COLORADO TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

2018 DOCTORAL SYMPOSIUM

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DISRUPTION AND TRANSFORMATION DURING DOCTORAL STUDIES
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Throughout my academic and professional career, several concepts have mixed, blended, and interwoven to form a sort of thematic symphony or orchestra – primary among them are

- Disruption
- Innovation
- Transformation
In a business setting managers / leaders act as symphony or orchestra conductors directing the activities of disruption, innovation, and transformation.

One thing that is indisputably clear is that the orchestra is a sum of all its parts and no individual part can create the total harmonic sound without the others.
Clayton Christensen (The Innovative Dilemma, 1997) combined two of the primary orchestra components and coined the concept of “disruptive innovation” (DI).

Therefore, by inference, disruptive innovation describes the interruption of existing activities or processes for the purpose of introducing new activities or processes.

Further, Christensen defined “disruptive theory” as a theory of competitive response with respect to innovation – how will competitors respond to the introduction of innovation into the existing environmental landscape.\(^1\)

The third component of the orchestra, *transformation*, provides the melody or application of the disruptive innovation to a viable new or existing market.
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Examples of career experiences in disruptive innovation and transformation:

- Returnable Management Container System
- RouteOne, LLC
- Cloud-base Call Center Distribution
- Amazon
- Bluetooth
- Uber
- IPhone/Mobile Phone
How do organizations position themselves structurally to promote and support disruptive innovation?

- Research and Design
- Advanced Design
- New Business Development
- Mergers & Acquisitions

Examples:
- Ford’s Autonomous Vehicle Division
- Apple’s Research and Development Centers
- Abbott’s New Product Development
- Airbus’s Autonomous Airplane Division
The case for incorporating disruption, innovation, and transformation into doctoral studies:

- As scholar-researchers, doctoral students are challenged with and looking for ways to contribute to the body of knowledge.
- Contributions can be technology-based or process-based, either way identifying potential “gaps” is a common goal.
- Identified “gaps” offer opportunities for disruptive innovation and transformation.

Example:

- “The Impact of IT Outsourcing on Surviving Employees: Managing Survivor Syndrome Symptoms”
- The goal of my research was to shine new light on how organizations could and should implement outsourcing initiatives from the perspective of maintaining employee morale.
- In effect, I offered a “disruptive innovation” to existing processes for implementing outsourcing engagements.
- Resulting in “transformational” opportunities.
For doctoral student researchers, disruption can very easily integrate into the research process:

- Start with a topical area and identify a problem or opportunity
- Challenge the underlying core of the problem area
- Identify new business models or value networks

Examples:
- FedEx
- Yahoo
- Limbitless
- Facebook
“Disruptors don’t have to discover something new; they just have to discover a practical use for new discoveries.” (Jay Samit, Author, Disrupt You!)

“Meaningful innovation does not need to be based on outright invention. Rather, there is an exhilarating shortcut. It is based on bold, new combinations of already existing components that simultaneously unlock heightened levels of consumer value and reduce costs.” (Gabor George Burt, Author, Slingshot: Re-imagine Your Business, Re-imagine Your Life)