

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

Age and Leadership – An Overview of (Ongoing) Projects By



Prof. Astrid C. Homan
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Date : 10 Nov 2025 (Monday)

Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon

Venue : M802, PolyU

Abstract

Although younger workers are often perceived as more motivated, healthier, and better performers than their older counterparts, anecdotal evidence suggests that they see their younger age as a handicap when climbing the hierarchical ladder. I will provide an overview of research my colleagues and I have done on the role that age plays in leadership emergence and effectiveness. In this work, we speak to both the relative and absolute influence of leader age. Across studies, we find that younger age (whether that is being younger than your followers or being young) influences the emergence and effectiveness of leaders. I will present published research illustrating the lack of perceived fit between young age and typical and ideal leadership prototypes, as well as how this might influence actual leadership effectiveness (moderator by leadership behaviors). Additionally, I will present unpublished data from ongoing research projects showing the importance of relative age in shaping lack of legitimacy perceptions of younger, and subsequent turnover, absenteeism, and decreased satisfaction and performance for both leaders and team members. Finally, focusing again on leadership emergence, I will present some unpublished data speaking to how the malleability of leadership prototypes might make “younger” leaders relatively more attractive in certain situations. Notwithstanding the importance of fighting age discrimination for older workers, I hope this presentation will convince you that young(er) age can actually be a significant obstacle for individuals who strive to be or who are in leadership functions.

Prof. Astrid C. Homan is a professor and chair of work and organizational psychology at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Her main research interests are related to diversity-related issues at work, ranging from effects of diversity in teams to stimulating diversity in leadership positions to inclusion-related practices employed by individuals and organizations. Additionally, she is interested in deviant behaviors at work, and how this shapes power-related processes, norms, and (un)ethical behaviors. She employs a wide variety of research methods, and bridges insights from organizational behavior, management, sociology, law, and biology. Prof. Homan has served as associate editor and editor-in-chief of *Organizational Psychology Review*, and as associate editor of *Journal of Applied Psychology*. She has held visiting positions at Michigan State University, UC Berkeley, Columbia University, and Stanford University. She is an elected fellow of the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology and the Association for Psychological Science.

All interested are welcome.



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