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| No | Questions | From | For |
| 1 | The author mentions that “… helped managers to identify themselves as a distinct economic group” (p. 456). What are the distinctive characteristics of this group? To what extent can this group influence the firm and the economy? What can be the limitations of this group? How to deal with the agency problem? | Shunyi Lai | Chandler |
| 2 | The text states that the professionalization of management flourished in the United States in the 1920s but only became widespread in other economies after World War II. Why did the U.S. become the “cradle” of management professionalization? | Yingying Liu | Chandler |
| 3 | The SARFIT model posits that structural change is primarily triggered by performance decline and is oriented toward regaining fit. However, in practice, organizational restructuring is often influenced by institutional pressures, managerial fashions, or executive self-interest, which are not strictly performance-driven. How does the SARFIT model rule out alternative explanations when explaining organizational restructuring? | Xueying Lin | Donaldson |
| 4 | In structural adaptation to regain fit model of contingency theory, normally organization need signals like performance decrease to detect misfit. Does this mean that structural adaptation model is meaningless in many situations? For instance, for companies that are experiencing continuous performance growth but requiring organizational re-design or restructuring. | Bohong Ma | Donaldson |
| 5 | In Chapter 1 of The Contingency Theory of Organizations, is “fit” meant to be a descriptive label we give to organizations that happen to work well, or is it a causal property that actively produces higher performance? More concretely: when he says a structure “fits” a contingency, does he mean (a) the structure simply looks appropriate after the fact, (b) the structure contains specific mechanisms that generate better outcomes, or (c) some mixture of both? | Jinnan Hou | Donaldson |
| 6 | Donaldson allows that different organizations might reach effectiveness in different ways (what others call equifinality). Still, Chapter 1 sometimes reads as if there are clear structural answers to clear contingencies. How does he set limits on the idea that “many different structures can be equally good”? | Jinnan Hou | Donaldson |
| 7 | Is it possible that bureaucratic change of large firms may not be purely for fitting, but for preventing potential opportunistic behaviors of individuals within them? Besides, in the structural contingency model, the organic theory emphasizes the initiative and decisions of employees, as well as their high task uncertainty. Can these circumstances be the fuel of opportunism? | Shunyi Lai | Donaldson |
| 8 | Is there clear causality and inevitability in SARFIT? Donaldson’s SARFIT posits a progression—initial fit → contingency change → misfit → low performance → adaptive structural change that restores fit—with performance explicitly mediating structural change. While the model is elegant, two worries remain: (a) endogeneity/selection—the same political or governance forces that depress performance may simultaneously impel structural change, confounding the “misfit → low performance → change” chain; sample only includes firms that announced changes after a downturn, while omitting equally misfitting firms that quietly self-corrected—emerging the selection bias problems; (b) inevitability—the empirical record that firms can remain in misfit for a decade challenges the presumption of timely adaptation. Organizations can settle into stable but inferior steady states, where structure does not revert to a high-fit configuration. So how to determine whether a firm should change its structure when faced with declining performance? | Jiabing Xu | Donaldson |
| 9 | When the contingency theory is applied to other organizational characteristics, such as the organizational culture, norms, and strategies, rather than the organizational structure, will the same core contingencies and underlying mechanisms still apply? | Hui Zhang | Donaldson |
| 10 | Structural contingency theory identifies three internal contingencies as the core constructs underpinning the framework and asserts that the external contingencies will influence organizational structure indirectly through these internal contingencies. Is this claim accurate and universal? Are there external contingencies that directly impact an organization's structure? | Hui Zhang | Donaldson |
| 11 | l How should we account for situations where asymmetry exists, but power is not exercised? For example, a dominant technology company could impose stricter fees on app developers but refrains from doing so to preserve goodwill. Should dependence theory treat this as latent power, or does it reveal limits in the framework? | Bohong Ma | Pfeffer |
| 12 | If environments are “enacted,” does that mean organizational reality exists only in what members notice and pay attention to? How, then, should the theory deal with external events—like new laws or technologies—that organizations do not notice but that still shape their outcomes? Does this mean we need to think about two kinds of environments: one that is enacted and one that exists outside the organization? | Jinnan Hou | Pfeffer |
| 13 | On page 72, the authors cite Weick’s quotes: “The human creates the environment to which the system then adapts. The human actor does not react to an environment; he enacts it” (Weick, 1969: 64). If each organization lives in its own “enacted” subjective reality, does it mean that there is a lack of objective evaluation of the organization’s environment? Does this mean that there is no such thing as "wrong cognition", only different but equally valid "cognitions"? | Shunyi Lai | Pfeffer |
| 14 | In the The External Control of Organizations, the theory suggests that organizations can reduce uncertainty by “cooperating,” and its logic seems to conflict with classical game theory (e.g., the Prisoner's Dilemma), which emphasizes individual rationality and non-cooperation; why is this so? | Jiabing Xu | Pfeffer |
| 15 | Ten conditions for compliance: necessary, sufficient, or just suggestive? Pfeffer & Salancik (1978) present ten conditions that raise the probability of external control; they explicitly say not all must be present. In practice, what combinations of conditions maximize the impact and which conditions substitute for (or amplify) others (e.g., visibility vs. lack of alternatives)? | Jiabing Xu | Pfeffer |
| 16 | Pfeffer and Salancik argue that resource dependence creates power imbalances (p. 43). However, their discussion seems to underemphasize how smaller organizations might resist or negotiate power with larger ones. Could smaller organizations use alternative strategies to gain influence? | Mingruoxin Yan | Pfeffer |
| 17 | Thompson (1967) suggests that organizations seek prestige to reduce dependence without increasing power. But prestige can also increase visibility and accountability, potentially inviting more external control (e.g., investor’s higher ESG expectations/pressures on high-profile firms). Is prestige always a buffer, or can it become a liability? | Xueying Lin | Thompson |
| 18 | When gave assumption of organization in norms of rationality, author sometimes use "Under norms of rationality" (Propositions 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 5.1, 5.3, and 5.4), sometimes use "Subject to rationality norms" (Propositions 3.2, 3.4, 4.1a, 4.1b, 4.1c, 4.2, 5.1b, 5.1c, and 5.2). Is this just a difference in expression, or a difference in assumption or context? | Bohong Ma | Thompson |
| 19 | The author mentioned that vertical integration became difficult due to rapid fan-out. What can be the criteria for selecting strategic or crucial support activities for vertical integration? Besides, as technological iterations accelerate, how can organizations adjust the "strategic support activities" of their vertical integration to avoid resource misallocation? | Shunyi Lai | Thompson |
| 20 | Do dependence → power mechanisms generalize to some new dependency relationships (e.g., platform-merchant ecosystems)? The empirical study is based primarily on government–contractor settings. But in the reality, multi-sided markets, network effects, and digital technologies can change observability, substitutability, and countervailing power. Does focusing only on government-business relationships limit its generalizability in explaining new types of dependencies such as platform-merchant relationships? How to adjust measures and predictions? | Jiabing Xu | Thompson |
| 21 | How do different technologies (long-linked, mediating, intensive) influence organizational domain expansion strategies, according to Thompson? Could you give some examples of industries or enterprises based on the current situation？ | Tongyue Fang | Thompson |
| 22 | How do different coordination mechanisms (mutual adjustment, standardization of work, standardization of outputs, standardization of skills, plan) map onto organizational structures in modern firms (e.g., platform firms, startups, manufacturing multinationals)? | Yingying Liu | Thompson |
| 23 | Thompson claims boundaries between organization and environment are negotiable. What criteria should managers use to decide whether to internalize a function or rely on market contracting? | Yingying Liu | Thompson |
| 24 | How is domain consensus achieved, and what happens when consensus breaks down？ | Yingying Liu | Thompson |
| 25 | Thompson’s framework assumes organizations can effectively buffer uncertainty, but what happens when external changes are too rapid or unpredictable? Are there limits to buffering strategies? | Mingruoxin Yan | Thompson |