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The challenge of being a young manager: The effects of contingent reward and participative leadership on team-level turnover depend on leader age

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Summary

Effective leadership requires a leader *claiming* as well as team members *granting* the leadership position. Contingent reward and participative leadership may both facilitate this mutual process. However, these behaviors differ in the degree to which they require a leader to have status and be prototypical. Their effectiveness might thus depend on the status-related characteristics of the leader. In this respect, we propose that younger leaders, by deviating from the leader prototype in terms of age, lack a natural status cue, which will determine the effectiveness of these two leadership behaviors in shaping turnover. Two pilot studies ($N = 113$ and 121 individuals) confirm that younger leaders are perceived as less prototypical and to have lower status than older leaders. Examining 83 work teams, we show that leader age differently moderates the effects of contingent reward and participative leadership on time-lagged team turnover. For younger (compared with older) leaders, contingent reward was effective as illustrated by decreased voluntary turnover and increased involuntary turnover, whereas participative leadership, which was associated with increased voluntary turnover and decreased involuntary turnover, was ineffective. These findings point to the importance of incorporating natural status cues of leaders for understanding the effectiveness of different leadership behaviors. Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Keywords: (younger) leader age; contingent reward; participative leadership; team-level (in)voluntary turnover

Introduction

Leaders cannot be successful without followers. According to the theory of leadership identity construction as a social process (DeRue & Ashford, 2010), an individual's identity as a leader is constructed not only by the person himself or herself but also by team members (i.e., through relational recognition) and the organization (i.e., through collective endorsement by peers and upper management). In order to be affirmed as a leader, not only individuals must claim the identity of leader, but also others must grant them this role. Youth is one factor that may increase the difficulty of being affirmed as a leader. Younger leaders cannot rely on the extensive experience and status associated with older age (Avolio, Waldman, & McDaniel, 1990; Kearney, 2008; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999) and are seen as less prototypical for a leader (Junker & van Dick, 2014). As such, they potentially struggle more with getting their team members to accept them and take them seriously. Leader age may thus influence which leadership behaviors are effective.

In line with DeRue and Ashford (2010), we propose that both leader's behaviors and prototypical characteristics such as age affect his or her success in claiming and being granted leadership. Creating mutual influence relations

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with team members is one potentially effective behavioral way for leaders to claim and be granted leadership (Keltner, Van Kleef, Chen, & Kraus, 2008). Mutual influence relations, or mutuality, entail a two-way influence process between leader and followers (Hollander, 1980), which is a core focus of both contingent reward and participative leadership (see, for instance, Hollander & Offermann, 1990; Hollander, 1992). Contingent reward defines leadership behavior that answers high performance or beneficial follower behavior with rewards and recognition in a contingent manner (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), instigating a mutually reinforcing two-way process. Participative leadership describes leaders' seeking of input from followers and their involvement in decision-making (Sagie & Koslowsky, 2000), again denoting a two-way influence. Although both behaviors enable mutuality, we argue that whether contingent reward and participative leadership are effective in promoting leaders' claiming and granting of leadership depends on the degree to which these leaders fit the leader prototype in terms of age.

Having prototypical attributes that match team and other organizational members' beliefs about the characteristics of an effective leader (implicit leadership theory; Lord, 1985; Lord & Maher, 1991) also helps individuals successfully claim and be granted leadership (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). We argue that age is one such prototypical leader characteristic. Societal-based attributions of higher status, competence, and expertise to those who are older (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972) can increase relatively older leaders' success in influencing their teams (Kearney, 2008). In contrast, younger leaders deviate from the age-based leader prototype and may be seen as nonprototypical for a leadership position (see also Ridgeway, 1991). Given the increasing age diversity in organizations (Rudolph & Zacher, 2015) and the fact that age serves as an immediately available and salient cue of status and prototypicality (Montepare & Zebrowitz, 1998; Ridgeway, Berger, & Smith, 1985), it is relevant to understand the role of leader age in effectively leading teams. We thus argue that depending on the leader's age, contingent reward and participative leadership become more or less effective.

Within the present paper, we operationalize leader effectiveness as voluntary and involuntary team-level turnover (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011). Leaving through voluntary turnover and, thus, through one's own decision might be one of the most powerful and consequential actions that team members can take to refuse leadership to an individual and thereby hinder successful leadership influence (Porter & Steers, 1973). By contrast, dismissals of followers that are dysfunctional or continue to perform below par, which constitute an involuntary, equally impactful form of turnover, may reflect an individual's claim of leadership in an organization. With an increasing reliance on team-based work in modern organizations, both voluntary and involuntary turnover are crucial factors influencing organizational and team success (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). The loss of valuable team members threatens a team's functioning and creates considerable replacement costs. Conversely, dismissing dysfunctional team members can be vital for maintaining optimal team functioning.

With this research, we aim to contribute to the literature by providing an empirical test of DeRue and Ashford's (2010) basic distinction between granting and claiming leadership. That is, we examine the idea that leaders' behaviors and demographic characteristics jointly determine the successful granting and claiming of leadership. By studying the interplay of a leader's age and behaviors in the context of implicit leadership theory, we also test whether certain leader behaviors are more or less effective when the leader is nonprototypical on a relevant leader characteristic. Lastly, we expand current research on age in work settings by focusing on younger leaders. Whereas age(ing) research often focuses on the potential liability associated with *older* age (Hirschfeld & Thomas, 2011; Kearney, 2008; Zacher, Rosing, & Frese, 2011), a recent review by Walter and Scheibe (2013) explicitly acknowledged the importance of zooming in on the effects of younger age, in particular of leaders, as well. We highlight that younger age may be a liability by making certain leadership behaviors less effective.

The Leadership Construction Process

Following DeRue and Ashford's (2010) leadership identity framework, effective leadership develops based on "reciprocal and mutually reinforcing identities as leaders and followers [that are] endorsed and reinforced within

a broader organizational context” (p. 627). The behaviors that leaders enact play an essential role in successfully claiming and being granted leadership.

Leader behaviors and leader effectiveness

Leadership behaviors aimed at creating mutuality, such as contingent reward and participative leadership, may increase the chance of effectively claiming and being granted leadership (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Keltner et al., 2008). In contingent reward, mutuality is reflected in a social exchange (Hollander & Offermann, 1990; Homans, 1958) established and shaped during dyadic, reciprocally reinforcing transactions that are “contingent on rewarding reactions from others” (Blau, 1964, p. 6). Building on equity and social exchange reasoning (Pearce & Sims, 2002), contingent reward involves a process in which a leader and team members agree on rewards and compliments in exchange for future efforts (Goodwin, Wofford, & Whittington, 2001). As each party needs to contribute to receive the other party’s contribution, contingent reward facilitates mutuality (“two-way influence;” Hollander, 1980, p. 103). Unlike economic exchange, which typically denotes negotiated rewards without obligations beyond the transaction, social exchange’s reciprocity is thus at the very core of contingent reward (Hollander & Offermann, 1990) and can evolve into trust and loyalty, mutual obligations, and sustainable social relationship patterns (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

By contrast, participative leaders consider team members’ suggestions and solve problems based on consultations and joint discussions (Sagie & Koslowsky, 2000). Through encouraging consultation and soliciting suggestions from team members, participative leaders provide team members with opportunities to influence processes and decisions. By offering to share influence with the team members, relying on their willingness to contribute, and promoting followers’ proactivity, leaders create mutuality (Hollander & Offermann, 1990; Yukl, 2013).

Although evidence reveals that both leadership behaviors can be effective (Bass & Bass, 2008), research points to considerable variability in, and moderators of, their effects (e.g., Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Wagner, 1994). Considering the leaders’ status-related characteristics may help explain these inconsistencies. In this respect, implicit theories of leadership help predict *when* certain leadership behaviors will be effective and thus conducive to leaders’ successfully claiming and team members’ granting of leadership (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). We argue that leader age determines the degree to which a leader matches the leadership prototype and as such could mitigate or enhance these styles’ effectiveness (cf. Howell, Dorfman, & Kerr, 1986).

The moderating role of leader age

People hold culturally formed beliefs that cause them to attribute higher competence and prestige to individuals based on status cues such as older age (Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977; Berger et al., 1972; Ridgeway et al., 1985). Beyond the actual correlation of older age with more job-related experience (Avolio et al., 1990), people associate older age with more knowledge, higher competency, advanced careers, and higher status (Avolio et al., 1990; Kearney, 2008; Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Pelled et al., 1999), all of which support prototypicality perceptions of leaders. We argue that younger leaders do not match the prototype of an effective leader (Bryman, 1987; Eden & Leviatan, 1975; Lord, 1985; Lord & Maher, 1991) and are thus less likely to be awarded status and competence (Ridgeway, 2003). This idea is consistent with the notion of implicit age-graded timetables that prescribe age norms for career steps (Lawrence, 1984; Lawrence, 1988). Early appointments of younger individuals to managerial positions violate age norms, thereby contradicting organizational members’ expectations of what is appropriate for these younger individuals (Vecchio, 1993). Similarly, a status congruence perspective suggests that the incongruence arising from the misalignment of age and career achievement may make it more difficult for younger leaders to influence their team members (Vecchio, 1993). Lastly, research on other nonprototypical leader characteristics (female gender or nonwhite race) illustrates that nonprototypical (compared with prototypical) leaders suffer from lower

expectations of success, enhanced evaluative scrutiny, and a higher likelihood of failure attributions when team functioning decreases (e.g., Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008).

Leader age might thus interact with leader behaviors in determining leader effectiveness. In line with our reasoning, a leader's status, which is closely linked to a leader's prototypicality in terms of age and other status cues (Ridgeway, 2003), has been found to determine whether individuals perceive certain leader behaviors as appropriate or not (Sauer, 2011). Similarly, Kearney (2008) found that some leader behaviors were only effective when leaders were (relatively) older. Finally, leadership style influenced the effectiveness ratings of nonprototypical (compared with prototypical) leaders (e.g., Eagly et al., 1992). Drawing on these ideas, we propose that leader age will determine the effectiveness of contingent reward and participative leadership in influencing team members. Older leaders match the leadership prototype and as such have greater leeway to show a variety of leadership behaviors than do younger leaders. That is, older leaders need to be less concerned with showing behaviors that allow them to claim and be granted their leadership position. In other words, older age in and of itself is less likely to be consequential in shaping the effectiveness of leadership behavior. However, even though younger leaders do not match the implicit leadership prototype, we argue that in order to understand how younger leader age influences the effectiveness of participative leadership and contingent reward, we need to consider which means of influence that these two styles rely on to create the mutuality central to these styles.

Contingent reward, leader age, and team-level turnover

Contingent reward relies on rewards and recognition as means of influence (Bass & Bass, 2008). Given that these are anchored in the leader's position and not in other status-related characteristics such as the leader's age (French & Raven, 1959; Yukl & Falbe, 1991), contingent reward should be relatively more effective for younger, nonprototypical leaders in successfully claiming and being granted leadership than for older, more prototypical leaders. As we argue earlier, involuntary and voluntary turnover are meaningful reflections of effective leadership influence, as they point to whether both effective claiming and granting of leadership have occurred (DeRue & Ashford, 2010).

Granting leadership to younger leaders: voluntary turnover

Porter and Steers (1973) pointed out that decisions to withdraw or not result from "a process of balancing received or potential rewards with desired expectations" (p. 171). In this respect, research shows that contingent reward in the form of reliable recognition, rewards, and feedback enhances commitment (Yammarino, Dubinsky, Comer, & Jolson, 1997) and under some circumstances may reduce voluntary turnover by meeting followers' expectations (Porter & Steers, 1973; Ross & Zander, 1957).

Contingent reward should especially be useful for reducing voluntary turnover in the case of younger (as compared with older) leaders, as it emphasizes the leader's managerial position (which is less necessary in the case of older leaders because of their higher natural status). Contingent reward should help younger leaders build credibility by relying on means of influence that are anchored in the position rather than in status-related attributions made toward the person (Sauer, 2011) and thus legitimate to use for younger leaders. At the same time, it signals to team members that the leader is trustworthy and reliable through engendering a social exchange relationship that contingent reward embodies. This is vital for nonprototypical leaders' success in influencing followers (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Yammarino et al., 1997). The mutuality instigated by contingent reward should thus be especially effective for reducing voluntary turnover among team members (see also Porter & Steers, 1973) when the leader is younger as compared with older, indicating that the team members have granted leadership to their leader. Therefore, we posit the following:

Hypothesis 1a: Contingent reward is associated with less team-level voluntary turnover to the degree that leaders are younger rather than older.

Claiming leadership by younger leaders: involuntary turnover

Contingent reward relies on a consistent allocation of rewards and recognition as a means of influence. This requires contingency in complementing those members who show desirable behavior, while identifying those who compromise team success. Contingent reward enables leaders to monitor team functioning, which is crucial for managing performance (Den Hartog, Boselie, & Paauwe, 2004). Such monitoring delivers systematic information that leaders can use to detect team members threatening team stability (see, for instance, Antonakis & House, 2002) and to dismiss them to maintain a productive team climate.

We propose that contingent reward is a particularly effective way for younger (as compared with older) leaders to credibly claim their leadership positions in the organization. Contingent reward involves functions that allow leaders to dismiss team members when necessary, and the contingency involved in this leadership style contributes to leaders' credibility. Maintaining stable, well-functioning teams is crucial for leaders to succeed (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Compared with a team's success, a team's failure is more frequently attributed to the leader (even when situational factors caused the failure), resulting in team members requesting to replace the leader (Weber, Camerer, Rottenstreich, & Knez, 2001). Given that nonprototypical leaders are under higher evaluative scrutiny and receive lower effectiveness ratings than their prototypical counterparts (Eagly et al., 1992; Rosette et al., 2008), a team's failure will especially harm leaders who do not fit the leader prototype. Ineffective, failing teams can thus seriously endanger younger leaders' current positions and future career prospects in the organization.

A credible claim of leadership by decisively reacting to emerging threats to team functioning is therefore especially important and effective for younger leaders. Contingent reward provides credible claims for leadership that are clear, visible, and consequential (DeRue & Ashford, 2010) as it allows leaders to contingently dismiss stability-endangering team members. Concluding, given younger, nonprototypical leaders' heightened need to decisively react to threats to their positions, contingent reward is relatively more likely to lead to dismissals when employed by younger as compared with older leaders (assuming that leaders are aware of what is beneficial for them and [can] act accordingly). Therefore, we posit the following:

Hypothesis 1b: Contingent reward is associated with more team-level involuntary turnover to the degree that leaders are younger rather than older.

Participative leadership, leader age, and team-level turnover

Participative leadership draws on a form of influence that requires team members' recognition, appreciation, or even identification with the leader (Bass, 1960; Sauer, 2011; Yukl & Falbe, 1991). Attributions of status, experience, and competence to the leader facilitate the latter aspects (e.g., Sauer, 2011). Younger, nonprototypical leaders lack this status. We thus propose that because the mutuality promoted by participative leadership depends on the presence of status-related characteristics other than the leader's position, participative leadership is less effective for younger as compared with older leaders in claiming and being granted leadership.

Granting leadership to younger leaders: voluntary turnover

Employing participative leadership could potentially help leaders obtain team members' approval and commitment, resulting in fewer decisions to quit (e.g., Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003). Participative leaders consult with team members and solicit their input, which allows team members to influence outcomes (e.g., decisions). Although in principle participative leadership could thus be effective in reducing voluntary turnover, we propose that this will not be the case when leaders are younger as compared with older. That is, in contrast to the relatively favorable effects of contingent reward for younger leaders, we expect younger leader age to hinder the effectiveness of participative leadership for reducing voluntary turnover.

Unlike older leaders, younger leaders cannot rely on the age-based attributions of status and competence (Ridgeway et al., 1985) that would promote others' recognition or identification with the leader (Kearney, 2008). Therefore, participative leadership, which requires these attributions, is unlikely to be effective for younger leaders (e.g., Bass & Bass, 2008; Sauer, 2011). As a result, when employed by younger (as compared with older) leaders, team members may not recognize participative leadership as a legitimate invitation to create mutuality but as an inexperienced leader's request for advice and informational resources. Team members are likely to interpret the questions asked and the doubts and uncertainties raised by a younger, nonprototypical leader during consultations and joint decision-making as signals of low competence and experience (see, for instance, Bass & Bass, 2008; Tannen, 1995). In other words, when leaders are younger, their attempts to develop mutuality through participation may be attributed to a lack of competence and a need to rely on knowledgeable others rather than offers to accord team members certain decision latitude (Sagie & Koslowsky, 2000). Team members who do not see the leader's participative leadership as legitimate and do not consider it as appropriate behavior of their leader will be less willing to cooperate with and accept him or her (Yukl, 2013). Consequently, this will make team members more inclined to quit as an expression of their lack of granting leadership.

We therefore propose that given team-member attributions of lowered status and competence to younger as compared with older leaders, younger leader age will undermine participative leadership's effectiveness, hindering that team members grant leadership to their leaders, which will be visible in higher voluntary turnover. Consistent with this argument, a study by Sauer (2011) revealed that participative leadership resulted in further status loss and lower effectiveness when used by low-status leaders. In sum, when exhibited by younger (as compared with older) leaders, participative leadership should make voluntary turnover among the team members more likely. Therefore, we posit the following:

Hypothesis 2a: Participative leadership is associated with more team-level voluntary turnover to the degree that leaders are younger rather than older.

Claiming leadership by younger leaders: involuntary turnover

Participative leaders ask for advice and suggestions and try to solve work issues through joint decision-making (Sagie & Koslowsky, 2000). When all team members are interdependent in the context of collaborative decision-making, an individual member's performance is less easily quantifiable, and accountability is naturally lowered (Hollenbeck et al., 2002). Participative leadership is thus likely to make monitoring, evaluating, and distinguishing individual members difficult for leaders (Humphrey, Hollenbeck, Meyer, & Ilgen, 2007; Walton, 1985). As a result, participative leaders will have difficulty detecting potentially subtle sources of dysfunctional behavior or low performance. Participative leaders are also likely to lose credibility and be considered manipulative and untrustworthy when blaming others for outcomes of joint decision-making (and dismissing people on this basis) as they were the ones asking for input and allowing voice in the first place (see, for instance, Hollander & Offermann, 1990; Yukl, 2013). Hence, they will not be particularly focused on monitoring and evaluating team-member functioning and performance. Therefore, participative leadership restricts a leader's opportunity to influence team members by actively managing performance and dismissing them when necessary. However, we propose that this is especially the case when leaders are younger as compared with older.

When younger, nonprototypical and thus low-status leaders employ participation as an influence strategy, team members may believe that the leader heavily relies on the team's knowledge and decisions. Similarly, team members are more likely to perceive younger leaders who seek to build mutuality through participative leadership as "member[s] among equals" rather than as leaders (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 461; Sauer, 2011). Consequently, team members may take over vital leadership functions (e.g., have the final say in decisions), further consolidating their equal status to the leader (Bass, 1960) and further lowering younger participative leaders' control over decisions and collective output (e.g., Hollander, 1992; Yukl, 2013). This will make

monitoring and evaluating team members more difficult and more unsuitable (monitoring and uncovering potential dysfunctions of “equals” using the collective output would be considered particularly manipulative), limiting opportunities to dismiss dysfunctional team members. In sum, when employed by younger (as compared with older) leaders, participative leadership is less likely to lead to dismissals. Therefore, we posit the following:

Hypothesis 2b: Participative leadership is associated with less team-level involuntary turnover to the degree that leaders are younger rather than older.

In the following sections, we report on two pilot studies (Studies 1a and 1b) that we conducted to examine the underlying idea that younger leaders are perceived as less prototypical than older leaders. After presenting these two scenario studies, we include the main study (Study 2), in which we test our hypotheses using an organizational sample.

Pilot Studies 1a and 1b

One of the core arguments in our reasoning is that younger leaders are perceived as less prototypical than older leaders. However, even though multiple theories support this reasoning, there is only very limited empirical evidence that individuals view a younger leader as less prototypical. In order to provide a test of this idea, we conducted two online scenario studies in which we experimentally manipulated leader age.

Methods

To approximate the setting of our organizational study (i.e., Study 2), we used a scenario describing the perspective of a team member who was supervised by a team leader in a customer communication organization. We randomly manipulated leader age to be either 23 or 48 years, reflecting the range of leader age in our organizational sample in Study 2.

In Study 1a, we manipulated age using a written statement: “Your team leader is 23 years/48 years.” Manipulation checks revealed that all but one participant, who was not included in the data analysis, correctly indicated the age of the team leader in the scenario. In Study 1b, participants saw a picture of a male person whose image was manipulated to appear either younger or older looking. We used two different sets of validated pictures of a younger-looking male face that was transformed into an older-looking equivalent using PSYCHOMORPH software (Spisak, Grabo, Arvey, & van Vugt, 2014).¹ In line with Spisak et al. (2014), we used male faces to exclude sex as a confounding factor. Replicating their findings, our participants perceived the younger-looking faces to be significantly more attractive than the older-looking faces. We thus controlled for attractiveness of the displayed individual in the subsequent analyses of this study.² After the manipulation, participants rated aspects related to prototypicality of the team leader in the scenario, namely whether they perceived the leader to be prototypical (yes versus no) and to have high status on a 7-point Likert scale (higher numbers indicated higher ratings; Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984).

Study 1a is based on a sample of 113 students (mean age: 19.5 years; 79.6 percent female); Study 1b draws on a sample of 121 students (mean age: 20.7 years; 75.2 percent female). There were no differences in participant age or gender in the younger-leader versus older-leader condition.

¹Seventeen individuals who did not correctly answer the question regarding the displayed individual’s older or younger age (no differences in age or gender from the rest of participants) were not included in the final sample.

²Results remained unchanged without attractiveness as a control variable.

Results

As expected, the younger leader was perceived to be less prototypical than the older leader in Study 1a, $\chi^2(1, n=113)=13.88, p < .001$; 30.09 percent (12.39 percent) of participants perceived the younger (older) leader as nonprototypical, and 20.35 percent (37.17 percent) perceived the younger (older) leader as prototypical. Additionally, participants perceived the younger leader ($M=3.39; SD=1.24$) to be of lower status than the older leader ($M=4.14; SD=1.10$), $F(1, 112)=11.79, p < .01, \eta^2=0.10$. Study 1b replicated the results of Study 1a. The leader was significantly less likely to be perceived as prototypical when participants saw a younger compared with an older face, $\chi^2(1, n=121)=7.67, p < .01$; 33.88 percent (26.45 percent) of participants perceived the younger (older) leader as nonprototypical, and 9.92 percent (29.75 percent) perceived the younger (older) leader as prototypical. Additionally, participants perceived the leader in the younger (compared with the older) leader condition to be of lower status (younger: $M=2.98; SD=1.07$; older: $M=3.40; SD=0.98$), $F(1, 120)=7.96, p < .01, \eta^2=0.06$. In sum, both pilot studies support our reasoning that younger team leaders are perceived to be less prototypical and of lower status than older leaders. Given the experimental nature of the two pilot studies, no other factors than the age manipulation could have influenced the results.

Additionally, we asked the participants in both pilot studies to indicate what age leaders in organizations would typically have. A typical leader was estimated to be 38.60 years on average ($SD=6.29$) in Study 1a and 40.51 years ($SD=6.86$) in Study 1b and thus considerably older than the age of the leaders representing the lower end of the age range (23 years) in Study 2, $t(112)=26.37, p < .001$, and $t(120)=28.08, p < .001$. This further supports our notion that the younger leaders in our organizational sample deviate from the age that is deemed prototypical of leaders in organizations.

Study 2

Research context

We tested our hypotheses with data collected in a large customer sales and service organization located in Germany. Teams were the basic work units in this organization. According to interviews with supervisors and the personnel department, the team members interacted frequently, worked on joint projects in the realm of customer sales campaigns or service improvements, and therefore truly constituted teams. The strong emphasis on collaboration in teams required a focus on the team rather than the individual level. Supervisors interacted frequently and collaborated closely with their teams, allowing them to influence their team members and the decisions regarding whether team members' contracts were canceled or not extended. In the customer communication branch in general and this company in particular, turnover rates were relatively high. This made turnover a crucial study variable for the company.

To show that leadership influenced turnover in teams, we needed teams to be stable over the study period. Given frequent restructures of segments comprising multiple teams, the organization only allowed us to measure turnover as an objective team outcome over a time frame of 2 (rather than the originally planned minimum of three) months. Naturally, this resulted in relatively low turnover numbers for the 2-month period, which were still comparable with those rates established in other studies (e.g., Nishii, 2013; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Numbers showing the organization's performance at the time of the study and beyond revealed a constant positive development. Steady growth implies hiring rather than firing employees. Downsizing due to economic necessity, which is beyond a leader's control, is thus not a likely alternative explanation for any involuntary turnover in the studied teams. Hence, we can assume that low performance or otherwise dysfunctional behavior was a driver of dismissals.

Sample and procedure

Study 2 includes 690 individuals grouped in 83 customer service and customer sales teams and led by 83 supervisors. We gathered data as part of a broader employee survey. Three sources provided data. The Human Resources (HR) department delivered leader age. The team members assessed contingent reward and participative leadership in an online survey. To preserve statistical power, we imputed missing values (between 0.1 and 1.2 percent) in the survey responses using an expectation–maximization algorithm (Dempster, Laird, & Rubin, 1977; Gevers & Peeters, 2009) in SPSS (IBM CORPORATION, ARMONK, NY, USA). Analyzing our data without the imputed values did not alter our findings and conclusions. We gathered objective team-turnover information over 2 months after the team-member survey.

Team sizes ranged from two to 35 ($M = 11.17$, $SD = 7.06$). Team members' average length of collaboration was more than 18 months ($SD = 17.78$). Sixty-five percent of the participating team members were female, and the mean age was 34.77 years (range: 18–62). With respect to their training level, 23.4 percent of the participating team members had graduated from university, 65.0 percent had performed an apprenticeship, and 11.6 percent had received no training. Of the team leaders (57.8 percent female), 47.0 percent had graduated from university, 38.6 percent had performed an apprenticeship, and 4.8 percent had not completed any training (from 9.6 percent of the leaders, we received no information about their training). On average, leaders had supervised their teams for more than 16 months ($SD = 11.49$).

Our final sample only consisted of teams from which data from 50 to 100 percent³ of the members ($M = 76.77$ percent) and objective information on leader age were available and which performed customer service and sales tasks with medium to high performance transparency requirements toward the end customer. Only a few leaders were responsible for more than one team, which made this second (supervisor) level existent for only a small number of teams. We thus could not conduct multilevel analyses to account for potential influences of the supervisor-level variance on the results. To avoid systematic, but uncontrollable, second-level variance, only the primary teams of leaders with multiple teams were included in this dataset.

Measures

We created German versions of all the scales except contingent reward leadership (see later) by means of the widely used translation–back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1980).

Contingent reward leadership

We assessed contingent reward with a four-item German version (Heinitz & Rowold, 2007) of a scale by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990). On a response scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*), respondents were for instance asked to indicate how often they felt that their leader “commends me when I do a better than average job” and “gives me special recognition when my work is very good.” Cronbach's alpha was .86.

Participative leadership

We used four items from Indvik (1986, 1988) that were based on House and Dessler (1974) to measure participative leadership. For instance, team members indicated the frequency of the following behaviors: “My supervisor consults with subordinates when facing a problem” and “My supervisor listens receptively to subordinates' ideas and suggestions.” The response format ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Cronbach's alpha was .82.

Leader age

The HR department provided objective information on team leaders' age in years. We used this absolute measure of leader age (range: 23–48) to operationalize younger (as compared with older) leader age.

³In line with Kozlowski and Bell's (2003) definition of teams as comprising at least two members, full participation was required for teams with only two members in order to be included in this study.

Team-level turnover

Within 2 months after having collected team-member ratings, we gathered objective data on team turnover from company records. Involuntary turnover was operationalized as the proportion of members on a team leaving the company because of employer-induced dismissal or lapse notice. Voluntary turnover was the proportion of team members leaving the company by their own decision (Jackson et al., 1991). The company provided both types of turnover at the team level, with no possibility to link turnover data to singular team members, and thus, relations could only be analyzed at the team level.

Control variables

We controlled for team size and task interdependence because prior research has shown their potential impact on group processes and outcomes (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Pelled et al., 1999). Task interdependence was measured by three items adapted from Van der Vegt and Janssen (2003, e.g., “I need to collaborate with my colleagues to perform my job well,” 1 = *completely disagree* and 5 = *completely agree*, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .82$). To ensure that results were independent of a team’s age composition, we controlled for mean age (based on the company’s archival data) and age diversity. In line with Kearney and Gebert (2009), we operationalized age diversity as the Blau’s (1977) index of heterogeneity (based on age categories of 5-year increments; range from 0 to 1), adjusted for differing team sizes (Biemann & Kearney, 2010; Harrison & Klein, 2007). We added leader gender to ensure that not another status-relevant characteristic was responsible for the effects (Ridgeway, 2001).

Data aggregation

As we conceptualized our constructs at the team level, we computed median $r_{wg[J]}$ values (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1984) to detail the degree of agreement between the individuals within teams. We also calculated intraclass correlation coefficients (Bliese, 2000) to indicate the ratio of between-group to total variance (ICC[1]) corrected for the average team size (Biemann, Cole, & Voelpel, 2012), the respective F -tests, and the reliability of team members’ average ratings (ICC[2]). These values were 0.76 ($r_{wg[J]}$), 0.09 (ICC[1]), $F(82, 607) = 1.84$, $p < .001$, and 0.46 (ICC[2]) for contingent reward; 0.84 ($r_{wg[J]}$), 0.18 (ICC[1]), $F(82, 607) = 2.78$, $p < .001$, and 0.64 (ICC[2]) for participative leadership; and 0.69 ($r_{wg[J]}$), 0.08 (ICC[1]), $F(82, 607) = 1.72$, $p < .001$, and 0.42 (ICC[2]) for task interdependence. Hence, agreement was acceptable for aggregation to the team level (George, 1990; Glick, 1985; James et al., 1984).

Confirmatory factor analyses

We conducted confirmatory factor analyses to examine the hypothesized three-factor structure of contingent reward, participative leadership, and task interdependence. Supporting our proposed factor structure, our hypothesized model provided a good fit to our data ($\chi^2_{[41]} = 125.26$; $RMSEA = 0.06$; $CFI = 0.98$; $SRMR = 0.04$). By contrast, a two-factor model combining contingent reward and participative leadership into one factor ($\chi^2_{[43]} = 608.25$; $RMSEA = 0.14$; $CFI = 0.84$; $SRMR = 0.08$) and another alternative model combining all three measures into one factor ($\chi^2_{[44]} = 1390.63$; $RMSEA = 0.21$; $CFI = 0.63$; $SRMR = 0.14$) yielded a significantly poorer fit to the data ($\chi^2_{[2]} = 482.99$, $p < .01$, and $\chi^2_{[3]} = 1265.37$, $p < .01$).

Results

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations,⁴ and correlations among the study variables. Of the main study variables, only contingent reward and participative leadership were positively associated. To test our hypotheses

⁴The sample studied here contains either teams with no or very limited turnover or teams with considerable turnover. Including both ends of the continuum represents meaningful variance that is also in line with turnover established in other team research (e.g., Nishii & Mayer, 2009). However, an outlier analysis indicated that three teams (one for voluntary turnover and two for involuntary turnover) were further than three standard deviations away from the mean. Reanalyzing the data without these teams resulted in a similar, albeit weaker, pattern of results.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Team size	11.17	7.06									
2. Task interdependence	3.51	0.51	-0.25*								
3. Mean team age	34.56	4.47	0.21 [†]	-0.03							
4. Age diversity	0.79	0.18	0.32**	-0.18	0.35**						
5. Leader gender	0.42	0.50	-0.02	0.12	-0.07	-0.05					
6. Contingent reward	3.61	0.48	-0.00	-0.06	0.07	0.33**	0.11				
7. Participative leadership	3.78	0.51	0.08	0.01	0.09	0.27*	0.14	0.67**			
8. Leader age	32.49	5.62	-0.21 [†]	0.28*	-0.09	-0.07	0.22*	-0.06	-0.03		
9. Voluntary turnover	0.05	0.07	0.04	-0.29**	-0.15	0.03	0.05	-0.11	-0.10	-0.03	
10. Involuntary turnover	0.04	0.08	0.03	-0.35**	0.09	0.12	-0.14	0.12	-0.05	-0.21 [†]	-0.04

Note: *N* = 83 teams. Turnover varies between 0.00 and 0.33 (voluntary) and 0.00 and 0.50 (involuntary).

[†]*p* < .10; **p* < .05; ***p* < .01.

positing a moderating effect of leader age on the leadership behavior–turnover link, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses for both turnover forms. Before computing product terms, we standardized our predictor variables. Following Aiken and West (1991), we entered the control variables⁵ (team size, task interdependence, mean team age, age diversity, and leader gender) in the first step, the main variables (contingent reward, participative leadership, and leader age) in the second step, and the interaction variables between contingent reward and leader age and between participative leadership and leader age in the third step.

Supporting Hypotheses 1a and 2a on the interactive effects of contingent reward as well as participative leadership with leader age on voluntary turnover, both interaction terms related significantly to voluntary turnover (Table 2). To further examine the interactive effects, we conducted simple slope analyses at 1*SD* and 1.5*SD* above and below the mean of leader age, as according to our rationale, leadership effects could become more pronounced the younger versus the older that the leaders are. Examining simple slopes at 1*SD* around the mean is merely a convention (Aiken & West, 1991); we might also consider more pronounced levels of the moderator if there is reason to believe that relations may become equally or more strongly manifest at more extreme levels of the moderator. At 1*SD* and 1.5*SD* around the mean of leader age, respectively, the relation between contingent reward and voluntary turnover was negative when leaders were younger (−1*SD*: $\beta = -0.50$, *p* = .02; −1.5*SD*: $\beta = -0.68$, *p* = .02) and nonsignificant when they were older (1*SD*: $\beta = 0.20$, *p* = .38; 1.5*SD*: $\beta = 0.37$, *p* = .20); the relation between participative leadership and voluntary turnover was marginally significantly and significantly positive, respectively, when leaders were younger (−1*SD*: $\beta = 0.41$, *p* = .08; −1.5*SD*: $\beta = 0.59$, *p* = .04), and marginally significantly and significantly negative, respectively, when leaders were older (1*SD*: $\beta = -0.31$, *p* = .09; 1.5*SD*: $\beta = -0.49$, *p* = .04). In conclusion, our results were in general supportive of Hypotheses 1a and 2a (Figure 1).

With respect to the hypothesized interactive effects of contingent reward as well as participative leadership with leader age on involuntary turnover (Hypotheses 1b and 2b), both interaction terms were significant (Table 2). Simple slope tests at 1*SD* and 1.5*SD* around the mean of leader age showed that the relation between contingent reward and involuntary turnover was positive when leaders were younger (−1*SD*: $\beta = 0.63$, *p* < .01; −1.5*SD*: $\beta = 0.83$, *p* < .01)

⁵In line with Becker (2005), we checked whether including only those control variables that significantly predicted the dependent variable (i.e., task interdependence) changed the results. Results remained unchanged when removing all control variables but task interdependence from the analyses.

Table 2. Results of hierarchical regression analyses.

Variable	Voluntary turnover (team)			Involuntary turnover (team)		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<i>Step 1: control</i>						
Team size	-0.02	-0.03	-0.11	-0.09	-0.08	0.01
Task interdependence	-0.30**	-0.31**	-0.38**	-0.35**	-0.31**	-0.27*
Mean team age	-0.17	-0.17	-0.16	0.08	0.08	0.07
Age diversity	0.04	0.10	0.11	0.05	0.03	0.01
Leader gender	0.08	0.10	0.07	-0.09	-0.07	-0.04
<i>Step 2: main effects</i>						
Contingent reward		-0.15	-0.15		0.22	0.21
Participative leadership		-0.02	0.05		-0.20	-0.21
Leader age		0.01	-0.03		-0.11	-0.09
<i>Step 3: interaction</i>						
Contingent reward × leader age			0.34*			-0.40*
Participative leadership × leader age			-0.41*			0.34*
R^2	0.12	0.14	0.22	0.15	0.19	0.26
ΔR^2	0.12 [†]	0.02	0.07*	0.15*	0.04	0.07*
F	2.08 [†]	1.54	1.98*	2.66*	2.12*	2.53*

Note: $N=83$ teams. Standardized coefficients (β s) are reported. Turnover varies between 0.00 and 0.33 (voluntary) and 0.00 and 0.50 (involuntary).

[†] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

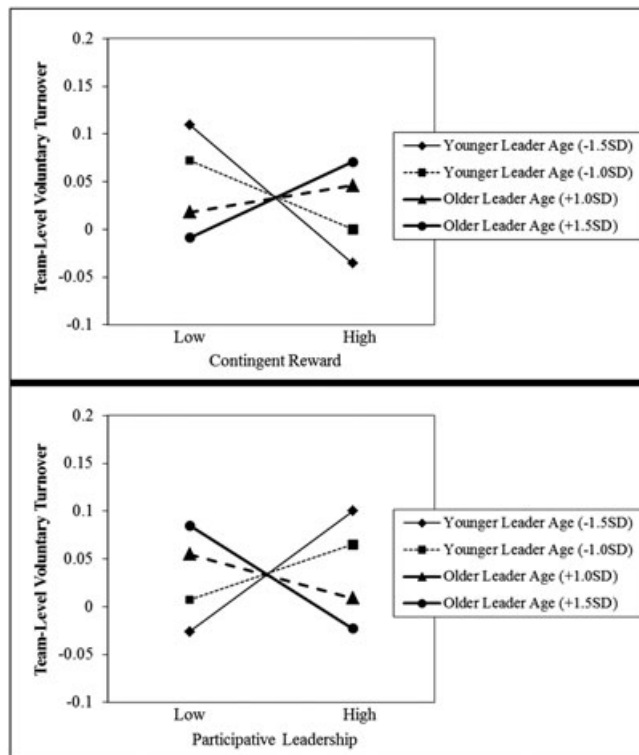


Figure 1. Leader age as moderator of the relationship of contingent reward and participative leadership with team-level voluntary turnover

and nonsignificant when they were older ($1SD: \beta = -0.21, p = .34$; $1.5SD: \beta = -0.42, p = .14$); by contrast, the relation between participative leadership and involuntary turnover was negative when leaders were younger ($-1SD: \beta = -0.50, p = .03$; $-1.5SD: \beta = -0.65, p = .02$) and nonsignificant when they were older ($1SD: \beta = 0.08, p = .65$; $1.5SD: \beta = 0.23, p = .32$). In sum, our results were consistent with Hypotheses 1b and 2b (Figure 2).

Discussion

Effective leadership requires leaders to claim and team members to grant leadership. Certain leadership behaviors, in particular contingent reward and participative leadership, instigate mutuality and may thus help attain this goal. We argue that realizing this increased potential for successful leadership influence depends on an important, yet so far overlooked, nonprototypical leader characteristic: young age. We model and show the following: (i) younger leaders are seen as more nonprototypical than older leaders and (ii) leader behaviors and age codetermine effective influence on team members, as manifested in team-turnover levels. That is, contingent reward, but not participative leadership, becomes more effective in shaping functional turnover levels in teams when the leader is younger. Voluntary turnover was decreased, and involuntary turnover was increased when younger leaders rewarded team members' efforts contingently; the opposite was true when younger leaders employed participative leadership.

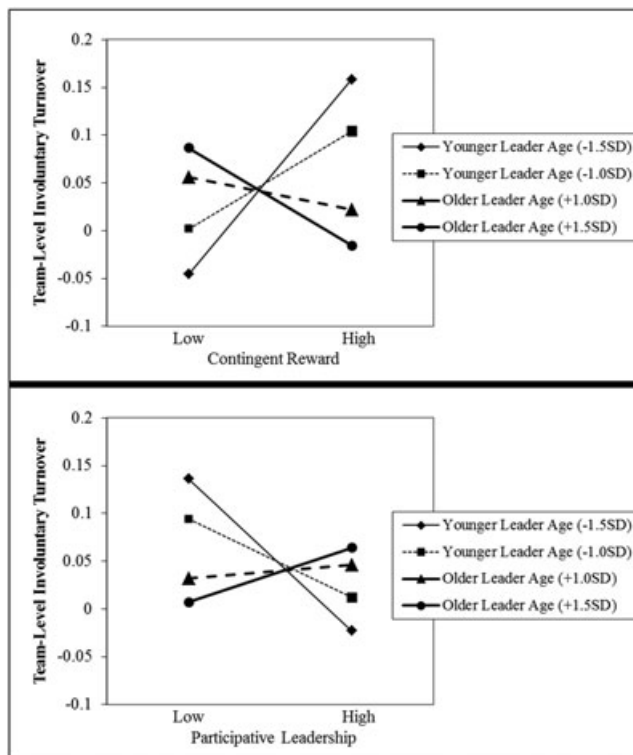


Figure 2. Leader age as moderator of the relationship of contingent reward and participative leadership with team-level involuntary turnover

Implications

Our research contributes to the extant literature in several ways. Connecting the literatures on leadership and turnover, our examination of (in)voluntary turnover as indicators of successful leadership influence provides a first step toward empirically testing the basic tenets of DeRue and Ashford's (2010) leadership identity construction model, namely leadership claiming and granting, in an organizational setting. Modeling successful leadership influence as dependent on approval by both the team and the organizational collective (DeRue & Ashford, 2010), we found that for younger leaders, contingent reward may help accomplish both. Contingent reward facilitates team members' granting of leadership to leaders, reflected by the higher retention of team members, especially so when the leader is younger. Moreover, contingent reward provides opportunities to identify and dismiss team members who might compromise team functioning. Given that avoiding a team's failure is particularly relevant for younger, nonprototypical leaders, contingent reward should also help bolster organizational approval of these leaders.

Providing insights regarding the (universal or situational) effectiveness of leadership behaviors, research shows that both contingent reward and participative leadership positively relate to satisfaction and performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Sagie & Koslowsky, 2000) and correlate markedly positively with each other (Bartol, Martin, & Kromkowski, 2003). When employed by younger (as compared with older) leaders, however, their effects are diametrically opposed. This intriguing finding deserves more attention, given that these styles appear to operate similarly (i.e., by enabling mutuality through the accordance of a certain amount of influence to team members). Indeed, a classification of leader influence as directive and controlling or collaborative and persuasive (Kipnis, 1976) would place both styles within the same influence category (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001), leading to similar predictions regarding their suitability for younger leaders at first sight.

By accounting for a leader's prototypicality in terms of age, it becomes obvious that different ways of establishing mutuality also result in more or less effective leader influence. While our results suggest that establishing mutuality using personal influence as instigated by participative leadership is not suitable when employed by younger, nonprototypical leaders, creating mutuality through contingent rewards that are inherent to the leader's position allows for successful influence of younger leaders. In other words, aligning a leader's behaviors with (a lack of) prototypical characteristics is crucial for leader effectiveness. Therefore, our results confirm and extend notions in leader prototypicality and status research (e.g., DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Kenney, Schwartz-Kenney, & Blascovich, 1996; Sauer, 2011) that leader characteristics and behaviors, and the extent to which they together match others' leadership prototype determine a leader's success. Similarly, these findings illuminate that leader age enhances or diminishes the effects of leader behavior (Howell et al., 1986), depending upon the specific style exhibited.

Our research also answers the call for a more integrated approach to leadership across taxonomic boundaries (e.g., Burke et al., 2006; DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011). Whereas contingent reward, as part of the full range of leadership model (Avolio & Bass, 2004), represents reward-based social exchange (see, for instance, Hollander, 1980; Hollander & Offermann, 1990), participative leadership, as part of path-goal theory (House & Dessler, 1974), conceptualizes mutual influence based on consultation and participation. Going beyond prior research that merely contrasts behaviors *within* taxonomic boundaries (e.g., Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003; Sauer, 2011), our research confirms the formulated need to account for similarities between leader behaviors (e.g., attempts to create mutual influence) regardless of their theoretical origins (DeRue et al., 2011). In addition, our finding that the differential effectiveness of contingent reward and participative leadership only emerges in conjunction with a leader characteristic clarifies the value of overcoming an exclusive focus on either the behavioral or the trait paradigm of leadership.

From this stems another question: Beyond the use of contingent reward or participative leadership, which other behaviors are (in)effective for younger leaders? For instance, passive and active management by exception, which, together with contingent reward, form transactional leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004), should not be effective for younger leaders. Although all three types of transactional leadership rely on position influence, followers will most likely see the use of some form of punishment in management by exception as a dominant leader action that is forced upon them and thus as unacceptable for nonprototypical leaders. In line with this, research has shown that

the “more traditional command-and-control leadership styles” (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 794) such as directive or autocratic leadership are not suitable for nonprototypical leaders to use, given their lower status (Eagly et al., 1992; Morrison & von Glinow, 1990). Not surprisingly, contingent reward and management by exception are only weakly correlated (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Investigating more recent leadership approaches may further augment our understanding of which behaviors are effective for younger (compared with older) leaders. Servant leadership, for instance, is in the range of nondominant, noncontrolling behaviors that could be effective for younger, nonprototypical leaders. However, because servant leadership emphasizes a leader’s ideals and personal values and involves aspects such as humility, it may rely more on personal than on position influence (see, for instance, Greenleaf, 1977). By drawing on personal influence, this style might be less suitable for younger leaders as they may lack the team members’ respect and admiration. Given its “submissive” tone, servant leadership, like participative leadership, might thus be ineffective when displayed by younger leaders.

Contributing to the literature on nonprototypical leader characteristics (e.g., Rosette et al., 2008) in the context of implicit leadership theory (Bryman, 1987; Eden & Leviatan, 1975; Lord & Maher, 1991), the present study shows the relevance of younger age as a nonprototypical leader characteristic. Results of our pilot studies support the basic proposition underlying our hypotheses that younger leaders are seen as less prototypical and as having lower status than older leaders. At first sight, this notion seems counterintuitive in light of ample evidence of the disadvantages that (considerably) older employees, including leaders, encounter (e.g., Hirschfeld & Thomas, 2011). This may explain the limited research explicitly focusing on potential disadvantages of younger individuals in managerial positions (for a recent overview, see Walter & Scheibe, 2013). Given the mathematical equivalence of independent and moderating variables in interactive relations (Kearney & Gebert, 2009), our results could also be interpreted by framing the effects of leader age as contingent on leader behaviors. By pointing out how certain behaviors undermine the ability of *younger* leaders to successfully influence their teams, we add a valuable perspective to the current age(ing) scholars’ and practitioners’ focus on the liabilities associated with older age in work settings. By identifying an effective strategy (i.e., contingent reward) for younger leaders, our study provides a mechanism by which this nonprototypical group of leaders can compensate for potential problems associated with their age. Contingent reward also may prove to be valuable for leaders with nonprototypical characteristics other than age (e.g., ethnicity and physical features).

We focused on the absolute value of a leader’s age as a leader characteristic (cf. leader race and leader gender; Eagly et al., 1992; Gündemir, Homan, de Dreu, & van Vugt, 2014). This is consistent with theoretical models stressing that certain characteristics are linked to higher or lower status and thus form status cues that signal status and competence to others (status characteristics theory; Berger et al., 1972, 1977). Demographic characteristics are particularly important, as they are easily accessible and quickly convey status-relevant information (Ridgeway, 2003). Another stream of research emphasizes the relative nature of differences (relational demography; Tsui, Porter, & Egan, 2002). These two foci also characterize the literature on leader prototypicality. Here, one focus emphasizes the prototypicality of leaders in absolute terms (Lord, Brown, Harvey, & Hall, 2001) and thus whether the leader’s characteristic is seen as prototypical, irrespective of the team’s characteristic; the other stresses in-group prototypicality and, thus, the leader’s characteristic compared with the team’s composition (Platow & Van Knippenberg, 2001). Both the relative and absolute perspectives have been linked to relevant outcomes (e.g., Eagly et al., 1992; Kearney, 2008). Speaking to the relevance of absolute leader age, our findings revealed absolute leader age to be important for team outcomes (in conjunction with behaviors) independently of relative leader age, as we controlled for team mean age in our analyses (Table 2). In addition, results of Studies 1a and 1b seem to suggest that leader prototypicality may be more important than in-group prototypicality. The prototypical perceived age of leaders in organizations (approximately 40 years) was significantly higher than the age of the leaders at the lower end of the age range (23 years) studied here. Future research could focus on distinguishing the effects of these different prototypicality types, especially as there are indications that the relevance of in-group prototypicality for instance is contingent upon identification with the group (Hais, Hogg, & Duck, 1997).

Our research also contributes to management practice. First, our findings point to the potential of leadership to influence team-level turnover effectively. Turnover affects the whole team and its functioning and is thus relevant for an organization's success (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Nishii & Mayer, 2009). When employees decide to quit, the organization loses valuable resources that it must replace, and those who remain must cope with disrupted team processes (Mobley, 1982). Dismissing team members exhibiting low performance or problematic behavior, however, can help organizations to mitigate threats and maintain effective teams. Our findings suggest that leadership behavior can support leaders in attaining a well-balanced ratio of both turnover forms, which should be especially functional when leaders are younger and therefore likely to undergo increased evaluative scrutiny.

Second, organizations could examine candidates for managerial positions regarding their flexibility to adapt leadership behaviors to their own age-based status. According to our findings, leader age might enhance or diminish the effectiveness of certain leadership behaviors, thereby determining which behavior is most appropriate. Third, leadership-training programs may not only help leaders develop contingent reward and participative leadership but also choose the most suitable strategy based on their own age. Whereas our results suggest encouraging younger leaders to enact contingent reward but not participative leadership, the opposed effects of these two strategies disappear when employed by somewhat older leaders. Only at more extreme levels of (older) leader age does participative leadership's beneficial effect on reducing voluntary turnover emerge. Hence, based on our findings, participative leadership does not seem to harm and eventually aids older (and thus more prototypical) leaders. This suggests that older, higher-status leaders can rely on personal influence (see also Kearney, 2008; Sauer, 2011), which is likely to be perceived as credible, thereby facilitating acceptance. The nonsignificant findings for contingent reward suggest that there is also no harm when older leaders draw on position influence. This is consistent with our notion that compared with younger leaders, these more prototypical leaders are less restricted in what behaviors they can use to influence followers. Importantly, we do not argue that leadership behaviors are necessarily effective just because the leader is older and thus prototypical. We do however argue that somewhat older leaders can—without harm—also draw on leadership behaviors such as participative leadership that are not viable for younger leaders given these behaviors' reliance on personal influence. Hence, we see older leader age as one precondition for effective leadership influence when using certain behaviors that require personal influence but definitely not as a guarantee for making all possible leadership behaviors more effective. Of course, our findings rely on a sample of teams with in tendency less than more turnover. Relations might be stronger with an even larger variation in team-level turnover.

Finally, companies could help younger leaders understand the powerful impact of implicit leader prototypes on the effectiveness of their leadership behaviors. Exhibiting behaviors that are acceptable to team members and the organizational collective may ultimately strengthen younger leaders' positions in organizations. Relatedly, organizations should be aware, and grow awareness, of the potential disadvantages that younger leaders might face by being nonprototypical—a phenomenon that has gone unnoticed in light of demographic shifts toward older workforces in many industrialized countries. Actively strengthening younger leaders' positions in the organization through recognition and support, mentoring, and coaching (especially in the early stages of their careers) may help younger leaders overcome potential challenges associated with their age. With these strategies, organizations might also be able to set the stage for the beneficial effects of the right set of behaviors for young managers.

Limitations and future research

We acknowledge certain limitations of this research. Despite basing our hypotheses on well-grounded theoretical assumptions and measuring turnover 2 months after the other variables, our results are still based on correlations. In order to speak to causality and to rule out alternative explanations completely, further research is needed to test these relations in an experimental setting. Limiting potential interpretation problems caused by common-method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012), we used three independent data sources (i.e., objective turnover, leader age, and team member-rated variables). Although studying the moderated leadership–turnover linkages at the individual level would also be interesting, the nature of our data only allows us to focus on team-level turnover.

Establishing the degree of equivalence of leadership effects at both levels might form an important area for future research.

We do not have more fine-grained reasons for both voluntary (self-decided) and involuntary (company induced) turnover that would allow us to determine the following: (i) whether the team member decided to leave the team because of the leader or because of personal circumstances or changing life events and (ii) whether the team leader fully instigated all of the cases of involuntary turnover. Regarding the former, it is difficult to argue that personal circumstances of employees would have been more likely under certain leaders showing certain behaviors. Regarding the latter, it became clear from conversations with the personnel department, the close interaction between leaders and team members in this sample, and the performance-driven nature of the customer communication company studied here that it is highly probable that leaders were considerably involved in initiating and approving dismissals. This is consistent with extensive empirical support for the link between low performance and involuntary turnover (e.g., Stumpf & Dawley, 1981). Of course, both turnover forms are not necessarily good or bad but could have different implications depending on the situation (Kwon & Rupp, 2013; McElroy, Morrow, & Rude, 2001). For instance, if only low performers decide to quit, voluntary turnover could even be functional, whereas involuntary turnover could be dysfunctional when reasons other than low performance or dysfunctional behavior (e.g., downsizing or leader dysfunction) precipitate it. However, the studied firm was growing steadily, as firm performance numbers revealed. Economic necessity could thus not have caused the dismissals.

Also, if leaders were to randomly dismiss—or dismiss many—employees or if many were to leave a particular leader, this could harm the organization (and leaders themselves). Importantly, involuntary and voluntary turnover are uncorrelated in our sample, and turnover levels are in line with those of other firms. In addition, our data do not contain teams with extreme amounts of dismissals (e.g., more than half of the team). Hence, turnover in this sample was not likely to be due to clear team leader dysfunctions. Relatedly, implicit in our argument is the assumption that leaders engender actions that are beneficial to them when they have recognized a need to act, implying that leaders are aware of what is beneficial to them and that they are not constrained on acting on this basis—namely that younger leaders using contingent reward enact dismissals when having identified low performance or dysfunctional behavior. Concluding, given these data, the performance-intensive context of the studied teams, and supportive evidence on the negative performance–dismissal link (e.g., Stumpf & Dawley, 1981), we believe that the current interpretation of our findings pertaining to the two turnover types is valid for this sample. Nevertheless, researchers might study the linkages established here, focusing on the specific reasons for turnover in more detail and/or including these turnover antecedents as mediating mechanisms (e.g., low performance). One could also argue that organizations assign dysfunctional teams to younger leaders given their nonprototypicality, which could explain dismissals in our study. In fact, research indicates that firms tend to promote women to precarious, prone-to-failure leadership positions (“glass cliff;” Ryan & Haslam, 2007, p. 549). However, we do not find that the younger leaders in our sample dismiss (or are left) more than their older counterparts, making this potential alternative explanation less likely.

We measured participative leadership using a shortened four-item scale adapted from Indvik (1986, 1988) and based on House and Dessler’s (1974) work. We used this shorter scale because of organizational restrictions regarding survey length, intolerance for employing highly similar items, and the use of a four-item measure of contingent reward. In the future, researchers may want to study the relations using more extended participative leadership measures.

The older leaders in Study 2 were in fact middle aged (48 years formed the upper end of the age range). This is because customer service and sales team leaders worked at lower (entry)-level managerial positions that individuals at earlier stages of their managerial careers often hold. Although the age range is not overly large, such restriction is in line with other studies on leader age (e.g., restricted range in terms of middle-aged to older leaders; Kearney, 2008; Zacher et al., 2011). We believe that testing our moderation hypotheses based on a sample with a somewhat restricted age range represents a rather conservative test. The differential impact of these two leadership behaviors on turnover might be stronger when contrasting younger with still older leaders. Nevertheless, our pilot data reveal that even in a relatively young student sample, the leader age seen as prototypical in work organizations is close to the age of the older leaders in our organizational sample. Therefore, although scholars could devote further research to examining the established relations using an even wider age range of leaders, we believe that our age range is generalizable to a broader variety of organizations.

Situational constraints such as organizational context, team and task characteristics, or culture may influence the activation of leadership prototypes (Lord et al., 2001). For instance, prior research has shown strong group identification, competition, and an orientation toward change to be important in this respect (e.g., Hogg, van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012; Spisak, Homan, Grabo, & Van Vugt, 2012; Spisak et al., 2014). Downsizing might introduce a situation where followers are more likely to endorse younger leaders. Compared with the hierarchical organization studied here, there may be contexts such as youth-oriented start-up companies or small Information Technology (IT) firms in which *older* leaders are considered nonprototypical and face the described difficulties in gaining approval (see, for instance, also Oldmeadow, 2007). Under such situational constraints, younger leaders may have an advantage in status that allows them to draw on leadership styles requiring team members' identification or admiration (e.g., participative leadership). Another contingency of the studied relationships could be a leader's formal versus informal position. Whereas younger leaders are better off when employing behavior within their legitimate authority, older leaders can also use behaviors unrelated to their formal authority. However, employing behaviors rooted in the leader's position is only possible for formal leadership positions; in informal leader constellations, influencing followers might thus be even more problematic for younger individuals in a context emphasizing a positive relation between age and status. To ensure the generalizability of our findings, further research may be initiated to study the effects of contingent reward and participative leadership shown by younger as compared with older leaders with other types of teams (e.g., R&D teams and self-managed teams), in other industries (e.g., manufacturing), and/or in different cultural (e.g., collectivistic) settings.

Conclusion

Although the average age of teams is increasing because of demographic shifts, individuals' young entry ages into managerial positions remain unaltered (Jackson, May, & Whitney, 1995). We argue that as a nonprototypical leader characteristic, young age can enhance or diminish the effectiveness of leadership behaviors aimed at creating mutual influence. Our research shows that unlike participative leadership, contingent reward is an effective strategy for younger leaders. For younger as compared with older leaders, contingent reward decreases team members' decisions to quit (i.e., increased granting of leadership) but increases dismissals when necessary (i.e., increased claiming of leadership), which should strengthen younger leaders' positions in their organizations.

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