# ESSAYS ON CHALLENGING JOB EXPERIENCES

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# ESSAYS ON CHALLENGING JOB EXPERIENCES

**Acknowledgments**

In this dissertation, I am working on a topic called challenging job experiences. And what better way to illustrate the relevance of this topic than by writing up a Ph.D. dissertation! In this dissertation, I have had the chance to learn a great deal (something I will elucidate later) about what it takes to become a researcher and a teacher *by doing.* In these last five and a half years, I have been pushed out of my comfort zone, made to confront innumerable obstacles on the way, and have had to make decisions at critical moments for which I didn't have the right answer. I am not sure about organizational leaders but all I can say with certainty is that I made it through all these *challenges* all because of the tremendous amount of love and support I received from several people. And, therefore, at this moment, I want to go ahead and extend my gratitude to every person who has supported me on this journey.

First, starting with my family, my mom and my pop (who is no longer in this world) for giving me the best education they could afford with a measly government salary. When I walk down the streets of Mumbai, I now realize how privileged I am to even receive a university bachelor's degree. Both of them have had a deep influence on bringing me up with the right family values and I hope to pass on the same to my kids one day. My brother Charles is, without a doubt, my closest friend and plays several other roles in my life (health instructor, financial advisor, mind trainer) and in doing so ensured that I continued to maintain my focus on my Ph.D. dissertation. He has paid for so many of my trips, birthday parties, GMAT school applications, ESSEC first month rent and so on and not once did he ask anything in return. How many people can honestly say that they have such a close relationship with their sibling? I am so happy to see him succeed in his career after all the problems he has had to face. All I can say is that even if I achieve a tenth of what he has, I will consider myself blessed. A big thank you to my sister-in-law Fallan and my niece who have kept me entertained with their WhatsApp dancing and singing videos while I was back

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Second, I come to the person who has steadfastly stood behind me all throughout these last three and a half years: Prof. Karoline Strauss. I remember reading up her paper published in the JAP and then meeting her at her office the next day (I vividly remember I kept saying "Jhap" in the meeting and she kept reminding me "Sheldon its J-A-P"). From that meeting on until today, I have always felt protected under her leadership. For example, in these last few years, I have faced so many issues during this Ph.D.: spending approximately 8 months negotiating data collection with companies and universities in India only to get rejected or get poor quality of data at the end, the submission mishap for the academy in 2018, and several others that at this moment I prefer not to recollect. All throughout this time, she has maintained her unwavering support for me. In these last few years, I can't tell you how many times she has read up and provided me with comments on my manuscript drafts. And this is not a paragraph or two. I am talking about providing comments on 30-40 pages every, single, time. Also, I can't forget the meetings on Skype/in-person almost every other week, the sweet emails from her when I was unwell and couldn't get out of my bed, the several letters of recommendation that she had written for me during the job market phase, and yes the feedback I received when I was a teaching assistant for the HRM and Research Methods course delivered by her. Overall, if you ask me: So Sheldon, tell me one key moment that indicates that you have grown as a person under her leadership? My answer would be: Organizing the AOM symposium last year. Guess who was the one who suggested I should do so? Yup, you guessed it right. Who would have thought that someone who is an introvert, hates being in the spotlight, and frequently stammers when he talks in a formal event would one day go on and design an event that would have some of the best scholars in the field of leadership development? I am sure none of my school teachers and close friends back in

India would believe me if I told them about this. I would thus like to thank her for developing my self-confidence and presentation skills. These are lessons that I hope to utilize even more in the coming few decades of my life.

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I would also like to list down many colleagues and friends back at ESSEC. Without their presence in my life, I would have surely gone back to India after spending the first few months in Cergy! Prof. Anca who warned me about the importance of developing a support network to manage the harsh winter weather in Cergy and suggested me to approach Prof. Aarti for the Ph.D. advisor role. Lina and Christine who always saw me working in the Ph.D. room when they used to leave from work and never once forgot to say a bye (this is in addition to the tremendous amount of information, resources, and support they provide Ph.D.

students like me each academic year). Next up, Jose Benedicto and Zaheer Shaik who have been more like family than friends these last five years. They were always available for a quick chat when I was stressed about my data collection and several personal problems beyond the Ph.D. program even though they had their own problems to deal with. We have a WhatsApp group in which we chat often and I hope one day we end up working and living in the same city/country with our families. Next, Victor (the one who is great at turning ideas into a concrete research agenda; surely my future co-author), Yoseb (the one who cooked some special Korean meals in the night when I had to work late in school and a living role model when it comes to being humble), Mouna (the one who is apparently my 'junior' in the Ph.D. program but she talks with so much maturity and yes a great listener), Sabra (the only friend I had from my Ph.D. cohort and the only one to show up on Sundays in school to work which then ensured I had some company in getting coffee or tea in the evening from the machine), and Amit (the one who constantly complains about literally everything so he, unintentionally, made me realize how small my problems at school were). Also, I would like to mention Yoyo, Seamus, Marco, and Mainak who introduced me to international cuisines and organized several birthday dinners, thus ensuring I had some sort of social life in Cergy.

Finally, I would like to conclude by extending my deepest gratitude to ESSEC Business School and Prof. Marie Laure Djelic for selecting and giving people like me an opportunity to shine.

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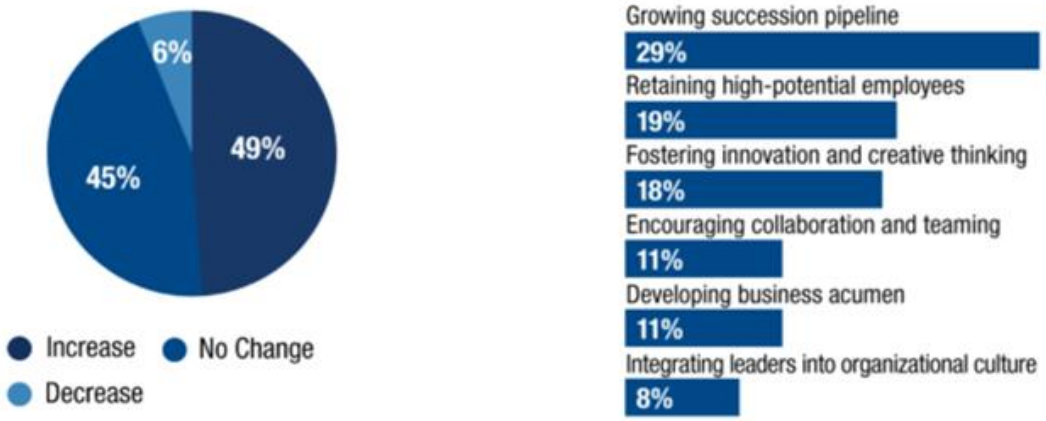
## Chapter 1: General Introduction

Leadership development refers to the expansion of the capacity of individuals and collectives to engage effectively in the leadership process (Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010). Organizations are investing significant resources in leadership development efforts with a view to build necessary capacity in anticipation of unforeseen challenges (Day, 2000), and, as a consequence, effectively adapt to and perform in a dynamic environment (DeRue & Myers, 2014). For example, according to practitioner data released by HR magazine Chief Learning Officer, 94 percent of surveyed organizations either plan to increase or maintain their level of investment in leadership development. The top priorities for such investments include areas such as growing a pipeline of strong leaders and retaining high potential employees (see Figure 1.1) (Prokopeak, 2018).

**Figure 1.1**

**Leadership Development Spending and Areas of Investment**



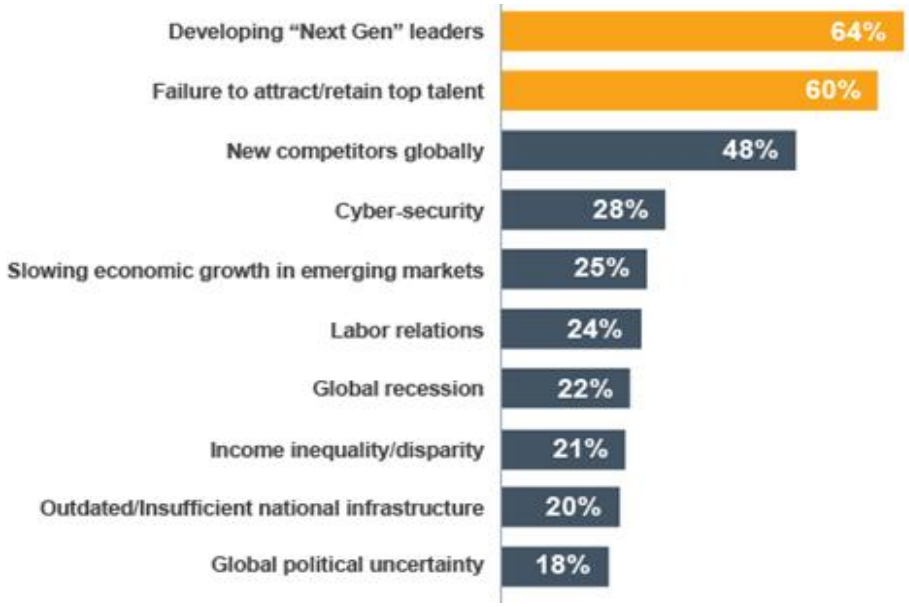

*Note:* Reprinted from "Follow the Leader(ship) Development Spending In Business", by Prokopeak, M., (2018, March 21). Retrieved from https://www.chieflearningofficer.com/2018/03/21/follow-the-leadership-spending/

Evidence for this trend also comes from the 2018 global leadership forecast survey conducted by international human resources and leadership development consulting firm DDI in partnership with consulting and advisory services firm E&Y and research group The Conference Board. As seen in Figure 1.2, what this survey reveals is that, for about 64% of

CEOs that participated in the survey, the big concerns aren't really recession, climate change or political instability; rather, their major worry is focused on developing the next generation of leaders (Ray, 2018).

**Figure 1.2**

**Top 10 CEO Challenges**




*Note.* Reprinted from "CEO Challenges", by Ray, R. L., (2018). Retrieved from https://www.ddiworld.com/glf2018/ceo-challenges

In line with these trends, researchers have made significant strides toward engaging in theory building and research in the field of leadership development (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014). Specifically, even though leadership development is still viewed as "a nascent field of scholarship" (Day & Dragoni, 2015, p. 134), primarily, on account of the greater amount of attention that was devoted in the 90s to "the practice of leadership development than to its scientific study" (Day & O'Connor, 2003, p. 12), the last 15 to 20 years have witnessed several contributions that have improved our understanding of the phenomenon (e.g., Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Day, 2000; Day & Harrison, 2007; see also Day & Dragoni, 2015, Day et al., 2014, and DeRue & Myers, 2014

for reviews). Overall, these theory building and research approaches seem to indicate that enhancing leadership development is essentially the *raison d'être* of leadership development practices. In this dissertation, I focus on one such important leadership development practice that can help organizations enhance the leadership capabilities of their employees: challenging job experiences (CJE hereafter).

CJE are referred to as features of individuals' jobs that arise from adding or changing roles, responsibilities, and tasks, aimed at providing them with an opportunity and a motivation to learn (McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994). Research on CJE is important for two reasons. First, prior empirical research on CJE shows that these experiences are particularly useful in helping individuals enhance their leadership self-efficacy beliefs (Seibert, Sargent, Kraimer, & Kiazad, 2017), engage in on-the-job learning (Brutus, Ruderman, Ohlott, & McCauley, 2000; McCauley et al., 1994; Preenen, De Pater, Van Vianen, and Keijzer, 2011; Preenen, Verbiest, Van Vianen, & Van Wijk, 2015), and acquire leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) (e.g., DeRue & Wellman, 2009; Dragoni, Tesluk, Russell, & Oh, 2009). Thus, CJE constitute an important route through which organizations can build a large pool of capable leaders. Second, an increasing number of organizations today utilize the so-called 70-20-10 approach as part of their learning and development strategy (Rabin, 2014). Specifically, in this approach, organizations use work-based development practices such as job experiences and relationships (e.g., coaching, mentoring) to a greater extent than formal training programs in order to foster employee learning at the workplace. For example, L'Oréal ("Careers - L'Oréal Group: World Leader in Beauty: Official Website L'Oréal Group," n.d.) mentions the 70-20-10 model on its website: *At L'Oréal we have a 70:20:10 leadership development concept. The majority - 70% of learning comes through experience - you rolling up your sleeves and getting your hands dirty on day one: experimentation, learning, success. Around 20% comes from learning with/from*

*feedback through your coaches, peers, team mates and buddies and 10% through engaging formal learning in the right training, at the right time - such as online courses, conferences, and workshop*s. Similarly, Nestle ("Engaging with Our People," n.d.) espouses its support of the 70-20-10 model and states: *Development at Nestlé is based around the 70/20/10 model, as we know from experience that it works best for us and for our people. It means that around 70% of learning happens through experience, such as work shadowing in a completely new position that you are unfamiliar with; 20% of the learning comes through relationships, for example, from receiving feedback, coaching or mentoring; and 10% comes from education, for example training, attending conferences or completing an e-learning. We use a number of different approaches, all designed to help you maximise your potential*. Overall, then, new insights that advance the existing literature on the topic of CJE should be of interest to both researchers and practitioners.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. First, I discuss the concept of CJE, the emergence, and conceptualization within the field of leadership development. Next, I offer a brief review of the work conducted to date on the role of CJE in leadership development. Finally, I conclude by presenting an overview of the three essays within my dissertation that are aimed at addressing important gaps in the CJE literature.

## Challenging Job Experiences

### Emergence of CJE Research

Emergence of CJE as a topic of research can be traced back to the Lessons of Experience Studies (LOE) undertaken at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) in the 1980s (e.g., Lindsey, Homes, & McCall, 1987; see also, Lombardo, 1985, 1986, McCall, 1988, McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988, and Yip & Wilson, 2010). Specifically, CCL examined the kinds of experiences that were considered to be developmental by executives and what lessons they learned from these experiences (McCauley 2008). Data were collected from 191

executives in 6 corporations. In total, these executives reported 616 descriptions of developmental experiences and 1547 descriptions of lessons they learned from these experiences (Lindsey et al., 1987). In analyzing the data, these experiences were found to cluster around three major categories: (1) job experiences (e.g., starting something from scratch assignments, fix-it/turn-it-around assignments, projects/task force assignments, line-to-staff job switches, change in job scope), (2) experiences involving interactions with other people (e.g., bosses, mentors, peers) and (3) experiences involving hardships (e.g., business failures or mistakes, demotions/missed promotions, personal trauma) (McCall et al., 1988). Two important findings emerged from this research.

First, each of these experiences provided opportunities for learning different types of lessons (McCauley, 1986). For example, through assignments, individuals learned lessons such as how to cope with new demands and developed skills such as problem-solving and decision-making. Through experiences involving interactions with other people, individuals learned lessons such as how to motivate employees and developed skills such as listening. Finally, through hardships, individuals learned important lessons of patience and humility and how to handle stress and deal with external groups (McCauley, 1986; Valerio, 1990).

Second, as compared to other experiences, job experiences taught both the greatest variety and the largest number of lessons (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1989a; Van Velsor & Hughes, 1990; Yip & Wilson, 2010). What makes job experiences "a potentially powerful learning experience" (McCall, 2010b, p.4) are the *challenges* they present, for example, playing for big stakes in view of senior management, influencing people never worked with before, or constantly making decisions about things only partially understood (Lindsey et al., 1987; Lombardo, 1985). In encountering these challenges, individuals feel that their existing capacities are being stretched (McCauley, 1999), providing them an opportunity to

"experiment with new learning strategies, behaviors, and alternative ways of thinking" and a motivation to "reach new levels of competencies" (Brutus et al., 2000, p. 368).

Overall, the research at CCL indicates that to facilitate learning and development, it is important that individuals are provided with challenging job experiences (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1989a; McCall et al., 1988).

**Conceptualization of CJE**

Building on this work, McCauley and her colleagues (e.g., McCauley, 1999; McCauley & Brutus, 1998; McCauley, Eastman, & Ohlott, 1995; McCauley et al., 1994) developed the concept of challenging job experiences (CJE). As mentioned previously, CJE are referred to as features of individuals' jobs that arise from adding or changing roles, responsibilities, and tasks, aimed at providing them with an opportunity and a motivation to learn. Initially, these features were conceptually grouped under three broad categories: *job transitions* (e.g., unfamiliar responsibilities, proving yourself), *task-related characteristics* (e.g., creating change, non-authority relationships), and *obstacles* (e.g., adverse business conditions, lack of top management support). However, in 1999, McCauley revised this early work and identified ten features which were then arranged in five general categories: (1) experiencing a job transition, (2) creating change, (3) managing at high levels of responsibility, (4) managing boundaries, and (5) dealing with diversity. Table 1.1 provides a brief description of each category of experience and its characteristics.

**Table 1.1**

**CJE: Categories and Features**

| CJE Category | Features | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Experiencing a job transition | Unfamiliar responsibilities | Individuals are put into a situation where they are expected to handle responsibilities that involve a noticeable change from the work that was done previously. |
| Creating change | New directions, inherited | Individuals are put into a situation |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | problems, and problems with employees | where they are expected to start something new (e.g., a new venture, a new process, a new unit) or fix problems that were created by a predecessor or existed when they took the experience. In addition, in such experiences, individuals typically have to work with staff that is unmotivated or incompetent and hence, individuals are expected to resolve conflict and improve the staff's performance. |
| Managing at high levels of responsibility | High stakes and scope and scale | Individuals are put into a situation where they face critical deadlines, pressures from senior management and take responsibility for key decisions. Further, in such experiences, individuals have to coordinate and integrate multiple functions, products, and services. |
| Managing boundaries | External pressure and influence without authority | Individuals are put into a situation where they have to influence key people and groups that are outside the organization. Additionally, in such experiences, individuals have to liaison with people over whom they hold no direct authority. |
| Dealing with diversity | Work across cultures and work group diversity | Individuals are put into a situation where they are expected to work with people who are from different cultures and institutions and people with different racial and ethnic backgrounds. |

## CJE: Role in Leadership Development

In the previous section, I discussed the concept, features, and the theoretical foundations of the CJE literature. In this section, I briefly review research that explores the implications of CJE from a leadership development perspective.

First as mentioned earlier, a key imperative for CEOs is to develop the next generation of leaders in their organizations (Ray, 2018). This raises an important issue of whether CJE do

indeed promote learning and leadership development. In line with the emerging literature on the proximal and distal indicators of leadership development (see Day & Dragoni, 2015 and DeRue & Myers, 2014 for reviews), studies show that CJE have a positive relationship with on-the-job learning (Brutus et al., 2000; McCauley et al., 1994; Preenen et. al, 2011, 2015), managerial competencies critical for effective performance (Dragoni et al., 2009), and leadership self-efficacy (Seibert et al., 2017). However, one study (DeRue & Wellman, 2009) shows that the relationship between CJE and leadership skill development exhibits a pattern of diminishing returns. In addition, the authors uncover that feedback availability helps offset the diminishing returns associated with overly challenging job experiences.

Further, as mentioned previously, organizations invest in leadership development efforts to grow a pool of leaders and retain employees (Prokopeak, 2018). Given that promotability evaluations are important in succession planning (De Pater, Van Vianen, Bechtoldt, & Klehe, 2009a) and given that "some organizations use challenging experiences as a means for selecting successors for leadership positions" (Courtright, Colbert, & Choi, 2014, p. 691), an important issue that also needs to be addressed is to what extent do CJE predict whether individuals are considered by their supervisors to be prepared for senior executive appointments. To this end, some studies show that CJE are associated with supervisors' evaluations of individuals' potential for career advancement (e.g., De Pater et al., 2009a; De Pater, Van Vianen, Fischer, & Van Ginkel, 2009b), in part, by enhancing individuals' task-specific self-efficacy (Aryee & Chu, 2012). However, a recent study (Dong, Seo, & Bartol, 2014) finds that CJE may increase unpleasant feelings, which, in turn, inhibit individuals' advancement potential. Furthermore, with regard to retention, extant research shows that challenging job experiences may help organizations reduce voluntary turnover by increasing individuals' commitment to the organization (Cao & Hamori, 2016) and on-the-job learning (Preenen, et al., 2011). However, Dong et al. (2014) find that these experiences may also

enhance individuals' unpleasant feelings, in turn, increasing turnover intentions, specifically, among those low in emotional intelligence (EI).

In sum, although it has been suggested that individuals need to be provided with challenging job experiences in order to facilitate learning and leadership development (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1989a; McCall et al., 1988), emerging research shows that these experiences may fail in reaching this goal and could, potentially, produce even unintended outcomes.

## Overview of Dissertation

Despite the extant empirical work showcasing CJE to be an important construct because these experiences may generate both beneficial and detrimental outcomes for employees and organizations, some important limitations still need to be addressed.

First, while there has been a growing interest in the topic of CJE among leadership development scholars, a large part of the extant work has highlighted the positive aspects of challenging experiences, with studies linking CJE to many desirable outcomes. However, as mentioned earlier, some scholars, drawing upon the stress literature, have uncovered that only positive outcomes should not be expected from these experiences. Rather, there is a possibility that these experiences could lead to dysfunctional leadership behaviors (Courtright et al., 2014) and lower evaluations of individuals' potential for high-level positions while increasing their intentions to leave the organization (Dong et al., 2014). Moreover, studies investigating the role of gender in determining CJE and the relationship between CJE and job performance have reported inconsistent findings. Therefore, in the first essay of my dissertation (see Chapter 2), I organize and summarize the evidence on the determinants and consequences of CJE through a review of the empirical literature. Further, I offer an emergent model of CJE that integrates the studies included in the review as well as highlights areas where future research is needed.

Second, existing CJE research has focused primarily on on-the-job learning (Brutus et al., 2000; McCauley et al., 1994; Preenen et al., 2011, 2015), leadership self-efficacy (Seibert et al., 2017), and leadership KSAs (DeRue & Wellman, 2009; Dragoni et al., 2009) as signs that indicate leadership may be developing from undergoing CJE (Day & Dragoni, 2015; DeRue & Myers, 2014). However, it is unclear from these studies whether and how CJE could also promote alternate indicators associated with leadership development such as individuals' self-concept and identity (Day & Dragoni, 2015; DeRue & Myers, 2014). Therefore, drawing upon the identity-based leadership development perspective (Ibarra, Snook, & Guillen Ramo, 2008) and the literature on role transitions and identity processes (Ibarra, 1999, 2005), in the second essay of my dissertation (see Chapter 3), I examine whether CJE enhance the process of leadership development by making individuals' possible selves, specifically, their future work selves salient. Further, drawing on the identity-based perspective on proactivity (Strauss & Kelly, 2016), I investigate whether such salient future work selves, then, motivate individuals to undertake behaviors that are risky and challenging in nature, namely, proactive behaviors (i.e., strategic scanning and taking charge). Results reveal that CJE promote the salience of individuals' future work selves, and, as a result, drive strategic scanning at work. I conclude by discussing the implications of the findings for organizations interested in motivating employees to engage in proactive behavior at work.

Finally, it has been suggested that individuals need to invest in different learning activities in order to learn from challenging experiences (Robinson & Wick, 1992). However, the self-presentational perspective (e.g., Leary, 1995; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 2003) would suggest that business expectations that come with these experiences may make public image concerns salient and, as a result, motivate self-presentational behaviors. This could make it difficult for individuals to attend to learning activities, potentially, hampering learning from challenging experiences (see Anseel, Lievens, & Levy, 2007; Baumeister,

1989). Therefore, drawing upon the self-presentation perspective, in the third essay of my dissertation (see Chapter 4), I examine whether CJE generate self-presentational concerns, thus, influencing individuals' self-presentational behaviors (i.e., ingratiation and self-promotion). Further, drawing on the self-presentational literature (Baumeister, 1989; Leary & Kowalski, 1990), I investigate two boundary conditions, namely, leader identity and honesty-humility, which explain why some individuals are more likely to self-present in response to challenging experiences than others. Results revealed that CJE were associated with ingratiation and self-promotion. I conclude by discussing the implications of the findings for organizations interested in ensuring individuals learn and develop from challenging job experiences.

In sum, this dissertation builds and contributes to the CJE literature in several ways, including reviewing the empirical work conducted on CJE and calling attention to several avenues for future research (Essay 1), identifying salient future work selves as a proximal sign that leadership may be developing from undergoing CJE (Essay 2), and examining individual responses to CJE that may potentially hamper individual learning and development from challenging job experiences (Essay 3).

## Chapter 2: Challenging Job Experiences: Review and Plan for Future Research


### Abstract

The empirical literature that addresses CJE, even though limited, relative to other leadership development practices, seems to be growing with the field of leadership development. In this essay, I build from McCauley and Brutus' (1998) annotated bibliography by taking stock of the empirical research on CJE over the past 20 years and summarize what is known about the determinants and consequences of CJE. I conclude by offering an emergent model of CJE that integrates the existing literature and identifies areas for future inquiry.



*Keywords*: *challenging job experiences; learning and development; leadership development; review*

## Introduction

> *…on-the-job experience should be the driving force in development and not just one option among equals that include training, mentoring, rotational programs, coaching, and development programs of various types.* – McCall, 2010b, p. 7.

Over the last decade or so, organizations have been experiencing tremendous turbulence due to rapid technological advancements, unprecedented unpredictability and uncertainty, and intense world competition (Dalakoura, 2010; Day & Halpin, 2004). Leaders are being called upon to adapt to this changing environment, handle multiple relationships within and across boundaries, and set and implement organization-related agendas (Dragoni, Tesluk, Russell, & Oh, 2009). Given this demanding reality facing organizations and their leadership pool, a critical question confronting scholars and practitioners of leadership development is, How can organizations enhance the potential or the capacity of their employees to be effective in leadership roles and processes, thus ensuring a continued productive and competitive organization? (Day, 2007; Mabey & Ramirez, 2005; Noe, Wilk, Mullen, & Wanek, 1997). Unfortunately, time-tested, traditional, one-off educational events have failed to provide adequate solutions to this question. This could be traced to some of the major criticisms of such a developmental approach, most notably, that such events fail to ensure a complete transfer of training and devote, inappropriately, a greater attention on helping emerging leaders overcome closed problems rather than helping them deal with complex and ill-structured problems (Conger, 2004; Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Day, 2007, 2012; Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014; Day & Halpin, 2004). Unsurprisingly, then, as illustrated by the opening quote by McCall (2010b) and by organizational actions across industries (e.g., Nestle, L'Oréal), there has been an increasing emphasis to supplement formal classroom training and educational programs with challenging job experiences (CJE).

However, despite several reviews existing within the leadership development field on other development options, for example, formal training (Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992; Salas

& Cannon-Bowers, 2001; see also, Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009), executive coaching (Feldman & Lankau, 2005), and mentoring (Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003), to date, to the best of my knowledge, there has not yet been an attempt to integrate extant findings on CJE. Currently, there exists only an annotated bibliography on the topic that was provided by McCauley and Brutus (1998) more than twenty years back. In particular, McCauley and Brutus offered annotations across three sections: (1) developmental jobs, (2) individual variability in on-the-job development, and (3) using developmental assignments. Since 1998, several developments have occurred in the CJE research arena. First, although CJE may facilitate learning, career advancement, and retention, extant research shows that these experiences have a *dark side* in spite of their ability to generate positive outcomes. Second, existing studies investigating the role of gender and the relationship between CJE and job performance have reported inconsistent findings. In light of these issues that have emerged over the past twenty years, I believe the time is ripe to review the existing base of knowledge on the topic and summarize what the key research themes across the determinants and consequences of CJE are.

Accordingly, in the present essay, I provide a review of the growing body of literature on CJE that has emerged over the past two decades within the field of leadership development. The rest of this essay is structured as follows. First, I discuss the concept of CJE, the evolution of CJE research, and conceptualization of CJE within the field of leadership development. Next, I offer a brief review of McCauley and Brutus' (1998) annotated bibliography on CJE. The goal of this summary was to gain clarity on what areas or themes of inquiry have been conducted prior to 1998 and what areas remained to be explored. Later, I assess the current state of the literature (1998-2018) and review the findings related to the outcomes and antecedents of CJE. Finally, on the basis of this review, I present an emergent

model of CJE that integrates the existing stock of literature and suggests areas of inquiry requiring further attention.

## CJE: Evolution as a Topic of Research

The construct of CJE arose from the qualitative work around on-the-job development that revealed that successful executives typically develop *on the job* over their careers (see, for example, Lindsey, Homes, & McCall, 1987; see also, Lombardo, 1985, 1986; McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988). For instance, McCall and associates at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) (Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall et al., 1988) collected data from 191 executives in 6 corporations to understand what kinds of experiences are considered to be developmental by such executives and what lessons they did they learn from these experiences. The findings revealed that three major categories of experience were vital in how executives learned and developed in their careers: (1) job experiences (e.g., projects/task force assignments, line-to-staff job switches, assignments that involve fix-it/turn-it-around situations, starting something from scratch assignments, and assignments that provide a leap in job scope), (2) experiences involving interactions with other people (e.g., good and bad colleagues, bosses, and role models), and (3) hardships (e.g., business failures and mistakes, demotions). These experiences helped executives learn a variety of skills and perspectives. For example, through job experiences, individuals learned how to cope with new demands and developed their problem-solving and decision-making skills. Through experiences involving interactions with other people, individuals learned how to motivate employees and develop listening skills. Finally, through hardships, they learned the valuable lessons of patience and humility, how to handle stress and deal with external groups (McCauley, 1986; Valerio, 1990). Importantly, they also found that job experiences taught both the greatest variety and the largest number of lessons (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1989a; Van Velsor & Hughes, 1990; Yip & Wilson, 2010). These experiences provide a push for development

because individuals are made to confront *challenges*, that is, situations where they need to learn new skills or develop new levels of skills because old skills no longer count, engage in decisions that involved substantial implications, and cooperate with people under difficult circumstances (Brutus, Ruderman, Ohlott, & McCauley, 2000; Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984; Lombardo, 1985; McCauley & Brutus, 1998; McCauley, Eastman, & Ohlott, 1995). These situations stretch individuals beyond their current capacities (McCauley, 1999), providing them an opportunity to "experiment with new learning strategies, behaviors, and alternative ways of thinking" and a motivation to "reach new levels of competencies" (Brutus et al., 2000, p. 368).

Overall, the early qualitative research on executive development served as building blocks for much of the current work around CJE by emphasizing that the challenges that individuals encountered in their job experiences were what really triggered their learning and development over their careers (McCall et al., 1988).

## CJE: Definition and Features

CJE are referred to as features of individuals' jobs that arise from adding or changing roles, responsibilities, and tasks, providing them an opportunity and a motivation to learn (McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994). Revising previous work[1], McCauley (1999) identified ten features that make CJE potent for the learning of important skills and

[1] Earlier, in 1994, McCauley and her colleagues had identified fifteen features of CJE that foster development. These dimensions (i.e., unfamiliar responsibilities, proving yourself, inherited problems, developing new directions, reduction decisions, problem with employees, high stakes, managing business diversity, job overload, handling external pressure, influencing without authority, adverse business conditions, lack of top management support, lack of personal support, and difficult boss) were conceptually grouped under three categories of variables related to learning (i.e., job transitions, task-related characteristics, and obstacles). However, in an email, Cindy McCauley explained the changes in the features of CJE (personal communication, May 21, 2016). She stated that this revision was driven with the intention to drop 5 dimensions (i.e., difficult boss, lack of personal support, lack of top management support, adverse business conditions, and reduction decisions) that executives might usually consider to be *hardships* rather than *challenges*. Further, two dimensions (i.e., unfamiliar responsibilities and proving yourself) that had conceptual overlap were termed unfamiliar responsibilities. Likewise, two dimensions (i.e., managing business diversity and job overload) that had conceptual overlap were termed scope and scale. Finally, additional qualitative research conducted post-1994 lead to the identification of two new features: work group diversity and work across cultures.

perspectives. These features were conceptually grouped under five broad clusters. Table 2.1 provides a brief description of each category and characteristics.

**Table 2.1**

**CJE: Categories and Features**

| CJE Category | Features | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Experiencing a job transition | Unfamiliar responsibilities | Individuals are put in a novel situation with responsibilities that are different from those handled in the past. |
| Creating change | New directions, inherited problems, and problems with employees | Individuals are put into a situation where they have to initiate something new for the organization, for example, start a new venture. Alternatively, they may be expected to fix problems that were created by a predecessor or manage staff that is incompetent or unmotivated. |
| Managing at high levels of responsibility | High stakes and scope and scale | Individuals are put into a situation where they face critical deadlines and pressure from senior management. Further, they may have to coordinate and integrate multiple functions, groups, products, or services. |
| Managing boundaries | External pressure and influence without authority | Individuals are put into a situation where they must interface and negotiate with groups and individuals inside or outside the organization over whom they hold no direct authority. |
| Dealing with diversity | Work across cultures and work group diversity | Individuals are put into a situation where they must collaborate with a diverse set of people with different racial and ethnic backgrounds and coming from different cultures or institutions in other countries. |

Some learning themes are expected to emerge from each of these categories of experiences (McCauley & Brutus, 1998; Ohlott, 2003). Table 2.2 provides a brief summary of each category and some expected areas of learning.

**Table 2.2**

**CJE: Categories and Expected Learning Themes**

| CJE Category | Expected Learning Themes |
|---|---|
| Experiencing a job transition | • Business and technical knowledge |
| Creating change | • Negotiation skills<br>• How to motivate and develop employees<br>• How to handle problematic employees |
| Managing at high levels of responsibility | • Decision-making and organizing skills<br>• Learning to integrate different perspectives, prioritize, and make trade-offs |
| Managing boundaries | • Learning about building relationships, handling conflict |
| Dealing with diversity | • Learn how to view personal, business, and workplace issues from the perspective of others |

### A Brief Review of McCauley and Brutus' (1998) Annotated Bibliography

In 1998, McCauley and Brutus provided an annotation of articles and books that connect to the topic of CJE. In particular, they examined three themes: (1) developmental jobs, (2) individual variability in on-the-job development, and (3) using developmental assignments. In the section on *developmental jobs*, the authors annotated studies that (a) showed that challenging job experiences to be vital in helping successful executives learn and develop over their careers, (b) uncovered that certain characteristics or features of challenging experiences make them developmental, and (c) found that each of these features are associated with a different area of learning. In the section on *individual variability in on-the-job development*, the authors annotated studies that (i) showed that individuals brought different learning styles to learn from experiences made available on the job, (ii) uncovered that certain abilities, personalities, and demographic characteristics were potentially important in learning from challenging experiences, and (iii) found that were some gender differences in challenging experiences and types of learning reported from such experiences.

Finally, in the section on *using developmental assignments*, the authors annotated studies that (1.) described ways in which certain organizations went about implementing challenging experiences as part of their management development system and (2.) documented interventions organizations could design to help individuals learn from challenging experiences.

Overall, the book provided some excellent insights into the role of individual differences in learning from challenging experiences, the organizational conditions that enhance learning from challenging experiences, and what sort of lessons do individuals learn from challenging experiences. However, while the research reviewed in the book did help substantially broaden our understanding of CJE, there were some criticisms of the studies reviewed in the book rather than the book per se.

First, a large part of the studies reviewed focused predominantly on learning as the core outcome of challenging experiences and neglected several other important outcomes such as performance, promotability, and retention. Studying the effect of CJE on performance is important because, in these experiences, old skills no longer count, the stakes are high, and the workload is exhausting (Lombardo, 1985). Thus, it is conceivable that, in undergoing challenging experiences, individuals may end up investing a significant amount of mental, physical, and emotional effort (Courtright, Colbert, & Choi, 2014), making it difficult for them to add more to the performance of their in-role duties and responsibilities (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998; Muraven, Tice, & Baumeister, 1998). Similarly, studying how CJE relate to promotability evaluations and retention is important because some organizations typically collect diagnostic data on individuals' performance in these experiences to make succession planning decisions (Courtright et al., 2014; Groves, 2007). Moreover, given that these experiences are expected to contribute to individual learning and growth, it is possible that these experiences may lower individuals' intention to voluntarily

leave the organization (Preenen, De Pater, Van Vianen, & Keijzer, 2011). Overall, then, understanding how, why, and under what conditions do challenging experiences hurt or help job performance, promotability, and retention should be of interest to both individuals and organizations.

Another criticism of the studies reviewed in the book was that they were exclusively US-centric. Given that people across countries may vary in how they learn (Hayes & Allinson, 1988) and, specifically, from what experiences they may draw learning from (Mabey & Ramirez, 2005; Yip & Wilson, 2010), it is important to understand whether these findings are indeed generalizable across cultures (McCauley & Hezlett, 2001).

## CJE: A Review of the Empirical Research

In this section, I review empirical studies that have made some progress in addressing the limitations of studies identified earlier with regard to McCauley and Brutus' (1988) annotated bibliography. To locate empirical studies, I followed the following inclusion/exclusion criteria: (1) articles published between 1998 (the year McCauley and Brutus published their annotated bibliography) and the end of 2018, (2) articles that mentioned the term *challenging job experiences* or other terms that are commonly used in the CJE literature (e.g., *developmental job experiences, challenging work experiences, developmental work assignments, developmental job assignments, stretch assignments, challenging task assignments*) in the title, abstract, or keywords, and (3) articles that focused on the overall CJE construct and reported or theorized about the determinants and consequences of CJE or those that examined how CJE interacted with other variables to predict outcomes.

Next, I searched for articles using the EBSCOhost database. After compiling a preliminary list of articles, I examined the references section to locate a further set of articles. This set of articles was then obtained using any of the following three resources: (1) Google Scholar, (2) ResearchGate, and (3) Inter-library loan. The results from this process yielded 19

empirical studies for inclusion in this review. A summary of this empirical work is provided in Table 2.3. I turn now to the findings of the empirical review starting with the determinants of CJE and then the consequences of CJE.

**Table 2.3**

**Summary of CJE Empirical Research**

| Authors (Year) | Sample | Key Findings | Country |
|---|---|---|---|
| Brutus, Ruderman, Ohlott, & McCauley (2000) | Managers enrolled in executive MBA programs or in management development programs | Challenging job experiences are associated with individuals' perceptions of overall development, particularly for those with low organization-based self-esteem (OBSE). | Not disclosed |
| De Pater, Van Vianen, Bechtoldt, & Klehe (2009a) | Governmental employees in a trainee program of the Dutch national government, university graduates in earth sciences working at junior job levels in different organizations, and employees of a pharmaceutical company | CJE explains variance in promotability, as measured by supervisor ratings and organization's formal ratings, over and above job performance and job tenure. | Netherlands |
| De Pater, Van Vianen, Fischer, & Van Ginkel (2009b) | University students and interns | Proactive individuals are more likely to have challenging experiences. Further, men choose to perform more challenging experiences than women. One possible explanation underlying such a choice is related to the tendency of women to express a stronger motive to avoid failure and of men to | Netherlands |

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|---|---|---|---|
| | | show a stronger motive to approach success. Finally, CJE are positively related to supervisors' evaluation of potential for career advancement but unrelated to supervisors' evaluation of current performance. | |
| De Pater, Van Vianen, Humphrey, Sleeth, Hartman, & Fischer (2009c) | University students | No gender differences found in individuals' choices to perform challenging experiences. Nonetheless, when opposite-sex dyads decide to allocate these experiences among themselves, female participants are likely to shift from their initial choice for challenging experiences to the choice for non-challenging experiences. | United States |
| DeRue & Wellman (2009) | Middle- and senior-level managers who were recruited from the executive and weekend MBA programs at a university | Overly challenging job experiences create a pattern of diminishing returns in skill development. However, feedback availability is a powerful mechanism through which these diminishing returns can be prevented. | United States |
| Dragoni, Tesluk, Russell, & Oh (2009) | Junior-level managers and their supervisors. Junior managers were recruited from the part-time MBA program at a university | Individuals with stronger learning orientations, especially those with opportunities to secure access to job experiences, are more likely to be in challenging experiences. | United States |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Individuals that hold or pursue CJE and have a strong learning orientation are likely to achieve higher levels of end-state competencies. | |
| De Pater, Van Vianen, & Bechtoldt (2010) | Middle- and senior-level employees in a pharmaceutical company | Men report more CJE in their jobs than women. The differential assignment of challenging experiences to male and female subordinates by their senior managers represents, in part, a potential reason for such differences. | Not disclosed |
| Preenen, De Pater, Van Vianen, & Keijzer (2011) | Members of an internet panel company employed in health care and welfare organizations | The relationships between CJE and turnover intentions and job search behaviors respectively are mediated by on-the-job learning. In addition, change in on-the-job learning mediated the relationship between change in CJE and voluntary turnover. | Netherlands |
| Aryee & Chu (2012) | Supervisor-subordinate dyads from service sector organizations | Transformational leadership and learning orientation are related to having CJE. Furthermore, CJE are related to task performance and promotability assessment but indirectly through task-specific self-efficacy. | China |
| DeRue, Nahrgang, Hollenbeck, | Full-time MBA students at a university | Individuals who go through an after-event review (AER) | United States |

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|---|---|---|---|
| & Workman (2012) | | immediately following leadership development experiences tend to report greater leadership development than individuals who do not engage in an AER. Additionally, this effect is accentuated if individuals possess a base of CJE in their career history. | |
| King, Botsford, Hebl, Kazama, Dawson, & Perkins (2012) | Managers in the energy industry, 2005 English National Health Service staff survey dataset, university students, and professional MBA students at a business school | While men and women tend to report little differences in the extent to which they engage in CJE, men consider these experiences to be more challenging and report more negative feedback than their female counterparts. Male decision-makers who hold an ideology connected to benevolence are less likely to allocate challenging experiences to their female employees. | United States |
| Carette, Anseel, & Lievens (2013) | Employees across organizational departments at a local branch of an international furniture retailer | For early-career employees, CJE are positively associated with in-role performance. For mid-career employees, however, the relationship exhibits an inverted U-shaped curve. | Not disclosed |
| Courtright, Colbert, & Choi (2014) | Junior and mid-level managers in the United States and Canada at Fortune 500 financial | While CJE relate to transformational leadership via engagement, such | United States |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | services company | experiences are also likely to fuel laissez-faire leadership behaviors via emotional exhaustion, particularly for employees who are low in leadership self-efficacy (LSE). | |
| Dong, Seo, & Bartol (2014) | Early-career managers who were recruited from a part-time MBA program at a university | While CJE are capable of eliciting pleasant feelings and boosting advancement potential, such experiences are also capable of potentially failing in this regard due to an increase in negative feelings. Further, CJE are capable of potentially causing unpleasant feelings which, in turn, may manifest in turnover intentions, particularly among low-EI individuals. | United States |
| Preenen, Van Vianen, & De Pater (2014a) | University students | Individuals performing job experiences high in challenge are likely to exhibit a higher positive-activating mood when instructed to focus on learning. Individuals performing job experiences low in challenge are likely to exhibit a higher positive-activating mood when instructed to focus on demonstrating their superior competence and skills to others. | Netherlands |
| Preenen, Van Vianen, & De Pater (2014b) | Employees across organizational departments at a | Employees with a learning orientation are likely to have | Netherlands |

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|---|---|---|---|
| | technical equipment company | challenging experiences. Furthermore, those whose supervisors are responsible for the allocation of tasks at work are less likely to have challenging experiences if their supervisors hold a strong performance-approach goal orientation and more likely to have challenging experiences if their supervisors hold a strong performance-avoidance goal orientation. | |
| Preenen, Verbiest, Van Vianen, & Van Wijk (2015) | Temporary agency workers (TAWs) in low-skill jobs such as production and warehouse work from temporary work agencies | Workers who have career competencies such as self-profiling and career control tend to learn more on-the-job because they are more likely to pursue or hold CJE. | Netherlands |
| Cao & Hamori (2016) | Alumni (international MBA, executive MBA, international LLM programs) of a European business school. | CJE tends to boost individuals' perceptions of organizational commitment. However, the presence of other developmental practices such as support from the direct supervisor, mentoring, and coaching tends to weaken such a positive effect of CJE on organizational commitment. | Not disclosed |
| Seibert, Sargent, Kraimer, & Kiazad (2017) | First-line managers and supervisors within the retail operations of a large retail organization. | CJE are likely to build an individual's leadership self-efficacy which, in turn, positively influences leadership | Australia |

| | |
|---|---|
| | effectiveness and promotability. In addition, CJE also helps build the size and quality of an individual's mentor network which, in turn, positively influences promotability. |

**The Determinants of CJE**

**Demographic characteristics**

CJE scholars have examined whether there are differences in CJE depending on individuals' gender. While some early studies revealed that men reported more amounts of CJE in their jobs than their women counterparts (De Pater, Van Vianen, Fischer, & Van Ginkel, 2009b; De Pater, Van Vianen, & Bechtoldt, 2010), a more recent study (King et al., 2012) showed little or no differences in male and female managers' reports of amount of challenging experiences in their jobs. However, going beyond prior research, King and colleagues (2012) integrating the assessment, challenge, and support (ACS) model of leadership development (Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010) with ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996), sought to examine whether there were *qualitative* differences in the CJE of male and female managers. Specifically, the ACS model of leadership development contends that experiences that involve three key elements (i.e., assessment data in the form of constructive feedback [A], feelings of challenge [C], a sense of support [S]) are richer and more developmental than challenging experiences that leave out any of these elements. Further, the ambivalent sexism theory proposes that women could face benevolent sexism, that is, "positive expressions that seek to reward women for being subservient and dependent" (King et al., 2012, p. 1840). Such benevolent ideologies, they reasoned, may end up creating qualitative differences in challenging experiences that men and women pursue or hold at work. Using a sample of managers in the energy industry, they

found some support for their arguments. Specifically, men held CJE that were rich and more developmental in that they perceived these experiences to be really challenging and received more negative feedback than female managers. However, contrary to expectations, men and women did not report significantly different levels of support from their supervisors.

Continuing with the research agenda of probing the role of gender in CJE, some studies have been dedicated to exploring potential reasons for the existence of gender similarities or differences in CJE. For instance, given that some of these experiences may be self-initiated (McCauley & Brutus, 1998), the first question that has received a relatively fair amount of attention is, Do men and women make different choices for challenging experiences in their current jobs? Unfortunately, findings have remained equivocal in this area (De Pater et al., 2009b; De Pater et al., 2009c; King et al., 2012). Another question that CJE scholars have probed is, Are organizational decision-makers or individuals' supervisors likely to differentially allocate challenging experiences to men and women? This question is important because more often than not, in work settings, supervisors have the final say on the allocation of such experiences (De Pater et al., 2009b). Some studies have indicated that senior managers were less willing to assign challenging experiences to female than to male employees (De Pater et al., 2010) and this is likely to occur when male decision-makers were high in benevolent sexism (King et al., 2012). Thus, one potential reason for why women tend to be underrepresented at the highest levels of organizations may be explained by the benevolent ideologies that organizational decision-makers and supervisors may typically hold about their women employees (e.g., women should be kept away from challenges because they deserve protection and reverence) (King et al., 2012).

**Abilities and dispositional characteristics**

Individuals differ in the extent to which they pursue or have challenging experiences. Extant empirical research has shown that individuals with a proactive personality (De Pater et

al. 2009b) and a learning orientation (Aryee & Chu, 2012; Dragoni et al., 2009; Preenen, Van Vianen, & De Pater, 2014b) are more likely to seek out challenging experiences. While three studies (Aryee & Chu, 2012; De Pater et al., 2009b; Preenen et al., 2014b) found a direct relation between personality and CJE, Dragoni et al. (2009) demonstrated an interaction effect of personality and organizational context in determining CJE. In particular, Dragoni and her colleagues showed that when individuals have opportunities to secure challenging experiences (i.e., perceived access to job experiences), those with stronger learning orientations were more likely to pursue or have challenging experiences in their jobs.

Using a competency perspective, Preenen, Verbiest, Van Vianen, and Van Wijk (2015) demonstrated that career competencies such as self-profiling (i.e., actively pointing out and communicating abilities to others) and career control (i.e., setting goals and creating plans to reach them) of temporary agency workers (TAWs) were related to CJE and, subsequently, to informal learning on-the-job. Drawing from these results, it would be fair to infer that, rather than choosing to limit CJE to a few select individuals (e.g., managers, high potentials), some organizations are actually trying to "build leadership capacity throughout the organization" through the usage of CJE (Day & Halpin, 2001, p. 50).

**Characteristics and behavior of the supervisor**

A few studies on CJE have discussed how contextual factors may also influence the extent to which employees have challenging experiences at work. For example, Aryee and Chu (2012) found that transformational leadership was associated with CJE. Supervisors who are transformational are likely to actively promote intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration of their employees. This helps foster perceptions of job variety, autonomy, significance meaningfulness, feedback, and coaching and, as a result, heightens individuals' perceptions of CJE. Further, Aryee and Chu found that CJE and task-specific self-efficacy mediated the effects of transformational

leadership on task performance and promotability assessment. Preenen et al. (2014b) provided evidence that supervisors' performance-avoidance orientation was positively related to employees' CJE, only when the supervisors had high authority over employees' work activities. This is because performance avoidant supervisors tended to use their high task authority to delegate challenging experiences to their subordinates. Conversely, supervisors' performance-approach orientation was negatively related to employees' CJE, only when the supervisors had high authority over employees' work activities. This is because performance approach supervisors wanted to signal their competence by retaining challenging experiences.

## The Consequences of CJE

### Learning

A significant body of empirical work in the CJE domain has attempted to examine the outcomes of having or pursuing CJE. Some studies have more closely examined the positive impact that CJE may have on learning-related outcomes. This is not surprising because the major premise of the CJE field is that the development of broad perspectives and a large repertoire of skills are most likely to occur when individuals encounter challenging job experiences (e.g., McCauley & Brutus, 1998). However, recent studies have indicated that features of the individual, namely learning goal orientation (Dragoni et al., 2009), organization-based self-esteem (Brutus et al., 2000) and features of the context, namely feedback availability (DeRue & Wellman, 2009) act as boundary conditions for the relationship between CJE and on-the-job learning, leadership skills, and managerial competencies. The study by DeRue and Wellman (2009), in particular, was interesting in that the authors, drawing on learning theories (e.g., activation theory, Scott, 1966) and research in human cognition (Miller, 1956; Pollock, Chandler, & Sweller, 2002; Sweller, 1994), uncovered a curvilinear relationship between CJE and the supervisors' reports of leadership skill development. Additionally, they found that while the results for learning orientation

were not statistically significant, feedback availability made individuals less susceptible to the diminishing returns in leadership skills development. Giving these findings, it is important for organizations to provide an optimal amount of challenging experiences to their employees. On the one hand, individuals with lower amounts of CJE may "hold onto old habits and fail to try new approaches", in turn, reducing the likelihood of them learning from experiences (Yost & Mannion-Plunkett, 2010, p. 323). This may then potentially derail the career or even motivate them to leave the organization (Van Velsor & Hughes, 1990). On the other hand, individuals with excessively high amounts of CJE may experience negative emotions such as anxiety that can then "interfere with their learning" (Yost & Mannion-Plunkett, 2010, p. 323; see also, McCauley, 1999 and McCauley et al., 1995).

Given the importance of these experiences for learning and development and given that learning from such experiences is "not automatic" (McCauley et al., 1995, p. 110), the onus is on organizations to design and implement interventions that can help facilitate individuals' development from these experiences (Day & Dragoni, 2015; McCauley & Brutus, 1998). One such intervention suggested by extant research could be a structured after-event reviews (AER) protocol. Utilizing a quasi-experimental cohort design, DeRue, Nahrgang, Hollenbeck, and Workman (2012) indicated that individuals undertaking leadership development experiences (e.g., team-building offsite) were likely to experience greater leadership development when assigned to a structured after-AER protocol. Additionally, they showed that individuals who have undergone challenging experiences in their careers were likely to benefit the most from such structured reflection exercises.

**Emotions and moods**

McCauley (1999) warned that some individuals may see CJE, which are expected to offer them an opportunity and a motivation to learn and grow, as a source of stress and frustration. Therefore, some studies, drawing upon transactional stress theory (Lazarus, 1995; Lazarus &

Folkman, 1987), have investigated whether and how CJE may negatively impact individuals and organizations. For example, Courtright et al. (2014) found that CJE were associated with transformational leadership behaviors through engagement. At the same time, CJE were also related to laissez-faire leadership behaviors via emotional exhaustion. Moreover, the indirect effect of CJE on laissez-faire leadership behaviors via emotional exhaustion was moderated by leadership self-efficacy. In a related vein, Dong, Seo, and Bartol (2014) demonstrated that CJE were positively related to advancement potential and negatively related to turnover intention through pleasant feelings (e.g., enthusiasm and excitement). However, CJE also hampered advancement potential through unpleasant feelings (e.g., depressed and disappointed). Additionally, the indirect effect of CJE on turnover intention via unpleasant feelings was moderated by emotional intelligence. What distinguishes these two studies is that Dong et al. utilized an experience sampling method (ESM) to collect the affective states of pleasantness and unpleasantness once a day for 27 consecutive days. ESM is usually considered to be a relatively novel or a more sophisticated research measurement technique for assessing employees' affective experiences than cross-sectional measures of affective experiences (Fisher & To, 2012; Ganster & Rosen, 2013).

While some attention has been devoted to emotions, only one study has addressed individuals' mood reactions to undergoing challenging experiences. Using a laboratory simulation, Preenen, Van Vianen, and De Pater (2014a) placed participants in high-task challenge and low-task challenge conditions to examine how induced goal orientation triggers activating mood. They found that while individuals placed in a high-task challenge condition exhibited a higher positive-activating mood when induced with a learning-approach orientation, individuals in a low-task challenge condition also exhibited a higher positive-activating mood but with a performance-approach orientation. This study is important for CJE research and practice for several reasons. From a research perspective, this study is novel

in that the authors utilized a randomized experimental setting and a control group that allowed a more robust test for causality and reduced the possibility that third variables offered alternate explanations for the findings (Singleton & Straits, 2009). From a practice point of view, these results are important because practitioners could be asked to steer training interventions that help supervisors create a work environment where employees, who are provided with *regular* job experiences, are motivated to demonstrate superior competence and performance (i.e., a performance approach) and employees having *challenging* job experiences are motivated to focus on personal improvement, skill development, and experimentation (i.e., a learning approach) (McCauley & Brutus, 1998).

**Promotability and job performance**

CJE scholars have also devoted attention to outcomes such as promotability and performance. In investigating the link between CJE and employee promotability, scholars have uncovered a positive influence of CJE on the evaluation of promotability, with two studies finding a direct relationship (De Pater et al., 2009a; De Pater et al., 2009b) but two other studies finding a mediating relationship via self-efficacy (task-specific, Aryee & Chu, 2012; leadership-specific, Seibert, Sargent, Kraimer, & Kiazad, 2017) and the quality and size of individuals' mentor network (Seibert et al., 2017).

On the other hand, however, the nature of the relationship between CJE and employee task performance still remains unclear, with studies finding no relationship (De Pater et al., 2009b), a mediating relationship via task-specific self-efficacy (Aryee & Chu, 2012), and even a curvilinear relationship (Carette, Anseel, & Lievens, 2013) between the two constructs. Adding to this body of research on CJE-work performance, one study (Seibert et al., 2017) demonstrated that CJE had a positive indirect effect on performance or effectiveness in current leadership role via an important proximal indicator of leadership development: leadership self-efficacy.

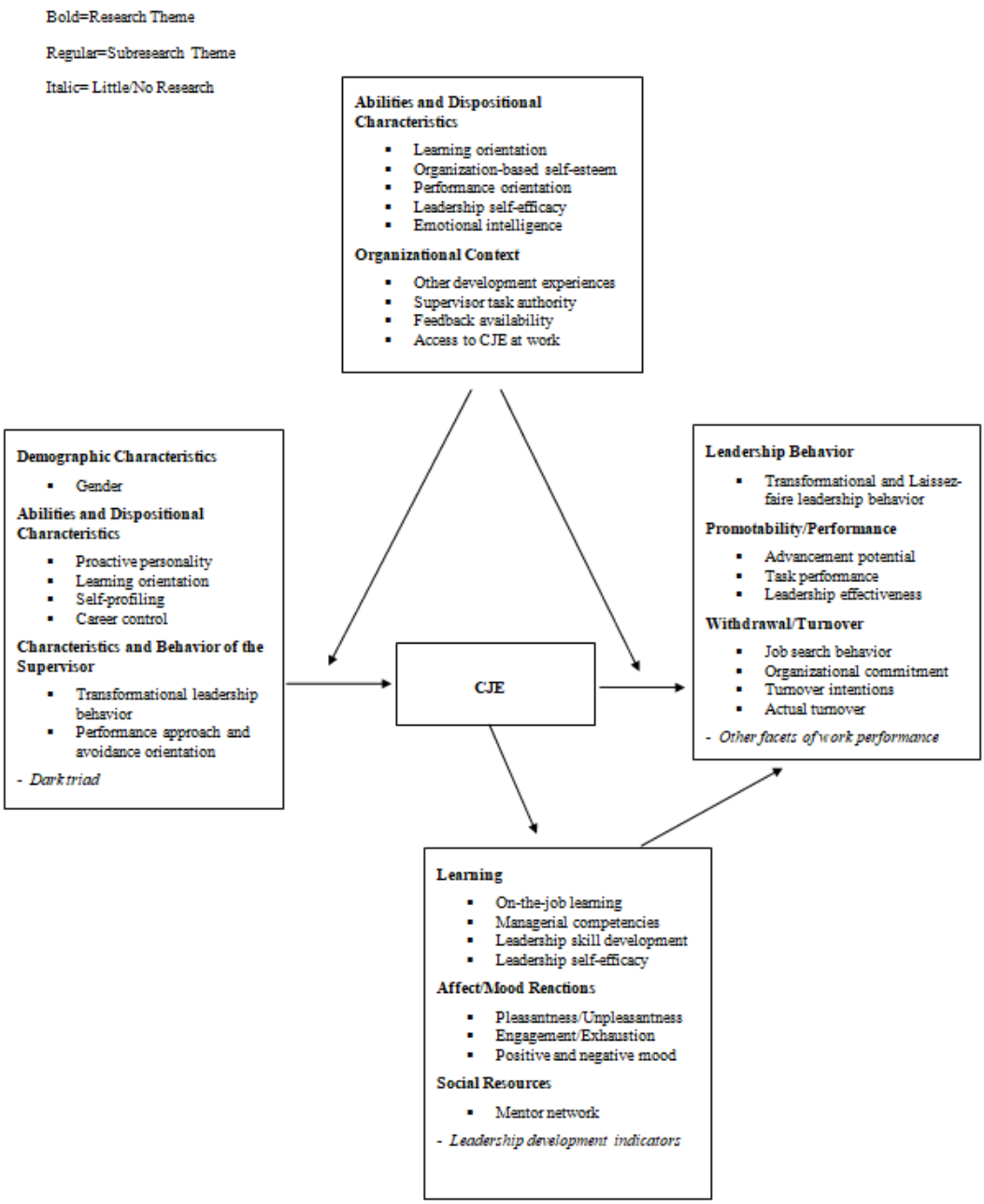
### Withdrawal and turnover

Finally, some studies have examined whether CJE could be related to withdrawal or turnover-related outcomes. Preenen and colleagues (2011), integrating several motivational theories (e.g., the job characteristics model, Hackman & Oldham, 1975; the self-determination theory, Gagné & Deci, 2005, Ryan & Deci, 2000; the job demands-resources model, Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001, Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), found that CJE motivated on-the-job learning which, in turn, reduced individuals' intentions to leave and their job search behaviors. Furthermore, the authors found that, as time unfolded, changes in CJE had an influence on voluntary turnover, and this relationship was mediated by changes in on-the-job learning, wherein, an increase in CJE over time was negatively related to voluntary employee turnover, while a decrease over time was positively related to voluntary employee turnover. On the other hand, Cao and Hamori (2016) showed that CJE were positively associated with an outcome proximally associated with employee retention: organizational commitment. However, their study revealed that the relationship between CJE and organizational commitment became weaker in the presence of three other commonly used leadership development practices: mentoring, coaching, and support from the direct supervisor.

## CJE: An Emergent Model and Plan for Future Research

As described in the previous section and highlighted in Table 2.3, the empirical research on CJE has made steady progress since McCauley and Brutus' (1998) annotated bibliography. In this section, I delineate, as depicted in Figure 2.1, an emergent model on CJE that integrates the extant empirical work.

**Figure 2.1**
**An Emergent Model of CJE**




In terms of the determinants of CJE, research evidence has been made available on who tends to secure challenging job experiences. Specifically, studies show that employees with a proactive personality (De Pater et al. 2009b), learning orientation (Aryee & Chu, 2012; Dragoni et al., 2009; Preenen et al., 2014b), and certain career competencies (Preenen et al., 2015) are more likely to have challenging experiences, though, under certain favorable

organizational conditions (i.e., access to job experiences at work; Dragoni et al., 2009). Second, extant research has helped us learn more about the contextual or situational factors that determine how employees assume challenging experiences. For instance, studies reveal that supervisors' goal orientations (Preenen et al., 2014b) and behaviors (Aryee & Chu, 2012) under a certain organizational context (i.e., supervisor task authority; Preenen et al., 2014b) may determine whether employees have challenging experiences in their jobs.

In terms of the consequences of CJE, additional evidence on the role of individual differences in learning from experience has been made available. Specifically, studies show that employee characteristics such as learning goal orientation (Dragoni et al., 2009) and organization-based self-esteem (Brutus et al., 2000) influence who gains the most from challenging experiences. Furthermore, we have learned more about how contextual or situational factors may facilitate learning from challenging experiences. Specifically, researchers emphasize the importance of feedback availability (DeRue & Wellman, 2009) and AER protocol (DeRue et al., 2012) in the development process. Recent research has also found a direct (De Pater et al., 2009a; De Pater et al., 2009b) and an indirect link via self-efficacy (Aryee & Chu, 2012; Seibert et al., 2017) and mentor network (Seibert et al., 2017) between challenging experiences and employee promotability. Finally, valuable evidence on how CJE relates to turnover has been made available, with research suggesting that CJE promotes organizational commitment (Cao & Hamori, 2016) and on-the-job learning (Preenen et al., 2011).

A major part of the work discussed has typically suggested that CJE are good for employees and organizations. However, some scholars have raised concerns over the dark side of challenging experiences. In particular, research is emerging that shows that CJE can lead to negative affective responses, which in turn, increase employees' laissez-faire leadership behaviors (Courtright et al., 2014) and turnover intentions, and reduce their

advancement potential (Dong et al. 2014). But, some employees, namely, those with high a level of leadership self-efficacy (Courtright et al., 2014) and emotional intelligence (Dong et al., 2014) are less susceptible to such dark effects of challenging experiences. These insights are helpful to organizations in that they can design appropriate interventions that can help prevent the negative outcomes of challenging experiences.

Overall, then, the extant work shows that while positive outcomes may accrue from CJE, there is potential that these experiences could also create negative outcomes. Further, existing studies have helped increase the generalizability of the construct by drawing from samples in China, the Netherlands, and Australia. Despite this progress, some important issues, in particular, the contradictory findings reported for research probing the role of individuals' gender as a determinant of individuals' CJE and the nature of the relationship between CJE and job performance, remain to be clarified. Therefore, I now turn to highlight these and several other areas where additional research is needed.

First, there exists something of a black box in the research examining the role of gender in CJE, with extant studies offering little insights on the boundary conditions. For example, it may be that gender effects depend on societal gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes refer to consensually-shared beliefs of the attributes, roles, and behaviors for males and females (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 2012). In societies where stereotypes of women are characterized by communal attributes (e.g., affectionate, helpful, kind) while male stereotypes tend to be associated with agentic attributes (e.g., competitive, self-confident, objective), it would be interesting to see whether male employees would report more challenging experiences at work than female employees (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Wood, 2012). Specifically, I expect would expect that in societies where such gender stereotypes are widely shared and taken for granted, men are more likely to choose challenging experiences than women and decision-makers or supervisors are more likely to

recommend the allocation of challenging experiences to men than women (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). Relatedly, I expect that in such societies, women are likely to be hesitant to initiate challenging experiences and decision-makers/supervisors are less likely to recommend the allocation of challenging experiences to women (Heilman, 2012).

In CJE, individuals make decisions under risk and uncertainty, work for long hours that involve significant travel, and are typically thrown into situations that involve high pressure and interacting with many groups that are unfamiliar to them (Lombardo, 1985; Ohlott, 2003). Thus, CJE may come to be viewed as a more agentic and less communal leadership development practice in that the expectations attached to CJE require individuals to possess a set of highly agentic qualities in order to achieve success in these experiences (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Accordingly, women in descriptive gender stereotypes societies may come to deem themselves or be deemed by decision-makers or supervisors as unfit for CJE because the attributes associated with success in these experiences do not match the attributes women are stereotypically believed to possess (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). Cross-country and cross-cultural research programs (see Gelfand, Leslie, & Fehr, 2008 and Tsui, Nifadkar, & Ou, 2007 for further details) are needed to further explore the role of gender in CJE.

Two, extant empirical work has focused mainly on the bright side of personality (e.g., proactive personality) in investigating who is likely to pursue or have challenging experiences, with little attention being devoted to how employees with dark personality traits (i.e., dark triad: narcissism, machiavellianism, and psychopathy; Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Paulhus & Williams, 2002) could also receive or pursue challenging experiences at work. Scholars could look to address this gap by drawing upon trait activation theory. According to the trait activation theory, "the behavioral expression of a trait requires arousal of that trait by trait-relevant situational cues" (Tett & Guterman, 2000, p. 398). On the

presence of these trait-relevant cues, a trait becomes activated which then results in trait-expressive behaviors (Tett & Burnett, 2003).

Therefore, it would be intriguing to observe whether a competitive climate (i.e., the extent to which individuals perceive their organization as encouraging or endorsing intense peer competition for resources; Fletcher & Nusbaum, 2010; Ng, 2017) provides a contextual condition that activates innate tendencies of employees who scores high on dark personality traits to engage in actions (e.g., supervisor-focused influence tactics; Wayne & Ferris, 1990) that then lead to them pursuing or having CJE. Specifically, because a competitive climate provides organizational-level cues that suggest that pursuing self-interested goals is valorized and rewarded and because CJE have been shown to be associated with important outcomes (e.g., promotions, pay raises) that presumably serve to enhance income, power, and status (Judge & Bretz 1994), employees who score high on dark personality traits may be encouraged to undertake trait-expressive actions with the aim to gain access to CJE.

Three, from a learning standpoint, much work needs to be devoted to uncovering the potential impact of CJE on proximal and distal indicators associated with leadership development. While research has commonly conceptualized leadership development as changes in on-the-job learning and leadership knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs), considerably less research has been devoted to examining how participation in challenging experiences may influence proximal (e.g., leadership self-efficacy, self-awareness) or distal (e.g., meaning-making structures and processes) indicators associated with the leadership development process (Day & Dragoni, 2015; DeRue & Myers, 2014). More importantly, given that "learning from experience is not just a one-shot deal" (McCall, 2010a, p. 65), little longitudinal research probing how development unfolds over time in response to such experiences has been conducted (McCauley & Brutus, 1998). Moreover, moderators that

might explain the conditions under which leadership development from CJE may be enhanced have yet to be explicated (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Hezlett, 2010).

Therefore, to address these various gaps, integrating the ACS model of leadership development (Van Velsor et al., 2010) with the theoretical work on leadership development processes and outcomes (Day & Dragoni, 2015), scholars could look to explore the interactive effect of CJE and each element (i.e., feelings of challenge, constructive feedback, and a sense of support) in promoting alternate indicators of leadership development over time. Do certain combinations of variables predict, for instance, higher levels of leadership efficacy and self-awareness than other combinations?

Four, as discussed in the review, extant research that explores the impact of CJE on individual task performance has been largely equivocal. One plausible reason for this may be the focus of all three studies on examining static, between-individual relationships rather than dynamic, within-individual relationships. While studies that adopt a between-individual conceptualization make a strong assumption that the construct of interest remains relatively stable over a period of time (Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010), research adopting a within-individual approach incorporates the possibility that employees do not undergo CJE or engage in task performance at a constant level; rather there may be fluctuations in CJE and performance over days, months, or years. Beyond differences in the assumptions made in these two approaches, scholars suggest that there could be potential differences in the underlying processes and the strength and direction of the relationships between two or more constructs of interest (Dalal, Bhave, & Fiset, 2014; Fisher & To, 2012; Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010).

Therefore, I urge future researchers to explore the following questions: Do CJE fluctuate over the short term (e.g., daily or weekly) or over a longer time frame (quarterly or yearly)? What situational factors account for such fluctuations in CJE? What are the effects of such

short term or long term fluctuations in CJE on task performance? From a research point of view, these efforts will help address the concerns of scholars who have suggested that CJE (McCauley et al., 1994) and job performance (Dalal et al., 2014) may not remain stable and may fluctuate on account of situational conditions. In addition, from a practical point of view, I believe efforts at addressing these questions are worthwhile because factoring in the fluctuations (i.e., increase or decrease) in CJE and task performance, above and beyond just observing an employee's baseline CJE at a specific point of time, may help generate more reliable data in making succession planning decisions (Courtright et al., 2014; Groves, 2007).

Five, a line of research that still remains very much underdeveloped is the effects of CJE on other facets of work performance. Scholars have suggested that work performance consists of three different subdimensions: (1) proficiency, that is, the extent to which an individual meets formal role requirements, (2) adaptivity, that is, the extent to which an individual adapts to changes in work roles, and (3) proactivity, that is, the extent to which an individual takes action to anticipate or initiate change in work roles (Carpini, Parker, & Griffin, 2017; Griffin, Neal & Parker, 2007). Furthermore, these different subdimensions of performance can be directed to the individual (i.e., individual task proficiency, individual task adaptivity, and individual task proactivity), group (i.e., team member proficiency, team member adaptivity, and team member proactivity), or organizational level (i.e., organization member proficiency, organization member adaptivity, and organization member proactivity). Given these recent developments, research that explores how CJE relate to other subdimensions of work performance (i.e., adaptivity and proactivity) should be valuable.

For example, extant scholarship has examined the relationship between CJE to behavior in the *current* job role such as task proficiency behaviors at work (Aryee & Chu, 2012) and leadership behaviors toward direct reports (Courtright et al., 2014; Seibert et al., 2017). What are the implications of CJE on future-oriented behavior such as proactivity and adaptivity?

According to the proactive motivation model (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010), contextual variables such as CJE can influence employee proactivity through three proximal individual proactive motivational states, namely, *can do*, *reason to*, and *energized to* motivation. Can do motivation includes self-efficacy perceptions, reason to motivate includes identity, and energized to motivation includes activated positive affect. Therefore, building and extending the proactive motivation model (Parker et al., 2010), scholars should look to uncover the motivational mechanisms that relate CJE to different forms of proactive behavior.

Six, from a turnover perspective, extant research has focused on a *motivational* explanation of CJE to suggest that when employees undergo CJE, they acquire on-the-job learning which, in turn, reduces their intentions to leave and search for new jobs (Preenen et al., 2011). However, another stream of research (Diener, Lucas, & Scollon, 2006), which I term the *adaptation* explanation of CJE, would suggest that in the short term, increases in CJE that may entail increased time pressure and workload demands (Lombardo, 1985), leading to adverse increases in psychological (e.g., heightened sense of fear) and psychosomatic (e.g., frequent incidents of headaches) responses among individuals (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). Because "negative information receives more processing and contributes more strongly to the final impression than does positive information" (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001, p. 323-324), such changes in health are likely to increase employees' intentions to leave and search for new jobs.

However, over time, with prolonged exposure to such experiences, employees may adapt to the stressful demands of CJE and, in doing so, may experience increased positive well-being, leading to a reduced likelihood of turnover (Diener et al., 2006). Hence, future work examining the CJE-turnover relationship should look to utilize longitudinal designs that study change within the substantive construct(s) of interest by collecting repeated measures from the same sample of employees at least thrice (Gentry & Martineau, 2010; Ployhart &

Vandenberg, 2010). This would help integrate theories that make conflicting predictions and help uncover whether the pattern of results with regard to the relationship between CJE and turnover does indeed differ as a function of time.

Finally, to date, CJE research has been limited almost exclusively to the individual level, linking individual perceptions of CJE to individual- and work-related outcomes. It has been suggested that "phenomenon at the micro-level of the organization are embedded in macro-contexts" (Renkema, Meijerink, & Bondarouk, 2017, p. 399) and, thus, there is a possibility that "particular phenomena appear at multiple levels of analysis" (Hitt, Beamish, Jackson, & Mathieu, 2007, p. 1393). Therefore, although CJE theory and research have consistently conceptualized and operationalized CJE at the individual level, there is a possibility that CJE may manifest itself at multiple levels. Hence, scholars could expand the existing CJE theory and research by moving from an individual to a unit level perspective.

At the unit level, however, it is likely that there may be variability in CJE, that is, a case in which there exist varying amounts of challenging experiences, with some unit members having greater amounts of these experiences as compared to others in the work unit. The argument for such variability to exist comes from McCauley and Brutus' (1998) annotated bibliography. Specifically, McCauley and Brutus contended that the implementation of CJE within organizations is likely to be an "involved process" (p. 87), with organizations having to create a sort of a learning infrastructure (e.g., creation of new workflows, provisions of learning-style inventories, and reflection periods) in order to support learning from challenging experiences. They reasoned that this could lead to a differentiation in challenging experiences and, subsequently, called for further research that examines the potential implications of such differentiation. Accordingly, to address this limitation in the CJE literature, scholars could study the role of CJE variability in a work unit. For example, social identity scholars have proposed a positive relationship between employees' work unit

identification (i.e., the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of their work unit; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010) and workplace helping behaviors (i.e., sharing resources or assisting those who are behind in their work in order to solve or prevent the occurrence of work-related problems; Anderson & Williams, 1996; Ng & Van Dyne, 2005; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Specifically, unit identification creates a situation where unit goals are seen as intrinsically motivating and employees' behaviors are then aligned with the unit's values, beliefs, and norms instead of their personal interests (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010; Seppälä, Lipponen, Bardi, & Pirttilä-Backman, 2012; van Dick, 2001). Thus, extant research shows that employees with high work unit identification are likely to positively contribute to the work unit processes (extra-role behavior toward the work unit) (Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006; Riketta & van Dick, 2005).

However, it is possible that the positive relationship between work unit identification and work unit helping behavior gets attenuated when CJE variability in a work unit is high. According to the social identification and motivation perspective (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004), under certain situational contexts, individuals are led to conceive of themselves as separate from the work unit and behave in ways that demonstrate how they differ from other unit members. That is, individuals are energized to act in terms of what seems individually rewarding instead of in terms of their unit memberships. Thus, in a work unit context where CJE variability is high, it may happen that individuals are encouraged to attend to individual differences (e.g. in the achievement of individual goals and rewards) and are prevented from focusing on their group memberships (Ellemers et al., 2004). This may occur because when CJE variability in a work unit is high, employees' identity needs such as self-enhancement (i.e., identifying with the work unit provides the basis for thinking of oneself in a positive light) and depersonalized belongingness (i.e., identifying with the work

unit satisfies the desire to experience similarity to others in the unit) get threatened which, then, may lower their propensity to think and behave in a way that benefits the work unit (Ashforth et al., 2008; Cooper & Thatcher, 2010; Conroy, Henle, Shore, & Stelman, 2017). Thus, by exploring the unit-level dynamics surrounding CJE, scholars have an opportunity to explore the potential side effects of implementing CJE within organizations (McCauley & Brutus, 1998).

## Conclusion

Since the publication of McCauley and Brutus' (1998) annotated bibliography on CJE, empirical research has made significant progress in capturing the determinants and consequences of CJE (see Table 2.3 and Figure 2.1). However, despite this steady progress, some themes still remain poorly understood (e.g., the role of gender in determining CJE), and several areas of inquiry remain unexplored (e.g., the potential of CJE to appear at both the individual- and unit-levels). I hope that the review and the emergent model presented in the essay will serve as a useful guide for scholars to build research programs and contribute to this emerging body of literature on CJE.

## Chapter 3: Challenging Job Experiences: An Identity Perspective


### Abstract

Introducing an identity perspective to challenging job experiences (CJE) research, this essay examined how CJE foster leadership development at work by promoting the salience of individuals' future work selves, and, as a result, drive two forms of proactive behavior: strategic scanning and taking charge. Data were collected at 2 time points from a sample of individuals in leadership positions across a range of industries. Results revealed that CJE were positively related to strategic scanning behavior over time, partially mediated by future work self salience. However, future work self salience did not mediate the relationship between CJE and taking charge. Implications of these results for theory and practice and directions for future research are discussed.



*Keywords*: challenging job experiences, future work selves, proactive behavior, leadership development

## Introduction

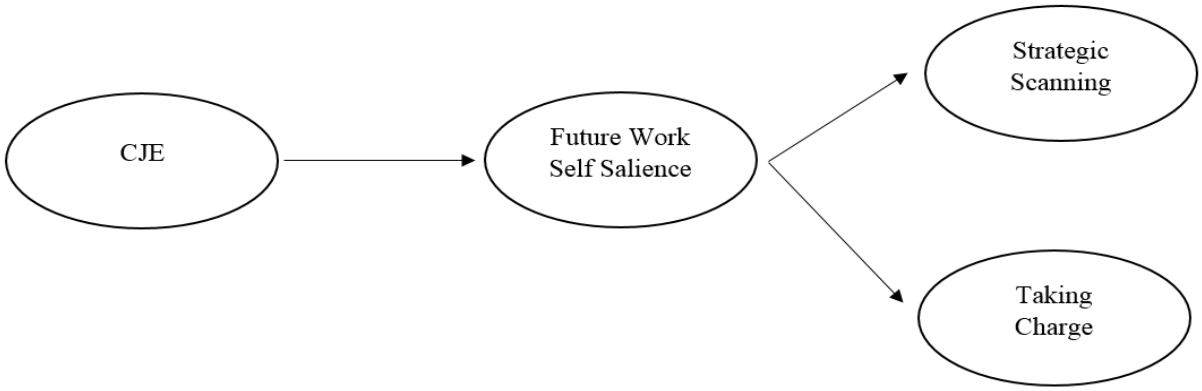
Challenging on-the-job experiences (henceforth CJE) are referred to as features of individuals' jobs that arise from adding or changing roles, responsibilities, and tasks, aimed at providing them with an opportunity and a motivation to learn (McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994). In a survey of 823 international executives, approximately 71% of executives cite such experiences as vital in helping them fulfill their potential over their careers (Fernández-Aráoz, 2014). Relatedly, empirical research shows that CJE are linked to a range of positive outcomes such as helping individuals develop leadership skills (DeRue & Wellman, 2009) and receive positive evaluations of career potential (De Pater, Van Vianen, Bechtoldt, & Klehe, 2009; De Pater, Van Vianen, Fischer, & Van Ginkel, 2009; Seibert, Sargent, Kraimer, & Kiazad, 2017) and helping organization motivate and retain employees (Cao & Hamori, 2016; Preenen, De Pater, Van Vianen, & Keijzer, 2011).

Scholars have proposed a variety of theoretical approaches to explain how and why CJE drive such positive outcomes at work. For example, Preenen and colleagues (2011) integrated several motivational theories (e.g., the job characteristics model, Hackman & Oldham, 1975; self-determination theory, Ryan & Deci, 2000; and the job demands-resources model, Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) and argued that CJE motivated on-the-job learning which, in turn, reduces individuals' turnover intentions and job search behaviors. Aryee and Chu (2012), drawing upon Tesluk and Jacobs's (1998) model of work experience, contended that CJE translate into primary outcomes (i.e., task-specific self-efficacy) and secondary or indirect outcomes (i.e., task performance and promotability) that follow from the effects of CJE on primary outcomes. More recently, Seibert et al. (2017), based on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) and social capital theory (e.g., Coleman, 1990), proposed and found that CJE positively relate to supervisors' assessment of leadership effectiveness in

the current job role and promotability through the individual's leadership self-efficacy and the size and quality of his or her mentor network.

In the present essay, I introduce an alternative perspective to generate an improved understanding of the positive outcomes of CJE. In particular, drawing upon the identity-based leadership development perspective (Ibarra, Snook, & Guillen Ramo, 2008) and the literature on role transitions and identity processes (Ibarra, 1999, 2005), I posit that leadership development experiences such as CJE put individuals in situations that pull them out of their normal day-to-day responsibilities and connect them with senior leaders within the organization. This, I argue, helps enhance the process of leadership development by disengaging individuals from their current work identities (i.e., who they currently are) and making their possible selves in connection to work, more specifically, their future work selves (i.e., who they hope or aspire to become in the future in relation to work) salient (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012). Further, drawing on the identity-based perspective on proactivity (Strauss & Kelly, 2016), I contend that individuals then are likely to engage in future-oriented behaviors such as strategic scanning (i.e., proactive behavior that involves bringing about change in the broader organization's strategy and the organization's fit with the external environment) and taking charge (i.e., proactive behavior that involves bringing about change within the internal organizational environment) because such actions are aligned with their future work selves and enacting such behaviors serve the purpose of asserting their future selves at work (Parker & Collins, 2010). Overall, then, bringing an identity perspective to CJE research helps to account for positive outcomes of CJE not explained by existing theoretical perspectives: proactive behaviors that are aimed at improving the future of the organization (Parker & Collins, 2010). The theoretical model is depicted in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1**
**The Proposed Theoretical Model**




This essay contributes to the literature in several ways. First, prior empirical work on CJE has tied leadership development experiences such as CJE to the development of leadership skills (DeRue & Wellman, 2009), acquisition of competencies necessary for managerial effectiveness (Dragoni, Tesluk, Russell, & Oh, 2009), and enhancement of leadership self-efficacy beliefs (Seibert et al., 2017). However, an emerging line of thinking links leadership development to change in identity (Day & Harrison, 2007; Ibarra et al., 2008; Lord & Hall, 2005). Lord and Hall (2005) propose that as leaders progress from novice to intermediate to expert, at each expertise stage, the development of skills is associated with changes in leadership knowledge structures and information processing. As a result of this development process, leaders develop their identities which are thought to change from a focus on the individual level to include relational and, finally, collective levels. In a similar vein, Day and Harrison (2007) suggest that as leaders move from lower organizational levels (e.g., individual contributor and first-level supervisor) to higher levels (e.g., general manager and above), they are likely to experience changes in self-identity (i.e., from individual to relational, and then collective identities). Building on these ideas, recently, Ibarra and her colleagues (2008, 2014) concur that when individuals make major role transitions, the leadership development process unfolds as an identity transition in which individuals discard their current work identities in favor of new possible selves. Additionally, they suggest that

leadership development experiences or training could also be designed to promote leadership development by facilitating such an identity change. In this study, I extend current thinking by applying these ideas to a specific leadership development experience – CJE – and investigating how CJE promote leadership development at work by increasing the salience of individuals' possible selves at work, specifically, their future work selves. Second, while prior empirical work on CJE has tied CJE to behavior in the *current* job role such as task proficiency behaviors at work (Aryee & Chu, 2012) and leadership behaviors toward direct reports (Courtright, Colbert, & Choi, 2014; Seibert et al., 2017), I attempt to demonstrate that CJE, by increasing the salience of future work-oriented identities, could also be a powerful driver of *future-oriented* work behavior such as proactive behavior.

## Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

### The Identity-Based Leadership Development Perspective

According to the identity-based leadership development perspective (Ibarra et al., 2008), the leadership development process unfolds as individuals transition out of their current work identities to allow the creation of new possible selves (i.e., "how individuals think about their potential and their future"; Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). This movement to possible selves and away from current identities is likely to be facilitated by direct action (activities) and social interaction (relationships) (Ibarra, 2005). Specifically, new activities (e.g., projects and assignments) during role transitions allow individuals to "learn about new options and test unfamiliar waters from the safety of their current jobs" and in doing so, individuals come to critically challenge the sense of who they are now (i.e., current identities) and begin to formulate knowledge about who they want to become (i.e., possible selves) (Ibarra, 2005, p. 11). Similarly, changes in individuals' social interactions are also likely to promote the creation of possible selves because meeting people in different roles or lines of work during role transitions provides information about new and previously unknown options and an opportunity to observe role models who support new possibilities by helping people identify

what behaviors and attitudes to acquire from them to successfully adapt to the newly transitioned role (Ibarra, 1999, 2005). Over time, as individuals do new things and interact in different networks, their new possible selves become more salient and the appeal of their old selves (i.e., current identities) starts to diminish (Ibarra, 2005). Building on these arguments, I argue that in a work context where individuals undergo leadership development experiences such as CJE, their possible selves in connection to work, specifically, their future work selves become salient.

**CJE increases the salience of future work selves**

Future work selves are defined as "representations of the self in the future that encapsulate individually significant hopes and aspirations in relation to work" (Strauss et al., 2012, p. 581). Future work selves are a specific type of possible selves that are future-oriented, positive, and specific to work. Like other possible selves, future work selves too function as incentives for future-oriented work behavior (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Further, Strauss et al. (2012) show that a future work self that is salient is likely to make future work selves effective in motivating future-oriented behavior. Future work self salience is defined as "the degree to which the future work self is clear and easy to imagine for a person" (Strauss et al., 2012, p. 581). Future work selves that are salient are more likely to be activated in an individual's working self-concept (Markus & Wurf, 1987) and, thus, become relevant to his or her motivation and behavior (Strauss et al., 2012).

Future work selves may come to become salient by a number of factors. For example, Strauss et al. (2012) argue that the salience of future work selves develops over time as individuals think about their hopes and aspirations for their future, observe role models and consider who they might become. In their normal day to day job responsibilities, individuals will rarely have the opportunity to think about their aspirations and future possibilities. I argue that in a work context where individuals undergo leadership development experiences

such as CJE, this situation is likely to change for two reasons. First, by undergoing CJE, individuals are likely to witness a change in their primary activities. In particular, in these experiences, individuals are pushed out of their comfort zone (Ohlott, 2003) and are made to confront realistic but ill-structured situations and problems (Stumpf, 1989) in which they need to make decisions under conditions of risk and uncertainty (Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984). For example, individuals are made responsible for major business problems or fixing a problematic situation such as a major accident or a plant closing (Lombardo, 1985). Second, by undergoing CJE, individuals are likely to encounter a change in social interactions. In particular, in these experiences, individuals are unable to count upon a set of tactics and routines that worked well in the past (Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984), forcing them to connect with senior leaders who not only provide advice and feedback but also guide and model the way forward (Ibarra, 2015; Seibert et al., 2017). Therefore, drawing on the identity-based leadership development perspective and the literature on role transitions and identity processes, I posit that by pulling individuals out of their current day to day responsibilities (i.e., changing work activities) and exposing individuals to senior leaders within the organization (i.e., changing social interactions), CJE are likely to help individuals make sense of who they hope to become in the future in the domain of work (Ibarra et al., 2008). Therefore, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 1*: CJE are positively related to future work self salience.

**Salient future work selves motivate proactive behaviors**

Salient future work selves provide a motivational resource for individuals to undertake future-oriented behavior and enable them to work toward an imagined future (Strauss et al., 2012). Unsurprisingly, then, empirical research shows that salient future work selves promote career exploration (Guan et al., 2017) and proactive career behaviors (Arakeri, 2013; Taber &

Blankemeyer, 2015). However, no study to date has examined whether salient future work selves are linked to individuals' strategic scanning and taking charge behaviors.

Strategic scanning refers to individuals' proactive attempts to influence the organization's fit with the environment by analyzing information about relevant events and changes in the external environment and assessing future organizational threats and opportunities (Parker & Collins, 2010). Such information is typically gathered through individuals' network of contacts outside the organization, reviewing industry reports and trade publications, and studying the decisions of competitors (Yukl, 2012). Scholars suggest that such behaviors help improve strategic decisions and facilitate the formulation of a competitive strategy (e.g., expansion into new markets; Yukl, 2008; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2006). Taking charge, on the other hand, refers to the "voluntary and constructive efforts, by individual employees, to effect organizationally functional change with respect to how work is executed within the contexts of their jobs, work units, or organizations" (Morrison & Phelps, 1999, p. 403). Generally, in taking charge, individuals initiate and implement constructive change in organizational procedures and processes (Thomas, Whitman, & Viswesvaran, 2010). Scholars argue that such behaviors are vital in introducing changes that benefit the organization (Potočnik & Anderson, 2016).

Both strategic scanning and taking charge require a strong motivational resource for individuals to engage in such behaviors at work (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). Individuals need to have a strong justification because these behaviors lie outside of their current job role (Strauss et al., 2012). Moreover, both behaviors are risky because in pursuing and striving toward these goals, individuals are not only likely to come up against resistance and skepticism from others but, more importantly, success remains uncertain (Parker et al., 2010). Therefore, drawing from the identity-based perspective on proactivity (Strauss & Kelly, 2016), I argue that salient future work selves represent a motivational resource that makes it

more likely that individuals will engage in risky proactive behaviors such as strategic scanning and taking charge (Strauss et al., 2012). Specifically, individuals are motivated to engage in taking charge and strategic scanning because such behaviors are now seen as "identity-congruent" (Strauss & Kelly, 2016, p. 2), that is, consistent with their future work selves and enacting such behaviors may serve the purpose of "trying out" their future selves at work (Strauss & Kelly, 2016, p. 12). Over time, engaging in such behaviors may also be viewed as a way through which individuals will look to claim social recognition of that identity from their coworkers (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Strauss & Kelly, 2016). Empirical research on future work selves shows that when individuals contrast the current situation with an ideal future (via a vision-focused training intervention), they are motivated to undertake risky proactive behavior aimed at changing the wider organization (Strauss & Parker, 2018). Therefore, I predict:

*Hypothesis 2*: Future work self salience is positively related to strategic scanning (Hypothesis 2a) and taking charge (Hypothesis 2b).

Furthermore, building upon the first two hypotheses, I hypothesize that CJE will indirectly influence taking charge and strategic scanning behaviors through future work self salience.

*Hypothesis 3*: CJE have a positive indirect effect on strategic scanning (Hypothesis 3a) and taking charge (Hypothesis 3b) via future work self salience.

## Method

### Participants and Procedures

Participants were recruited via Prolific (https://app.prolific.ac) which is an online participant recruitment panel of students and working adults. In particular, I recruited individuals with the following prescreening criteria: individuals (a) from the UK, (b) whose first language is English, (c) who work full-time, (d) who hold leadership or supervisory

duties[2], and (e) who have at least 10 previous submissions and a 95% approval rate on Prolific.

I collected data in two waves. At Time 1 (T1), the sample consisted of 725 participants. Approximately one month after the initial T1 survey, these 725 participants were invited to complete the Time 2 (T2) survey. At T1, participants reported on demographics, personality variables, CJE, future work selves, and proactive behaviors and, at T2, they reported on their CJE, future work selves, and proactive behaviors. Of these 725 participants, I identified 720 for inclusion for data collection; the five individuals who were removed indicated that they did not have job experience, organization experience, or work experience. This final sample of 720 participants then became the basis for the present essay and another essay (for more details, see chapter 4 of this dissertation). To ensure cases/observations from this data collection effort are different for both studies, I used IBM SPSS Statistics 25 to randomly split the sample in half which resulted in two datasets with 364 participants and 356 participants respectively.

In the present essay, I used the first of the two datasets (N = 364). Of this sample, 56.30% were women, 59.10% had completed technical college or possessed a university degree, 15.40% were working in the field of business-related services (i.e., financial/insurance/accounting, legal & administration, marketing/ media professions), and 23.90% held a general management position. The average age of the sample was 37.77 years (*SD* = 9.77) and the average organizational tenure was 7.92 years (*SD* = 6.11). On average, respondents reported having 8.18 subordinates (*SD* = 14.38) in the current job role. Of the 364 participants at T1, 333 individuals had returned the T2 survey (retention rate = 91.48%).

[2] I utilized leadership or supervisory duties as a filter because CJE scholars contend that such sampling increases the likelihood that participants have had ample opportunities to have been exposed to challenging experiences (Courtright et al., 2014). Moreover, proactivity scholars have also frequently sampled supervisors given that individuals in these positions tend to have sufficient autonomy to engage in proactive behavior (Parker & Collins, 2010).

Giving the potential for subject attrition to lead to non-random sampling and, thus, affect substantive research results, I performed a series of steps to assess the effects of subject attrition on research results as recommended by Goodman and Blum (1996) (The results for all steps are reported in Appendix A). In step 1, using multiple logistic regression, I investigated whether attrition led to nonrandom sampling. Results of this analysis showed that there was a marginally significant difference in strategic scanning between participants who responded to both T1 and T2 surveys (i.e., Stayers) and participants who responded to only the T1 survey (i.e., Leavers). Thus, given the presence of non-random subject attrition, I went ahead with further steps that assess the effects of nonrandom sampling on the data. In step 2, I examined the effects of non-random sampling on the means using an independent samples t-test. Mean differences were found between stayers and leavers for strategic scanning: on average, participants who responded to the second data collection engaged in lower levels of strategic scanning than those who dropped out. In step 3, the effects of non-random sampling were assessed by comparing differences in the variances of the variables measured at T1, for the whole sample versus the restricted sample, that is, only those with complete data (i.e., Stayers). The results for step 3 revealed that the variances did not change significantly. Finally, in step 4, I assessed the effects of non-random sampling on relationships among variables. A series of multiple regression analyses were performed to assess the effects of non-random sampling on the structure of relationships between the independent variable (i.e., CJE), measured at T1, and the dependent variables (i.e., future work self salience, strategic scanning, and taking charge) also measured at T1. For each dependent variable, two models were estimated: the first model used the whole sample and the second model included only those who remained in the sample at T2 (i.e., Stayers). The results revealed that the two models were similar for each dependent variable despite the presence of non-random sampling and mean differences in strategic scanning. Therefore,

based on Goodman and Blum's (1996) recommendation, I went ahead to perform longitudinal analyses on this dataset.

**Measures**

**CJE.** CJE were measured using the 8-item scale developed by Seibert et al. (2017). Participants indicated the extent to which they underwent challenging experiences at work on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Very much*). A sample item is "I have taken care of responsibilities that involved a product, market, or technology that I had not worked with before."

**Future work self salience.** Future work self salience was measured using the 5-item measure developed by Strauss et al. (2012). Following Strauss and colleagues (2012), I asked participants to imagine their desired future selves in relation to work and keep this image in mind. Next, they were asked to rate the salience of their future work selves on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly agree*). A sample item is "This future is very easy for me to imagine."

**Strategic scanning.** Strategic scanning behavior was measured using three items developed by Parker and Collins (2010). Participants were asked to rate on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Very frequently*) how often they engaged in scanning at work. A sample item is "Actively scanned the environment to see if what is happening might affect the organization in the future."

**Taking charge.** Participants' taking charge behavior was measured using three items adapted by Parker and Collins (2010) from the scale developed by Morrison and Phelps (1999). All of the items were measured by a 5-point scale anchored from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Very frequently*). A sample item is "Tried to bring about improved procedures in the workplace."

## Results

Descriptive statistics, internal consistency reliabilities and intercorrelations for the study variables are presented in Table 3.1. Both CJE and future work self salience correlated positively with both forms of proactive behaviors at each time and across times.

**Table 3.1**

**Mean, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Variables**

| Variable | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. CJE T1 | 2.86 | 0.88 | **.82** | | | | | | | |
| 2. CJE T2 | 2.71 | 0.86 | .60** | **.83** | | | | | | |
| 3. Future Work Self Salience T1 | 3.39 | 0.97 | .25** | .26** | **.92** | | | | | |
| 4. Future Work Self Salience T2 | 3.39 | 0.98 | .25** | .28** | .65** | **.93** | | | | |
| 5. Strategic Scanning T1 | 2.87 | 1.09 | .54** | .44** | .13* | .15** | **.89** | | | |
| 6. Strategic Scanning T2 | 2.79 | 1.03 | .38** | .49** | .19** | .19** | .59** | **.89** | | |
| 7. Taking Charge T1 | 3.34 | 1.01 | .53** | .44** | .19** | .21** | .51** | .42** | **.89** | |
| 8. Taking Charge T2 | 3.18 | 0.97 | .41** | .51** | .17** | .20** | .50** | .63** | .56** | **.90** |

*Note.* T1 *(n*=364), T2 (*n*=333).
Reliability coefficients are in boldface on the diagonal.
CJE= challenging job experiences.
* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.

Next, to confirm the distinctiveness of the constructs, I conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) at each of the two time points. To assess model fit, I used several fit indices: Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). I then compared the hypothesized four-factor model to alternate models using the chi-square difference ($\Delta\chi 2$) test to determine the best fitting model. The CFA results are reported in Appendix B. Results revealed that the hypothesized four-factor model (i.e., CJE, future work self salience, strategic scanning, and taking charge) provided reasonable fit to the data at each time period (for T1, $\chi 2$ [146] = 649.99, CFI = .88, TLI = .86, RMSEA = .09; for T2, $\chi 2$ [146] = 592.00, CFI = .89, TLI = .87, RMSEA = .09) and all items loaded significantly on their corresponding latent factors at each measurement

point (factor loadings ranging from 0.47 to 0.90 at T1, $p < 0.001$, and from 0.48 to 0.90 at T2, $p < 0.001$). Next, I compared the hypothesized four-factor model to a three-factor model consisting of CJE, future work self salience, and a general proactivity factor (i.e., strategic scanning and taking charge loaded on a single factor) and a one-factor model with all items loaded on a single factor. Results showed that at both time points, the hypothesized four-factor model fit significantly better than the more parsimonious three-factor (for T1, $\Delta\chi2 = 446.91$, $\Delta df = 3$, $p < .001$; for T2, $\Delta\chi2 = 264.80$, $\Delta df = 3$, $p < .001$) and one-factor (for T1, $\Delta\chi2 = 1948.08$, $\Delta df = 6$, $p < .001$; for T2, $\Delta\chi2 = 1890.71$, $\Delta df = 6$, $p < .001$) models respectively. Overall, these results supported the distinctiveness of the constructs within each measurement occasion.

Finally, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to examine the hypothesized relationships between CJE, future work self salience, and proactive behaviors across the two waves of data. These analyses were conducted using the Mplus software version 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) and following the guidelines provided by Cole and Maxwell (2003). I tested several competing structural models: a stability model (Mstability) which included the autoregressive effects over time of each latent variable, a normal causation model (Mcausal) which included the temporal stabilities combined with the relationships hypothesized, a reverse causation model (Mreverse), which included the autoregressive effects as in Mstability combined with the reversed effects of the paths specified in the hypothesized relationships, and finally, a reciprocal model (Mreciprocal) which included all paths as specified in Mstability, Mcausal, and Mreverse. As suggested by Cole and Maxwell (2003), in all models, I included auto-regressive effects to control for baseline levels for each endogenous variable (Gollob & Reichardt, 1991). Further, the error terms of each indicator at T1 were allowed to covary with the corresponding indicator at T2 and synchronous correlations between constructs in the same wave were added. In order to assess all models, I

used CFI, TLI, and RMSEA. In addition, to make the comparisons between the stability model and the three models with longitudinal associations with regard to their fit, I used the chi-square difference ($\Delta\chi2$) test.

As can be seen in Table 3.2, the causation model (Mcausal1) with the cross-lagged associations between CJE, future work self salience, and strategic scanning provided a better fit to the data than the stability model (Mstability1) without cross-lagged links ($\Delta\chi2 = 8.21$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < .05$). The reverse causation model (Mreverse1), however, did not show any improvement in fit compared to the stability model ($\Delta\chi2 = 4.51$, $\Delta df = 2$, ns). The reciprocal model (Mreciprocal1) fitted the data better than the stability model ($\Delta\chi2 = 12.45$, $\Delta df = 4$, $p < .05$). However, its fit did not improve compared to the causation model ($\Delta\chi2 = 4.23$, $\Delta df = 2$, ns). Taken together, these results suggest that Mcausal1 was the best fitting model.

**Table 3.2**

**Fit Statistics for Testing Cross-Lagged Relationship between CJE, Future Work Self Salience, and Strategic Scanning**

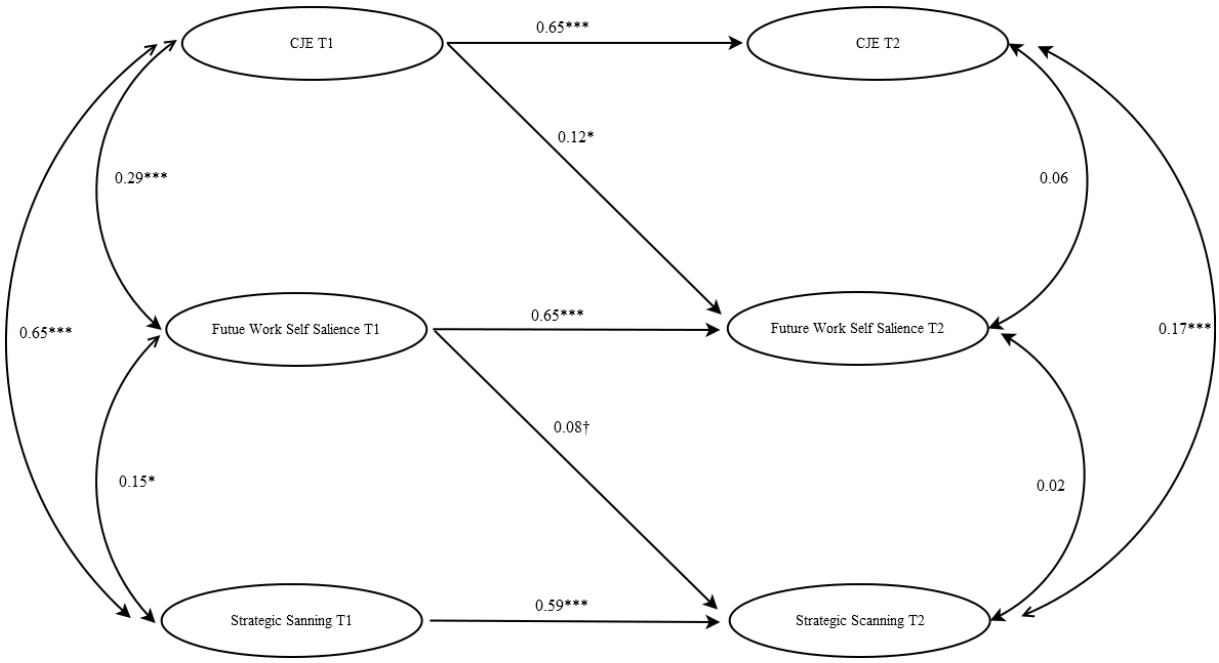
| Model | $\chi2$ | *df* | CFI | TLI | RMSEA | Model comparison | $\Delta\chi2$ | $\Delta df$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mstability1 | 1312.38 | 453 | 0.87 | 0.86 | 0.07 | | | |
| Mcausal1 | 1304.17 | 451 | 0.88 | 0.86 | 0.07 | Mcausal1 vs. Mstability1 | 8.21* | 2 |
| Mreverse1 | 1307.87 | 451 | 0.88 | 0.86 | 0.07 | Mreverse1 vs. Mstability1 | 4.51 | 2 |
| Mreciprocal1 | 1299.93 | 449 | 0.88 | 0.86 | 0.07 | Mreciprocal1 vs. Mstability1 | 12.45* | 4 |
| | | | | | | Mreciprocal1 vs. Mcausal1 | 4.23 | 2 |

*Note.* df = degree of freedom; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.
* $p < 0.05$.

In Mcausal1 (see Figure 3.2), both structural paths were significant: T1 CJE were significantly related to future work self salience at T2 ($\beta = 0.12$, $p < .05$) and T1 future work self salience was marginally significantly related to strategic scanning at T2 ($\beta = 0.08$, $p <$

.10). Thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2a were supported. In relation to Hypothesis 3a, as discussed by Cole and Maxwell (2003) and following prior research that has adopted a two-wave cross-lagged panel design (e.g., Tuckey & Neall, 2014), it is not possible to examine full mediation in a two-wave longitudinal design. However, as Cole and Maxwell (2003) suggest, if both of the lagged paths in the normal causation model are significant, partial mediation is indicated. Hence, given that the normal causation model presents the best fit to the data and the normal causation pathways are significant, I can conclude that there is partial mediation from CJE to strategic scanning via future work self salience. Thus, Hypothesis 3a was supported.

**Figure 3.2**
**The Normal Causation Model (Mcausal1)**




*Note.* In the interest of clarity, I have omitted the error terms between the T1 and T2 items.
† $p < 0.10$.
* $p < 0.05$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

As presented in Table 3.3, the causation model (Mcausal2) with the cross-lagged associations between CJE, future work self salience, and taking charge provided a slightly better fit to the data than the stability model (Mstability2) without cross-lagged associations ($\Delta\chi2 = 5.83$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < .10$). The reverse causation model (Mreverse2) also fit the data

better than the stability model ($\Delta\chi2 = 9.04$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < .05$). To compare the reverse causation model and the causation model, I used the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC)[3]. As indicated by Mreverse2's lower value on the AIC (Mcausal2 [AIC]: 27604.35 vs. Mreverse2 [AIC]: 27601.13), the reverse causation model showed a better fit than the causation model. The reciprocal model (Mreciprocal2) provided a significantly better fit than the stability model ($\Delta\chi2 = 12.41$, $\Delta df = 4$, $p < .05$) and the causation model ($\Delta\chi2 = 6.59$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < .05$). However, its fit did not improve compared to the reverse causation model ($\Delta\chi2 = 3.38$, $\Delta df = 2$), indicating that the Mreverse2 was the model that best represents the data. As a result, Hypotheses 2b and 3b respectively were not supported.

**Table 3.3**

**Fit Statistics for Testing Cross-Lagged Relationship between CJE, Future Work Self Salience, and Taking Charge**

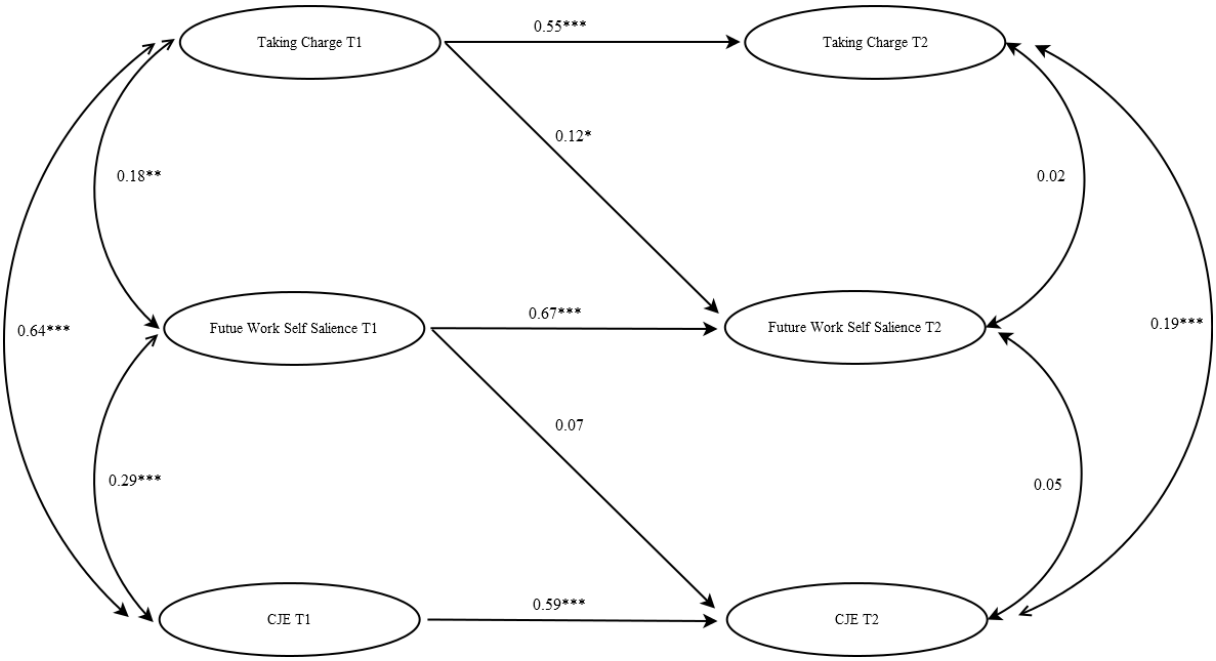
| Model | $\chi2$ | *df* | CFI | TLI | RMSEA | Model comparison | $\Delta\chi2$ | $\Delta df$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mstability2 | 1287.43 | 453 | 0.88 | 0.87 | 0.07 | | | |
| Mcausal2 | 1281.60 | 451 | 0.88 | 0.87 | 0.07 | Mcausal2 vs. Mstability2 | 5.83† | 2 |
| Mreverse2 | 1278.39 | 451 | 0.88 | 8.87 | 0.07 | Mreverse2 vs. Mstability2 | 9.04* | 2 |
| Mreciprocal2 | 1275.01 | 449 | 0.88 | 0.87 | 0.07 | Mreciprocal2 vs. Mstability2 | 12.41* | 4 |
| | | | | | | Mreciprocal2 vs. Mcausal2 | 6.59* | 2 |
| | | | | | | Mreciprocal2 vs. Mreverse2 | 3.38 | 2 |

*Note.* df = degree of freedom; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.
† $p < 0.10$.
* $p < 0.05$.

[3] Given that both the causation model (Mcausal2) and the reverse causation model (Mreverse2) have the same degree of freedom, a chi-square difference ($\Delta\chi2$) test could not be used to compare the fit between these two models. Hence, following prior cross-lagged research (e.g., Baillien, Rodriguez-Muñoz, Van den Broeck, & De Witte, 2011; Huyghebaert, Gillet, Fernet, Lahiani, Chevalier, & Fouquereau, 2018a; Huyghebaert, Gillet, Fernet, Lahiani, & Fouquereau, 2018b; Rodríguez-Muñoz, Baillien, De Witte, Moreno-Jimenez, & Pastor, 2009), the difference between the two models was evaluated using the AIC. A smaller absolute AIC value is indicative of a better fitting model (Bozdogan & Ramirez, 1987).

In Mreverse2 (see Figure 3.3), the path from T1 taking charge to future work self salience at T2 was significant (β = 0.12, $p < 0.05$) but the other path from T1 future work self salience to CJE at T2 was not significant (β = 0.07, ns).

**Figure 3.3**
**The Reverse Causation Model (Mreverse1)**




*Note.* In the interest of clarity, I have omitted the error terms between the T1 and T2 items.
* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

To summarize, the two-wave cross-lagged model provided some support for the expected association between CJE and strategic scanning via future work self salience. In contrast, the hypothesis regarding the relationship between CJE and taking charge via future work self salience was not supported.

**Additional Analyses**

I also wanted to examine whether there were direct effects of CJE on proactive behavior. Hence, I ran cross-lagged models to probe the direct association between CJE and the two proactive behaviors: strategic scanning and taking charge. The causation model with T2 strategic scanning regressed on CJE at T1 did not provide a better fit to the data than the

stability model ($\Delta\chi2 = 1.13$, $\Delta df = 1$, ns). The reverse causation model with T2 CJE regressed on strategic scanning at T1 showed a better fit than the stability model ($\Delta\chi2 = 6.77$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < .01$). The reciprocal model also fit the data better than the stability model ($\Delta\chi2 = 7.09$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < .05$). However, its fit did not improve compared to the reverse causation model ($\Delta\chi2 = 0.32$, $\Delta df = 1$, ns). Thus, in terms of parsimony, the best fitting model was the reverse causation model. In the reverse causation model, the path from T1 strategic scanning to CJE at T2 was significant ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.01$).

On the other hand, the causation model with T2 taking charge regressed on CJE at T1 fit well, and significantly better than the stability model ($\Delta\chi2 = 10.89$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.001$). However, the reciprocal model had a better fit than the stability model ($\Delta\chi2 = 17.93$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < 0.001$), the causation model ($\Delta\chi2 = 7.04$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.01$), and the reverse causation model ($\Delta\chi2 = 7.16$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that the reciprocal model was the best fitting model. In the reciprocal model, both paths were significant: T1 CJE were significantly related to taking charge at T2 ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < .01$) and T1 taking charge was significantly related to CJE at T2 ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < .01$).

## Discussion

Introducing an identity perspective to CJE research, this essay developed a model illustrating how leadership development experiences such as CJE foster leadership development at work by promoting individuals' possible selves at work, specifically, their future work selves and, as a consequence, drive future-oriented work behavior such as proactive behavior (see Figure 3.1). Overall, the essay findings hold significant implications for theory and practice.

### Theoretical Implications

First, the present essay contributes to the emerging literature on the proximal and distal indicators of leadership development (see Day & Dragoni, 2015 and DeRue & Myers, 2014

for reviews). Specifically, in addition to looking at skills and competencies as indicators for whether leadership may be developing, scholars suggest that a range of proximal and distal indicators such as changes in individuals' self-concept and identity are also important to understanding leadership development. Yet, as DeRue and Myers (2014) point out, we still know very little about the extent to which such alternative indicators of leadership development are malleable and what experiences could develop them. The current essay found that CJE had a positive cross-lagged effect on future work self salience. This result shows that CJE, above and beyond enhancing individuals' belief in their ability to perform successfully in a leadership role (Seibert et al., 2017) and helping them engage in on-the-job learning (e.g., McCauley et al., 1994; Preenen et al., 2011; Preenen, Verbiest, Van Vianen, & Van Wijk, 2015) and acquire important managerial and leadership skills and competencies (e.g., DeRue & Wellman, 2009; Dragoni et al., 2009), may have helped contribute to the leadership development process by making individuals' future work selves more salient.

Second, this essay contributes to the proactivity literature. Specifically, I shed light on how proactive behavior such as strategic scanning may be motivated (Strauss & Kelly, 2016). Strauss and Kelly (2016) theorize that when individuals see proactive behavior as congruent with their identities, they are likely to interpret the behavior as important and thus, remain motivated in exhibiting such behavior. In this essay, I answer their call to enrich the proactivity literature by examining the role of identity congruence in motivating persistence in proactive behavior. The current essay found that future work self salience had a positive cross-lagged effect on strategic scanning behavior. It is possible that individuals may have been motivated to engage in strategic scanning because this behavior was viewed by them to be congruent with their hopes and aspirations in connection to work and, thus, engaging in strategic scanning represented an opportunity to pursue their desired, future possibilities. Furthermore, the current essay proposed and found some support for future work self salience

as a partial mediator of the relationship between CJE and strategic scanning. These results show that CJE, in addition to impacting behaviors in the current job role (Aryee & Chu, 2012; Courtright et al, 2014; Seibert et al., 2017), may also help drive future-oriented behavior, namely, proactive behavior in the form of strategic scanning by increasing the salience of individuals' future work selves.

Against my expectations, I did not find support for the mediating role of future work self salience in the relationship between CJE and individuals' taking charge. Rather in probing possible reverse and reciprocal relationships, I found some evidence that supports a reverse causal relationship (i.e., from taking charge to CJE via future work self salience). In this model, taking charge behavior had a positive cross-lagged effect on future work self salience. While unexpected, these results seem consistent with Strauss and Kelly's (2016) assertion that engaging in proactive behavior may provide important information about potential success or failure in attaining one's future work self, in turn, triggering a change in an individual's future-oriented identity. It is conceivable that individuals in this study may have had opportunities to talk about bringing in improvements at work and these efforts may have actually induced positive reactions from their coworkers and top executives, in turn, triggering an increase in the salience of their future work selves.

Finally, in probing the direct relationship between CJE and the two forms of proactive behavior, I found that T1 strategic scanning was significantly related to CJE at T2. Top executives spend a large portion of their time scanning the environment for strategic threats and opportunities to make strategic decisions (El Sawy, 1985; Lesca, Caron-Fasan, & Falcy, 2012). Hence, organizations may come to see individuals who invest time and energy in strategic scanning at work as potential future leaders. In order to prepare such individuals for leadership roles and processes, organizations may be strategically assigning them to challenging experiences. Further, the additional analyses showed that CJE and taking charge

affected each other reciprocally over time. This result reaffirms the principles of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960) in that while organizations assign individuals to developmental experiences to drive proactive behavior at work, the beneficiaries of such investments try to reciprocate by voluntarily making efforts to bring about constructive change within the organization.

**Managerial Implications**

This research provides valuable implications for organizations regarding what actions they could take to motivate employees to engage in strategic scanning and taking charge. First, to drive strategic scanning at work, the current results call for increasing the salience of employees' future work selves. To do so, the findings indicate that salience can be increased via two potential avenues: (1) assigning employees to challenging experiences at work and/or (2) providing incentives and support to employees to engage in taking charge. Moreover, the broader literature on future work selves points to several other possible routes, not explored in this essay, through which future work selves may become salient. These include career exploration activities, counseling interventions, and inspirational leadership (e.g., Cai et al., 2015; Strauss et al., 2012; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015; Zhang, Hirschi, Herrmann, Wei, & Zhang, 2017). Organizations, however, need to ensure that employees are provided with a safe space to practice and try out their future selves at work (Ibarra et al., 2008). Furthermore, as suggested by Arakeri (2013), employees should receive social and psychological support in the immediate work context (i.e., from supervisors and co-workers) in the nature of ongoing feedback and guidance which in turn, should increase the belief among them that their future work selves are attainable. Second, to drive taking charge at work, the current results emphasize the importance of assigning employees to challenging experiences at work. However, for mid-career employees, organizations should ensure that these experiences are

adjusted to employees' experiential background to ensure these experiences do not hurt their in-role job performance (Carette, Anseel, & Lievens, 2013).

**Limitations of the Study**

There are some important limitations that need to be discussed. First, this essay is limited in its conclusions to only one leadership development practice (i.e., CJE) as studied here. Future research should examine whether CJE combined with other leadership development practices such as formal training, executive coaching, mentoring, and action learning that form a part of the leadership development system (Day, 2000) continue to foster leadership development by making individuals' future work selves salient. That is, do CJE promote salient future work selves, above and beyond other leadership development experiences? Second, although this essay discussed two potential future work selves creation processes, identified by the role transitions and identity processes literature, namely, changing work activities and changing social interactions, I did not test these underlying processes directly. Future work needs to examine these mechanisms, and thus enrich our understanding of how activities and relationships work together in producing future work selves (Ibarra, 2005). Third, in this essay, I employed a two-wave cross-lagged longitudinal design. Such a design represents a major improvement over traditional designs that are cross-sectional or time-lagged in nature, namely, in its ability to control for prior levels of the variables (Cole & Maxwell, 2003). However, scholars suggest that collecting at least three waves of data provide a better appreciation of the temporal relationships between the studied variables (Huyghebaert et al., 2018a, 2018b; Li, 2018), for example, by investigating how T1 CJE predicts T2 future work self salience which in turn influences taking charge and strategic scanning at T3. Another issue in the essay is the selection of the study time lag. Studies that have probed the relationship between CJE and work outcomes have applied different time lags, ranging from three weeks (DeRue & Wellman, 2009) to two years (Preenen et al.,

2011). In order to ensure that there was sufficient time for individuals to display changes in CJE and future work selves, I followed Cai et al. (2015) and chose a time lag of four weeks. However, as noted by Selig and Preacher (2009) and as evidenced by prior CJE research, we currently have little understanding of how long it takes for the effects of CJE to unfold and, thus, little basis for choosing theoretically appropriate lags. Hence, as recommended by Selig and Preacher (2009), future research should ideally look to test relationships hypothesized by using different temporal lags within or across studies. Finally, all measures were based on self-reports, raising the possibility of common method bias. However, proactivity scholars contend that the usage of self-reports to assess proactivity behavior is advantageous in that other-sources (e.g., supervisors or peers) may come to view such behavior negatively, rendering their ratings potentially less reliable than self-ratings (Parker et al., 2010; Parker & Collins, 2010). Relatedly, it also seems appropriate to use self-reports to study CJE because scholars suggest that the experiences of the work context "are subjective by their very nature and are thus best measured by tapping into individuals' perceptions" (Nikolova, Schaufeli, & Notelaers, 2019, p. 9). Nevertheless, in order to control for the effects of common method bias, I followed several of the recommendations by Podsakoff and colleagues (2003, 2012) such as using different response formats for the predictor (i.e., CJE) and criterion variables (i.e., strategic scanning and taking charge) and ensuring respondent anonymity through the use of Prolific for data collection. Together, these actions provide additional strength for the conclusions draw from the results.

**Conclusion**

Despite these limitations, this essay, to the best of my knowledge, is the first to examine different causal models for the relationship between CJE, future work self salience, and proactive behavior by using longitudinal data. More specifically, I was able to demonstrate that CJE help cultivate salient future work selves, in turn, motivating individuals to engage in

strategic scanning behavior. Further, contrary to what was expected, I uncovered that taking charge behavior develops salient future work selves. Overall, the essay makes important contributions to extant research in the areas of challenging experiences and proactive behavior respectively.

## Appendix A

### Table A1

**Logistic Regression: Stayers versus Leavers [a]**

| Variable | *B* | *S.E.* |
|---|---|---|
| CJE T1 | -0.24 | 0.27 |
| Future Work Self Salience T1 | 0.05 | 0.20 |
| Strategic Scanning T1 | -0.37† | 0.22 |
| Taking Charge T1 | 0.25 | 0.22 |
| Constant | 3.20*** | 0.91 |
| -2 log likelihood | 206.28 | |
| Model Chi-square | 5.72 | |

*Note.* $n$= 364.
[a] Leavers = 1, Stayers = 2.
CJE = Challenging Job Experiences.
B = Unstandardized weight; S.E. = Standard error of unstandardized weight.
† $p < 0.10$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

### Table A2

**T-tests: Stayers versus Leavers**

| | Means (*SD*) | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | Stayers | Leavers | t(*df*) |
| CJE T1 | 2.76 (0.89) | 3.00 (1.00) | 1.47 (362) |
| Future Work Self Salience T1 | 3.39 (0.97) | 3.41 (1.04) | 0.09 (362) |
| Strategic Scanning T1 | 2.83 (1.08) | 3.25 (1.14) | 2.00 (362)* |
| Taking Charge T1 | 3.34 (1.00) | 3.39 (1.14) | 0.23 (362) |

*Note.* df = degrees of freedom.
* $p < .05$.

## Table A3

### Differences in Variances: Whole Sample versus Stayers

| | Variances | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | Whole Sample | Stayers | z [a] |
| CJE T1 | 0.775 | 0.755 | -0.18 |
| Future Work Self Salience T1 | 0.957 | 0.947 | -0.04 |
| Strategic Scanning T1 | 1.200 | 1.179 | 0.11 |
| Taking Charge T1 | 1.030 | 1.008 | -0.00 |

*Note.*

[a] $z = \frac{x^2(v) - v}{\sqrt{2v}}$, $x^2(v) = \frac{(N-1)s^2}{\sigma^2{}_0}$

where $v$ = N - l and N is the number of responders, $s^2$ is the variance for the stayers, and $\sigma^2{}_0$ is the variance for the whole sample. Two-tailed test, α = .05, critical z = 1.96.

## Table A4.1

### Results of Regression Analyses: Future Work Self-Salience T1

| | Whole Sample | | Stayers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | *B* | *S.E.* | *B* | *S.E.* | t [a] |
| CJE T1 | 0.29*** | 0.06 | 0.29*** | 0.06 | |
| Constant | 2.573*** | 0.17 | 2.57*** | 0.18 | |

*Note*. B = Unstandardized weight; SE = Standard error of unstandardized weight.

[a] A t-test of the differences between the regression coefficients is performed when a coefficient for a variable in one model is statistically significant, while the coefficient in the other model is not. A significant difference in the regression coefficients between the two models would indicate the effects of attrition on the relationships among the study's variables. In this dataset, however, the two multiple regression models (i.e., Whole sample and Stayers) were found to be similar. Hence a t-test was not required to be performed (Goodman & Blum, 1996).

*** $p < 0.001$.

**Table A4.2**

**Results of Regression Analyses: Strategic Scanning T1**

| | Whole Sample | | Stayers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | *B* | *S.E.* | *B* | *S.E.* | t [a] |
| CJE T1 | 0.68*** | 0.05 | 0.67*** | 0.06 | |
| Constant | 0.93*** | 0.16 | 0.94*** | 0.17 | |

*Note*. B = Unstandardized weight; SE = Standard error of unstandardized weight.
[a] A t-test of the differences between the regression coefficients is performed when a coefficient for a variable in one model is statistically significant, while the coefficient in the other model is not. A significant difference in the regression coefficients between the two models would indicate the effects of attrition on the relationships among the study's variables. In this dataset, however, the two multiple regression models (i.e., Whole sample and Stayers) were found to be similar. Hence a t-test was not required to be performed (Goodman & Blum, 1996).
*** $p < 0.001$.

**Table A4.3**

**Results of Regression Analyses: Taking Charge T1**

| | Whole Sample | | Stayers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | *B* | *S.E.* | *B* | *S.E.* | t [a] |
| CJE T1 | 0.61*** | 0.05 | 0.61*** | 0.05 | |
| Constant | 1.59*** | 0.15 | 1.59*** | 0.16 | |

*Note*. B = Unstandardized weight; SE = Standard error of unstandardized weight.
[a] A t-test of the differences between the regression coefficients is performed when a coefficient for a variable in one model is statistically significant, while the coefficient in the other model is not. A significant difference in the regression coefficients between the two models would indicate the effects of attrition on the relationships among the study's variables. In this dataset, however, the two multiple regression models (i.e., Whole sample and Stayers) were found to be similar. Hence a t-test was not required to be performed (Goodman & Blum, 1996).
*** $p < 0.001$.

## Appendix B

### Table B1

**Comparison of Alternative Factor Structures at Time 1 and Time 2**

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | T1 | | | |
| Model | $\chi^2$ | *df* | CFI | TLI | RMSEA | $\Delta\chi^2$ |
| Hypothesized 4-factor model | 649.99 | 146 | 0.88 | 0.86 | 0.09 | |
| 3-factor model | 1096.90 | 149 | 0.77 | 0.74 | 0.13 | 446.91*** |
| 1-factor model | 2598.07 | 152 | 0.42 | 0.35 | 0.21 | 1948.08*** |
| | | | T2 | | | |
| Model | $\chi^2$ | *df* | CFI | TLI | RMSEA | $\Delta\chi^2$ |
| Hypothesized 4-factor model | 592.00 | 146 | 0.89 | 0.87 | 0.09 | |
| 3-factor model | 856.81 | 149 | 0.82 | 0.80 | 0.11 | 264.80*** |
| 1-factor model | 2482.71 | 152 | 0.43 | 0.36 | 0.21 | 1890.71*** |

*Note.* df = degree of freedom; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.
*** $p < 0.001$.

## Chapter 4: Challenging Job Experiences: A Self-Presentation Perspective


### Abstract

In this essay, I drew upon the self-presentation perspective to argue that concerns about one's image in undergoing leadership development experiences such as CJE drive self-presentational behaviors (i.e., ingratiation, self-promotion). Additionally, I examined two boundary conditions – individuals' leader identity and honesty-humility – in self-presentation related to challenging experiences. Using Prolific, I tested these ideas in a lagged study of individuals in leadership positions across a variety of sectors. Results revealed that CJE were associated with ingratiation and self-presentation. By contrast, no moderating effects were found for the role of leader identity and honesty-humility. The results are discussed in terms of their theoretical implications for learning from challenging experiences. Further, I identify practical suggestions and avenues for future research on how individual learning and development from CJE can be ensured.



*Keywords*: challenging job experiences, leader identity, honesty-humility, self-presentation

## Introduction

Challenging on-the-job experiences (henceforth CJE) are referred to as features of individuals' jobs that arise from adding or changing roles, responsibilities, and tasks, aimed at providing them with an opportunity and a motivation to learn (McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994). In utilizing these experiences, organizations can look to increase their pool of leadership talent (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1989a; Ruderman, Ohlott, & McCauley, 1990) and dismantle, to a certain extent, the presence of glass ceiling (i.e., an invisible barrier that prevents women and minority groups from moving up the corporate ladder; Ohlott, Ruderman, & McCauley, 1994; Weyer, 2007) and career derailment (i.e., individuals' career involuntarily and prematurely stalled or stopped through demotion, plateauing, or being fired; Eichinger & Lombardo, 1990; Lombardo & Eichinger, 1989b) at the workplace.

To date, a number of studies have investigated how and under what conditions do CJE lead to individual and organizational outcomes such as learning, promotability, and retention (e.g., Cao & Hamori, 2016; DeRue & Wellman, 2009; Dragoni, Tesluk, Russell, & Oh, 2009; Preenen, De Pater, Van Vianen, & Keijzer, 2011; Seibert, Sargent, Kraimer, & Kiazad, 2017). Although this research has substantially broadened our understanding of the effectiveness of CJE in organizations, we still have a limited understanding of how individuals respond to challenging experiences (see Aryee & Chu, 2012; Courtright, Colbert, & Choi, 2014 for exceptions). Some scholars suggest that learning from such experiences is "not automatic" (McCall, 2010, p. 17) and "often messy and difficult to achieve" (Robinson & Wick, 1992, p. 63). Therefore, in order to extract learning from these experiences, individuals are expected to engage in different learning activities such as critical thinking (i.e., thinking about how this experience is different from what was done in the past), hypothesis testing (i.e., taking an action to test it out and evaluating the results), and critical reflection (i.e., probing the underlying assumptions and beliefs that guided actions and try to

challenge them) (Robinson & Wick, 1992). However, CJE are "often not designed for the specific purpose of leadership development" (DeRue & Myers, 2014, p. 841; see also, McCauley, 1986). Rather, these experiences are highly embedded in ongoing work (Day, 2000) and are usually tied to specific business goals or outcomes (McCauley & Brutus, 1998). Therefore, in these experiences, individuals encounter situations wherein they are required to work under the close watch of and pressure from senior management and are expected to cooperate and secure buy-in from a diverse set of people inside (e.g., peers, top managers) and outside (e.g., customers, unions, government officials) the organization over whom they hold no formal authority (Ibarra, 2015; Lombardo, 1985; Lombardo & Eichinger, 1989a; McCauley, 1999). Individuals undergoing these experiences, then, may look to control their public image because how they are seen by these audiences holds relevance for the accomplishment of the business goals or outcomes associated with these experiences (Baumeister, 1989; Leary, 1995). In doing so, it is possible that they may be less able to devote their attention to executing learning-related activities. Support for this argument comes from the literatures on self-presentation and feedback-seeking respectively. First, the self-presentation literature contends that the time, thought, and energy devoted to self-presentation consumes cognitive resources (Baumeister, 1989; Vohs, Baumeister, & Ciarocco, 2005), meaning fewer resources can be channeled into other activities (in this case, learning activities). Further, the self-motives framework of feedback-seeking (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015; Anseel, Lievens, & Levy, 2007) contends that there are four basic motives behind seeking feedback. One set of forces reflects the self-improvement motives behind feedback-seeking: individuals seek feedback because they want to improve their abilities and skills. Another set of forces reflects the self-enhancement motive behind feedback-seeking: individuals seek feedback because they want to maximize the positivity of their self-concept. The literature suggests a third motive: self-assessment, that is, individuals

seek feedback because they want to obtain an accurate evaluation of the self. Accordingly, "people seek diagnostic information, regardless of its positive or negative implications for the self and regardless whether the information affirms or challenges existing self-conceptions" (Anseel et al., 2007, p. 218). Finally, Anseel and colleagues highlight the role of the self-verification motive, that is, individuals also seek feedback in a way that confirms their self-views. Furthermore, they propose that these different self-motives have implications for individuals' performance improvement. In particular, they contend that when individuals seek feedback for self-assessment and self-improvement purposes, they are motivated to accurately assess and improve their performance. As a result, seeking feedback may lead to performance improvement. However, when individuals seek feedback for self-verification and self-enhancement purposes, they are more concerned with feedback that reinforces and enhances their self-views. In such cases, they are unlikely to benefit from feedback seeking. Overall, then, I argue that in the case of CJE, self-presentational concerns can potentially be quite detrimental to individuals' learning and development from these experiences.

Accordingly, in this essay, I introduce a self-presentation perspective (e.g., Leary, 1995; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 2003) to generate an improved understanding of how individuals respond to CJE. In particular, I argue that CJE place individuals in situations where the decisions they make are visible to senior management and they are dependent on people across organizational units, functions, and cultures for advice, assistance, approvals, and so on. These conditions, I argue, generate public image concerns, encouraging individuals to engage in self-presentational behavior (i.e., behavior people use to manage the image others form of them; Bolino, Long, & Turnley, 2016; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). While the terms self-presentation and impression management are often used interchangeably (Arkin & Shepperd, 1989; Leary, 1995; Leary & Kowalski, 1990), impression management is much broader in scope in that it is intended to create and maintain a favorable image of a

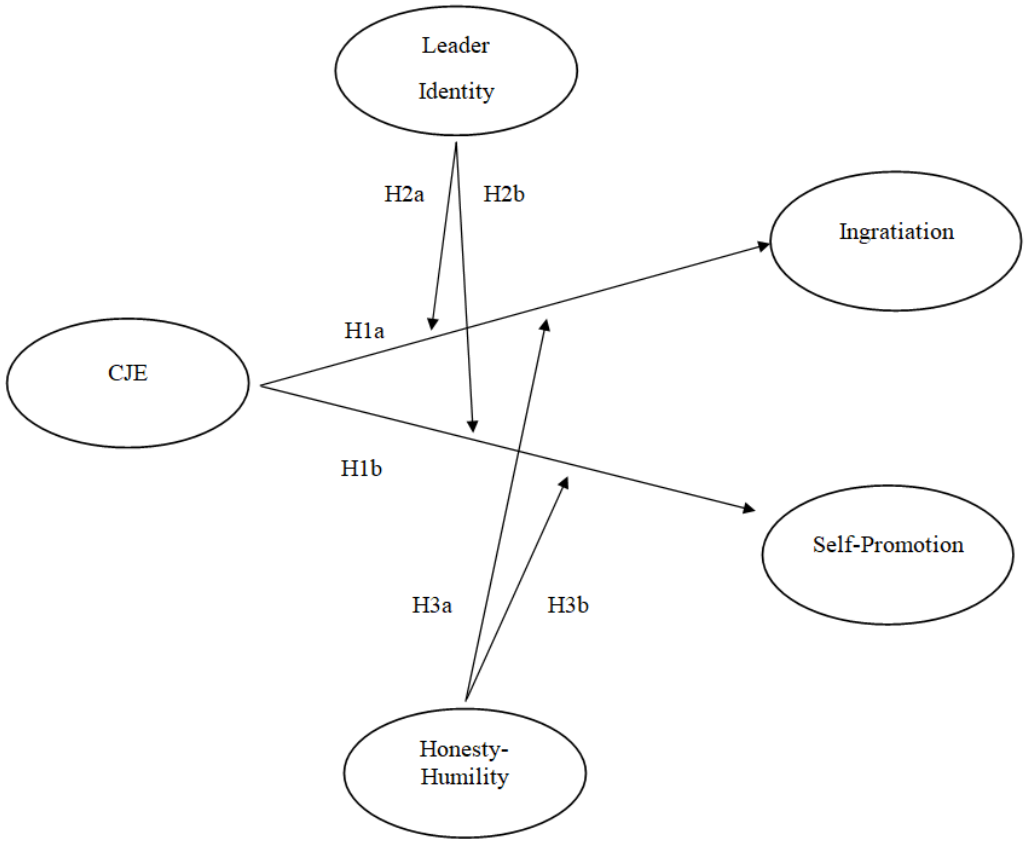
group, an object, an event, etc. in the eyes of others while self-presentation is specifically aimed at creating and maintaining a favorable image of oneself (Bolino et al., 2016; Schlenker & Pontari, 2000). Hence, I focus specifically on self-presentation.

The self-presentation literature, however, suggests that some people are more motivated to self-present than others (Baumeister, 1989; Leary & Kowalski, 1990) and, thus, when undergoing these experiences, such individuals are likely to go out of their way to control audiences' image of them. In this essay, I consider individuals' level of leader identity and honesty-humility as important boundary conditions influencing the extent to which CJE drives self-presentational behaviors (i.e., ingratiation and self-promotion) (see Figure 4.1). The self-presentation literature suggests that people are particularly motivated to manage their public image when they desire to claim for themselves a certain desired identity (Baumeister, 1989; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). I propose that, when undergoing challenging experiences, individuals who feel that their identity as a leader is lacking (i.e., those low in leader identity) are more likely than their high leader identity counterparts to engage in self-presentational behaviors. This is because to think of themselves as leaders, they must obtain recognition from others that they possess the aspired-to identity (Baumeister, 1989; Brunstein & Gollwitzer, 1996; Gollwitzer, Bayer, Scherer, & Seifert, 1999) and hence, such individuals are motivated to get audiences to take notice of their claim to possess qualities denoting leadership ability (Leary, 1989). Furthermore, the self-presentation literature suggests that people are particularly motivated to manage their public image because they see a favorable image to be important in accomplishing their personal goals (Baumeister, 1989; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). I propose that, when undergoing challenging experiences, individuals low in honesty-humility are more likely than their high honest-humble counterparts to engage in self-presentational behaviors. CJE typically represent a platform to prepare individuals for top leadership positions (Ohlott et al., 1994) and in these experiences, individuals are

provided exposure to a wider range of senior leaders within the organization (Seibert et al., 2017). Thus, individuals low in honesty-humility should then have little qualms in using self-presentational behaviors in these experiences to impress senior leaders and get ahead (Bourdage, Wiltshire, & Lee, 2015).

**Figure 4.1**

**The Proposed Theoretical Model**




This essay contributes to the literature in several ways. First, this study adds to the CJE literature that has examined the behavioral responses of individuals undergoing challenging experiences. Existing research has drawn upon the theory of work experience (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998) and the transactional stress theory (Lazarus, 1995; Lazarus & Folkman, 1987) to explain the cognitive and affective processes that underlie individuals' task proficiency behaviors at work (Aryee & Chu, 2012) and leadership behaviors toward direct reports (Courtright et al., 2014). This essay adds to the literature by considering how concerns about

one's image may drive individuals' self-presentational behavior which may, however, adversely affect their learning from challenging experiences. Moreover, Eichinger and Lombardo (1990) suggest that a failure to learn from CJE may have even wider ramifications for individuals in that it may lead to career derailment. Second, this study also enhances our understanding of self-presentation. The extant self-presentation literature has suggested that some people, particularly, those who desire to claim a desired identity and those who desire to accomplish personal goals are more likely than others to make attempts to control their image in the eyes of others (e.g., Baumeister, 1989; Leary & Kowalski 1990). By empirically identifying two critical contingencies (i.e., leader identity and honesty-humility) that capture such different intentions or goals associated with self-presentation, the essay expands theory regarding the boundary conditions of self-presentation in the context of challenging job experiences.

## Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

### The Self-Presentation Perspective

According to the self-presentation perspective (e.g., Leary, 1995; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 2003), there are several conditions within group and organizational settings that influence the saliency of public image concerns. First, the literature suggests that the most important condition influencing the saliency of public image concerns is the publicness of one's behavior. Publicness of behavior refers to the degree to which others may observe a person's behavior first hand or learn about it from secondary sources. The more a person's behavior is public, the more relevant it is to the person's public image, and, thus, the more likely it is that the person will be concerned with how he or she appears to others. A second factor identified by the literature is the person's dependency on others. Dependency on others refers to the degree to which a person's outcomes are contingent on the behavior of other people or groups. The more the person is dependent on others to obtain certain outcomes

which he or she desires, the more likely the person is to become particularly attuned to the image that he or she is conveying to this audience. Finally, future interactions may influence the degree to which a person is concerned about how he or she appears to others. Future interactions refer to the degree to which a person is expected to interact with other people or groups in the future. The more the person anticipates future interactions with others, the more concerned he or she is likely to be about the implications of those interactions for his or her image. Each of these three conditions will influence the degree to which public image concerns are salient to a person and the degree to which those concerns then motivate self-presentational behaviors.

Jones and Pittman (1982) developed a taxonomy that captures five forms of self-presentational behaviors: (1) ingratiation (i.e., doing favors or giving flattery so as to convey an image of being likable), (2) self-promotion (i.e., exaggerating or highlighting one's accomplishments and abilities so as to convey an image of being competent), (3) exemplification (i.e., self-sacrificing or going above and beyond the call of duty so as to convey an image of being dedicated), (4) intimidation (i.e., advertising power to create pain, discomfort and other forms of psychic costs so as to convey an image of being dangerous), and (5) supplication (i.e., advertising one's dependence so as to convey an image of being helpless) (see also, Bolino & Turnley, 1999). I chose to focus on ingratiation and self-promotion because these behaviors are considered to be "close cousins" (Jones & Pittman, 1982, p. 259) in that they help increase others' perception of individuals' social attractiveness (Schneider, 1981; Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981). Moreover, in the case of individuals in leadership positions, efforts to appear competent (self-promotion) and likable (ingratiation) become particularly important because empirical research demonstrates that while competence is central to a leader's success, likability helps promote leader effectiveness at work (Kehn, 2012).

**CJE make image concerns salient, and encourage self-presentation**

I argue that in a work context where individuals undergo CJE, their public image concerns should become salient, specifically, because these experiences present two conditions: publicness and dependency on others. In undergoing CJE, individuals' actions are public to a large extent in that while they are provided a higher degree of autonomy to operate outside the "constraints of existing systems and procedures" (Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984, p. 177), they still, in general, make decisions that can have a major impact on the organization under the close observation of the top management (Lombardo, 1985; Lombardo & Eichinger, 1989a; McCauley, 1999). In addition, in these experiences, individuals are dependent on peers, higher management, external parties (e.g., foreign governments, unions, and joint venture partners) or other key people over whom they have no direct authority for receiving advice, help, and approvals and, thus, "getting the job done" (Lombardo, 1985; McCauley, Eastman, & Ohlott, 1995, p. 97). However, the impact of the third condition – future interactions – within the context of challenging experiences is less clear; specifically, whether future interactions would increase the salience of public image concerns may depend on several other factors. First, I expect that the effect may depend on an individual's assumptions regarding the number of interactions in the future with the audience. For example, a common challenging job experience involves a situation where an individual faces high levels of responsibility (e.g., responsible for securing financing for a key acquisition) (DeRue & Wellman, 2009). An individual may assume that he or she will interact with the financer repeatedly in the future, at least until the financing is obtained. In such a case, concerns about one's public image may become salient to the individual. Conversely, the individual may assume that he or she will just have a single interaction with the financer, after which he or she delegates future meetings with the financer to his or her staff. As a result, he or she should be less concerned about how he or she appears to the

financer. Second, the effect may depend on the type of audience encountered during the experience. For example, another challenging job experience is a situation where an individual has to create change (e.g., manage a new product launch or acquisition) (DeRue & Wellman, 2009). An individual during such an experience will typically have the top management peering "over their shoulders to see how they were doing" (Lombardo, 1985, p. 52). In such an experience, the individual will presumably expect to continue their relationship with the top management, at least until they remain with the same organization. Hence, in cases where an individual encounters top management during the experience, concerns about one's public image may become salient to him or her. Therefore, I suggest that it is in particular because of the first two conditions – publicness of behavior and dependency on others – that public image concerns are likely to become salient to individuals undergoing challenging experiences. More specifically, because CJE require individuals to accept responsibility for key decisions that bring in high visibility and pressure from senior managers (i.e., ensure publicness of behavior) and make them interface with important people and groups inside and outside the organization (i.e., ensure dependency on others), individuals' public image concerns become salient, in turn, driving them to engage in behaviors that are associated with controlling the image that others form of them. Thus, I hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 1(H1)*: CJE will be positively related to ingratiation (H1a) and self-promotion (H1b).

**The Moderating Role of Leader Identity and Honesty-Humility**

In the previous section, I contended that the saliency of public image concerns in the context of CJE will encourage individuals to engage in self-presentational behaviors. The self-presentation literature, however, suggests that some people, in particular, those who want to (1) claim a certain desired identity and (2) accomplish personal goals are more likely to

make attempts to control their image in the eyes of others (e.g., Baumeister, 1989; Leary & Kowalski 1990). Accordingly, in this essay, I incorporate leader identity and honesty-humility as boundary conditions of the relationship between CJE and self-presentational behaviors.

**The moderating role of leader identity**

Leader identity is defined as "the subcomponent of one's identity that relates to being a leader or how one thinks of oneself as a leader" (Day & Harrison, 2007, p. 365). Thinking of oneself as a leader is an important motivator for developing and serving as a leader (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2005). Empirical research shows that individuals who see themselves as leaders are more likely to be seen as such by others (Peters & Haslam, 2018), primarily on account of having attained a central position in their social network (Kwok, Hanig, Brown, & Shen, 2018). In addition, studies show that individuals holding a strong leader identity are more likely to be effective in leadership roles (Day & Sin, 2011; Kragt & Guenter, 2018).

I first propose that individuals low in leader identity are more likely to engage in self-presentational behaviors in response to challenging experiences. Specifically, individuals low in leader identity will be eager to self-promote and ingratiate themselves with others in order to gain social recognition from others that they possess characteristics (i.e., competence and likability) that are typically associated with being a leader (Gollwitzer, 1986; Kehn, 2012). This is consistent with the self-presentation literature which suggests that people are more motivated to control how others see them when they desire to claim for themselves a certain desired identity (Baumeister, 1989). For people to claim desired identities, they must self-symbolize, that is, publicly enact behaviors that are consistent with those identities (Gollwitzer, 1986; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Self-symbolizing behaviors serve the function of getting others in one's area of interest to take notice of one's claim to possess the aspired-

to identity and may take many different forms including the use of open self-aggrandizement and attempts to persuade and influence others (Brunstein & Gollwitzer, 1996; Gollwitzer, 1986; Gollwitzer et al., 1999). Getting an audience in one's area of interest to take notice of one's claim to possess the aspired-to identity is of central importance because identity requires a social acknowledgment from others (Brunstein & Gollwitzer, 1996; Gollwitzer, 1986; Gollwitzer et al., 1999). On the other hand, the self-presentation literature suggests that individuals who are sure that others already regard them positively are less likely to make attempts to convey additional positive images of themselves (Leary, 1995; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Hence, given that individuals high in leader identity are already likely to be seen as effective and recognized by others to be leaders (Peters & Haslam, 2018), they are less likely to engage in self-presentational behaviors during challenging experiences (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981). Thus, I hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 2(H2)*: The relationship between CJE and ingratiation (H2a) and self-promotion (H2b) will be stronger for individuals low in leader identity relative to those high in leader identity.

**The moderating role of honesty-humility**

Honesty-Humility is derived from a six-dimensional model of personality known as the HEXACO model (Ashton & Lee, 2005; Ashton & Lee, 2007). This model consists of six factors: Honesty-Humility (H), Emotionality (E), Extraversion (X), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), and Openness to Experience (O). Honesty-Humility is defined by terms such as sincere, fair, and unassuming versus sly, greedy, and pretentious (Ashton & Lee, 2005; Ashton, Lee, & Son, 2000). People low in honesty-humility have a tendency to flatter others in order to obtain favors, are willing to take advantage of others to gain at their expense, are motivated by monetary or social status considerations, and consider themselves as superior and entitled to special treatment (Ashton & Lee, 2005). Unsurprisingly, then,

empirical research shows that honesty-humility is strongly negatively correlated with the *Dark Triad* personality traits, that is, psychopathy, machiavellianism, and narcissism which tend to "share elements such as exploitation, manipulativeness, and a grandiose sense of self-importance" (Ashton et al., 2000; Lee & Ashton, 2005, p.1572).

I propose that individuals low in honesty-humility are more likely to engage in self-presentational behaviors in response to challenging experiences. CJE help individuals acquire necessary experience before taking on upper-level management jobs (Ohlott et al., 1994). Moreover, in these experiences, individuals are put into positions of visibility and, thus, get wide exposure to senior leaders who act as mentors and provide individuals with career and psychosocial support (Ohlott et al., 1994; Seibert et al., 2017). Thus, because individuals low in honesty-humility tend to desire power (e.g., salary and promotions) and status, they will be opportunistic and self-interested when engaged in challenging experiences. Specifically, they will look to present a favorable image in order to acquire as much information, career advice, material support and other types of social resources as they possibly can from their mentor network (i.e., senior leaders), thus increasing their potential for promotion into senior leadership positions (Bourdage et al., 2015; Highhouse, Brooks, & Wang, 2016; Seibert et al., 2017). This is consistent with the self-presentation literature which suggests that people are motivated to use self-presentation when they desire to accomplish personal goals (Baumeister, 1989). In addition, empirical research shows that individuals low in honesty-humility engage in citizenship behaviors (OCB) for impression management purposes such as "to get ahead and appear positively to others in the workplace" (Bourdage, Lee, Lee, & Shin, 2012, p.193). In contrast, individuals high in honesty-humility are less interested in possessing power and high social status and have a tendency to be more genuine in interpersonal interactions (Ashton, Lee, & de Vries, 2014; Zettler & Hilbig, 2010). Furthermore, empirical research shows that unlike individuals low in honesty-humility who

weigh their own outcomes much more strongly than the outcomes of others, individuals high in honesty-humility are willing to forgo individual payoffs for the sake of joint outcome maximization or to increase others' outcomes (Hilbig, Glöckner, & Zettler, 2014). Hence, they should be less likely to engage in self-presentational behaviors during challenging experiences. Thus, I hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 3 (H3)*: The relationship between CJE and ingratiation (H3a) and self-promotion (H3b) will be stronger for individuals low in honesty-humility relative to those high in honesty-humility.

## Method

### Participants and Procedures

Data for this essay were collected as part of a larger data collection effort (for more details, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation). Participants were recruited via Prolific (https://app.prolific.ac) which is an online participant recruitment panel of students and working adults. I collected data in two waves. At Time 1 (T1), the sample consisted of 725 participants. Approximately one month after the initial T1 survey, these 725 participants were invited to complete the Time 2 (T2) survey. At T1, participants reported on demographics, CJE, leader identity, honesty-humility and, at T2, they reported on their self-presentational behaviors. Of these 725 participants, I identified 720 for inclusion for data collection; the five individuals who were removed indicated that they did not have job experience, organization experience, or work experience. I used IBM SPSS Statistics 25 to randomly split this sample of 720 participants in half which resulted in two datasets with 364 participants and 356 participants respectively.

In this essay, I used the second dataset (N = 356). Of this sample, 55.90% were women, 62.60% had completed technical college or possessed a university degree, 14.60% were working in the field of business-related services (i.e., financial/insurance/accounting, legal &

administration, marketing/ media professions), and 19.90% held a general management position. The average age of the sample was 37.16 years (*SD* = 9.96) and the average organizational tenure was 8.17 years (*SD* = 6.95). On average, respondents reported having 8.92 subordinates (*SD* = 29.83) in the current job role. Of the 356 participants at T1, 330 individuals had returned the T2 survey (retention rate = 92.69%).

**Measures**

**CJE**. CJE were measured using the 8-item scale developed by Seibert et al. (2017). Participants indicated the extent to which they underwent challenging experiences at work on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Very much*). A sample item is "I have taken care of responsibilities that involved a product, market, or technology that I had not worked with before."

**Leader identity**. Leader identity was measured using the scale developed by Hiller (2005). Participants were asked to rate on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all descriptive*) to 5 (*Totally descriptive*) how they viewed themselves. A sample item is "I prefer being seen by others as a leader."

**Honesty-Humility**. Honestly-Humility was measured using ten items drawn from the 60-item version of the HEXACO Personality Inventory (HEXACO-60; Ashton & Lee, 2009). All items were answered on a 5-point scale (1= *Strongly disagree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*). A sample item is "I wouldn't use flattery to get a raise or promotion at work, even if I thought it would succeed."

**Ingratiation**. Ingratiation was measured using four items from the IM-5 scale (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). Participants were asked to rate on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Very frequently*) how often they engaged in ingratiation at work. A sample item is "Complimented your colleagues so that they will see you as likeable."

**Self-promotion**. Self-promotion was measured using four items from the IM-5 scale (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). All of the items were measured by a 5-point scale anchored from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Very frequently*). A sample item is "Made people aware of your talents or qualifications."

**Control variables**. First, to isolate the effects of challenging job experiences from just the amount of experience in the current job (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998), I controlled for job tenure (measured in years). Second, because gender may influence both individuals' participation in developmental experiences (e.g., Ohlott et al., 1994) and the extent to which they engage in self-presentational behaviors (e.g., Singh, Kumra, & Vinnicombe, 2002), I controlled for individuals' gender (measured as 1= male, 2= female).

## Results

Descriptive statistics, internal consistency reliabilities and intercorrelations for the study variables are presented in Table 4.1. CJE correlated positively with both forms of self-presentational behaviors.

**Table 4.1**

**Mean, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Variables**

| Variable | *M* | *SD* | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *6* | *7* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Job Tenure T1 | 5.44 | 5.07 | (-) | | | | | | |
| 2. Gender T1 | 1.56 | 0.49 | -.01 | (-) | | | | | |
| 3. CJE T1 | 2.76 | 0.83 | -.15** | .03 | (.81) | | | | |
| 4. Leader Identity T1 | 3.06 | 0.97 | -.04 | .01 | .39** | (.90) | | | |
| 5. Honesty-Humility T1 | 3.57 | 0.62 | .05 | .07 | -.06 | -.04 | (.73) | | |
| 6. Ingratiation T2 | 3.14 | 0.84 | -.04 | .13* | .21** | .20** | -.20** | (.83) | |
| 7. Self-Promotion T2 | 2.51 | 0.90 | .00 | .00 | .24** | .22** | -.24** | .46** | (.89) |

*Note.* T1 (*n*=356), T2 (*n*=330).
Reliability coefficients are in parentheses on the diagonal.
CJE= Challenging Job Experiences.
* $p < 0.05$.
** $p < 0.01$.

Next, I conducted logistic regression analyses to examine whether attrition from T1 to T2 led to nonrandom sampling. Specifically, I examined whether dropout at T2 was predicted by T1 CJE, T1 leader identity, T1 honesty-humility, and the control variables. The results are reported in Appendix C. The results demonstrated that all of the logistic regression coefficients associated with the variables of interest and controls were not significant, indicating that attrition did not bias subsequent analyses (Goodman & Blum, 1996).

Because the same respondents rated all study variables, I used a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to examine the distinctions among these variables. To assess model fit, several indices were used: Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), commonly used for evaluating goodness-of-fit in SEM (Coovert & Craiger, 2000). I then compared the hypothesized five-factor model to alternate models using the chi-square difference ($\Delta\chi2$) test to determine the best fitting model. The CFA results are reported in Appendix D. The results of these analyses revealed that the hypothesized five-factor model (i.e., CJE T1, leader identity T1, honesty-humility T1, ingratiation T2, and self-promotion T2) presented a poor fit to the data. Because modification indices showed some items to have strong cross-loadings, and because these items would have relatively little impact in bringing a change in the reliability of the scale if deleted, three items (one from CJE and two from honesty-humility scales) were deleted[4]. The resulting five-factor model now exhibited reasonable fit to the data ($\chi2$ [314] = 831.16, CFI = .86, TLI = .85, RMSEA = .06) and all items loaded significantly on their corresponding latent factors (factor loadings ranging from 0.36 to 0.92, $p < 0.001$). Next, I compared this modified model to a four-factor model consisting of CJE, leader identity, honesty-humility, and a

[4] I deleted item 8 ("I have dealt with responsibilities that involved significant performance problems among key members of my staff") from the CJE scale. The revised reliability for the CJE scale after the deletion of the item was .79. From the honesty-humility scale, I deleted item 4 ("I think that I am entitled to more respect than the average person is" [reverse-scored]) and item 8 ("I want people to know that I am an important person of high status" [reverse-scored]). The revised reliability for the honesty-humility scale after the deletion of the items was .73.

general self-presentational factor (i.e., ingratiation and self-promotion loaded on a single factor) and a one-factor model with all items loaded on a single factor. Results showed that the modified five-factor model fit significantly better than the more parsimonious four-factor ($\Delta\chi2 = 337.86$, $\Delta df = 4$, $p < .001$) and one-factor ($\Delta\chi2 = 1995.86$, $\Delta df = 10$, $p < .001$) models respectively. Overall, these results supported the distinctiveness of the constructs.

Finally, a series of two-wave lagged structural equation models were set up to examine the study hypotheses. All analyses were conducted using the Mplus software version 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). First, to test Hypothesis 1a and 1b, I specified separate lagged models (i.e., Model 1 and Model 2 for ingratiation and self-promotion respectively; see Table 4.2). Each of these models includes the lagged effects of CJE and the control variables. Both structural models provided a reasonable fit to the data (see Table 4.2). As reported in Table 4.2, T1 CJE were associated with ingratiation ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < .001$) and self-promotion ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < .001$) at T2. Thus, Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 1b were supported.

**Table 4.2**

**Summary of Estimates for Testing the Relationship between CJE T1 and Ingratiation and Self-Promotion at T2**

| Estimate | Model 1 | Model 2 |
|---|---|---|
| Job Tenure T1 | 0.00 | 0.01 |
| Gender T1 | 0.25* | -0.01 |
| CJE T1→ Ingratiation T2 | 0.29*** | |
| CJE T1 → Self-promotion T2 | | 0.35*** |
| Model Fit | | |
| $\chi^2/df$ | 214.21/63 | 209.65/63 |
| CFI | 0.88 | 0.90 |
| TLI | 0.85 | 0.88 |
| RMSEA | 0.08 | 0.08 |

*Note.* Model 1 includes ingratiation.
Model 2 includes self-promotion.
CJE= Challenging Job Experiences.
CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.
*$p < 0.05$.
*** $p < 0.001$.

The next set of hypotheses predicts that the relationship between T1 CJE and self-presentational behaviors at T2 is moderated by T1 leader identity (Hypothesis 2). I followed the procedures recommended by Stride, Gardner, Catley, and Thomas (2015). Specifically, I added the two-way interactions (for example, between T1 CJE and T1 leader identity to predict ingratiation at T2) to the lagged models specified earlier. The path estimates showed that the interaction effect between T1 CJE and T1 leader identity was not significant in predicting ingratiation ($\beta = 0.00$, ns) and self-promotion ($\beta = 0.01$, ns) at T2. Thus, Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 2b were not supported. Finally, Hypothesis 3 predicts that the relationship between T1 CJE and ingratiation (Hypothesis 3a) and self-promotion (Hypothesis 3b) at T2 is moderated by T1 honesty-humility. The path estimates showed that the interaction effect between T1 CJE and T1 honesty-humility was not significant in predicting ingratiation ($\beta = 0.00$, ns) and self-promotion ($\beta = 0.00$, ns) at T2. Thus, Hypothesis 3a and Hypothesis 3b received no support.

## Discussion

"Impression management and self-presentation are pervasive features of social behavior" (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000, p. 224). Thus, scholars have focused extensively on the use of impression management or self-presentation in HR-relevant contexts such as job analysis, recruitment interviews, performance evaluation and the feedback-seeking process, and careers (see Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008 and Bolino et al., 2016 for reviews). Yet, as Bolino and colleagues (2008) point out in their review, we know relatively little about other organizational contexts in which impression management or self-presentation may have an important role to play. In this essay, then, I proposed that leadership development experiences such as CJE are a further important context that may drive individuals' self-presentational behaviors and I aimed to identify boundary conditions of the CJE-self-presentational behaviors relationship.

First, while prior research has examined the behavioral responses of individuals undergoing CJE (see Aryee & Chu, 2012; Courtright et al., 2014 for exceptions), little consideration has been devoted to whether there may be pressure on individuals undergoing these experiences to create and maintain a favorable image in order to meet business goals attached to these experiences, ultimately leading them to engage in actions that help them manage their image. Furthermore, while significant attempts have been made to investigate the consequences of self-presentational behaviors, few studies have examined the antecedents of self-presentational behaviors (see Bolino et al. 2016 for a review). Therefore, in Hypotheses 1a and 1b respectively, I proposed and found that CJE were associated with two important types of self-presentational behaviors: ingratiation and self-promotion. Thus, it is possible that instead of devoting their attention to executing learning-related activities to learn and develop from these experiences, individuals may have made efforts to control their public image in response to these experiences. This, potentially, could hamper learning and development from these experiences (Anseel et al., 2007; Baumeister, 1989).

While the results showed that CJE were associated with ingratiation and self-promotion respectively, the existing self-presentation literature suggests that not all individuals are likely to be equally driven to engage in self-presentation (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Therefore, in Hypotheses 2 and 3 respectively, I proposed that individuals who are low in leader identity and those low in honesty-humility should be more inclined to engage in self-presentational behaviors when undergoing challenging experiences. However, I did not find evidence for leader identity as a moderator of the CJE-self-presentational behaviors relationship. One potential reason for this is that I did not assess commitment to leader identity in this essay. Specifically, the self-symbolizing literature emphasizes an important boundary condition for identity striving: that is, only individuals committed to identity will attempt to self-symbolize (Gollwitzer, Wicklund, & Hilton, 1982; Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981). Thus, future research

should investigate whether the self-symbolizing process in the form of self-presentational behaviors is likely to occur among individuals low in leader identity but with high commitment to leader identity. Similarly, honesty-humility did not emerge as a significant moderator of the relationship between CJE and ingratiation (Hypothesis 3a) and self-promotion (Hypothesis 3b) respectively. I speculate that this effect may depend on how political the environment is. Specifically, in organizations where compensation and promotion systems are less political in nature (e.g., criteria for promotions is clearly delineated by the human resources department or top management), there would little reason for individuals low in honesty-humility to engage in self-presentational behaviors (Wendler, Liu, & Zettler, 2018; Wiltshire, Bourdage, & Lee, 2014; Zettler & Hilbig, 2010). Thus, future work could inquire into whether there is a three-way interaction between CJE, honesty-humility, and organizational politics in the prediction of self-presentational behaviors. Specifically, we would expect that honesty-humility will moderate the relations between CJE and self-presentational behaviors only when self-presentation becomes a necessary and important requirement, that is, when perceptions of organizational politics are high.

The results of this essay have important implications for organizations working to ensure individuals learn and develop from challenging job experiences. Specifically, assuming that self-presentational concerns may have negative consequences for individuals' learning and development from CJE, there are two important organizational actions that could be put in place. One, organizations should look to screen out individuals who are more worried than others about controlling their public image and, thus, more likely to engage in self-presentation and, as a result, may devote inappropriately, little attention to engaging in learning-related activities when placed in challenging experiences. To this end, further research is needed to uncover the types of individuals who are more likely to self-present when undergoing challenging experiences. For example, the self-presentation literature

suggests that people who are high in need for approval are more concerned with pleasing the audience and confirming to the needs and expectations of the audience (Baumeister, 1989; Gardner & Martinko, 1988; Leary, 1995; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). In a similar vein, individuals high in public self-consciousness have a greater sensitivity to how audiences react to them in public (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992) and tend to think more about the public aspect of themselves (Leary, 1995). Thus, compared to people who are low in such a characteristic, individuals high in public self-consciousness are more likely to make attempts to manage their social impressions (Leary, 1995). Therefore, I recommend future research to test whether there is a stronger relationship between CJE and self-presentational behaviors for those with high in need for approval and high in public self-consciousness. Two, organizations should look at managing organizational culture (i.e., norms) in a way that can help limit self-presentation (Gardner & Martinko, 1998). One way to do so would be for senior leaders to describe how they went about learning from challenging experiences in order to teach employees placed in challenging experiences the importance of viewing challenging experiences as valuable opportunities to learn and develop, thus alleviating, to some extent, public image concerns in the context of CJE (Whitehurst, 2016).

**Limitations of the Study**

There are some important limitations that need to be discussed. First, in this essay, I proposed that CJE will be associated with self-presentational behaviors. However, the study design does not provide evidence regarding the causal order of the relationships. It has been suggested that in most work settings, it is the supervisors rather than individuals themselves who decide on who will undergo CJE (De Pater, Van Vianen, Fischer, & Van Ginkel, 2009b). Therefore, it is conceivable that individuals may engage in self-presentational behaviors that are interpreted in a positive manner by powerful audiences such as supervisors who, in turn, assign individuals to challenging experiences (Wayne & Ferris, 1990). I cannot rule this

possibility. Hence, longitudinal survey designs that allow for examination of reciprocal relationships, or directional influences, between variables over time (e.g., cross-lagged panel designs) would be useful. Second, all measures were based on self-reports, raising concerns about common method bias. In this regard, I followed several of the recommendations by Podsakoff et al. (2003, 2012) including using a lagged design, incorporating different response formats for the predictor (i.e., CJE) and outcomes (i.e., ingratiation and self-promotion), and ensuring respondent anonymity during data collection. Future studies may, however, replicate the present findings by reports of self-presentational behaviors from other sources such as peers, supervisors, direct reports, or external stakeholders (Bolino et al., 2016). Finally, while I did use well-established measures to assess the study variables, the CFA results indicated that the fit of the modified five-factor model was still well below what is commonly recommended (Hu & Bentler, 1998).

**Conclusion**

While prior research has enquired into the behavioral responses of individuals undergoing CJE, little consideration has been given to self-presentational actions that individuals undertake in response to CJE which, over the long term, may have costs for individual learning and development. Specifically, the findings show that CJE were associated with ingratiation and self-promotion. The essay findings call upon scholars and practitioners to pay greater attention to understanding the role of self-presentation in the leadership development process. This is important to increase the likelihood that leadership development practices such as CJE will have a positive role to play in helping individuals learn and develop at work.

## Appendix C

### Table C1

### Logistic Regression: Stayers versus Leavers [a]

| Variable | *B* | *S.E.* |
|---|---|---|
| CJE T1 | -0.33 | 0.26 |
| Leader Identity T1 | -0.22 | 0.23 |
| Honesty-Humility T1 | 0.08 | 0.33 |
| Job Tenure T1 | 0.02 | 0.04 |
| Gender T1 | -0.40 | 0.43 |
| Constant | 4.48** | 1.65 |
| -2 log likelihood | 180.09 | |
| Model Chi-square | 6.03 | |

*Note.* $n$= 364.
[a] Leavers = 1, Stayers = 2.
CJE = Challenging Job Experiences.
B = Unstandardized weight; S.E. = Standard error of unstandardized weight.
** $p < 0.01$.

## Appendix D

### Table D1

### Comparison of Alternative Factor Structures

| Model | $\chi^2$ | *df* | CFI | TLI | RMSEA | $\Delta\chi^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Original | | | |
| Measurement model | 1298.71 | 395 | 0.79 | 0.77 | 0.08 | |
| | | | Modified | | | |
| Measurement Model | 831.16 | 314 | 0.86 | 0.85 | 0.06 | |
| 4-factor model | 1169.02 | 318 | 0.77 | 0.75 | 0.08 | 337.86*** |
| 1-factor model | 2827.02 | 324 | 0.34 | 0.29 | 0.14 | 1995.86*** |

*Note.* df = degree of freedom; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.
*** $p < 0.001$.

## Chapter 5: General Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine challenging job experiences (CJE) and their role in facilitating the process of leadership development. In the first essay of the dissertation, I provided an overview and discussion of the extant empirical literature on CJE and suggested avenues for future research. In the second essay of the dissertation, I proposed that CJE foster leadership development at work by promoting individuals' possible selves at work, specifically, their future work selves and, as a consequence, motivate individuals to engage in proactive behaviors. Finally, in the third essay of the dissertation, I posited that CJE generates self-presentational concerns that, subsequently, drive individuals' self-presentational behaviors. In this chapter, I discuss the key findings from each of the dissertation essays. Next, I discuss the practical implications of the findings obtained in Essay 2 and Essay 3. I conclude by noting some of the key limitations of the work carried out in this dissertation.

### Theoretical Implications

In the first essay of the dissertation, I reviewed the last 20 years of CJE research, focusing, in particular, on the determinants and consequences of CJE. I found that the determinants of CJE have been explored at two major levels: the individual level (i.e., demographic characteristics, individual differences) and the contextual level (i.e., supervisor characteristics and behaviors). Specifically, the evidence seems to indicate that individuals with a proactive personality, learning orientation, certain career competencies and reporting to performance avoidant supervisors or supervisors who exhibit transformational leadership are more likely to secure challenging experiences, under certain favorable organizational conditions (e.g., access to job experiences, supervisor task authority). In terms of the consequences, I found that the focus has been extensively on linking individual-level CJE with desirable individual-level outcomes (e.g., learning, promotability). However, by drawing

upon the stress literature (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1987), recent studies showed that CJE may lead to negative emotions and, as a result, increase individuals' laissez-faire leadership behaviors and turnover intentions and reduce their advancement potential. I then developed an emergent model of CJE that integrates the extant CJE research, which then became the basis for highlighting a number of areas in which future research is required.

In the second essay of the dissertation, I introduced an identity-based perspective to CJE research. Undergoing CJE, I argued, brings in a change in work activities and social interactions. CJE, hence, make salient individuals' possible selves, more specifically, their future work selves salient. This, in turn, motivates them to engage in two forms of proactive behavior: strategic scanning and taking charge. A two-wave cross-lagged study among individuals in leadership positions across a range of industries provided some support for the propositions. In line with the identity-based leadership development perspective (Ibarra, Snook, & Guillen Ramo, 2008) and the literature on role transitions and identity processes (Ibarra, 1999, 2005), I found that CJE were related to future work self salience. Furthermore, salient future work selves motivated strategic scanning behavior and partially mediated the effect of CJE on strategic scanning over time. However, contrary to expectations, the CJE-future work self salience-taking charge relationship followed a reverse causation direction wherein I found that engaging in taking charge behaviors helped increase the salience of individuals' future work selves. Overall, the essay findings add to the literature on challenging experiences and proactive behavior respectively. First, the essay advances current CJE research by moving beyond relating CJE to self-reported learning and leadership KSAs (e.g., McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994; Dragoni, Tesluk, Russell, & Oh, 2009) and showing how CJE contribute to the leadership development process by shaping the saliency of individuals' future work selves. Second, by uncovering the link between future work self salience and strategic scanning, this essay contributes to the proactivity literature by

shedding light on how proactive behavior such as strategic scanning may be motivated (Strauss & Kelly, 2016).

Finally, in the third essay of this dissertation, I introduced a self-presentation perspective to CJE research. Undergoing CJE, I contended, creates visibility and dependency on others. CJE, hence, make salient individuals' self-presentational concerns, in turn, motivating them to engage in two forms of self-presentational behavior: ingratiation and self-promotion. Furthermore, I articulated two boundary conditions, namely, leader identity and honesty-humility that explain who is more likely to engage in self-presentational behaviors in response to challenging experiences. A two-wave lagged study among individuals in leadership positions across a range of industries provided some support for the propositions. In line with the self-presentation perspective (e.g., Leary, 1995; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 2003), I found that CJE were related to ingratiation and self-promotion. However, contrary to expectations, leader identity and honesty-humility did not moderate the relationships between CJE and self-presentational behaviors. Overall, the essay findings add to the literature on challenging experiences and self-presentation respectively. First, the essay advances current CJE research by moving beyond relating CJE to task proficiency behaviors (Aryee & Chu, 2012) and leadership behaviors toward direct reports (Courtright, Colbert, & Choi, 2014) and showing how CJE may potentially hinder individual learning from these experiences by making them undertake behaviors that are aimed at presenting a favorable image at work (Anseel, Lievens, & Levy, 2007; Baumeister, 1989). Second, by uncovering the link between CJE and self-presentational behaviors, this essay contributes to the self-presentation literature by demonstrating how self-presentation may also have a role to play in the leadership development context, above and beyond other HR-relevant contexts such as job interviews and performance evaluations (Bolino, Long, & Turnley, 2016).

## Practical Implications

This dissertation, specifically, Essay 2 and Essay 3 provide answers to two questions of relevance to organizations: How can CJE be used to motivate individuals to engage in proactive behaviors that contribute to the effectiveness of the organization? How best to ensure the development of individuals from challenging experiences?

First, given that future work selves salience plays a role in motivating strategic scanning behaviors, practitioner interventions designed to augment the salience of employees' future work selves could help organizations motivate behaviors that could help improve the future of the organization. Previous studies have suggested various interventions such as career exploration activities, counseling interventions, and inspirational leadership to increase future work self salience (e.g., Cai et al., 2015; Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015; Zhang, Hirschi, Herrmann, Wei, & Zhang, 2017). In this dissertation, I offer two further alternatives to organizations: (1) allocate employees to challenging job experiences and (2) provide incentives and support to employees to engage in taking charge behaviors at work. Furthermore, by placing employees in challenging job experiences, organizations are likely to be rewarded with another desirable outcome: individual taking charge behaviors.

Second, this dissertation provides guidance for organizations working to ensure employees learn through participation in challenging job experiences. Given that individuals are likely to respond with self-presentational behaviors when placed in challenging experiences, organizations need to be careful about choosing the type of individuals to deploy to these experiences. Recent research, for example, recommends deploying individuals with stronger learning goal orientations to challenging experiences in order to facilitate the process of learning and leadership development (Dragoni et al., 2009). As a second step, organizations should look to use organizational culture in a way that can help limit the extent

to which self-presentation is undertaken by individuals when placed in challenging experiences. For example, in helping individuals prepare for challenging experiences, organizations could launch experience-based leadership development workshops wherein successful senior executives come and share stories about how challenging job experiences allowed them to extract important leadership lessons and how it is important to view challenging experiences as an opportunity to learn instead of using them as a platform to just manage a favorable image.

## Limitations

Some important limitations of the work carried out in this dissertation should be noted. First, in identifying studies for inclusion/exclusion in Essay 1, I chose to search for articles: (1) that were empirical in nature, (2) that were published between 1998 and 2018, (3) and that utilized the overall CJE construct. As a result, this essay suffers from the problem of publication bias and certainly does not represent an exhaustive and up-to-date review of the literature relevant to CJE. Therefore, I caution organizations from using this literature review as a basis for making key talent management decisions. Second, given the self-reported nature of the data in Essay 2 and 3 respectively, I cannot rule out the possibility that common method bias may have affected the results. However, I followed several techniques suggested by scholars to control for common method bias (see Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003 and Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012 for reviews). Third, the use of a two-wave cross-lagged panel design (Essay 2) and a time-lagged design (Essay 3) respectively preclude strong causal conclusions that can be drawn from the findings. To further strengthen these findings, replication studies using three-wave longitudinal designs or experimental designs that clarify the causal order of the relationships could be a useful next step. Finally, in Essay 2 and 3, I examined the impact of one leadership development practice (i.e., CJE) on leadership development processes and self-presentational behaviors

respectively. However, some scholars (e.g., Cao & Hamori, 2016; Seibert, Sargent, Kraimer, & Kiazad, 2017) have incorporated several leadership development practices to isolate the effects of CJE on study outcomes. Thus, examining several leadership practices together in a single model that provides a better estimate of the impact of CJE would be a valuable direction for future research.

## Conclusion

In the general introduction (see Chapter 1), I suggested that CJE can help organizations enhance employees' capacity to lead. The question is: To what extent are these experiences meeting this desired end? In line with the extant literature (Essay 1), the answer does not seem straightforward. CJE may produce, among individuals, dysfunctional responses that could be a threat to learning (Essay 3) in spite of its ability to proximally develop among them a future-oriented identity that, in turn, leads to behaviors that may improve the future of the organization (Essay 2). I hope this dissertation, then, will be seen as an important step in our journey to provide a more holistic picture of the role of CJE within the field of leadership development.

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