

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar



Identity-based Motivation and the Inferences People Draw about Themselves and Goal Pursuit When Life Is Hard By

Prof. Daphna Oyserman
University of Southern California

Date : 19 Oct 2023 (THU)
Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon
Venue : M802

Abstract

Just world and deservingness beliefs imply that people suffer for a reason. Drawing on identity-based motivation theory, I predict that when drawing inferences about themselves, people infer that life's hardships provide opportunities to become a better person. Across cross cultural comparison studies, diary studies, and studies with American adults and college students, I document that when people think about difficulty that do use the language predicted by identity-based motivation theory, that how much people endorse difficulty-as-improvement can be assessed cross-culturally and has meaningful effects on variation in daily well-being as well as on preference for more effortful as opposed to less effortful means of goal attainment.

Prof. Daphna Oyserman's research examines how small changes in context can shift mindsets, and so the perceived meaning of behaviors and situations, with large downstream effects on important and consequential outcomes, including health and academic performance. Her theoretical and experimental work conceptualizes the underlying processes, which she then translates into real-world interventions. One line of work focuses on cultural differences in affect, behavior, and cognition – how people feel, act, and think about themselves and the world around them. A related second line of work focuses on racial, ethnic, and social class gaps in school achievement and health. Throughout, she examines how apparently “fixed” differences between groups may in fact mask highly malleable situated processes that can be profoundly influenced through small interventions that shift mindset.

Prof. Oyserman received a PhD in psychology and social work from the University of Michigan (1987) and served on the faculty of The Hebrew University, Jerusalem before returning to the University of Michigan, where she last held appointments as the Edwin J. Thomas Collegiate Professor of Social Work, Professor of Psychology, and Research Professor in the Institute for Social Research. She is the recipient of a W. T. Grant Faculty Scholar Award, a Humboldt Scientific Contribution Prize of the German Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, Association for Psychological Science, Society for Personality and Social Psychology, and Society for Experimental Social Psychology.

All interested are welcome.



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