Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday, September 9, 2019

Where: 370 JMHH

When: 12:00 – 1:20 pm

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Uniting Through Differences: Cultivating Inclusion through Richly Expressing Cultural-Identity Differences at Work

ABSTRACT:

The present research investigates how employees can cultivate inclusion through expressing cultural differences within diverse organizations. Three experiments examined how minority-group employees engaging in rich and meaningful conversations about their cultural backgrounds (referred to as "rich cultural-identity expression") during interactions with majority-group coworkers influenced majorities' inclusive behaviors toward minorities, such as majorities' willingness to socially integrate with and professionally support minority coworkers. Although previous research suggests that bringing attention to minority identities in the workplace can lead to social distancing and professional devaluation, the present work provides promising evidence that the opposite can occur: majorities behaved more inclusively toward minorities who engaged in rich cultural-identity expression, compared to minorities who did not bring attention to their cultural backgrounds (Studies 1-3). These effects persisted even when minorities richly expressed negatively-valenced cultural information (such as issues with discrimination; Studies 2 and 3), but did not occur when cultural-identity expressions were superficial rather than rich (Studies 2 and 3) nor when expressions focused on sharing generally intimate information relating to emotions (without necessarily focusing on cultural background; Study 2). The benefits of rich cultural-identity expression are rooted in majority-group members thinking more highly of, feeling closer to, and learning more from minority coworkers. This research provides promising evidence that minority employees may be able to express their true selves while gaining – as opposed to jeopardizing – inclusion.

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