“Diversity Management: An examination of the effects of group dominance motives on racial minority group recruitment, selection and retention”

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Abstract:

Past research suggests that diversity can generate positive outcomes. For example, in higher education learning is enhanced by interracial interactions. In companies, diversity can facilitate innovation and problem-solving. However, other studies suggest that the relationship between diversity and outcomes is based on a variety of contingencies. One of these contingencies is the degree to which diversity is managed effectively. A key component of effective diversity management is the development and implementation of policies and practices that facilitate the recruitment, selection, and retention of diverse groups. I present five studies on policies and practices that adversely impact diversity efforts and serve to maintain racial inequality.

The first two of these studies examine reactions to selection policies – affirmative action policies, which grant admissions preferences to racial minorities, and legacy policies, which grant admissions preferences to children and grandchildren of university alumni. In the third study I examine reactions to recruitment and selection policies – specifically, word-of-mouth referrals, which is an informal hiring practice of using current employees to share information about job vacancies with their family, friends, and acquaintances. Taken together, these findings suggest that attitudes toward recruitment and selection policies do not depend on their specific content or effects on one’s racial group, but rather on the policies’ assumed effect on racial status hierarchies. The final two studies are from a paper recently published (Gutiérrez & Unzueta, 2010) on multicultural and colorblind ideology – tenets of which are often promoted in organizational settings. These findings suggest that these ideologies may have differential effects on evaluations of racial minorities. Specifically, exposure to multicultural ideology -- which emphasizes the importance of embracing diversity and recognizing ethnic group differences, led to greater liking of a stereotypic African American (Study 1) and Latino (Study 2) than a counterstereotypic African American and Latino. Conversely, exposure to colorblind ideology -- which emphasizes the importance of ignoring ethnic group differences and assuming a unifying identity (e.g., Americans), led to greater liking of a counterstereotypic African American (Study 1) and Latino (Study 2) than a stereotypic African American and Latino. To the extent that feeling liked may influence racial minorities’ sense of belongingness and inclusion in organizations, these findings suggest that promoting tenets of these ideologies may adversely affect the retention of racial minorities in organizations.

In all, my research suggests that selection policies currently used by universities, recruitment practices employed by companies, and interethnic ideologies promoted in organizations may undermine diversity efforts. As such, these findings make a call to organizations to examine whether current selection, recruitment, and retention policies and practices serve their intended purpose or instead, threaten efforts to include racial minorities in organizations.