Departmental Research Seminar

Competition of a Different Flavor: How a Collective Competitor Identity Fosters Cooperative and Competitive Behaviors

By

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Date: 2 November 2015 (Mon)
Time: 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm
Venue: M802

Abstract

Using an inductive, qualitative study of gourmet food trucks, I elaborate theory that explains how a group of competitors form a collective identity and how this identity shapes competitive and cooperative behaviors. I describe the prototypical characteristics that comprise a collective competitor identity that enables cooperation, finding the importance of identity content beyond categorization processes. I then develop theory around how practices (competitor relationship practices and identity preservation practices) and the enactment of the collective identity form, maintain, and strengthen this identity. This collective competitor identity fosters extraordinary cooperative behaviors around sharing human, market and knowledge resources and shifts competition to becoming the most prototypical (and most prosocial) member. This research builds on both cognitive and affective approaches to understanding the role of identity in competition by theorizing the processes that shape a collective competitor identity as well as the content of prototypes that can spark cooperative behaviors among competitors. It also contributes to social identity theory by deepening its focus on important affective mechanisms and explaining competition and collaboration within the same in-group.

Scott Sonenshein is Professor of Management at the Jesse H. Jones Graduate School of Business at Rice University, where he teaches courses in organizational behavior, change and leadership. Dr. Sonenshein's research employs field methodologies (primarily involving qualitative data) to explain the resourceful actions of employees in the context of organizational and social/ethical change. Dr. Sonenshein's work usually follows an inductive approach, posing broad research questions grounded in the literature that enable the development and elaboration of theory—often in unexpected directions. This has led to contributions to a variety of theoretical perspectives including sensemaking, narratives, social influence, creativity and decision making. He has made these contributions by locating generative field settings ranging from fashion to food trucks, banks to booksellers, and entrepreneurs to environmentalists. While his studies often contain an “inductive surprise”, his work coalesces around illuminating the skill, agency, and motivation of individuals to contribute to change (in the workplace or for the social good) as well as the corresponding organizational practices that foster these outcomes. He currently serves as an Associate Editor at the Academy of Management Journal and serves on the editorial boards of Academy of Management Review and Organization Science.

All interested are welcome.