

Economic Sociology: Selected Doctoral Theses

TITLE:

“The Global Integration Challenge: Global Management Teams, Temporal Difference, and Constructing the Identity of the Global ‘Other’” – Laurel Grassin-Drake (2019)

COMMITTEE:

Donald Lessard (chair), Ezra Zuckerman-Sivan, Eleanor Westney

ABSTRACT:

In this thesis, I investigate the challenges of global integration in the context of a large global components manufacturer (CC) who closely interacts with a small number of similarly global customers.

First I draw on a unique data set: observations spanning thirteen months of the weekly virtual meeting of the global account team responsible for the largest customer. I examine the process of external organizational identity construction of the ‘other’ in the context of a close, dependent relationship, characterized by multiple boundary-crossing links across space and time. I find that in constructing the customer’s global organizational identity (OI) the team is also co-creating their own global OI. Further, the processes by which the team constructs the customer’s OI to answer the question ‘who are they?’ parallels well-documented internal processes used by organizational members to answer ‘who are we?’ The results demonstrate that in such close organizational relationships, identity processes answering the questions ‘who are they?’ and ‘who are we?’ inextricably co-constitute each other, making it problematic to privilege the insider view of OI over the outsider view.

In addition, when the OI of the ‘other’ appears to be incoherent, results show that a dependent, external stakeholder, despite being effectively unable to exit the relationship, can still activate voice to enforce the OI of the ‘other.’ The range of voice mechanisms notably includes using the customer’s hierarchy from outside to discipline and shape the customer’s behavior from within. The strength of the intervention is associated with identity threat and the ability to exercise voice. In the case of CC, a fundamental breakdown in the customer’s global hierarchy disabled their ability to exercise effective voice. Instead, they accepted the new state, despite its high identity threat, and defaulted to loyalty and adaptation as the only option.

I also go beyond the experience of this single team to examine the broader role of global management teams and virtual meetings for cross-regional control, coordination and collaboration at the firm, and the challenge posed by differential time zones. Results reveal that time differences should be treated as a social variable embedded in local standards and norms, or “temporalities.” In addition, I demonstrate that collectively agreed norms of ‘sleep time’ significantly limit the firm’s ability to integrate globally and generate structural disadvantages for specific geographies. Moreover, while technology ameliorates geographic distance, it amplifies the problem of time. Thus it is vital that geographic distance and time be separately modelled and theorized in international business research.

TITLE:

“Essays on Social Norms” – Minjae Kim (2018)

COMMITTEE:

Ezra Zuckerman-Sivan (chair), Roberto M. Fernandez, Oliver Hahl, Katherine Kellogg

ABSTRACT:

The first essay addresses why people might conform to norms that they do not endorse. One explanation is pluralistic ignorance: when everyone appears to endorse a norm, even nonendorsers will conform so as to feign their commitment to the group's values, thereby exacerbating the misperception. But this explanation is limited because people seem to even conform to norms that are widely known to contradict the group's values ("visibly unpopular norms"), to the point that their conformity appears insincere. I argue that such insincere

conformity is an especially potent signal of commitment because it shows that one is willing to sacrifice one's personal preferences on others' behalf. Using both qualitative and experimental methods, I study the visibly unpopular norm prescribing excessive drinking in after-hour business gatherings in South Korea. The analysis indicates that an insincere conformist to the drinking norm is perceived as an especially committed relationship partner. An important implication is that some norms might persist not despite the fact they contradict group members' preferences but because of this contradiction.

The second essay (coauthored with Ezra W. Zuckerman Sivan) addresses why norms might not persist despite their wide popularity. Recent research suggests that many norms may be upheld by closet deviants who engage in enforcement so as to hide their deviance. But various empirical accounts indicate that audiences are often quite sensitive to this ulterior motive. Our theory and experimental evidence identify when inferences of ulterior motive are drawn and clarify the implications of such inferences. Our main test pivots on two contextual factors: (1) the extent to which individuals might try to strategically feign commitment and (2) the contrast between "mandated" enforcement, where individuals are asked for their opinions of deviance, and "entrepreneurial" enforcement, where enforcement requires initiative to interrupt the flow of social interaction. When the context is one where individuals might have a strategic motive and enforcement requires entrepreneurial initiative, suspicions are aroused because the enforcers could have remained silent and enjoyed plausible deniability that they had witnessed the deviance or recognized its significance. Given that the mandate for enforcement might be rare, a key implication is that norms might frequently be under-enforced.

TITLE:

“Essays on Knowledge Sharing and an Opt-in Evaluation Process among Investment Professionals” – Tristan Botelho (2017)

COMMITTEE:

Ezra Zuckerman-Sivan (chair), Roberto M. Fernandez, Ray Reagans

ABSTRACT:

This dissertation contributes to our understanding of recently popularized opt-in evaluation processes. These processes have been democratized such that ratings are provided no longer solely by experts, but commonly by any audience member who has experienced an offering (i.e., good, candidate, or service) and chooses to rate its quality. The goal of these democratic evaluation processes is to collect independent ratings from evaluators in order to triangulate on a representative and unbiased signal of quality. Across the three chapters of this dissertation, I study various aspects of an opt-in evaluation process to uncover the mechanisms that affect evaluative outcomes. To do so, I use data from an online knowledge-sharing platform and its opt-in evaluation process in the investment management industry where investment professionals share investment recommendations.

In Chapter 1, to gain a better understanding of the platform under study, I focus on the conditions that bring these professionals together to engage in knowledge sharing, despite the associated risk of losing competitive advantage. In Chapters 2 and 3, I turn my focus to the evaluation process, in particular, examining who opts to evaluate and how factors unrelated to an offering's quality affect the evaluative outcomes. Chapter 2 examines how social influence, measured as exposure to the ratings from past evaluators, affects the likelihood that subsequent ratings occur and the types of ratings an offering receives. Chapter 3 examines how search costs and uncertainty facing an evaluator affects the likelihood of gender bias in the amount of attention and types of ratings an offering receives.