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

FSS 2022

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

Introduction to academic writing (inaugural meeting):

Wednesday, Apr 6th 2022, 15:00 – 18:00h. The session will be held virtually. Detailed information regarding the exact procedure will be shared with the students beforehand via email/ ILIAS.

TOPIC 1:

The influence of relative performance feedback on performance

Related literature:

Azmat, G., Bagues, M., Cabrales, A., & Iriberri, N. (2019). What you don't know… can't hurt you? A natural field experiment on relative performance feedback in higher education. Management Science, 65(8), 3714-3736.

Abstract:

This paper studies the effect of providing feedback to college students on their position in the grade distribution by using a natural field experiment. This information was updated every six months during a three-year period. We find that greater grades transparency decreases educational performance, as measured by the number of examinations passed and grade point average (GPA). However, self-reported satisfaction, as measured by surveys conducted after feedback is provided but before students take their examinations, increases. We provide a theoretical framework to understand these results, focusing on the role of prior beliefs and using out-of-trial surveys to test the model. In the absence of treatment, a majority of students underestimate their position in the grade distribution, suggesting that the updated information is "good news" for many students. Moreover, the negative effect on performance is driven by those students who underestimate their position in the absence of feedback. Students who overestimate initially their position, if anything, respond positively. The performance effects are short lived—by the time students graduate, they have similar accumulated GPA and graduation rates.

TOPIC 2:

Direct and indirect effects of crises for organizations: A review and agenda for future research

Related literature:

Kang, E. (2008). Director interlocks and spillover effects of reputational penalties from financial reporting fraud. Academy of Management Journal, 51(3), 537-555.

Abstract:

I examined the spillover of reputational penalties between firms in the context of financial reporting fraud. Drawing from signaling and attribution theories, I used financial event study methodology and found significant reputational penalties in 45 (18.4%) out of 244 firms with director interlocks to 30 firms accused of financial reporting fraud in the United States. Furthermore, logistic regression analysis suggested that firms thus associated with accused firms were more likely to experience significant reputational penalties when the interlocking directors held audit or governance chair positions in them. This likelihood decreased when these firms' observable governance structures signaled effective corporate governance.

TOPIC 3:

Organizational factors affecting the recognition of novelty

Related literature:

Berg, J. M. (2016). Balancing on the creative highwire: Forecasting the success of novel ideas in organizations. Administrative Science Quarterly, 61(3), 433-468.

Abstract:

Betting on the most promising new ideas is key to creativity and innovation in organizations, but predicting the success of novel ideas can be difficult. To select the best ideas, creators and managers must excel at creative forecasting, the skill of predicting the outcomes of new ideas. Using both a field study of 339 professionals in the circus arts industry and a lab experiment, I examine the conditions for accurate creative forecasting, focusing on the effect of creators' and managers' roles. In the field study, creators and managers forecasted the success of new circus acts with audiences, and the accuracy of these forecasts was assessed using data from 13,248 audience members. Results suggest that creators were more accurate than managers when forecasting about others' novel ideas, but not their own. This advantage over managers was undermined when creators previously had poor ideas that were successful in the marketplace anyway. Results from the lab experiment show that creators' advantage over managers in predicting success may be tied to the emphasis on both divergent thinking (idea generation) and convergent thinking (idea evaluation) in the creator role, while the manager role emphasizes only convergent thinking. These studies highlight that creative forecasting is a critical bridge linking creativity and innovation, shed light on the importance of roles in creative forecasting, and advance theory on why creative success is difficult to sustain over time.

TOPIC 4:

Is necessity really the mother of invention? How the availability of resources shapes innovation

Related literature:

Keupp, M. M., & Gassmann, O. (2013). Resource constraints as triggers of radical innovation: Longitudinal evidence from the manufacturing sector. Research Policy, 42(8), 1457-1468.

Abstract:

Despite the significant role of radical innovation as a driver of firm growth and performance, the consequences of resource constraints for radical innovation outcomes remain unknown. Our paper addresses this gap. We combine arguments from entrepreneurship theory and the theory of recombinative innovation to construct an overarching theoretical framework that argues why resource constraints can promote, rather than impede, radical innovation. We then build hypotheses on two specific resource constraints, knowledge and financial, and test these by a lagged-variable random-effects Tobit model with longitudinal data from an exceptionally large and detailed innovation survey. Controlling for absorptive capacity, firm age, and firm growth, we find full support for the hypothesis that knowledge constraints spur radical innovation and partial support for the hypothesis that financial constraints spur radical innovation. We discuss the theoretical significance of these findings and point to managerial implications and paths for future research.

TOPIC 5:

Knowledge hiding vs. knowledge sharing: A review of differences and overlaps in their predictors

Related literature:

Connelly, C. E., Zweig, D., Webster, J., & Trougakos, J. P (2012). Knowledge hiding in organizations. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 33, 64-88.

Abstract:

Despite the efforts to enhance knowledge transfer in organizations, success has been elusive. It is becoming clear that in many instances employees are unwilling to share their knowledge even when organizational practices are designed to facilitate transfer. Consequently, this paper develops and investigates a novel construct, knowledge hiding. We establish that knowledge hiding exists, we distinguish knowledge hiding from related concepts (knowledge hoarding and knowledge sharing), and we develop a multidimensional measure of this construct. We also identify several predictors of knowledge hiding in organizations. The results of three studies, using different methods, suggest that knowledge hiding is comprised of three related factors: evasive hiding, rationalized hiding, and playing dumb. Each of these hiding behaviors is predicted by distrust, yet each also has a different set of interpersonal and organizational predictors. We draw implications for future research on knowledge management.

TOPIC 6:

The relationship between creativity and risk taking

Related literature:

Dewett, T. (2007). Linking intrinsic motivation, risk taking, and employee creativity in an R&D environment. R&d Management, 37(3), 197-208.

Abstract:

Intrinsic motivation is thought to spur risk taking and creativity. Nonetheless, the relationship between common creativity antecedents and intrinsic motivation is seldom clarified and the assertion that

intrinsic motivation spurs risk taking and creativity has rarely been addressed. The current study adopts an individual level of analysis and attempts to link several common creativity antecedents, intrinsic motivation, and one's willingness to take risks to employee creativity. Using survey data collected from 165 research and development personnel and their supervisors, evidence is provided showing that intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship between certain antecedents and one's willingness to take risks and that this willingness mediates the effect of intrinsic motivation on employee creativity. However, starkly different findings emerge when using subjective versus objective indicators of employee creativity, suggesting that further theoretical development is in order to explain the differences.

TOPIC 7:

How do virtual teams work? Hierarchies and team processes in virtual teams

Related literature:

Townsend, A. M., DeMarie, S. M., & Hendrickson, A. R. (1998). Virtual teams: Technology and the workplace of the future. Academy of Management Perspectives, 12(3), 17-29.

Abstract:

Virtual teams, which are linked primarily through advanced computer and telecommunications technologies, provide a potent response to the challenges associated with today's downsized and lean organizations, and to the resulting geographical dispersion of essential employees. Virtual teams also address new workforce demographics, where the best employees may be located anywhere in the world, and where workers demand increasing technological sophistication and personal flexibility. With virtual teams, organizations can build teams with optimum membership while retaining the advantages of flat organizational structure. Additionally, firms benefit from virtual teams through access to previously unavailable expertise, enhanced cross-functional interaction, and the use of systems that improve the quality of the virtual team's work.

TOPIC 8:

How does knowledge hiding affect the hider and the receiver? A review and agenda for future research

Related literature:

Černe, M., Nerstad, C. G. L., Dysvik, A., & Skerlavaj, M. (2014). What goes around comes around: Knowledge hiding, perceived motivational climate, and creativity. Academy of Management Journal, 57(1), 172–192.

Abstract:

Knowledge hiding prevents colleagues from generating creative ideas, but it may also have negative consequences for the creativity of a knowledge hider. Drawing on social exchange theory, we propose that when employees hide knowledge, they trigger a reciprocal distrust loop in which coworkers are unwilling to share knowledge with them. We further suggest that these effects are contingent on motivational climate, in such a way that the negative effects of an individual's hiding knowledge on his/her own creativity are enhanced in a performance climate and attenuated in a mastery climate. A

field study of 240 employees nested in 34 groups revealed a negative relationship between knowledge hiding and knowledge hiders' creativity as well as a moderating role of a mastery climate. Study 2 replicated these findings in an experimental study of 132 undergraduate students, testing a reciprocal distrust loop and comparing it with an alternative intrapsychic explanatory process based on situational regulatory focus. Implications for practice and future research are discussed.

TOPIC 9:

Career inaction: Individual and organizational determinants

Related literature:

Verbruggen, M., & De Vos, A. (2020). When people don't realize their career desires: toward a theory of career inaction. Academy of Management Review, 45(2), 376-394.

Abstract:

Career decisions are at the core of the career literature. Most current career theories focus on how career decisions are enacted and, in the end, realized. However, empirical evidence shows that people often do not realize their career desires. For instance, many people who have turnover intentions stay in their organization, and people with entrepreneurial desires often turn out to be wantrepreneurs (i.e., people who talk about starting a business without doing anything to realize it). Although structural barriers sometimes inhibit people from realizing a desired change, there are also indications that people often do not even mobilize into action, or give up prematurely, when trying to realize their career desires. This explanation, however, has rarely been acknowledged, let alone studied. To address this gap, we develop a theory of career inaction. We define career inaction as the failure to act sufficiently over some period of time on a desired change in one's career. Building on the psychology of doing nothing, we explain why and when career inaction may occur and how it can impact people, even in the longer run. Our propositions may guide career researchers to think about and include career inaction in their future studies.

TOPIC 10:

The influence of inventor mobility on the diffusion of knowledge in the digital era

Related literature:

Almeida, P., & Kogut, B. (1999). Localization of knowledge and the mobility of engineers in regional networks. Management science, 45(7), 905-917.

Abstract:

Knowledge, once generated, spills only imperfectly among firms and nations. We posit that since institutions and labor networks vary by region, there should be regional variations in the localization of spillovers. We investigate the relationship between the mobility of major patent holders and the localization of technological knowledge through the analysis of patent citations of important semiconductor innovations. We find that knowledge localization is specific to only certain regions (particularly Silicon Valley) and that the degree of localization varies across regions. By analyzing data on the interfirm mobility of patentholders, we empirically show that the interfirm mobility of

engineers influences the local transfer of knowledge. The flow of knowledge is embedded in regional labor networks

TOPIC 11:

The role of CEO gender during crisis management processes

<u>Related literature:</u>

Bundy, J., Pfarrer, M. D., Short, C. E., & Coombs, W. T. (2017). Crises and crisis management: Integration, interpretation, and research development. Journal of Management, 43(6), 1661-1692.

<u>Abstract:</u>

Organizational research has long been interested in crises and crisis management. Whether focused on crisis antecedents, outcomes, or managing a crisis, research has revealed a number of important findings. However, research in this space remains fragmented, making it difficult for scholars to understand the literature's core conclusions, recognize unsolved problems, and navigate paths forward. To address these issues, we propose an integrative framework of crises and crisis management that draws from research in strategy, organizational theory, and organizational behavior as well as from research in public relations and corporate communication. We identify two primary perspectives in the literature, one focused on the internal dynamics of a crisis and one focused on managing external stakeholders. We review core concepts from each perspective and highlight the commonalities that exist between them. Finally, we use our integrative framework to propose future research directions for scholars interested in crises and crisis management.

TOPIC 12:

Nonstandard work schedules: Implications for employees and organizations

<u>Related literature:</u>

Bolino, M. C., Kelemen, T. K., & Matthews, S. H. (in press). Working 9-to-5? A review of research on nonstandard work schedules. Journal of Organizational Behavior.

<u>Abstract:</u>

Increasingly, organizations around the world need employees to work weekends and during hours that fall outside of a traditional 9-to-5, Monday through Friday, schedule. At the same time, in recent years, employees have sought more flexible working arrangements that result in longer work shifts that occur on fewer days each week. Although nonstandard work schedules have important organizational implications, much of this research has occurred outside of the management literature. Further, within the management literature, there has been little attempt to review and integrate the findings of prior studies of nonstandard work schedules. In this paper, we review research that has investigated nonstandard work shifts and how they affect work-related outcomes (e.g., job behavior and job attitudes), health-related outcomes (e.g., physiological, behavioral, and psychological consequences), and personal/family-related outcomes (e.g., work–family conflict, divorce, and parent–child relations). Following our review, we identify avenues for future investigations, with a particular emphasis on methodological improvements and research that would

facilitate the development of integrated conceptual models that more fully consider the implications of work schedules in the context of other important areas of organizational scholarship.

TOPIC 13:

How does the radicalness of an idea affect its diffusion?

Related literature:

Sgourev, S. V. (2013). How Paris gave rise to Cubism (and Picasso): Ambiguity and fragmentation in radical innovation. Organization Science, 24(6), 1601-1617.

Abstract:

In structural analyses of innovation, one substantive question looms large: What makes radical innovation possible if peripheral actors are more likely to originate radical ideas but are poorly positioned to promote them? An inductive study of the rise of Cubism, a revolutionary paradigm that overthrew classic principles of representation in art, results in a model where not only the periphery moves toward the core through collective action, as typically asserted, but the core also moves toward the periphery, becoming more receptive to radical ideas. The fragmentation of the art market in early 20th-century Paris served as the trigger. The proliferation of market niches and growing ambiguity over evaluation standards dramatically reduced the costs of experimentation in the periphery and the ability of the core to suppress radical ideas. A multilevel analysis linking individual creativity, peer networks, and the art field reveals how market developments fostered Spanish Cubist Pablo Picasso's experiments and facilitated their diffusion in the absence of public support, a coherent movement, and even his active involvement. If past research attests to the importance of framing innovations and mobilizing resources in their support, this study brings attention to shifts in the structure of opportunities to do so.

TOPIC 14:

What factors influence the outcome of salary negotiations? A literature review from the employee's perspective and an agenda for future research

Related literature:

Seidel, M.-C. L., Polzer, J. T., & Stewart, K. J. (2000). Friends in high places: The effects of social networks on discrimination in salary negotiations. Administrative Science Quarterly, 45(1), 1-24.

Abstract:

This article tests hypotheses about the effects of social networks on inequitable salary negotiation outcomes using a U.S. high-technology company's salary negotiation data for 1985–1995. Analyzing results of 3,062 actual salary negotiations, we found that members of racial minority groups negotiated significantly lower salary increases than majority members, but this effect was dramatically reduced when we controlled for social ties to the organization. Having a social tie to the organization significantly increased salary negotiation outcomes, and minorities were less likely than majority members to have such a social tie.

TOPIC 15:

The role of strategic practices in resolving indecision in managerial contexts

Related literature:

Denis, J. L., Dompierre, G., Langley, A., & Rouleau, L. (2011). Escalating indecision: Between reification and strategic ambiguity. Organization Science, 22(1), 225-244.

Abstract:

This paper examines an organizational pathology that we label "escalating indecision"—where people find themselves driven to invest time and energy in activities and decision processes aimed at resolving an issue of common concern, but where closure appears elusive. The phenomenon is illustrated through a case history in which a strategic orientation decision involving the configuration of a group of large teaching hospitals was continually made, unmade, and remade, producing little concrete strategic action over many years before achieving more tangible moves toward implementation. The paper introduces the notion of a "network of indecision" in which participants have become sufficiently attached to a common project to continue working together to move it forward, but their divergent conceptions of what this involves prevent them from materializing it in a tangible form. The paper suggests that networks of indecision are dialectically constituted through a set of practices of reification and practices of strategic ambiguity. The phenomenon is strongly associated with pluralistic settings characterized by diffuse power and divergent interests, and its prevalence is likely to be greater in situations of reactive leadership, uncertain resource availabilities, and long time horizons.