Fun & Games with Managerial Accounting
ABO Conference, 2008
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Ways to Innovate
- Innovative Questions
- Innovative Tasks / Operationalizations
- Innovative Theories
- Innovative Analytical Methods

Why Innovate on Task?
- It’s not really about innovation.
- It’s about understanding your question & your theory & finding the right task.
- Classic Tasks
  - Decoding
  - Construction (Loc-Bloc or Lego)

Tafkov’s Task
- Performance = f(ability)
- Performance = f(effort)
- Important domain/ability
- Task is not interesting (low intrinsic motivation.)

Kachelemeier, Reichert, & Williamson, JAR, 2007
- Research Question: How does worker productivity differ when compensation is based on quantity, creativity, or the product of both measures?
- Important task attributes
  - Two dimensional task performance
    - Quantity of performance is measurable
    - Creativity of performance is measurable

Solution
- Rebus Puzzles & a Panel of Judges
**Fessler, JMAR, 2003**

- Research Question: How does task attractiveness moderate the relation between monetary incentives and performance?
- Important Task Attributes
  - One dimensional performance
  - Range of attractiveness

**Solution**

- Water Jug Problems
  - A mother sends her son to the well to get 3 liters of water. She gives him a 5-liter jar and an 8-liter jar.
  - How can the boy get exactly 3 liters of water using only these containers and not guessing the amount?
  - Solution
    - Fill the 8-liter jar, and then pour out enough to fill the 5-liter jar.

**Farrell, Kadous & Towry, CAR, 2008**

- Research Question: How do incentives on forward-looking performance measures affect far-sighted actions?
- Important Task Attributes
  - Two types of effort (short-sighted and far-sighted)
  - Interdependencies across periods (short-term vs. long-term performance tradeoffs)

**Solution**

- [Image of solutions](image)

**Choi, Hecht, and Tayler, almost a WP, 2008**

- Research Question: To what extent (and how) do managers replace strategies with measures? (strategy surrogation)
- Important Task Attributes
  - Immersion in strategy implementation
  - Clear distinction between strategic construct and measures
  - Abstract setting, to prevent influence of priors

**Solution**

- [Image of solutions](image)
Summary

• Innovative tasks in managerial accounting research aren’t just for fun. 
  – (though they are fun)
• They are necessary for theory testing.
• What are the important task attributes for testing your theory?