

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

FSS 2020

You can choose among the 16 topics described below.

Preferences will be collected after the inaugural meeting.

Introduction to academic writing (inaugural meeting):

Thursday, April 2nd 2020, 15:30 – 17:00h. The session will be held virtually. Detailed information regarding the exact procedure will be shared with the students beforehand via email/ ILIAS.

TOPIC 1:

Incentives and Work Motivation in the Gig Economy

Anreize und Arbeitsmotivation in der Gig Economy

Einstiegsliteratur:

Fleming, P. (2017). The Human Capital Hoax: Work, Debt and Insecurity in the Era of Uberization. *Organization Studies*, 37, 691-709.

Abstract:

Human capital theory – developed by neoclassical economists like Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz – is widely considered a useful way to explain how employees might enhance their value in organizations, leading to improved skill, autonomy and socio-economic wellbeing. This essay argues the opposite. Human capital theory implies that employees should bear the costs (and benefits) of their investment. Highly individualized training and work practices are an inevitable corollary. Self-employment, portfolio careers, the ‘gig economy’ and on-demand business models (including Uber and Deliveroo) faithfully reflect the assumptions that inform human capital theory. I term this the radical responsabilization of the workforce and link it to growing economic insecurity, low productivity, diminished autonomy and worrying levels of personal debt. The essay concludes by proposing some possible solutions.

TOPIC 2:

The role of Venture Capitalists in the development of Start-ups with Radical Inventions

Die Rolle von Wagniskapital in der Entwicklung von Start-ups mit radikalen Erfindungen

Einstiegsliteratur:

Bertoni, F., Colombo, M. G., & Grilli, L. (2011). Venture capital financing and the growth of high-tech start-ups: Disentangling treatment from selection effects. *Research policy*, 40(7), 1028-1043.

Abstract:

The financial and innovation literature generally claims that venture capital (VC) investments spur the growth of new technology-based firms (NTBFs). However, it has proved difficult so far to separate the “treatment” effect of the VC investment from the “selection” effect attributable to the ability of the VC investor to screen high growth NTBFs. The aim of this work is to test whether VC investments have a positive treatment effect on the growth of employment and sales of NTBFs. For this purpose we consider a 10-year longitudinal data set for 538 Italian NTBFs, most of which are privately held. The sample includes both VC-backed and non-VC-backed firms. We estimate Gibrat-law-type dynamic panel-data models augmented with time-varying variables that capture the VC status of firms. To control for the endogeneity of VC investments we use several GMM estimators. The econometric results strongly support the view that VC investments positively influence firm growth. The treatment effect of VC investments is of large economic magnitude, especially on growth of employment. Most of it is obtained immediately after the first round of VC finance. Conversely, the selection effect of VC appears to be negligible in the Italian context.

TOPIC 3:

How do Venture Capitalists select partners in syndicates?

Wie selektieren Wagniskapitalinvestoren ihre Partner in Syndikaten?

Einstiegsliteratur:

Sorenson, O., & Stuart, T. E. (2008). Bringing the context back in: Settings and the search for syndicate partners in venture capital investment networks. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 53(2), 266-294.

Abstract:

Most existing theories of relationship formation imply that actors form highly cohesive ties that aggregate into homogenous clusters, but actual networks also include many “distant” ties between parties that vary on one or more social dimensions. To explain the formation of distant ties, we propose a theory of relationship formation based on the characteristics of “settings,” or the places and times in which actors meet. We posit that organizations form relations with distant partners when they participate in two types of settings: unusually faddish ones and those with limited risks to participants. In an empirical analysis of our thesis in the formation of syndicate relations between U.S. venture capital firms from 1985 to 2007, we find that the probability that geographically and industry distant ties will form between venture capital firms increases with several attributes of the target-company investment setting: (1) the recent popularity of investing in the target firm's industry

and home region, (2) the target company's maturity, (3) the size of the investment syndicate, and (4) the density of relationships among the other members of the syndicate.

TOPIC 4:

Follow the money? Location choices of founders

Folge dem Geld? Standortentscheidungen von Gründern

Einstiegsliteratur:

Colombo, M. G., D'Adda, D., & Quas, A. (2019). The geography of venture capital and entrepreneurial ventures' demand for external equity. *Research Policy*, 48(5), 1150-1170.

Abstract:

In this paper, we study how the geography of venture capital (VC) and the location of entrepreneurial ventures affect the propensity of the latter to seek external equity financing. We analyse a sample of 533 European high-tech entrepreneurial ventures and examine their external equity-seeking behaviour in the 1984–2009 period. We find that ventures are more likely to seek external equity when the local availability of VC is higher, whereas the level of competition of the local VC market plays a negligible role. The stimulating effect of the availability of VC on the demand for external equity rapidly decreases with distance and vanishes at approximately 250 km. It also vanishes when national borders are crossed, except for countries at close cultural and institutional distance. Moreover, the distance decay of the stimulating effect of the availability of VC varies with the characteristics of prospective VC investors, namely, their private or public ownership and governance, and their reputation. These results have important implications for the policy that European countries and the European Commission should implement to foster the demand for VC by entrepreneurial ventures, thereby improving the functioning of the VC market in Europe.

TOPIC 5:

To share or not to share? Intra-cohort knowledge sharing in accelerator programs

Teilen oder nicht teilen? Wissensaustausch zwischen Startups innerhalb eines Acceleratorprogramms

Einstiegsliteratur:

Cohen, S. L., Bingham, C. B., & Hallen, B. L. (2019). The role of accelerator designs in mitigating bounded rationality in new ventures. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 64(4), 810-854.

Abstract:

Using a nested multiple-case study of participating ventures, directors, and mentors of eight of the original U.S. accelerators, we explore how accelerators' program designs influence new ventures' ability to access, interpret, and process the external information needed to survive and grow. Through our inductive process, we illuminate the bounded-rationality challenges that may plague all ventures and entrepreneurs—not just those in accelerators—and identify the particular

organizational designs that accelerators use to help address these challenges, which left unabated can result in suboptimal performance or even venture failure. Our analysis revealed three key design choices made by accelerators—(1) whether to space out or concentrate consultations with mentors and customers, (2) whether to foster privacy or transparency between peer ventures participating in the same program, and (3) whether to tailor or standardize the program for each venture—and suggests a particular set of choices is associated with improved venture development. Collectively, our findings provide evidence that bounded rationality challenges new ventures differently than it does established firms. We find that entrepreneurs appear to systematically satisfice prematurely across many decisions and thus broadly benefit from increasing the amount of external information searched, often by reigniting search for problems that they already view as solved. Our study also contributes to research on organizational sponsors by revealing practices that help or hinder new venture development and to emerging research on the lean start-up methodology by suggesting that startups benefit from engaging in deep consultative learning prior to experimentation.

TOPIC 6:

The Emergence of Shared Leadership in Teams

Die Entstehung von Shared Leadership (geteilter Führung) in Teams

Einstiegsliteratur:

Carson, J. B., Tesluk, P. E., & Marrone, J. A. (2007). Shared Leadership in teams: an investigation of antecedent conditions and performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(5), 1217-1234.

Abstract:

Shared leadership refers to a team property whereby leadership is distributed among team members rather than focused on a single designated leader. We examined antecedent conditions that lead to the development of shared leadership and the influence of shared leadership on team performance in a sample of 59 consulting teams. Both the internal team environment, consisting of shared purpose, social support, and voice, and external coaching were important predictors of shared leadership emergence. In turn, shared leadership was found to predict team performance as rated by clients. We conclude by discussing the implications of these findings for team leadership and effectiveness.

TOPIC 7:

The benefits and costs of "stars" in teams

Vor- und Nachteile von "Star Performern" in Teams

Einstiegsliteratur:

Kehoe, R. R., & Tzabbar, D. (2015). Lighting the way or stealing the shine? An examination of the duality in star scientists' effects on firm innovative performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 36(5), 709-727.

Abstract:

Do star employees enhance or constrain the innovative performance of an organization? Using data from 456 biotechnology firms between 1973 and 2003, we highlight the duality of the effects that stars have on firm performance. We show that while stars positively affect firms' productivity, their presence constrains the emergence of other innovative leaders in an organization. We find that firm productivity and innovative leadership among non-stars in a firm are greatest when a star has broad expertise and collaborates frequently. We offer cross-disciplinary insights into the role of human capital as a source of competitive advantage, suggesting that the value of human capital in a firm is contingent on the mutual dependence inherent in high-status employees' relationships with other individuals in a firm.

TOPIC 8:

The influence of high-status team members on team creativity

Der Einfluss von Teammitgliedern mit hohem Status auf Teamkreativität

Einstiegsliteratur:

Lount RB, Doyle SP, Brion S, Pettit NC. Only When Others Are Watching: The Contingent Efforts of High Status Group Members. *Management Science*. 2019;65(7):3382-3397

Abstract:

This research examines how an individual's place in the status hierarchy affects their willingness to expend effort on group tasks, why this occurs, and a contingency governing this relationship. Among firefighter teams (Study 1), MBA student workgroups (Study 2), and undergraduates in the laboratory (Study 3), we find that the relationship between status and effort, through performance expectations, is contingent on the perceived visibility of one's efforts (i.e., task visibility). When task visibility is high, greater status leads to higher performance expectations. When task visibility is low or absent, this relationship was not present. Overall, our findings help paint a more complete picture of the relationship between status, performance expectations, and effort in workgroups while also furthering our understanding of the psychological experience of status.

TOPIC 9:

Resolving knowledge sharing dilemmas in organizations

tbd

Einstiegsliteratur:

Cabrera, A., & Cabrera, E. F. (2002). Knowledge-sharing dilemmas. *Organization studies*, 23(5), 687-710.

Abstract:

The exchange of information among organizational employees is a vital component of the knowledge-management process. Modern information and telecommunication technology is available to support such exchanges across time and distance barriers. However, organizations investing in this type of technology often face difficulties in encouraging their employees to use the system to share their ideas. This paper elaborates on previous research, suggesting that sharing personal insights with one's co-workers may carry a cost for some individuals which may yield, at the aggregate level, a co-operation dilemma, similar to a public-good dilemma. A review of the research on different types of public-good dilemmas provides some indications of the specific interventions that may help organizations encourage the kind of social dynamics that will increase overall knowledge sharing. These interventions can be classified into three categories: interventions aimed at restructuring the pay-offs for contributing, those that try to increase efficacy perceptions, and those that make employees' sense of group identity and personal responsibility more salient.

TOPIC 10:

Managing conflict in the pursuit of creativity

tbd

Einstiegsliteratur:

Chua, R., & Jin, M. Across the Great Divides: Gender Dynamics Influence How Intercultural Conflict Helps or Hurts Creative Collaboration. *Academy of Management Journal*, (ja).

Abstract:

Collaborating across cultures can potentially increase creativity due to access to diverse ideas and perspectives, but this benefit is not always realized. One reason is that the conflict that arises in intercultural creative collaboration is a double-edged sword and how it is managed matters. In this research, we examine how the gender of collaborating dyads influences the link between intercultural conflict (task and relationship) and creative collaboration effectiveness. Through two studies (a laboratory study and a field survey), we found that intercultural task conflict has a negative effect on creative collaboration in men dyads but a positive effect on creative collaboration in women dyads. Conversely, intercultural relationship conflict has a negative impact on creative collaboration in general, but this effect is stronger for women than men dyads. These effects can be traced to how men versus women dyads handled intercultural conflict. There is also evidence that information elaboration (exchange, discussion, and integration of task-relevant information and ideas) mediates the effects of dyad gender and intercultural conflict on creative collaboration. These

findings extend current understanding of when and how intercultural collaborations can result in creativity benefits from a gender and conflict management perspective.

TOPIC 11:

The role of person-environment fit in creativity

tbd

Einstiegsliteratur:

Spanjol, J., Tam, L., & Tam, V. (2015). Employer–employee congruence in environmental values: An exploration of effects on job satisfaction and creativity. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 130(1), 117-130.

Abstract:

This study examines how the match (vs. mismatch) between personal and firm-level values regarding environmental responsibility affects employee job satisfaction and creativity and contributes to three literature streams [i.e., social corporate responsibility, creativity, and person–environment (P–E) fit]. Building on the P–E fit literature, we propose and test environmental orientation fit versus nonfit effects on creativity, identifying job satisfaction as a mediating mechanism and regulatory pressure as a moderator. An empirical investigation indicates that the various environmental orientation fit conditions affect job satisfaction and creativity differently. More specifically, environmental orientation fit produces greater job satisfaction and creativity when the employee and organization both demonstrate high concern for the environment (i.e., a high–high environmental orientation fit condition) than when both display congruent low concern for the environment (i.e., a low–low environmental orientation fit condition). Furthermore, for employees working in organizations that fit their personal environmental orientation, strong regulatory pressure to comply with environmental standards diminishes the positive fit effect on job satisfaction and creativity, while regulatory pressure does not affect the job satisfaction and creativity of employees whose personal environmental orientation is incongruent with that of the organization.

TOPIC 12:

The influence of social capital on knowledge creation in teams

tbd

Einstiegsliteratur:

McFadyen, M. A., & Cannella Jr, A. A. (2004). Social capital and knowledge creation: Diminishing returns of the number and strength of exchange relationships. *Academy of management Journal*, 47(5), 735-746.

Abstract:

This study analyzed the relationship between social capital and knowledge creation at the individual level. Our limited theory of knowledge creation encompasses the number and strength of the

relationships that a person maintains. Hypothesis tests in a sample of biomedical research scientists strongly supported predictions. As relationships increased in number, returns to knowledge creation diminished. Increased interactions with a single other showed a similar effect. The strength of interpersonal relations had a higher marginal effect on knowledge creation than the number of relations.

TOPIC 13:

Learning from negative feedback - The role of leaders

tbd

Einstiegsliteratur:

Kim, Y. J., & Kim, J. (in-press). Does negative feedback benefit (or harm) recipient creativity? The role of the direction of feedback flow. *Academy of Management Journal*.

Abstract:

Negative feedback alerts recipients to a creativity-standard gap and thus may offer an opportunity to improve creativity. However, the existing theories and empirical evidence are contradictory. The literature contains evidence of positive, negative, and null relationships between negative feedback and recipient creativity. The goal of our research is twofold: first, to organize the contradictory theories under a comprehensive theoretical framework, and second, to resolve the inconsistency between negative feedback and recipient creativity. Across two studies – one quasi-field experiment and one laboratory experiment – we found that the direction of feedback flow determined the nature of the relationship between negative feedback and recipient creativity via two distinct mechanisms: task-processes and meta-processes. Negative feedback increased recipient creativity in the bottom-up feedback flow (from followers to supervisors) because it heightened recipients' focus on task processes, whereby recipients focus on the generation of better task strategies to close the creativity-standard gap. In contrast, in top-down (from supervisors to followers) or lateral (between peers) feedback flows, negative feedback heightened the recipients' focus on meta processes – the psychological state in which recipients feel threatened by negative feedback – and thus hindered recipient creativity.

TOPIC 14:

The impact of employee volunteering on social innovation

tbd

Einstiegsliteratur:

Rodell, J. B., Breitsohl, H., Schröder, M., & Keating, D. J. (2016). Employee volunteering: A review and framework for future research. *Journal of Management*, 42(1), 55-84.

Abstract:

Employee volunteering is a topic of growing importance in workplaces around the globe. Likewise, research on employee volunteering has seen a marked increase over the past decade, particularly in leading management and psychology outlets. Despite this increasing visibility, there is little consensus on the state of the literature or directions for the future. In particular, research is currently based on a variety of different definitions and operationalizations and is spread across several disciplines. In order to advance management research on employee volunteering, this review focuses on three contributions: (1) clarifying the definition and various forms of employee volunteering, (2) reviewing the current body of knowledge on employee volunteering, and (3) providing a future research agenda for the role of employee volunteering in the workplace.

TOPIC 15:

Drivers and barriers of innovation in family firms

tbd

Einstiegsliteratur:

Duran, P., Kammerlander, N., van Essen, M., & Zellweger, T. (2016). Doing more with less: Innovation input and output in family firms. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(4), 1224-1264.

Abstract:

Family firms are often portrayed as an important yet conservative form of organization that is reluctant to invest in innovation; however, simultaneously, evidence has shown that family firms are flourishing and in fact constitute many of the world's most innovative firms. Our study contributes to disentangling this puzzling effect. We argue that family firms—owing to the family's high level of control over the firm, wealth concentration, and importance of nonfinancial goals—invest less in innovation but have an increased conversion rate of innovation input into output and, ultimately, a higher innovation output than nonfamily firms. Empirical evidence from a meta-analysis based on 108 primary studies from 42 countries supports our hypotheses. We further argue and empirically show that the observed effects are even stronger when the CEO of the family firm is a later-generation family member. However, when the CEO of the family firm is the firm's founder, innovation input is higher and, contrary to our initial expectations, innovation output is lower than that in other firms. We further show that the family firm–innovation input–output relationships depend on country-level factors; namely, the level of minority shareholder protection and the education level of the workforce in the country.

TOPIC 16:

Star scientist turnover and firm's innovation - A human capital and relational capital perspective

tbd

Einstiegsliteratur:

Tzabbar, D., & Kehoe, R. R. (2014). Can opportunity emerge from disarray? An examination of exploration and exploitation following star scientist turnover. *Journal of Management*, 40(2), 449-482.

Abstract:

How do the specific characteristics of a departing star influence the effects of the star's turnover on a firm's innovation processes? Proposing a contingency model of key employee turnover, we argue and demonstrate that the individual characteristics of a star scientist who exits a firm determine the effects of the star's turnover for the organization. Based on a longitudinal study of star scientist turnover in the biotechnology industry (1972-2003), we show that while star turnover disrupts existing innovation routines and thus decreases exploitation, this "shock" creates opportunities for the firm to search beyond existing knowledge boundaries, thereby increasing exploration. However, these effects are moderated by the departing star's innovative and collaborative involvement within the firm. Specifically, the results indicate that a departing star's innovative involvement strengthens the negative effects and weakens the positive effects of the star's turnover on exploitation and exploration in the firm, respectively. On the other hand, a departing star's collaborative involvement within a firm strengthens the negative effect of the star's exit on exploitation but increases the positive effect of star turnover on exploration, thereby fostering opportunities for technological renewal. We suggest therefore that the prognosis for firms losing stars may vary, and may not always be dire. Our findings indicate that the short-term and long-term value of human capital is contingent on the social mechanisms surrounding its utilization. Thus, we offer a redirection for research and extend the resource-based view and human capital theory by introducing a resource dependence perspective into this theoretical context.