

ERIM

Developing Theory and Theoretical Contributions

Course Manual

Academic year 2015 - 2016

Course title	Developing Theory and Theoretical Contributions
Coordinators	Professor Dr. Joep Cornelissen
Lecturer(s)	Professor Dr. Joep Cornelissen
Start date	31st of March
Course goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To have a basic understanding of issues around management and organizational theory; what theory is, and what its core components are.2. To develop reflective skills in theory development; including basic argumentation and the formulation of propositions, construct clarity and persuasive writing.3. To develop creative skills in developing theory through specific forms of reasoning such as conceptual blending and counter-factual reasoning.
Content	Theory and theory development are seen as crucial to making meaningful academic contributions to bodies of knowledge in management and organisational research. Despite its prominence, the constituent processes around theorizing are often left implicit, and not typically discussed or taught in doctoral training programmes. The course tries to address this very point; participants will through a series of exercises, practical assignments and readings be trained in ‘reading’ theory in journal articles, and will also develop skills in the development and assessment of theory.
Form of tuition	Workshop-format around exercises and articles
Assignment	The final assignment for the course will consist of a written essay that describes the participant’s use of the methods or concepts used in class (e.g., construct clarity, counter-factual reasoning) in the context of their own research. Details on the assignment will be distributed in class.

Session 1: Theory: What is it, How does it relate to Practice and How do you Claim a Theoretical Contribution?

Prescribed reading:

Corley, K. & Gioia, D. (2011), Building theory about theory building: What constitutes a theoretical contribution?, *Academy of Management Review*, 36 (1): 12-32

Locke K. and Golden-Biddle K. (1997) 'Constructing Opportunities for Contribution: Structuring Intertextual Coherence and "Problematizing" in Organizational Studies'. *Academy of Management Journal* (40)5: 1023-1062.

Hambrick, D.C., "The field of management's devotion to theory: Too much of a good thing?", *Academy of Management Journal*, 2007, 50 (6), 1346-1352.

Further reading:

Astley, W.G. (1985). Administrative science as socially constructed truth. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 30(4): 497-513.

Astley, W G, and Zammuto, R F (1992), "Organization Science, Managers, and Language Games", *Organization Science*, 3(4), 443-460.

Shapira, Z. (2011), "I've Got a Theory Paper---Do You?": Conceptual, Empirical, and Theoretical Contributions to Knowledge in the Organizational Sciences. *Organization Science*.

Sutton, R. I. and Staw, B. M. (1995) What theory is not. *Administrative Science Quarterly*; 40:371-384.

Suddaby, Roy (2014), Editor's comments: Why theory? , *Academy of Management Review*, 39, 407-411.

Take-home assignment: write a short introduction for a paper (200-500 words) you are working on or for your overall thesis using the 'framing' method introduced in class to position your study and claim a theory contribution.

Session 2: The State of the Field: Theory, Paradigms and (Inter)Disciplinary Approaches to Theory Development

Prescribed reading:

Agarwal, R. & Hoetker, G. 2007. A Faustian bargain? The growth of management and its relationship with related disciplines. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50: 1304-1322.

Alvesson, M. and Sandberg, J. (2012), Has Management Studies Lost Its Way? Ideas for More Imaginative and Innovative Research. *Journal of Management Studies*, 50 (1), 128-152.

Colquitt, J. A., & Zapata, C. P. 2007. Trends in theory building and theory testing: A five-decade study of *Academy of Management Journal*. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50: 1281-1303.

Further reading:

Birkinshaw, J., Healey, M. P., Suddaby, R. & Weber, K. (2014), Debating the Future of Management Research. *Journal of Management Studies*, 51: 38–55

Pfeffer, J. (1993) “Barriers to the advancement of organizational science: paradigm development as a dependent variable,” *Academy of Management Review*, 18: 599–620.

Felin, T. & Foss, N.J. (2009). Social reality, the boundaries of self-fulfilling prophecy, and economics. *Organization Science*, 654-668.

Ferraro, F., J. Pfeffer, R. I. Sutton. 2005. Economics language and assumptions: How theories can become self-fulfilling. *Academy of Management Review*, 30 8–24.

Take-home assignment: (200-500 words). Write a short reflection on your own research topic in relation to business and management research. In what tradition does it fit? Can you identify new literatures to draw from? Can you think of other disciplines that might enrich theorizing in your own topic /field of study? If so, what would these be?

Session 3: Basic Reasoning and Logic behind Theory Development: 1.The Borrowing and Blending of Theories

Prescribed reading:

Cornelissen, J. P. & Durand, R. (2014), Moving Forward: Developing Theoretical Contributions in Management Studies. *Journal of Management Studies*, 51: 995–1022

Okhuysen, G., & Bonardi, J.P. 2011. The challenges of theory building through the combination of lenses. *Academy of Management Review*, 36, 1, 6-12.

Weick, K. E. (1989). Theory construction as disciplined imagination. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 516-531.

Further reading:

Boxenbaum, E. & Rouleau, L. 2011. New knowledge products as bricolage: Metaphors and scripts in organizational theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2).

Oswick C, Fleming, P & Hanlon, G. (2011), 'From Borrowing to Blending: Rethinking the Processes of Organizational Theory-Building', *Academy of Management Review*, 36(2), p.318-337

Whetten, D., Felin, T. & King, B. (2009). Theory-borrowing in organizational studies: issues and future directions. *Journal of Management*, 35: 537-563

Take-home assignment: write a short reflective summary (500-1,000 words) of how you are (or could be) borrowing and blending different theories and constructs as part of your PhD project. Make sure to evaluate the consistency of the underlying assumptions and the argumentation by which you justify the combination of theories and/or constructs.

Session 4: Basic Reasoning and Logic behind Theory Development: 2. Counter-factual reasoning

Alvesson, M. & Sandberg, J. 2011 Generating research questions through problematization. *Academy of Management Review*, 36 2.

Durand, R., & Vaara, E. 2009. Causation, counterfactuals and competitive advantage. *Strategic Management Journal*, 30(12): 1245-1264.

Tsang, E.W.K, & Elsaesser, F. 2011. How Contrastive Explanation Facilitates Theory Building. *Academy of Management Review*, 36, 2.

Further reading:

Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2007). Constructing mystery: Empirical matters in theory development. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(4), 1265-1281.

Davis, M. S. 1971. That's interesting: Towards a phenomenology of sociology and a sociology of phenomenology. *Philosophy of Social Science* 1:309-344.

Shepherd, D.A. & Sutcliffe, K.M. 2011. Inductive top down theorizing: A source of new theories of organization. *Academy of Management Review*, 36, 2.

Take-home assignment: write a short reflective summary (500-1,000 words) of how you are (or could be) challenging established theories as part of your PhD project. Make sure to point out how through counter-factual reasoning you are able to challenge default assumptions or the existing argumentation in a literature.

Session 5: Definitions and construct clarity

Prescribed reading

Hirsch, Paul M., and Daniel Z. Levin. "Umbrella Advocates Versus Validity Police: A Life-cycle Model". *Organization Science* 10.2 (1999): 199–212

Suddaby, R. 2010. Construct clarity in theories of management and organization. *Academy of Management Review*, 35 (3) 346-358.

Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., and Podsakoff, N.P. (2016), Recommendations for Creating Better Concept Definitions in the Organizational, Behavioral, and Social Sciences, *Organizational Research Methods*, April 2016 19: 159-203,

Background reading

Ragins, B. (2012). Reflections on the craft of clear writing. *Academy of Management Review*, 54 (3), 432-435

Locke, E. A. (2005). Why emotional intelligence is an invalid concept. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26, 425-431.

Osigweh, C. A. B. (1989). Concept fallibility in organizational science. *Academy of Management Review*, 14 (4), 579 – 594.

Take-home assignment: (500-1000 words). Select a construct of interest that is likely to play an important role in your Ph.D research project. Identify the different definitions of this construct in the literature and discuss and explain potential sources of ambiguity or a lack of clarity in how the construct is currently understood in the literature ('problem diagnosis'). Then explore how this problem might be solved through reconceptualization.

Session 6: Variance versus Process Theorizing

Prescribed reading:

Cornelissen, J.P. (in press), Preserving theoretical divergence in management research: Why the explanatory potential of qualitative research should be harnessed rather than suppressed, *Journal of Management Studies*.

Thompson, M. (2011). Ontological shift or ontological drift: Reality claims, epistemological frameworks and theory generation in organization studies. *Academy of Management Review*, 36, No. 4, 754–773.

Langley, A., Smallman, C., Tsoukas, H., and Van de Ven, A. H. (2013). Process studies of change in organization and management: Unveiling temporality, activity, and flow. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(1), 1-13.

Further reading:

Chia, R. (2007). Essai: Thirty years on: from organizational structures to the organization of thought. *Organization Studies*, 18, 685-707.

Solinger, O.N., Olfen, W. van, Roe, R.A. & Hofmans, J. (2013). On becoming (un)committed: A taxonomy and test of newcomer on-boarding socialization. *Organization Science*, 24 (6), 1640-1661. doi: 10.1287/orsc.1120.0818

Langley, A. (1999) 'Strategies for Theorizing from Process Data', *Academy of Management Review*, 24(4): 691-710

Take-home assignment: (200-500 words). How would you classify the available theory on your phenomenon or construct of interest (variance or process)? Why is that? Explore how your construct (and its relationships with other constructs) might behave over time using a temporal ('process') epistemology. What might such process theorizing contribute to the extant literature?