



## Call for Papers

*Management and Organization Review*  
**Special Issue on 'Ambiguity and Decision Making in Chinese Organizations and Thought'**

**Guest Editors:**

Mie Augier, Naval Postgraduate School and Stanford University, US  
James G. March, Stanford University, US  
Mooweon Rhee, University of Hawaii, US  
Xueguang Zhou, Stanford University, US

**Submission Deadline: December 15, 2012**

Ambiguity is an important yet elusive and often puzzling concept in studies of decisions and organizations, ranging from calculations of risk and inference of preferences from hypothetical lotteries, to ambiguity about preferences and even about the concept of ambiguity itself (Ellsberg, 1961; Fox & Tversky, 1995; Heath & Tversky, 1991; de Lara Resende & Wu, 2010; March, 1978; Rubaltelli, Rumiati, & Slovic, 2010). We consider four broad classes of ambiguities: (1) Lack of clarity about preferences. (2) Lack of clarity about the definition of action alternatives. (3) Lack of clarity about possible outcomes and their likelihoods. (4) Lack of clarity about information (including translations) influencing decision making. The phrase 'lack of clarity' is intended to encompass both vagueness and inconsistencies (contradictions) in the premises of action. Although ambiguity is often either ignored or reduced to risk or calculative uncertainty, and ambiguity aversion has been found in some studies, we would like to explore alternative responses.

It is a cliché of organizational commentary to observe that how organizational members and decision makers behave is shaped at least in part by the culture in which they are embedded (Crozier, 1964). Readings both of contemporary reports on Chinese organizations and of traditional Chinese philosophy and literature suggest that Chinese traditions and practices may confront ambiguity with a frame that is different from the frame of Western rationality.

In Chinese thought, the simultaneous existence of contradictory states or feelings is viewed as natural. Recent treatments of the idea of yin-yang and the I-Ching in Chinese writing contrast the Chinese perspective not only with Western ideas of rationality but also with Western ideas of dialectic (Chai & Rhee, 2010; Fang, 2012; Hsu & Chiu, 2008; Julliene, 2011). As a result, according to some reports and speculations, Chinese organizational practice may be, consciously or unconsciously, less directed to avoiding or removing ambiguity in choice than to exploiting it.

### **Potential Research Topics**

We invite papers that discuss one or more kinds of ambiguity and how they are confronted, reduced, or embraced in Chinese organizational behaviors, theories, decisions, and practices. We invite studies of ambiguity avoidance on the part of organizations, but we also

are interested in organizational responses to ambiguity that do not seek to remove ambiguities or to avoid them, but embrace them as necessary aspects of choice, indeed as possible symptoms or sources of intelligence (March, 1978).

We are interested in understanding Chinese organizational responses to ambiguity as well as the rhetoric and philosophies surrounding those responses. To what extent do Chinese organizations seek to eliminate ambiguity so as to confront a situation more amenable to conventional rational choice? To what extent do Chinese organizations rely on other, less consequential, procedures for choice?

The focus encompasses, but extends beyond, rational choice to include the role of ambiguity in experiential adaptation to experience through learning or selection, in the diffusion of knowledge, and in the evocation of the rules of identity. How do Chinese organizations learn from ambiguous experience? What is the role of ambiguity in the spread of practices or information in Chinese Organizations? How do individuals in Chinese organizations confront ambiguities of contradictory identities and goals?

We are especially interested in papers that discuss the actual empirical nature of ambiguity in Chinese organizations, and how Chinese ideas and organizations have ways of conceiving, confronting, or embracing ambiguity that can cast light on a more general theory of organizations. Among other things, this might include how ambiguity affects the ways Chinese organizations formulate, develop, and implement strategies, organize information, or learn from their experience. Another possible theme would be mechanisms through which ambiguity is perceived and embraced (or not embraced) in organizational decision making and how that influences organizational routines and learning.

Questions may be addressed to any one of the guest editors: Mie Augier (augier@stanford.edu), James G. March (march@stanford.edu), Mooweon Rhee (mooweon@hawaii.edu), or Xueguang Zhou (xgzhou@stanford.edu). Papers for the special issue should be submitted electronically through MOR's ScholarOne Manuscripts site at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/mor> and identified as a submission to the 'Ambiguity and Decision Making in Chinese Organizations and Thought' special issue. All submissions should follow the 'MOR Author Guidelines', available online at [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1740-8784/homepage/ForAuthors.html](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1740-8784/homepage/ForAuthors.html)

## References

- Chai, S., & Rhee, M. 2010. Confucian capitalism and the paradox of closure and structural holes in East Asian firms. *Management and Organization Review*, 6(1): 5–29.
- Crozier, M. (1964): *The bureaucratic phenomenon*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- de Lara Resende, J. G., & Wu, G. 2010. Competence effects for choices involving gains and losses. *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, 40(2): 109–132.
- Ellsberg, D. 1961. Risk, ambiguity, and the Savage axioms. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 75(4): 643–669.
- Fang, T. 2012. Yin Yang: A new perspective on culture. *Management Organization Review*, 8(1): 25–50.
- Fox, C. R., & Tversky, A. 1995. Ambiguity aversion and comparative ignorance. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 110(3): 585–603.
- Heath, C., & Tversky, A. 1991. Preference and belief: Ambiguity and competence in choice under uncertainty. *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, 4(1): 5–28.
- Hsu, M., & Chiu, K. 2008. A comparison between I-Ching's early management decision making model and Western management decision making models. *Chinese Management Studies*, 2(1): 52–75.
- Julliene, F. 2011. *Silent transformations*. Chicago University Press.
- March, J. G. 1978. Bounded rationality, ambiguity, and the engineering of choice. *Bell Journal of Economics*, 9(2): 587–608.
- Rubaltelli, E., Rumiati R., & Slovic, P. 2010. Do ambiguity avoidance and the comparative ignorance hypothesis depend on people's affective reactions? *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, 40(3): 243–254.