



B392 Bachelor Seminar – list of topics – winter term 2024/2025

1. Distrust in an international context

Student:

Supervisor: Margarita Mejia Likosova

Trust is for organizations as fragile as it is important. Gaining trust in business relationships between people of the same culture is already difficult. In international interactions, it is even more difficult.

For organizations, the emergence of distrust entails, by contrast, negative and costly consequences. It can lead to negative relationships and even intractable conflicts and ultimately cause lower productivity and performance.

Recent research has shown that trust and distrust are distinct constructs. Distrust is self-amplifying and represses trust. While trust is slowly built and can be quickly shattered, distrust emerges quicker and can be difficult to mitigate.

The B.Sc. thesis should critically review the literature on the consequences of distrust and discuss how challenges arising from cultural differences can either mitigate trust or increase distrust on an interpersonal level in international business.

References:

Kim, P. H., Dirks, K. T., & Cooper, C. D. (2009). The repair of trust: A dynamic bilateral perspective and multilevel conceptualization. *Academy of Management Review*, 34(3), 401-422.

Saunders, M. N., Dietz, G., & Thornhill, A. (2014). Trust and distrust: Polar opposites, or independent but co-existing? *Human Relations*, 67(6), 639-665.

Zaheer, S., & Zaheer, A. (2006). Trust across borders. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37, 21-29.



2. Language barriers in multinational teams

Student:

Supervisor: Margarita Mejia Likosova

Multinational teams are work-teams consisting of members of different nationalities and cultures. They have increasingly gained importance for multinational companies due to their ability to integrate a variety of perspectives and skills. These multinational teams need to manage conflicts, deal with coordination and control issues, maintain communication richness, develop and uphold team cohesiveness, as well as deal with the team task at hand.

However, not only the cultural but also the linguistic diversity between team members confronts these teams with a range of challenges. Their different mother tongues and differing levels of foreign language abilities result in communication barriers. For example, a low level of language proficiency can be interpreted by fellow team members as a lack of competence, thus creating tension within the team. Furthermore, language barriers can impact knowledge processing, power dynamics and trust dynamics in teams.

This B.Sc. thesis should critically review the literature on language barriers in multinational teams and discuss which impact language barriers can have on multinational teamwork.

References:

Li, H., Yuan, Y. C., Bazarova, N. N., & Bell, B. S. (2019). Talk and let talk: The effects of language proficiency on speaking up and competence perceptions in multinational teams. *Group and Organization Management*, 44(5), 953-989.

Nurmi, N., & Koroma, J. (2020). The emotional benefits and performance costs of building a psychologically safe language climate in MNCs. *Journal of World Business*, 55(4), 101093.

Tenzer, H., Pudelko, M., & Zellmer-Bruhn, M. (2021). The impact of language barriers on knowledge processing in multinational teams. *Journal of World Business*, 56(2), 101184.

Tenzer, H., & Pudelko, M. (2017). The influence of language differences on power dynamics in multinational teams. *Journal of World Business*, 52(1), 45-61.



3. Cultural intelligence and its impact on the willingness and success for expatriation

Student:

Supervisor: Margarita Mejia Likosova

Research on expatriation has been a popular topic in international business for more than four decades. Given the growing quantity of expatriate assignments in an increasingly international business environment, the issue of how expatriates adjust to foreign cultures and perform in their jobs has been gaining relevance. As expatriate failure has negative consequences both for the organization and the expatriate, selecting the right candidate for an international assignment is of high importance.

One characteristic that appears to contribute to overcoming the challenges of expatriation is cultural intelligence. Cultural intelligence consists of different (meta-)cognitive, motivational and behavioral components and can be viewed as the ability of a person to adapt to an unfamiliar situation and correctly interpret communication across different cultures.

This B.Sc. thesis should critically review the literature on cultural intelligence in the context of expatriation and explore the relevance of cultural intelligence on the willingness to take on an international assignment and its influence on a successful expatriation period.

References:

Earley, P. C., Murnieks, C., & Mosakowski, E. (2007). Cultural intelligence and the global mindset. In *The global mindset* (pp. 75-103). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Hippler, T., Caligiuri, P., & Johnson, J. (2014). Revisiting the construct of expatriate adjustment: Implications for theory and measurement. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 44(3), 8-24.

Huff, K. C. (2013). Language, cultural intelligence and expatriate success. *Management Research Review*, 36(6), 596-612.

Lee, L. Y., & Sukoco, B. M. (2010). The effects of cultural intelligence on expatriate performance: The moderating effects of international experience. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21(7), 963-981.



4. Perceived organisational justice in the West and China

Student:

Supervisor: Margarita Mejia Likosova

Organizational justice describes individuals' or groups' perception of the fairness received from an organization. It has been extensively researched since perceived fairness is the foundation for many organizational success factors, including employees' job satisfaction and their loyalty to the organization.

Most research on organizational justice has been conducted in a Western setting. However, recent cross-cultural research indicates that the perception of fairness in the Western and the Chinese culture can be significantly different from each other.

The B.Sc. thesis should review existing research on organizational justice (respectively, as a synonym) fairness perceptions from both a Western and a Chinese perspective.

References:

Bidder, S. L., Chang, C. C., & Tyler, T. R. (2001). Procedural justice and retaliation in organizations: Comparing cross-nationally the importance of fair group processes. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 12(4), 295-31.

Bueechl, J., & Pudelko, M. (2017). Organizational justice perceptions and responsive behavior in a Chinese-German context. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2017, No. 1, p. 15944). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

Li, A., & Cropanzano, R. (2009). Do East Asians respond more/less strongly to organizational justice than North Americans? A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management Studies*, 46(5), 787-805.

Shao, R., Rupp, D. E., Skarlicki, D. P., & Jones, K. S. (2013). Employee justice across cultures: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Management*, 39(1), 263-301.



5. Commonalities and differences of protean and boundaryless careers

Student:

Supervisor: Margarita Mejia Likosova

Protean and boundaryless careers have frequently been described as a result of global economic changes and the increasing international mobility of people. Protean and boundaryless career attitudes are mostly described as alternatives to traditional forms of career planning.

Protean career theory suggests that employees are managing their own careers as a lifelong sequence of work experiences. These experiences are shaped by personal career choices and the search for self-fulfilment. Career choices are based on internal values and self-direction.

The boundaryless career is based on psychological and physical mobility. This concept refers to the willingness to cross organizational and national boundaries as a career strategy.

Despite some similarities between the protean and boundaryless career concepts, they are distinct and are applied varyingly by individuals.

This B.Sc. thesis should critically review the protean and boundaryless career literature and clearly discuss similarities and differences between these two concepts. The dissertation should give practical recommendations on how companies can attract and benefit from protean and boundaryless careerists.

References:

Breitenmoser, A., Bader, B., & Berg, N. (2018). Why does repatriate career success vary? An empirical investigation from both traditional and protean career perspectives. *Human Resource Management, 57*(5), 1049-1063.

Crowley-Henry, M., Benson, E. T., & Al Ariss, A. (2019). Linking talent management to traditional and boundaryless career orientations: Research propositions and future directions. *European Management Review, 16*(1), 5-19.

Hirschi, A., Jaensch, V. K., & Herrmann, A. (2017). Protean career orientation, vocational identity, and self-efficacy: an empirical clarification of their relationship. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 26*(2), 208-220.

Hofstetter, H., & Rosenblatt, Z. (2017). Predicting protean and physical boundaryless career attitudes by work importance and work alternatives: regulatory focus mediation effects. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 28*(15), 2136-2158.



6. Opportunities and challenges of self-initiated international assignments

Student:

Supervisor: Margarita Mejia Likosova

There is a growing body of research that identifies a disjunction between an international assignees' perception of the value of international assignments from a career perspective and the perceived value from the organizational point of view. Specifically, individual assignees perceive the main value of the assignment as a means for developing individual competence that can be transferred across organizations.

Reflecting this trend, international human resource managers have noticed a growing number of self-initiated international assignments. In the context of self-initiated assignments, employees seek posts in foreign operations and relocate abroad on their own accord, without organizational assistance. One key implication of the increasing number of self-initiated assignees is that multinational corporations can make use of these employees to fill key positions in subsidiary operations at a lower cost than traditional expatriates.

The B.Sc. thesis should critically review the advantages and drawbacks of self-initiated international assignments, both from the assignees and the employer's point of view.

References:

Hajro, A., Stahl, G. K., Clegg, C. C., & Lazarova, M. B. (2019). Acculturation, coping, and integration success of international skilled migrants: An integrative review and multilevel framework. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 29(3), 328-352.

Shaffer, M. A., Reiche, S., Dimitrova, M., Lazarova, M., Chen, S., Westman, M., & Wurtz, O. (2016). Work-and family-role adjustment of different types of global professionals: Scale development and validation. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 47, 113-139.

Suutari, V., Brewster, C., Mäkelä, L., Dickmann, M., & Tornikoski, C. (2018). The effect of international work experience on the career success of expatriates: A comparison of assigned and self-initiated expatriates. *Human Resource Management*, 57(1), 37-54.

Thomas, D. C., Lazarova, M. B., & Inkson, K. (2005). Global careers: new phenomenon or new perspectives? *Journal of World Business*, 40(4), 340-347.



7. Managing knowledge in multinational companies through expatriates

Student:

Supervisor: Margarita Mejia Likosova

In an organizational context, knowledge management has the task to actively develop and transfer knowledge through certain structures, processes and systems. The goal is to keep, develop and spread the knowledge acquired in order to achieve innovation and higher performance. Multinational corporations (MNCs) are particularly faced with challenges that arise when knowledge must be managed between headquarter (HQ) and subsidiaries. Geographically dispersed locations and culturally diverse members of the MNC require more complex solutions to transfer and develop knowledge.

Researchers have found out that expatriates can play an important role in the knowledge management of MNCs. In order to transfer knowledge from HQ to subsidiaries and back, expatriates with special functional knowledge can play an important role by taking key positions in subsidiaries for a certain period of time. But what are the success factors, challenges and limitations of this method of knowledge transfer? And which contextual factors influence the success, challenges and limitations of knowledge management through expatriates?

The B.Sc. thesis should critically review the literature on knowledge management in MNCs. On this basis, the role of expatriates in knowledge management should be discussed.

References:

- Duvivier, F., Peeters, C., & Harzing, A. W. (2019). Not all international assignments are created equal: HQ-subsidiary knowledge transfer patterns across types of assignments and types of knowledge. *Journal of World Business*, *54*(3), 181-190.
- Fang, Y., Jiang, G. L. F., Makino, S., & Beamish, P. W. (2010). Multinational firm knowledge, use of expatriates, and foreign subsidiary performance. *Journal of Management Studies*, *47*(1), 27-54.
- Hajro, A., & Pudelko, M. (2009, August). Multinational teams in the context of organizational culture: A multi-company case study. Best paper proceedings in *Academy of Management proceedings* (Vol. 2009, No. 1, pp. 1-6). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.
- Zellmer-Bruhn, M., & Gibson, C. (2006). Multinational organization context: Implications for team learning and performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, *49*(3), 501-518.



8. Expatriation and career progression

Student:

Supervisor: Margarita Mejia Likosova

Research on expatriation has been a popular topic in international business for more than four decades. Given the increasing amount of expatriate assignments in an increasingly international business environment, the issue of what motivates potential expatriates to go abroad and perform in their jobs has been gaining more importance.

One factor that is often mentioned regarding expatriation willingness is the perceived probability of a promotion after a successful expatriation. However, these hopes are not always fulfilled due to several problems ranging from expatriate failure to organizational planning.

This B.Sc. thesis should critically review the actual and perceived outcomes of expatriation on an individual's career progression.

References:

Benson, G. S., & Pattie, M. (2008). Is expatriation good for my career? The impact of expatriate assignments on perceived and actual career outcomes. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(9), 1636-1653.

Froese, F. J., Jommersbach, S., & Klautzsch, E. (2013). Cosmopolitan career choices: a cross-cultural study of job candidates' expatriation willingness. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24(17), 3247-3261.

Georgakakis, D., Dauth, T., & Ruigrok, W. (2016). Too much of a good thing: Does international experience variety accelerate or delay executives' career advancement? *Journal of World Business*, 51(3), 425-437.

Suutari, V., Tornikoski, C., & Mäkelä, L. (2012). Career decision making of global careerists. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23(16), 3455-3478.



9. Guanxi in the Western context: An ethical issue for Chinese multinational corporations

Student:

Supervisor: Margarita Mejia Likosova

Unlike Western social networks, the Chinese concept of guanxi can be defined as interpersonal relationships or informal networks, which carry strict obligations of reciprocity. Guanxi is an essential part for the functioning of Chinese society and has been described as having the invisible power of strongly impacting the political, economic, and social systems in China. For running of business operations in China, guanxi practices are the norm. Guanxi is essential and vital for successful commercial operations in all stages. However, in the Western context, the concept and the application of guanxi can easily be interpreted by Westerners as unethical and immoral practices, such as nepotism, cronyism, favoritism, and bribery.

Given that guanxi is strongly rooted in the specific Chinese cultural context, Chinese multinational corporations are likely to encounter cross-cultural ethical problems resulting from guanxi. For example, in China, it is a part of the established business culture for business-people to develop their guanxi with government officials to obtain official permits and approvals or to avoid red tape. To build up guanxi or foster it, invitations to elaborate dinners, expensive gifts or even direct or indirect cash payments are not out of the norm. If managers of Chinese MNCs were to employ the same practices abroad, they would be considered immoral and to some extent illegal in the West.

This B.Sc. thesis should critically review the existing literature on how Chinese MNCs develop and use guanxi in the Western context and what the ethical and managerial implications are.

References:

Gao, H., Ballantyne, D., & Knight, J. G. (2010). Paradoxes and guanxi dilemmas in emerging Chinese–Western intercultural relationships. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 39(2), 264-272.

Provis, C. (2008). Guanxi and conflicts of interest. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 79, 57-68.

Tan, D., & Snell, R. S. (2002). The third eye: Exploring guanxi and relational morality in the workplace. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 41, 361-384.

Ulusemre, T., & Fang, X. (2022). How do expatriate managers draw the boundaries of moral free space in the case of Guanxi? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1-14.



10. The difference between the Western and Chinese corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices

Student:

Supervisor: Shuangyue LI

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) originated in the West but is by now discussed and applied worldwide, resulting in a broad variety of definitions, conceptualizations and practices. Though there is no universally accepted definition of CSR, the Western understanding of CSR became dominant. However, Western standards and practices are problematic and difficult to adapt to for Chinese corporations, as many of them are not in accordance with Chinese reality.

While according to the Western understanding, CSR is a voluntary concept, in China it is more interpreted as corporations having to follow basic legal requirements. After all, the Chinese society is still struggling with issues such as illegal labor relationships, corporate crime, product safety and pollution. Corporate disclosure and reporting in China are still limited and mainly focused on financial performance rather than on social and environmental issues. In addition, the lack of related regulations, standards and guidelines has also restricted the development of CSR practices and their disclosure. As such, the Chinese understanding and implementation of CSR are largely grounded in the context of discretionary ethical considerations.

This B.Sc. thesis should critically review the existing literature on the differences of CSR practices in the West and China and critically analyze the underlying social and cultural reasons for those differences.

References:

Wang, L., & Juslin, H. (2009). The impact of Chinese culture on corporate social responsibility: The harmony approach. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 88, 433-451.

Welford, R. (2004). Corporate social responsibility in Europe and Asia: Critical elements and best practice. *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, (13), 31-47.

Xiao, M., Cooke, F. L., Xu, J., & Bian, H. (2020). To what extent is corporate social responsibility part of human resource management in the Chinese context? A review of literature and future research directions. *Human Resource Management Review*, 30(4), 100726.

Yin, J., & Zhang, Y. (2012). Institutional dynamics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in an emerging country context: Evidence from China. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 111, 301-316.



11. Host country effects on the HRM practices of MNC subsidiaries

Student:

Supervisor: Shuangyue Li

A host country environment is distinctive from the home country environment in terms of socio-economic factors (e.g. labor market conditions), institutional conditions (e.g. laws, formal and informal rules set by employers), and culture (e.g. values and norms). These factors differ from country to country and can constrain the capability of a MNC to standardize the HRM practices across its subsidiaries. As a result, a deep understanding of the variety of the host country environments is necessary for deciding upon the standardization-localization mix of HRM practices a MNC must apply for its subsidiaries.

This B.Sc. thesis should critically review how the host country environment can influence the HRM practices of MNC subsidiaries.

References:

Anxo, D., Fagan, C., Cebrian, I., & Moreno, G. (2007). Patterns of labour market integration in Europe—a life course perspective on time policies. *Socio-Economic Review*, 5(2), 233-260.

Björkman, I., & Lervik, J. E. (2007). Transferring HR practices within multinational corporations. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 17(4), 320-335.

Ferner, A., Quintanilla, J., & Varul, M. Z. (2001). Country-of-origin effects, host-country effects, and the management of HR in multinationals: German companies in Britain and Spain. *Journal of World Business*, 36(2), 107-127.



12. Cross-cultural training and development of expatriates

Student:

Supervisor: Shuangyue LI

To attain and sustain global competitiveness, organizations are increasingly focused on developing the necessary skills for success in the international marketplace. Expatriation can help MNCs manage the complexity of international business and provides the possibility to control and coordinate subsidiaries. Additionally, expatriation is a tool used in staffing, as e.g. different subsidiaries face a shortage of skilled employees or in order to develop a pool of experienced international talent.

However, lack of proper adjustment of an expatriate can result in poor work performance with associated issues of major disadvantages for both the company and the expatriate. Therefore, there has been a growing trend within multinational corporations to provide cross-cultural management training for their expatriates, in order to increase the effectiveness of their employees working and living outside of their own cultures.

Cross-cultural training facilitates the expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment in the host country and, hence, minimizes problems of adjustment. Cross-cultural training helps to develop a more cosmopolitan outlook and gives managers a deeper understanding and appreciation of cross-cultural situations. It also can help employees to learn about the host culture, its values and norms, as well as appropriate and acceptable behaviors in the society and how that affects their performance in host organizations. Furthermore, it helps develop coping mechanisms to deal with new and unforeseen or unpredictable events in the host culture and to reduce conflict arising from new unexpected and unfamiliar encounters.

This B.Sc. thesis should critically discuss how cross-cultural training and development can help to improve the expatriates' adjustment process.

References:

Bennett, R., Aston, A., & Colquhoun, T. (2000). Cross-cultural training: A critical step in ensuring the success of international assignments. *Human Resource Management*, 39(2-3), 239-250.

Forster, N. (2000). Expatriates and the impact of cross-cultural training. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 10(3), 63-78.

Puck, J. F., Kittler, M. G., & Wright, C. (2008). Does it really work? Re-assessing the impact of pre-departure cross-cultural training on expatriate adjustment. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(12), 2182-2197.