The Influence of the Global Leader’s Identity on Multicultural Team Innovation

By

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Abstract
My seminar presentation is based on a paper co-authored by Lisak, Erez, Sui and Lee (2016), which now appears on-line in JIBS. The social identity theory asserts that social categorization prevents multicultural teams from fully utilizing their wide pool of knowledge and perspectives for enhancing team innovation. The question is, therefore, how to overcome the tendency to categorize multicultural team members into ingroup and outgroup based on their cultural background. This study proposes that the leader plays a major role in enabling the multicultural team to overcome social categorization through two mechanisms (Shamir et al., 1993). First, the leader serves as a role model, and therefore, the leader’s approach to multicultural team diversity influences the team members’ approach. Second, the leader aligns the followers with his/hers own values and expectations to accomplish the shared team goal. Our study proposed that leaders with high global identity, who themselves have a strong sense of belongingness to the global world to which multicultural teams belong, convey a sense of inclusion to the team members, which helps overcome social categorization. Furthermore, these leaders recognize the advantage of the large pool of knowledge and perspectives of multicultural teams and they foster team shared innovation goal, which further motivates team members to adopt communication inclusion behavior, making sure that they all understand each other, as they work together towards accomplishing the team innovation goal. We tested the proposed research model on of 574 multicultural team members, their leaders, and their leaders’ managers in 82 co-located multicultural teams in China, who filled out our research questionnaire. Using SEM analysis, our findings supported our research model, demonstrating that leaders with high global identity conveyed a sense of inclusion and fostered team innovation goals, which further enhanced team communication inclusion, which positively affected team innovation. This model was significant mainly for team with high, rather than low perceived diversity.

Prof. Miriam Erez is a Professor Emeritus at the Faculty of Industrial Engineering & Management in the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. Professor Erez has published extensively in many top-tier journals, such as Journal of Applied Psychology, Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, and Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes. Her current research interests include work motivation, cross-cultural organizational psychology and innovation and creativity. Professor Erez has served in many academic leadership positions. Prof. Erez served as the Dean of the Faculty of Industrial Engineering & Management, 1996-1998. She is Fellow of the American Psychological Association, Fellow of the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Fellow of the Academy of Management and Fellow of the International Association of Applied Psychology. Erez serves on the Board of Academy of Management. She is the Past President of Division 1 of Organizational Psychology, The International Association of Applied Psychology (1998-2002). Erez is the former Editor of: Applied Psychology: An International Review (1997-2003). She is on the editorial board of the Journal of Applied Psychology, and she served on the editorial boards of Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes (1988-1999), and of the Academy of Management Journal (1997-1999).

All interested are welcome.