Eagly, 2003). The setting was also unique in that it entailed a rotating leadership position, which participants were required to assume periodically. A given individual's follower during one shift could be his/her leader the next day. Thus, unlike leadership roles studied in much of management research, the charge nurses did not have sustained legitimate power (French & Raven, 1959). At the same time, the charge nurses could be thought to experience "middle-power" (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017) such that they "repeatedly vacillate between upward and downward social interactions" (p. 660), which is likely to be a common experience in organizations (i.e., among middle managers). Still, the impact of reluctance to lead on leader effectiveness should be explored in more traditional settings. It is possible that the benefits of reluctance to lead may be even more pronounced when leaders have greater power – and more prone to its disinhibiting effects.

Finally, because nurses were expected to serve as charge nurse, this was not a fitting setting to test Hypotheses 3-4. I therefore conducted an experiment to examine the

relationship between reluctance to lead and leader emergence (Chapter 3, Study 2).

Although gender was not central to my theorizing, I also including a manipulation of gender to explore if participants would respond differently to a reluctant male versus female leader.

CHAPTER 3

PERCEPTIONS OF RELUCTANT LEADERS

Overview

I designed an online experiment (Study 2) to test the relationship between reluctance to lead, assuming it is made known to others, and leader emergence, particularly in regards to how reluctance to lead shapes perceptions of potential leaders and the likelihood of being selected to lead. In this experiment, I manipulated a job candidate's degree (amount) of reluctance to lead, such that no information was provided about why he/she was hesitant to assume the mantle. As an additional exploratory study to examine how the reason for reluctance to lead shapes evaluations of could-be leaders, I also conducted Study 3, an experiment comparing reactions to eight different antecedents of reluctance to lead.

Study 2

Procedures and Participants

Three hundred twenty four full-time working adults participated in this online experiment (mean age = 37.04, $SD = 10.58$; 174 male, 147 female, 3 did not indicate gender). They evaluated a job candidate for a leadership role with varying levels of reluctance to lead (none, low/moderate, or high). Given that the prototypical leader is male (Rosette, Mueller, & Lebel, 2015), to account for any gender effects, I also manipulated the candidate's gender. I did so by indicating that the candidate was named Steven (male condition) or Sarah (female condition). Thus, this was a 3 (reluctance to lead) X 2 (gender) between-subjects experimental design. Twenty seven participants

failed attention checks embedded in the survey, resulting in a final sample of 297 participants.

Participants were asked to take on the role of a hiring manager for a fictitious company. They were informed that a key leadership position (division manager) recently opened up at the firm, and that the company would be evaluating candidates. They were asked to evaluate one candidate who had the necessary credentials for the division manager position and who was an effective contributor in his/her current role at the company. Thus, the candidate's competence was consistent across conditions. In the no reluctance to lead condition, the participant was informed that Steven [Sara] decided right away to apply for the job. In the low/moderate condition, they learned that Steven [Sara] initially decided not to apply for the job, but that he [she] changed his [her] mind after being encouraged by his [her] supervisor. In the high reluctance condition, I indicated that the job candidate needed to be encouraged multiple times before he [she] applied for the position.

Measures

After learning about the leadership position and candidate, participants completed a short survey about the candidate.

Leader selection. To indicate their interest in hiring the candidate, participants responded to the question "What is the likelihood that you would hire the job applicant?" on a scale from 1 = *extremely unlikely* to 7 = *extremely likely*.

Leader prototypicality. Participants provided ratings of the job candidate's leader prototypicality using three items I developed based on leadership categorization theory research (e.g., Rosette et al., 2008). The stem was "This candidate," and participants rated

their level of agreement with the following statements on a Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*: “is a typical leader,” “possesses leader-like qualities,” and “matches my idea of what a leader is” ($\alpha = .90$).

Manipulation check. To determine if the reluctance to lead manipulation successfully led participants to perceive higher levels of reluctance in the job candidate, they responded to three items on a scale from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*. The stem was “This job candidate,” and the items were: “is hesitant to step into a leadership role,” “is reluctant to take on positions of authority,” and “has reservations about leading” ($\alpha = .97$).

Results

Means and standard deviations for outcome and mediation measures appear in Table 6.

Manipulation check. I conducted a 3 (candidate’s reluctance to lead) X 2 (candidate’s gender) between-subjects ANOVA to determine if the manipulation was successful. Results indicated that the reluctance to lead manipulation had a significant effect on perceived reluctance to lead of the job candidate ($F [2, 291] = 338.93, p < .01$). Post-hoc tests with Tukey’s correction revealed that each condition was significantly different from one another ($p < .01$), with the no reluctance to lead condition having the lowest perceived reluctance score, and the high reluctance to lead condition having the highest score. There was no effect of gender or the interaction of reluctance and gender on perceived reluctance.

Hiring decision. I employed a 3 (candidate’s reluctance to lead) X 2 (candidate’s gender) between-subjects ANOVA using leader selection as the dependent variable.

There was a significant main effect of the reluctance to lead condition ($F [2, 289] = 11.68, p < .01$). There was no main effect of gender ($F [1, 289] = .22, ns$), nor a significant interaction of gender and reluctance ($F [2, 289] = 1.69, ns$). Planned contrasts indicated that compared to the candidate in the no reluctance condition, candidates in the low/moderate and high reluctance conditions were significantly less likely to be selected to lead ($p < .01$). There was no difference in selection between the low/moderate and high reluctance conditions (ns ; see Figure 4). This provided support for Hypothesis 3.

Leader Prototypicality. To test Hypothesis 4a (that reluctance is associated with lower perceptions of leader prototypicality), I again conducted a 3 X 2 between-subjects ANOVA using leader prototypicality as the dependent variable. There was a significant main effect of the reluctance to lead condition ($F [2, 290] = 54.42, p < .01$), but no main effect of gender ($F [1, 290] = 1.68, ns$) nor an interaction between the reluctance condition and gender ($F [2, 290] = .47, ns$). Planned contrasts indicated that the candidate who applied for the job right away (no reluctance condition) was rated as more prototypical than the other candidates ($p < .01$), but no difference was found between the candidates in the low/moderate and high reluctance conditions (ns). This provides partial support for Hypothesis 4a, as increasing reluctance to lead decreased ratings of leader prototypicality only to moderate levels; additional reluctance to lead beyond this point did not lower perceptions of prototypicality (see Figure 5).

To test if perceived leader prototypicality is associated with leader selection (Hypothesis 4b) and if leader prototypicality mediates the relationship between reluctance to lead and leader selection (Hypothesis 4c), I conducted a bootstrap analysis with 5,000 samples using PROCESS software (Hayes, 2013). I entered reluctance to lead as the

independent variable (entered as a categorical, sequential variable), leader prototypicality as the mediator, and leader selection as the dependent variable. In support of Hypothesis 4b, results indicated that leader prototypicality was positively associated with selecting the candidate to lead (estimate = .65, $SE = .06$, $p < .01$); further, there was a significant indirect effect of reluctance to lead on leader selection through perceptions of leader prototypicality (Omnibus Test = .17, $SE = .03$, bias corrected bootstrap CI = 95% [.11, .24]). This provides support for Hypothesis 4c.

Additional Analyses

Leader effectiveness/competence. Given limitations of a single-item dependent measure (selection), in the survey I also asked participants how effective they believed Steven/Sara would be in the division manager position. Participants first read the prompt, “Please indicate the extent to which you anticipate that this candidate would be an effective leader based on the statements below,” and then responded to the following overall effectiveness items adapted from Bass and Avolio (1995) on a Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*: “If chosen, this candidate would be effective at meeting job-related needs,” “If chosen, this candidate would be effective at meeting requirements of the leadership role,” and “If chosen, this candidate would be an effective leader” ($\alpha = .92$). Similar to the results in which leader selection was the dependent variable, a 3 X 2 between-subjects ANOVA revealed a main effect of reluctance to lead condition on leader effectiveness ($F [2, 290] = 12.21$, $p < .01$), but there was no effect of gender ($F [1, 290] = .85$, *ns*) nor a significant interaction between the factors ($F [2, 290] = 1.87$, *ns*). Tukey’s post-hoc tests indicated that when the job candidate hesitated to apply (in the low/moderate and high reluctance conditions), he/she

was expected to be significantly less effective ($M = 4.92$ and 4.74 , respectively) compared to the candidate who applied immediately ($M = 5.46$; $p < .01$); again, no difference was found between the low/moderate and high reluctance conditions (ns). Also, results remained unchanged for Hypothesis 3 and 4a-c when using anticipated leader effectiveness as the dependent variable, rather than leader selection. Parallel results were found when I asked the participants to rate the extent to which they believed the candidate was “intelligent,” “competent,” “confident,” and “competitive” (Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999; Rosette et al., 2008; $\alpha = .71$), creating a composite measure of competence.

Warm, humility, and trust. In order to gain additional insights as to how reluctance to lead influences perceptions of potential leaders beyond those directly related to performance, using the prompt “I believe this candidate is,” I asked the participants to indicate how “tolerant,” “warm,” “good natured,” and “sincere” the job candidate seemed on a Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* ($\alpha = .93$). I averaged their responses, creating a composite measure of warmth (Fiske et al., 1999), and conducted a 3 X 2 between-subjects ANOVA using leader warmth as the dependent variable. There was a significant main effect of the reluctance to lead condition ($F [2, 291] = 3.75, p < .05$), but no main effect of gender ($F [1, 291] = .16, ns$) nor an interaction between the reluctance condition and gender ($F [2, 291] = .57, ns$). Tukey’s post-hoc tests revealed that the candidate in the low/moderate condition ($M = 5.36$) was rated as warmer than the candidate in the no reluctance condition ($M = 5.06$) at marginal significance ($p < .10$), and the candidate in the high reluctance condition ($M = 5.42$) was rated as significantly warmer ($p < .05$) than the candidate in the no reluctance

condition. There was not a significance difference in warmth between the candidates in the two different reluctance conditions (*ns*).

I used six items modified from Owens et al. (2015) to assess anticipated leader humility. Following the prompt, “If chosen, I believe [Steven/Sara] would,” participants rated their agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*: “be open to the advice of others,” “be willing to learn from others,” “be open to the ideas of others,” “admit it when they made mistakes,” “have awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses,” and, “admit it when they don’t know how to do something” ($\alpha = .93$). A 3 X 2 between-subjects ANOVA indicated that there was a significant main effect of the reluctance to lead condition on leader humility ($F [2, 291] = 13.98, p < .01$). There was no main effect of gender ($F [1, 291] = .13, ns$), and the interaction between the reluctance to lead condition and the candidate’s gender failed to reach significance ($F [2, 291] = 1.65, ns$). Tukey’s post-hoc tests revealed that the candidates in both reluctance to lead conditions were rated as significantly more humble ($M = 5.71$ in both conditions) than the candidate who applied for the job right away (no reluctance condition, $M = 5.11; p < .01$). As with prior analyses, there was no significant difference between the low/moderate and high reluctance to lead conditions (*ns*).

I also asked the participants how trustworthy Steven/Sara seemed. They rated their level of agreement (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) with the following statements: “I feel quite confident that this candidate will always try to treat others fairly,” “This candidate would never try to gain an advantage by deceiving coworkers,” and “I have complete faith in the integrity of this candidate” (Podsakoff et al., 1990; $\alpha = .89$). In line with prior analyses, a 3 X 2 between-subjects ANOVA indicated that there

was a significant main effect of the reluctance to lead condition ($F [2, 291] = 5.32, p < .01$), but no main effect of gender ($F [1, 291] = 1.36, ns$) nor an interaction between factors ($F [2, 291] = .88, ns$). Candidates in the low/moderate reluctance to lead condition ($M = 5.33$) and high reluctance to lead condition ($M = 5.41$) were rated as significantly more trustworthy than the candidate in the no reluctance condition ($M = 4.95; p < .05$). Again, no difference was found between the low/moderate and high reluctance conditions (ns).

Given that reluctance to lead influenced perceptions of competence, warmth, humility, and trust (in addition to the focal variables), as an exploratory analysis, I used model 4 of the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2013) with 5,000 bootstrap samples to examine the possibility of multiple, parallel mediators in the negative relationship between reluctance to lead and leader selection. Controlling for gender, I entered prototypicality, competence, warmth, humility, and trust all as mediators. The analysis revealed that three of the five variables were significant mediators, which fully mediated the reluctance-selection relationship: prototypicality (Omnibus Test = .12, $SE = .03$, bias corrected bootstrap CI = 95% [.07, .19]), competence (Omnibus Test = .07, $SE = .03$, bias corrected bootstrap CI = 95% [.03, .14]), and humility (Omnibus Test = .03, $SE = .01$, bias corrected bootstrap CI = 95% [.01, .06]). The confidence intervals for warmth (Omnibus Test = -.003, $SE = .01$, bias corrected bootstrap CI = 95% [-.02, .001]) and trust (Omnibus Test = -.001, $SE = .005$, bias corrected bootstrap CI = 95% [-.01, .21]) failed to exclude zero, indicating that they did not mediate the relationship. As noted previously, reluctance to lead (i.e., when the candidate did not apply for the job right away) was associated with lower ratings of prototypicality and competence, yet higher

ratings of humility. Further, prototypicality, competence, *and* humility were all positively related to leader selection. Similar results were obtained when entering anticipated effectiveness as the dependent variable.

Study 2 Discussion

Study 2 demonstrated that if individuals are viewed as being reluctant to lead in the eyes of others, they are less likely to be selected to lead because they seem less prototypical (and as revealed in supplemental analyses, because they seem less competent). Interestingly, although the manipulation check confirmed that there was a meaningful difference in perceived reluctance to lead when comparing the low/moderate and high reluctance conditions (such that perceived reluctance was significantly higher in the latter condition), there was no difference between these conditions in terms of selection, prototypicality, or the other outcomes used in supplemental analyses. In other words, the manipulation was successful in that participants made a distinction in how reluctant to lead the candidate seemed on the basis of experimental condition; when Steven/Sara had to be encouraged multiple times before applying for the leadership position at the company, he/she indeed seemed more reluctant to lead than when he/she applied after being encouraged only once. Yet, the heightened level of reluctance to lead in the high condition did not lead participants to select Steven/Sara less readily or view the candidate as less prototypical or competent when compared to the low/moderate condition. It appears that there is a qualitative “break” in evaluations when moving from no reluctance to lead to some reluctance to lead (as clearly illustrated in Figure 5) – even small levels of reluctance to lead are penalized in terms of selection and prototypicality, but once some level of reluctance to lead is established, no further distinctions are made

in terms of selection or prototypicality (or anticipated effectiveness, competence, warmth, humility, and trust) with increasing reluctance to lead. I have found this same pattern of results in other replications and iterations of this experiment in which reluctance to lead was expressed verbally by a potential leader candidate⁸ and through a third party⁹.

Although the reluctant candidates were less likely to be selected to lead relative to the candidate who applied for the job right away, supplemental analyses revealed that they nonetheless received higher scores in terms of warmth, humility, and trust. Despite these potential upsides to seeming reluctant by others, only humility actually affected the likelihood of being selected for the leadership position. Plus, the benefit of appearing

⁸ In a between-subjects online experiment, participants were given a brief except from an interview conducted by a human resources (HR) representative and one job candidate who had applied to an open leadership position at a fictitious company called Pinnacle. The HR representative asked the job candidate why he/she did not possess an MBA. The job candidate explained that he/she had obtained a different master's degree instead, but then added in a statement in which I manipulated the candidate's level of reluctance to lead. In the no reluctance to lead condition, the candidate said, "That being said, I'm not reluctant to lead. In general, I don't hesitate to pursue leadership roles, and I don't have any reservations about taking on a leadership position at Pinnacle." In the moderate reluctance condition, the job candidate stated, "That being said, I'm somewhat reluctant to lead. In general, I am a bit hesitant to pursue leadership roles, and I have a few reservations about taking on a leadership position at Pinnacle." In the high reluctance condition, the candidate said, "That being said, I'm extremely reluctant to lead. In general, I am very, very hesitant to pursue leadership roles, and I have many reservations about taking on a leadership position at Pinnacle." Results indicated that candidates in both the moderate and high conditions were penalized in terms of selection and prototypicality relative to the no reluctance condition. Although the candidate in the final condition was rated as most reluctant, there was no difference in selection and prototypicality ratings between the moderate and high conditions.

⁹ In a within-subjects online experiment, participants reviewed a job application for four job candidates (in random order) who had applied for a managerial position at a fictitious firm. Each job candidate's (a) motivation to lead and (b) reluctance to lead were manipulated through the "reference check" portion of the application. Participants were informed that the hiring team contacted the three references listed by each candidate and that a summary of those conversations was available. In the motivated to lead condition, it stated, "The references said that this candidate has a lot of enthusiasm about being in a leadership role – (s)he is highly motivated to be a team manager and lead a group of employees." The reluctant to lead condition stated, "The references indicated that this candidate has serious reservations about being in a leadership role. The idea of managing a team brings up some concerns for him/her." There was also a condition in which I indicated that the candidate was both motivated and reluctant to lead: "According to the references, this candidate has mixed feelings about being in a leadership role. While having a strong desire to lead a team, (s)he simultaneously has hesitations about managing others." Finally, I had a control condition, indicating that reference information was not available at that time. The purely motivated candidate was overwhelming chosen by participants to hire for the job.

more humble because of reluctance to lead was still outweighed by negative prototypicality and competence ratings. The supplemental parallel mediation analyses also supports existing work demonstrating that when it comes to leaders, perceptions of their competence are weighted more heavily than perceptions of their warmth (Cuddy, Glick, & Beninger, 2011).

Overall, Study 2 provides support for hypotheses 3-4 in that even slight reluctance to lead dampens leader selection. Interestingly, I did not provide participants with any information as to why the employee was reticent to stand at the helm. An implication of this work is that employees who have concerns about leading (yet still wish to lead) should be cautious in implicitly or explicitly communicating their overall hesitation to lead with supervisors or hiring personnel. However, Study 2 did not address the issue of how the precise reason for reluctance to lead shapes perceptions. Thus, I designed Study 3 to examine if, holding a job candidate's amount of reluctance to lead constant, leader selection varies according to different sources of reluctance to lead.

Study 3

Antecedents of Reluctance to Lead

In this study, I examined if perceptions and judgements of a reluctant leader vary according to the leader's underlying reason for hesitating to assume the mantle. Just as there are varying motives underlying the motivation to lead (Chan & Drasgow, 2001) reluctance to lead may stem from a variety or combination of different sources. On the one hand, the non-calculative dimension of motivation to lead highlights that there are costs to serving as the leader based on the very nature of leadership, and these challenges at work may spillover to affect a leader's personal life (Edwards & Rothbard, 1999;

Rothbard, 2001). Research on leader stress similarly points to the reality that some may be wary about leading due to extensive demands at work and accountability to others (Campbell, Baltes, Martin, & Meddings, 2007; Courtright, Colbert, & Choi, 2014), along with constraints on one's personal time and freedom (Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005). On the other hand, the affective-identity dimension of motivation to lead indicates that some seek out leadership due to an internal interest in leading that stems from their sense of self, whereas the social-normative dimension reflects that a sense of responsibility to others can propel people into leadership; Magee and Langner (2008) also note that power motivation is caused by not only self-serving but also prosocial desires. In a parallel sense, reluctance to lead may arise due to apprehension of how taking on a leadership role could adversely affect the self or others. Given these dimensions of motivation to lead, as shown in Figure 6, I organize a variety of factors along two dimensions, highlighting that people can be hesitant to lead because of (a) concerns that are internal versus external to work and (b) how it would impact others versus the self.

Crossing these dimensions, one category of antecedents captures factors that are internal to work (inherent to leadership) and cases in which people are reluctant because of how they might impact others once on the job. As leaders are accountable to a number of constituents including subordinates, superiors, board members, and external governing bodies (Wood & Winston, 2005), leaders' decisions and actions can have a strong influence on the fate of others (Schneider, 2002). Knowing that others trust you can bring about pride, but it is also emotionally exhausting (Baer, Dhensa-Kahlon, Colquitt, Rodell, Outlaw, & Long, 2015). Leaders not only are tasked with giving negative feedback to others (Patient & Skarlicki, 2010), but they often have to make tough interpersonal

decisions about whom to promote and engage in “necessary evils” like layoffs and firing employees (Margolis & Molinsky, 2008; Molinsky & Margolis, 2005). Thus, the burden of responsibility that comes with leadership is a source of reluctance to lead, and this may be especially salient for guilt-prone individuals. As Schaumberg and Flynn (2012: 338) observe, “because guilt-prone individuals feel a great deal of responsibility for others, they may sometimes be loath to ‘take the lead’ on tasks because they are wary of the burden of responsibility.” Workplace relationships are another source of reluctance to lead in this category. Because friendships in the workplace tend to be among peers at the same level (Jehn & Shah, 1997; Lincoln & Miller, 1979; McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987), people may find leadership unappealing because taking a managerial role would mean that lateral coworkers become subordinates.

Conversely, some people may experience reluctance to lead due to work-related concerns that are more directly related to the self. Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s own beliefs about his/her their ability to succeed in a given behavior (Ajzen, 1991). As it relates to leadership, reluctance may occur when someone calls into question whether or not he/she can effectively lead, experiencing self-doubt. In line with previous research on leader self-efficacy (Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin, & Jackson, 2008), if potential leaders do not believe in their own leadership abilities, this will not only decrease their motivation, but will also be a source of hesitation in taking on leadership responsibilities. Additionally, leaders face high demands and often must respond to unpredictable, complex problems, making leadership stressful (Hambrick et al., 2005; Yukl, 2002). The very nature of leadership may make some individuals reluctant, particularly with regards to stress (Wood & Winston, 2005). Given that highly neurotic individuals tend to be

nervous and high-strung (Barrick & Mount, 1991), they may avoid additional sources of strain such as leadership roles. Note that self-focused reasons behind reluctance to lead need not be inherently selfish. In line with Meglino and Korsgaard's (2004) view of rational self-interest, self-focused reluctance to lead stems from personal values and risk preferences.

As opposed to reluctance stemming from sources internal to work, external factors may refer to commitments to other people outside of the workplace. External, other-focused sources of reluctance to lead include family priorities, and in a similar vein, considerations around work/life balance. For example, leaders are prone to experience work-family conflict (Hambrick et al., 2005), which is especially salient for women and may cause them to pass up leadership opportunities (Sandberg, 2013). Indeed, one third of employees in a recent poll indicated that they hesitated to take on leadership roles because of work-life balance concerns (CareerBuilder, 2014).

There are also sources of reluctance to lead that are external to work yet focused on the self, largely reflecting personal needs or desires. For example, many leaders have little privacy, which may be another source of reluctance to lead. By virtue of their organizational rank and position of prestige, leaders are well known within their organizations, and for CEOs as well as those in top government positions, leaders are also public figures (Hambrick & Cannella, 2004). Leaders' actions are often the topic of public scrutiny, and even leaders' personal lives and other job-irrelevant actions or characteristics can lead to widespread gossip. Because of these challenges, those with a high need for privacy (Marshall, 1974) may be hesitant to lead. Finally, though leaders have a great deal of choice and discretion in deciding what to do and when, they

experience high levels of interdependence with others (Lee & Tiedens, 2001), limiting their personal freedom. As stated by Jim March, they are deeply “embedded in a network of relations and expectations” (Podolny, 2011: 504). Work on career anchors indicates that those who strongly value independence from others tend to forgo advancement opportunities (Schein, 1978, 1990, 1992), suggesting that having a strong desire for autonomy may result in a negative attitude toward the idea of leading others.

If others become aware of why a particular individual is reluctant to lead, their perceptions of that individual may vary according to the specific cause of the reluctance. I therefore designed Study 3 to examine how people respond to the eight aforementioned¹⁰ sources of reluctance to lead.

Procedures and Participants

¹⁰ There are several other antecedents of reluctance to lead beyond those listed in Figure 6, including those based on demographic features. For example, women and racial minorities deviate from the White, male leader prototype common in Western society (Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008). According to leadership categorization theory (LCT) (Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984), these individuals may perceive a “mismatch” between the self and the leader prototype, leading them to question their suitability for leadership roles. Indeed, Gino et al. (2015) found that men and women have similar perceptions of the positive outcomes of high-power positions (e.g., satisfaction, money, and status), and they view high-status positions as equally attainable. Nonetheless, women expect more negative outcomes than men in terms of time constraints and conflicts with their personal lives. Additional research notes that female leaders receive harsher evaluations than their male counterparts for the same exact leader behaviors (Eagly et al., 1992). Thus, “implicit theories have the potential to affect women’s perceived suitability for management roles” (Ryan & Haslam, 2007: 551), setting up expectations that women will fail as leaders. In regards to race, across several studies, Rosette and colleagues (2008) demonstrated that “being White” is tightly linked to perceptions of a leader’s identity, and people indicate that African Americans have lower leadership potential than their White counterparts. In the face of a team’s failure, Black leaders are also perceived to be more incompetent than White leaders (Carton & Rosette, 2011), and stereotypes are activated when minority leaders follow interpersonal justice rules, leading to bias in subordinates’ judgements of minority leaders (Zapata et al., 2016). Social norms and expectations also apply to other demographic characteristics. For example, Belmi and Laurin (2016) found that individuals of lower socioeconomic status tend to associate positions of power with a need to engage in political dominance, including manipulating others and Machiavellian behaviors. Given their more interdependent self-construals, “members of disadvantaged groups see prevailing institutional norms as abrasive to their values and beliefs, causing them to opt out” of roles associated with power (Belmi & Laurin, 2016: 524), such as leadership.

A total of 403 full-time, working adults on M Turk participated in this online experiment, though some were excluded for failure to pass an attention or manipulation check, resulting in a final sample of 378 individuals.

Similar to Study 2, participants learned about an employee and an open leadership position at a fictitious company. Instructions read, “A particular employee with significant work experience in the company’s marketing branch has been considering whether or not to apply. This individual didn’t initially opt in for the leadership role given some hesitations about [experimental manipulation]. Nonetheless, the candidate decided to go for it after being reminded by their supervisor that they have the necessary qualifications for the job.” As the experimental manipulation text, participants were randomly presented with one of eight reasons underlying the candidate’s reluctance to lead (see Figure 6): (a) “the burden of responsibility that comes with leadership, knowing that many people are depending on you” (the burden of responsibility condition); (b) “how this job could impact relationships with other people at work, because it can be difficult to lead employees who were once your peers” (referred to as the work relationships condition); (c) “self doubt, as this candidate lacks confidence in their leadership abilities” (henceforth referred to as the self-doubt condition); (d) “the stress that comes with leadership, as the job can be demanding and exhausting” (henceforth referred to as the stress condition); (e) “family priorities, as leaders often face work-family conflict” (the family condition); (f) “work-life balance, as leadership roles are often demanding in terms of one’s personal time” (the work/life condition); (g) “privacy, as it can be uncomfortable to be in the spotlight” (the privacy condition); and (h) “freedom and autonomy, as becoming a leader often means having less control over your

schedule” (the autonomy condition). Thus, this was a between-subjects design with one factor (reason for reluctance to lead), resulting in eight different conditions.

Measures

After learning about the candidate, participants completed a short survey about their impressions of the individual and suitability to lead using the same measures from Study 2.

Results

A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was utilized for all analyses that follow.

Perceived reluctance. Participants described in their own words why the candidate was reluctant to lead as a manipulation check. However, to ascertain if the reason for hesitating to apply shaped perceptions of how reluctant the candidate was, I also included the same manipulation check from Study 2 (i.e., participants rated their level of agreement with statements such as, “This job candidate is hesitant to step into a leadership role”). The ANOVA indicated that there was a main effect of condition ($F [7, 370] = 2.37, p < .05$). Post-hoc tests revealed that participants rated the candidate with family priorities as less reluctant ($M = 4.56$) than the candidate with self-doubt ($M = 5.45; p < .05$) and the burden of responsibility condition ($M = 5.48; p < .05$). No other differences were found between conditions.

Selection. With the participant’s likelihood of selecting the candidate as the dependent variable, I found a main effect of condition ($F [7, 370] = 3.63, p < .01$). The candidate in the self-doubt condition received the lowest score ($M = 3.88$), and Tukey’s post-hoc tests revealed that this mean was significantly lower than the work/life condition ($M = 4.82, p < .05$) and work relationships condition ($M = 5.02; p < .01$). The candidate

in the work relationships condition had the overall highest selection score, which post-hoc tests indicated was statistically greater than (in addition to self-doubt) privacy ($M = 4.16, p < .05$), autonomy ($M = 4.17, p < .05$), and burden of responsibility ($M = 4.17; p < .10$).

Prototypicality. The ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of condition on perceived prototypicality of the job candidate ($F [7, 370] = 3.59, p < .01$). Among the conditions, the mean was highest for the work relationships candidate ($M = 4.29$), and lowest in the self-doubt condition ($M = 3.36$). Post-hoc tests revealed that the prototypicality score for the work relationships condition was statistically higher than the following three conditions: self-doubt ($p < .01$), burden of responsibility ($M = 3.53; p < .10$), and privacy ($M = 3.59; p < .10$). Prototypicality of the self-doubt candidate was also significantly lower than the work/life ($M = 4.11; p < .10$) and family ($M = 4.12; p < .10$) conditions. No other differences were found.

Effectiveness and competence. There was main effect of condition on anticipated leader effectiveness of the job candidate ($F [7, 366] = 3.43, p < .01$). Paralleling the prototypicality results, the work relationships candidate was rated as most effective ($M = 5.18$) whereas the self-doubt candidate, least effective ($M = 4.28$). Tukey's post-hoc tests indicated that the effectiveness score in the work relationships condition was statistically higher than the self-doubt ($p < .01$), burden of responsibility ($M = 4.41; p < .05$), and autonomy conditions ($M = 4.49; p < .10$). Further, the self-doubt candidate was rated as significantly lower in anticipated effectiveness than in the work/life ($M = 5.01; p < .10$) and family ($M = 4.97; p < .10$) conditions. No other differences were found.

In terms of competence, the self-doubt candidate again received the lowest score ($M = 4.38$), but the family candidate received the highest score ($M = 5.29$). Tukey's post-hoc tests revealed that the self-doubt candidate was viewed as statistically less competent than in the stress ($M = 4.97$; $p < .10$), work relationships ($M = 5.16$; $p < .01$), work/life ($M = 5.08$; $p < .05$), and family ($p < .01$) conditions. The candidate for whom reluctance was due to family concerns was also rated as more competent than the candidate citing burden of responsibility ($M = 4.73$; $p < .10$). No other differences were found between conditions.

Warmth, humility, trust. There was no main effect of condition on perceived warmth of the job candidate ($F [7, 367] = 1.47, ns$) or humility ($F [7, 369] = 1.26, ns$). However, there was a main effect of condition on trust ($F [7, 370] = 2.81, p < .01$). The candidate in the work relationships condition received the highest score, with a mean of 5.66. Tukey's post-hoc tests revealed that this was significantly greater than the self-doubt ($M = 4.97$; $p < .05$) and burden of responsibility conditions, which had the lowest overall score ($M = 4.94$; $p < .05$). No other differences between conditions were found.

Study 3 Discussion

Study 3 indicates that the reason underlying why someone is reluctant to lead matters for how that person is viewed by others. Among the reasons explored in this experiment, with a few exceptions, the candidate lacking confidence in his/her leadership abilities (the self-doubt condition) was associated with the "worst" outcome measures, being least likely to be selected to lead and rated least prototypical, effective, and competent. This supports Anderson et al.'s (2012) work in which perceptions of someone's confidence directly influence how capable they seem. Interestingly, the

candidate who was hesitant due to the burden of responsibility that comes with leadership was also viewed in a negative light, receiving the highest absolute score on perceived reluctance to lead and lowest ratings for being trustworthy.

In general, being reluctant to lead due to work relationships was viewed most favorably, as this individual received the highest prototypicality, effectiveness, and trustworthy scores, and was most likely to be selected to lead. Citing family priorities was associated with seeming least reluctant to lead (and most competent), perhaps because this source of reluctance is viewed as more legitimate or understandable than other factors. As demonstrated in Study 2, seeming reluctant to lead is generally inadvisable if leader selection is the desired outcome, but Study 3 adds nuance to this finding — others respond not only to how much reluctance to lead is conveyed, but also why that reluctance exists in the first place.

CHAPTER 4

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Summary

Although leadership is often portrayed in a predominantly positive light — and with good reason considering the personal and professional rewards that leaders receive and their influence on others — leadership roles come with significant challenges that may be particularly unappealing or more salient to some individuals. Drawing on the approach-inhibition theory of power, I argued that reluctance to lead acts as a “check” on the disinhibiting effects of power. I hypothesized that the relationships between reluctance to lead and (a) leader effectiveness and (b) empowering leadership behavior are curvilinear (inverted U-shaped), meaning that some reluctance to lead actually benefits leaders. Yet, based on implicit theories of leadership I predicted that those who are reluctant, even moderately so, are penalized in the leader selection process. I tested these hypotheses in a field study of leaders of hospital nursing units (known as “charge nurses”) and an experiment related to a hiring decision. I found that a small degree of reluctance to lead initially leads to an increase in leader overall performance (as rated by leaders’ superiors), in part because reluctance to lead is associated with empowering leadership behavior (as rated by leaders’ peers). However, more reluctant leaders exhibit extremely poor performance on the job, highlighting the costs of reluctance to lead. From a leader selection standpoint, people tend to view others who are reluctant to lead, even slightly so, as deviating from the leader prototype, and thus they are not readily chosen as leaders. An exploratory experiment also reveals that being reluctant to lead due to self-

doubt is particularly damaging in the leader selection process. Bringing these together, my dissertation highlights the paradox of reluctance to lead, such that a small degree of reluctance to lead can benefit leaders on the job, but a slight expression of reluctance to lead can make them less likely to become leaders in the first place. An examination of reluctance to lead contributes to research on leader emergence, effectiveness, and identity.

Theoretical Implications

Barriers to Leadership

Though scholars have acknowledged that leadership has both desirable and undesirable features (Yukl, 2002), Chan and Drasgow (2001) noted that the impact of self-selection into leadership remains relatively unexplored. They addressed this gap by applying a motivational lens to leader emergence, introducing motivation to lead as an important individual-difference construct. Building on this work, I highlight that individuals vary in the extent to which they have concerns and hesitations around leadership — and that these reservations capture more than just self-doubt. Further, other scholars interested in why some people do not advance into leadership roles have often examined the impact of gender and race, such that women and minorities emerge less often as leaders (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Pinel, 1999; Sandberg, 2013). This work is vital on theoretical and practical grounds, highlighting the role of external factors like discrimination and structural barriers to advancement (e.g., Carton & Rosette, 2011; Combs, 2003; Eagly et al., 1992; Hernandez et al., 2016; Rudman & Glick, 2001). To complement this work, the present research suggests that individuals may shy away from leadership roles regardless of demographics. For example, even those

who are male and/or White may experience significant reluctance to lead. This is one way in which possessing surface-level factors associated with leader emergence does not necessarily lead to the pursuit of leadership roles.

Leader Emergence

In a similar vein, this work contributes to a vast body of research on the link between leader emergence and effectiveness. Specifically, I argue that those who tend *not* to occupy leadership roles (due to supply-side and demand-side forces) are well-suited to lead, complicating findings that leader emergence and effectiveness are positively correlated. Given that emergence and effectiveness are both judged through the lens of prototypicality, especially when the evaluator does not have individuating information about the target (Geyer & Steyrer, 1998; Lord et al., 1984; McCrea, Wieber, & Myers, 2012), it is perhaps not surprising that the characteristics that predict leader emergence also predict effectiveness. However, the present research attempts to more explicitly disentangle emergence and effectiveness by demonstrating how certain factors that make leaders effective also make them less likely to take on leadership roles in the first place. This is related to the concepts of over- and under-emergence as described by Lanaj and Hollenbeck (2015). In their words, “inappropriate leadership emergence is an important, but overlooked phenomenon in the organizational literature” (Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015: 1488). Thus, the present research helps describe why some people assume leadership at lower rates than merited by their potential for leader effectiveness.

Leader Identities

A deeper understanding of reluctance to lead also extends recent work about leader and follower identities. DeRue and Ashford (2010) posited that the development of

these identities is a socially constructed process in which individuals can claim an identity for themselves yet are also granted the role of leader or follower by others. Though the followership identity may be claimed to avoid the stresses of leadership, some may reject the leader identity due to factors beyond a given leadership position, such as competing family or personal priorities. The present theory also builds on DeRue's (2011) work, which rejects the notion that individuals have strict leader versus follower identities. Whereas DeRue focuses on changes from leader to follower identities (and vice versa) over time, I argue that people can be motivated to lead yet reluctant to take the reins of power, which suggests that people may *simultaneously* identify as a leader and follower. Additionally, inherent in my research is a recognition that in most cases, taking on a leadership role entails a major identity shift (Day & Harrison, 2007; Hammond, Clapp-Smith, & Palanski, 2017). For example, physicians, researchers, and police officers who advance into a managerial position take on new day-to-day responsibilities that they probably did not anticipate when choosing their occupation. In these transitions, employees must negotiate the tension between holding onto their occupational identity and the new identity of "leader," and grapple with negotiating multiple identities as they acquire heightened status but may still wish to remain close with their followers (Brown, 2015; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). The anticipation of this inherent identity shift may cause discomfort and is a likely contributor to reluctance to lead.

Ambivalence in Organizations

Although I did not study ambivalence directly, the experience of reluctance to lead while in an actual position of power may foster feelings of ambivalence. The

application of ambivalence to organizational contexts is especially important, as many work experiences are thought to be characterized by at least some level of ambivalence (Rothman, Pratt, Rees, & Vogus, 2017). Despite the prevalence of ambivalent emotions and motivations in organizations, research in this domain remains limited (Ashforth et al., 2014; Pratt, 2000). As stated by Fong and Tiedens (2002: 118), since “ambivalence may be a more common state than researchers have previously thought, it may be important to identify situations under which conflicting emotions are more likely to exist.” The present research responds to this call by suggesting that the leadership context is particularly relevant for understanding ambivalence. Whereas existing studies that link leadership and ambivalence have found that leaders often have mixed feelings about organizational change (Piderit, 2000; Plambeck & Weber, 2010), ambivalence has not been widely applied to the issue of who takes on leadership roles except in terms of gender (e.g., Fong & Tiedens, 2002). As related to high levels of achievement in the workplace, Exline and Lobel (1999: 307) noted, “although individuals do find satisfaction and comfort in outperformance, they also appear to view superior status with some ambivalence,” suggesting that ambivalence may also accompany organizational advancement. Although ambivalence has traditionally been considered problematic, I follow more recent research highlighting that in many cases, ambivalence can be functional (Ashforth et al., 2014; Guarana & Hernandez, 2015, 2016; Rothman & Melwani, 2017).

Limitations and Future Directions

The field study described in Chapter 2 was conducted in one context (nursing), yet contingency theories of leadership highlight that what makes for effective leadership

in part depends on the nature of the situation (Avolio, Sosik, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Fiedler, 1967; Vroom & Yetton, 1973). Additional work is thus needed to delineate contextual moderators of the relationship between reluctance to lead and leader effectiveness, including when moderate reluctance to lead is more or less beneficial. Although a measured, systematic, and nuanced approach to decision making has many benefits, the theory presented here intimates that reluctant leaders' performance may falter in situations requiring risk-taking or rapid decision making. For example, the combination of ambivalence and power has been shown to increase inaction, relative to those with univalent feelings (Durso, Briñol, & Petty, 2016). Further, reluctance to lead may hinder performance when leaders must assert their power. For example, among leaders' various tasks, they must obtain resources from upper echelon leaders and external parties, often requiring that leaders act assertively to persuade others (Cialdini, 1984; Hackman, 2002; Hackman & Wageman, 2005; McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994). However, reluctant leaders may find it especially uncomfortable to act authoritatively with others outside of their group. To the extent that those high in reluctance to lead are also less self-promoting, reluctant leaders may receive insufficient recognition, which is another obstacle to garnering critical resources for their group (Yukl, 2012). Therefore, reluctant leaders may perform worse when competing with others to obtain (limited) resources for their team and other "ambassador activities" (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992).

Additional theory and research is needed to understand how reluctance to lead develops and unfolds temporally, as I only measured reluctance to lead at one point in time in Study 1. Young, career-driven people may be particularly drawn toward

leadership since society equates it with success (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). At the same time, they lack experience and may feel less confident in their leadership abilities, leading to reluctance. Over time, leader self-efficacy may increase with work experience (Bandura, 1997; Hannah, Avolio, Walumbwa, & Chan, 2012), which should reduce hesitations about leading, but personal priorities like family may become more important, which can increase reluctance to lead (Gino et al., 2015). Additionally, people attach different meanings to leadership with age and experience (Hammond et al., 2017). Thus, levels of reluctance to lead may change over time, and the specific motives for leading and reasons for reluctance to lead may change with career and life experiences. Further, ambivalence researchers have found that as people become more familiar with a given target, they gain additional information and come to see the target in a more complex, multidimensional manner (Ashforth et al., 2014). In a parallel sense, as their careers unfold, people are likely to become more aware of the pros and cons of leading. Future research should therefore examine fluctuations in reluctance to lead with experience and time.

Another limitation of my work is that I did not explicitly test how the underlying reason for one's reluctance to lead shapes leader performance. Scholars are encouraged to examine fine-grained pairings of motivation to lead and reluctance to lead. As noted previously, although motivation to lead can be conceptualized as a unidimensional construct (Chan et al., 2000; Waldman et al., 2012), some people's motivation to lead is affective/identity-laden (experienced by those who tend to be extraverted and value achievement), whereas it is duty-based for others (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). The specific combination of this latter form of motivation to lead (social-normative) and high

reluctance to lead is especially intriguing, as a strong sense of duty to others may amplify reluctance, but it may also give individuals an internal “push” to take on leadership roles. People may not want to stand at the helm, but they may eventually step up out of duty to their organization, or even to prevent someone else from taking the role if they believe that the other candidate would cause the demise of the group. This reflects an interesting tension between personal desires (e.g., to forgo leadership and spend more time with family) and needs of the larger collective (e.g., to help an organization through a rough transition period). Holding the motive for leading constant, it is also likely that leaders whose reluctance comes from other-focused factors (versus self-focused reasons) will achieve the highest levels of leader effectiveness. As power leads to an increase in goal pursuit (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Overbeck & Park, 2001, 2006), when people with other-focused reluctance to lead gain power, it should propel them to select and pursue goals in line with their other-oriented priorities and values (Chen et al., 2001; DeCelles, DeRue, Margolis, & Ceranic, 2012; Magee & Langner, 2008). Accountability to others also prompts more vigilant information processing (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Tetlock, 1985) and reduces egocentrism among power holders (Rus, van Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2012). Thus, if people are hesitant to lead because they are sensitive to how their decisions may affect others, they may work harder to minimize adverse interpersonal consequences of their actions, such as by communicating the rationale behind their decisions (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Wood & Winston, 2005). Conversely, when coupled with motivation to lead, having self-focused reluctance to lead could potentially cause leaders to pursue goals that minimize the adverse impact of leadership on the self. For example, they may delegate away

unpleasant decisions or fail to make hard choices out of fear of criticism. These specific leader behaviors as a function of the source of reluctance merit additional attention.

Future research is also needed to examine the specific case of reluctance to lead stemming from low leader self-efficacy. Interestingly, existing work intimates that reluctance resulting from self-doubt may have several benefits. Research on defensive pessimism points to the benefits of self-doubt (Norem & Cantor, 1986), which can foster commitment to a cause and willingness to learn from others (Sonenshein, Decelles, & Dutton, 2014). Questioning oneself by (internally) asking “will I,” for example, is linked to superior performance over stating “I will” (Senay, Albarracín, & Noguchi, 2010). In the realm of leadership, those who rated themselves as lower in their leadership performance received higher 360 degree evaluations, and their followers were more engaged (Zenger & Folkman, 2015). Individuals are not always accurate in assessing their own leadership abilities. This is especially intriguing when coupled with the results from Study 3 — across eight different reasons for being reluctant, self-doubt in a potential leader candidate was seen by participants in an especially negative light. Unfortunately, when people lack confidence in their contributions and abilities, they opt for lower-ranking positions in a group (Anderson, Willer, Kilduff, & Brown, 2012). Looking ahead, scholars are encouraged to identify the potential benefits of selecting leaders who underrate themselves, and to find solutions for mitigating the negative relationship between self-doubt and leader emergence from both a supply- and demand-side perspective.

Another interesting area for future research is the distinction between true reluctance to lead felt by an individual versus what that person expresses to others (and

also, how much reluctance to lead is perceived by others). Bringing together the field study and experiments in this dissertation, I find that *felt* reluctance is related to leader effectiveness, whereas perceived reluctance (on behalf of others) is related to leader emergence. In the future, it would be helpful to explore discrepancies between what a leader (or job candidate) is experiencing and what others can sense. Although feelings tend to leak out (Ekman, 1993; Rothman & Wiesenfeld, 2007; Waxer, 1977), people may still attempt to conceal their reluctance to lead because leading others is seen as a desirable endeavor by society. Yet, scholars should also examine specific contexts in which being reluctant to lead is actually normative (or at least, more acceptable). For example, reluctance to lead may be more common in certain occupational fields like academia and engineering, as taking on managerial responsibilities in these contexts entails a significant shift in identity and day-to-day job duties. Also, politics is an arena in which it is dangerous to *seem* overly ambitious about the job (especially for women; Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010). For example, the Zuni (a Native American tribe) have a history of only electing chiefs that do not want the job (Benedict, 1935), and in the words of English author Douglas Adams, “anyone who is capable of getting themselves made President should on no account be allowed to do the job” (Adams, 1980: 197). This brings up the possibility that people may strategically *feign* reluctance to lead, which has important implications for leader emergence and effectiveness.

The impact of reluctance to lead on leader well-being warrants additional attention. Research on cognitive dissonance suggests that conflicting beliefs elicit discomfort, and people often reject or misinterpret information that is inconsistent with their extant beliefs in an attempt to minimize feelings of discomfort (Festinger, 1957).

Relatedly, if individuals are both motivated and reluctant to lead, they may experience this ambivalence as an aversive state (Nordgren, van Harreveld, & van der Pligt, 2006), leading to stress and strain (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). Pratt (2000: 481) described ambivalent employees as being of “two minds,” reflecting that they feel pulled in opposing directions. Because of conflicting motivations, ambivalent leaders may experience higher levels of stress than those who are purely motivated to lead, especially at the start of their position. At the same time, scholars have found that mixed emotions are positively related to (eudaimonic) well-being, possibly because mixed emotions can stem from goal conflict and may be indicative of the search for meaning in one’s life (Berrios, Totterdell, & Kellett, 2017). Additional research is needed to understand the extent to which reluctance to lead is accompanied by discomfort and stress, as well as how ambivalent leaders resolve their dissonant attitudes related to leadership.

Practical Implications

My framework offers fresh insights for leadership selection and development. People are often chosen as leaders based on their leadership experience (Atwater, Dionne, & Avolio, 1999) and the extent to which they are prototypical (Lord et al., 1986). While these criteria have merit, a deeper understanding of people’s motivations and concerns around leading may also prove useful. Rather than picking those who are most firm in their conviction to lead or have the most experience, I suggest that organizations may benefit from selecting individuals that are slightly hesitant to lead.

Looking beyond candidates who are most vocal or agentic about their desire to lead may be especially helpful in regards to promoting more women into leadership roles. GoDaddy recently implemented a change in which managers were required to consider

all employees as candidates for promotion, not just those who expressed an interest in leadership roles at the organization. Over the course of one year, the number of women who received promotions increased by 30% (Zarya, 2017). Furthermore, in a study of 57 female CEOs (Stevenson & Orr, 2017), two-thirds failed to “realize they could be CEO until someone else told them,” and they gave credit to a boss or mentor who recognized their talents in changing their career aspirations. In a similar vein, it is especially important that organizations consider hiring, sponsorship, and promotion practices that support individuals who are most likely to experience reluctance to lead due to demographic factors and social norms (i.e., expectations around gender and race). Interestingly, whereas the gender ambition gap has often been attributed to unique work/family concerns experienced by women, a large study of female employees revealed that aspirations for executive roles vary by company, rather than family status (Lam, 2017). This suggests that organizations must consider how their diversity initiatives (or lack thereof) and day-to-day treatment of women contribute to reluctance to lead. For example, leadership development efforts, which often include 360-degree feedback and mentoring, must be targeted toward those who do not match the leader prototype and/or express reservations about leading. Interestingly, whereas programs that increase leader self-efficacy may backfire for those with an already eager stance toward leadership, these may be essential for those who are reluctant to lead.

Organizations should also consider changes that help individuals overcome their reluctance more easily so that they are more agentic in pursuing leadership. For example, while there are many benefits of leaderless groups (Anderson & Brown, 2010), non-reluctant individuals are likely to emerge organically in these situations. Competitive

cultures may similarly exacerbate the negative relationship between reluctance to lead and leader emergence. By creating psychologically safe cultures in which people can openly express their reservations about leading (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson, Kramer, & Cook, 2004), reluctant individuals may at least be more willing to engage in dialogue about the potential of leading and examine whether any of their concerns can be mitigated.

Finally, the study of reluctance to lead is especially pertinent for today's workforce, as a recent poll of employees, varying in age, organizational status, and leadership experience indicates that "more than one-third of workers shy away from management positions because they don't want to sacrifice work-life balance" (CareerBuilder, 2014; Lebowitz, 2015). This appears to be the case particularly for Millennials, who are less interested in management compared to generations of young people before them (Grant, 2015). Hence, a better understanding of the factors that cause reluctance to lead and how to remove these obstacles may help organizations avoid leadership voids (DeRue, 2011). Of course, organizations must be careful not to force individuals into leadership and focus on how culture, organizational structure, work design, and leadership demands can be improved to avoid such voids.

Conclusion

Recent work indicates that some people, especially women and racial minorities, hesitate to take on leadership roles, yet less is known about how individuals' feelings of reluctance impact leader effectiveness should they step into a position of power. I argue that a degree of reluctance to lead may counteract the disinhibiting effects of power, increasing empowering leadership behavior and improving leader effectiveness. A better

understanding of the factors that cause reluctance to lead and how to address these challenges may help ensure that reluctant yet qualified individuals actually emerge as leaders.

TABLE 1

Study 1: Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Cronbach's Alpha Reliabilities

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Leader Effectiveness*	.00	.92	(.90)											
2	Empowering Leadership Behavior	6.05	1.00	.21**	(.98)										
3	Reluctance to Lead	2.57	1.23	-.12*	-.01	(.83)									
4	Leader Self-Efficacy	6.00	.71	.06	.13*	-.39**	(.91)								
5	Charge Nurse Frequency	5.07	3.00	.25**	.11*	-.33**	.14**	--							
6	Charge Nurse Training Course	.39	.49	.10†	.10†	-.12*	.04	.07	--						
7	Supervisor's Familiarity with Charge Nurse	5.33	8.73	.12*	-.03	-.13*	.13*	.15*	.19**	--					
8	Peer's Familiarity with Charge Nurse	5.28	8.87	.05	.02	.04	.09†	.00	.17**	.27**	--				
9	Day Shift	.56	.50	.10	.06	-.11*	.09†	-.02	-.05	-.04	.07	--			
10	Night Shift	.31	.46	-.03	-.05	-.02	-.05	.07	.18**	.19**	.06	-.75**	--		
11	Gender	.93	.26	.08	-.03	-.05	.12*	.06	.09†	.10†	.04	.03	.08	--	
12	Race	.79	.41	.07	.06	-.03	-.13*	.01	-.08	-.17**	.01	.13*	-.17**	-.04	--

Note. Leader effectiveness standardized due to different scaling of items. Mean of first two items (on scale from 1-7) = 6.28, SD = .76. For frequency item (on scale from 1-5), mean = 4.07, SD = .77. For gender, 0 = male, 1 = female. For race, 1 = White, 0 = other. Internal consistencies are provided in parentheses. † $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 2

Study 1: Results of Regression Analyses for H1 and H2b

Independent Variables	Leader Effectiveness					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Empowering leadership behavior					.15*	(.07)
Reluctance to lead			.20†	(.11)	.19†	(.11)
Reluctance to lead squared			-.14**	(.04)	-.15**	(.04)
Leader self-efficacy	-.02	(.05)	.01	(.06)	-.01	(.06)
Time in charge nurse role	.19**	(.06)	.21**	(.06)	.20**	(.06)
Charge nurse course	.13	(.13)	.16	(.13)	.12	(.12)
Length of time working with supervisor	.07	(.05)	.06	(.05)	.06	(.05)
Length of time working with peer					.07	(.06)
Day shift	.30	(.21)	.22	(.20)	.19	(.22)
Night shift	.17	(.23)	.06	(.22)	.04	(.24)
Gender	.16	(.19)	.15	(.20)	.18	(.23)
Race	.21†	(.13)	.11	(.12)	.08	(.13)
R Squared	.10		.14		.17	

Note. Robust standard errors shown in parentheses.

TABLE 3

Study 1: Results of Regression Analyses for H2a

Independent Variables	Empowering Leadership Behavior			
	Model 1		Model 2	
Empowering leadership behavior				
Reluctance to lead			.20*	(.08)
Reluctance to lead squared			-.11*	(.05)
Leader self-efficacy	.08	(.06)	.11†	(.06)
Time in charge nurse role	.07	(.06)	.11	(.07)
Charge nurse course	.19	(.12)	.19	(.12)
Length of time working with peer	.01	(.06)	.03	(.06)
Day shift	.10	(.18)	.07	(.18)
Night shift	-.03	(.22)	-.08	(.21)
Gender	-.02	(.18)	-.03	(.17)
Race	.22	(.14)	.19	(.14)
R Squared	.04		.06	

Note. Robust standard errors shown in parentheses.

TABLE 4

Study 1: Results of Supplemental Leader Self-Efficacy Analyses (for Leader Effectiveness)

Independent Variables	Leader Effectiveness					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Reluctance to lead (RTL)			.21†	(.11)	.22†	(.11)
Reluctance to lead squared			-.15**	(.04)	-.16**	(.04)
Leader self-efficacy (LSE)	-.03	(.06)	.03	(.07)	.06	(.07)
Leader self-efficacy squared	-.01	(.03)	.02	(.03)		
RTL X LSE					-.05	(.08)
RTL squared X LSE					-.01	(.03)
Time in charge nurse role	.19**	(.06)	.21**	(.06)	.22**	(.06)
Charge nurse course	.14	(.13)	.15	(.13)	.14	(.13)
Length of time working with supervisor	.07	(.05)	.06	(.05)	.07	(.05)
Day shift	.30	(.21)	.22	(.20)	.20	(.20)
Night shift	.16	(.23)	.07	(.22)	.05	(.22)
Gender	.14	(.19)	.17	(.20)	.16	(.20)
Race	.22†	(.13)	.10	(.12)	.08	(.12)
R Squared	.10		.14		.15	

Note. Robust standard errors shown in parentheses.

TABLE 5

Study 1: Results of Supplemental Leader Self-Efficacy Analyses (for Empowering Leadership Behavior)

Independent Variables	Empowering Leadership Behavior					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Reluctance to lead (RTL)			.20*	(.08)	.20*	(.08)
Reluctance to lead squared			-.11*	(.05)	-.09*	(.04)
Leader self-efficacy (LSE)	.07	(.07)	.12†	(.07)	.06	(.08)
Leader self-efficacy squared	-.02	(.03)	.01	(.03)		
RTL X LSE					.01	(.08)
RTL squared X LSE					.02	(.03)
Time in charge nurse role	.06	(.06)	.11	(.07)	.10	(.07)
Charge nurse course	.20	(.13)	.19	(.12)	.20	(.12)
Length of time working with peer	.01	(.06)	.03	(.06)	.02	(.06)
Day shift	.10	(.18)	.07	(.18)	.09	(.17)
Night shift	-.03	(.22)	-.08	(.21)	-.06	(.21)
Gender	-.04	(.20)	-.02	(.18)	-.06	(.18)
Race	.22	(.14)	.19	(.14)	.20	(.14)
R Squared	.04		.06		.07	

Note. Robust standard errors shown in parentheses.

TABLE 6

Study 2: Means and Standard Deviations by Condition

	Leader Selection	Prototypicality
No reluctance, male leader	5.13 (1.42)	5.34 (0.90)
No reluctance, female leader	5.42 (1.29)	5.04 (1.12)
Low/moderate reluctance, male leader	4.76 (1.08)	3.93 (1.06)
Low/moderate reluctance, female leader	4.66 (1.19)	3.92 (1.02)
High reluctance, male leader	4.57 (1.45)	3.81 (1.06)
High reluctance, female leader	4.16 (1.45)	3.63 (1.21)

Note. Standard deviations shown in parentheses.

FIGURE 1

Theoretical Model

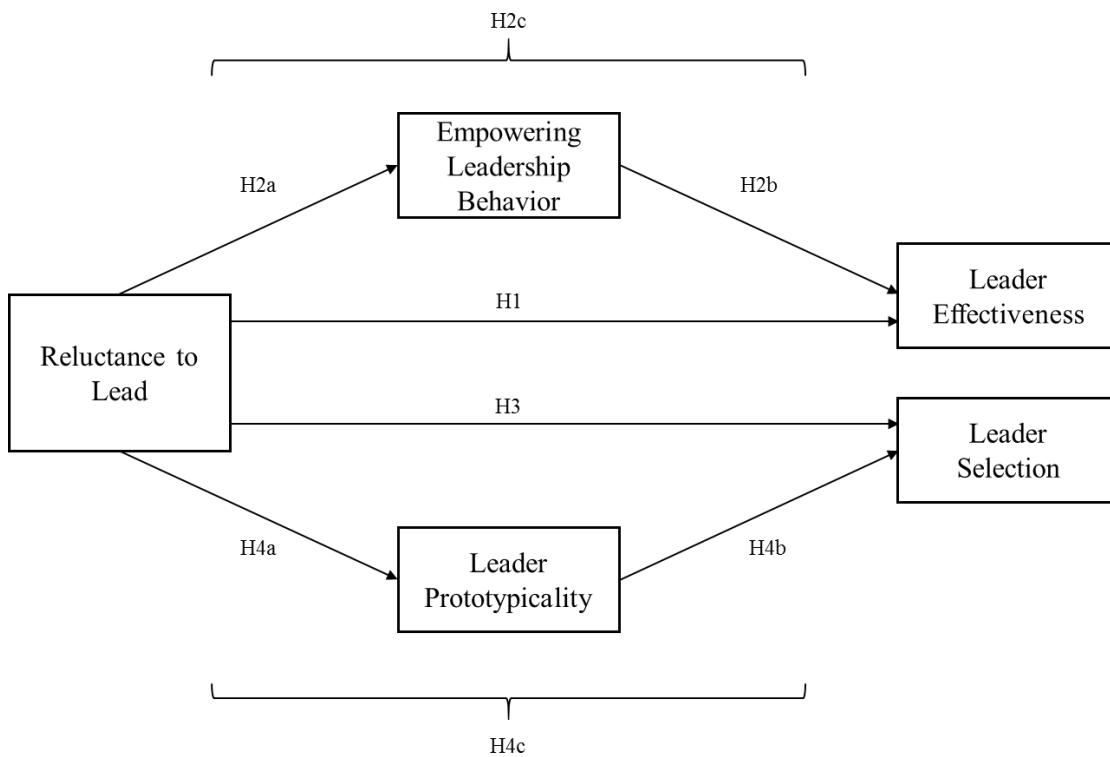


FIGURE 2

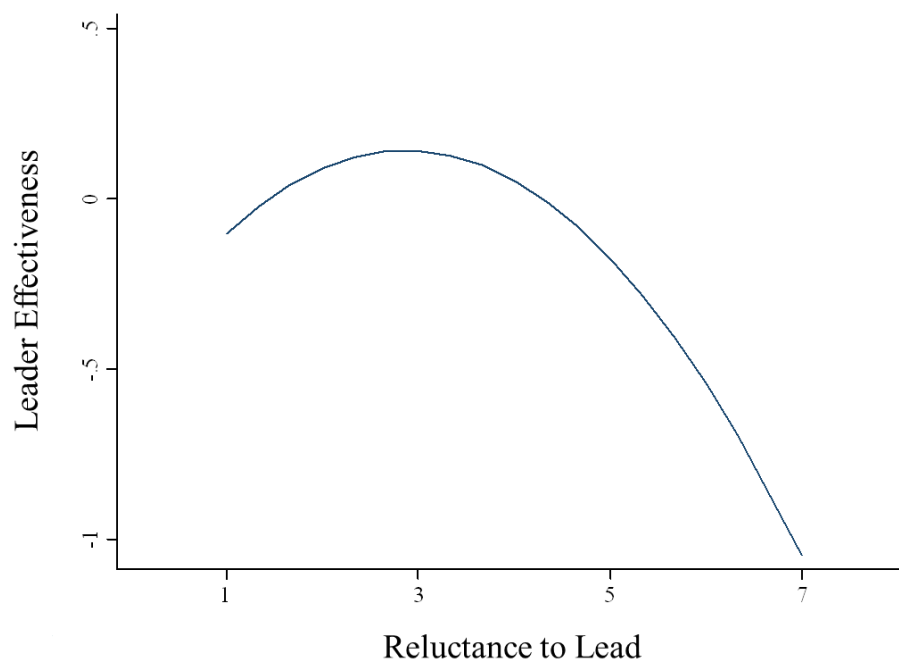
Study 1: The Relationship between Reluctance to Lead and Leader Effectiveness

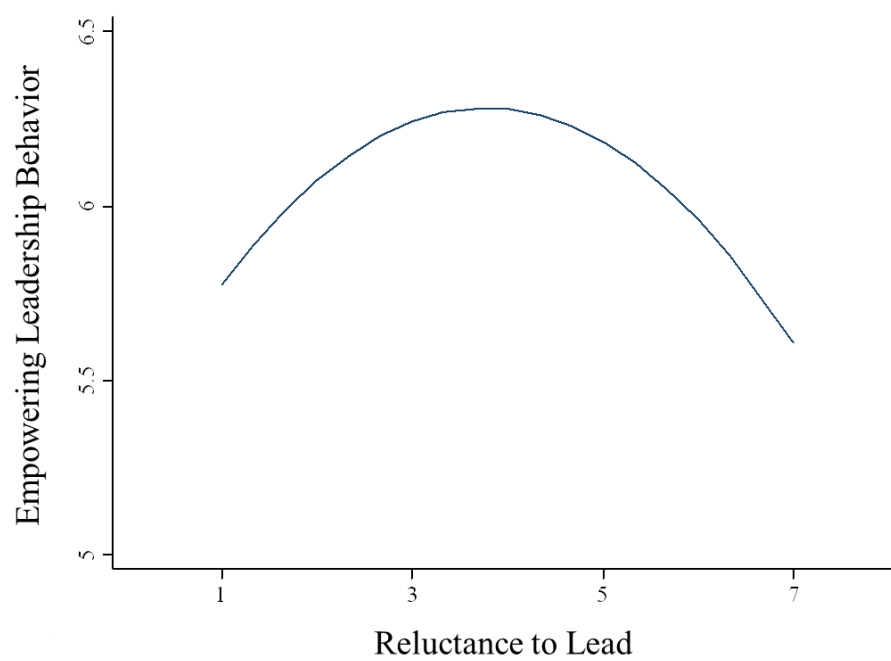
FIGURE 3**Study 1: The Relationship between Reluctance to Lead and
Empowering Leadership Behavior**

FIGURE 4

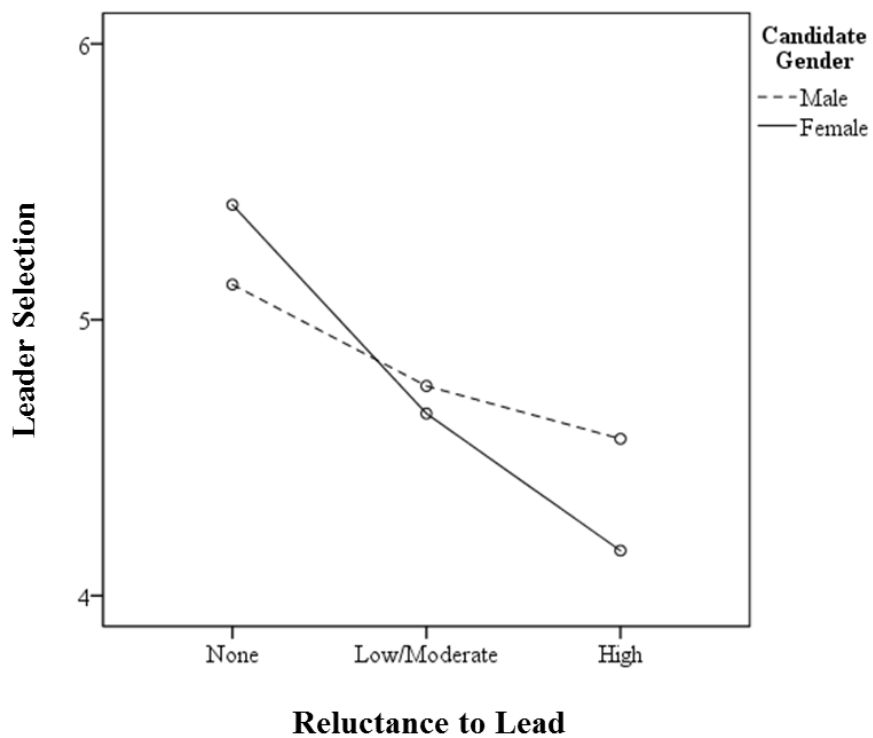
Study 2: The Relationship between Reluctance to Lead and Leader Selection

FIGURE 5

Study 2: The Relationship between Reluctance to Lead and Perceptions of Leader

Prototypicality

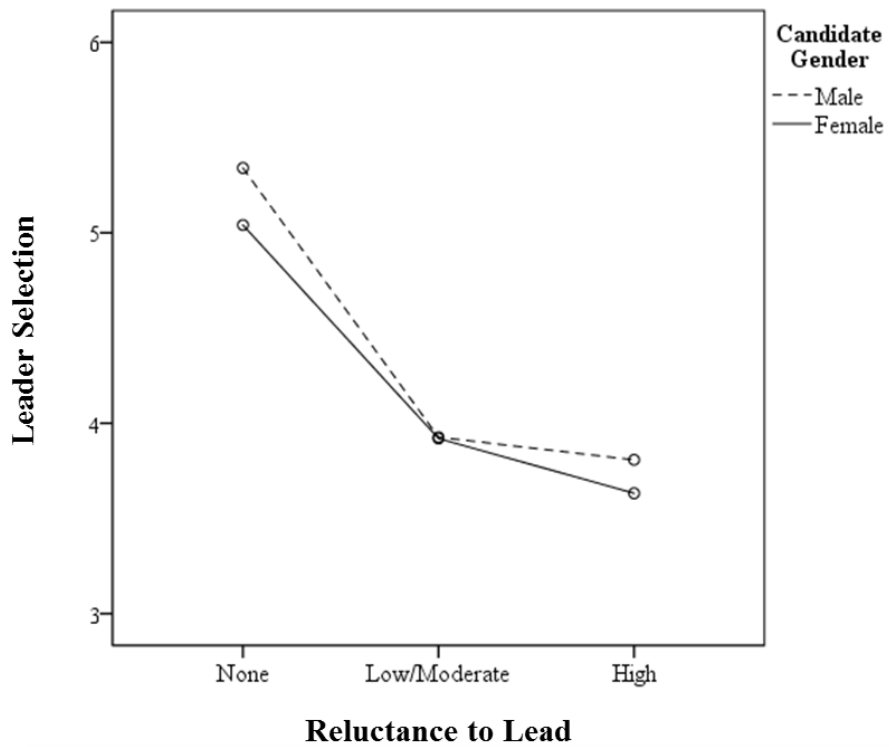


FIGURE 6**Study 3: Reasons Underlying Reluctance to Lead**

	Internal to Work	External to Work
Impact on Others	Burden of responsibility Work relationships	Family priorities Work/life balance
Impact on Self	Self-doubt Stress	Privacy Freedom

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