Exploring the layers of inclusivity through PRW:

The microfoundations of inclusion in organizations

Submission #: 12551

Proposed sponsor: Organizational Behavior (OB) Division
Other Possible Sponsors: Managerial and Organizational Cognition (MOC) Division, All-Academy Theme (AAT)

ABSTRACT

Our PDW explores the intersection of research on positive relationships at work and inclusion within the workplace. Although scholarly work has long acknowledged an association between positive relationships at work and topics related to inclusion, efforts to examine this relationship explicitly are relatively nascent. The proposed PDW is aimed at building a stream of research that links positive relationships and inclusion by understanding how relationships at work offer a microfoundational lens for creating more inclusive organizations. To this end, the first part of our session is designed to foster connections and ground scholars in key concepts related to both building relationships and understanding inclusivity. The second part of our session invites generative dialogue through a panel discussion with four scholars whose work sits at the crossroads of relationships and inclusion. Through the proposed session, our broad goals are to create opportunities for novel scholarship and research-oriented collaborations among members of the Positive Relationships at Work Microcommunity, scholars who study workplace diversity and inclusion, and individuals interested in relationships at work more generally.

INTEREST TO SPONSORING DIVISIONS

Primary sponsor. We believe that the best fit for our proposed PDW is the **Organizational Behavior (OB) Division**, which has sponsored this session several times in previous years. Our current session explores the broad notion of inclusivity from a positive relationships at work perspective. We believe that understanding the link between positive relationships at work and inclusion is a fundamental concern of the OB division. We have invited expert presenters and panelists whose work in core areas of OB such as authenticity, diversity, and sensemaking bridges positive workplace relationships with fundamental concepts related to facilitating inclusive organizations. These experts will not only discuss the advances that have been made at the intersection of these areas, but also outline new directions and challenges. This approach allows us to connect with many of the topics in the division's domain, including areas such as trust and justice, leadership, teams, commitment and turnover, satisfaction, and stress. Thus, we expect a highly interactive session with participants from a range of OB topic areas. Finally, this session serves as a gathering for scholars interested in studying relationships at work, including Positive Relationships at Work Microcommunity members, many of whom identify the OB division as their primary "home" within the Academy.

Other potential sponsors (MOC and AAT). Work relationships play a key role in how individuals socially construct and make sense of their work and their personal identities, making this PDW a natural fit with the **Managerial and Organizational Cognition (MOC) Division**. Additionally, we have aligned our PDW with the AOM theme, suggesting that our session would also fit within the **All-Academy Theme (AAT).** Research on positive relationships at work has direct relevance to understanding how organizations can facilitate inclusive organizations, "open systems of opportunity in which all stakeholders have access to information, resources, and the capacity to fully contribute to their functioning" (AAT call for submissions).

WORKSHOP FORMAT

The proposed PDW is designed to facilitate several key outcomes. These include considering new research directions by exploring the implications of positive relationships at work for building inclusive organizations, generating conversations related to the microfoundations of inclusivity, and providing a space in which members of the Positive Relationships at Work Microcommunity and other scholars can connect.

PDW Structure

We will begin the workshop with a brief welcome, including an overview of the Positive Relationships at Work Microcommunity and the agenda for the day. We will then move to a short introductory presentation on what inclusivity looks like through a PRW lens, led by Kyle Ehrhardt. Following Professor Ehrhardt's remarks, we will facilitate two successive experiential learning activities. The first will be an icebreaker activity in small groups to facilitate participants' sense of community within the PDW, build common ground, and generate conversation on personal experiences with the microfoundations of inclusivity. After debriefing this common ground exercise, we will move to a second activity in which we will share core stories: partners will reflect on crucible moments in their lives and then discuss their experience doing so in a large group debriefing session. We will then move to a panel discussion, featuring experts spanning multiple research areas relevant to the microfoundations of inclusivity. Panelists include Professors Sally Maitlis, Julianna Pillemer, Laura Morgan Roberts, and John Paul Stephens. Finally, we will conclude the PDW with a brief review and takeaways for deeper discussion and research exploration. We will also share information on how to stay connected with the Positive Relationships at Work Microcommunity. We include a more detailed schedule of the workshop in Appendix A.

OVERVIEW OF WORKSHOP

The theme for the 2019 AOM gathering is "Understanding the Inclusive Organization." Aligned with this theme, our PDW presents a view that inclusion in organizations is constituted in and through positive workplace relationships and interactions. We define inclusion as the degree to which individuals feel integrated and uniquely valued in a group (Shore et al., 2011). Indeed, positive relationships at work can be considered the "ground zero" for creating a more inclusive organization; yet, current research has tended to focus on how inclusion, which has primarily emerged within the domain of workplace diversity, affects social relationships – with mixed results. For example, research on workplace diversity has broadly focused on how diversity affects group processes and performance (van Knipenberg & Schippers, 2007), with countless contextual moderators (Joshi & Roh, 2009). More specifically, this research has shown how diverse group composition increases relational conflict (Pelled at al., 1999; Randel, 2002) and reduces social integration (Harrison et al., 1998, 2002), while other scholars have found a positive relationship between diversity and social integration (e.g., Polzer, Milton, & Swann Jr., 2002; Swann Jr. et al., 2003, 2004). More recently, scholars have explored how the way people manage each other's multiple and diverse identities at work affects the quality of their relationships (Creary, Caza, & Roberts, 2015). Within this stream of work, relationship quality has continued to be treated primarily as an outcome of diversity and inclusion conditions and practices. In effect, this body of work suggests that diversity or inclusion is the starting point and examines the effects on relationship quality, rather than considering positive relationships at work as microfoundations for cultivating inclusion.

Although this body of work has offered substantial insight to ways in which inclusion and relationships at work are associated, we suggest that more insight can be gained by considering

positive relationships at work as the input for organizations that seek to be inclusive – beyond issues of diversity. Over the past decade, positive relationships at work has become a burgeoning area of research within organizational behavior (Colbert, Bono, & Purvanova, 2016; Dutton & Ragins, 2007; Ferris et al., 2009). The growing interest in positive relationships at work is spurred by the value of positive relationships for both the individual employees and the organizations in which they are embedded. Understanding how relationships shape the workplace experience has been approached through a variety of lenses, ranging from how organizations cultivate moments of high quality connections (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Stephens, Heaphy, & Dutton, 2012) to how organizations develop systems of relational coordination (Gittell, 2001; Gittell & Douglass, 2012). Topics in this domain include relational identification and how relationships shape the way employees see themselves and their work (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Ashforth, Schinoff, & Rogers, 2016), mentoring and the value of developmental networks (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Murphy & Kram, 2014), compassion in response to suffering (Dutton, Workman, & Hardin, 2014), and the complexities of workplace friendships (Methot, LePine, Podsakoff, & Christian, 2015; Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018).

Positive relationships can strengthen people's sense of inclusion directly, by creating a sense of belonging within the positive relationship itself, as well as indirectly by enhancing people's capacity to engage more fully in their work (Kahn, 2007), and enhancing their identity through self-discovery and self-actualization (Roberts, 2007). Whether brief or long-lasting, high-quality connections marked by vitality, mutuality, and positive regard naturally produce a sense of inclusion by awakening an awareness of our shared humanity (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Functionally, developmental networks can provide social support and role modeling that can facilitate inclusion and mutual understanding (Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy, & Kram, 2012).

Systematically, inclusion can be cultivated by pursuing relational coordination built on an ethic of care (Gittell & Douglass, 2012). Finally, when organizations fail to cultivate inclusion, developing a capacity for compassion in response to suffering at work can help elevate people who feel marginalized (Dutton et al., 2006; Lilius et al., 2011; Worline & Dutton, 2017).

In sum, prior work clearly points to the connection between understanding positive relationships at work and inclusion. However, we have only scratched the surface in bridging these research domains, and still have numerous opportunities to advance knowledge and practice regarding inclusion. As Dutton and Ragins (2007) argue, the field needs to "build bridges across silos of scholarship" (p. 5), "put relationships to the foreground of organizational studies" (p. 5), and "extend our boundaries of knowledge about relationships in organizations" (p. 6). As we build a greater understanding of how to build and maintain positive relationships at work, this understanding can help address efforts to establish more inclusive organizations. Likewise, our understanding of inclusion can inform and expand the positive relationships at work literature. As such, our goals for this session are threefold:

1. Expand our thinking and generate dialogue among scholars who have approached the subjects of positive relationships and inclusion from a wide range of perspectives.

2. Foster a space for research collaboration and emergent scholarship.

3. Provide a rewarding, interactive experience of connection among participants and strengthen the sense of inclusion among scholars interested in relationships research.

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Research presenters and panelists (in alphabetical order):

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ORGANIZERS' DECLARATION

We, Melissa Chamberlin, Gabby Cunningham, Lyndon Garrett, and Beth Schinoff, certify that all organizers and facilitators have stated that they agree to participate in this workshop if it is accepted, and that they are not in violation of the *Rule of Three + Three.* We understand that if this submission is accepted, all of the listed participants must be registered for the meeting to take part in the session. We understand that the scheduling and audio-visual requests are requests only. If our proposal is accepted, the PDW chair will let us know whether our requests are approved.

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APPENDIX A

Workshop Schedule (duration: 150 minutes)
- Welcome & Agenda (5 minutes)
- Presentation: What is inclusivity through a PRW lens? Kyle Ehrhardt (10 minutes)
- Experiential Learning Exercise 1 (30 minutes): Common Ground Icebreaker
  - Building surface inclusivity in groups of 4-6
  - Large group debrief, led by organizers
- Experiential Learning Exercise 2 (45 minutes): Sharing Core Stories
  - Building deeper relationships in groups of 2-3
  - Large group debrief, led by organizers
- Discussion Panel (50 minutes)
  - Laura Morgan Roberts – Identity and Social Identification
  - Julianna Pillemer – Authenticity
  - Sally Maitlis – Compassion and Growth
  - John Paul Stephens – Connections and Microfoundations
- Closing remarks (10 minutes)