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EVALUATION OF ACCENTED-SPEAKERS IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

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## ABSTRACT

This study explored the effects of leaders with accented speech and how this speech influences subordinates' willingness to follow the leader as well as their perceptions of the leader's task and relationship competence. Previous research suggested that native speaking individuals are preferred over foreign accented individuals, especially in workplace situations and hiring decisions. This study further explored individuals in leadership positions and compared five accents (U.S. American, European, Arab, Hispanic, and Asian) simultaneously. Additionally, the effect of accent on leader perceptions was tested in two contexts: crisis and non-crisis. Surprisingly, the results of this study did not support the hypothesized relationships. Descriptively, there were differences in leader ratings across accents, with explanations for these findings explored. Theoretical contributions and practical implications are also discussed.

*Keywords:* leadership, accents, crisis, subordinate

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The US is a country of immigrants, known for its land of opportunity and financial success. For the longest time, the American dream has been the goal of many people across the globe and motivated millions of immigrants and internal migrants to move to the US to fulfill their dream. In the 1960s, the US established itself as the leading country to conduct business with and foreign companies took example from US companies (Wolff, 2013). Competition urged other countries to engage, learn from and outdo the US. After World War II, Anglophone countries (e.g., United States) gained power and recognition, and the English language manifested itself as the primary global language (Northrup, 2013).

As the trend of globalization closes the physical gap between nations, the need to speak English becomes more critical. Being the primary language for cross-cultural communication, an approximately 1.75 billion people speak English at a “useful level” (Neeley, 2012), while one fourth of the world’s population can speak English on some level (Cook, 1999). More importantly, most of these individuals consider English as their second or third language; thus leaving many English-speaking persons with accented speech.

Accents are salient ethnic indicators that may provide information about an individual’s social, regional, or class background. One study found that accents even elicit judgements about the speaker’s values and work ethic (Callan, Gallois, and Forbes, 1983). Studies have shown that speaking accented English can be detrimental to individuals, especially in job-related contexts. For example, non-native English speakers have been shown to be perceived more negatively in

employment-related decisions than native English speakers (Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010, Hosoda, Nguyen, & Stone-Romero, 2012, Segrest-Purkiss, Perrewé, Gillespie, Mayes, & Ferris, 2006). Despite the understanding that accents may affect how certain individuals are perceived at work, it is unclear whether or not these perceptions persist at higher organizational levels. That is, to date, very little is known about how non-native accents affect perceptions of leaders.

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, it aims to better understand how non-native English speakers are perceived in leadership roles compared to native speakers, and how accent influences perceived subordinates' willingness to follow the leader. While it is not practical to examine every accent, this study will focus on five accents that represent multiple regions of the world, including Standard American, British, Venezuelan, Saudi Arabian and Chinese. The Standard American accent was chosen as a control variable, British accent was more easily recognizable than French or German accents. Further, the Venezuelan was chosen to represent Hispanic, and it was readily available to record. The idea to include a Saudi accent originated from current political events and a common fear of terrorism that is linked to Arabic language. Lastly, Chinese was chosen as the most common Asian accent and the importance in the business world. Second, it considers how context influences the extent to which a leader's accent affects subordinates' perceptions of him. That is, during crisis, subordinates seek guidance and rely on a leader for directions and support, and may therefore be less likely to attend to the leader's accent in such contexts.

## Literature Review

### Importance of Accents

Research has shown that accent plays a key role in the way people perceive or behave towards one another (Bresnahan, et al., 2002; Ahmed, Abdullah, & Heng, 2013). Foreign-accented speakers are often evaluated more harshly and negatively than native English speakers (Insch & Miller, 2005; Ryan, Hewstone, & Giles, 1984). With respect to the workforce and current immigration participation trends, it is evident that there is a discrepancy between foreign-accented and native-accented speakers (Reitz, 2001); such that Hispanic workers are often placed in lower level jobs, or have great difficulties finding a job in the first place. For example, Hosoda and Stone-Romero (2010) investigated foreign accents in employment-related decisions, and found more positive ratings for applicants with an American English accent or French accent than for Japanese- or Hispanic-accented applicants. More interestingly, even when French-accented applicants were rated as least understandable, participants favored the French-accented applicants over the Japanese-accented applicants. Thus, perceptions of accents made be based, in part, not just on the understandability of the accent, but rather on the race of the individual as indicated by the accent. To this point, Cargile and colleagues (2010) examined the perception of “foreignness” of accented speakers and found that people with non-white skin tones received more negative ratings than White accented speakers. These findings suggest that people may make judgments about others based on stereotypes and beliefs they have about their perceived racial-ethnic identity, rather than simply on the accent alone.

One reason that non-native English speakers are perceived negatively may be due to the fact that it is easier for native speakers to process native accents as a result of their fluency

(Dragojevic & Giles, 2016). When manipulating background noise, Punjabi-accented English speakers were rated significantly more negatively than Standard American English speakers. Specifically, their ratings of solidarity (e.g. signs of loyalty, sociability and friendliness) decreased rapidly, which indicates a negative attitude and affection towards accented speakers. Therefore, people may make inferences about accented speakers based on their understandability and fluency, which those higher in understandability and fluency receiving more favorable ratings.

### **Stereotyping**

One reason that is critical to understand how accents affect non-native English speakers is that accents may elicit judgments and can facilitate a change in perception and behavior based on stereotyping. Usually, accents give away certain social characteristics (e.g. nationality, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status) and judgments are formed about these characteristics based on prejudice and existing beliefs. For example, Fiske and her colleagues (2002) created the stereotype content model, which establishes two dimensions in stereotyping processes; warmth and competence. Warmth is defined by the perception of nurture, friendliness or interpersonal skills (e.g. mothers, the elderly) whereas competence is defined by intelligence or status (e.g. rich people, athletes). Task competence is another way to measure and evaluate a person's competence (Fiske, et al., 2002). More importantly, these two dimensions interact with one another when people make judgments about others. For example, in the Western world, Asians are perceived to be high on competence, but low in warmth to reduce threat, and welfare recipients are considered to be low in both dimensions. It also elicits assumptions on people's

perceptions of how we would perceive these categorized individuals on relationship and task competence. Continuing the example of Asians, they might be perceived as high on task competence, but low on relationship competence because of their perceived interpersonal skills and high levels of perceived competence.

With those beliefs in mind, people are classified as belonging to the in- or outgroup and these classifications are dependent on social identities and characteristics. Consciously, or subconsciously, people favor their in-group due to perceived similarities and a sense of belonging (Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979). Therefore, we can predict that people would favor others with an accent that is like their own because it is a signal of in-group membership.

In addition, Tajfel (1981) coined the term ethnic identity, which defines a person's individual self-concept as being tied to the social group they belong. Phinney (1992) developed a scale to measure a person's ethnic identity and argued that people prefer individuals who share a similar identity. Such conclusions have been drawn in other studies as well. For example, Hinds and colleagues (2000) examined how individuals choose their team members for a group task. Subjects preferred to work with people like themselves. That is, subjects preferred to work with people of their same race, who were known to be competent, and hardworking, and who they had previous working relationships with. However, research has not yet examined how people choose their leaders. Therefore, people make inferences about speakers and their accents, and make assumptions based on stereotypes of their group membership, which could also have an effect on people's preferences for leadership.

## **Leader Prototypes.**

In addition, the way people stereotype and make assumptions about others is similar to our expectations of people in leadership positions. The ideal and stereotypical leader is a white man with masculine characteristics (Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Gündemir, Homan, de Dreu, & van Vugt, 2014). In fact, today's managerial workforce is still majority white, holding high levels of power and status (DiTomaso, Post, & Parks-Yancy, 2007). This can be detrimental to minority leaders because they do not match these stereotypical beliefs. More so, in order to attain higher occupational status, perceptions of performance and task competency matter. Unfortunately, when it comes to evaluations and ratings, individuals with more prototypical leader characteristics are perceived more favorably (Lord & Maher, 1991). There seems to be a connection between leader race and leadership categorization, such that White leaders are preferred (Rosette, et al., 2008). Even minority members prefer White leaders and see more potential in White workers.

For example, Rubin, DeHart and Heintzman (1991) investigated Japanese-accented managers and Standard-American-accented managers and interacted both accent and national managerial style. Participants were asked to identify the manager's nationality. Interestingly, they preferred the participative and Japanese managerial style. However, they often erroneously identified it to be the American style and therefore, the American identified manager received most positive ratings. Therefore, it often does not matter what style the manager follows, but the perception of nationality determines the leader's competency and ratings. While accent did not have a main effect in the preceding study, it played a significant role in Bresnahan and colleagues' study (2002) who investigated attitudinal and affective responses measured by intelligible, unintelligible foreign accents compared to American English accent. They found that

international teaching assistants with unintelligible accents received the most negative ratings. Therefore, it seems apparent that people in leadership positions (e.g. teaching assistants) with native English, or foreign accents with high understandability are preferred by subordinates.

**Accents in employment-related decisions.** More importantly, we are interested in the role of accent in the workplace because of the declining participation trends of immigrants, yet increasing globalization, which will force native English speakers to interact with foreigners. Besides race, gender, and disability, there is also discrimination in the workplace due to accent (Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010; Hosoda, Nguyen, & Stone-Romero, 2012; Huang, et al., 2013; Segrest-Purkiss, et al., 2006). Most research has looked at hiring and promotion decisions to assess employment suitability across three accents or less. Results from these studies largely demonstrate that minority speakers were less likely to be employed, or if employed, they were preferred for lower level jobs (de la Zerda & Hopper, 1979; Segrest-Purkiss, et al., 2006). Huang, Frideger, and Pearce (2013) argued that the glass ceiling for non-native speakers exists due to perceived political skill, which is expressed through the accent.

However, there are few studies that have looked at situations where non-native speakers have broken the glass ceiling (e.g., obtained leadership roles), or how leaders with accented English are perceived by their subordinates. Based on the stereotyping model and the prototypical leader, we assume that foreign-accented speakers have a disadvantage in leadership positions as their accents act as an ethnic cue, which reveals their ethnic group membership. Because prior research has shown that non-White and accented speakers are perceived less favorably than White or English accented speakers, we predict the following:

*H1: Perceptions of willingness to follow the leader will significantly differ based on the leader's accent, such that leaders with an American or British accent will receive the highest ratings compared to all other accents.*

- H2: Perceptions of leader task competence will significantly differ based on leader's accent, such that leaders with an American or British accent will receive the highest rating compared to all other accents.*
- H3: Perceptions of leader relationship competence will significantly differ based on leader's accent, such that leaders with an American or British accent will receive the highest rating compared to all other accents.*

## **Crisis**

Boal and Bryson (1988, p. 16) define a crisis situation as a condition where a system is required or expected to handle a situation for which existing resources, procedures, policies, structures, or mechanisms are inadequate. This makes events that are likely to occur or which can easily be solved a non-crisis event. Subordinates often seek their leader and expect them to offer a hopeful and promising vision to find a way out of the crisis, and into a more secure condition (Hunt, Boal, & Dodge, 1999). Hunt and colleagues (1999) were more interested in exploring types of leadership in crisis conditions, and found that visionary and crisis-responsive leadership were most receptive by subordinates. Similarly, Pillai (1996) argues that crisis allows the leader to demonstrate charismatic attributes, which are positively received by subordinates.

To this end, when a crisis occurs, subordinates may be especially likely to look to leaders for guidance and support because of its unpredictable, high-risk nature. While the accent of non-native English speaking leaders may be salient in times of non-crisis, followers may be less likely to attend to such information when there are more critical needs on which they should focus.

- H4: Context will moderate the relationship between accent and willingness to follow. The difference in willingness to follow for native-accented vs. non-native-accented leaders will be even greater in times of crisis as compared to non-crisis contexts.*

## **Chapter 2**

### **Method**

#### **Design and Participants**

This study used a 2 (condition: crisis, non-crisis) x 5 (accent: Standard American English, British English, Arab-accented English, Hispanic-accented English, Asian-accented English) between-subjects design. Participants were recruited through the psychology undergraduate research subject pool system at a large Mid-Atlantic university. In total, 184 participants qualified for the study. In order to qualify for the study, participants must have been at least 18 years of age, residents of the United States, and native English speakers. Of the participants, 12 participants were removed because they did not meet the study inclusion criteria.

The final sample consisted of 47 males, 135 females and 2 who identified outside the male/female binary. The racial composition of this sample was 80% white, 4% Black or African American, 9% Asian, and 6.5% who identified as other than those listed. In addition, 9% identified as Hispanic. The mean age of this sample was 19 years old whereas 18 years old was the minimum and the oldest participant was 46 years old.

#### **Procedure**

The participants logged on to the research platform where they could sign up to take the survey. They were shown a brief description of the study, which indicated that they would listen

to a brief description of an event, and then they would listen to a short audio recording and lastly, they would answer questions about the recording. After choosing to participate, they would be re-directed to an online survey, which prompted them to read a consent form. Upon clicking next, they agreed to consent.

The study was administered in three parts. First, participants read a vignette about national or local terrorist threats then listened to a response administered by the Chief of Police in regards to the threats. In his response, the university's Chief of Police addressed the threats and gave information regarding the university's future emergency-response plans. Following that, the survey measures were administered (Willingness to follow scale (Cushenberry, et al., 2010), leader liking scale (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997), leader task and relationship competence (Cushenberry, et al., 2010)) and lastly, they were asked to respond to manipulation checks and demographic questions. After completing the survey, participants were navigated to a debriefing page, which emphasized the fact that this survey was fictional and none of the threats or attacks had happen on the university's campus to ensure that no misunderstandings or rumors were created.

## **Manipulations**

**Accent.** This study aimed to focus on accented speech only. Therefore, race, name or nationality were omitted, and the speaker's accent was the only ethnic cue provided to the participants. The "verbal guise" technique was utilized through five speakers who read tightly controlled scripts, which means that different individuals were used to record each accent, rather than the "matched guise" technique in which individual produces all of the accents (Cargile &

Giles, 1998). However, we intended to recruit individuals with equally thick accents, which we tested in a manipulation check prior.

We recruited ten males (Northeastern Standard American, French, two Germans, British, Venezuelan, Ecuadorian, two Saudi Arabian, and one Chinese) to record two tightly controlled scripts. We specifically chose male speakers to account for the prototypical leader (Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008; Gündemir, et al., 2014). All individuals were native to the accent they recorded, and each one of them completed the recordings for each condition. All speakers had migrated to the US for their college career, and ranged between the ages of 21 and 25. From these recordings, those that were most easily identifiable for each region were retained. The final accents included in this study were American, Hispanic, Arab, European, and Asian accents.

All recordings were completed in the same noise-protected room, used the same microphone and were taken on the Apple application called Garage band. The confederates were granted as much time as they needed to familiarize themselves with the script and were left alone during their recording efforts. Everyone completed the recordings multiple times to ensure the correctness of the script. Therefore, there were no grammatical errors or differences across recordings, except their paralinguistic features (e.g. tone, pitch, speed).

**Crisis.** To test the perception of accent in two different conditions, the participants were confronted with an alteration of the original vignette. The non-crisis vignette informed the participants about recent national threats at universities and other public places. In his statement, the Chief of Police addressed the threats, and then focused on the university's emergency response plan. Differently, in the crisis condition, the participants were shown a vignette that indicated that their own university was attacked by an active shooter who killed five students and left 24 community members injured. Then, the Chief of Police expressed his condolences to the

community, and proceeded to inform the participants about the university's emergency response plans and mentioned the continuous presence of law enforcement and the cancellation of classes for the remaining day.

In both conditions, the Chief of Police asked for collaboration on the new initiative and required the students to submit their phone numbers to the police department to ensure that everyone would receive emergency alerts in the future. Overall, the scripts were meant to be similar, except for a difference in severity of the threat.

## Measures

All participants completed 1) the willingness to follow scale (Cushenbery, et al., 2010); 2) leader liking scale (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997); 3) measures of leader competence, including the leader task competence scale (Cushenbery et al., 2010), and the leader relationship competence scale (Cushenbery et al., 2010).

**Willingness to follow.** Participants completed the six item willingness to follow scale, which asked questions, i.e. "I would like to work with this leader on future projects" on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. This measured the participants' willingness to follow in this specific scenario on .

**Leader liking.** The three item Leader Liking scale assessed questions such as "I think this leader would make a good friend" to measure how much the participants liked the leader on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

**Leader task competence.** Ratings for the perceived task competence were measured by 5 items such as “sets specific goals and standards for task performance” (Cushenbery, et al., 2009) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

**Leader relationship competence.** Ratings for the perceived relationship competence were measured by five items such as “provides support and encouragement to someone with a difficult task” (Cushenbery, et al., 2009) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

**Leader competence.** The perception of the leader’s competence was measured with an adapted four-item scale by Fiske and colleagues’ (2002) stereotype content model on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = not at all to 5 = extremely. Interestingly, this item asked from a societal perspective, rather than an individual perspective to reduce social desirability. A sample item would be “as viewed by society, how good natured are members of this group?” The measure asks for members of the groups to gage more honesty and reduce social desirability.

**Leader warmth.** Similarly, the perception of the leader’s warmth was measured with an adapted five-item scale (Fiske, et al. 2002) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = not at all to 5 = extremely. A sample item was “as viewed by society, how confident are members of this group?” Again, this measure asked participants to respond from a societal point of view.

## Chapter 3

### Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and reliabilities for each of the measures included in the subsequent analyses. Using a between-subjects design, participants were randomly assigned to be exposed to one accent. Overall,  $n = 184$ , for the crisis condition  $n = 91$ , and for the non-crisis condition  $n = 93$ .

Table 1 demonstrates the correlations among willingness to follow, leader task competence, and leader relationship competence. Each of these three variables was significantly and positively correlated with one another. That is, as perceptions of task competence and relationship competence increased, participants' willingness to follow the leader also increased.

*Table 1*

*Means and correlations among variables*

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
1. Willing	3.54	.70	-	-	-
2. Task Competence	3.87	.69	.56**	-	-
3. Rel Competence	3.78	.70	.57**	.65**	-

$N = 184$ . \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

Hypothesis 1 stated that willingness to follow the leader would vary significantly as a function of the leader's accent such that American and British accents would receive the most

favorable ratings. To test this hypothesis, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the extent to which the mean scores for willingness to follow the leader differed across accents. The results of the ANOVA were not significant,  $F(4,179) = 1.14, p > .05$ . Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. Descriptively, the leader with an American accent ( $M = 3.69$ ) scored the highest on willingness to follow, while the leader with an Asian accent was rated lowest on willingness to follow ( $M = 3.36$ ). However, post-hoc analyses did not show significant mean differences in willingness to follow the leader between any of the leader accents.

While the differences in means between groups were not statistically significant, descriptively, they did partially align with our expectations. The American-accented leader was most likely to be followed, followed by the Latin American-accented leader. Interestingly, the leader with a European accent scored third highest ratings, closely followed by the Arab. The Asian-accented leader was least likely to be followed.

Similarly, Hypothesis 2 stated that leader task competence would be rated most favorably for American and British accents compared to all other accents. Again, an ANOVA was conducted to examine the extent to which the mean scores for task competence differed across accents. The results of the ANOVA conducted for task competence were not significant,  $F(4,179) = .399, p > .05$ . Interestingly, the leader with an Arab accent ( $M = 3.95$ ) perceived the highest ratings descriptively, followed by the European ( $M = 3.92$ ), while the leader with an American accent ( $M = 3.79$ ) scored the lowest. Post-hoc analyses were also conducted, but did not show significant mean differences in task competence between any of the leader accents. Therefore, hypotheses 1 and 2 were not supported.

The means between groups were not statistically significant and they also failed to descriptively meet this study's expectations. Surprisingly, the Arab-accented leader was

perceived to be highest on task competence, closely followed by the leader with a European accent, the Latin American, and the Asian accent. Interestingly, the American accent was perceived as lowest on task competence, which is different from the results in Hypothesis 1 and contrary to existing research and expectations.

Similarly, Hypothesis 3 stated that leaders' relationship competence would be rated most favorably for American and British accents compared to all other accents. Again, an ANOVA was conducted to examine the extent to which the mean scores for relationship competence differed across accents. The results of the ANOVA were not significant either,  $F(4,179) = .803$ ,  $p > .05$ . Descriptively, the leader with an Asian accent ( $M = 3.60$ ) scored the lowest on relationship competence, while the leader with a Hispanic accent ( $M = 3.89$ ) scored higher than all other accents, closely followed by the leader with an Arab accent ( $M = 3.84$ ).

While differences in the means between the groups were not statistically significant, they also only partially adhered to our expectations descriptively. Overall, the Latin American accents received the highest ratings, closely followed by the Arab, then American. Lastly, the European-accented leader scored before the Asian accents. Interestingly, a pattern emerged in which the Asian-accented leader received the lowest ratings in terms of willingness to follow and relationship competence, suggesting that these leaders may be consistently viewed more negatively than other leaders.

### **Crisis vs. NonCrisis**

Hypothesis 4 stated that context would moderate the relationship between accent and willingness to follow, such that the relationship would be strengthened if crisis were present. This would mean that native-accented leaders (American and British) would receive higher ratings than non-native leaders in times of crisis. Table 2 lists the means and correlations among

the three variables, willingness to follow, task competence, and relationship competence by the crisis condition. Each of these variables was significantly and positively correlated with one another. That is, as perceptions of task competence and relationship competence increased, participants' willingness to follow the leader also increased. Similarly, as task competence increased, so too did relationship competence.

Given that both predictors (i.e., accent, crisis) were categorical, moderation was tested by creating a new categorical variable that combined both conditions. Specifically, speakers were categorized into one of four groups: English/European crisis situation, Non-English/European crisis situation, English/European non-crisis situation, and non-English/European non-crisis situation. Next, an ANOVA was conducted to compare the extent to which willingness to follow the leader varied as a result of the combination of accent and context. Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations for each group. The results of the ANOVA were not significant,  $F(3,180) = 1.33, p > .05$ . Thus, Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Similar to the discussion above, the differences across groups were not significantly different, though descriptively, the differences were in the hypothesized direction. As expected, during times of crisis, the means of willingness to follow the leader were higher than during times of non-crisis. Similarly, the means for native speakers were higher than those of non-native speakers during crisis. However, the differences were not statistically different.

Table 2

Means and correlations among variables by crisis condition

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
<b>Crisis</b>					
1. Willing	3.60	.70	-	-	-
2. Task Competence	3.98	.60	.51**	-	-
3. Rel Competence	3.75	.65	.60**	.58**	-
<b>Non-Crisis</b>					
1. Willing	3.49	.71	-	-	-
2. Task Competence	3.75	.75	.60**	-	-
3. Rel Competence	3.81	.74	.55**	.73**	-

*N*=184. \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for leader accent by condition

Condition / Accent	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Crisis / Native	3.73	.55
Crisis / NonNative	3.51	.81
NonCrisis / Native	3.47	.72
NonCrisis / NonNative	3.48	.68

*N*=184

## Chapter 4

### Discussion

This study investigated leaders with accented speech. We purposely separated accent from all other ethnic cues (e.g. name, race), to study how accent influences subordinates' willingness to follow and subordinates' perceptions of leader task and leader relationship competence. Further, we examined how context influenced this relationship. We hypothesized that English-native leaders with American or British accents would be rated significantly more positively than leaders with non-native accents. However, these assertions were not supported in this study. While it showed descriptive differences, there were no statistically significant differences among leader accents. Yet, the descriptive results showed some interesting findings, which partially aligned with our expectations. The American-accented leader was the most likely to be followed, received the high ratings on relationship competence, yet scored lowest on task competence. Further, the Asian-accented speaker received the lowest ratings on both willingness to follow and relationship competence. Again, the results were not statistically significant, but do align with previous warmth and competence stereotyping research (Fiske et al., 2002), in which Asian individuals are perceived to have lower interpersonal skills, but higher levels of intelligence.

There are several possible reasons why this study did not obtain the predicted results. First, it is established that minorities already hit a glass ceiling in the employment hiring process in which majority group members are usually favored (Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010; Hosoda, Nguyen, & Stone-Romero, 2012). In fact, both majority and minority individuals prefer White leaders and choose to work with people like their own. Therefore, the perception may exist that once a non-White leader is in this role, he or she must overcome these barriers and subordinates

might trust the prior selection process that this person must be qualified. Thus, it could be the case that minority leaders are accepted equally because they were able to overcome obstacles.

Second, Dragojevic and Giles (2016) argued that people make judgments based on the speakers' fluency rather than stereotyping, and there is a chance that the accents were not thick enough for subjects to make judgements. Indeed, the results from the manipulation check showed that the average thickness of the accents ranged from 1.9 and 3.3 on a 5-point Likert scale. However, we could also draw the conclusion that leaders with slight accents are not perceived differently from native-speaking leaders. Further, it may be that the grammatical and syntactical correctness of the leader's response reduced negative ratings of the leaders. When leaders who speak accented English fail to adhere to proper convention, they may be perceived more negatively. However, additional research is needed to tease apart such differences.

Lastly, even if inferences were made by stereotyping, there is a high chance that participants did not want to admit their biases. Most participants correctly identified the purpose of the study, guessing that it assessed their perceptions of leader race, ethnicities or accents. Therefore, social desirability could have played a large factor in participants' willingness to respond openly and critically think about their responses.

### **Practical Implications**

This research was inspired by two phenomena. First, companies' recruitment efforts often involve an initial phone interview in which international applicants could have a disadvantage in hiring decisions due to their accent and perceived communication skills (Hosoda & Stone-

Romero, 2010; Hosoda, Nguyen, & Stone-Romero, 2012). In phone interviews, the applicants' race is often unknown and accent is one of the only ethnic cues provided.

Second, it is not uncommon for students around campus to complain about foreign teaching assistants or professors in relation to their teaching and communication skills due to their accented speech. Therefore, the individuals placed in those positions mastered the hiring process and were intentionally placed in a leadership position. However, they are often perceived more negatively than their native-speaking colleagues based on their communication skills (Ahmed, Abdullah, & Heng, 2013). Consequently, organizations and universities alike would benefit from investigating employees' or students' reactions to foreign-accented leaders and teach them about the effect of accents and how it does not reduce the leaders' competency. It would be interesting to notice whether the accent only influences perceived communication skills or whether it also has an effect on perceived leadership skills and expertise.

### **Limitations**

This study does not go without limitations. First, there could be limitations with the subjects chosen. The study was conducted through an online portal in which subjects listened to the audio recording and answered the questions on their own time without any supervision. Thus, there is a chance that some participants were distracted and did not fill out the survey in a focused manner. Again, this study assessed prejudiced beliefs, it is a possibility that students did not feel comfortable admitting their own biases. It is important to notice further that some of the participants correctly identified the purpose of the study. Therefore, there is a great chance that subjects did not answer the survey as openly as they could. In addition, majority of the

participants were 19 years old and white, and thus cannot be generalized to the general US workforce or older populations,

More importantly, the “verbal guise” technique invites many confounds. All speakers varied in pitch, speed, and other paralinguistic features. Commonly known, more masculine and attractive voices influence perceptions of leadership effectiveness more positively (Degroot et al., 2011). Our manipulation check showed varying degrees of perceived masculinity, which could have an effect on people’s perceptions as well. Instead, the “matched guise” technique is usually a better tool to eliminate confounds, the “verbal guise” method was the preferred measure for this experiment because it is unlikely to find someone who can produce the same speech with five different accents in a similar thickness and understandability. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize that all ethnic accents of non-white speakers will be perceived in the same manner as their individual voices can be perceived differently.

Lastly, while people are exposed to people with accents, most often accent does not represent the sole exclusive ethnic cue. Even in phone interviews, recruiters most often know the applicant’s name or are presented with a picture of the person on a resume in some countries. Specifically, most leaders are known by their name and/or appearance, which gives away their ethnicity more blatantly. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that name or appearance can influence the perception of accents (Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2001).

## **Implications and Future Research**

Accent is a common phenomenon to be studied, however, there are few studies that look at this many accents at once. While there is a benefit at comparing two accents with one another,

globalization and developing markets invite all kinds of accents into business. Therefore, companies would benefit from learning about various accents in similar contexts. Further, most research investigates employment suitability rather than exploring accented speakers in superior positions. It is greatly established that White and native-accented applicants are preferred, but we are still unsure what would happen when minority leaders take charge and how it influences subordinates. Therefore, research that examines reactions to accented speakers in a field setting would greatly enhance our understanding of the perception of accented leaders.

Moreover, future research should ensure hidden measures to reduce social desirability effects and to invite participants to be able to express their true beliefs. Another measure to change the perspective. It is possible to prompt the participants to respond from a societal perspective rather than from a personal perspective. Eventually, they can respond to what extent agreement occurs to evaluate personal beliefs. This way, it correlates with the participants' expectations and general attitudes, but also assesses their own with less judgment involved. Additionally, participants did not necessarily experience the crisis, but just read a vignette. Thus, a field study could experiment with a true crisis perceived by the participants and examine how accent plays a role in subordinates' perceptions of leaders.

## **Appendix A**

### **Vignettes**

#### **Crisis Vignette:**

The Chief of Police at Penn State University has made a statement that addresses the university's emergency response plans. This statement is in response to a recent attack at Penn State University in which an active shooter killed 5 students and left 24 community members injured. In his response, the Chief of Police shares insights about the university's procedures and initiatives that apply should a similar situation arise once again on Penn State University's campus. Please listen carefully.

#### **Non-Crisis Vignette:**

The Chief of Police at Penn State University has made a statement that addresses the university's emergency response plans. This statement is in response to recent attacks and threats at other universities. In his response, the Chief of Police shares insights about the university's procedures and initiatives that apply should a similar situation arise on Penn State University's campus. Please listen carefully.

## Appendix B

### Scales

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

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

Leader Warmth (adapted from Fiske, et al., 2002)

1. As viewed by society, how tolerant are members of this group?
2. As viewed by society, how warm are members of this group?
3. As viewed by society, how good natured are members of this group?
4. As viewed by society, how sincere are members of this group?

Leader Competence (adapted from Fiske, et al., 2002)

1. As viewed by society, how competent are members of this group?
2. As viewed by society, how confident are members of this group?

3. As viewed by society, how independent are members of this group?
4. As viewed by society, how competitive are members of this group?
5. As viewed by society, how intelligent are members of this group?

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# ACADEMIC VITA

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## EDUCATION

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### **The Pennsylvania State University, Schreyer Honors College**

Bachelor of Science in Psychology  
Minors in Labor Employment Relations (honors) & Sociology

**University Park, PA**

Expected Graduation  
Spring 2017

## WORK EXPERIENCE

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### **Reckitt Benckiser**

*HR intern*

- Developed and executed innovative recruitment strategies to connect RB with our product brands; LinkedIn visibility, external association presence, employee referral
- Sourced and scheduled interviews and maintained candidate care
- Presented several topics to Supply and HR Leadership team to up to 15 individuals
- Revised succession plans to forecast internal movement and outline key development areas to build proactive recruitment pipeline
- Organized functional and leadership competencies to utilize in career conversations

**Parsippany, NJ**

June – August 2016

### **Ehrenamt Agentur Essen e.V.**

*Project Coordinator*

- Organize networking events for organizations and refugees to connect and explore job opportunities
- Outline possibilities and chances to organizations of integrating a refugee
- Plan networking events, i.e. book location, materials, guest lists, and run the agenda of the event
- Prepare refugees for networking events, i.e. polish resumes, practice German and interview skills
- Facilitate conversations between volunteers and refugees

**Essen/Germany**

January – May 2017

### **atrain GmbH**

*Talent Management Intern / External Junior*

- Assist in design, delivery and follow-up work for development centers
- Organize networking events and training sessions to help solve diversity issues by developing a Development Center for 8 female participants
- Recruit new Senior Consultants, i.e. contact European universities and disseminate job description
- Present scientific input presentation on women and networking to TM-team of 15 members

**Bamberg/Germany**

June 2015 – Present

### **Dr. Samuel Hunter's Leadership and Innovation Lab**

*Lab Coordinator and Research Assistant*

- Promoted to Coordinator, responsible for recruitment, guidance, and support of 20+ undergraduate research assistants
- Explored use of co-leaders to support team performance on an innovation task
- Led team in leadership study on leader errors by synthesizing information from biographies and acted as a research confederate in experiments with undergraduate subjects

**University Park, PA**

August 2014 - Present

### **World in Conversation**

*Advanced Global Facilitator*

- Navigate discussion of controversial social topics by creating neutral spaces, i.e. global issues, race relations, climate change
- Build connections between people from different backgrounds
- Co-facilitate 2-4 dialogues with 6-10 participants per week in person and virtually on a global scale using the Socratic Method

**University Park, PA**

August 2014- Present

## The Penn State University Office of Global Programs

*International Orientation Student Coordinator and Orientation Leader*

University Park, PA

August 2014 – March 2015

- Trained and supervised Orientation Leaders on building rapport, cross-cultural understanding, and leadership
- Organized, prepared and ran the program for international student orientation
- Co-led three groups of 20 incoming international students by making them feel welcome and building connections while fulfilling their government regulations

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### Skills

- Fluent in writing and speaking German, English
- Proficient in French (DELF A1, A2, B1)
- Proficient in MS Office, Mac OS X

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### PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND LEADERSHIP

- Society of Industrial/Organizational Psychology
- Global Engagement and Leadership Experience
- Successful participant of the PNC Leadership Assessment Center at Penn State
- The Liberal Arts Alumni Mentor Program
- The Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance MaraTHON 2014, 2015, and 2016: Dancer Relations and Special Events Committee Member

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### GRANTS AND AWARDS

2015	<b>The Virginia Todd Chapel Executive Internship Program Award</b> For securing an internship in the private sector and maintaining a GPA of at least 3.0
2015	<b>University Park Allocation &amp; College of the Liberal Arts Committee Travel Grant</b> For travel expense to attend the Society of Industrial/Organizational Psychology Conference in Philadelphia, PA
2016	<b>Liberal Arts Enrichment Award</b> For studying abroad in Germany to collaborate with the Ehrenamt Agentur Essen to integrate Syrian refugees into the workforce
2016	<b>Liberal Arts Enrichment Award</b> For interning with Reckitt Benckiser
2017	<b>Harold L. Hinman Memorial Award</b> Recognized for outstanding performance as a Psychology undergraduate