

Topics for Bachelor Theses for Management Students at the Chair of Organization & Innovation

FSS 2021

You can choose among the 15 topics described below. Preferences will be collected after the inaugural meeting.

Introduction to academic writing (inaugural meeting):

Monday, May 3rd 2021, 10:00 – 12:00h. The session will be held virtually. Detailed information regarding the exact procedure will be shared with the students beforehand via email/ ILIAS.

TOPIC 1:

Internal/external change agents and organizational resistance to change

Related literature:

Ford, J. D., Ford, L. W., & D'Amelio, A. (2008). Resistance to change: The rest of the story. *Academy of management Review*, 33(2), 362-377.

Abstract:

Prevailing views of resistance to change tell a one-sided story that favors change agents by proposing that resistance is an irrational and dysfunctional reaction located “over there” in change recipients. We tell the rest of the story by proposing that change agents contribute to the occurrence of resistance through their own actions and inactions and that resistance can be a resource for change. We conclude by proposing how resistance might be restructured.

TOPIC 2:

Friends with benefits? The effects of friendships in work teams on team performance

Related literature:

Pillemer, J., & Rothbard, N. P. (2018). Friends without benefits: Understanding the dark sides of workplace friendship. *Academy of Management Review*, 43(4), 635-660.

Abstract:

Although many scholars and practitioners have assumed that workplace friendships lead to desirable organizational outcomes, a growing body of research suggests important complexities and downsides associated with them. This indicates a need to better understand how and when workplace friendships may lead to harmful outcomes, especially in light of organizational and technological shifts that are changing the way employees connect. Drawing on theories of close relationships, social exchange, and boundary management, we present a theoretical framework highlighting how four defining features of friendship (informality, voluntariness, communal norms, and socioemotional goals) are in tension with four fundamental elements of organizational life (formal roles, involuntary constraints, exchange

norms, and instrumental goals). We also highlight how mutual self-disclosure and perceived similarity develop and deepen friendships but also lead to downsides for individuals, groups, and organizations. We articulate how specific features of a focal friendship clique (e.g., closeness, maturity, and status of members) may amplify or buffer negative aspects and how social media affect friendship formation and tensions. Our theoretical framework should inform new theory and research on positive relationships at work and boundary management of professional and personal identities, as well as how changes to work and technology affect workplace relationships.

TOPIC 3:

CEO selection: determinants of appointing a female CEO

Related literature:

Cook, A., & Glass, C. (2014). Above the glass ceiling: When are women and racial/ethnic minorities promoted to CEO?. *Strategic Management Journal*, 35(7), 1080-1089.

Abstract:

Using a dataset of all CEO transitions in Fortune 500 companies over a 15-year period, we analyze mechanisms that shape the promotion probabilities and leadership tenure of women and racial/ethnic minority CEOs. Consistent with the theory of the glass cliff, we find that occupational minorities—defined as white women and men and women of color—are more likely than white men to be promoted CEO of weakly performing firms. Though we find no significant differences in tenure length between occupational minorities and white men, we find that when firm performance declines during the tenure of occupational minority CEOs, these leaders are likely to be replaced by white men. We term this phenomenon the “savior effect.”

TOPIC 4:

The positive and negative effects of stars on team creativity

Related literature:

Li, Y., Li, N., Li, C., & Li, J. (2020). The boon and bane of creative “stars”: A social network exploration of how and when team creativity is (and is not) driven by a star teammate. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(2), 613-635.

Abstract:

Although previous research has highlighted the disproportional contributions of star employees to their teams, an emerging line of research has begun to examine the potentially negative consequences of team stars. Drawing on a social model of team creativity, we develop a dualistic model of the influences of team creative stars on team creativity. Specifically, we explore the roles of two types of team members—star and nonstar employees—in driving team creativity. Across two multiwave and multisource field samples, we find that a creative star who occupies a central position in the team workflow network has both a positive direct effect on team creativity and a negative indirect effect on team creativity via reducing nonstars’ learning (i.e., exploratory and exploitative activities). Our study also reveals that team coordination can mitigate the detrimental effect of a star’s centrality on nonstars’ learning behavior, and subsequently buffer the indirect effect on team creativity.

TOPIC 5:

Tackling the gender gap: is the adoption of diversity goals or quotas effective?

Related literature:

Leslie, L. M., Manchester, C. F., & Dahm, P. C. (2017). Why and when does the gender gap reverse? Diversity goals and the pay premium for high potential women. *Academy of Management Journal*, 60(2), 402-432.

Abstract:

Abundant research has documented a gender pay gap; women earn less than men, all else being equal. Against the backdrop of an overall female penalty, we propose that the widespread adoption of diversity goals in organizations creates a female premium for certain women. We integrate the economic principle of supply and demand with theory from the field of strategic human resource management and theorize that individuals perceive high-potential women—Who have the abilities needed to reach the upper echelons of organizations, where women remain underrepresented—As more valuable for achieving organizational diversity goals than high-potential men and, in turn, reward them with higher pay. Two field studies (Studies 1 and 3) and two laboratory experiments (Studies 2 and 4) reveal a female premium that is unique to high-potential women (Studies 1 and 2), driven by perceptions that high-potential women have more diversity value than high-potential men (Studies 2 and 4), and larger in contexts where diversity goals are stronger (Studies 3 and 4). Our theory and findings challenge the assumption that the gender pay gap uniformly disadvantages women and offer new insight into why and when the female penalty reverses and becomes a female premium.

TOPIC 6:

The impact of forced role integration in times of COVID-19 on work outcomes

Related literature:

Ashforth, B. E., Kreiner, G. E., & Fugate, M. (2000). All in a day's work: Boundaries and micro role transitions. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(3), 472-491.

Abstract:

We focus on everyday role transitions involving home, work, and other places. Transitions are boundary-crossing activities, where one exits and enters roles by surmounting role boundaries. Roles can be arrayed on a continuum, spanning high segmentation to high integration. Segmentation decreases role blurring but increases the magnitude of change, rendering boundary crossing more difficult; crossing often is facilitated by rites of passage. Integration decreases the magnitude of change but increases blurring, rendering boundary creation and maintenance more difficult; this challenge often is surmounted by boundary work.

TOPIC 7:

The influence of an entrepreneur's status on the costs of business failure

Related literature:

Ucbasaran, D., Shepherd, D. A., Lockett, A., & Lyon, S. J. (2013). Life after business failure: The process and consequences of business failure for entrepreneurs. *Journal of Management*, 39(1), 163-202.

Abstract:

Where there is uncertainty, there is bound to be failure. It is not surprising, therefore, that many new ventures fail. What happens to entrepreneurs when their business fails? People hear of highly successful entrepreneurs extolling the virtues of failure as a valuable teacher. Yet the aftermath of failure is often fraught with psychological, social, and financial turmoil. The purpose of this article is to review research on life after business failure for entrepreneurs, from the immediate aftermath through to recovery and re-emergence. First, the authors examine the financial, social, and psychological costs of failure, highlighting factors that may influence the magnitude of these costs (including individual responses to managing these costs). Second, they review research that explains how entrepreneurs make sense of and learn from failure. Finally, the authors present research on the outcomes of business failure, including recovery as well as cognitive and behavioral outcomes. They develop a schema to organize extant work and use this as a platform for developing an agenda for future research.

TOPIC 8:

The influence of hierarchies on knowledge recombination in teams

Related literature:

Carnabuci, G., & Operti, E. (2013). Where do firms' recombinant capabilities come from? Intraorganizational networks, knowledge, and firms' ability to innovate through technological recombination. *Strategic management journal*, 34(13), 1591-1613.

Abstract:

A firm's innovativeness is driven by its ability to recombine existing technologies. Elaborating on this argument, we contend that there exist two distinct types of recombinant capabilities. First, firms may innovate through recombinant creation, i.e., by creating technological combinations new to the firm. Second, they may innovate through recombinant reuse; i.e., by reconfiguring combinations already known to the firm. We study what drives each type of capability by examining two factors: the degree of integration of a firm's intraorganizational network and the diversity of its knowledge base. We test our theoretical predictions using data on 126 semiconductor firms between 1984 and 2003. Our analyses indicate that factors that favor recombinant creation generally hinder recombinant reuse and vice versa; however, combining an integrated collaboration network and a diverse knowledge base may concurrently enhance both recombinant capabilities.

TOPIC 9:

The influence of social status on knowledge diffusion

Related literature:

Singh, J. (2005). Collaborative networks as determinants of knowledge diffusion patterns. *Management science*, 51(5), 756-770.

Abstract:

This paper examines whether interpersonal networks help explain two widely documented patterns of knowledge diffusion: (1) geographic localization of knowledge flows, and (2) concentration of knowledge flows within firm boundaries. I measure knowledge flows using patent citation data, and employ a novel regression framework based on choice-based sampling to estimate the probability of knowledge flow between inventors of any two patents. As expected, intraregional and intrafirm knowledge flows are found to be stronger than those across regional or firm boundaries. I explore whether these patterns can be explained by direct and indirect network ties among inventors, as inferred from past collaborations among them. The existence of a tie is found to be associated with a greater probability of knowledge flow, with the probability decreasing as the pathlength (geodesic) increases. Furthermore, the effect of regional or firm boundaries on knowledge flow decreases once interpersonal ties have been accounted for. In fact, being in the same region or firm is found to have little additional effect on the probability of knowledge flow among inventors who already have close network ties. The overall evidence is consistent with a view that interpersonal networks are important in determining observed patterns of knowledge diffusion.

TOPIC 10:

The influence of team tenure on team creativity

Related literature:

Perry-Smith, J. E., & Shalley, C. E. (2003). The social side of creativity: A static and dynamic social network perspective. *Academy of management review*, 28(1), 89-106.

Abstract:

We explore the association between the context of social relationships and individual creativity. We go beyond a one-dimensional treatment of social relationships, highlighting the importance of both static and dynamic social network concepts. We argue that weaker ties are generally but not always beneficial for creativity, propose the network positions that facilitate and constrain creative work, and describe three moderators. A spiraling model is presented, capturing the cyclical relationship between creativity and network position. Collectively, our propositions describe an individual's creative life cycle in terms of network

TOPIC 11:

Acquisitions and employee mobility: how acquisitions create new innovative competitors

Related literature:

Younge, K. A., Tong, T. W., & Fleming, L. (2015). How anticipated employee mobility affects acquisition likelihood: Evidence from a natural experiment. *Strategic Management Journal*, 36(5), 686-708.

Abstract:

This study draws on strategic factor market theory and argues that acquirers' decisions regarding whether to bid for a firm reflect their expectations about employee departure from the firm post-acquisition, suggesting a negative relationship between the anticipated employee departure from a firm and the likelihood of the firm becoming an acquisition target. Using a natural experiment and a difference-in-differences approach, we find causal evidence that constraints on employee mobility raise the likelihood of a firm becoming an acquisition target. The causal effect is stronger when a firm employs more knowledge workers in its workforce and when it faces greater in-state competition; by contrast, the effect is weaker when a firm is protected by a stronger intellectual property regime that mitigates the consequences of employee mobility.

TOPIC 12:

The curse of being a young firm? Employer attractiveness of start-ups

Related literature:

Sorenson, O., Dahl, M. S., Canales, R., & Burton, M. D. (2020). Do startup employees earn more in the long-run?. *Organization Science*.

Abstract:

Evaluating the attractiveness of startup employment requires an understanding of both what startups pay and the implications of these jobs for earnings trajectories. Analyzing Danish registry data, we find that employees hired by startups earn roughly 17% less over the next ten years than those hired by large, established firms. About half of this earnings differential stems from sorting—from the fact that startup employees have less human capital. Long-run earnings also vary depending on when individuals are hired. While the earliest employees of startups suffer an earnings penalty, those hired by already-successful startups earn a small premium. Two factors appear to account for the earnings penalties for the first employees: Startups fail at high rates, creating costly spells of unemployment for their (former) employees. Job mobility patterns also diverge: After being employed by a small startup, individuals rarely return to the large firms that pay more.

TOPIC 13:

Couplings between young firms: Acquisitions between start-ups and innovation outcomes

Related literature:

Graebner, M. E., Heimeriks, K. H., Huy, Q. N., & Vaara, E. (2017). The process of postmerger integration: A review and agenda for future research. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(1), 1-32.

Abstract:

Mergers and acquisitions (M&As) continue to be prevalent despite frequently yielding disappointing outcomes. Postmerger integration plays a critical role in M&A success, yet many questions about M&A implementation remain unanswered. In this article, we review research on postmerger integration, which we organize around strategic integration, sociocultural integration, and experience and learning. We then lay out a research agenda that centers on expanding our understanding of processual dynamics in postmerger integration. We focus on opportunities related to temporality, decision-making, practices and tools, and emotionality.

TOPIC 14:

Relational rivalry in organizations: Antecedents and Consequences

Related literature:

Kilduff, G. J., Elfenbein, H. A., & Staw, B. M. (2010). The psychology of rivalry: A relationally dependent analysis of competition. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(5), 943-969.

Abstract:

We investigate the psychological phenomenon of rivalry and propose that competition is inherently relational, thus extending the literatures on competition between individuals, groups, and firms. Specifically, we argue that competitors' relationships, determined by their proximity, attributes, and prior competitive interactions, influence the subjective intensity of rivalry between them, which in turn affects their competitive behavior. Initial tests in NCAA basketball support these ideas, indicating that teams' similarity and interaction histories systematically predict rivalry, and that rivalry may affect team members' motivation and performance. Implications for the management of employees, as well as for organizations' competitive strategies, are significant.

TOPIC 15:

Risk-taking in organizations

Related literature:

Hoskisson, R. E., Chirico, F., Zyung, J., & Gambeta, E. (2017). Managerial risk taking: A multitheoretical review and future research agenda. *Journal of management*, 43(1), 137-169.

Abstract:

Managerial risk taking is a critical aspect of strategic management. To improve competitive advantage and performance, managers need to take risks, often in an uncertain environment. Formal economic

assumptions of risk taking suggest that if the expected values for two strategies are similar but one is a greater gamble (uncertain), managers will choose the strategy with a more certain outcome. Based on these assumptions, agency theory assumes that top managers should be compensated or monitored to achieve better outcomes. We review the theory and research on agency theory and managerial risk taking along with theories that challenge this basic assumption about risk taking: the behavioral theory of the firm, prospect theory, the behavioral agency model and the related socioemotional wealth perspective, and upper echelons theory. We contribute to the literature by reviewing and suggesting research opportunities within and across these theories to develop a comprehensive research agenda on managerial risk taking.