



**ROMANCE OF LEADERSHIP AS A LEADER EMERGENCE PREDICTOR**

THESIS

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AFIT/GSS/ENV/08-M01

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THESIS

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to examine whether a link between romance of leadership and leader emergence exists. To test this proposition, a sample population was drawn from a military leadership development program for senior enlisted personnel. The school's 406 students were broken into 28 separate groupings called "flights", each led by an instructor. The data for this study was obtained by administering the Romance of Leadership Scale (RLS) and observing leader emergence within the individual flights over a six-week period. The hypothesis that individuals who exhibit a high romance of leadership will be more likely to emerge as a leader was supported ( $p < .05$ ) in the case of peer ratings. The assertion that locus of control will moderate the relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence received strong support in the case of instructor ratings ( $p < .001$ ) and partial support in the case of peer ratings ( $p < .06$ ).

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*To my wife, whose extraordinary patience and support made this endeavor possible.*

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# **ROMANCE OF LEADERSHIP AS A LEADER EMERGENCE PREDICTOR**

## **I. Introduction**

Leadership holds a prevalent place within our society; one only needs to look at the mass volume of print material dedicated to the concept of leadership to understand the great value and significance it holds in our culture (Jackson, 2005). A substantial amount of early 20<sup>th</sup> century leadership studies (e.g., Stogdill, 1948 and Mann, 1959) focused on a trait theory of leadership, attempting to identify core traits of an individual that could predict successful leadership. The results were generally interpreted as being too difficult to isolate and therefore inconclusive (Bass, 1990). However, the popularity of trait-based models has been renewed upon the suggestion that the interpretations of early trait-theory studies were incorrect (Lord, DeVader, & Alliger, 1986). Subsequent studies have indeed shown to produce correlations between leadership and traits such as personality (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002), gender (Neubert & Taggar, 2004), and self-monitoring (Eby, Cader, & Noble, 2003). However, additional factors increasing the sophistication of leadership models are needed to fully understand the construct (Van Wart, 2004).

While trait theories have shown promising results, other leadership theories have been proposed as well. For example, in a departure from more traditional, leader-centric views, some researchers question whether leadership actually exists, viewing it as simply the fulfillment of followers' preconceived ideas as to the qualities and behaviors a leader

should possess (Eden & Leviatan, 1975). Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT; Eden & Leviatan, 1975) states that leadership is measured by the degree to which followers attribute particular traits and behaviors to leaders. If leadership is an idealized notion held in followers' minds as ILT suggests, then it's important to understand what followers are thinking (Lord & Emrich, 2000) as opposed to leader-centric theories.

Most of the research surrounding ILT since its inception has been focused on either identifying traits that followers perceive as leadership (e.g., Keller, 1999) or how factors such as follower traits or internal attributions affect leadership attributions such as charisma (e.g., Yorges, Weiss, & Strickland, 1999). While there is value in these approaches, research has been limited to investigating how followers' perceptions of leadership in general could affect their perception of current leaders, and doesn't address how follower perceptions may affect leader emergence among a group of followers.

Examinations into follower thinking and ILT eventually led to the proposition that leadership has taken on a larger-than-life role, such that leadership is attributed as the primary driver in organizational performance regardless of environmental influences, as suggested by the idiom *romance of leadership* (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). To measure the degree to which an individual holds a romantic view of leadership, a survey instrument was developed called the Romance of Leadership Scale (RLS; Meindl & Ehrlich, 1988). Consistent with ILT, Meindl (1995) suggests that romance of leadership be used to enhance the follower-centric model of leadership by focusing on socially developed constructs as opposed to leader behaviors.

It has been suggested that researchers continue to search for meaningful interactions with RLS (Gardner, 2003). One question that has largely been ignored to

this point is whether romance of leadership can be thought of in terms of the leader-centric trait theory of leadership as opposed to the follower-centric theory of ILT from which it was derived. Romance of leadership, assuming it to be a deeply held and stable belief, could be considered an individual trait one possesses that is capable of predicting leader emergence among followers. If indeed strong leadership has transcended to a heroic level of achievement in the eyes of certain followers and affects their leadership potential, there lies an implication of how beliefs in leadership influence leader emergence. Since research has yet to investigate the romance of leadership construct as a leader emergence predictor, this line of reasoning warrants attention.

The purpose of this paper is to examine whether such a link between romance of leadership and leader emergence exists. To test this proposition, a sample population was studied from a military leadership development program for senior enlisted personnel. The school's 406 students were broken into 28 separate groups, or flights, each led by an instructor. Data was obtained by measuring romance of leadership, control variables, and two separate leader emergence indicators.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **Leader Emergence**

An emergent leader can be defined as a product of “interactions within the group that arouse expectations that he or she, rather than someone else, can serve the group most usefully by helping it to attain its objectives” (Bass, 1990, p. 16). Generated from group interactions and consensus as opposed to an organizational chart, emergent leadership is distinct from formally appointed positions of leadership. While it seems that leader emergence would be a separate construct from leader effectiveness, an individual informally rising to become a leader is interpreted by some as being effective and thus grouped together (e.g., Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). As is the case with predicting leader effectiveness, the ability to predict leader emergence is a popular topic of interest for researchers due to the benefits of increased organizational performance (Anderson & Schneier, 1978) or giving those with potential the opportunity to demonstrate leadership capability (Kolb, 1999).

Leader emergence literature follows a similar pattern to general leadership literature, modeled as a function of individual traits (see below), a behavioral phenomena (e.g., Wolff, Pescosolido, & Druskat, 2002), or simply the fulfillment of follower perceptions (e.g., Keller, 1999). Leader emergence has been studied in student groups (e.g., Kolb, 1998), work teams (e.g., Taggar, Hackett, & Saha, 1999) and as a non-linear dynamic model (e.g., Guastello, 2007). As mentioned previously, trait methodology has been shown to indicate strong relationships with leader emergence.

## **Trait Approaches to Leader Emergence**

While a majority of trait literature focuses on leadership performance, others have attempted to identify traits that predict leader emergence. A significant volume of research has been published on the topic (e.g., Dobbins, Long, Dedrick & Clemons, 1990; Judge & Cable, 2004; Kolb, 1999; Neubert & Taggar, 2004; Smith & Foti, 1998). Early trait theory research by Mann (1959) and Stogdill (1948) failed to produce a concise list of traits strongly associated with leadership and was interpreted as lacking empirical support (Dobbins et al., 1990). The popularity of trait approaches for leadership (and leader emergence) rebounded under the suggestion that researchers over-generalized and misinterpreted the results of early findings and applied trait theories to performance instead of leader emergence (Lord, DeVader, & Alliger, 1986). In fact, many subsequent studies of various traits such as gender (Neubert & Taggar, 2004), personality (Judge et al., 2002), self-monitoring (Eby, Cader, & Noble, 2003), etc have suggested a link with leader emergence and will be discussed below.

***Gender.*** Trait leadership research has often examined gender for identifying emergent leaders, presumably to validate the notion of the “glass ceiling” preventing women from achieving the same degree of career success as men (Neubert & Taggar, 2004; Kolb, 1999; Moss & Kent, 1996; Kent & Moss, 1994). Moss and Kent (1996) and Kolb (1999) found that gender role was a more significant predictor of leader emergence than gender, suggesting that stereotypical gender *behavior* is more significant than the trait itself. In fact, Moss and Kent (1996) found a strong correlation between masculine behavior and leader emergence without a significant correlation between gender and leader emergence.

***Physical Attributes.*** Other studies have examined different physical traits and their usefulness in predicting leader emergence (Judge & Cable, 2004; Atwater, Dionne, Avolio, Camobreco, & Lau, 1999). Judge and Cable (2004) and Atwater et al. (1999) found physical height and physical fitness, respectively, influences leader emergence. Similar to gender studies, both show underlying aspects that suggest behavior associated with a given trait may be a significant predictor of leader emergence. Judge and Cable (2004) found that height was also related to social-esteem while Atwater et al. (1999) found correlation between physical fitness and self-esteem. These findings imply that physical traits influence the confidence level of individuals and generate behaviors associated with leader emergence.

***Mental Ability.*** The aforementioned analysis of Lord et al. (1986) revisiting early trait theory studies showed significant association between intelligence and leadership. Work by Mann (1959) reported a positive correlation in 88% of 196 relations. Intelligence has also shown significant correlation with leader emergence when included as part of a multi-factor “pattern approach” model of leadership emergence (Smith & Foti, 1998).

***Personality.*** Personality factors are perhaps the most common traits to be used in literature. A meta-analysis by Judge et al. (2002) using a five-factor model (commonly referred to as the “Big Five” personality model) found extraversion to be the strongest correlate with leadership, with conscientiousness and openness to experience having significant correlations as well.

Self-monitoring has been popularly identified as a trait in predicting leader emergence (Eby et al., 2003; Dobbins et al., 1990; Garland & Beard, 1979), suggesting

that those who adapt their behavior in accordance with a particular group setting will better meet the needs of the group and therefore emerge as leaders. However, moderating factors such as the organizational context of a group (Kolb, 1998) and group need for task-oriented behavior (Eby et al., 2003) suggest that self-monitoring may not be the “key trait” in predicting leader emergence as earlier studies suggest (e.g., Dobbins et al., 1990).

Another personality trait that has shown potential in predicting leader emergence is locus of control (Anderson & Schneier, 1978; Johnson, Luthans, & Hennessey, 1984). This construct is defined by the degree to which an individual believes his or her behaviors, attitudes, and capacities can affect outcomes (Rotter, 1966). Those with an internal locus of control believe that outcomes are largely contingent upon personal decisions and actions while those with an external locus of control tend to attribute outcomes to other factors such as luck, fate, or environmental circumstances. Internals have been observed to be more likely to emerge as a leader in groups without a formally designated leader (Anderson & Schneier, 1978). The same study found groups led by internals exhibited superior performance in their assignments as well as members giving higher ratings to the leadership performance of internals. Internal locus of control has been shown to account for variance in overall effectiveness and productivity (Johnson et al., 1984), behavior that other researchers would likely ascribe as leading to leader emergence (Smith & Foti, 1998; Wolff et al., 2002). A possible explanation is that individuals who believe they can control outcomes will be more motivated in situations they perceive as dependent on skill, such as tasks to be accomplished within an organization (Rotter & Mulry, 1965).

A different approach suggesting a link between the locus of control trait as a leader emergence predictor is to view it as a moderating factor in the quality of leader-member exchanges. Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX; Graen & Novak, 1982) identifies quality interaction between a leader and subordinate as a major influence on subordinate performance. The argument of locus of control moderating LMX is that internally-focused individuals will feel a greater sense of control of their destiny and will be more likely to seek out quality interaction with their superiors. LMX suggests this will lead to higher job performance and, in turn, a greater chance for emerging as a leader. One study confirmed the relationship (Martin, Thomas, Charles, Epitopaki, & McNamara, 2005), while another did not (Phillips & Bedeian, 1994). One possible explanation offered by Phillips and Bedeian (1994) was the unique environment of the study, where a labor shortage in the career field of the participants may have caused other factors to be more significant moderators of LMX.

### **Summary of the Trait Approach to Emergent Leadership**

Researchers have been able to account for variance in leader emergence by studying traits. The large number of traits shown to affect leader emergence, such as demographics (gender, appearance), personality, self-monitoring, locus of control, etc, somewhat mirrors the results obtained from early trait theory research-- that the list of traits isn't concise but can be aggregated to produce a consistent capability of predicting leader emergence. Given the diverse list of factors involved, it stands to reason that there may be additional traits that have yet to be fully explored that could further enhance the trait theory of leader emergence.

Previous research derives relationships directly from traits themselves or by

extending traits into behavioral patterns that people perceive as leader-like qualities (e.g., gender role, Moss & Kent, 1996). When looking at leader emergence, some researchers have categorized traits such as personality as nothing more than social contributions that facilitate group interaction (Guastello, 2007). It therefore stands to reason that any trait that affects how an individual behaves in a group setting is likely to correlate with his or her chances of emerging as a leader. An example of this kind of behavioral influence can be seen with locus of control, as individuals believing they can control outcomes show increased motivation to “take charge” of a situation and exhibit performance qualities that group members attribute to leaders (Johnson et al., 1984).

An interesting element in trait leadership literature has begun to surface; Kolb (1999) noted in her gender role study that subjects’ “attitude towards leadership” as measured by her own scale (Kolb, 1997) produced a higher correlation with leader emergence than gender, the focal point of her trait theory studies. Her scale is a five-point, self-report measure that measures the degree to which an individual desires to take charge of a group. A high score indicates a motivation to “step up” and become a leader in a leaderless group. In general terms, it appears that an individual’s view of leaders (and the inspiration to become one), could possibly affect his or her likelihood of becoming a leader themselves. Expanding this concept further, an individual’s view on the importance of leaders to the success or failure of an organization could also generate behavior conducive to leader emergence. Schilling (2007) examined a similar question, showing partial support for individual leadership attributions affecting organizational or group outcomes, with extreme leadership attributions labeled as *romance of leadership* (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985).

## **Romance of Leadership**

Romance of leadership was introduced as a component of Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT; Eden & Leviatan, 1975), a follower-centric view divergent from trait theory that defines leadership as the fulfillment of followers' preconceived ideas as to the qualities and behaviors a leader should possess (Eden & Leviatan, 1975). Romance of leadership is leadership taking an extreme, larger-than-life role in the minds of followers to the extent that leadership is attributed as the primary driver in organizational performance, regardless of environmental influences (Meindl et al., 1985). Exploratory studies of the romance of leadership concept have confirmed the tendency of individuals to over-emphasize the role of leaders in organizations (Shamir, 1992; Felfe & Petersen, 2007), particularly in situations regarding positive organizational performance (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987). In the Meindl and Ehrlich (1987) study, subjects tended to bestow positive attributes to the leaders of organizations that generated positive results, even when presented with alternative plausible explanations.

To measure the degree to which an individual holds a romantic view of leadership, an instrument was developed called the Romance of Leadership Scale (RLS; Meindl & Ehrlich, 1988). Similar to personality-measuring instruments, the RLS is a self-report measure typically administered to measure an individual's outlook on leaders and how important he/she views leadership as a factor in organizational outcomes. A high score suggests a tendency to look at leaders as heroic figures and leadership in general as the "premier force" (Meindl et al., 1985, p. 79) behind organizations.

In the subsequent decades since the RLS was introduced, researchers have been using the instrument to control for follower bias when studying follower attributions of

leadership performance. The results have been modest at best, and little of the behavioral research addresses the romance of leadership construct from a leader-centric view (e.g., Bligh, Kohles, Pearce, Justin, & Stovall, 2007; Schyns, Felfe, & Blank, 2007; Awamleh & Gardner, 1999). One study found that romance of leadership affects individuals' perceptions of leader effectiveness given a leader's strong or weak speech delivery (Gardner, 2003). Another study found a correlation between speech delivery and leader effectiveness regardless of RLS score (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999), a conflicting result from Gardner (2003). In addition to the need for researchers to continue exploring meaningful interactions with romance of leadership to better understand ILT (Gardner, 2003), no study has yet explored high romance of leadership with followers' likelihood to emerge as leaders.

### **Romance of Leadership as a Leadership Emergence Predictor**

Consistent with follower-based methodology of ILT, Meindl (1995) suggests that romance of leadership be viewed as a model focusing on socially developed constructs as opposed to actual leader behaviors. Therefore previous research has been limited to the crafting of leadership models and validating the attributional notions behind ILT (Den Hartog, House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla, & Dorfman, 1999; Lord & Emrich, 2000). The extent to which an individual holds a romantic view of leadership (and their derived RLS score) may also be thought of as a leader-centric quality capable of indicating future leader emergence or leadership performance, much like a trait such as locus of control.

Romance of leadership is likely to predict leader emergence because it may produce similar behavior patterns as the trait of locus of control in a leaderless group scenario. With locus of control, individuals can emerge as leaders on the belief they can

control outcomes and show increased motivation to fill the role of the leader (Johnson et al., 1984). A similar argument can be made using Kolb's (1997) "attitude towards leadership" scale, with those possessing high motivation to lead a group more likely to emerge as a leader (Kolb, 1999).

It's possible that high-RLS individuals will also show similar motivation to become a leader in the group, not because of an internal locus of control or inclination to lead a group, but because the romantic view they hold of leaders (and the corresponding desirable qualities that are attributed to leaders) will also inspire them to "step up" and become leaders themselves, not at all dissimilar from the natural tendency to mimic behaviors of those held in high regard (Bass, Waldman, Avolio, & Bebb, 1987).

Also, based on the earlier observation of individuals with an internal locus of control thriving in task-oriented situations (Rotter & Mulry, 1965), high-RLS individuals may be motivated to elevate their own level of performance in a leaderless situation because of the perception that a leader is critical to the success of the group. Low-RLS individuals, believing leaders aren't as influential to the outcome, could possibly be more likely to accept a decentralized, democratic work environment and be less likely to demonstrate behaviors that would influence their leader emergence. The following hypothesis is therefore generated to test these assumptions:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals who exhibit a high romance of leadership will be more likely to emerge as a leader, controlling for self-monitoring, locus of control, gender, and extraversion.

In order for a high romance of leadership individual to be motivated to become a leader in a leaderless environment, it's likely that he or she must believe that group outcomes are under personal control, i.e., have an internal locus of control. Without an internal locus of control, individuals who might have otherwise emerged as a leader may not do so because of a perceived lack of ability to significantly affect the success of the group. Locus of control may therefore have a significant moderating effect on the relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence:

Hypothesis 2: Locus of control will moderate the relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence such that an internal locus of control will result in a stronger relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence than an external locus of control.

### **III. Methodology**

#### **Sample Description**

To test the hypotheses presented in the previous chapter, a sample population was studied from a military educational institution for senior enlisted personnel. The student body was competitively selected from the overall enlisted population, with students being drawn from a wide variety of geographic locations and job responsibilities. A majority of the students attending the school had over 15 years of military job experience, and the mean age of the sample was 40.6 years. The racial demographic of the sample population is as follows: 70.1% White, 16.7% Black, 5.7% Hispanic, and 6% other. The sample was 13.1% female, similar to the overall gender demographic of the Air Force (19.58% female; "Service Demographics," 2007).

The school's 406 students were broken into 28 separate groupings or flights, each led by an instructor. Each flight was comprised of 13-17 students, the variation due to limitations in classroom size. Effort was made to assign the students into approximately homogeneous flights, taking into account gender, ethnicity, and job specialty. The students were surveyed once per week over a period of six weeks. Each week's survey consisted of unique content measuring items such as romance of leadership, locus of control, personality, etc.

Surveys were voluntary, and two of the flights opted to not participate in week five, when the romance of leadership instrument was administered. This, along with individual missing data, reduced the individual sample size to  $N = 340$  and the group sample size to  $N = 26$ .

## Measures

**Leader Emergence.** At the end of the six-week instruction period, each student was asked to provide leadership ratings by identifying the top three leaders in their flight. Each flight member ranked who he or she felt were the best leaders, with the top leader receiving a score of five points, and the second and third ranked individuals receiving three and one point(s), respectively. Flight members were not asked to stratify their peers beyond the top three, and zero points were given to all members not receiving a top-three vote. The votes from all flight members were combined into an aggregate score for each individual, and the individuals with the highest overall scores within a flight were considered to have emerged as a leader.

Instructor evaluations of leadership were also obtained as a measure of leader emergence. At the end of the instruction period, each flight instructor was allotted 45 points to distribute among the flight members according to each individual's demonstrated leadership ability during the course. The instructors were given the freedom of distributing points to as many or few flight members as they saw fit, with the restrictions being that no one member could receive more than 15 points and the points must be awarded in five-point increments.

**Romance of Leadership.** During the fifth week, flight members were administered the RLS-B (Meindl, 1990), a 21-item instrument measuring romance of leadership. Survey items were rated on a five-point Likert Scale, with seven of the items reverse-coded. Scores for each statement ranged from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). Reliability for the instrument was .854.

**Control Variables.** As noted in the previous chapter, many studies have used

traits to predict leader emergence. In order to isolate the influence of romance of leadership on leader emergence, traits that have previously been shown as influencing leader emergence were controlled. Four control variables were chosen based on the results from literature: locus of control, self-monitoring, gender, and extraversion.

Locus of control is used for both hypotheses as a control variable and as a moderating variable for hypothesis two. Locus of control was measured by a 29-item pairwise statement survey from Rotter's (1966) instrument. For each item, flight members were given two statements, one describing an internal locus of control and the other an external locus of control, and were asked to indicate which statement he or she agreed with the most. Reliability for the instrument was .72.

Self-monitoring was measured using Snyder and Gangestad's (1986) self-monitoring scale. Flight members were given 18 true/false questions designed to measure the degree to which the member would adapt themselves within a group. Reliability for the instrument was .70.

Gender data was collected from the participants. As mentioned previously, the sample population was mostly male (86.9%), reflecting the overall demographics of a military organization.

Extraversion has been shown to be the most significant predictor of leadership emergence among the "Big Five" personality factors (Judge et al., 2002). Flight members were given 13 adjectives describing extraversion (four of the adjectives were reverse-coded, i.e., describing introversion) and were asked to rate themselves on each adjective using a five-point Likert Scale. Scores for each statement ranged from one (very inaccurate) to five (very accurate). Reliability for the instrument was .89.

## Analysis Techniques

The sample population for the study follows a hierarchical structure, with individuals nested within flights. Traditional statistical techniques are inadequate in modeling hierarchical structures because group variance, as reflected by differences in both slope and intercept among the flights, won't be captured in typical multiple-regression models and will instead be absorbed into the individual error term.

Therefore, a two-level hierarchical linear model (HLM; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992) will be used for analysis. Level one will model individual-level effects of romance of leadership on leader emergence and level two will model flight-level differences in romance of leadership, isolating the individual effect of romance of leadership from potential flight effects.

For hypothesis one, romance of leadership scores will be tested against both the peer ratings given by flight members and flight instructor ratings while controlling for locus of control, self-monitoring, gender, and extraversion (Figure 1). The second level is void of predictor variables, known as a *random-coefficients regression model*. In this model, differences in slope and intercept between flights are taken into account without attempting to predict the cause of the variation. Uncentered variables measured with instruments where a zero-value is meaningless (such as a Likert scale with values one through five) can result in erroneous intercepts in HLM models (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). Therefore, all independent variables in the model will be grand-mean centered. The primary value of interest in this model is  $\beta_1$ , the individual effect of romance of leadership on peer or instructor points.

Level 1:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1*(ROL) + \beta_2*(SM) + \beta_3*(LOC) + \beta_4*(SEX) + \beta_5*(EXTR) + r$$

Y: peer or instructor leadership points

$\beta_0$ : intercept

$\beta_1$ : individual effect of romance of leadership on peer/inst leadership points

$\beta_2$ : individual effect of self-monitoring on peer/inst leadership points

$\beta_3$ : individual effect of locus of control on peer/inst leadership points

$\beta_4$ : individual effect of gender on peer/inst leadership points

$\beta_5$ : individual effect of extraversion on peer/inst leadership points

r: individual-level error

Level 2:

$$\beta_0 = \gamma_{00} + u_0$$

$$\beta_1 = \gamma_{10} + u_1$$

$$\beta_2 = \gamma_{20} + u_2$$

$$\beta_3 = \gamma_{30} + u_3$$

$$\beta_4 = \gamma_{40} + u_4$$

$$\beta_5 = \gamma_{50} + u_5$$

$\gamma_{00}$ : average intercept across the population of flights

$\gamma_{10}$ : effect of romance of leadership on peer/inst points

$\gamma_{20}$ : effect of self-monitoring on peer/inst points

$\gamma_{30}$ : effect of locus of control on peer/inst points

$\gamma_{40}$ : effect of gender on peer/inst points

$\gamma_{50}$ : effect of extraversion on peer/inst points

$u_0, u_1, u_2, u_3, u_4, u_5$ : flight-level errors

**Figure 1. HLM for Hypothesis 1**

Hypothesis two will be tested using the same control variables as hypothesis one: locus of control, self-monitoring, gender, and extraversion (Figure 2).  $\beta_6$ , the coefficient of the individual-level interaction between romance of leadership and locus of control on peer or instructor points, is the primary value of interest.

Level 1:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1*(ROL) + \beta_2*(SM) + \beta_3*(LOC) + \beta_4*(SEX) + \beta_5*(EXTR) + \beta_6*(ROL\_X\_LOC) + r$$

Y: peer or instructor leadership points

$\beta_0$ : intercept

$\beta_1$ : individual effect of romance of leadership on peer/inst leadership points

$\beta_2$ : individual effect of self-monitoring on peer/inst leadership points

$\beta_3$ : individual effect of locus of control on peer/inst leadership points

$\beta_4$ : individual effect of gender on peer/inst leadership points

$\beta_5$ : individual effect of extraversion on peer/inst leadership points

$\beta_6$ : individual-level interaction between romance of leadership and locus of control on peer/inst leadership points

r: individual-level error

Level 2:

$$\beta_0 = \gamma_{00} + u_0$$

$$\beta_1 = \gamma_{10} + u_1$$

$$\beta_2 = \gamma_{20} + u_2$$

$$\beta_3 = \gamma_{30} + u_3$$

$$\beta_4 = \gamma_{40} + u_4$$

$$\beta_5 = \gamma_{50} + u_5$$

$$\beta_6 = \gamma_{60} + u_6$$

$\gamma_{00}$ : average intercept across the population of flights

$\gamma_{10}$ : effect of romance of leadership on peer/inst points

$\gamma_{20}$ : effect of self-monitoring on peer/inst points

$\gamma_{30}$ : effect of locus of control on peer/inst points

$\gamma_{40}$ : effect of extraversion on peer/inst points

$\gamma_{50}$ : effect of interaction between romance of leadership and locus of control on peer/inst points

$u_0, u_1, u_2, u_3, u_4, u_5, u_6$ : flight-level errors

**Figure 2. HLM for Hypothesis 2**

## IV. Results

Descriptive statistics of the variables used in the hypotheses models are given in Table 1. Romance of leadership was not significantly correlated with any of the control variables associated with leader emergence, an indication of discriminant validity.

Therefore, the direct effect of romance of leadership on leader emergence as well as the moderating effect of locus of control on romance of leadership can be isolated.

Bivariate analysis doesn't indicate a relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence, with only self-monitoring, extraversion, and gender correlating with peer and/or instructor points. However, bivariate data does not account for flight (group) variances that may have a significant effect on the results. Additionally, the bivariate correlations don't give the effect of each independent variable while controlling for the other variables. Following the rationale presented in the previous chapter, HLM models are a more appropriate choice for data analysis.

The results of hypotheses one and two using peer points as the leader emergence indicator are given in Table 2. The HLM coefficients were standardized by multiplying each coefficient by the standard deviation of the independent variable and dividing by the standard deviation of the outcome variable (Hox, 2002). Hypothesis one proposed that individuals who exhibited a high romance of leadership were more likely to emerge as a leader and was supported ( $\gamma_{10} = .08, p < .05$ ). Hypothesis two proposed that locus of control moderated the relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence and received partial support ( $\gamma_{60} = .81, p < .06$ ).

**Table 1. Correlations**

	N	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Total Instructor Points	406	3.10	4.82	--							
2. Total Peer Points	406	8.91	10.87	.476**	--						
3. Romance of Leadership	341	3.68	.43	.004	.076	(.85)					
4. Self Monitoring	405	.366	.18	.146**	.198**	-.021	(.70)				
5. Locus of Control	405	.645	.16	.027	.059	.087	.025	(.72)			
6. Gender <sup>a</sup>	406	.870	.34	-.198**	-.077	-.035	.035	.024	--		
7. Extraversion	406	3.15	.94	.147**	.135**	-.026	.371**	.096	-.072	(.89)	
8. RoL_X_LoC	340	2.37	.69	.030	.089	.480**	.008	.909**	.012	.071	--

*Note.* Reliabilities are given in parentheses on the diagonal

<sup>a</sup> 0 = female, 1 = male

\*\* p < .01 (2-tailed)

**Table 2. HLM Analysis of Romance of Leadership and Leader Emergence (Peer Points)**

	Hypothesis 1		Hypothesis 2	
	Raw Coefficient	Standardized	Raw Coefficient	Standardized
Intercept- $\gamma_{00}$	9.07*** (5.22)	--	9.01*** (19.99)	--
Romance of Leadership- $\gamma_{10}$	1.93* (1.04)	.08	1.78 (5.21)	--
Self Monitoring- $\gamma_{20}$	11.48** (3.94)	.19	11.05** (3.97)	.18
Locus of Control- $\gamma_{30}$	3.40 (3.39)	--	3.01 (30.03)	--
Gender- $\gamma_{40}$	-3.82* (2.19)	-.12	-3.39 <sup>†</sup> (2.09)	-.11
Extraversion- $\gamma_{50}$	0.70 (0.79)	--	0.66 (0.80)	--
RoL X LoC- $\gamma_{60}$			12.80 <sup>†</sup> (7.99)	.81

Note. Standard errors are given in parentheses below the raw coefficients

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , <sup>†</sup>  $p < .06$  (1-tailed)

Two control variables, self-monitoring and gender, showed significant correlation with peer ratings ( $\gamma_{20} = .19$ ,  $p < .01$  and  $\gamma_{40} = -.12$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Because of the coding used for the gender variable (0 = female, 1 = male), the negative gender coefficients in the HLM analysis indicate that females were more likely to be identified as emergent leaders than males.

The results of hypotheses one and two using instructor points as the leader emergence indicator are given in Table 3. Hypothesis one was not supported ( $\gamma_{10} = .00$ ,  $p < .48$ ) while hypothesis two was strongly supported ( $\gamma_{60} = 1.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As was the

case with peer points, self-monitoring and gender showed significant correlation with instructor points ( $\gamma_{20} = .12, p < .05$  and  $\gamma_{40} = -.23, p < .01$ ).

**Table 3. HLM Analysis of Romance of Leadership and Leader Emergence (Instructor Points)**

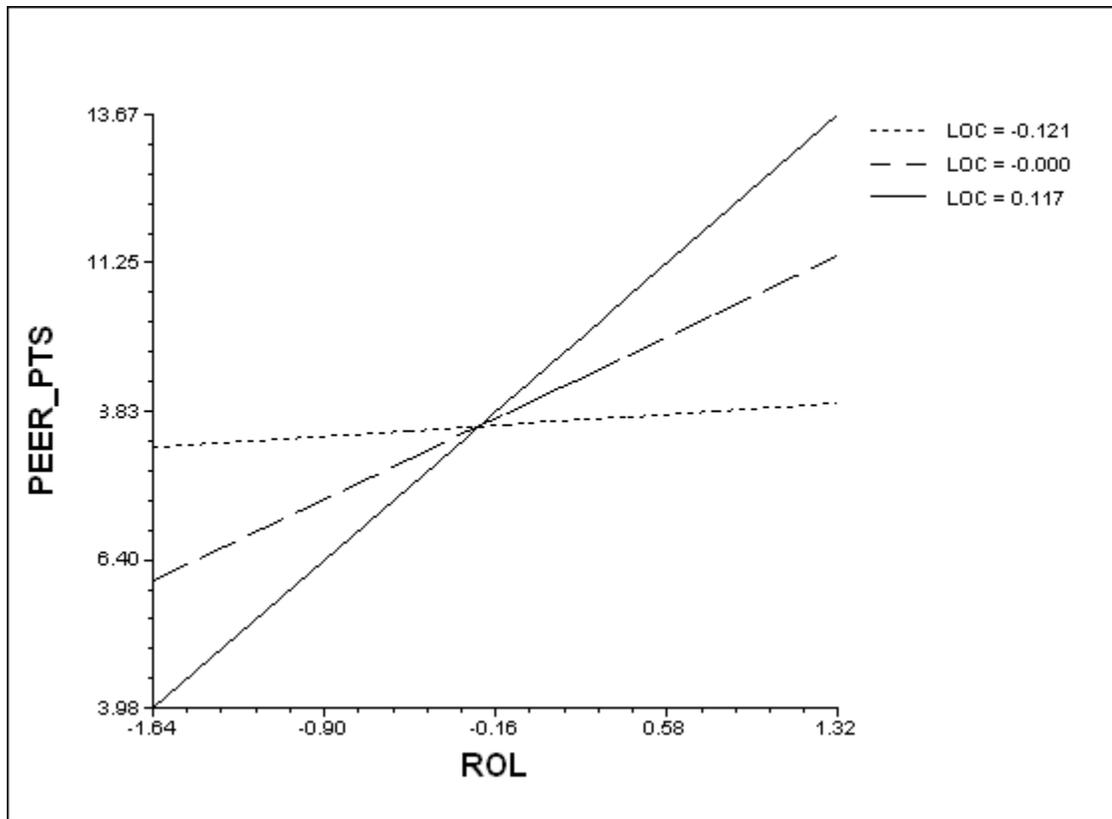
	Hypothesis 1		Hypothesis 2	
	Raw Coefficient	Standardized	Raw Coefficient	Standardized
Intercept- $\gamma_{00}$	3.20*** (2.53)	--	3.10*** (6.49)	--
Romance of Leadership- $\gamma_{10}$	0.03 (0.53)	--	-0.09 (1.89)	--
Self Monitoring- $\gamma_{20}$	3.15* (1.52)	.12	3.17** (1.51)	.12
Locus of Control- $\gamma_{30}$	0.22 (1.65)	--	0.75 (9.26)	--
Gender- $\gamma_{40}$	-3.19** (0.98)	-.23	-3.12** (0.92)	-.22
Extraversion- $\gamma_{50}$	0.35 (0.31)	--	0.36 (0.30)	--
RoL X LoC- $\gamma_{60}$			11.88*** (2.72)	1.70

*Note.* Standard errors are given in parentheses below the raw coefficients  
 \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$  (1-tailed)

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the moderating effect that locus of control had on romance of leadership and leader emergence. Each figure plots peer or instructor points as a function of romance of leadership for low (external) locus of control (25<sup>th</sup> percentile,  $x = .524$ ), the mean ( $x = .645$ ), and high (internal) locus of control (75<sup>th</sup> percentile,  $x = .762$ ).

In Figure 3 (peer ratings,  $p < .06$ ), there appears to be little relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence for individuals with an external locus of control. However, as the locus of control value increases, indicating an internal locus of

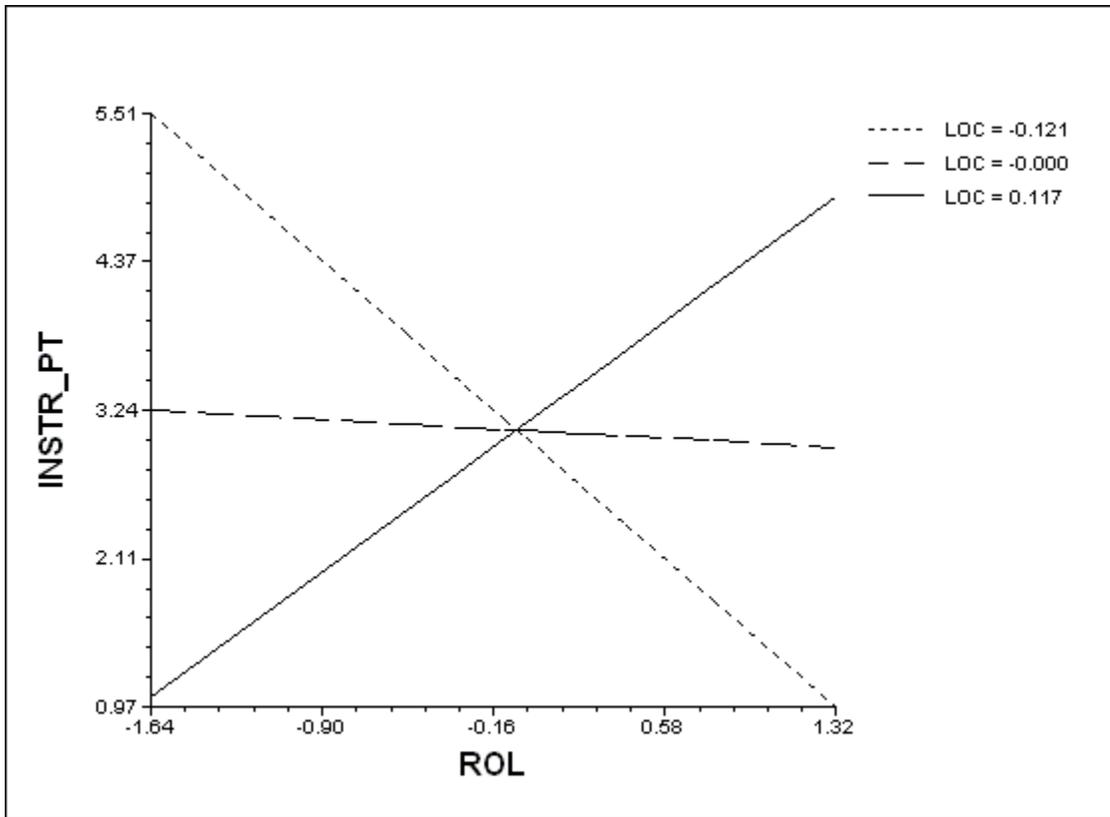
control, the relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence also increases as expected.



**Figure 3. Moderating Effect of Locus of Control on Romance of Leadership (Peer Points,  $p < .06$ )**

In Figure 4 (instructor ratings,  $p < .001$ ), locus of control appears to moderate the relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence to a much greater extent. For individuals with an external locus of control, the relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence is negative. As the locus of control value approaches the mean, the relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence transitions from a negative relationship to no relationship. Finally, individuals scoring high with an internal locus of control reverse the relationship to a

positive one. The severe nature of the moderation, with external locus of control individuals showing negative correlation between romance of leadership and leader emergence, could partially account for the lack of correlation seen in hypothesis one for the case of instructor points ( $\gamma_{10} = .00, p < .48$ ).



**Figure 4. Moderating Effect of Locus of Control on Romance of Leadership  
(Instructor Points,  $p < .001$ )**

## V. Discussion

Romance of leadership has previously been thought of as a follower-centric component of ILT (Meindl, 1995), only useful for controlling for follower attributions of leadership. The purpose of this study was to go beyond the traditional application of romance of leadership and explore the possibility of those with a romantic view of leadership being more likely to emerge as leaders, similar to trait theories of leadership. The argument presented here was that high-RLS individuals may possess a greater desire to become leaders themselves and be motivated to elevate their own level of performance in a leaderless environment because of the perception that a leader is critical to the success of the group. The results of the study provide partial support for this argument, as it was supported in the case when peers were asked to identify who among them emerged as a leader. Apparently, holding a romantic view of leadership may produce behavioral patterns within individuals that influence other group members to perceive those individuals as emergent leaders.

Although romance of leadership predicted leader emergence as evaluated by peers, the hypothesis was not supported in the case where flight instructors were asked to evaluate leader emergence. A possible explanation for the discrepancy between the peer and instructor ratings is in the different perspectives, or information sets, between the two evaluators. For example, instructors had access to each member's academic performance scores, in which high achievement could induce a halo effect (Murphy, Jako, & Anhalt, 1993) and cause a false perception of leader emergence.

Perhaps more importantly, instructors were only observing the behavior of flight members for shorter periods of time in a classroom environment, where flight members could more easily conduct impression management (Sosik, Avolio & Jung, 2002) in front of their instructors. By demonstrating highly desired and expected leader behaviors, individuals could create a false perception of emerging as a leader. Peers spent additional time interacting with one another outside the formal environment of the classroom, and the longer periods of time may have made impressions more difficult to manipulate. If impression management in the classroom included a false romantic view of leadership, individuals with genuinely high romance of leadership could be obscured and not be identified by the instructors.

The control variables used in this study were selected based upon previous literature identifying them as predictors of leader emergence. As was the case with previous studies (e.g., Eby et al., 2003), self-monitoring was shown to be a strong predictor of leader emergence in both ratings. These results support the traditional argument that those who adapt their behavior to the group setting will be more likely to emerge as leaders.

Surprisingly, gender was shown to significantly correlate with leader emergence in the opposite direction from literature; that is, females were more likely to be perceived as emergent leaders than males. This is likely a result of the sample population being comprised from a predominantly male institution such as the Air Force (> 80% male). Females whose prior supervisory job performances were strong enough to overcome this barrier such that they received the honor of selection for senior enlisted education are

likely to possess many leadership traits and behaviors resulting in their identification as leaders.

Also, previous studies have found gender role is a more accurate predictor of leader emergence than gender itself (Moss & Kent, 1996). The gender role construct was not included in this study. Because individuals in the study had many years of work experience in a male-dominated environment, including the females, it's possible that the females in the sample displayed greater male-pattern gender role than females in the general population. Additionally, unisex characteristics of the military dress code may have tempered differences between male-pattern and female-pattern behavior.

The results of the study also support the hypothesis that locus of control moderates the relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence. For individuals with an internal locus of control, the relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence is stronger. This result makes sense because both the romance of leadership and locus of control constructs are based on the perception of individuals having the power to control outcomes. An individual with both an internal locus of control and highly romantic view of leadership would not only be motivated to emerge as a leader based on the belief that he or she can affect group outcomes, but would likely possess additional motivation to emerge as a leader in order to fill a perceived critical need of the group: a strong leader. If an individual believes a strong leader is critical to the success of the group but has an external locus of control, the belief that the group's fate is out of his or her personal control would nullify the motivation to step up and fill the need. This suggests that a perceived ability to affect the success of a

group is a significant prerequisite to romance of leadership influencing an individual's chance to emerge as a leader.

### **Study Strengths**

The study presented here has many factors contributing towards high internal validity, limiting the number of alternative explanations for the obtained results. Subjects were of similar age and had approximately the same amount of relevant work experience. The study was conducted in a controlled environment of a classroom, where factors such as physical location and job responsibilities (as a student) were consistent.

Although the homogeneity of the sample group that contributed internal validity may limit generalization, the study provides a degree of external validity as well. The data was collected from a field study with real incentives versus a laboratory study with arbitrary incentives. The dependent variables used, peer and instructor points, were elements that affected individuals' training reports as well as their chances of becoming a distinguished graduate, a significant positive impact on their careers. It would have been highly unlikely that a flight member with the capability to emerge as a leader would not opt to do so based on a perception that the end reward was frivolous or unimportant.

In addition to internal and external validity, common method bias was not an issue for this study because the independent variable measures were self-report instruments while the dependent variable measures were collected from peers or instructors. Additionally, the two dependent variable measures of leader emergence also reduced the chance of common method bias within the dependent variable measure itself. Although obtained from different sources (peers versus instructors), the significant

bivariate correlation between the two measures (.476,  $p < .01$ ) suggest a high degree of convergent validity.

### **Limitations**

However, the dependent variable measures had limitations that could have affected the results. Because a majority of the members of a flight received few, if any, peer or instructor points, the data doesn't follow a normal distribution. Rather, the dependent variable data is positively skewed, limiting results from normal distribution methodologies. A logarithmic transformation supplemented with an offset to account for zero values in the data could be useful to verify the obtained results.

Another limitation was the ordinal nature of the peer rating system used by the school. The rating system was constructed such that each member was required to identify exactly three individuals within their flight who had emerged as leaders, regardless of the actual perceived number of individuals who emerged as leaders. It would have been possible for a particular flight with only one clearly emergent leader plus two other members to receive the same scores as another flight with three emergent leaders. Also, the stratification given to each first, second, and third place vote was ordinal. Therefore, flight members' votes were separated into two-point increments without regard to the actual perceived discrepancy between the places. In reality, the difference in leader emergence among the three chosen emergent leaders might have been less uniform. An unforced stratification using an interval or ratio scale would have been preferable.

## **Future Research**

It is recommended that future research explore the stability of the romance of leadership construct. Although presented here as an additional element to trait theories of leadership, it is unclear at this point whether romance of leadership is actually a stable trait or if it's an attitude susceptible to change. Some researchers support this assertion by describing romance of leadership as a latent mindset within society (Schilling, 2007). Others contend that leaders influence their followers' degree of romanticized views on leadership by transmitting idealized images of leadership (and themselves) via impression management (Gray & Densten, 2007). Longitudinal studies exploring romance of leadership among a sample population would greatly assist in the resolution of the conflicting views.

Enhancing trait theories of leadership by adding the romance of leadership construct may help clarify a process for identifying individuals who are most likely to emerge as leaders. This should be of particular interest to organizations, as individuals who emerge as leaders may be better suited for formal positions of appointed leadership (Goktepe & Schneier, 1989). Romance of leadership could assist in the process of formally appointed leaders selecting particular subordinates to lead teams or committees; those with a natural tendency to emerge as an informal leader within their working groups could thrive in a scenario in which they were designated the group leader from the beginning. In a participatory work environment, individuals with high leadership emergence potential who are not in official leadership positions can receive the opportunity to demonstrate leadership capabilities (Kolb, 1999). Romance of leadership could also assist in the identification of those who would most benefit from being

selected to attend management or leadership training to further enhance their leadership abilities.

The stability of romance of leadership would affect the implications of this study. If revealed as stable dispositional trait, romance of leadership could be thought of as an indicative trait that potential leaders possess, much like previously studied personality factors such as extraversion and self-monitoring. Practitioners could benefit by including romance of leadership aspects into legacy leadership measurement tools. If malleable, then this study suggests organizations may be able to increase the leadership potential of employees by training them to hold a romantic view of leadership. For organizations such as the Air Force that place a high emphasis on their employees taking charge and acting as leaders throughout all levels of the organization, the development of tools to increase romance of leadership could be a vital addition to the progress towards that goal.

This study explored the merit of expanding the romance of leadership construct from a strictly follower-centric component into a trait-like factor capable of predicting leader emergence. Using a sample population of senior enlisted personnel at a military education institution, hierarchical linear modeling methods supported the hypothesis that individuals who exhibit a high romance of leadership are more likely to emerge as an informal leader in a group environment while controlling for many of the traits previously identified in leader emergence literature. Furthermore, locus of control was shown to significantly moderate the relationship between romance of leadership and leader emergence such that an internal locus of control will result in a stronger relationship, suggesting that the underlying motivational mechanisms associated with an internal locus of control and the motivational mechanisms associated with possessing a

romantic view of leadership are related. The results obtained here suggest that the research and application of the romance of leadership construct be expanded beyond its conventional boundaries.

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