PhD Studentships for Academic Year 2026-27

Centre for Leadership and Followership (CLF)

About the Research Centre

The Centre for Leadership and Followership offers a vibrant, international community of scholars who seek to understand 'who leads, and who follows' in organisations as well as the intersection of this research with key organisational behaviour topics such as identity, trust, and social networks. An important aspect of our centre is collaboration and mentorship. We have events with renowned international speakers, and work in international collaborations—all for the purpose of advancing the study of leadership and followership.

We currently propose six research topics for scholarship applications. Please get in touch with the potential supervisors named below <u>before</u> submitting your application.

Find out more at: [Centre for Leadership and Followership - Durham University Business School](#)

Topic 1

Title of Proposed Research Topic:

Being Trusted Too Much, Too Little, or Just Right? Causes and Consequences of Trust Meta-accuracy in Leader-follower Dyads

Potential Supervisors:

[Professor Bart de Jong](#)

[Dr Janey Zheng](#)

Description of Possible Research Topic:

Due to its dominant focus on the *level* of trust organizational members have in each other, extant research implicitly assumes that these members are *accurate* in their assessments of how trustworthy others are, and how much they are trusted by others (Dirks & De Jong, 2022; De Jong et al., in press). There is growing interest in and evidence, however, that parties' trust perceptions may not always be accurate,

and that they instead are trusting or being trusted either too much or too little than is warranted (Campagna et al., 2020; Schilke & Huang, 2018). A few studies have been done on this topic, but there's a lot we still don't know about the causes and consequences of trust (meta-)accuracy. This PhD project will therefore aim to gain more insight by studying this topic in the context of leader-follower dyads. The project will theoretically draw on attribution and information processing theories, and will utilise polynomial regression (Edwards & Perry, 1993) and the Directional and Nondirectional Difference Framework (Bednall & Zhang, 2020) to empirically analyze the data. Dyadic, cross-sectional survey data for a pilot study have already been collected in the Netherlands and can serve as a springboard for the PhD project.

Key References:

Bednall, T. C., & Zhang, Y. (2020). Modeling (In)congruence Between Dependent Variables: The Directional and Nondirectional Difference (DNDD) Framework. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 105(9), 1013–1035. https://doi.org/10.25916/sut.26252615

Campagna, R. L., Dirks, K. T., Knight, A. P., Crossley, C., & Robinson, S. L. (2020). On The Relation Between Felt Trust and Actual Trust: Examining Pathways to and Implications of Leader Trust Meta-accuracy. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 105(9), 994–1012. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000474

De Jong, B. A., Lee, A., Gill, H., Zheng, X. (2025). Felt Trust: Added Baggage or Added Value? A Critical Review, Constructive Redirection, and Exploratory Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 46(2), 288–313. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2838

Dirks, K. T., & De Jong, B. A. (2022). Trust within the Workplace: A Review of Two Waves of Research and a Glimpse of the Third. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 9, 247–276. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012420-083025

Edwards, J. R., & Parry, M. E. (1993). On the Use of Polynomial Regression Equations as an Alternative to Difference Scores in Organizational Research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36(6), 1577–1613. https://doi.org/10.5465/256822

Schilke, O., & Huang, L. (2018). Worthy of Swift Trust? How Brief Interpersonal Contact Affects Trust Accuracy. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 103(11), 1181–1197. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000321

Topic 2

Title of Proposed Research Topic:

Having Mixed Feelings About Your Workplace? Causes and Consequences of Trust Ambivalence in Organisations

Potential Supervisors:

Professor Bart de Jong

Dr Janey Zheng

Description of Possible Research Topic:

While extant research implicitly assumes that individuals' (dis)trust in others is a single, coherent psychological state of (negative) positive expectations, some scholars have argued that it is possible for people to experience both trust and distrust simultaneously (Lewicki et al., 1998). This phenomenon is referred to as trust ambivalence. There has been a growing interest in and evidence of emotional and relational ambivalence within the Organizational Sciences more broadly (Rothman et al., 2017; Methot et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2019), but examinations specifically focusing on ambivalence with respect to trust have been lacking. This PhD project will therefore aim to gain more insight into this topic. The project will theoretically draw on insights from the broader ambivalence literature, will utilise polynomial regression (Edwards & Perry, 1993) and the Directional and Nondirectional Difference Framework (Bednall & Zhang, 2020) to empirically analyse its causes and consequences, and will involve studies at both the between-person and within-person (e.g., daily fluctuations) level of analysis. Longitudinal survey data for a pilot study have already been collected in Ireland. Through our Centre's connections with industry, data collection in a similar organizational context within the UK is likely possible.

Key References:

Bednall, T. C., & Zhang, Y. (2020). Modeling (In)congruence Between Dependent Variables: The Directional and Nondirectional Difference (DNDD) Framework. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 105(9), 1013–1035. https://doi.org/10.25916/sut.26252615

Edwards, J. R., & Parry, M. E. (1993). On the Use of Polynomial Regression Equations as an Alternative to Difference Scores in Organizational Research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36(6), 1577–1613. https://doi.org/10.5465/256822

Lee, A., Thomas, G., Martin, R., & Guillaume, Y. (2019). Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Ambivalence and Task Performance: The Cross-Domain Buffering Role of

Social Support. *Journal of Management*, 45(5), 1927-1957.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206317741190

Lewicki, R. J., McAllister, D. J., & Bies, R. J. (1998). Trust and Distrust: New
Relationships and Realities. *Academy of Management Review*, 23, 438-458.
https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1998.926620

Methot, J. R., Melwani, S., & Rothman, N. B. (2017). The Space Between Us: A
Social-functional Emotions View of Ambivalent and Indifferent Workplace
Relationships. *Journal of Management*, 43(6), 1789–1819.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316685853

Rothman, N. B., Pratt, M. G., Rees, L., & Vogus, T. J. (2017). Understanding the
Dual Nature of Ambivalence: Why and When Ambivalence Leads to Good and Bad
Outcomes. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(1), 33–72.
https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2014.0066

Topic 3

Title of Proposed Research Topic:

Increasing Inclusiveness and Reducing Bias at Work

Potential Supervisors:

Professor Maria Kakarika

Description of Possible Research Topic:

In organizations, managers and HR professionals aim to increase inclusiveness and
reduce bias. However, they often need to make quick, almost on impulse, judgments
of others. Physical and health-related factors may influence such workplace
judgments. For example, tattooed individuals are stigmatized (e.g., Dickson et al.,
2014). They are seen as thoughtless and irresponsible (Hawkes et al., 2004), as
lower-class individuals (Adams, 2009), and as less competent and warm (Henle et
al, 2021), while their hireability is often reduced (Timming et al., 2017). Further, the
objectification literature shows that sexualized women are objectified, i.e., seen as
'objects' and perceived as lacking competence and warmth (Guillen et al., 2023).
Other unique characteristics of leaders such as fitness and menopause may also
influence workplace judgements and behaviors (Grandey et al., 2020). Despite these
important insights, research on the role these characteristics play in social
perceptions in the workplace is scarce.

This project aims to fill these gaps and explore the effects of physical and health-related factors in relation to workplace perceptions, personnel decisions, unconventional behaviors, leadership behaviours, high-status jobs, and male vs. female evaluators. The project requires quantitative and experimental research methods.

Key References:

Dickson, L., Dukes, R., Smith, H., & Strapko, N. (2014). Stigma of Ink: Tattoo Attitudes Among College Students. *The Social Science Journal*, 51(2), 268–276. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2014.02.005

Guillén, L., Kakarika, M., & Heflick, N. (2024). Sexualize One, Objectify All? The Sexualization Spillover Effect on Female Job Candidates. J*ournal of Organizational Behavior*, 45(4), 576–594. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2758

Grandey, A. A., Gabriel, A. S., & King, E. B. (2019). Tackling Taboo Topics: A Review of the Three Ms in Working Women's Lives. *Journal of Management*, 46(1), 7-35. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206319857144

Hawkes, D., Senn, C. Y. & Thorn, C. (2004). Factors That Influence Attitudes Toward Women with Tattoos. *Sex Roles* 50(9-10), 593–604. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:SERS.0000027564.83353.06

Henle, C. A., Shore, T. H., Murphy, K. R., & Marshall, A. D. (2022). Visible Tattoos as a Source of Employment Discrimination Among Female Applicants for a Supervisory Position. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 37, 107–125. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-021-09731-w

Timming, A. R., Nickson, D., Re, D., & Perrett, D. (2017). What Do You Think of My Ink? Assessing the Effects of Body Art on Employment Chances. *Human Resource Management*, 56(1), 133-149. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21770

Topic 4

Title of Proposed Research Topic:

Implicit Leadership Theories, Leader Identity Development, and Leader Identification

Potential Supervisors:

Professor Olga Epitropaki

Dr Anders Friis Marstand

Description of Possible Research Topic:

This topic addresses the question of how leadership prototypes and Implicit Leadership Theories (ILTs) influence individuals' leader identity development and individuals' identification with their leader (Lord et al., 2020). Special emphasis is placed on the intrapersonal match of a person's ILTs with self-perceptions of leadership in actual organizational settings ('self-to-prototype' and 'self-to exemplar' comparisons) and implications for identity strength, self-efficacy, and leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, the topic aims to investigate the role of interpersonal match between a person's ILTs and their perceptions of their leader ('other-to-prototype' and 'other-to exemplar' comparisons) for identification with their leader. The project requires experimental and/or quantitative field studies with longitudinal data collection.

Key References:

Lord, R. G., Epitropaki, O., Foti, R. J., & Keller Hansbrough, T. (2020). Implicit Leadership and Followership Theories and Dynamic Processing of Leadership Information. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 7(1), 49–74. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2013.10.005

Topic 5

Title of Proposed Research Topic:

Leader or Coworker Work-family Support? A Behavioral Perspective on How Organizations Can Best Support Employee Work-family Balance

Potential Supervisors:

Professor Jakob Stollberger

Dr Yingli Deng

Description of Possible Research Topic:

Recent years have seen a steep increase in employees working from home at least some days of the week (Bloom et al., 2024). As a result, management scholars increasingly realize that what happens at home exerts substantial influence on the quality and quantity of employees' work (Allen & French, 2023; Hu et al., 2023), focusing research attention on how organizations can best support their employees' work-family balance (Braun & Nieberle, 2017; Erdogan et al., 2022; Las Heras et al., 2017). Although some studies suggested that both leaders and coworkers can be sources of work-family support (Crain & Stevens, 2018; Las Heras et al., 2017;

McMullan et al., 2018), more recent research highlighted that, in some situations, coworker support is preferable over leader support (Stollberger et al., 2022). Questions a PhD research proposal will address include, but are not limited to: 1) when are supervisors or coworkers the better work-family support provider in response to employee work-family needs? 2) What specific verbal and / or nonverbal behaviors do supervisors and coworkers display that are perceived as work-family supportive? The proposal will align with the recent paradigm shift in leadership research (Banks et al., 2021; Fischer & Sitkin, 2023; Hemshorn de Sanchez et al., 2022; Stollberger et al., 2024).

Key References:

Allen, T. D., & French, K. A. (2023). Work-family Research: A Review and Next Steps. *Personnel Psychology*, 76(2), 437–471. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12573

Banks, G. C., Woznyj, H. M., & Mans, C. A. (2021). Where is "Behavior" in Organizational Behavior? A Call for a Revolution in Leadership Research and Beyond. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 34(6). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2021.101581

Bloom, N., Han, R., & Liang, J. (2024). Hybrid Working from Home Improves Retention without Damaging Performance. *Nature,* 630, 920–925. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-07500-2

Braun, S., & Nieberle, K. W. A. M. (2017). Authentic Leadership Extends Beyond Work: A Multilevel Model of Work-family Conflict and Enrichment. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *28*, 780–797. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2017.04.003

Crain, T. L., & Stevens, S. C. (2018). Family-supportive Supervisor Behaviors: A Review and Recommendations for Research and Practice. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39, 869–888. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2320

Erdogan, D. T., Heras, M. L., Rofcanin, Y., Bosch, M. J., & Stollberger, J. (2022). Family Motivation of Supervisors: Exploring the Impact on Subordinates' Work Performance via Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors and Work–family Balance Satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 52(12), 1179–1195. https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12919

Fischer, T., & Sitkin, S. B. (2023). Leadership Styles: A Comprehensive Assessment and Way Forward. *Academy of Management Annals*, 17(1), 331–372. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2020.0340

Hemshorn de Sanchez, C. S., Gerpott, F. H., & Lehmann-Willenbrock, N. (2022). A Review and Future Agenda for Behavioral Research on Leader–follower Interactions at Different Temporal Scopes. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 43(2), 342–368. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2583

Hu, J., Chiang, J. T. J., Liu, Y., Wang, Z., & Gao, Y. (2023). Double Challenges: How Working from Home Affects Dual-earner Couples' Work-family Experiences. *Personnel Psychology*, 76(1), 141–179. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12559

Las Heras, M., Rofcanin, Y., Bal, M. P., & Stollberger, J. (2017). How Do Flexibility Ideals Relate to Work Performance? Exploring the Roles of Family Performance and Organizational Context. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38, 1280–1294. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2203

McMullan, A. D., Lapierre, L. M., & Li, Y. (2018). A Qualitative Investigation of Work-family-supportive Coworker Behaviors. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 107, 25–41. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2018.03.007

Stollberger, J., Guillaume, Y., & van Knippenberg, D. (2024). Inspiring, Yet Tiring: How Leader Emotional Complexity Shapes Follower Creativity. *Organization Science*, 35(3), 1015–1041. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2019.13152

Stollberger, J., Las Heras, M., & Rofcanin, Y. (2022). Sharing is Caring: The Role of Compassionate Love in Sharing Coworker Work-family Support at Home to Promote Partners' Creativity at Work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 107(10), 1824–1842. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000985

Topic 6

Title of Proposed Research Topic:

Adapting to Change by Owning the Change: A Multi-study Investigation into Why and How Collective Identity and Future Career Identity Affirmations Shapes Psychological Ownership, Engagement and Proactive Creativity Towards Change

Potential Supervisors:

Dr Richard Morgan

Professor Maria Kakarika

Description of Possible Research Topic:

In the world of work, organisational change is now an inevitable certainty, not just a possibility. People's emotional and behavioural responses to the organisational changes that leaders propose determine the project's long-term progress trajectory. When the content of the organisational change is meaningful and ambitious, it tends to require higher levels of engagement and creativity behaviours from individuals rather than just asking for their mere compliance. With this in mind, why do people become creatively proactive to organisational change rather than disengaged and

resistant? This topic addresses this fundamental question by examining the alignment of perceived collective identity affirmation and future career identity affirmation on individuals' emotions, engagement levels, and proactive creativity towards progress over time. The project will investigate the role that both affirmed rather than negated collective identity and future career identity alignment play in developing individuals' psychological ownership for making progress towards the organisational change. The project also investigates how individuals' perception of leader's intentions for organisational change influences their desire to support or disengage from the leader's vision for organisational change. The project will involve quantitative longitudinal data collections, including experiential sampling/daily diary research in later studies.

Key References:

Lord, R., Hall, R., Gatti, P., Zheng, J., & Morgan, R. (n.d.). Measuring Leadership Identity: Complexity, Risks, and Recommendations. In O. Epitropaki, & R. Kart (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Leadership, Followership and Identity*. Oxford University Press. https://academic.oup.com/

Morgan, R., Braun, S., & Epitropaki, O. (2025). Pursuing a Future Leader Self: A Multi-study Investigation of Leader Identity and its Motivational and Behavioural Outcomes. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 98(1). https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.70014

Stam, D. A., Lord, R. G., van Knippenberg, D. L., & van Knippenberg, B. (2014). An Image of Who We Might Become: Vision Communication, Possible Selves, and Vision Pursuit. *Organization Science*, 25(4), 1172–1194. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2013.0891

Stouten, J., Rousseau, D. M., De Cramer, D. (2018). Successful Organizational Change: Integrating the Management Practice and Scholarly Literatures. *Academy of Management Annals*, 12(2), 752-788. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2016.0095