

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of Liberal Arts

THE IMPACT OF GENDER, RACE, AND ERROR TYPE ON LEADER RATINGS

A Thesis in

Psychology

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2016

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of error type, leader gender, and leader race on leadership ratings after an error occurred. A sample of 536 MTurk participants was used to test the hypothesized relationships. The results revealed that leader ratings are significantly influenced by the type of error (i.e., task, relationship, ethical) that a leader commits. Leader ratings did not vary significantly based on leader gender. Leader race, however, did significantly influence leader ratings, such that Black leaders were rated higher on leader liking and willingness to follow the leader than White leaders. On average, internal behavioral attributions were made to explain leader behavior regardless of the leader's race, gender, or type of error committed. Finally, internal attributions were significantly and negatively related to leadership ratings. These results are discussed in terms of both their theoretical and practical implications for the study of leader error.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely thank my committee for their assistance, words of wisdom, and feedback throughout the research. Most notably, Dr. Kisha Jones and Dr. Sam Hunter, your time, support, and enthusiasm were integral to the completion of the manuscript. I would also like to express my gratitude to my partner, Jake, for your encouragement and support throughout this process.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Although the workplace is becoming increasingly diverse, the landscape the highest organizational levels remain especially homogenous. Research suggests that while women and individuals of color are ascending the organizational hierarchy, they do so at rates considerably lower than White males (Blau & Devaro, 2007; Eagly and Karau, 2002; Sagas & Cunningham, 2005). A review of employment statistics reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics reveals that women and Black individuals comprise 46.9% and 11.4% of the workforce, respectively, and hold 51.6% and 8.8% of management jobs. Yet, the number of women and individuals of color embedded within the top levels of organizations shows that it is rare for non-White males to reach these positions of power. For example, women comprise only 19% of Congress, 12% of United States' governors, and 4.6% of S&P 500 CEOs. An examination of top-level leaders reveals that Black individuals constitute only 8.3% of congressional positions, 1% of Fortune 500 CEOs, and zero state governor positions. Despite the progress occurring in middle management positions, gender and race-based inequality continues to persist at the highest levels in both organizations and society.

At the most basic of levels, one barrier to diversity in high-level positions may result from the common conceptualization of how a leader is defined. The traditional leader prototype ascribes masculine characteristics to the exemplary leader, thereby reducing women's perceived leadership ability. In addition, majority groups traditionally maintain high levels of power and status in organizations (DiTomaso, 2004; Torelli, Leslie, Stoner, & Puente, 2014), and in most instances the majority groups consist of White individuals (DiTomaso, 2004). The low organizational status assigned to individuals of color ascribes negative evaluations of their skills

and abilities relative to status-holding White individuals. As a result of these negative evaluations, individuals of color may be perceived as poorer candidates for leadership positions than their White counterparts. Based on the prevailing stereotypes that assign White male characteristics to the prototypical leader, misalliance occurs such that women and minorities are do not match the traditional leader prototype. This incongruence between stereotypical expectations and actual leader characteristics may lead to differential treatment and evaluations of women and individuals of color in leadership positions.

Much of the existing leadership research has focused on the differential perceptions and treatment of women and individuals of color who hold leadership positions, as compared to their White male counterparts (Dovidio & Hebl, 2005; Duehr & Bono, 2006; Ramaswami, 2010). However, these research studies have tended to evaluate leader perceptions under conditions of leader success, but little research has studied how these perceptions vary after failures or mistakes occur (c.f. Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Thoroughgood, Sawyer, & Hunter, 2012). A burgeoning area of research on leader behavior refutes the idea that leaders are infallible (Bedell-Avers, 2008 as cited in Hunter, Tate, Dzieweczynski, & Bedell-Avers, 2011), and instead highlights an unavoidable truth: leaders make mistakes. While a general taxonomy of leader error has been proposed (Hunter et al., 2011), little is known about the antecedents or consequences related to leader errors. Therefore, researchers do not fully understand how committing an error affects perceptions of leaders or how personal characteristics affect perceptions of the leader after committing an error.

This study aims to broaden both the diversity and leadership literature by investigating how personal characteristics (i.e., gender and race) affect perceptions of leaders following the occurrence of an error. This study advances the leadership literature in three ways. First, it

examines both race and gender concurrently to better understand how the combination of race and gender affect perceptions of leaders following an error. Second, it examines how errors are differentially attributed to internal or external factors as a result of the leader's race and gender. Third, this study contributes to the theoretical and practical understanding of the process by which leader errors are attributed as a result of the leader's personal characteristics, and subsequently how these characteristics and attributions affect ratings of the leader.

Literature Review

The extant leadership research has traditionally studied positive leader attitudes and behaviors to better understand the traits (Mann, 1959; Stogdill, 1948; Yukl, 1989), situations (Fiedler, 1971; Hersey, 1982), and relationship mechanisms (Howell & Avolio, 1993; Willner, 1984) that enable individuals to thrive as leaders. The existing research has produced a romanticized view of leadership, which portrays leaders as heroic figures who positively affect and contribute to organizations (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). To date, a disproportionate amount of research has focused on the positive aspects of leadership while excluding the effect of leadership errors on followers or organizations (Hunter et al., 2011). This emphasis on positive leadership attributes has created an unbalanced examination of leadership, and necessitates a more holistic understanding of the positive and negative aspects of leadership behaviors (Hunter et al., 2011). Developing a fuller understanding of leaders' successes and failures and the outcomes associated with these actions will contribute to the extant knowledge in both theoretical and practical ways.

Leader Error Defined

Moving beyond the romanticized view of leadership requires researchers to abandon the notion that leaders are fundamentally flawless individuals. It should be acknowledged that, as

human beings, leaders are quite capable of committing errors. By definition, a leader commits an error when he or she chooses an “avoidable action or inaction, which results in an initial outcome outside of the leader’s original intent, goal or prediction” (Hunter et al., 2011, p.2). The taxonomy of leader errors proposed by Hunter and colleagues elucidates how leaders have significant and multiple chances for committing errors, as well as how these errors affect followers and organizational outcomes. Leader errors may occur at single or multiple levels as a result of individual (e.g., overconfidence, negative emotions, or fatigue), group (e.g., groupthink and team climate), and organizational (e.g., time pressure and error management culture) characteristics.

Prior research has discerned leader errors as distinctly different than leader ineffectiveness or destructive leadership. A leader may be ineffective due to a lack of ability, incompetence, or laissez-faire management style (Hunter et al., 2011). In such instances, leaders do not engage in purposeful, goal-driven action or inaction, but rather cannot perform or do not engage in their leadership duties effectively. Conversely, destructive leadership requires that a leader engage in volitional, harmful behavior that has negative consequences for followers or the organization (Krasikova, Green, & LeBreton, 2013). Destructive leadership behaviors, therefore, contradict organizational goals or values. By definition, a leader may commit an error without intent to cause harm; thus leader error and destructive leadership are separate constructs.

Given the power that leaders wield within organizations, the consequences associated with committing errors can be quite severe. The effect of leader errors on employees, stockholders, and consumers is far reaching and can result in serious financial and social losses for organizations. Both academic researchers and popular press outlets have shown an increased interest in leader errors, as evidenced by a 2013 Forbes article in which the worst CEO ‘screw-

ups' of the year were recounted. Included in the list of CEO errors was Chip Wilson, the CEO of Lululemon athletic wear, who blamed reports of defective yoga pants on overweight women who were not meant to wear the clothing, thus causing the pants to pill. His comments resulted in outraged consumers and drastic decreases in company stock prices. Additionally, the CEO of Sears Holdings, Eddie Lampert, was included on the list after generating \$7 million in company debt while pursuing a cost-cutting strategy to turn the company around even after this strategy was previously shown to be ineffective (Adams, 2013).

These examples illustrate the deleterious effects that occur at multiple organizational levels as a result of leader errors. Yet, despite the organizational consequences associated with such missteps, little academic attention has been directed toward understanding the circumstances and outcomes associated with leader errors (c.f. Eubanks & Mumford, 2010; Hunter et al., 2011; Thoroughgood, Sawyer, & Hunter, 2013). Although committing an error informs perceptions of a leader, it is less understood how the leader is perceived after a mistake has occurred, and the extent to which perceptions are universal or differentially applied. To date, few empirical studies have directly examined how leaders' personal characteristics affect the perception of leaders post-error (Thoroughgood et al., 2013; Walker, Madera, & Hebl, 2013). Previous research suggests that the interaction between gender and job context can result in disparate competence ratings for male and female leaders, such that male leaders who committed errors were perceived as less task and relationship competent and less desirable to work for than female leaders who committed errors in a masculine work context (Thoroughgood et al., 2013). However, the findings regarding the importance of leader race are less clear. Walker et al., (2013) reported that when a leader committed a mistake, ratings of Black and White managers

were similar, although lower salaries were assigned to Black managers than White managers when mistakes occurred.

The extant literature on leader errors supports the notion that leaders not only make mistakes, but these mistakes can be extremely costly for the organization. Yet, not all mistakes affect the same stakeholders or have equal impact on organizational outcomes. That is, the type of error committed will dictate the degree to which followers or organizations are negatively affected.

Types of Leader Error

Task and relationship errors. Leaders are responsible for overseeing multiple projects, processes, and employees, thus requiring engagement in a range of behaviors, often simultaneously. The two-factor model of leadership described two distinct categories of leader behaviors – task and relationship – in which leaders engage (Likert, 1961, 1967). Leader task behaviors are often complex and include planning, organizing, coordinating, and decision-making. In addition to task behaviors, leaders also engage in relationship behaviors via interaction with organizational stakeholders (e.g., employees, customers, and vendors). Effective relationship behaviors include interacting with subordinates in ways that are supportive, considerate and helpful. Leaders participate in multiple task and relationship behaviors every day; thus, they have many opportunities to commit errors.

A critical development in the leader error literature arose from Hunter and colleagues' (2011) extension of the two-factor model of leadership to the error domain. The authors proposed that task errors and relationship errors are distinct constructs. That is, when a leader makes a task error it is evidence of failing to properly manage tasks that are relevant to the job, such as: poorly managing funds or resources, disregarding important information during the

decision-making process, or failing to follow through on key job responsibilities. A relationship error occurs when a leader fails to properly manage people, and examples of relationship errors include disregarding employee concerns, reprimanding employees in front of others, and overly criticizing employees.

Ethical errors. In addition to task and relationship responsibilities, scholars have argued that leaders also have an obligation to promote ethical behaviors in their organizations (Ciulla, 1995). According to the moral manager prototype (Trevino, Hartman, & Brown, 2000), leaders should communicate the importance of ethics to employees, while also role-modeling ethical behaviors and decision-making. It is expected that leaders behave ethically, just as they are expected to perform their job-related tasks and interact with employees in efficient and effective ways. As a result, this paper offers an extension of the two-factor model of leader errors (Hunter et al., 2011) to include a third factor: ethical errors. Utilizing the definition of leader error in combination with the moral manager prototype, examples of ethical mistakes may include taking credit for another's work, misrepresenting facts, or unfairly distributing support or resources across the organization.

Regardless of the type of error committed, leader ratings are likely to be affected. Moreover, committing an error may demonstrate that an individual lacks the ability necessitated for a successful leader. Thoroughgood et al. (2012) found that regardless of the error type, a leader who committed an error was perceived as less task and relationship competent, as well as less desirable to work for than a leader who did not commit an error. In addition, leaders who committed a task error were perceived as having lower task competence than when they committed relationship errors, and were perceived as having lower relationship competence when they committed relationship errors as compared to task errors. As a result, it is expected

that task errors will result in lower ratings of task competence and relationship errors will result in lower ratings of relationship competence. In addition, this reasoning is extended to include ethical errors, which should result in lower ratings of ethical leadership.

- H1:** Leaders who commit task errors will be rated lower on task competence than leaders who commit relationship or ethical errors.
- H2:** Leaders who commit relationship errors will be rated lower on relationship competence than leaders who commit task or ethical errors.
- H3:** Leaders who commit ethical errors will be rated lower on ethical leadership than leaders who commit task or relationship errors.

Traditional Leader Prototypes

Categorization theory (Rosch, 1978; Rosch & Mervis, 1975) posits that individuals utilize the average of available information to generate prototypes about groups of individuals. The more an individual has in common with others in a specific group, the more that individual will be perceived as a good representation of the group. These categorizations generate prototypes, or the “most clear, best examples of the category” (Rosch & Mervis, 1975, p. 574). Over time, leader prototypes have emerged such that individuals are believed to be leaders when they share traits in common with other leaders. The following section describes how the prototypical leader is categorized as White and male thus, disadvantaging women and individuals of color who hold leadership positions.

Gender-based prototypes. The leadership prototype assumes that gender is an attribute of leadership, such that being male is a prerequisite to the conceptualization of a successful manager. This phenomenon has been found in both male and female managers (Schein, 1973; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989) although current research shows that this stereotype has persisted more strongly for men than women (Duehr & Bono, 2006). Schein (1973) asked managers to generate a list of traits that a successful manager would exhibit, and the results

showed that both men and women associated masculine traits with the successful leader, resulting in a “think leader, think male” paradigm. In essence, when imagining a successful leader, the automatic response provides a series of traits that are reflective of a male prototype. Although the differences between men and women are actually quite small (Hyde, 2005), gender stereotypes dictate specific roles and traits that are perceived as appropriate for only one gender. For example, it is expected that women are more communal than men and should exhibit behaviors that are indicative of cooperation, kindness, and concern for others. On the other hand, men are expected to exhibit agentic behaviors that signify aggression, independence, and dominance – traits that are commonly associated with the prototypical leader.

Gender-based expectations are so ingrained within social institutions that they persist even when women do not conform to traditional gender stereotypes. Heilman (1983) conducted a study that examined the fit between gender and occupation, and found that women were perceived as a better fit for traditionally feminine jobs (e.g., nurse, teacher, secretary) than traditionally masculine jobs, such as an attorney or physician, and these findings were consistent regardless of the actual characteristics the individual women exhibited. Thus, the lack of fit model (Heilman, 1983) proposes that women may be perceived to be a poor match for masculine jobs because their presumed attributes do not fit with the job characteristics.

The expectation that women will exhibit communal traits and that masculine traits are a prerequisite to successful leadership perpetuates the stereotype that men are more effective leaders than women. Therefore, a female who also holds a leadership role leader may be perceived as holding competing, incompatible roles. According to role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), individuals hold multiple roles (e.g., gender role, leader role) and these may conflict with one another such that women are perceived as less qualified leaders than men

because they lack the traits necessary for success in the leadership role. Thus, a female leader would be perceived as violating her gender role because the traits associated with being a leader (e.g., assertiveness, dominance) do not align with the traits associated with being female (e.g., cooperative, sensitive).

For women, the consequences associated with violating gender role norms can be quite severe. Prior research findings suggest that both performance ratings and blame are differentially applied to women based on their adherence to gender roles. For example, agentic women are liked less than non-agentic women (Eagly & Karau, 2002), and, in general, survey participants have indicated a preference for male leaders (versus female leaders; Eagly, 2007). In addition, women who violate gender-role norms are punished more harshly than women who do not (Berdahl, 2007; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004). As a result, women are disliked for holding leadership positions, are less likely to be viewed as ideal leaders, and more likely to experience harsh punishment for committing an error while simultaneously violating gender role norms.

Taken together, these theories and research findings suggest being a leader is generally associated with also being a man (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schien, 1989; Schein, 1973), feminine traits are not perceived as congruent with successful leadership (Heilman, 1983; Heilman et al., 1989; Ritter & Yoder, 2004), and that women in leadership positions are generally rated lower than their male counterparts (Blau & Devaro, 2007; Eagly & Karau, 2002).

H4: Across all conditions, female leaders who commit errors will be rated (a) lower on leader liking, (b) lower on willingness to follow the leader, and (c) higher on recommended punishment than male leaders.

Race-based prototypes. As previously discussed, a prototype emerges from the average characteristic that is present among individuals who share group membership (Rosch, 1978;

Rosch & Mervis, 1975). Due to the perceived status differences between White individuals and individuals of color, in addition to the lack of representation of individuals of color in high-profile leadership positions, the prototypical leader assumes the “best” or “most common” leader as White. Although there has been a vast amount of research on gender-based leadership prototypes, there has been substantially less research conducted on race-based leadership prototypes (Carton & Rosette, 2011; Rosette et al., 2008).

Rosette and colleagues (2008) posited that being White would be indicative of the prototypical leader. Through a series of four studies, Rosette and colleagues (2008) found that being White was more strongly related with a leader role than a general employee role, and that White leaders were perceived as more effective than non-White leaders when both groups were portrayed as successful. Tomkiewicz, Brenner, & Adeyemi-Bello (1998) found that views of White individuals and views of managers were significantly related, while this relationship was not significant for Black individuals. In addition, this relationship remained significant even when gender was included, such that both White men and White women were perceived as more congruent with management roles than Black men. These results indicate a “White standard” of leadership, in which non-White leaders are compared to the prototypical White leader, and thus are perceived to be less effective.

The lack of fit Model (Heilman, 1983) posits that individuals may be considered a poor fit for a job when their personal characteristics are perceived to be incongruent with the job-related characteristics. Extending this framework beyond gender expectations to include racial characteristics suggests that some jobs may be more stereotypically associated with White employees than Black employees, and vice versa. Prior research has indicated that traditionally “White” jobs require more skill, authority, and offer more autonomy than those categorized as

“Black” jobs, which are traditionally more labor intensive, have poorer working conditions, and are seen as more subservient roles (Kaufman, 2002). Because leadership positions require an individual to think critically, to lead others, and to engage in decision-making, the characteristics of leaders are better matched with stereotypically ‘White’ jobs than stereotypically ‘Black’ jobs. As a result of the stereotypes associated with race and leadership, Black individuals may be perceived as less fitting for leadership roles than White individuals. Thus, the expectation is that Black individuals will be less effective leaders than White individuals.

The limited research on leader error suggests that ratings of leaders change as a result of committing an error (Thoroughgood et al., 2012). However, there is a dearth of research regarding how organizations react when a leader commits an error. That is, it is unknown what type of outcome (e.g., punishment) is appropriate to impose after a mistake is made. Although research on specific punishments is limited, it has previously been shown that Black individuals who break rules or laws are punished more harshly in both court (Pfeifer & Ogloff, 1991) and school (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002) contexts. Extending this logic, it is believed that Black leaders who commit errors will be recommended for more severe punishment than White leaders.

The existing research indicates the existence of a leader prototype that associates being a leader with being White (Rosette et al., 2008), a lack of fit between being both Black and holding high status leadership positions (Heilman, 1983; Kaufman, 2002), and lower ratings for Black leaders (Rosette et al., 2008) than their White counterparts (Pfeifer & Ogloff, 1991; Skiba et al., 2002).

H5: Across all conditions, Black leaders who commit errors will be rated (a) lower on leader liking, (b) lower on willingness to follow the leader, and (c) higher on recommended punishment than White leaders.

Ethical prototype. The field of leadership has traditionally focused on the qualities and behaviors that are associated with effective leadership. From these studies an implicit view of leadership has emerged, such that the word *leader* itself conjures images of individuals who are moral, effective, good-natured, and heroic (Meindl et al., 1985). The foundational theories of leadership emphasize how leaders espouse ideological goals (House, 1976), engage in individualized, reciprocal exchanges with followers (Liden, 1986; Scandura, 1987), and motivate followers to engage in behaviors that are consistent with organizational values and ideals (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Although individual leadership theories propose different mechanisms through which leaders achieve success, each theory is underscored by the idea that leaders are essentially good individuals. As one aspect of their ethical leadership theory, Brown & Trevino (2006) discuss how the moral manager not only communicates ethical values to employees but also espouses these values via personal behaviors. In her book, Joanna Ciulla (2014) describes leadership as a moral relationship that is based on “a shared vision of good” (p. xvi), thereby constraining leadership to include only positive behaviors and intentions. The romanticism of leadership (Meindl et al., 1985) thus has altered the conception of a good leader such that the prototypical leader is good and does good. As a result, leaders who do not live up to the ethical imperative inherent to leadership should not be perceived as effective leaders.

H6: Across all conditions, leaders who commit ethical errors will be rated (a) lower on leader liking, (b) lower on willingness to follow the leader, and (c) higher on recommended punishment than leaders who commit task or relationship errors.

Attribution of Behavior

In organizations, followers’ perceptions of leaders are of great importance as positive perceptions lead to increased leader liking and willingness to follow the leader, while negative perceptions show the reverse relationship. Because leaders yield great power in the organization,

followers look to them as role models, and as such followers may be especially attune to the behaviors leaders exhibit. As a result, when followers observe negative leader behaviors, such as when leaders make mistakes, it will likely affect their perceptions of the leader as likeable or their willingness to follow the leader.

However, witnessing a leader commit an error does not automatically engender a negative perception of the leader. Rather, it is the cause behind the error that affects perceptions of the leader. Attribution theory (Kelley & Michela, 1980) states that individuals attribute internal and external causes to others' behaviors. Specifically, after a leader has committed an error, followers can attribute the error to internal characteristics (e.g., the leader's personality) or to external characteristics (e.g., situational characteristics).

The perceived cause of a given behavior can be influenced by many factors, including the behaviors we expect others to exhibit. When an individual's actual behavior is congruent with their expected behavior, the perceived cause of the behavior is more likely to be attributed to internal, stable properties, such as personality. However, when the behaviors of other individuals are incongruent with expected behaviors, the perceived causes of the behaviors are more likely to be attributed to external properties, such as luck or situational characteristics. In addition, personal attitudes can influence the behavioral expectations, and consequently the perceived causes of these behaviors, of others. For example, the good behavior of a liked person and the bad behavior of a disliked person are more likely to be attributed to internal causes, whereas the bad behavior of a liked person and the good behavior of a disliked person are more likely to be attributed to external causes (Bell, Wicklund, Manko, & Larkin, 1976; Regan, Straus, & Fazio, 1974).

Based on the gender stereotypes that ascribe attributes to individuals based on their gender (e.g., men are competent, female are communal), it is expected that men will perform tasks well and women will excel at interacting with other individuals. According to attribution theory, when men and women fail at jobs in which they are expected to succeed, external attributions will be made for their behavior. Similarly, when men and women fail at jobs in which they are expected to fail, the cause of the behavior will be attributed to internal characteristics. Thus, the following hypotheses are presented:

- H7:** External attributions will be made for male leaders who commit task errors and female leaders who commit relationship errors.
- H8:** Internal attributions will be made for male leaders who commit relationship errors and female leaders who commit task errors.

The traditional leader prototype indicates that the best and most common leaders examples are White. According to the two-factor theory of leadership (Likert, 1961, 1967), leaders succeed at both managing tasks and managing people. Thus, individuals who match the leader prototype (i.e., White individuals) will be expected to succeed in managing both tasks and people, whereas individuals who do not match the leader prototype (e.g., Black individuals) will be expected to perform poorly in these two domains. Thus, attribution theory can explain the behavioral attributions made for White and Black leaders who commit task and relationship errors:

- H9:** External attributions will be made when White leaders commit task or relationship errors.
- H10:** Internal attributions will be made when Black leaders commit task or relationship errors.

Although the stereotypical leader prototype is driven by ethical principles, the expectations for ethical behavior vary as a function of group membership. Specifically,

stereotypes engender the beliefs that women are more likely to engage in ethical behavior than males, and White individuals are more likely to engage in ethical behavior than Black individuals.

Research on ethical orientation suggests that women are typically perceived as maintaining higher moral standards and reasoning skills than men. These perceptions may be tied to stereotypes that describe women as fair, kind, compassionate, and sincere (Eagly & Karau 2002; Heilman, 1983), while men are described as driven, competitive, self-serving, and aggressive (Schein, 1973). Furthermore, studies of attitudes toward business ethics have found that women are less likely to endorse unethical behavior than their male counterparts (Betz, O'Connell, & Shepard, 1989; Ruegger & King, 1992; Weeks, Moore, McKinney, & Longenecker, 1999). The individual traits attributed to women and the general findings that women ascribe to stronger ethical principles suggest that women are expected to behave in an ethical manner.

Taken together the previous studies suggest that women are expected to behave more ethically than men. As such, when women commit an ethical error (i.e., disconfirming expectations) an external attribution will be made for the error. Conversely, when men commit an ethical error (i.e., confirming expectations) an internal attribution will be for the error. As such, the following hypothesis is presented:

H11: External attributions will be made when female leaders commit ethical errors and internal attributions will be made when male leaders commit ethical errors.

The stereotypical ethical expectations for White and Black individuals are more ambiguous than those for men and women. Competing stereotypes associated with individuals of color include both criminality and spirituality, each of which would be expected to differentially affect expectations for ethical behavior. An examination of negative stereotypes of

Black individuals indicate that on average Black individuals are perceived as aggressive, criminal, and deviant (Czopp & Monteith, 2006; Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Maddox & Gray, 2002); and these perceptions are especially salient for Black males. Media portrayals and coverage of Black individuals reinforce these stereotypes by depicting Black individuals as felonious (Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996) rather than representing Black individuals who are lawful and contribute positively to the community. These studies suggest that overall, Black individuals would be perceived as less ethical than White individuals, and the expectation is that a Black leader would be more likely to commit an ethical error than a White leader. Thus, the following hypothesis is presented:

H12: External attributions will be made when White leaders who commit ethical errors and internal attributions will be made when Black leaders commit ethical errors.

Contrary to the stereotypes that criminalize Black individuals, particularly men, research suggests that Black individuals are perceived as especially spiritual and religious. Black individuals attend church more regularly (Taylor, Chatters, Jayakody, & Levin, 1996), engage in more private religion behaviors (Roof & McKinney, 1987; Taylor et al., 1996), and are more involved in church-related activities than White individuals (Taylor et al., 1996). In general, females are perceived as more ethical than males, and the stereotype of the “Black criminal” is more strongly associated with Black males and females, thereby suggesting that Black female leaders may be expected to commit fewer ethical errors than Black male leaders.

H13: External attributions will be made when Black females commit ethical errors and internal attributions will be made when Black males commit ethical errors.

Leader Ratings

The current study examines how a leader’s race and gender interact with the type of error committed, thus leading to leader ratings via behavioral attributions. According to attribution

theory, when stereotypes are confirmed internal attributions are made and when stereotypes are disconfirmed external attributions are made. Because a leadership error suggests a lack of ability or competence, errors attributed to internal causes will result in lower leadership ratings than those attributed to external causes.

H14: Leadership liking and willingness to follow the leader will be lower when internal attributions, rather than external attributions, are made.

H15: Recommended punishment will be more severe when internal attributions, rather than external attributions, are made.

Finally, each of the previously proposed hypotheses will be included in one full model such that:

H16: Attribution will mediate the relationship between (a) leader gender and leader ratings, (b) leader race and leader ratings, and (c) error type and leader ratings.

Chapter 2

Method

Design and Participants

This study utilized a 2 (leader gender: male, female) x 2 (leader race: Black, White) x 3 (leader error: task, relationship, ethical) between-subjects design. Participants were recruited online via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). This platform pays individuals a fee for their participation in research studies and has been shown to be a suitable method for collecting data, especially research involving surveys (Goodman, Cryder, & Cheema, 2012). In total, 628 individuals completed the online survey. Individuals who did not complete at least 85% of the survey were removed from the analysis, resulting in a sample size of 563 individuals. Finally, individuals who failed the manipulation checks were removed from the study, resulting in a final sample size of 536 participants.

In the final sample, 59% of the participants were female, 41% were male, and less than 1% identified as a gender outside of the male/female binary. The racial composition of the sample was 77% White, 10% Black or African American, 4% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and less than 2% identified as American Indian or Indian. The composition of the sample is similar to that of the United States as whole (77% White, 13% Black or African American, 17% Hispanic or Latino, and 5.3% Asian; U.S. Census, 2010). Of the participants in this study, 78% reported working at least part-time in a variety of industries including sales and marketing, education, and technology.

Procedure

Participants were shown a brief description of the study on the MTurk platform, which stated that participants would be asked to read a newspaper article and answer questions about

the behavior depicted in the newspaper article. After clicking on the survey link, participants were directed to an online survey in which they were first asked to consent to participate in the study. After consent was obtained, participants were randomly shown a fictitious newspaper story depicting one of the 12 possible conditions. The survey measures were administered to the participants immediately after they finished reading the vignette. Participants were then asked to answer two manipulation check questions that asked the participant to identify the race and gender of the leader in the scenario. Finally, the participants completed several demographic questions.

Manipulation Development

Leader gender and race. The gender and race of the leader were made salient to participants via the leader's name and a headshot photograph. A pilot test was conducted to select first names that were most commonly associated with White and Black individuals. To select last names for the fictitious leaders, data from the United States Census Bureau was analyzed to determine the most commonly reported last names for White and Black individuals. In the White male leader condition, the name Connor Snyder was chosen. The pilot study showed that 93% of participants identified Connor as associated with a White individual. In the White female condition, the name Katherine Murphy was selected as the leader name, with 95% of pilot study participants identifying Katherine as a White-sounding name. In the Black male condition, DeShawn Washington was selected as the leader name as 87% of pilot study participants indicated the name DeShawn described a Black individual. Finally, in the Black female leader condition, the name LaKeisha Jackson was selected, as 88% of the pilot study participants identified LaKeisha as being associated with a Black individual.

In addition to using names commonly associated with White and Black individuals, the fictitious newspaper article contained a headshot photograph of the leader. The race of the individual depicted in the photograph matched the race implied by the leader's name. For example, a photograph of a Black female was shown when the name LaKesiha Jackson was utilized in the newspaper article.

Error type. The newspaper article described a CEO engaging in one of three errors: task, relationship, or ethical. In the task error condition, the leader incorrectly forecasted sales and profits for three consecutive quarters. In the relationship error condition, the leader publicly fires an employee during a company conference call. Finally, in the ethical error condition, the leader recalls a diet pill that has been linked to heart failure after previously denying that the medication was unsafe. The author used actual reported CEO behaviors to create the error vignettes (Adams, 2013).

Measures

All participants completed: 1) measures of recommended punishment (adapted from Trevino, 1992); 2) measures of leader ratings, consisting of the Willingness to Follow scale (Cushenbery et al., 2010) and the Leader Liking scale (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997); 3) ratings of internal and external attribution created for this study; and 4) measures of leader competence, including the leader task competence scale (Cushenbery et al., 2010), the leader relationship competence scale (Cushenbery et al., 2010) and the ethical leadership scale (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005).

Recommended punishment. According to Trevino (1992), punishment is categorized as either imposing negative consequences or withholding positive consequences from an employee after misconduct has occurred. Imposing a negative consequence (i.e., presentation punishment)

administers a punishment to an employee through a negative outcome such as a reprimand, suspension, or termination. Punishment that is administered through the withdrawal of positive consequences (e.g., withholding punishment) includes withholding a pay raise or bonus as a result of employee misconduct. Based on Trevino's (1992) conceptualization of punishment, seven questions were created to measure the extent to which the leader in the scenario should be punished for his or her behavior. An example question that addresses presentation punishment included "The leader should be suspended", and an example withholding punishment question included "The leader should not receive any bonuses for which he/she is eligible". Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale in which 1 = *strongly disagree*, and 5 = *strongly agree*. Of the 7 questions, 5 questions addressed presentation punishment and 2 addressed withholding punishment. Participants' responses to questions of each punishment type were summed such that each participant had a total presentation punishment score and a total withholding punishment score.

Willingness to follow. Participants completed the Willingness to Follow scale (Cushenbery et al, 2009), which measured their willingness to follow the leader depicted in the scenario. A sample item was, "I would like to work with this leader on future projects". Participants' responses were averaged to create a composite score that was utilized in subsequent analyses. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .93.

Leader liking. Ratings of how much the participant liked the leader were measured with the three-item Leader Liking scale (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). One question from this measure was "I would get along well with this leader". Participants' responses were averaged to create a composite score that was utilized in subsequent analyses. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .92.

Internal/external attribution. Participants answered two close-ended question about the internality-externality of the attribution related to the leader's behavior. These questions were adapted from previous measures of attribution (Ababneh, Hackett, & Schat, 2014). The anchor points for the first question were 1 = *Entirely due to the situation* and 5 = *Entirely due to the leader's personality*. The anchor points for the second question were 1 = *Entirely due to factors external to the leader* and 5 = *Entirely due to factors internal to the leader*. The average of the two attribution questions was computed to create a composite score that was used in subsequent analyses in which higher scores indicated more internal attributions and lower scores indicated more external attributions.

Leader task competence. Perceptions of the leader's task competence were measured using an adapted nine-item scale developed by Cushenbery et al. (2009). A sample item was "this leader sets specific goals and standards for task performance". Participants' responses were averaged to create a composite score that was utilized in subsequent analyses. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .88.

Leader relationship competence. Perceptions of the leader's relationship competence were measured using an adapted version of the 11-item scale developed by Cushenbery, and colleagues (2009). Participants responded to questions such as, "the leader provides support and encouragement to someone with a difficult task" and "the leader socializes with people to build relationships". Participants' responses were averaged to create a composite score that was utilized in subsequent analyses. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .91.

Ethical leadership. Respondents were administered the ten-question Ethical Leadership Scale (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005) to gauge the likelihood that the leader in the scenario would engage in specific ethical behaviors and decision-making. Example questions include, the

leader “sets an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics” and the leader “has the best interests of employees in mind”. Participants’ responses were averaged to create a composite score that was utilized in subsequent analyses. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .93.

Chapter 3

Results

Preliminary Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

A missing data analysis was conducted to examine the extent of missing data present in the sample. The analysis revealed 42 missing values with no cases having more than 15% missing. Overall, the missing values analysis resulted in a total missing value percentage of .001%. Due to the small amount of missing data, imputation was not conducted.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and reliabilities for each of the measures included in the subsequent analyses. Cronbach's alpha was used as a measure of reliability and revealed adequate reliability coefficients across all measures. To verify that each of the measures loaded on its respective constructs and that the overall model provided a good fit for the data, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted utilizing the R[©] software package. The results of the CFA suggested the model fit the data well and provided evidence that the measures accurately loaded onto their latent constructs, CFI = .91, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .06, 90% CI [.06, .07], SRMR = .07.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>α</i>
Punishment	20.98	21.00	5.02	.83
Positive Punishment	12.88	13.00	3.89	.84
Negative Punishment	8.10	8.00	1.83	.69
Willingness to Follow	2.26	2.00	1.25	.93
Leader Liking	2.78	2.67	1.34	.92
Attribution	3.25	3.00	0.82	.69
Task Competence	3.87	4.00	1.19	.88
Rel. Competence	3.33	3.75	1.20	.91
Ethical Leadership	3.10	3.10	1.12	.93

n = 536.

Leader Competence Ratings & Error Type

Correlations among leader task competence, leader relationship competence, and ethical leadership are displayed in Table 2. The obtained correlations provided evidence of significant relationships among leader task competence, leader relationship competence, and ethical leadership. A moderate, significant correlation was obtained between task competence and relationship competence, as well as between task competence and ethical leadership. A strong correlation was obtained between measures of relationship competence and ethical competence. The correlations supported the notion that the three types of leadership competence were related, yet independent constructs.

Table 2

Correlations Among Leader Task Competence, Leader Relationship Competence, and Ethical Leadership

Measure	1	2	3
1. Task Competence	-		
2. Rel. Competence	.47**	-	
3. Ethical Leadership	.38**	.64**	-

Note. Rel. Competence = Relationship Competence

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

To test the first hypothesis, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine differences in leader competence ratings, by error type. The results revealed a significant multivariate effect for error type, $\lambda=0.64$, $F(6, 1030) = 43.22$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.20$. Tests of between-subjects effects revealed significant differences in task competence, $F(2, 517) = 15.94$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, relationship competence, $F(2, 517) = 27.70$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.10$, and ethical leadership, $F(2, 517) = 19.30$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$, by error type. Post-hoc tests using Tukey HSD revealed that leaders who committed task errors received lower task competence ratings than when a relationship (mean difference = $-.69$, $p < .01$, $d = -.59$) or ethical (mean difference = $-.44$, $p < .01$, $d = -.39$) error was committed. Leaders who committed

relationship errors were rated significantly lower on relationship competence than those who committed task (mean difference = $-.84$, $p < .01$, $d = -.70$) or ethical (mean difference = $-.74$, $p < .01$, $d = -.63$) errors. Thus, Hypothesis 1 and 2 were supported.

Leaders who committed ethical errors were rated lower on ethical competence than leaders who committed task (mean difference = $-.69$, $p < .01$, $d = -.65$) but not relationship (mean difference = $-.18$, $p > .05$, $d = -.16$) errors. Descriptively, leaders who committed an ethical error received the lowest ethical leadership ratings, but the difference in ratings was not significant between ethical and relationship errors. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported.

Leader Gender and Leadership Ratings

To test for differences in the leadership ratings of willingness to follow, leader liking, and recommended punishment, by gender, a MANOVA was conducted. The results of the MANOVA did not reveal significant differences in leadership ratings by gender, $\lambda=1.00$, $F(4, 524) = .40$, $p > .05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.003$. Descriptively, female leaders who committed any error received higher ratings of leader liking and willingness to follow than their male counterparts, and lower ratings of withholding punishment; however, these differences were not significant. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Leader Race and Leadership Ratings

To examine differences in leader ratings of willingness to follow, leader liking, and recommended punishment, by race, a MANOVA was conducted. The results of the MANOVA revealed significant differences in leadership ratings by race, $\lambda=0.98$, $F(4, 524) = 3.00$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. Tests of between-subjects effects were conducted to further examine the differences in leadership ratings by race. The results showed significant differences in willingness to follow, $F(1, 527) = 4.30$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$, and leader liking, $F(1, 527) = 9.17$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$.

There were no significant differences in presentation, $F(1, 527) = 1.20, p > .05, \eta_p^2 = 0.00$, or withholding punishment, $F(1, 527) = .18, p > .05, \eta_p^2 = 0.00$. Post-hoc analyses were conducted using Tukey HSD and revealed that Black leaders who committed any error were rated higher on willingness to follow (mean difference = .22, $d = .18$) and leader liking (mean difference = .35, $d = .26$) than White leaders. Because the significant differences between White and Black leaders were contrary to expectation, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Error Type and Leadership Ratings

Hypothesis 6 stated that leaders who committed ethical errors would be rated lower on leader liking and willingness to follow the leader, as well as higher on recommended punishment than leaders who committed task or relationship errors. To test for differences in leader ratings as a function of error type, a MANOVA was conducted. The results yielded significant differences in leadership ratings by error type, $\lambda=0.66, F(8, 1046) = 30.61, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = 0.19$. Tests of between-subjects effects were conducted to further examine the differences in leadership ratings and the results showed significant differences in willingness to follow, $F(2, 526) = 5.16, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = 0.02$, leader liking, $F(2, 526) = 34.62, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = 0.12$, presentation punishment, $F(2, 526) = 49.85, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = 0.16$, and withholding punishment, $F(2, 526) = 17.22, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = 0.06$.

To further examine the differences in leader ratings, post-hoc analyses were again conducted using Tukey's HSD. Leaders who committed ethical errors were rated significantly lower on leader liking (mean difference = .92, $p < .01, d = -.76$) and willingness to follow (mean difference = .39, $p < .05, d = -.32$) than leaders who committed task errors; however, the differences in ratings of leader liking (mean difference = .08, $p > .05, d = .06$) and willingness to

follow (mean difference = .06, $p > .05$, $d = .10$) between leaders who committed relationship and ethical errors were not significant.

An examination of the punishment outcomes revealed that leaders who committed ethical errors were given higher recommendations for presentation punishment than leaders who committed task (mean difference = 3.76, $p < .01$, $d = 1.05$) and relationship (mean difference = 2.43, $p < .01$) errors. In addition, leaders who committed relationship errors were given higher recommendations for presentation punishment than leaders who committed task errors (mean difference = 1.33, $p < .01$, $d = .66$). Leaders who committed ethical errors were given significantly higher recommendations for withholding punishment than leaders who committed relationship errors (mean difference = .97, $p < .01$, $d = .52$), but not leaders who committed task errors (mean difference = .03, $p > .05$, $d = .01$). In light of these results, Hypothesis 6 was partially supported.

Leader Gender and Behavioral Attributions

Hypothesis 7 predicted that external attributions would be made when (a) males committed task errors and (b) females committed relationship errors. Hypothesis 8 predicted that internal attributions would be made when (a) males committed relationship errors and (b) females committed task errors. To examine these hypotheses, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used, where attribution was the dependent variable, and the experimental condition (i.e., male task, male relationship, female task, female relationship) was the grouping variable. The means and standard deviations for the groups are presented in Table 3. Descriptively, the mean attribution score for each of the four groups was higher than the midpoint on the attribution scale, suggesting that internal attributions were made for all four conditions. Thus, support exists for hypothesis 8, but not hypothesis 7.

The results of the ANOVA revealed significant differences in the amount of internal attribution across the groups, $F(3, 358) = 17.55, p < .01$. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD showed that male task errors were given lower internal attribution ratings than male relationship errors (mean difference = .62, $p < .01, d = -.80$), and female task errors were given lower internal attribution ratings than female relationship errors (mean difference = .56, $p < .01, d = -.72$). The differences in internal attribution for males and females when a task error (mean difference = .07, $p > .05, d = .10$) or relationship error (mean difference = .01, $p > .05, d = .01$) was committed were negligible.

Table 3

Mean of Attributions for Task & Relationship Errors, by Gender

Measure	Mean	SD
Male Task Errors	2.95	.75
Male Relationship Errors	3.57	.80
Female Task Errors	3.02	.72
Female Relationship Errors	3.58	.82

N = 359.

Leader Race and Behavioral Attributions

Hypothesis 9 stated that the combination of leader race and error type would affect the type of behavioral attribution made, such that external attributions would be made when White leaders committed task errors or relationship errors. In addition, Hypothesis 10 predicted that internal attributions would be made for Black leaders who committed task errors or relationship errors. ANOVA was conducted to determine the mean differences that exist in attribution as a result of the experimental condition (i.e., White task, White relationship, Black task, Black relationship). The means and standard deviations for each of the four conditions are presented in Table 4. Descriptively, the mean attribution score for each of the four groups was higher than the midpoint on the attribution scale, suggesting that internal attributions were made for all four conditions. Thus, support exists for hypothesis 10, but not hypothesis 9.

The results of the ANOVA were significant, $F(3, 358) = 17.83, p < .01$, revealing that differences in attribution exist across the four groups. Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD revealed that internal attributions were higher for relationship errors than task errors for both White (mean difference = .64, $p < .01, d = .82$) and Black (mean difference = .54, $p < .01, d = .31$) leaders. The differences in internal attributions were small and non-significant for White leaders and Black leaders when task (mean difference = .03, $p > .05, d = .04$) and relationship (mean difference = .15, $p > .05, d = .15$) errors were committed.

Table 4

Mean of Attributions for Task & Relationship Errors, by Race

Measure	Mean	SD
White Task Errors	3.00	.70
White Relationship Errors	3.63	.85
Black Task Errors	2.97	.77
Black Relationship Errors	3.50	.76

N = 359.

Ethical Errors and Behavioral Attribution

Hypothesis 11 predicted that when leaders committed ethical errors, the behavioral attributions would vary based on the leader's gender. An independent samples t-test was used to determine whether gender differences existed, $t(174) = .64, p > .05$. Descriptively, the attributions made for male and female leaders who committed ethical errors were higher than the midpoint, suggesting that internal attributions were made regardless of the leader's gender. Post-hoc analyses show that higher internal attributions were made for male (mean = 3.26) than female (mean = 3.18) leaders who committed ethical errors, but this difference was not significant. Overall, Hypothesis 11 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 12 predicted that for leaders who committed ethical errors, behavioral attributions would vary based on the race of the leader. An independent samples t-test was used to test the hypothesis, $t(174) = 1.96, p = .05$, and revealed a significant mean difference between

White and Black leaders. Descriptively, the attribution means for White (mean = 3.34) and Black (mean = 3.10) leaders were higher than the midpoint, suggesting that internal attributions were made when ethical errors were committed, regardless of the leader's race. Because internal attributions were made for both White and Black leaders, Hypothesis 12 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 13 posited that the behavioral attributions assigned to ethical errors would vary for Black male and Black female leaders. To examine the difference, an independent samples t-test was conducted, $t(86) = 1.22, p > .05$. Descriptively, both Black males (mean = 3.00) and Black females (mean = 3.21) received average attributions that were higher than midpoint of the scale. Thus, internal attributions were made for both Black male and female leaders who committed ethical errors, though the difference was not significant. Thus, Hypothesis 13 was partially supported.

Attribution and Leader Ratings

Hypothesis 14 and 15 predicted that when internal behavioral attributions were made, ratings of leader liking and willingness to follow would decrease, while recommendations for positive and negative punishment would increase. These relationships were examined using the Pearson product moment coefficient, and correlations are reported in Table 5. There was a significant moderate relationship between attribution and leader liking such that when attribution scores were higher (i.e., more internal) ratings of leader liking were lower. Similarly, a significant moderate relationship was revealed between attribution and willingness to follow, such that when attribution scores were higher, ratings of willingness to follow the leader were lower. As a result, Hypothesis 14 was supported. The correlations between attribution and positive and negative punishment were both significant and positive. Thus, as attribution scores

increased (i.e., more internal), recommendations for both presentation and withholding punishment increased, supporting Hypothesis 15.

Table 5
Correlations Among Attribution, Leader Liking, & Willingness to Follow

Measure	1	2	3	4	5
1. Attribution	-				
2. Leader Liking	-.39**	-			
3. Willingness to Follow	-.32**	.68**	-		
4. Presentation Punish	.31**	-.53**	-.52**	-	
5. Withholding Punish	.20**	-.34**	-.50**	.48**	-

$N = 536$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Mediation Models

The research model originally specified that behavioral attribution (i.e., internal or external) would mediate the relationship between leader characteristics (i.e., gender, race, error type) and leader ratings (i.e., leader liking, willingness to follow, and recommendations for punishment). However, the previous analyses revealed that none of the leadership ratings varied as a function of the leader's gender (Hypothesis 16a). Furthermore, recommendations for punishment did not vary based on the leader's race. Thus, the mediation models were adjusted to account for these findings, and the revised mediation models are presented in Figure 1. All of the mediation models were tested using the PROCESS macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (2011).

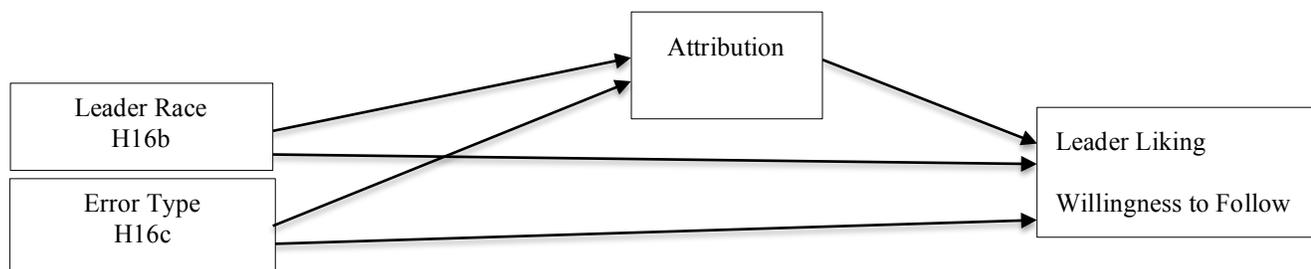


Figure 1. The specified research model that predicts behavioral attribution will mediate the relationship between leader characteristics (i.e., race, error type) and leader ratings (i.e., leader liking, willingness to follow).

In the specified mediation models the independent variables were multicategorical, thus necessitating dummy coding for the race and error type variables. According to Hayes and Preacher (2014), mediation can be tested utilizing multicategorical independent variables using $k-1$ mediation iterations, where k = the number of categories within the independent variable. Thus, for the mediation models specifying race as the independent variable, only one iteration was required because the race variable included only two levels (White, Black); the resulting dummy coded variable represented as 0 = White and 1 = Black.

The error type variable included three categories (task, relationship, ethical), thus requiring the calculation of two dummy-coded variables. Relationship error was dummy coded as 1 = relationship error and 0 = task error, whereas ethical error was coded as 1 = ethical error and 0 = task error. Thus, for all analyses, task errors were used as the referent group. According to Hayes & Preacher (2014), the first iteration of the mediation model specifies one of the dummy coded variables (e.g., relationship error) as the independent variable while the remaining dummy coded variable (e.g., ethical error) is entered into the model as the covariate. For the second iteration, the same mediation model is tested but with the original covariate (e.g., ethical error) now entered as the independent variable, and the original independent variable (e.g.,

relationship error) entered as the covariate. The estimated path coefficients derived from all mediation iterations are then tested to determine whether or not mediation is supported.

The effect of leader race on leadership ratings via attribution. Separate mediation analyses were used to the extent to which behavioral attribution mediated the relationships between leader race and leader ratings (leader liking, willingness to follow the leader). Figure 2 displays the obtained statistical model for the mediated relationship between leader race and ratings of leader liking via behavioral attribution.

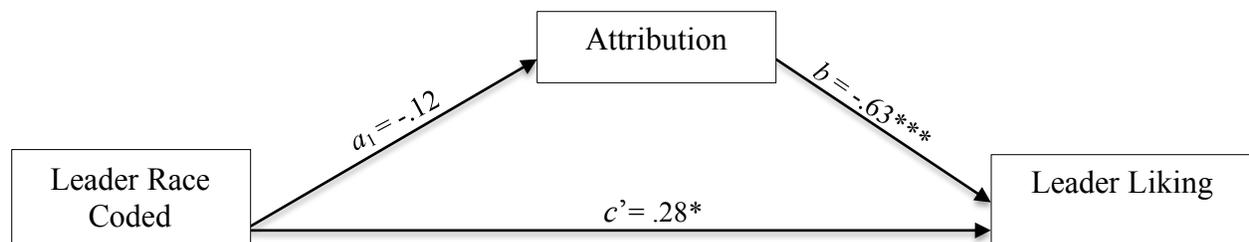


Figure 2. Estimated model coefficients resulting the specification of behavioral attribution as the mediator between leader race and leader liking. Leader race coded as 0 = White, 1 = Black.

The first model path ($a_1, X \rightarrow M$) was not significant, $\beta = -.12, t = -1.67, p > .05, SE = .07$. Thus, leader race was not significantly related to behavioral attribution scores. Paths b and c' were significant showing that attribution scores were significantly related to ratings of leader liking ($\beta = -.63, t = -9.70, p < .001, SE = .07$, and the relative direct effect of leader race on ratings of leader liking ($c', X \rightarrow Y, M$) was significant $\beta = .28, t = 2.61, p < .05, SE = .11$. The relative direct effect shows that when participants read about a Black leader (versus a White leader), ratings of leader liking were, on average, .28 points higher.

An examination of the relative indirect effect (a_1b), $\beta = .08, SE = .05$, by means of the Sobel test and bootstrapped confidence interval (Hayes, 2012; MacKinnon & Fairchild, 2009; Sobel, 1986) revealed that the relative indirect effect of leader race on ratings of leader liking through behavioral attribution was not significant, $Z = 1.64, p > .05$, and the confidence interval

(95% CI [-.01, .17]) contained 0, thereby corroborating the Sobel test findings. Thus, the results do not support a mediation model.

Figure 3 displays the obtained statistical model for the mediated relationship between leader race and ratings of willingness to follow the leader, via behavioral attribution. As expected based on the previous mediation findings, the first model path ($a_1, X \rightarrow M$) was not significant, $\beta = -.12, t = -1.67, p > .05, SE = .07$. Thus, leader race was not significantly related to behavioral attribution scores. Path b ($M \rightarrow Y$) was significant, $\beta = -.48, t = -7.60, p < .001, SE = .06$, demonstrating that behavioral attribution scores were negatively associated with ratings of willingness to follow the leader. The relative direct effect ($c', X \rightarrow Y, M$) was not significant $\beta = .17, t = 1.63, p > .05, SE = .10$.

An examination of the relative indirect effect (a_1b), $\beta = .06, SE = .04$, revealed that the relative indirect effect of leader race on ratings of leader liking through behavioral attribution was not significant, $Z = 1.73, p > .05$, and the confidence interval (95% CI [.00, .14]) contained 0, thereby corroborating the Sobel test findings. Taken together, the two mediation models demonstrate that attribution does not mediate the relationship between leader race and leader ratings. Thus, Hypothesis 16b was not supported.

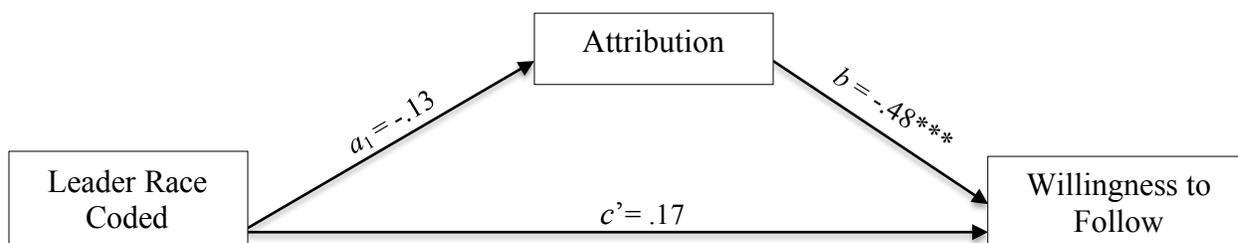


Figure 3. Estimated model coefficients resulting from the specification of behavioral attribution as the mediator between leader race and willingness to follow. Leader race coded as 0 = White, 1 = Black.

The effect of leader error type on leader liking via behavioral attribution. Two mediation models were used to test the extent to which attribution mediates the relationship between leader error type and ratings of leaders. Figure 4 displays the statistical model for the mediated relationship between leader error and ratings of leader liking, via behavioral attribution. In this model D1 represents ethical error as the dummy coded variable and D2 represents relationship error as the dummy coded variable with task error as the referent group for both D1 and D2. Thus, the findings can be interpreted by comparing the effect of the dummy-coded variable (i.e., relationship error, ethical error) to the referent group (i.e. task error). The obtained model provided support for the hypothesized mediated relationship. Leader error type and behavioral attribution accounted for a significant amount of the variance in ratings of leader liking, $F(3, 528) = 49.75, p < .001, R^2 = .22$. The obtained effect size indicates a moderate effect, such that the tested model accounted for 22% of the variance in leader liking ratings.

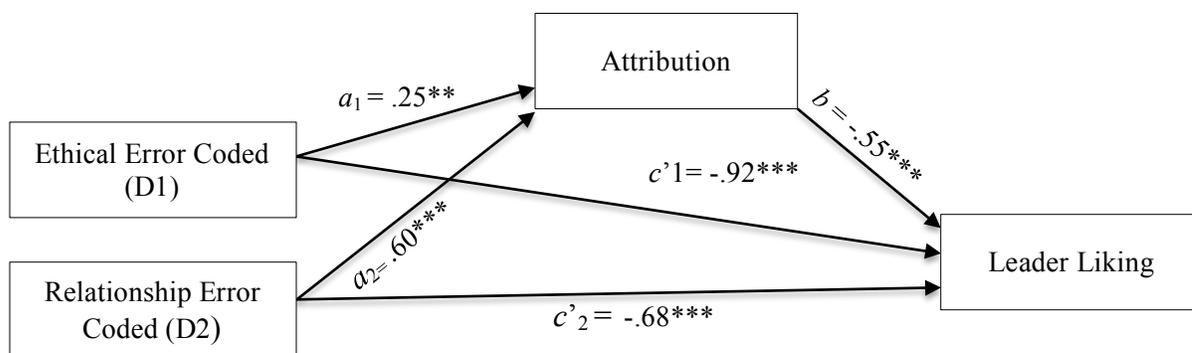


Figure 4. Estimated model coefficients resulting from the specification of behavioral attribution as the mediator between error type and leader liking.

An examination of the individual associations included in the model revealed significance for all proposed paths (i.e., paths $a_1, a_2, b, c'1$, and $c'2$). The reported association between the ethical error condition and behavioral attribution (path $a_1, X \rightarrow M$) was statistically significant, $\beta = .25, t = 3.07, p < .01, SE = .08$. In addition, the association between the relationship error condition and behavioral attribution was statistically significant, (path a_2 ,

$X \rightarrow M$), $\beta = .60$, $t = 7.20$, $p < .001$, $SE = .08$. These findings show that participants who were assigned to the ethical error scenario reported behavioral attribution scores that were, on average, .25 units higher (i.e., more internal) than those who received the task error scenario. Similarly, participants who viewed the relationship error scenario reported behavioral attribution scores that were, on average, .60 units higher (i.e., more internal) than those who viewed the task error scenario.

Behavioral attribution scores were associated with ratings of leader liking (path b , $M \rightarrow Y$, X), $\beta = -.55$, $t = -8.32$, $p < .001$, $SE = .07$. The relative direct effect of the ethical error condition on ratings of leader liking was significant (path c_1' , $X \rightarrow Y$, M), $\beta = -.93$, $t = -6.93$, $p < .001$, $SE = .13$, as was the relative direct effect of the relationship error condition on ratings of leader liking (path c_2' , $X \rightarrow Y$, M), $\beta = -.68$, $t = -5.19$, $p < .001$, $SE = .13$. Together these two relative direct effects indicate that the effect of error type on ratings of leader liking was partially transmitted by behavioral attribution.

The relative indirect effects of error type on ratings of leader liking through behavioral attribution were measured for both the ethical error condition and the relationship error condition. The relative indirect effects of the ethical error condition, (a_1b) , $\beta = -.14$, $SE = .05$, and relationship error condition (a_2b) , $\beta = -.33$, $SE = .06$, on ratings of leader liking via behavioral attribution were evaluated by means of the Sobel test in addition to the calculation of a bootstrap confidence interval (Hayes, 2012; MacKinnon & Fairchild, 2009; Sobel, 1986). The relative indirect effect for both the ethical, $Z = -2.86$, $p < .05$, and relationship, $Z = -5.42$, $p < .01$, error condition was statistically significant. Following the recommendations of Hayes (2012), a bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the relative indirect effects were calculated using 10,000 bootstrap samples. The confidence interval for both the ethical (95% CI

= [-.25, -.05]) and relationship (95% CI = [-.47, -.22]) error condition excluded zero, thereby substantiating the significant indirect effects as reported by the Sobel tests. These results demonstrate that relative to the task error scenario, participants who viewed the ethical error scenario reported leader liking scores that were, on average, .14 units lower as a result of the rated attribution. Further, relative to the task error scenario, participants who viewed the relationship error scenario reported leader liking scores that were, on average, .33 units lower as a result of the reported attribution.

The effect of leader race on willingness to follow via behavioral attribution. Figure 5 displays the statistical model for the mediated relationship between leader error and ratings of willingness to follow the leader, via behavioral attribution. The leader error variables were dummy coded using the same process described above. The obtained model provided support for the hypothesized mediated relationship. Leader error type and behavioral attribution accounted for a significant amount of the variance in ratings of willingness to follow the leader, $F(3, 527) = 21.34, p < .01, R^2 = .11$. The obtained effect size indicates a modest effect, such that the tested model accounted for 11% of the variance in ratings of willingness to follow the leader.

An examination of the individual associations included in the model revealed significance for three of the five proposed paths (i.e., paths $a_1, a_2,$ and b). The reported association between the ethical error condition and behavioral attribution (path $a_1, X \rightarrow M$) was statistically significant, $\beta = .24, t = 2.85, p < .01, SE = .08$. In addition, the association between the relationship error condition and behavioral attribution was statistically significant, (path $a_2, X \rightarrow M$), $\beta = .58, t = 6.99, p < .001, SE = .08$. These findings are consonant with the previously explained mediation model, as paths a_1 and a_2 are identical across the two mediation models.

Behavioral attribution scores were associated with ratings of willingness to follow the leader (path b , $M \rightarrow Y, X$), $\beta = -.48$, $t = -7.42$, $p < .001$, $SE = .07$. The relative direct effect of the ethical error condition on ratings of willingness to follow the leader was not significant (path c_1' , $X \rightarrow Y, M$), $\beta = -.22$, $t = -1.79$, $p > .05$, $SE = .13$, nor was the relative direct effect of the relationship error condition on ratings of willingness to follow the leader (path c_2' , $X \rightarrow Y, M$), $\beta = -.02$, $t = -.16$, $p > .05$, $SE = .13$. Because the relative direct effects are not significant when attribution is included in the model, the effect of error type on ratings of willingness to follow the leader is fully transmitted via behavioral attribution.

The relative indirect effects of error type on ratings of willingness to follow the leader via behavioral attribution were measured for both the ethical error condition and the relationship error condition. Again, the Sobel test showed that the relative indirect effects of the ethical error condition, (a_1b) , $\beta = -.12$, $SE = .04$, $Z = -2.64$, $p < .05$, and relationship error condition, (a_2b) , $\beta = -.28$, $SE = .06$, $Z = -5.06$, $p < .001$, on ratings of willingness to follow the leader through behavioral attribution were significant. The bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals for the relative indirect effects were calculated using 10,000 bootstrap samples. The confidence interval for both the ethical (95% CI = [-.22, -.04]) and relationship (95% CI = [-.41, -.18]) error condition excluded zero, thereby substantiating the significant indirect effects as reported by the Sobel tests. The results of the mediation analyses show that for participants in the ethical error condition (as compared to the task error condition) ratings of willingness to follow the leader were, on average, .12 lower as a result of the rated behavioral attribution. Similarly, for participants in the relationship error condition (as compared to the task error condition) ratings of willingness to follow the leader were, on average, .28 lower as a result of the rated behavioral attribution. Together, these two mediation models provide support for Hypothesis 16c.

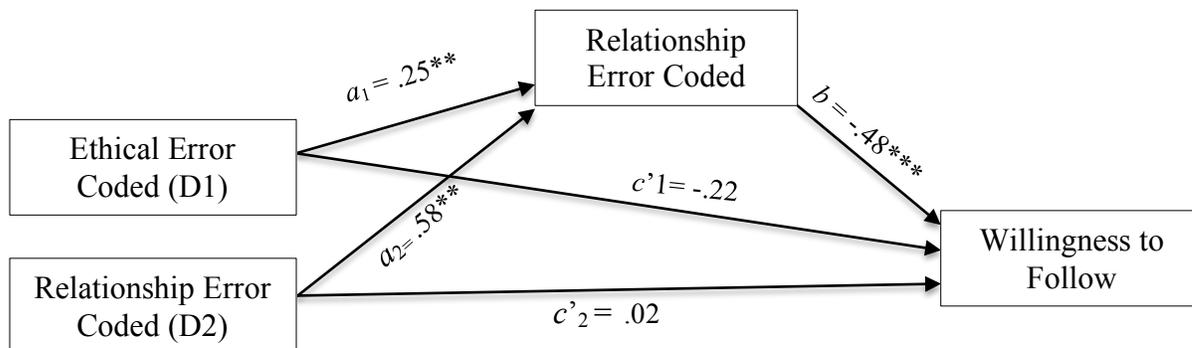


Figure 5. Estimated model coefficients resulting from the specification of behavioral attribution as the mediator of the effect of error type on willingness to follow.

Chapter 4

Discussion

This study intended to bridge the diversity and leader error literature by examining how the personal characteristics of leaders influenced subsequent leader ratings after an error occurred. It was posited that, overall, leadership ratings would be lower for female and Black leaders who committed errors as compared to male and White leaders; yet, these assertions were not supported in the current study. In fact, the results demonstrate that males and females did not receive significantly different ratings of leader liking, willingness to follow, or recommended punishment. One explanation for these findings may arise from less saliency of gender (as compared to the error) in ratings of leader effectiveness after an error has occurred. According to Powell, Butterfield, & Bartol (2008), differences in ratings of male and female leaders may be contingent upon the type of leadership style exhibited. Specifically, leadership ratings did not vary for male and female leaders who utilize a transactional leadership style. One dimension of transactional leadership (Bass, 1985) encompasses management by exception behaviors in which a leader fails to take action until after a problem has already occurred. As a result, regardless of gender, a leader who commits an error may be perceived as reactive, rather than proactive, subsequently resulting in negative leadership ratings.

Also contrary to expectations, Black leaders who committed an error were rated higher on leader liking and willingness to follow than White leaders. Although these findings need to be examined in more detail, it is possible that White leaders who fail to live up to the leader prototype are rated more harshly than Black leaders. Rosette et al. (2008) presented similar findings in which White leaders received more credit than Black leaders when there was organizational success, but there were no differences when there was failure. Since Black

individuals are not considered prototypical leaders, their failure to live up to leadership standards (e.g., by committing an error) may result in less severe ratings than White individuals who are held to the leader prototype. These findings are, however, inconsistent with double standards theory, which would predict more lenient standards for White male leaders than White women and racial-ethnic minorities (Foschi, 2000). Despite the non-significant finds regarding the effects of leader race and gender on leadership ratings, this study contributes to the literature both theoretically and practically, and can inform future research endeavors.

Theoretical Contributions

Leader error framework. This study extends the leader error literature in many ways, evidencing that leader error is a complex phenomenon that can significantly affect followers' perceptions of leaders. Most notably, this study provided support for the inclusion of a third dimension of leader error: ethical errors. In previous studies of leader error (Hunter et al., 2011; Thoroughgood et al., 2012), errors have been described as either task or relationship, thereby excluding the critical dimension of ethical errors. The results from this study revealed that perceptions of task competence, relationship competence, and ethical leadership are related, yet separable, suggesting that the three error types (i.e., task, relationship, ethical) can be distinctly measured. This study also demonstrated that the type of error a leader commits could result in differential ratings of leadership effectiveness. Descriptively, ethical errors are related to the most negative perceptions of leader liking and willingness to follow the leader, as well as the highest ratings of recommended punishment. Yet, the results show a clear separation in the ratings of task errors from relationship and ethical errors, where task errors yield the least amount of damage to leader ratings. Participants most liked and were most willing to follow a leader who committed a task error, suggesting that errors resulting from forgotten or improperly

executed tasks are not perceived as severe as those rooted in interpersonal relationship or ethics. Surprisingly, there were no significant differences between the ratings of leader liking or willingness to follow for relationship and ethical errors, suggesting that perceptions of effective leadership may be contingent upon leaders behaving ethically as well as treating followers well. Taken together, this study demonstrates that the three types of leader error can be measured independently and each error type differentially influences subsequent leader ratings.

Attribution as a mediating mechanism. This study aimed to identify the extent to which error type influences perceptions of leaders' effectiveness, as well as to understand how this effect was transmitted. The results show that behavioral attributions partially mediated the relationship between error type and ratings of leader liking. Leaders who committed ethical or relationship errors were given significantly lower ratings of leader liking as a result of the behavioral attribution assigned to the leader's behavior. Thus, because internal attributions were made for leaders who committed ethical or relationship errors, ratings of leader liking decreased.

In addition, behavioral attributions fully mediated the relationship between error type and ratings of willingness to follow the leader. Again, leaders who committed ethical or relationship errors (as compared to task errors) were given significantly lower ratings of willingness to follow the leader. This effect was transmitted through behavioral attributions, such that the type of error committed by the leader was related to lower behavioral attributions (i.e., more internal), which in turn was related to lower ratings of willingness to follow the leader. Interestingly, in both mediation models, exposure to the relationship error condition resulted in a stronger relative indirect effect on leader ratings than exposure to the ethical error condition, suggesting that relationship errors may be perceived as the most egregious error type. Thus, the effect of error type on leadership ratings that occurs via behavioral attribution is stronger for those who commit

relationship errors as compared to ethical or task errors. Taken together, this study not only examined how error type can lead to differential ratings of leader effectiveness, but also provided an explanation of the process by which this effect was transmitted.

Practical Contributions

Although it was hypothesized that behavioral attributions would vary as a result of the leader's race, gender, and error type, the results suggest that, on average, participants made internal behavioral attributions for leader errors (of any type), thereby attributing the cause of the error to the leader's personality or factors implicit within the leader. Participants were more likely to endorse internal causes as explanation for the leader's behavior than external causes. While contrary to expectations, these results are important and interesting. First, when the details surrounding a leader's error are ambiguous (as was the case in this study), individuals may be more likely to attribute the behavior to the faults of the individual who committed the error. In the absence of distinguishing information, individuals may assume internal causes for the observed behavior. These results suggest that organizations need to implement formal procedures for reviewing leaders after an error has occurred to reduce biases in subsequent decision-making processes. For example, it is necessary for organizations to examine both internal and external factors that influenced the leader's behavior to help protect against internal attribution biases that attribute blame personally to the leader.

In addition, when retroactively discussing a leader's error with stakeholders or the public, organizations may benefit from explaining the external factors that contributed to the cause of the error. Our results suggest that when the causes for a leader error are ambiguous, individuals may utilize internal attributions as an explanation for the error. This has important implications for leaders who commit errors visible to followers or the public; in the absence of evidence,

errors may be attributed to internal causes, thereby resulting in lower leader ratings. However, providing information about external influences on leader error may buffer subsequent negative leader ratings. Previous research has shown that leader responses following an alleged violation (Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004) can affect followers' trust levels based on the authenticity of the response. More research is needed to understand the extent to which leader ratings are affected when behavioral attributions are made explicit (versus ambiguous), and how leader and organizational responses to errors influence behavioral attributions, followers' perceptions of leaders, as well as ratings of leader effectiveness.

Limitations

Despite the findings described above, this study is not without its limitations, and these should be carefully considered when interpreting the results. Although research has shown that vignette-based studies are appropriate for measuring attitudes and perceptions, especially those related to leadership and ethics (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014), it is possible that participants' ratings would demonstrate different patterns in real-life scenarios as a result of social and contextual factors. For example, perceptions of leaders may vary based on the leaders' individual characteristics, status, and relationships with followers in their respective organizations.

Second, this study sampled participants from MTurk; although this has been found to be an adequate platform for obtaining survey responses (Goodman et al., 2012), the results may not generalize to all employees or account for behavior in real-life situations. Although the sample demographics from this study mirror those of the greater United States, it is possible that the results are not generalizable to all employees, and caution should be used when generalizing the results to other contexts.

Implications and Future Research

Leader error is a relatively new phenomenon of interest in organizational research; yet, it is an important one based on the consequences errors yield for both employees and organizations (Hunter et al., 2011). This study demonstrated the leader error domain should be broadened to include ethical errors in addition to task and relationship errors. While leader error research has typically relied upon vignette-based methodologies (Thoroughgood et al., 2012;) employing field studies would allow these results to be tested in an actual work context. Thus, future research that measures employees' reactions to real leader errors would greatly advance our understanding of the leader-follower relationship after errors have occurred.

Notably, this study revealed that the type of error committed by the leader significantly affected leadership ratings. Thus, it is possible that different error types will yield disparate consequences contingent upon the severity perceptions of the error, even if the outcomes of error are equally negative. The study of leader error would be greatly benefited by future studies that examine the real-life consequences associated with leader errors to determine if the type of error yields differential punishment.

In this study, White leaders were given lower leadership ratings than Black leaders. It is essential that organizations employ objective measures of ratings and standardized consequences to ensure that outcomes are applied equally to all leaders. More in-depth study is needed to parse out why differences in ratings exist; however, preliminary results indicate that race and gender may be less salient following errors than success (Rosette et al., 2008; Singletary, Madera, & Hebl, 2013). Future research should examine whether or not these relationships hold true across leadership status (e.g., manager, CEO) and across industries (e.g., blue color jobs, technology). In addition, there are a multitude of other individual characteristics that may contribute to the

differential perceptions of leaders after an error has occurred, including experience, organizational tenure, age, and citizenship status. Future research is needed to further explore these relationships.

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Appendix A Study Measures

Ethical Leadership Scale (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005)

1. Conducts his/her personal life in an ethical manner
2. Defines success not just by results but also the way that they are obtained
3. Listens to what employees have to say
4. Disciplines employees who violate ethical standards
5. Makes fair and balanced decisions
6. Can be trusted
7. Discusses business ethics or values with employees
8. Sets an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics
9. Has the best interests of employees in mind
10. When making decisions asks, "what is the right thing to do?"

Leader Liking (Adapted from Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997)

1. I think this leader would make a good friend
2. I would along well with this leader
3. I like this leader very much

Leader Relationship Competence (Adapted from Cushenbery, Thoroughgood, & Hunter, 2009)

1. Provides support and encouragement to someone with a difficult task
2. Socializes with people to build relationships
3. Recognizes contributions and accomplishments
4. Provides coaching and mentoring when appropriate
5. Helps resolve conflicts in a constructive way

Leader Task Competence (Cushenbery, Thoroughgood, & Hunter, 2009)

1. Organizes work activities to improve efficiency
2. Plans short-term operations
3. Sets specific goals and standards for task performance
4. Directs and coordinate work activities
5. Monitors operations and performance

Recommended Punishment (new scale)

1. The leader should complete additional training
2. The leader should be privately reprimanded
3. The leader should be publicly reprimanded
4. The leader should be suspended
5. The leader should be fired
6. The leader should not receive a pay raise
7. The leader should not receive any bonuses for which he/she is eligible
8. The leader should be punished legally

Willingness to Follow (Cushenbery, Thoroughgood, & Hunter, 2009)

1. I would like to work with this leader on future projects
2. I would be willing to serve under this leader
3. I would enjoy working with this leader
4. If given a choice, I would rather not work with this leader R
5. I would be unhappy if I was required to work with this leader R
6. I would request to work with this leader

Appendix B

Sample Manipulations

Black Male Ethical Error

Human Resource Review Weekly

On Leadership

Omni Inc. CEO Reports False Earnings

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By: K. L. Sampson



Last week, an investigation into Omni Inc. CEO, DeShawn Washington, shocked the business world when it revealed that the CEO falsely inflated earnings to help bolster his end-of-quarter-bonus. Washington submitted an earnings statement to the board of directors, which was overinflated by \$67 million. The misreported earnings would have resulted in an additional \$8 million in the CEO's quarterly bonus. An anonymous source said that Washington had previously been shorted on his quarterly bonuses. Although several attempts were made to contact Washington's office, he has not responded with comments about the most recent financial statement. It is safe to report that company morale is at an all-time low, and the organization cannot afford many more mistakes like this one.

White Female Task Error

Human Resource Review Weekly

On Leadership

Omni Inc. CEO Discusses Deflated Performance

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By: K. L. Sampson



Last week, CEO Katherine Murphy shocked the business world by publicly announcing Omni Inc.'s 10th consecutive quarter of dismal performance. The financial reports, made available to employees and investors, reported that Omni Inc. has experienced a 24% decline in sales since Murphy took over as CEO nearly 3 years ago. In addition, Omni Inc. reported a total loss of \$159 million in this latest quarter. Financial critics say that Murphy's decision to pursue a cost-cutting strategy, rather than expand Omni's business offerings, has led to decreased sales and performance. However, an anonymous source says that the economic recession has created a need for the cost-cutting strategy. Although several attempts were made to contact Murphy's office, she has not responded with comments about the most recent financial report. It is safe to report that company morale is at an all-time low, and the organization cannot afford many more mistakes like this.

White Male Relationship Error

Human Resource Review Weekly

On Leadership

Omni Inc. CEO Publicly Fires Employee



By: K. L. Sampson



Last week, Omni Inc. CEO Connor Snyder shocked the business world by publicly firing a long-time employee during a company-wide conference call. The purpose of the conference call was to review Omni's international sales strategy that has been unfolding over the last year. Unfortunately, one employee will not be continuing on with those efforts. According to employees who were on the call, Snyder lost his temper when an unnamed employee began questioning some of the information presented by the CEO and his top management team. After several questions, Snyder shouted, "Enough!

That's it with the questions! You're out! You're fired! Out!" According to an anonymous source, this is not the first time the employee had challenged Omni management. Although several attempts were made to contact Snyder's office, he has not responded with comments about the firing. It is safe to report that company morale is at an all-time low, and the organization cannot afford many more mistakes like this one.