Abstract:
While people have strong positive associations with creative ideas and the people who generate them, I will present several studies to show that people can also hold strong unacknowledged negative associations with creative ideas and downgrade creative people as not “leader-like.” These negative implicit theories we hold about creative ideas and people can begin to explain a paradox in the organizational literature, namely that decision-makers often desire yet reject creative ideas. Specifically, my work reveals that situational factors can activate negative implicit views of novelty and thereby alter a person’s ability to accurately recognize or ‘spot’ creative ideas. For example, a person’s role as implementer (a role responsible for selecting ideas to implement that meet timeline, budgetary, and/or page allocations) can promote the view that highly novel ideas lack practical use and so are not “creative,” instead, useful ideas are “creative.” Furthermore, a person’s psychological mindset or construal level can also alter whether she recognizes whether an idea is creative. By building what we know about negative implicit theories of creativity and how they are activated, we can reveal new bottlenecks to innovation and provide decision-makers in organizations (e.g., journal editors, product development managers, venture capitalists) with solutions to overcome the biases which deter their ability to “spot” useful ideas that also move their organizations in new directions.