HARVARD | BUSINESS | SCHOOL

Rising Scholars Conference
Leadership Student Research Presentations

Richard Burgess **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**
richard_burgess@kenan-flagler.unc.edu

Ricky Burgess is a 4th year PhD Candidate in Organizational Behavior at University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School. His research centers around leadership, team dynamics, and identity. Prior to UNC-Chapel Hill, he received his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and both an MBA and master of science degree in public policy and management from Carnegie Mellon University.

ABSTRACT:

Bystander Intervention of Workplace Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination, or "unfair, differential treatment on the basis of race" (Ong et al, 2009) is pervasive in American workplaces; in 2019 alone, nearly 24,000 race related discrimination charges were filed with the EEOC (EEOC, 2020). Racial discrimination has been shown to have a myriad of negative consequences for racial minorities, including lower performance ratings, difficulty accessing management roles, and lower acceptance as leaders (see Avery et al, 2018 for a review). One potential lever for addressing racial discrimination in organizations is bystander intervention. While scholars have shown that members of stigmatized groups may incur penalties for engaging in behaviors that might reduce discrimination by confronting perpetrators of racial discrimination (Hekman et al, 2017), there is emerging evidence that bystanders who confront racial discrimination can shift the beliefs of discrimination perpetrators (Czopp, Monteith, and Mark, 2006).

We argue that both situational and individual characteristics combined to influence bystander intervention during racial discrimination events in the workplace. On the situational level, we draw on classic bystander theory (Latane & Darley, 1968) and the Confronting Prejudice Responses model (Ashburn-Nardo et al, 2008) to argue that the overtness of racial discrimination will influence a bystander's perception of racial discrimination, and thus the likelihood that they will intervene. At the individual level, we draw on the attribution to discrimination literature (see Major, et al, 2002 for review) to argue that a bystander's racial background and stigma consciousness will also influence an individual's likelihood of acting on perceived racial discrimination, and thus intervening during a racial discrimination event at work.

To test our research questions, we conduct two studies. Study 1 employs a two (race: Black vs White) by three (racial discrimination: blatant discrimination vs subtle discrimination vs control) between subjects design. Participants (N=363) are randomly assigned to a discrimination condition and are asked to evaluate a workplace racial discrimination event adapted from a #BlackIntheIvory tweet (Holguin, 2020). Across each condition, the participant imagines they are a bystander observing a coworker speaking to a Black potential colleague. The coworker tells the potential colleague to either "stop talking so Black", "speak normally", or "speak louder" in the blatant, subtle, and control conditions, respectively. After reading the scenario, each participant indicates the perceived racial discrimination of faced by the potential colleague and their likeliness to intervene, along with demographic and individual trait variables. In the study, we find members of both races were more likely to perceived discrimination and intervene in both the blatant (M=5.99, SD=1.66) and subtle conditions (M=5.12, SD=1.87) than the control condition (M=3.41, SD=1.95). We also find no racial difference in perceived discrimination across any of the conditions, but that Black participants (M=5.50, SD=1.62) are significantly more likely to intervene than White participants (M=4.73, SD=2.03) in the subtle discrimination condition.

In study 2, we ask participants about their experiences with workplace racial discrimination (N=309). For participants that have experienced workplace racial discrimination (N=192) or have observed workplace racial discrimination (N=67), we ask further questions about the discrimination event, and additional individual trait and demographic scale items. We are currently coding these responses to better understand what individual and situational factors lead to bystander intervention and what methods and strategies bystanders use to intervene.

Temitope Oladimeji **University of Texas at Austin**
temitope.oladimeji@mccombs.utexas.edu

I am a PhD Candidate in Strategy at the University of Texas at Austin (McCombs School of Business), where I also received MBA and MS degrees in Finance and Management respectively. My research focuses on managerial cognition and organizational evolution. Before graduate school, I worked in real estate and equity research.

ABSTRACT:

Peril or Power in Pride? Cumulative Evidence About CEO Self-Exaggeration and Firm Performance

Presuming that a top executive's inflated view of his or her abilities should have significant implications for firm performance, scholars have investigated two forms of self-exaggeration intensely: *hubris* and *overconfidence*. The *distorted expectations paradigm* regards both forms of self-exaggeration as indicative of judgment bias and predictive of decision error. The *self-confidence paradigm* regards them as positive forces for motivation. And, perhaps as a consequence of these divergent paradigms, investigations of self-exaggeration in CEOs have yielded confusing and even contradictory results. Although many scholars maintain that self-exaggeration leads to negative firm outcomes, others claim this generates positive results. Furthermore, some have found no detectable impact of these characteristics on firm outcomes. Still, others contend that either of these orientations could entail peril or power, depending on moderating or mediating mechanisms. In sum, there is theoretical debate and empirical confusion about the nature and consequences of hubris and overconfidence. Do these forms of CEO self-exaggeration yield good, bad, or indifferent outcomes for the firms that they lead?

Our paper provides a comprehensive answer. It does so by introducing a third paradigm using a theoretical distinction between hubris and overconfidence which originates from psychology research. This perspective, which we call the *differential referents paradigm*, suggests that there is systematic variation between forms of (executive) pride, such that one form could be perilous and another could be empowering. Although scholars of executive self-exaggeration often use hubris and overconfidence interchangeably, we distinguish between them and explain how they can have different consequences. To be more specific, overconfidence, the degree to which an individual thinks they are better at (task) performance than they actually are, is *self*-directed and might trigger stronger motivation to achieve results. Hubris, the degree to which an individual thinks they are better than others, might spur reckless actions that are dismissive of social information, in a way that is more likely to hurt their own firms.

We use this differential referents paradigm to sort findings and conduct a meta-analysis of 103 empirical studies with 259 effect sizes, across 28 countries and 38 years. One of the chief strengths of meta-analysis is the ability to use cumulative data to sort out the relative support for competing predictions, creating strong inferences about what mechanisms are most likely to be operating. Our results show that CEO self-exaggeration contains both peril and power: hubris and overconfidence forms of pride have opposing effects on firm performance. CEO hubris is associated with lower levels of future performance, while CEO overconfidence is associated with higher levels. Therefore, these forms should not be treated synonymously or as stand-ins for each other. Dissimilarities in impacts of CEO hubris and overconfidence are further highlighted in contexts that provide executives with more or less discretion, and that make their downstream effects more or less likely. Hubris is sensitive to contextual discretion; overconfidence is not.

Our findings should provide valuable answers to the debate surrounding CEO self-exaggeration, and point toward fruitful avenues for further investigation. One implication of our results is that it is in the best interest of firms to select CEOs (and other senior executives) who are overconfident. They should, however, eschew executives who are hubristic. Moreover, our study has implications for a much broader set of findings for (political, religious, sports, and so on) leadership in general. Boasting does not have to be insulting. Bragging does not have to be bullying. Customers and markets seem to have found ways to sort those firms whose leaders do one rather than the other.

Adaora Ubaka **University of Illinois at Chicago**
cubaka2@uic.edu

Adaora is a 5th year Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Adaora's research focuses on leadership, how to bridge intergroup differences within the workplace through building psychological safety, and how team social/power structures impact team outcomes. Adaora uses both experimental and qualitative methods in her research. In 2020, she was awarded the Janessa Shapiro Graduate Research Award by the Society of Personality and Social Psychology.

ABSTRACT:

Testing the Genealiziability of the White Leadership Standard in the Post-Obama Era
(with XinXin Lu & Lyangela Gutierrez)

Over a decade ago, Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips (2008) conducted a study on race and business leader prototypes and discovered that participants held an implicit "white leadership standard". As revealed in that study, such a standard introduces racial bias into the leadership categorization process, and places employees from racial minority groups at a disadvantage as they seek to attain leadership roles. However, in the last decade, events as well as broader societal trends (e.g., the Obama presidency; an increase in minority business leader representation; changing demographics) suggest that leader prototypes within the American populace may have become amenable to change. The present study retested the theoretical assumptions of RLP (2008) in a direct/close replication study to examine the extent to which the findings would generalize to a new era. In four studies, with over 3,000 participants, results reveal more racially inclusive leadership perceptions, as well as a weakened and context-dependent white leadership standard.

INTRODUCTION
Rosette et al. (2008) tested two overarching hypotheses: 1) whether race was an implicit component of the business leader prototype, yielding a "white leadership standard" and 2) whether this implicit component of the business leader prototype influenced perceptions of leadership effectiveness and leadership potential, yielding a racial bias. Their overall findings supported both of these initial hypotheses and uncovered that racial bias existed in the business leader categorization process.

Yet, since the publication of RLP (2008) there have been considerable technological, demographic, and cultural shifts within the United States that have influenced both the broader societal context, as well as the American business and work environment. These changes comprise of the most racially and ethnically diverse generation of workers entering the workplace (e.g., Millennials), an influx of highly skilled workers to the United States from India and China (Pew Research Center, 2016), as well as an upward trend in the overall representation of racial minorities in management positions and Fortune 100 Board of Director seats (Alliance for Board Diversity, 2018; GAO Financial report, 2017). Equally important, has been the arrival of Generation Z -- a college-age cohort (and our sample population) that is becoming readily known for their capacity to recognize prejudice against racial minorities and a willingness to support minority groups who protest as a way to obtain equality (Pew Research Center, 2019). This generation grew up amid the era of President Barack Obama, who as president of the United States for eight years represented a highly visible leadership example. Since an important source of where people derive their leadership exemplars, even their business leadership exemplars, is from highly publicized leadership roles such as that of the United States Presidency (Offerman et al., 2018) it is important to incorporate this new development into our understanding of race and leadership schemas. Taking this new context into consideration, our goal was to ascertain whether findings from over a decade ago remain pertinent to our current understanding of race and leadership categorization.

Laura Weimer **Harvard University**
lweimer@hbs.edu

Laura is a 3rd-year doctoral student in Management at Harvard Business School. She is an 18-year active duty Army Officer, with her BS in Chemistry from the United States Military Academy at West Point and MA in Sociology from Duke University. Laura previously taught Leadership and Sociology at West Point for 3 years and will return to continue her research as an Assistant Professor. Her research interests include identity development and expression, particularly for emerging leaders and non-prototypical populations.

ABSTRACT:

What Happens When You're in Charge:
The Effects of Leadership Role Occupation on Assessments of Self and Others

Feedback plays a critical role in developing leaders in organizations. Although prior research on feedback has focused on whether and how emerging leaders *take* feedback, this paper instead focuses on how they *provide* feedback. To investigate the impact of occupying a leadership role on feedback provision, we analyze data from a natural experiment at the United States Military Academy that randomized 3000 cadets into leadership roles (vs. non-leadership roles). Using multi-level linear regression, we found that cadets randomly assigned to leadership roles (vs. non-leaders) gave more critical lateral and upward feedback. More specifically, individuals assessed their peers and supervisors as less warm and less competent when the evaluators were assigned to formal leadership positions, even while controlling for demographics and performance scores for both raters and ratees. We explore two plausible accounts for these effects: 1) a l*egitimacy account* suggesting that occupying a leadership role gives individuals thecredibility to express their beliefs and 2) a *learning account* suggesting that occupying a leadership role gives individuals greater insight into the definition, qualities, and expectations of a leader. Additional analyses reveal support for the legitimacy account as leaders did not evaluate themselves more critically nor give other leaders more critical feedback. These results point to evidence that feelings of legitimacy - rather than learning - explain differences in feedback provision between leaders and non-leaders. These findings challenge organizations to consider the rater's role when evaluating feedback they provide, as well as the organization's role in legitimizing employee honesty in assessing their peers and supervisors.