

# Decision Processes Colloquia

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Monday, November 11, 2019

Where: 370 JMHH

When: 12:00 – 1:20 pm

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## Trash-talking: The Dysfunction and Function of Incivility

### ABSTRACT:

Trash-talking is pervasive in politics, sports, business, and academia. We conceptualize trash-talking as incivility that is expressed in competition. In this research seminar, we explore the dysfunction and function of trash-talking. In every trash-talking exchange, there is a trash-talker, a target, and typically an audience. To understand the dysfunction of trash-talking, we examine the effect of trash-talking on the target. We demonstrate that participants in a competition who are targets of trash-talking are more likely to outperform participants who face the same economic incentives, but are targets of neutral communication. Furthermore, we find that perceptions of rivalry mediate the relationship between trash-talking and effort-based performance. To explore the function of trash-talking, we consider the effect of trash-talking on an audience of in-group members. We find that trash-talking about an out-group promotes prosocial behavior, relative to neutral communication. In addition, group identification mediates the relationship between trash-talking and prosocial behavior. Taken together, our findings highlight how trash-talking is a common workplace behavior that can motivate both constructive and destructive behavior.

