

MARKETING COLLOQUIA

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Where: 741 JMHH
When: 12:00 PM to 1:20 PM

INDIVIDUALS PREFER TO HARM THEIR OWN GROUP RATHER THAN HELP AN OPPOSING GROUP

ABSTRACT:

Group-based conflict enacts a severe toll on society, yet the psychological factors governing behavior in group conflicts remain unclear. Past work finds that group members seek to maximize relative differences between their in-group and out-group (“in-group favoritism”) and are driven by a desire to benefit in-groups rather than harm out-groups (the “in-group love” hypothesis). This prior research studies how decision-makers approach trade-offs between two net-positive outcomes for their in-group. However, in the real world, group members often face trade-offs between net-negative options, entailing either losses to their group or gains for the opposition. Anecdotally, under such conditions, individuals may avoid supporting their opponents even if this harms their own group, seemingly inconsistent with “in-group love” or a harm minimizing strategy. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, these circumstances have not been investigated. In six pre-registered studies, we find consistent evidence that individuals prefer to harm their own group rather than provide even minimal support to an opposing group across polarized issues (abortion access, political party, gun rights). Strikingly, in an incentive-compatible experiment, individuals preferred to subtract more than three times as much from their own group rather than support an opposing group, despite believing that their in-group is more effective with funds. We find that identity concerns drive preferences in group decision-making, and individuals believe that supporting an opposing group is less value-compatible than harming their own group. Our results hold valuable insights for the psychology of decision-making in intergroup conflict as well as potential interventions for conflict resolution.