Abstract Title: Integration of environmental sustainability into business decision-making frameworks

Abstract Text:
Addressing environmental sustainability requires input and commitment from all sectors, including future business leaders. Business schools are one pipeline through which such leaders are accredited and trained, an outcome of an immersive two-year MBA experience where students internalize mental frameworks and social norms about what rationales, beliefs and behaviours define a successful and “good actor” in business. While there is societal consensus for the importance of producing ethical business leaders, normative beliefs, standards, and social and institutional norms on how to integrate environmental sustainability factors into business decision-making are not well-established and are still subject to debate. Correspondingly, business students exhibit a remarkable range of beliefs and abilities, and apply a range of different cognitive frameworks when facing the same question of how to incorporate environmental factors into corporate decision-making practices. In order to dissect and characterize the factors that systematically explain this range of outcomes, we conducted over 50 in-depth interviews and surveys of current students in Stanford’s MBA program. We have created a typology that segments students into consistently different decision-making types, each exhibiting a characteristic and systematic combination of factors that predict level of knowledge and comprehension, belief, and willingness-to-act. This presentation will discuss these business decision-making types and their implications for successfully incorporating environmental sustainability factors. We will consider how practitioners and academics may use this typology as an innovative tool to design interventions that are more effective and targeted to each business decision-making type.