

Developmental Experiences Impacting Leadership Differentiation in Emerging Adults

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family:

My brother, Nathan, who offers the perfect balance of inspiration, competition and collaboration in my life;

My mom, Barbara, who is my biggest encourager and role model;

And my dad, Tom, who passed away half way through my doctorate, but packed more than enough love and support in those first two years to carry me through to this moment.

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Abstract

Several decades of research have indicated a strong relationship between developmental experiences and the lessons that shape one's leadership. Furthermore, researchers have suggested that effective leadership often involves a complex combination of various components or character qualities. Differentiated leadership involves knowing and expressing one's convictions while also listening to and deeply understanding the perspectives of others around them. Research is limited on which experiences shape differentiated leadership or a shared capacity of conviction and connection. As a critical phase of development, emerging adulthood (the phase of life from ages 18 through 25) may be a particularly important time to develop these leadership qualities. Furthermore, the way the workforce is rapidly changing suggests that emerging adults will soon be in positions of leadership. Thus, leveraging this stage of life to focus on developmental experiences that shape differentiated leadership may better prepare emerging adults for the workforce. This study explores which foundational experiences develop differentiated leadership in emerging adults, while controlling for openness to experience. The sample consisted of 274 emerging adults enrolled in an online leadership development tool. Hierarchical regression analyses were used to test the primary hypotheses and exploratory research questions, all of which resulted in statistically significant results. Specifically, *People Experiences* positively predict conviction and connection development beyond other types of experiences. Exploratory analyses indicated which specific experiences most impacted this development, and results particularly pointed to the importance of family experiences. Implications are offered regarding which specific

experiences emerging adults should seek out to develop differentiated leadership, and which experiences educators, supervisors, and families of emerging adults could provide.

CHAPTER I

Introduction and Literature Review

“Few people enter emerging adulthood at age 18 with a well-established world view, but few people leave their twenties without one, just as few people leave their twenties without a definite direction in love and work.” – Arnett (2014)

“These are the years when it will be easiest to start the lives we want. And no matter what we do, the twenties are an inflection point - the great reorganization - a time when the experiences we have disproportionately influence the adult lives we will lead.” – Jay (2012)

Few of us would deny that one of the fundamental challenges that human beings face, whether leaders or not, is the challenge of developing a strong sense of what we believe alongside the challenge of maintaining healthy connections to others at the same time. This fundamental tension, often referred to as differentiation, is something that likely begins at the beginning of our lives and continues through our adult development. A particularly powerful moment is the season of emerging adulthood when the challenge of developing a sense of self and connections to others is as salient as any moment in life, especially in the context of one’s influence as a leader. This is due to the numerous experiences and opportunities young adults are navigating for the first time on their own. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences that impact leadership differentiation – the emergence of both conviction (sense of self) and connection (sense of other) in emerging adults who are developing as leaders.

The term emerging adult refers to the age (18-25 years old) and stage of life an individual is experiencing, regardless of the generation to which they belong. In the last five to ten years, this age group has been predominantly comprised of individuals in the millennial generation. Due to millennials entering the workforce, emerging adulthood has

been heavily researched in recent years as employers attempt to understand how to prepare for this new group of individuals, many of who will likely step into leadership roles. Current emerging adults are important to study for a few reasons. First, the developmental stage emerging adults are experiencing, in combination with generational differences, has led researchers to the conclusion that these individuals may have unique needs when developing as leaders (Erikson,1966, 1988; Levinson,1986; Sessa et al., 2007). Second, during this stage of life, individuals seek to acquire autonomy and a sense of identity (Arnett, 2000). Due to a number of factors, such as an increasingly globalized workforce and access to information via the internet, emerging adults are forming their opinions and convictions in the midst of more options than possibly any other generation (Arnett, 2000; Shanahan, 2000). Third, the older end of this age group, millennials (born in 1980-1996), are already in many leadership positions and made up 35% of the work force in 2017 (Fry, 2018). It is expected that current emerging adults, born in 1995-2002, will follow similar trends and also quickly develop into positions of leadership. Since we can expect emerging adults to be in leadership positions in the near future, it is important to study how they can develop differentiated leadership while in this identity-shaping stage.

Effective leaders have many qualities and skills such as inspiring others, managing subordinates, and showing genuine care for followers (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Judge et al., 2004). Of particular importance is a leader's ability to be convicted while also being connected to the perspectives and emotions of others around them (McKenna & Yost, 2004). Built on a foundation in marriage and family systems theory (Bowen, 1974; Goldhor-Lerner, 1989), leadership differentiation highlights the importance of

leaders being able to balance their own identity and convictions while simultaneously staying connected to the perspectives of people surrounding them (Friedman, 1985; McKenna & Yost, 2004). Research shows that leaders may develop skills related to conviction and connection (e.g., decisiveness, knowing one's values, dealing with others' perspectives, directing and motivating others) through formal and informal learning experiences, key assignments, and other on-the-job experiences (e.g. Kraiger & Culbertson, 2013; McCall, 1988, 2010; McCauley et al., 1994). However, what has not been studied is which experiences directly develop leadership differentiation, specifically for emerging adults developing as leaders. This leaves many questions such as: Of these numerous experiences, which ones should 18-25 year olds who are preparing for leadership positions seek out? Which experiences should employers provide to emerging adult employees to accelerate their development? And, what is the relationship between these experiences, the development of self, and connection to others?

In order to understand the development of an emerging adult as a leader, it's necessary to first understand the complex set of variables that forms the identity of an individual, and then deep dive into the specific context of leadership. Following, is a review of those personal, interpersonal, and contextual factors that shape emerging adults and their leadership development.

Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood refers to the elongated transition period from adolescence to adulthood in which many individuals report viewing themselves as neither adolescents nor fully adults (Arnett, 2000, 2014). This stage generally occurs between the ages of 18 to 25 as individuals navigate through numerous identity choices with few standard social

norms guiding their transition (Arnett, 2000, 2016; Shanahan, 2000). While prior generations in their twenties could rely on standard norms in a specific order (e.g., attending college, getting a job, getting married, buying a house in their hometown, and having children) that is no longer seen as the standard order due to the additional options available (e.g., taking a gap year, moving states/countries, birth control) and challenges (e.g., job market, housing costs, tuition fees) facing current emerging adults. Due to their pursuit of higher education, instability of residential status, and wide scope of social (e.g., choice of friend groups) and intellectual (e.g., choice of college majors) experiences, this age is demographically different than surrounding ages (Arnett, 2016).

Emerging adulthood begins with adolescents who are generally dependent on parents or caretakers and whose futures remain largely undefined. However, this stage ends with young adults who demonstrate key indicators of adulthood such as living independently, being financially independent of parents, deciding on personal beliefs and values, having long-term relationships, and having a defined career path and identity (Nelson & Barry, 2005; Wood et al., 2018). Emerging adulthood has been called the *volitional years* due to the opportunities and exploration of possible life, love, work directions and establishment of one's world view (Arnett, 2000, 2016). As individuals explore these opportunities, they are developing the characteristic qualities (e.g., self-sufficiency, maturity, resilience, ownership of actions, emotional self-regulation, consideration of others) necessary for becoming independent individuals in committed relationships who can take on the adult roles and responsibilities described above (Arnett, 2000, 2016; Nelson & Barry, 2005; Wood et al., 2018).

The Impact of Culture

Rather than being viewed as a universal period, emerging adulthood is better viewed as a period that is unique to specific cultures wherein individuals postpone certain adult roles and responsibilities much past one's late teens. Arnett's (2000) research suggests that emerging adulthood is relevant primarily to twenty-somethings in developed and industrialized cultures and countries, with most research focusing on European and North American cultures. This impact of culture is even evidenced by differences in cognitive development.

During emerging adulthood, brain development occurs such that individuals are better able to integrate emotional information into their cognitive processing (Benes, 1998; Taber-Thomas & Perez-Edgar, 2015). Due to the plasticity of the brain, the neurodevelopmental processes responsible for these changes may be seen earlier in cultures where there is more pressure to rapidly transition to adulthood, and later in cultures with a prolonged stage of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Douglass, 2007; Taber-Thomas & Perez-Edgar, 2015). For example, within the United States, individuals may transition to adulthood more rapidly in cultures such as those within conservative religious traditions (Arnett, 2000) or in rural locations, compared to the prolonged transition stage of those in cultures of higher academia or rapid career development found in many Western cities with fast-growing economies.

One potential cause for the impact of culture on emerging adulthood is that industrial and developed societies place greater value on the concepts of individualism, self-realization, and personal expressions compared to less developed societies (Arnett, 1998). The value placed on these concepts likely lead to an elongated process of shaping one's identity (Arnett, 1998). Other reasons for this stage being particularly salient in

developed societies likely includes a combination of the following factors: requirement of post-high school education for many occupations, changes from industrial to information-based economies, stagnation of salary for low skilled workers, increased costs of education, and increased costs of independent living (Arnett, 2000; Rifkin, 2011, Wood et al., 2018). Along with cognitive development and culture, another essential piece to understanding emerging adulthood for current emerging adults is the perspective of it as both a developmental stage as well as having unique generational differences.

Developmental Stage Versus Generational Differences

While emerging adulthood has been primarily researched as a developmental stage, this age group of 18-25 year olds can be viewed as either a stage or a generation. Erikson (1968) and Levinson (1986) propose that as individuals grow, they encounter various developmental stages each with their own challenges. Generational cohort theory takes a slightly different view and posits that a group of individuals may be predisposed to similar characteristics, attitudes, behaviors, and values due to sharing the same historical and social context, and this context likely differs from previous generations (Dannar, 2013; Sessa et al., 2007).

Developmental Stages

Erikson and Levinson provide the theoretical foundation for examining age groups and their differences. Erikson (1968) proposes that individuals advance through eight stages of psychosocial development, each with their unique core conflicts, as they age. The age range of 19 to 40 years is said to wrestle with the conflict of intimacy versus isolation (Erikson, 1968). During this time, individuals face the tension of commitment to

loving relationships, or protecting themselves from the potential vulnerability and rejection that may accompany pursuit of those relationships.

Influenced by Erikson's work, Levinson (1986) developed a similar theory of adult development in which individuals pass through developmental milestones as they transition into each era of age. Levinson (1986) defined the 17 to 45 age range as the second era – early adulthood. This era is characterized by high levels of energy, abundance, stress, and contradiction. During this time, individuals must weight their competing desires and priorities such as choosing between starting their career or starting their family (Levinson, 1986).

A consistent theme between these challenges of intimacy versus isolation and energy versus stress, is an interaction between self and other. As one is navigating their late teens and early twenties, they are beginning to make decisions between their own desires and views, and those of others (Arnett, 2000; 2016; Erikson, 1968; Levinson, 1986). This tension between independence and interdependence is further emphasized in research (Arnett, 1994, 1997, 1998, 2001; Nelson & Barry, 2005), as both categories are represented in the criteria for adulthood. For example, criteria for adulthood that focus on independence include being financially independent of parents, accepting responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, and deciding on personal beliefs and values independently of parents and others. Criteria for adulthood that focus on interdependence include long term commitments to others, having effective control over one's emotions, and becoming less self-oriented while developing greater consideration of others (Nelson & Barry, 2005). Thus, the tension between self and other is particularly prominent in

emerging adulthood due to the corresponding developmental stage individuals are experiencing.

Generational Cohort Theory

Generational cohort theory differs from developmental stages theory in that it suggests that the cohort one grows up in plays a larger role in how they develop than predictable stages would indicate. This suggests that a cohort (defined as people who were born around the same time or during a specific time period) grow up in a similar historical and social context, thus leading to many similarities among members of that cohort. They experience the same life changing events (e.g. the 2008 stock market crash, September 11 terrorist attacks), in that same context, and their shared experience is likely unique from the experience of other cohorts. Due to this shared context, members of the same generation are predisposed to similar characteristics, attitudes, behaviors and values as their peers (Dannar, 2013; Sessa et al., 2007). Many current emerging adults (ages 18-25) in developed and industrialized cultures and countries have been raised in a time of rapid technological advancement and a context that is more globalized than any previous generation (Ng et al., 2010; Sessa et al., 2007; Tapscott, 1998). This generation may even differ from other generations in personality factors. For example, research has suggested that those in the millennial generation show increased self-esteem, narcissism, less need for social approval, and an increased belief of an external locus of control (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Additionally, this generational cohort has been shaped by societal and economic uncertainty such as economic shortfalls in the housing market, international armed conflict, and public ethical failures of leaders (Gallup, 2016).

Given generational cohort theory and the research that suggests ways emerging adults differ from previous generations, it is likely that current emerging adults have unique needs compared to previous generations. As compared to previous generations, the stage of life in one's 20s has been uniquely complicated due to social and economic forces that have prolonged the transition to adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Côté, 2014). This indicates the need to build on prior research regarding the needs of this specific generation in this stage of life.

Identity Exploration and Development

It has been suggested that identity exploration and development, a key piece of emerging adulthood, is less structured than ever before for this generation (Arnett, 2014; Côté, 2000). Arnett explains the experience of emerging adulthood in his statement that “Few people enter emerging adulthood at age 18 with a well-established world view, but few people leave their twenties without one, just as few people leave their twenties without a definite direction in love and work” (2014). In this stage of life, emerging adults go from exploring their identity through a variety of opportunities available (e.g. educational, love, and social opportunities), to having clear convictions about who they are and their role in life (Arnett, 2000, 2014). As seen in the Arnett quote, the three primary areas of identity development during this stage include love, work, and worldviews (Arnett, 2014, 2016; Wood et al., 2018).

Young adult identity also involves establishing a stable identity through adapting to changing demands (Benson & Elder, 2011; Schwartz et al., 2005). Autonomy is a key contributor to this identity stabilization (Benson & Elder, 2011; Greenberger, 1984). In the midst of numerous choices and varied opinions with a lack of defined norms guiding

them, emerging adults must develop a sense of autonomy in order to develop a stable and viable identity. Furthermore, researchers have suggested that identity includes three types of continuity (Côté & Levine, 2014; Erikson, 1968). The first type is a sense of continuity with oneself, sometimes referred to as *ego identity*. The second type is a sense of continuity with interrelationships between self and other. The third type is a sense of continuity of the identities within one's community (Côté & Levine, 2014). When any of these types of continuity of identity are threatened by instability, an individual may feel pressured to revise their identity (Côté & Levine, 2014). With identity development being such a key element of emerging adulthood, how is that identity developed?

For emerging adults who will be in leadership roles, this stage of identity exploration and development has implications for one's leadership development and their identity as a leader. Clinical psychologist Meg Jay, who has decades of experience counseling emerging adults, refers to the twenties as a critical period of adulthood. During this stage, there are windows of opportunity and learning happens quicker than in other life stages. Jay (2012) has observed that the experiences that happen in one's twenties disproportionately influence their adult lives, thus labeling it a critical period of development. This critical period will ultimately impact how emerging adults lead, and this stage is a valuable time to develop them for the leadership roles they will likely be taking on in their early careers. In order to better understand the implications this critical stage of development has for emerging adults developing as leaders, a deeper exploration into the environment, traits, and experiences for this development is necessary.

Leadership Development and Identity

Emerging adult identity in the context of leadership development is shaped by numerous factors including one's environment (Bandura, 1977) and traits (Day & Zaccaro, 2007). However, much of what shapes leadership identity falls into the broad category of foundational experiences (Yeager & Callahan, 2016). A large portion of these experiences take place on-the-job during one's early career, and outweigh more formal experiences such as training (McCall, 2004).

Leader development, when viewed from a life span perspective, is an ongoing process from childhood to adulthood which happens through life experiences that shape a leader's identity (Day et al., 2009). Erikson (1980) observed that cultures provide members with a space in between childhood and adulthood for them to explore and develop their new adult identity. This is referred to as *institutionalized moratoria* (Erikson, 1980). During this time, they can experiment with various roles without fear of permanent commitment. The experiences that emerging adults try out in this space may include travel, service (e.g., military, Peace Corp.), schooling, or even dropping out of a role (e.g., changing majors, leaving a job; Erikson, 1968). Research suggests that experiences during later adolescence affect an emerging adult's identity (Benson & Elder, 2011). Additionally, one's identity as an emerging adult shifts with major experiences such as becoming a parent, or gaining more independence (Arnett, 1998, 2001; Galinsky, 1981). In regards to leadership development, guidance on which experiences to pursue is limited, and emerging adults may even be directed to experiences by mass culture (e.g., passive consumption of media, packaged experiences) that delay their development (Côté, 2000). The specific experiences that are particularly foundational to leadership development will be discussed in the following sections.

Emerging Adults as Developing Leaders

Leadership goes beyond identity in that it is not only balancing one's sense of self and consideration of others, but it is being responsible for the development of others (McKenna, 2008). By simple population changes alone, there will be many emerging adults transitioning into leadership roles in the next five to ten years. In 2017, the US workforce consisted of 35% millennials (70 million individuals born between 1980-2000; Fry, 2018). Many emerging adults are already in positions of leadership with little guidance from research on the best ways to prepare them for these roles (Fry, 2018). Baby Boomer retirements are impending (Yeager & Callahan, 2016), which will open up many leadership roles for younger generations. Additionally, organizations are rapidly changing in ways that require quickly developing the next generation (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2011). These changes include switching to flatter structures with more teams which in turn creates the need for more leaders (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2011; Day et al., 2009; Yeager & Callahan, 2016). This research strongly suggests that emerging adults are on a trajectory to be leaders soon, whether or not they are prepared. Furthermore, emerging adults will need to be developed differently as they will be leading a different generation who has different expectations of leadership. The new structures of organizations and new generations require different skills sets, which creates a need to develop emerging adults as leaders with different skillsets than previously required.

The current workforce context is one of increased complexity of jobs with more options available than ever before (Côté, 2000; Côté & Levine, 2014). Amidst the lack of consensus from society regarding guidance on how to navigate this context, action must

be taken to best prepare emerging adults for their leadership roles (Côté, 2000). Additionally, as previously noted, society expects emerging adults to simultaneously demonstrate both independence and interdependence amongst many other pairs of seemingly opposite characteristics. The following sections will review various models of leadership, the differentiated leadership model, and the role that experiences play in leadership development.

Models of Leadership

Leadership can be defined as “a process that involves the influence of individuals within a group context to achieve some goal” (Northouse, 2016). Generally, that process is defined as a trainable set of skills and behaviors displayed in interactions by leaders to influence their followers to achieve a goal (Day, 2001; Yeager & Callahan, 2016). Over the past century, several models of leadership have emerged as to what defines effective leadership. Early models suggested that leadership is a collection of traits and that leadership is born or discovered (Day & Zaccaro, 2007). Soon after these models were proposed, they were found to be ineffective due to leaders not existing in isolation, but adapting their behavior to those around them. Thus, trait models were replaced with models of leadership as a collection of behaviors that could be trained. Furthermore, in the late 1940s, research emerged suggesting that leadership must be effective and appropriate to the situation at hand and is not simply a list of traits or behaviors (Day & Zaccaro, 2007). Building on that research, Fiedler (1964) developed the contingency theory suggesting that the combination of trait-like qualities with situational contingencies are what determine the efficacy of various leadership styles. For example, Fiedler suggested that task-oriented or relational-oriented leaders may be more or less

effective in different situations. Other theories, such as path goal theory (House, 1971) and leader member exchange theory (Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen et al., 1982), also took a situational approach to leadership and suggested that the effectiveness of leadership behaviors depended on factors such as follower characteristics, task characteristics, the environment, and the relationship between the leader and subordinates. Further research explored leadership from the perspective of follower perceptions (e.g., Hollander & Julian, 1969), fitting a leadership prototype (e.g., Lord et al., 1984), or personality characteristics (e.g., Judge et al., 2002). While numerous leadership models have been proposed with varying conclusions, much of the research suggests that effective leadership is likely a combination of traits, behaviors, the situation/environment, and the perceptions of and interactions with followers (Day & Zaccaro, 2007). This brings us to modern models of leadership which take into account many of these key factors and suggest that there may be complex, competing components to leadership.

Modern Leadership Models

Many of the modern leadership models suggest various complex combinations of components or character qualities of leadership. For example, in the model of transactional-transformational leadership, transformational leadership focuses on a leader inspiring followers with purpose and goals, while transactional leadership focuses on a leader properly exchanging resources (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Both transactional and transformational leadership are important to leadership effectiveness, and an effective leader likely demonstrates both (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Yet another leadership model involves consideration and initiating structure (Judge et al., 2004). Consideration refers to the extent to which a leader shows concern and respect for followers, while initiating

structure refers to the extent to which the leader organizes and defines roles. Both consideration and initiating structure are important for objective and subjective leadership success (Judge et al., 2004).

Differentiated Leadership

Another complex leadership model is the Differentiated Leadership Model. This leadership model is closely related to the concept of “self-differentiation” seen in family systems theory (see Bowen, 1974; Goldhor-Lerner, 1989) and refers to the extent to which a leader defines their own goals and convictions while staying in touch with the system of people around them (McKenna & Yost, 2004). Furthermore, differentiation of self can be defined as “the capacity to maintain autonomous thinking and achieve a clear, coherent sense of self in the context of emotional relationships with important others” (Skowron & Friedlander, 1988, p. 237). Bowen (1978) described differentiation of self as a balance between one’s emotional and intellectual functioning and one’s intimacy and autonomy in relationships. This concept involves maintaining flexible boundaries that allow one to consider the perspectives of others while also adhering to their own convictions (Bowen, 1978; Kerr, 1988; Skowron & Friedlander, 1998). Emphasis on this balance can also be seen in trending literature such as books on radical candor and fierce conversations, in which practitioners provide advice on simultaneously staying true to one’s own values, paying attention to the needs of others, and having authentic conversations (see Scott, 2004; Scott, 2019). This balance of self and other is clearly important in leadership, and particularly during high-pressure moments.

During times of adversity, differentiated leaders will balance their personal convictions with the needs of others. The difference between this approach and other

approaches is that it calls out the necessary tension between managing one's self and managing connections to other people, a paradox that becomes even more salient when pressure and anxiety rises in the system of people around the leader (Bowen, 1974; Goldhor-Lerner, 1989; McKenna & Yost, 2004). A leader's response during stressful moments is especially important as their response affects the anxiety felt by all who are around them. Differentiated leadership centers around the concept that a leader must balance their conviction and connection.

Conviction

Conviction has been defined as “the ability to maintain a clear direction and to have a clear and consistent sense of who you are and what is most important to you” (McKenna & Yost, 2004, p. 295). This involves knowing one's own emotions and opinions, which are separate from the emotions and opinions of their family of origin or others around them (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Furthermore, in the context of leadership differentiation, conviction refers to adhering to what one knows to be true even when pressured by others to do differently (Bowen, 1978).

Connection

Connection has been defined as “the ability to take the perspective of the other key stakeholders in the system, even the ones who are causing the most anxiety; talk about the goals of other people from their perspectives instead of discussing them only in the context of ‘my goals’” (McKenna & Yost, 2004, p. 296). Connection refers to the interpersonal components of differentiated leadership such as considering the emotions and perspectives of other people (Skowron & Friedlander, 1988). When discussing connection as a strategy for differentiated leadership, McKenna and Yost (2004) describe

it as a leader taking the perspectives of others, empathizing with all who may be affected by their decisions, and recognizing that people's negative actions may be due to other factors and are not personal.

Foundational Experiences in Leader Development

Experiences are at the heart of leadership development (McCall, 1998, 2004), but what is it about experiences that provides such deep opportunity for learning about leadership? So much of what shapes people and potential leaders are the experiences that bring both crucibles and potential for deep development and transformation. Learning can certainly take place in a variety of ways, but some of the deepest lessons are from intense personal events or challenging on-the-job experiences (McCall, 2004).

Emerging adults have likely had experiences that impact their leader development throughout their lives, beginning in early childhood (e.g., experiences with family, adapting to change, and experiences in extracurricular activities) all the way through to their current experiences at work or school (e.g., seeing good and bad role models, leading a team, confronting a subordinate). This section will primarily focus on experiences of those in the late teen to early twenties age range, while first addressing earlier experiences that would have a significant impact.

Experiences and Leadership Development

Multiple research studies have suggested that experiences play a major role in leadership development (e.g., Avolio, 1999, 2005; Avolio & Gibbons, 1988; Day, 2000; McCall, 1998, 2004; McCall et al., 1988; Popper & Amit, 2009; Yeager & Callahan, 2016). McCall (2004) suggests that to the extent that leadership can be learned, it is learned through experiences. Atwater et al. (1999) studied freshmen at a military

academy and found that their past leadership experiences (e.g. positions of influence in contexts such as academics, sports, etc.) and self-efficacy most strongly distinguished their levels of leadership. The students with a strong background of leadership experiences and high self-efficacy held the highest leadership positions (Atwater et al., 1999). Furthermore, Hall et al. (2004) studied West Point cadets and found that those who had more leadership experiences at high school demonstrated higher initial leadership performance. Thus, much of the research supports that experiences can develop leadership.

Experiences in Childhood

A portion of the many experiences that shape a leader's development occur during childhood. For example, leaders report learning some of their first leadership skills early in school and extracurricular activities (Rayburn et al., 2001). Additionally, pivotal events such as moving to new towns or schools as children have taught skills related to leadership such as adapting to new people, places, and situations (Madsen, 2007). Furthermore, leaders report that various significant events or challenges taught them leadership skills regarding responsibility and strength (Madsen, 2007). Lastly, experiences in childhood such as learning about segregation and racial issues affected the importance of diversity issues for leaders later on in leadership (Madsen, 2007). This research suggests that experiences across the lifespan impact one's leadership development. While not a focus of the proposed study, this research suggests that experiences in childhood shape one's leadership.

Experiences in Adulthood

While some experiences that develop leadership occur in childhood, others occur in adulthood. The literature suggests that a majority of these formative leadership experiences occur during one's early work experiences which likely overlap with emerging adulthood. (Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall, 1998, 2004; McCall et al., 1988). Studies examining the developmental experiences of 191 executives resulted in 16 types of experiences or events that can be grouped into four broad categories: assignments, other people, hardship endured, and other events (Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall, 1998). One of the experiences identified in the category of other events is *early work experiences* which are defined as early non-managerial jobs (McCall, 1998). Executives reported learning lessons from these types of experiences such as comfort with ambiguity, learning to be tough, and viewing organizations as systems (McCall, 1998). Janson (2008) conducted similar research studying the developmental experiences of senior leaders. These experiences fell into six primary categories: natural process, coping and struggle, self-improvement, alignment with a cause, relationship with (real or symbolic) parents, and role models (Janson, 2008). However, the majority of experiences the leaders reported occurred at an age over 31 years and thus it is unknown if these generalize to emerging adults (Janson, 2008).

When reviewing these experiences and their impact, it is important to note that one's experience of anything, including leadership, is very individual. Different people will likely have different benefits from the same experience due to prior knowledge, their learning style, and the context around the situation (McCall, 2004). While the research summarized refers to the trends seen in leadership lessons learned from experiences broadly, it is helpful to keep in mind that individual experiences differ.

Experiences that Develop Conviction and Connection

McCall (2004) states that while experiences are key to development, some experiences matter more than others (e.g., on-the-job experiences matter more than formal training/education). Thus, some experiences may be particularly impactful in developing conviction and connection.

Many of the types of experiences studied by Lindsey et al. (1987) and McCall (1998) led to leadership qualities that are associated with conviction. For example, leaders learned how to stand alone and be decisive from experiences where they had to start from scratch or fix a failing operation. Leaders reported learning about what values matter to them from experiences involving role models, seeing values play out, and personal experiences. Furthermore, leaders developed their self-confidence in skills and judgement from experiences with certain projects and formal coursework (Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall, 1998). Hickory (2017) studied the development of conviction in women leaders using some of Lindsey et al.'s (1987) categories and found that experiences related to calling (e.g., feeling called to a specific purpose, called to leadership, etc.) and people (observing role models, dealing with difficult people, etc.) predicted women's conviction above and beyond the categories of leadership and transition experiences. Additionally, research suggests that experiences that are successful lead to increased confidence and self-efficacy in those areas, and resilient self-efficacy develops from experiences in which one perseveres at mastering difficulties (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1989; Popper & Amit, 2009). These learnings are all related to components of conviction meaning these experiences are likely important for developing conviction.

Similar to how experiences such as starting from scratch, fixing a failing operation, and experiencing good and bad role models develop conviction, certain experiences may be better at developing connection or the ability to take the perspectives of others. For example, leaders reported learning how to deal with people's perspectives from experiences such as starting from scratch, business failures, and personal experiences (Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall, 1998). They also learned lessons regarding directing and motivating others from experiences such as starting from scratch, fixing a failing operation, and managing a project of a larger scope. Findings from a study analyzing the leadership experiences of women university presidents suggested that significant events such as a serious illness of a sibling or a close relative help leaders develop awareness and consideration of others' circumstances and perspectives (Madsen, 2007).

Within this research on experience, the experiences that have been found to lead to conviction as well as connection include: starting from scratch, fixing a failing operation, and personal experiences (Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall, 1998). Thus, these experiences are important to consider for developing a shared capacity of conviction and connection in emerging adults who will be stepping into leadership roles.

Role of Personality in Experiences

Before concluding the discussion on experiences, it is important to acknowledge the role that personality plays in how one seeks out experiences. Trait anxiety (lack of confidence) and openness to experience have been found to be significant predictors of leadership development (trait anxiety $R^2 = .39$, openness $R^2 = .06$; Popper et al., 2004). This finding matches the research that suggests personality traits influence the scope and

intensity of a leader's learnings from leadership experiences (Popper & Amit, 2009). Furthermore, openness to experience is generally higher in leaders than non-leaders as measured by the NEO Personality Inventory of the Five-Factor Model (Costa & McCrae, 1992a; Judge & Bono, 2000; Judge et al., 2002; Popper et al., 2004). This trait remains stable from childhood through adulthood with a .66 correlation of scores over 24 years (Costa & McCrae, 1992b). Therefore, relevant personality factors will be measured in this study.

The Present Study: Developmental Experiences Impacting Leadership Differentiation in Emerging Adults

Purpose

The following study and research design are structured to investigate the experiences that impact the shaping of a sense of self and a sense of connection to others in emerging adults developing as leaders. Research indicates a relationship between experiences and lessons, particularly the lessons that impact one's sense of self. But how are those experiences specifically related to the parts that shape one's leadership such as conviction and connection? The following study is based on several decades of research of the developmental journey of leaders, with a further exploration of what that journey looks like for emerging adults.

Data has been collected through a battery of whole leader developmental assessments and measures. An experience-based audit is also included in the battery due to the finding that the vast majority of learning takes place on the job and in real-life experiences (McCall, 2010; McCall et al., 1988; McCauley & McCall, 2014). It is hypothesized that certain experiences will be more powerful than others in developing

conviction and connection. Some of these experiences fall into categories of life and work such as leadership experiences, people experiences, and transition experiences (Hickory, 2017; McCall, 1998).

The theoretical assumption as to why these experiences will develop conviction is based on the research indicating that identity and conviction develop through challenges and growth experiences. Bandura's (1977, 1986, 1989) research on self-efficacy suggests that resilient self-efficacy develops from experiences such as persevering at mastering difficulties, and that successful experiences result in increased confidence in those areas. Additionally, McCall (1998) identified 16 developmental on-the-job experiences which were shown to have helped executives learn more about their basic values, executive temperament, and personal awareness. These learnings support the notion that conviction is likely developed through experiences.

The theoretical underpinnings for these experiences being related to connection are based on McCall's (1998) research of 16 experiences in which some of the key learnings executives reported were relationship learnings such as understanding another person's point of view. Therefore, connection is likely developed through relational experiences.

Definitions

Emerging Adults

For the purposes of this study, emerging adults are defined as those who are currently 18 to 25 years old. The term emerging adult refers to the age and stage of life an individual is experiencing, regardless of the generation to which they belong.

Conviction

Conviction will be defined as McKenna and Yost (2004) define it: “the ability to maintain a clear direction and to have a clear and consistent sense of who you are and what is most important to you” (p. 295).

Connection

For this study, connection will be defined as “the ability to take the perspective of the other key stakeholders in the system, even the ones who are causing the most anxiety; talk about the goals of other people from their perspectives instead of discussing them only in the context of ‘my goals’” (McKenna & Yost, 2004, p. 296).

Leadership and Development

As suggested earlier, leadership can be defined as “a process that involves the influence of individuals within a group context to achieve some goal” (Northouse, 2016). This process often is defined as a trainable set of skills and behaviors displayed in interactions by leaders to influence their followers to achieve a goal (Day, 2001; Yeager & Callahan, 2016). While the application or utilization of skills and behaviors within the context of influence is important in leadership, the concept of leadership differentiation goes one step further in accounting for the emotional processing necessary inside of a leader to show up well in that influence. Differentiated leadership involves making choices in real time regarding which behaviors are best for the leader and for others. Thus, development refers to the development of that capacity.

Developmental Experiences

Experiences are known to be major catalysts of learning and are likely more powerful than many other facilitators of learning (McCall, 1998, 2004). For this study, experiences will be broadly defined as the experiences or events that are important to

one's leadership. The focus of the proposed study is to look into the experiences that emerging adults can seek out on their own, or that can be provided by those in their professional network. Experiences that do not meet these criteria (e.g., personal traumatic events, external spiritual events such as calling, etc.) will not be included, and thus experiences will be limited to those accessible for emerging adults. Due to this criteria, the factor of Calling experiences identified by Hickory (2017) will not be included in the analyses, except for preliminary validation work.

Practical Implications

Emerging adults are building their identities among vast opportunities and decisions. They are in a unique place to be progressive and innovative with their convictions, while simultaneously needing to balance the views of those around them in order to be successful as leaders. As they grow in independence and interdependence (two criteria of adulthood; Nelson & Barry, 2005) they will likely benefit from developing a leadership style that also models this balance of conviction and connection to others' perspectives. They are in a critical period of developing from their experiences (Jay, 2012), and this stage can be leveraged to develop differentiated leaders.

The findings from this study will benefit emerging adults, their educators, their supervisors, their families, and researchers by providing clarity about which experiences will develop leaders who can balance conviction with connection. The results of this study will help inform research by further establishing the predictors of leadership development, and also will provide practical knowledge for emerging adults and those around them to implement. From this research, emerging adults may better understand what experiences they should be seeking if they want to develop in conviction and

connection. Furthermore, those responsible for the development of emerging adults could use this research to provide opportunities for these types of experiences. For example, a supervisor could assist an emerging adult in planning for these experiences and creating opportunities for them while setting developmental goals during a performance review. An educator of emerging adults could incorporate these experiences into coursework or internship requirements (see Billet, 2009). Understanding which experiences are most important may also provide an understanding of which experiences are less important to focus on during this stage.

Hypotheses

Given the literature and purpose discussed above, the hypotheses for the proposed study were as follows:

Hypothesis 1

For emerging adults, *Leadership, Transition, and People Experiences* will be positively related to conviction.

Hypothesis 2

For emerging adults, *Leadership, Transition, and People Experiences* will be positively related to connection.

Hypothesis 3

For emerging adults, *People Experiences* will be a unique and positive predictor of differentiated leadership development (scoring an average of 4 or higher on both the conviction and taking the perspective of others scales).

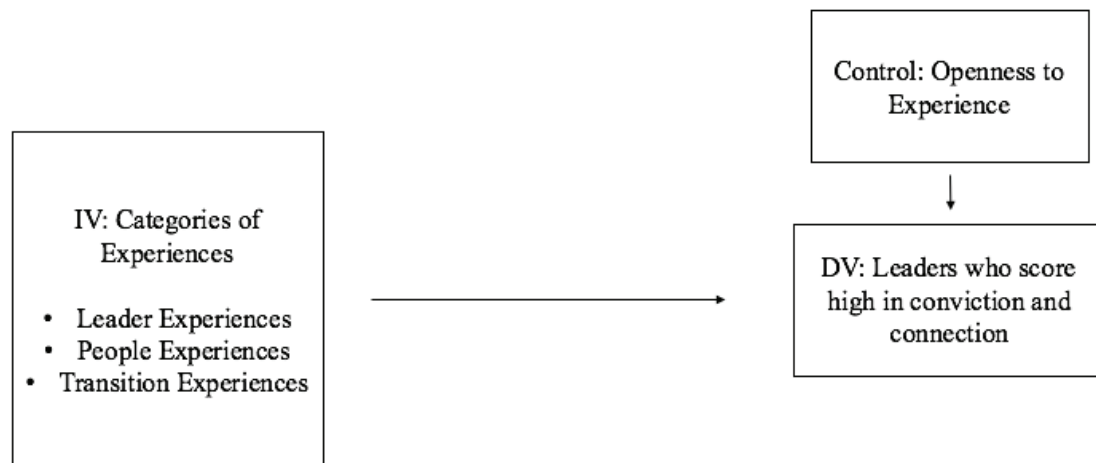


Figure 1. Full Proposed Model. This figure depicts the hypothesized links between key variables in this study.

In addition to these hypotheses, this research investigated two exploratory research questions:

Exploratory Research Question 1

For emerging adults, which experiences are the strongest, positive predictors of conviction development?

Exploratory Research Question 2

For emerging adults, which experiences are the strongest, positive predictors for connection development?

Statistical Analyses

Prior to running the following analyses, I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to determine if the experiences factor into the same four categories as found in Hickory's (2017) research. This four-factor model was confirmed (indicated by the following metrics: CMIN/df < 3, model p-value >.05, CFI > .90, GFI > .95, AGFI > .80, SRMR <.09, RMSEA < .05), and thus I proceeded with the following analyses.

In order to analyze the data from this study, I conducted one-tailed correlations to test hypotheses 1 and 2. Then, I used a multiple hierarchical regression technique to test hypothesis 3 as it allows for the prediction of the outcome variables, conviction and connection, based upon the value of the multiple predictor variables (experience categories and openness to experience) included (Field, 2013). This technique results in information regarding which predictor(s) emerge as unique while taking into account all other variables in the model and their impact on the outcome variable. I regressed a variable of high-conviction-high-connection on each category of experiences to determine the relationship between the experiences and this outcome variable.

In order to investigate the two exploratory research questions, I first conducted two-tailed correlations to see which experiences most correlated with conviction and connection. I then used the results from the correlations to structure two multiple, hierarchical regression analyses. For these analyses, I regressed conviction and connection separately on the three experience items that showed the strongest positive correlation with the dependent variables from the correlation analyses, while controlling for openness to experience.

CHAPTER II

Method

Sampling Procedure

This study used archival data collected from an online personal leadership development platform over the course of 8 years. The archival data included participants who were recruited from a variety of sectors, through invitation. These individuals were not compensated financially but were encouraged to participate as a means of reflection and development of leadership strategies. As part of the development process, participants completed a variety of assessments regarding multiple aspects of their leadership and character development, along with a profile that collected demographic and personal data.

This sampling procedure was chosen in order to better understand a person's perception of their use of leadership strategies of conviction and connection. The data is self-report and is structured for an individual's personal leadership development rather than for evaluating leadership. The archival data analyzed in this study received approval by the Institutional Review Board and follows all procedures regarding human subjects, including informed consent.

Participant Demographics and Sample Size

Participants were included in the analyses if they were within the age range of 18 to 25 years when they took the assessments, were living in the US, and had volunteered their data for research purposes. The number of participants who met the first two criteria and had taken all four measures was 338, and, of these participants, 290 agreed to allow their data to be used for research. Missing data was minimal and thus no participants

were removed nor were any further actions taken to address missing data. The final sample size, accounting for outliers, was 274. This sample greatly exceeded the necessary sample size of 74 participants as suggested by G* Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) when specifying a one-tailed, fixed effects linear model regression and effect size (f^2) of .15, alpha = .05, 1- β = .95, with 4 predictors.

The final sample included 274 participants who were between the ages of 18-25 (M = 22.62, SD = 1.53) when they took the measurements between 2010 and 2017. The sample was 70.4% (193) female, 29.6% (81) male, and 71.2% white (195). Religious preference was primarily Christian Protestant (57.7%), but also included participants who identified as “Other” (52%), Christian Catholic (8.4%) and Atheist/Agnostic (5.5%) among others. Furthermore, participants were from a variety of organization types including not-for-profit (37.6%), not working (10.6%), educational institution (5.1%) and military (3.6%) among others. See Table 1 for the complete list of participant demographic characteristics.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Characteristics	%	N
Sex		
Female	70.4%	193
Male	29.6%	81
Race/Ethnicity		
Caucasian/White	71.2%	195
Hispanic	6.6%	18
Asian/Pacific Island	10.6%	29
African American/Black	3.3%	9
Other	4.4%	12
Missing	4%	11
Religious Preference		
Atheist/Agnostic	5.5%	15
Buddhist	0.4%	1
Catholic	8.4%	23
Protestant	57.7%	158

Hindu	0.7%	2
Jewish	0.7%	2
Other	19%	52
N/A	5.8	16
Missing	1.8%	5
Organization Type		
Business/For-Profit Org	.4%	1
Educational Institution	5.1%	14
Healthcare	.4%	1
Military	3.6%	10
Not-for-Profit Org	37.6%	103
Not working right now	10.6%	29
Other	41.2%	113
Missing	1.1%	3

Note. N = 274.

Measures and Variables

The archival data used was collected via an online leadership development tool. All participants in the data have completed the surveys in the course of 4 months to 1 year. To be selected for the proposed study, participants must have had completed the following measures and items throughout the tool: (a) Assessment Profile – this includes the personality assessment and demographic items; (b) Leadership Experience and Learning Audit – this includes a scale measuring the experiences they have had and the extent to which they have had them; and (c) the Leading Under Pressure Inventory – this includes scales measuring conviction and connection. Each measure used in this study has undergone initial psychometric validation (Haney, 2014; McKenna et al., 2015; McKenna et al., 2013) and has been determined appropriate for this study based upon the fit indices (Byrne, 2000) and alpha levels (Cortina, 1993). Details regarding the measures and their psychometric properties are provided below.

Leadership Experiences and Learning Audit

The Leadership Experiences and Learning Audit (LELA; see Appendix A) assesses a leader's past, current, and future experiences and the lessons learned. Additionally, the LELA assesses the learning strategies leaders use to learn from their experiences. The Experience Scales from this measure were used to assess the developmental experiences of emerging adults.

This measure is based on approximately three decades of research on experiences that develop leaders (McCall, 1988, 2004; McKenna et al., 2007). This research spans multiple leadership contexts such as traditional business settings, ministry, and nonprofit. The LELA was created by combining lists of developmental experiences that capture the key events that shape leaders (Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall et al., 1988; McKenna et al., 2007). The LELA includes 27 developmental experiences which individuals are asked to rate the extent to which they have had, are experiencing, and desire. Example items include: "you were exposed to new environments, cultures, or management philosophies through non-management jobs early in your career" and "you had to get things done through other people without have any direct authority over them". Participants rate the extent to which they have had, are experiencing, or desire each experience using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*no extent*) to 10 (*great extent*).

Results from previous validation work suggest that the LELA contains the following four factors with the respective reliability coefficients: *Leadership Experiences* ($\alpha = .86$), *People Experiences* ($\alpha = .71$), *Transition Experiences* ($\alpha = .73$), and *Calling Experiences* ($\alpha = .72$; Hickory, 2017). For this study, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in order to confirm the four factors of the LELA with the respective reliability coefficients: *Leadership Experiences* ($\alpha = .77$), *People Experiences*

($\alpha = .73$), *Transition Experiences* ($\alpha = .71$), and *Calling Experiences* ($\alpha = .68$). While included in these initial analyses to assess construct validity, the factor of *Calling Experiences* was dropped from the analyses due to statistical and theory/implication driven reasons. The statistical reasoning for dropping this factor was that the reliability coefficient of .68 is considered inadequate for the threshold of .7. The theory/implication driven reason is that the focus of this study is on determining the types of experiences that emerging adults could seek out to develop differentiated leadership. The *Calling Experiences* in the LELA focus on an external or existential call which one could not seek out or expect to experience, thus this factor was dropped in the analyses.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis. I used a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the extent to which the individual LELA experiences had the same four-factor structure as found by Hickory (2017). A confirmatory factor analysis assesses construct validity based on the hypothesized structure, and thus was determined to be an appropriate analysis for validating this measure for use with my sample. Furthermore, I used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index, an index of sampling adequacy, to determine if my sample size is sufficient for a CFA. Kaiser's (1974) recommendations for this index are as follows: .5 = bare minimum, .5 - .7 = mediocre, .7 - .8 = good, .9 and above = superb. The KMO value for my data is .87 suggesting that the sample is good to superb for use of a CFA.

First, I constructed a CFA model with the *lavaan* (v. 0.6-5) package in R and I selected fit criteria for their capacity to assess different aspects of the analysis. I used common fit metrics among SEM researchers such as the chi-square goodness of fit (χ^2). This evaluates the discrepancy between the unrestricted sample matrix and the restricted

covariance matrix. The associated p value indicates adequate fit when the value is non-significant; however, a large sample size can result in a statistically significant p value (Byrne, 2010). I used the comparative fit index (CFI), an incremental index, comparing the hypothesized model with the baseline model. This value should be at least .90 to be an acceptable value (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) considers the error of approximation in the population and expresses it per degree of freedom. As such, the fit indicator considers the complexity of the model. Ideal values are equal to or less than .05, values less than .08 represent a reasonable fit, and values between .08 and .10 represent a mediocre fit. The standardized root mean residual (SRMR) is a standardized measure of the mean absolute covariance residual – the overall difference between the observed and predicted correlations. Values greater than .10 may indicate poor fit in which case inspection of residuals is advised. Researchers have suggested considering other factors such as sample size and model complexity, rather than only using these criteria as strict cutoffs (Kline, 2015).

The 20 items were loaded on their respective correlated factors (i.e., *Leadership Experiences, People Experiences, Transition Experiences, and Calling Experiences*). I began by constructing the baseline model, based off of the EFA results (Hickory, 2017); however, this model had a poor fit to the data: $\chi^2(164) = 333.66, p < .001, CFI = .87, RMSEA = .006$ (90%CI = .05, .07). Next, I constructed a second order factor model, which also had a poor fit to the data: $\chi^2(166) = 343.65, p < .001, CFI = .87, RMSEA = .006$ (90%CI = .05, .07). Both of these models had a poor fit, specifically in regards to the CFI value which did not meet the .9 threshold.

Due to the poor fit of these models, I then constructed a bifactor model. A bifactor

model follows a top-down approach (Jensen, 1998) as one begins building the model with the most prominent factor (e.g., developmental experiences) and allowing all other items to load onto it, and then the builder adds subsequent factors (e.g., *Leadership Experiences, People Experiences, Transition Experiences, and Calling Experiences*) and has items load onto those factors (Cucina & Byle, 2017). The bifactor structure, had optimal fit to the data: $\chi^2(150) = 257.07, p < .001$, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .004 (90%CI = .04, .06).

Overall, these analyses suggest that the bifactor structure is the best fit for the data, indicating that each experience item loads directly onto developmental experiences, along with the experience items loading onto the broad factors of *Leadership Experiences, People Experiences, Transition Experiences, and Calling Experiences*. These results demonstrated that items loaded onto the same factors as found in Hickory's (2017) research and thus I proceeded with analyses using this structure of factors.

Leading Under Pressure Inventory

To assess the dependent variables of conviction and connection, the Demonstrating Conviction and Taking Others' Perspectives scales within the Leading Under Pressure Inventory (LUPI) were used. This inventory is based upon research by McKenna and Yost (2004) and measures the tendencies and strategies one uses when under pressure. At the beginning of the inventory, participants are asked to describe a high-pressure situation they are currently facing, and to answer the remaining items in the context of that situation.

The work of 7 subject matter experts (SMEs), who had interviewed more than 100 senior-level leaders, was used in developing the LUPI. This measure is supported by

initial psychometric evaluation (Haney, 2014; McKenna et al., 2015; McKenna et al., 2013). Alpha coefficients for the current study were assessed to confirm that they were adequate for the two scales from this measure.

Demonstrating Conviction Scale. The Demonstrating Conviction scale ($\alpha = .8$ in this study) assesses an individual's knowledge on what is most important to them, what they would like to see happen, and their ability to clearly communicate that to others (McKenna, 2004). This scale includes 6 items measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 5 (*very much like me*). Example items include: "I speak my mind, even if it might be risky for me to do so" and "I know what's important to me".

Taking Others' Perspectives Scale. The Taking Others' Perspectives Scale ($\alpha = .77$ in this study) assesses an individual's knowledge on their tendency to consider, understand, and listen to others' views (McKenna, 2004). This scale includes 6 items measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 5 (*very much like me*). Example items include: "I am effective at taking the perspectives of others" and "I take the time to listen to other people without talking over them".

Personality Measure

Research has found that openness to experience increases the scope and intensity of learning processes in leadership experiences, which could affect the extent to which participants have developed conviction and connection from experiences. Additionally, being open to experience may lead to some people to being more receptive than others of the lessons learned (conviction and connection in this case). Given this, it is necessary to

control for this factor of personality when studying the relationship between experiences and leadership development.

For the proposed study, the openness to experience scale within the IPIP five factor model (Goldberg, 1999) will be used to control for openness to experience. Along with openness to experience, this model measures neuroticism, agreeableness, extroversion, and conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount, 1991). However, evidence suggests that openness to experience most affects the relationship between experiences and leadership development, and thus it will be the only factor included in analyses from this measure (Popper et al., 2004).

The IPIP five factor model meets optimal psychometric criteria (Goldberg, 1999) and is measured using a 5-point Likert scale in which participants “rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with the following items.” Example items include “I have a vivid imagination” and “I am quick to understand things”. Alpha coefficients for the IPIP five factor model are .84 and .97 (Goldberg, 1992, 1999), which surpasses the traditional minimum threshold of .8 (Cortina, 1993). The alpha coefficient for the openness to experience scale found in this study was $\alpha = .79$.

Research Design and Procedure

This study was a non-experimental design in which emerging adults’ conviction and connection will be regressed on their experiences while controlling for openness to experience. Archival data was used, and only participants who were within the demographic specifications and have taken the measures above were included.

CHAPTER III

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses were conducted to prepare the data for further analyses and identify outliers or missing data. Prior to testing the hypotheses, the data were cleaned and checked for outliers as well as missing data. The descriptions of each preliminary analysis are described in the following sections.

Missing Data

To assess whether data were missing, I first evaluated the dataset for missing cases with plans to remove any participant who had more than 20% missing data from any scale in the study (Parent, 2013). No participants had more than 20% missing data on any scale and thus none were removed. I analyzed missing data at the item level to ensure that no single case had more than 5% missing data. Little's Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) test was used to statistically identify reasons for data to be missing, and the test was nonsignificant, indicating that the data were missing completely at random ($\chi^2(490) = 514.772, p = .212$). Given that the overall MCAR test was nonsignificant and there was less than 5% of the data missing for all participants, no further steps were taken in response to missing data (Schafer, 1999).

Outliers

To assess whether any outliers were present, I used visual inspection of histograms and scatterplots. This indicated that potential outliers were present, and thus I conducted additional tests for these outliers. After standardizing scores for all variables to determine whether any z scores were greater than 3.29 ($p < .001$) [Tabachnick & Fidell,

2013]) to indicate an extreme score, 16 cases were found to be outliers, resulting in the final sample of 274 participants. Descriptive statistics for all variables are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Predictor, Criterion, and Control Variables

Variable	M	SD	Min.	Max.
People Experiences	4.34	.93	1.00	6.00
Transition Experiences	3.99	1.09	1.00	6.00
Leadership Experiences	2.86	.92	1.00	5.57
Conviction	3.98	.63	2.00	5.00
Connection	3.89	.59	2.00	5.00
Openness to Experience	3.74	.54	2.10	5.00

Note. $N = 274$.

Normality

To assess the normality of data, I began with visual inspection using histograms. This showed that all variables were negatively skewed except for *Leadership Experiences*, which was positively skewed. This was supported by descriptive statistics that indicated the same results. I then used the Shapiro-Wilk test to assess whether the data were significantly different from data in a normal distribution. This showed that all variables were significant (they fail to reject the null hypothesis that the data is significantly different from a normal distribution) except for openness to experience. When I conducted this same test on the subset of the data used for the regression analyses (only cases that scored 4.0 or higher on both conviction and connection), all variables were significant except for openness to experience and *Leadership Experiences*. These limitations of non-normal data were addressed by using bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals (Efron & Tibshirani 1993; Field, 2013) when determining

significance. Additionally, the analyses conducted such as regression are robust to non-normal data.

Assumptions

Several assumptions are made when using regression for analysis. I checked these assumptions using the subset of data for the regression analysis. First, the assumption of homoscedasticity is made. I tested for this by visually inspecting scatterplots of all unstandardized residuals to determine if the spread of residuals was consistent at each level of the predictor. I then evaluated linearity by visually inspecting scatterplots for each predictor and criterion variable, which revealed a linear relationship in each case.

Next, I used the Durbin-Watson test to determine whether residuals were independent and uncorrelated. The value from this test was 2.033 which indicated that this assumption was met (Field, 2013). Then, to assess normality of residuals I visually inspected a histogram of the residuals against a normal distribution. This suggested that the residuals were normally distributed. Furthermore, I evaluated collinearity statistics which were all well above the .2 guideline (Menard, 1995) and had VIF scores ranging from 1.03 to 1.48, well below the score of 10 that suggests bias (Bowerman & O'Connell, 1990; Field, 2013; Myers, 1990). Given these results, I determined that no other statistical assumptions were violated and that the data were adequate for the analyses.

Primary Analyses

Hypothesis 1 proposed that for emerging adults, *Leadership*, *Transition*, and *People Experiences* would be positively related to conviction. Hypothesis 2 proposed that for emerging adults, *Leadership*, *Transition*, and *People Experiences* would be positively

related to connection. To assess these hypotheses, I needed to observe a statistically significant correlation between each of the three categories of experiences and conviction as well as connection. Both of these hypotheses were supported with correlations that were statistically significant and positive between each category of experiences and conviction ($r = .16$ to $.26$), and connection ($r = .19$ to $.27$). See Table 3 for details.

Table 3
Correlation Matrix Between Conviction, Connection, and Experiences

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1 Conviction	(.80)				
2 Connection	.38**	(.77)			
3 People Experiences	.26**	.27**	(.73)		
4 Transition Experiences	.16**	.20**	.36**	(.71)	
5 Leadership Experiences	.20**	.19**	.45**	.43**	(.77)

Note. ** Indicates $p \leq .01$. $N = 274$.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that for emerging adults, *People Experiences* will be unique and positive predictors of differentiated leadership development. This hypothesis was supported by a significant ΔR^2 of 4.3%, indicating that *People Experiences* provides incremental validity above and beyond *Leadership Experiences* and *Transition Experiences* when controlling for openness to experience. See Table 4 for details.

Table 4
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Estimates of Test Variables Predicting Differentiated Leadership

Model and Predictors	B	SE _B	β	R^2	ΔR^2	BC _a Lower	BC _a Upper
Step 1				.125			
Openness	.171	.047	.354**			.081	.254
Step 2				.176	.051		
Openness	.157	.046	.325**			.071	.240
Leadership Experiences	.024	.027	.094			-.030	.079
Transition Experiences	.037	.023	.170			-.005	.077
Step 3				.219	.043*		
Openness	.146	.045	.304**			.061	.230
Leadership Experiences	-.002	.029	-.008			-.062	.060

Transition Experiences	.023	.023	.109		
People Experiences	.068	.031	.253*	-.018	.062
				.007	.131

Note. ** Indicates $p \leq .01$, * Indicates $p \leq .05$, $N = 95$.

Exploratory Analyses

While the primary analyses were limited to looking at which categories of experiences predicted differentiated leadership, I also conducted additional tests to explore which specific developmental experiences were the strongest, positive predictors of conviction and connection. I began by assessing a correlation matrix to determine which experiences were most strongly related to conviction and connection. See Table 5 for details.

For conviction, 13 of the 17 experiences showed statistically significant positive correlations. Specifically, the top 5 items that had the strongest correlations with conviction included: (a) *You have had an experience with your family that had a profound impact on your approach to leadership or life* (item 378, $r = .24$, $p \leq .01$), (b) *You helped lead other people through a personal crisis or trauma in their life or lives* (item 369, $r = .22$, $p \leq .01$), (c) *You confronted a subordinate about a significant performance issue* (item 360, $r = .21$, $p \leq .01$), (d) *You voluntarily changed jobs or careers to seek new challenges, opportunities, or growth* (item 330, $r = .20$, $p \leq .01$), and (e) *You have been able to observe great role models. These people are often described in superlative terms, and are examples of “what TO do or be”* (item 381, $r = .19$, $p \leq .01$). Three of these items were from the factor of *People Experiences* with the other two representing *Transition* and *Leadership Experiences*.

For connection, 14 of the 17 experiences showed statistically significant positive correlations. Specifically, the top 5 items that had the strongest correlations with connection included: (a) *You have had an experience with your family that had a profound impact on your approach to leadership or life* (item 378, $r = .27, p \leq .01$), (b) *You helped lead other people through a personal crisis or trauma in their life or lives* (item 369, $r = .26, p \leq .01$), (c) *You were responsible for leading a group or organization without any other staff to support you* (item 327, $r = .20, p \leq .01$), (d) *You have experienced or observed a person doing something to another person that had profound impact on your beliefs and values* (item 375, $r = .19, p \leq .01$), and (e) *You were exposed to new environments, cultures, or management philosophies through non-management jobs early in your career* (item 309, $r = .17, p \leq .01$). Three of these items were from the factor of *People Experiences* with the other two representing *Transition* and *Leadership Experiences*.

Table 5
Correlations Between Developmental Experiences, Conviction, and Connection

Item	Conviction	Connection
309 You were exposed to new environments, cultures, or management philosophies through non-management jobs early in your career.	.03	.17**
321 You experienced having gained increased responsibility that is both broader and different from previous work.	.13*	.12*
324 You moved from one type of organization to a new one, in a different industry, with a different population or set of stakeholders, or with a different location and culture.	.08	.15**
327 You were responsible for leading a group or organization without any other staff to support you.	.17**	.20**
330 You voluntarily changed jobs or careers to seek new challenges, opportunities, or growth.	.20**	.14**

333	You experienced leading or managing others for the first time.	.11*	.13*
336	You experienced leading people who manage others (e.g., being a leader of leaders).	.11*	.12*
339	You have been in a senior leadership role (e.g., a leader of leaders of leaders).	.12*	.16**
348	You had to get things done through other people without having any direct authority over them.	.12*	.11*
360	You confronted a subordinate about a significant performance issue.	.21**	.10
363	You experienced what you perceived as a career setback (e.g. not getting a coveted position, getting demoted, being derailed, or even fired).	.06	.08
369	You helped lead other people through a personal crisis or trauma in their life or lives.	.22**	.26**
375	You have experienced or observed a person doing something to another person that had profound impact on your beliefs and values.	.13*	.19**
378	You have had an experience with your family that had a profound impact on your approach to leadership or life.	.24**	.27**
381	You have been able to observe great role models. These people are often described in superlative terms, and are examples of “what TO do or be.”	.19**	.10*
384	You have observed difficult individuals (often senior leaders) who may have had fatal flaws. These people have been examples of “what NOT to do or be.”	.19**	.09
387	You have had the firsthand opportunity to see or care for people in poverty-stricken areas, or to care for people who have other deeply challenging physical/psychological/spiritual needs.	.07	.15**

Note. ** Indicates $p \leq .01$, * Indicates $p \leq .05$, $N = 274$.

Using the results of this correlation table, I conducted two multiple, hierarchical regressions. Before running these analyses, I checked all assumptions for both regressions using the same process as stated earlier. I visually inspected scatterplots of unstandardized residuals to ensure that the spread of residuals was consistent at each

level of the predictor. I then evaluated linearity by visually inspecting scatterplots for each predictor and criterion variable, which revealed a linear relationship in each case. The Durbin-Watson test resulted in a value of 1.853 for the first regression and 1.871 for the second, indicating that the assumption of independence was met as the value was near the value of 2 (Field, 2013). Furthermore, histograms revealed that residuals were normally distributed, collinearity statistics were well above .2 (Menard, 1995), and VIF scores ranged from 1.06 to 1.18 for the first regression and 1.11 to 1.15 for the second regression (Bowerman & O'Connell, 1990; Field, 2013; Myers, 1990).

Given that all assumptions were met, I proceeded with the regression analysis. I wanted to see if the combination of the experiences with the strongest correlation to conviction could significantly predict conviction while controlling for openness to experience. The number of predictors in a multiple regression model have a significant impact on the estimates of regression coefficients, and thus including fewer (< 5) predictors is recommended (Field, 2013). Due to also controlling for openness to experience, I limited the predictors included in my regression model to the top three experiences with the strongest correlations to conviction. For the first regression, I controlled for openness to experience while regressing conviction on the three items that showed the strongest correlation: 378, 369, and 360. The results of the regression analysis indicated that these three experiences provide incremental validity ($\Delta R^2 = .069$) when accounting for the variance in openness to experience. Specifically, items 378 and 360 had a statistically significant impact on conviction in this model. See Table 5 for details.

Table 5
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Estimates of Test Variables Predicting Conviction

Model and Predictors	B	SE _B	β	R^2	ΔR^2	BC _a Lower	BC _a Upper
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Step 1				.064			
Openness	.298	.069	.253**			.168	.425
Step 2				.133	.069**		
Openness	.214	.070	.183**			.087	.339
Item 378	.077	.029	.159*			.012	.141
Item 369	.032	.026	.077			-.020	.084
Item 360	.063	.025	.150*			.016	.108

Note. ** Indicates $p \leq .01$, * Indicates $p \leq .05$, $N = 274$.

For the second regression analysis, I wanted to see if the combination of the experiences with the strongest correlation to connection could significantly predict connection while controlling for openness to experience. I limited the predictors included in my regression model to the top three experiences with the strongest correlations to connection. To conduct this regression, I controlled for openness to experience while regressing connection on the three items that showed the strongest correlation: 378, 369, and 327. The results of the regression analysis indicated that these three experiences provide incremental validity ($\Delta R^2 = .085$) when accounting for the variance in openness to experience. Specifically, items 378 and 327 had a statistically significant impact on connection in this model. See Table 6 for details.

Table 6
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Estimates of Test Variables Predicting Connection

Model and Predictors	B	SE _B	β	R^2	ΔR^2	BC _a Lower	BC _a Upper
Step 1				.070			
Openness	.288	.064	.265**			.145	.425
Step 2				.155	.085**		
Openness	.213	.064	.196**			.078	.347
Item 378	.078	.027	.174**			.025	.131
Item 369	.042	.025	.108			-.008	.089
Item 327	.057	.023	.143*			.006	.104

Note. ** Indicates $p \leq .01$, * Indicates $p \leq .05$, $N = 274$.

CHAPTER IV

Discussion

Several decades of research have indicated a strong relationship between developmental experiences and the lessons that shape one's leadership (McCall, 1998; McCall, 2004; Lindsey et al., 1987). Furthermore, researchers have suggested that effective leadership often involves a complex combination of various components or character qualities (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Judge et al., 2004; McKenna & Yost, 2004). One such model of leadership is differentiated leadership which involves knowing and expressing one's thoughts, values, and emotions (conviction), while also listening to and deeply understanding the perspectives of others around them (connection; McKenna & Yost, 2004). While some research has focused on which developmental experiences shape conviction (e.g., Hickory, 2017), research is limited on which experiences shape differentiated leadership or a shared capacity of conviction and connection.

Emerging adulthood may be a particularly important time to develop these leadership qualities. During this stage of life, individuals are developing their independence and interdependence as they establish themselves as adults (Arnett 1998; Nelson & Barry, 2005). They are in a critical phase of development in which they will quickly learn from foundational experiences (Jay, 2012). Furthermore, the way the workforce is rapidly changing suggests that emerging adults will soon be in positions of leadership (Fry, 2018; Arnett, 2000; Shanahan, 2000). Thus, leveraging this stage of life to focus on developmental experiences that shape differentiated leadership, may better prepare emerging adults for the workforce. In studying experiences that shape differentiated leadership, this study specifically focuses on emerging adults and provides

useful insights as to which experiences will help them develop in this way. This knowledge benefits emerging adults, their educators, their supervisors, their families, and researchers by providing clarity regarding which developmental experiences most predict conviction and connection for emerging adults. In the following sections, the results of this study are reviewed, implications for theory and practice are suggested, and limitations and future research are discussed.

Summary of Findings

Experience Categories Are Significantly, Positively Correlated with Conviction and Connection

Hypothesis 1 examined whether *Leadership, Transition, and People Experiences* were positively related to conviction, and Hypothesis 2 examined whether these same experiences were positively related to connection. Both of these hypotheses were supported with all three categories of experiences showing a significant, positive correlation to conviction and connection. These hypotheses provided the foundation for predicting conviction and connection with categories of experiences as well as individual experiences. The finding that these categories are correlated to conviction aligns with Hickory's (2017) research which had the same results. Furthermore, these results match the research on foundational experiences (Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall, 1998) which connects a variety of experiences with lessons that relate to both conviction and connection.

It is interesting to note that for both conviction and connection, *People Experiences* correlated the strongest. This finding suggests that while all three categories of experiences are important for developing differentiated leadership, *People Experiences*

may be uniquely important beyond the others. This matches the trends seen in prior research that shows that experiences with others are particularly impactful for leadership development (Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall, 1998) and was initially hypothesized in Hypothesis 3.

Experiences with People Predict Differentiated Leadership Beyond Other Experiences

Hypothesis 3 examined whether *People Experiences* were a unique and positive predictor of differentiated leadership, above and beyond *Leadership* and *Transition Experiences*. This hypothesis was supported by the hierarchical, multiple regression results, when controlling for openness to experience. These results suggest that *People Experiences*, more so than any other category of experiences are particularly important to one's development of conviction and connection. The idea that one's ability to connect with others and take others' perspective is developed through their experiences with others, matches prior research on foundational experiences – such as seeing good and bad role models, directing and motivating others (Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall, 1998), and significant events with family members (Madsen, 2007) – that impact one's development of connection. Furthermore, the idea that one's conviction is shaped by experiences with others' is supported by previous research suggesting that one's sense of self is developed through relationships with others including having one's values challenged by others (Goldhor-Lerner, 1989).

It isn't surprising that these interactions with people are likely catalysts for a deeper sense of conviction. In fact, it has been suggested that conviction is most always developed through interactions where our deepest values come in contact with the values of others, whether like ours or different from ours. In fact, the Greek translation of the

word “convict” is “elegchos” which can be translated as “to cross-examine” (Liddell & Scott, 1897). As McKenna (2017) suggests, conviction development does not occur in a vacuum, but rather is refined through cross-examination with others in which one more deeply understands their own values when they are challenged by someone else’s values (McKenna, 2017). Thus, conviction is often shaped through interactions with other people.

Furthermore, this finding suggests that *People Experiences* develop one’s differentiated leadership beyond the traditional *Leadership Experiences* that are often given the majority of focus (e.g., managing others, task-based work; Lindsey et al., 1987; McCauley et al., 1994). These results provide several practical implications which will be discussed later.

A Majority of Specific Experiences Are Significantly, Positively Correlated with Conviction and Connection

In addition to the three primary analyses, two exploratory research questions were considered to provide additional insight as to which specific experiences predict conviction and connection. Openness to experience was controlled for in both exploratory analyses due to its impact on leadership development. The first exploratory analysis investigated which experiences were the strongest, positive predictors of conviction development. A majority (13/17) showed as being significantly, positively correlated with conviction. The five experiences that were most strongly correlated and the categories they belong to included: (a) *You have had an experience with your family that had a profound impact on your approach to leadership or life (People Experience)*, (b) *You helped lead other people through a personal crisis or trauma in their life or lives*

(*People Experience*), (c) *You confronted a subordinate about a significant performance* (*Leadership Experience*), (d) *You voluntarily changed jobs or careers to seek new challenges, opportunities, or growth* (*Transition Experience*), and (e) *You have been able to observe great role models. These people are often described in superlative terms, and are examples of “what TO do or be”* (*People Experience*). A multiple regression analysis with the three experiences that most strongly correlated with conviction indicated that two of these experiences had a statistically significant impact on conviction while controlling for openness to experience. The first of these two experiences focused on an experience with family that impacted one’s approach to leadership or life. This aligns with previous research suggesting that personal experiences such as those with family, perhaps even experiences had in childhood, impact one’s leadership (Madsen, 2007). The second of these two experiences focused on confronting a subordinate about a performance issue. This finding aligns with the research on conviction being developed through interactions with others that challenge one’s values (Goldhor-Lerner, 1989; McKenna, 2017).

The second exploratory analysis investigated which experiences were the strongest, positive predictors of connection development. A majority (14/17) showed as being significantly, positively correlated with connection. Similar to the findings with conviction, the five experiences that were most strongly correlated and the categories they belong to included: (a) *You have had an experience with your family that had a profound impact on your approach to leadership or life* (*People Experience*), (b) *You helped lead other people through a personal crisis or trauma in their life or lives* (*People Experience*) (c) *You were responsible for leading a group or organization without any*

other staff to support you (Leadership Experience), (d) You have experienced or observed a person doing something to another person that had profound impact on your beliefs and values (Transition Experience), and (e) You were exposed to new environments, cultures, or management philosophies through non-management jobs early in your career (People Experience). A multiple regression analysis with the three experiences that most strongly correlated with connection indicated that two of these experiences had a statistically significant impact on connection while controlling for openness to experience. One of these experiences is the same as the experience discussed in the previous paragraph of a personal experience with family that impacted one's approach to leadership or life. This aligns with previous research suggesting that personal experiences, such as those with family, developed leaders' awareness and consideration of others (Madsen, 2007). The second experience is focused on being responsible for leading a group or organization without the support of others. Prior research suggests that connection with others is more likely to develop in high-pressure situations such as starting from scratch or fixing a failing organization (Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall, 1998; McKenna & Yost, 2004). This experience of independently leading others likely also qualifies as a high-pressure situation, thus facilitating one's ability to connect with others around them. Furthermore, during an experience of leading alone, individuals may need to further connect with other sources of support outside of their immediate role, thus deepening their connection.

When looking at these experiences that most correlated with conviction and connection, it is interesting to note that the results are slightly counterintuitive. The experience that most strongly predicted conviction, after family experiences, was

confronting a subordinate. Initially, one may think that this experience would be an opportunity to build connection; however, this experience strongly predicts conviction. This is likely due to this experience requiring someone clearly articulate their values and sense of conviction to a subordinate. Similarly, the experience that most strongly predicted connection, after family experiences, is leading without the support of others. This experience would initially appear to possibly develop conviction, or lead to intrapersonal growth. However, it is counterintuitive in that the process of leading alone strengthens one's ability to connect with others and take their perspectives. It is possible that during these times of leading alone, one is even more intentional about taking the perspectives of others and thinking through others' concerns because they know they are solely responsible. Additionally, it may be that the experience of leading alone helps one realize how valuable their connections are, and leads them to focus on strengthening their connections and better exercising that skillset in future scenarios.

It is also interesting to note the experiences that did not significantly correlate with conviction or connection. The only experience that did not significantly correlate with conviction or connection is: *You experienced what you perceived as a career setback (e.g. not getting a coveted position, getting demoted, being derailed, or even fired)*. One potential reason for why this experience did not correlate with conviction or connection may be due to the victim phrasing of it. The examples provided in this experience are of actions that happened to an individual, not necessarily actions that the individual chose to experience or engage. A second potential reason for why this experience did not correlate with conviction or connection may be that participants had not yet had an experience of a career setback. Additionally, two experiences were

significantly correlated with conviction but not connection, including: (a) *You confronted a subordinate about a significant performance issue*, and (b) *You have observed difficult individuals (often senior leaders) who may have had fatal flaws. These people have been examples of “what NOT to do or be.”* Both of these suggest a negative experience with another individual, and could likely lower one’s sense of connection to those around them, or decrease their desire to try to connect with others. Furthermore, three experiences were significantly correlated with connection but not with conviction, including: (a) *You were exposed to new environments, cultures, or management philosophies through non-management jobs early in your career*, (b) *You moved from one type of organization to a new one, in a different industry, with a different population or set of stakeholders, or with a different location and culture*, and (c) *You have had the firsthand opportunity to see or care for people in poverty-stricken areas, or to care for people who have other deeply challenging physical/psychological/spiritual needs.* These experiences have in common a theme of exposure to other perspectives. Thus they are less likely to develop conviction due to the focus on being open to other views rather than growing stronger in one’s own views.

A Personal Experience with Family that Impacts One’s Approach to Leadership or Life Most Strongly Predicts Conviction and Connection

When looking at the themes across these analyses, it is interesting to note that the experience that most correlated with conviction, as well as with connection, is having an experience with family that impacted one’s approach to leadership or life. Contrary to the bulk of research on experiences focusing on early work experiences (Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall, 1998; McCall, 2004), this experience appears to take place outside of work in

one's personal life. However, this finding aligns with some research that has focused on more personal and family experiences which shaped leaders' ability to consider others' circumstances and perspectives (Madsen, 2007). Furthermore, Goldhor-Lerner (1989) discusses the concept of self-differentiation and states that it is developed beginning early on with one's family. One's convictions and sense of self are constantly being shaped by interactions and challenges with family (Goldhor-Lerner, 1989). This also strongly aligns with the Bowen family systems theory which suggests that it is easier to understand people in the context of their family ties and relationships (Bowen, 1974). Specifically, Bowen theory focuses on differentiation of self from family of origin, thus fitting well with this finding that impactful leadership experiences with family most strongly predict differentiated leadership. Thus, this finding emphasizes the power of family of origin on one's leadership development.

It would be powerful for future researchers to investigate the nature of these family experiences, and the characteristics of those experiences that had a powerful impact on one's approach to leadership or life. Furthermore, future research could focus on how one could go about seeking out this type of experience. While this research could discover how people could further seek out and create these types of experiences, it is also possible that these experiences are difficult to create and are most impactful when they occur naturally. If this is the case, then future research could investigate how to best leverage these experiences when they occur. One such way may be through the process of reflecting on these experiences in an appreciative manner. Furthermore, since this experience item is not prescriptive of a specific experience with family, it is possible that anyone willing to reflect on the lessons learned from their upbringing will likely benefit

their future leadership development. Several researchers have found that the effect of experiences can be amplified by intentional reflection (Ashford & DeRue, 2012; Daudelin, 1996; DeRue et al., 2012). Thus, emerging adults may develop conviction and connection by further reflecting on family experiences that have implications for their approach to leadership or life.

Implications for Theory and Research

From these findings, there are several implications for theory and research. These implications are as follows: differentiated leadership can be developed, conviction is refined through experiences with others, differentiated leadership represents a tension between self and other, emerging adulthood is a powerful time to leverage, and recognizing individual differences in emerging adults is important.

Differentiated Leadership can be Developed

First, these findings suggest that differentiated leadership can be developed. More specifically, for emerging adults, differentiated leadership can be developed through experiences with people, while controlling for the effect of openness to experience. Emerging adults' experiences with people not only shape their ability to connect with others, but also these experiences refine their values and convictions. A key type of people experience that develops differentiated leadership is an experience with family that impacts one's approach to leadership or life. Furthermore, while experiences that involve leadership or transitions are important, people experiences predict differentiated leadership above and beyond these. Therefore, findings from the current study suggest that one can develop differentiated leadership, particularly through experiences with people.

Convictions are Refined Through Interactions with Others

Second, these findings indicate that one's convictions are refined and developed through interacting with others. Due to this, conviction may be best studied as a relational process of self-differentiation, rather than simply an individual process. Despite the focus of conviction being described in the context of "self", these findings suggest that conviction is developed through experiences with others such as family experiences or confronting a subordinate. In these experiences, one is communicating what is important to them (e.g., communicating their work values to a subordinate) and allowing cross-examination from others. This implication aligns with researchers who have described conviction development as a relational process of cross-examination (Goldhor-Lerner, 1989; McKenna, 2017).

Differentiated Leadership Represents a Tension Between Self and Other

Third, these findings suggest that differentiated leadership involves a tension between oneself and those that surround them. While conviction and connection can both be developed through certain experiences such as impactful family experiences, there are also sets of experiences that separately develop conviction or connection. Differentiated leadership is a complex research model in which people must balance their own needs and convictions with the perspectives of others (McKenna & Yost, 2004). Thus, this model of leadership may best be studied as two related strategies (conviction and connection), but also may be best developed separately as individuals will have different developmental challenges regarding differentiated leadership.

Emerging Adulthood may be a Powerful Time to Leverage Experiences for

Differentiated Leadership

Fourth, this research indicates that emerging adulthood may be a particularly powerful stage of life to leverage for gaining experiences that develop differentiated leadership. Individuals are already learning how to balance their independence and interdependence during this stage of growing into adulthood (Arnett, 1998; Nelson & Barry, 2005), and it is likely that they will soon be in positions of leadership (Fry, 2018; Arnett, 2000; Shanahan, 2000). Furthermore, as this time is characterized by few pre-determined norms, experiences with people so that emerging adults can learn from others may be particularly important. Thus, this may be a key time to introduce experiences that would help them develop differentiated leadership.

Different Experiences Are Needed to Develop Differentiated Leadership, Depending on One's Developmental Edge

Fifth, results from this study suggest that emerging adults will need different sets of experiences to develop differentiated leadership depending on their specific developmental edge. While family experiences predict both conviction and connection, other experiences are better for developing just conviction or just connection. Thus, another implication would be to use caution when discussing and researching an age group or generation as a whole, and to focus on the individual needs within that population.

Implications for Practice

Several implications for practice emerge as a result of this research. These implications include recommendations of experiences for emerging adults to seek out, and implications for those who are in a position of supporting emerging adults, including educators, supervisors, and families.

Implications for Emerging Adults

Powerful experiences can be identified from this research for developing conviction, connection or the shared capacity of these qualities (differentiated leadership) which emerging adults could seek out. Emerging adults could determine their own developmental needs regarding differentiated leadership, and actively seek out the experiences that would help them grow in this balance. For example, while experiences with family develop both conviction and connection simultaneously, the experience of leading without support develops connection but not conviction. Additionally, the experience of confronting a subordinate develops conviction but not connection. In identifying experiences, it is important to keep in mind that each person likely has a different developmental challenge. Some people may find that they are already skilled at connection, but need to develop conviction. For some they will naturally have strong convictions, but may need to focus on balancing these with those around them. For others, they may want to develop both simultaneously. Appendix H provides a list of which experiences to focus on depending on one's developmental challenge. This list is not comprehensive, but includes some experiences that showed the strongest correlation to conviction, connection, or a shared capacity of these.

Emerging adults could use this list to identify the experiences they want, and then find ways to obtain those experiences. This list could also be used as a catalyst to start conversations with those around them who could help them obtain those experiences such as their educators, supervisors, families, mentors, and other people who are influential in their lives. By identifying the experiences that help them grow, and communicating this

to others, emerging adults can be intentional about their development into differentiated leaders.

Intentional, self-development is particularly important in organizations that are financially constrained and rapidly changing (London & Smither, 1999). These organizations often do not have structured plans and development programs, thus increasing the need for employees to be responsible for their own development (London & Smither, 1999). Thus, rather than depending on the organization to provide structure for development, emerging adults would be wise to proactively create self-development plans by identifying their developmental needs, the experiences that will help them develop, and communicating this to others.

Implications for Educators of Emerging Adults

Educators are in an impactful role as they engage with emerging adults. They help prepare emerging adults for the work place and are facilitators of emerging adults' learning and professional identity development (Trede, 2012). While educators cannot control what emerging adults experience when they enter the workforce, they can help prepare emerging adults for how they will handle these experiences (Billet, 2009). One way of doing so and facilitating emerging adults' development, is by integrating workplace experiences into the classroom. Specifically, educators could integrate experiences that help emerging adults develop conviction and connection in the classroom. This could be done through providing leadership experiences by offering opportunities for students to be leads on certain projects, or rotate the role of who facilitates class. Furthermore, educators could integrate role playing difficult experiences. Students could simulate confronting a subordinate by delivering difficult feedback to a

peer. Educators could also allow students to identify the experiences they want, seek out those experiences during the course of the class, and then reflect on their experiences.

Several of the key experiences that emerged from this study involved observing others, so incorporating opportunities for emerging adults to observe the actions of others and reflect may be a beneficial way to develop differentiated leadership in a classroom setting.

Implications for Supervisors of Emerging Adults

Supervisors of emerging adults are in a unique position to facilitate emerging adults' on-the-job differentiated leadership development. They are in roles of closely monitoring the performance and development of emerging adults, and shaping the early-work experiences that will significantly impact emerging adults' leadership. These on-the-job leadership development experiences are even more powerful than traditional training (Avolio et al., 2009). Thus, supervisors could provide emerging adults with experiences that help them develop in their conviction and connection. For example, a supervisor could promote a promising emerging adult to a team lead role, where they could have leadership experiences. Particularly, if the emerging adult is seeking to develop in connection, a supervisor could step back and let the emerging adult experience leading alone. Or, if an emerging adult is seeking to develop in conviction, a supervisor could provide them with an opportunity to deliver difficult feedback to a subordinate, or observe parts of the performance review process where appropriate. Additionally, a supervisor could invite a young adult to observe a high-stakes meeting and reflect on the actions of those in the meeting.

Creating a regular cadence of reflection by asking emerging adults questions such as “what have you noticed is impacting the way you lead?” and “what would you do differently?” may help them capture the lessons of these experiences (see Appendix I for a full list of recommended reflection questions). Experiences will be even more impactful on leadership development if the supervisor offers feedback to their emerging adults shortly after the experiences (DeRue & Wellman, 2009). Furthermore, supervisors could set aside time in a performance review to discuss the emerging adult’s developmental goals. They could listen to the emerging adult’s developmental goals, and work together to identify experiences (perhaps using the list in Appendix H) at work that meet those goals.

Implications for Families of Emerging Adults

This study highlighted the importance that one’s family of origin has on their leadership style. Thus, families of emerging adults could focus on experiences as a family that may impact emerging adults’ approach to leadership or life. Furthermore, if these experiences are difficult to seek out, families could set aside time to reflect with emerging adults about lessons learned and reflections from impactful experiences they had together. Additionally, family members could facilitate conversations with their emerging adults about what key leadership lessons and developments they are experience to encourage reflection. Since many developmental experiences happen in childhood, families would be wise to start seeking out powerful experiences and reflecting on the impact of these even before the emerging adulthood stage.

Limitations

As this study was essentially a replication of Hickory's (2017) study with an additional outcome variable and a different population, several of the same limitations are present.

Sample

The sample contained diversity in terms of organizations that individuals were from, however it contained homogeneity in regards to sex, ethnicity, and religious preferences. The sample consisted of a predominantly female (70.4%), Caucasian (71.2%), and protestant (57.7%) population. Additionally, all participants took the assessments as part of a leadership development process, and thus may have been more intentional about their development than other populations. For many of the participants, this leadership development process was required for a graduate course, and thus the population likely consists of a high number of students.

Measurement

The scale used to measure experiences was rated on a 1 (*Not relevant to you yet*) to 6 (*Definite experience with this*)-point scale. However, these anchors do not specify if the definite experience is due to one particularly powerful/impactful experience, or the frequency of the experience. The scale did not identify what qualified as *definite experience* thus making it difficult to determine if it is the experience's impact or frequency that predicts conviction and connection. Future research should improve on this by measuring both the frequency and impact of each experience.

Additionally, the experience descriptions varied in specificity. For example, the experience of confronting a subordinate is specific and could be replicated by others desiring the same impact of that experience. However, the experience of having an

impactful experience with family lacks specificity. The experiences with broad descriptions will likely require additional research to understand the context of those experiences and to shape them into specific recommendations for emerging adults. Furthermore, future research on experiences should provide more specific definitions of each experience.

Furthermore, the list of experiences measured were likely not comprehensive of all experiences that may have a significant impact on differentiated leadership. Thus, future research with more comprehensive lists of experiences would be beneficial.

Mono-Method Bias

Another limitation is that all measures in this study were self-reported, which could have influenced the results of the study (Shadish et al., 2011). Additionally, conviction and connection were measured with one scale each that may not have fully captured the construct. Further research should consider using multiple methods to gather data, and investigate other measures of conviction and connection that may more fully capture those constructs.

Future Research

There are many ways that future research could further study the experiences that develop differentiated leadership in emerging adults. First, future research could develop a more comprehensive measure of emerging adult experiences that may develop differentiated leadership. While the experiences measured in the current study were built on decades of early work experience literature, they likely do not capture the whole range of experiences that impact leadership. Specifically, they do not capture a wide range of personal or family experiences outside of work. Furthermore, future research could

specifically measure the frequency and impact of experiences. As mentioned previously, the current study did not use anchors that measured these separately, and thus this would be important to further investigate.

Second, future research could study the difference between experiences that happen to emerging adults compared to the experiences with which emerging adults engage or actively seek out. Some of the experiences that did not correlate strongly with differentiated leadership in this study were phrased as experiences that happened to emerging adults. This suggests that the level to which one actively seeks out or chooses to engage with an experience may determine the impact that experience has on their conviction and connection development. Thus, this would be interesting for future research to investigate.

Third, future research could study the changing context and characteristics of certain experiences. For example, while multiple emerging adults could report having experiences with people, the way in which they interact and connect with people may be different. While connection experiences would traditionally be assumed to be in-person connection experiences, many connection experiences may now occur virtually. Similarly, while many leadership experiences may have originally been measured in a traditional hierarchical leadership context, current leadership experiences are likely to be on a smaller scale due to organizations switching to flatter structures (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2011; Day et al., 2009; Yeager & Callahan, 2016). These changes in the context of experiences would be helpful to study.

Fourth, future research could investigate other factors that contribute to the development of differentiated leadership. For example, while the current study controlled

for the importance of openness to experience, other personality factors (e.g., extroversion, agreeableness) may affect differentiated leadership and should be studied in future research. Furthermore, several other factors such as the culture one grows up in, family dynamics, their support networks, and other contextual factors may have an impact on differentiated leadership and should be further investigated in future research.

Conclusion

As the quotes by Arnett and Jay at the beginning of this paper suggest, emerging adulthood is a particularly critical time of identity development. During this stage, emerging adults learn how to balance both independence and interdependence, self and other, conviction and connection. This study highlights the importance of developing differentiated leadership during emerging adulthood. Of particular importance are experiences with people, especially the interpersonal experiences that often occur outside of the workplace. Leveraging these experiences and this critical stage of development is key to developing differentiated leaders for our rapidly changing world.

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Appendix A: Experience Scales

Experience Scales

The Experience Scales is within the Leadership Experiences and Lessons Audit tool.

Instructions: Below are descriptions of different experiences you may or may not have been through at this point in your career. Read the description of each experiences to the left and indicate the extent to which you have had the experience (relevance), and its importance to your career and life.

1. Not Relevant To You Yet,
2. No Experience But Desire It,
3. Little Experience With This,
4. Moderate Experience With This,
5. Significant Experience With This,
- or 6. Definite Experience With This.

Experience Scales

Leadership Experiences

1. LELA 327: You were responsible for leading a group or organization without any other staff to support you.
2. LELA 333: You experienced leading or managing others for the first time.
3. LELA 336: You experienced leading people who manage others (e.g., being a leader of leaders).
4. LELA 339: You have been in a senior leadership role (e.g., a leader of leaders of leaders).
5. LELA 348: You had to get things done through other people without having any direct authority over them.
6. LELA 360: You confronted a subordinate about a significant performance issue.

7. LELA 363: You experienced what you perceived as a career setback (e.g., not getting a coveted position, getting demoted, being derailed or even fired).

People Experiences

1. LELA 375: You have experienced or observed a person doing something to another person that had profound impact on your beliefs and values.

2. LELA 378: You have had an experience with your family that had a profound impact on your approach to leadership or life.

3. LELA 381: You have been able to observe great role models. These people are often described in superlative terms and are examples of “what to do or be.”

4. LELA 384: You have observed difficult individuals (often senior leaders) who may have had fatal flaws. These people have been examples of “what not to do or be.”

5. LELA 387: You have had the firsthand opportunity to see or care for people in poverty-stricken areas, or to care for people who have other deeply challenging physical/psychological/spiritual needs.

6. LELA 369: You helped lead other people through a personal crisis or trauma in their life or lives.

Transition Experiences

1. LELA 309: You were exposed to new environments, cultures, or management philosophies through non-management jobs early in your career.

2. LELA 321: You experienced having gained increased responsibility that is both broader and different from previous work.

3. LELA 324: You moved from one type of organization to a new one, in a different industry, with a different population or set of stakeholders, or with a different location and culture.

4. LELA 330: You voluntarily changed jobs or careers to seek new challenges, opportunities, or growth.

Calling Experiences

1. LELA 312: You experienced a defining moment when you dedicated your life to God or another spiritual or philosophical way of life.

2. LELA 315: You experienced a moment when you felt called to a specific or more general purpose (e.g., through dreams, the voice of God, or other messages outside yourself).

3. LELA 342: You experienced a redefining moment in your life that reaffirmed your call to leadership or to your purpose.

Appendix B: Conviction Scale

Conviction Scale

This scale is within the Leading Under Pressure Inventory.

Instructions: Think about a recent high-pressure situation you have faced or are currently facing—one that has challenged your personal convictions and your ability to stay connected to the thoughts, needs, and feelings of other people involved. This situation might include a direct conflict, a conversation you need to have, or a person or group who is challenging for you in some way. In 100 words or fewer, describe the situation and why it is challenging for you.

Conviction Scale

After describing a high-pressure situation, participants respond to questions regarding the situation they described.

Instructions: Considering the recent high-pressure experience you just described, rate the extent to which each statement below is like you or not like you.

1. Not at All Like Me, 3. Somewhat Like Me, or 5. Very Much Like Me.

1. I know what I want to see happen.
2. I speak my mind, even if it might be risky for me to do so.
3. I clearly communicate what I want to see happen.
4. I make decisions based on the values that matter most to me, even during conflicts with other people.
5. I think about the outcomes I would like to see happen before I have important conversations.
6. I know what's important to me.

Appendix C: Taking Others' Perspectives Scale

Taking Others' Perspectives Scale

This scale is within the Leading Under Pressure Inventory.

Instructions: Think about a recent high-pressure situation you have faced or are currently facing—one that has challenged your personal convictions and your ability to stay connected to the thoughts, needs, and feelings of other people involved. This situation might include a direct conflict, a conversation you need to have, or a person or group who is challenging for you in some way. In 100 words or fewer, describe the situation and why it is challenging for you.

Taking Others' Perspectives Scale

After describing a high-pressure situation, participants respond to questions regarding the situation they described.

Instructions: Considering the recent high-pressure experience you just described, rate the extent to which each statement below is like you or not like you.

1. Not at All Like Me, 3. Somewhat Like Me, or 5. Very Much Like Me.

1. When I'm under pressure from others, I often think about what is at stake for them.
2. When I'm in conflict with someone else, I always maintain my ability to put myself in their shoes.
3. I generally understand what other people around me think.
4. I am effective at taking the perspectives of others.
5. I ask others what they are thinking.
6. I take the time to listen to other people without talking over them.

Appendix D: Openness to Experience Scale

Openness to Experience Scale

This scale is within the IPIP Five Factor Personality Measure (Goldberg, 1992; 1999).

Instructions: Describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future. Describe yourself as you honestly see yourself, in relation to other people you know of the same sex as you are, and roughly your same age. So that you can describe yourself in an honest manner, your responses will be kept in absolute confidence.

Indicate for each statement whether it is:

- (1) Very Inaccurate, (2) Moderately Inaccurate, (3) Neither Accurate nor Inaccurate, (4) Moderately Accurate, or (5) Very Accurate as a description of you.

1. Have a rich vocabulary.
2. Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas.
3. Have a vivid imagination.
4. Am not interested in abstract ideas.
5. Have excellent ideas.
6. Do not have a good imagination.
7. Am quick to understand things.
8. Use difficult words.
9. Spend time reflecting on things.
10. Am full of ideas.

Appendix E: Demographic Items

Demographic Items**What is your sex?**

Male
Female

What is your ethnicity? Please check all that apply.

Caucasian/White
African American/Black
Hispanic/Latino
Asian/Pacific Islander
Native American
Other

What year were you born?

Are you currently in a formal leadership role (e.g., do you have people you are responsible for leading)?

Yes
No

What is your religious affiliation?

Catholic
Protestant
Jewish
Muslim
Buddhist
Hindu
Atheist/Agnostic
Other
N/A

Appendix F: Recommended Experiences for Emerging Adults

Recommended Experiences for Emerging Adults'

Conviction and Connection Development

Below is a list of experiences that help develop conviction and connection in emerging adults. After identifying their developmental challenge, emerging adults can use this list to help direct which experiences they seek out next.

Experiences to Develop Conviction and Connection

1. Having an experience with your family that profoundly impacts your approach to leadership or life.
2. Leading other people through a personal crisis or trauma in their lives.

Experiences to Develop Conviction

1. Having an experience with your family that profoundly impacts your approach to leadership or life.
2. Leading other people through a personal crisis or trauma in their lives.
3. Confronting a subordinate about a significant performance issue.
4. Voluntarily changing jobs or careers to seek new challenges, opportunities, or growth.
5. Observing great role models.

Experiences to Develop Connection

1. Having an experience with your family that profoundly impacts your approach to leadership or life.
2. Leading other people through a personal crisis or trauma in their lives.
3. Leading a group or organization without any other staff to support you.

4. Observing a person doing something to another person that impacts your beliefs and values.
5. Exposing yourself to new environments, cultures, or management philosophies through non-management jobs early in your career.

Appendix G: Recommended Reflection Questions

Recommended Reflection Questions

Below is a list of reflection questions that may help emerging adults better reflect on experiences to capture the lessons learned regarding conviction and connection.

Emerging adults may include these reflection questions as part of their regular routine, or these questions may be asked by supervisors, educators, or family members of emerging adults to encourage reflection.

1. What did you learn?
2. What did you see?
3. What have you noticed is impacting the way that you will lead?
4. What would you do differently?
5. How is this impacting and changing you?
6. Where did this produce a conflict in who you are now and who you are becoming?
7. Where are your convictions being challenged?