Leveraging Multicultural Skills in the Workplace
Soft Skills II Workshop
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Part 1: Social Identities  (15 Min)
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Opening question on white board:

Which U.S. Presidents were bi/multilingual, bi/multicultural?
Questions on white board: (answers provided during discussion)

What are social identities? (feeling of a bond with others in a cultural group and defining oneself according to the group)

What purposes do they serve?
(willing to follow the group, sacrifice for the group)
(reduce uncertainty – cognitive aspect)
(increase self-esteem – motivational aspect)

What are the sources of identities?
(religion)
(education)
(family upbringing)
(sports)
(profession)

Key characteristics of social identities (and strength)
- S(salient) – accessible most of the time, e.g., national and religious, whereas sports only when team is playing
- D(distinctive) – unique, e.g., engineer in a marketing firm has stronger professional identity in that setting
- P(prestigious) – high status, in the beholder’s eyes, e.g., Western European cultural identity may be seen as more prestigious in N. America than other cultural identities

Managing multiple identities
- Feelings – increases psychological work, can take a psychological toll,
- Actions – if threatened or confused, we might be tempted to reject identities that threaten deeply held ones; if both identities are strong, to resolve uncertainty may need to segment the identities and exit the situation

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Multicultural employees as organizational “brokers”

Stacey Fitzsimmons

See her PPT slides and articles