Rising Scholars Conference
Work Student Research Presentations

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David Jinwoo Chung is a Doctoral Candidate at the ILR School of Cornell University. His research investigates the impacts of human resources practices and events on organizational functioning and employee welfare. Underpinned by this focus, his research taps into employee-organization relations, human resource systems, turnover, and compensation. In terms of teaching, he is interested in teaching human resource management across various levels, from individual to international. He is also interested in teaching analysis-related courses like research methods and human resources analytics.

Abstract:

Are Unions Friends or Foes of High-Performance Work Systems?

What is the role of unions for organizations that use high-performance work systems (HPWS)? Despite the longstanding interest among labor and human resource scholars on this matter, relevant studies are limited and dated. In addition, how the interplay of HPWS and unions affects employees' shared perceptions remains uninvestigated. In this research, focusing on the social psychological processes, we argue that the co-presence of unions and HPWS benefits both the organization and employees because it leads to an increase in cooperative climate and a decrease in performance climate. We test our hypotheses using longitudinal data with 936 observations from 287 South Korean firms. In addition, a supplemental analysis using a sample from the United Kingdom was conducted as robustness checks. All in all, the findings imply that unions help HPWS engender more favorable workforce well-being outcomes by fostering cooperative climate while not weakening their positive effect on organizational performance.

Emily Hu
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I'm Emily, a third-year PhD student in Operations, Information, and Decisions at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. I previously earned a Bachelor's of Science in Computer Science and a Master's of Science in Symbolic Systems at Stanford University. In my research, I seek to discover how people come together to accomplish far more than they could have alone. Specifically, I use cutting-edge computational techniques to empirically investigate team behavior. My projects include developing a multidimensional "design space" of team tasks; using language models to understand how thin slices of communication patterns predict a team's downstream performance; and designing experiments that explore how changes in

motivations, incentives, or leadership structures influence team outcomes. Ultimately, I seek not only to advance our theoretical understanding of teamwork, but also to produce solution-oriented applications for team members and managers.

Abstract:

Saying the Right Thing at the Right Time: An Integrative Study of Communication Using Computational Social Science

Effective communication is often cited as a critical attribute of a high-performing team (Marlow et al., 2018; Marks et al., 2001). Businesses widely promote and invest in communication skills: articles with tips for improving team communication abound (Gallo, 2022; Jolaoso, 2023; Tawakol, 2018). As of 2022, the global market for communication and soft-skills training reached $26.5 billion USD (IMARC Group, 2022).

Given this immense interest in effective team communication, it may be surprising to observe that, in fact, there is little consensus on what "effective" means or how to measure it. For example, the variable "communication quality" has been operationalized as the willingness to share ideas (B. H. Bradley et al., 2013); timeliness of the message (Kashive et al., 2022; González-Romá & Hernández, 2014); perceived appropriateness, openness, and richness

(Lam, 2015); and objectively-rated levels of positive sentiment (Pöysä-Tarhonen et al., 2016). This example reveals two related challenges in the study of team communication. The first is a challenge of definition. While many features (e.g., timeliness, appropriateness, richness, and positivity) have been proposed to characterize effective communication, it is often unclear which conflicting value should take precedence in a given situation: should feedback be focused on timeliness (even if it is less rich) or on richness (even if it is less timely)? The answer invariably depends on the context. It is therefore imperative for researchers to better account for the influence of context when building theories of team communication.

The second challenge is with measurement. Even with a consistent definition of effectiveness, theoretically-important features do not always map onto specific, measurable behaviors; two instances of perceived "open" or "clear" communication may not refer to the same underlying activity. This loose coupling between communication measurements and concrete behaviors makes it difficult to translate findings from generalities ("it's important to be clear") to actionable improvements.

Our research aims to address these two challenges. We first conduct a structured review of communication features in the behavioral and social sciences. Our summary yields 26 communication features across seven broad categories — describing the quantity, pace, content, engagement, equality, emotion, and variance in a team's conversation. Next, drawing from Natural Language Processing (NLP) and the growing literature on computationally analyzing conversations (Reece et al., 2023; Yeomans et al., 2023; Cao et al., 2021; Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al., 2013), we propose measures that operationalize each communication feature, and we build them into a Python-based communication analysis framework. We then apply this framework to analyze the chat communications of more than 2,200 online teams completing four different collaborative tasks, and we use machine learning models to reveal patterns in how "effective communication" takes on different behavioral meanings across

different tasks. Our method enables us to create testable hypotheses about which types of communication are most effective in different contexts, as well as directly connect theories of team communication with concrete, measurable behavioral insights.

In short, we answer the question: “what does effective team communication look like across different tasks?” By applying a computational approach to the social science of communication, we hope to produce a fuller picture of what it means to say the right thing at the right time.

Michaela Lobo **University of Pennsylvania**
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Michaela Lobo is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Business Ethics & Legal Studies (Wharton), joint with Philosophy (UPenn). She is a Platt Fellow and a Winkleman Fellow. Her research interests include business ethics, moral philosophy, the history of moral, political, and economic thought, and applied epistemology. Prior to joining Wharton, she read Philosophy at the University of St Andrews, receiving an MLitt with Distinction, and worked in the luxury beauty industry with the marketing, brand management and corporate responsibility departments.

Abstract:

How could epistemic injustice manifest in organizations?

In business ethics, epistemic injustice is the phenomenon where one is harmed qua knower. Thinkers on the topic focus on knowers that speak but are not heard, and those knowers that are left unconsidered or silenced. What about deserving and capable individuals who require businesspeople to mentor, guide, and provide information? What of the employees who do not need to be listened to but be told things? The current business ethics debate focuses only on one scenario: those harmed as speakers in their capacity to impart knowledge. I will argue that a second scenario wherein someone is harmed in their capacity to receive knowledge is as salient a form of injustice as the first. I will focus on how hearer-directed epistemic injustice pertains to life in organizational contexts. Put simply, I urge business leaders to shift focus from harmed speakers to harmed hearers. This takes up §I, II and III. In §IV, I suggest how virtuous leaders should treat employees as potential bearers of knowledge. The sense in which I am concerned involves speaking virtuously by attending to one’s possible prejudices as one shares knowledge. My essay concludes with novel implications for attending to cognitive bias, feedback-sharing, psychological safety and virtuous leadership.

Alan Zhang **MIT**
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I am a job market candidate currently at MIT Sloan, and my research examines how value can be gained from sustaining unstable conditions. I believe there is much to learn about how organizations can be successful in an increasing unstable world. My dissertation explores these issues in the context of fine wine production, drawing on my ethnographic studies in Northern California. Prior to my PhD, I studied neuroscience in my undergrad in St. Louis, and conducted

research in biomedical labs for several years, before then working in consulting for pharmaceutical firms. I've spent meaningful amounts of time living outside the US, including in Bhutan, South Africa, Madagascar, Colombia, Brazil, and China.

Abstract:

Authenticity Frictions: Harnessing Risk as a Catalyst for Authenticity in Fine Wine Production

The market for cultural goods prizes authentic features, valuing those products that seem "true" or "genuine" to what they claim to be. But unstable supply-side conditions can alter production activities and put intended features at risk, threatening their authenticity. Drawing on 16 months of ethnographic field work at an internationally-renowned winery (Cal-Cru) in Northern California, I examine how actors contend with environmental instabilities in the production of authentic fine wine. Cal-Cru has been producing fine wines consistently for over half a century, and these products are widely regarded in the industry as authentic. Yet, Cal-Cru's achievement of authentic productions entails a perennial struggle with volatile grape-growing and wine-making conditions. What is particularly distinctive about Cal-Cru's production process is that multiple kinds of actors (i.e., humans, weather, plants, microbes) are given considerable latitude to participate in the wine-making process, making production conditions highly complex and unstable. Instead of following industry practice to mitigate or suppress these risks, I find that Cal-Cru actively promotes and sustains them, thus harnessing risk in the service of authenticity. By allowing multiple heterogenous actors to contest and destabilize the course of production—fostering what I call authenticity frictions—Cal-Cru catalyzes risky conditions to achieve authenticity. Cal-Cru does this through a set of recurrent trajectory management practices which incorporate and repurpose ongoing instabilities in the production process. My research contributes to the literature by explaining how Cal-Cru's consistent achievement of authentic products is accomplished not despite supply-side instabilities, but because of them.