

DOCTORAL THESIS

When creativity requirement does not enhance employee creativity: the limits of goal-directed behavior

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**When Creativity Requirement Does Not Enhance Employee Creativity:
The Limits of Goal-Directed Behavior**

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Doctor of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

The study of individual creativity has come a long way in the last decade. Creativity is a direct response to the creative requirement inherent in a job task. However, there is surprisingly little evidence on the associations between the creative requirement and employee creativity in the workplace. The goal of a creative requirement can be very difficult to determine, because not all goals are in fact personally internalized.

Conceptually, people pursue goals according to personal values or interests that may or may not be congruent with the goals assigned by their organization. Sheldon and Elliot (1998) introduced the self-concordant model, which suggests that individuals are likely to achieve goals that are concordant with their interests and values, however, when their goals are not concordant with their interests, they will be unlikely to attain the goal. Moreover, the conative mechanisms of individual creativity that involve goal-directed effort by individuals to attain creative outcomes have not been clearly addressed. This is important because researchers of creativity have highlighted the lack of understanding about which work context are especially effective in enhancing or restricting individual creativity, which influence subsequent performance when individuals attain creative goals that meet their needs.

Methodologically, creativity researchers (Zhou & Shalley, 2003) have also pointed out that the future development and evolution of research on creativity is dependent upon both better theory and methodology that tests the full range of antecedent and outcome of creativity at multilevel because organization is a complex social systems that involves the combination of individuals, groups and units. Noting that lack of research investigates this issue in the context of creativity requirement and individual creativity, nor have researchers examined the conative processes of individual

creativity that link creativity requirement to work outcomes, the aim of this thesis is to extend the literature by linking employees' self-regulated motives, goal-directed effort, the attainment of creativity goals, and performance and career success.

Two field studies were conducted in mainland China. The results of a hierarchical regression analysis in study 1 revealed the creative requirement of a job was positively associated with individual creativity, but this improvement only occurred when employees interpreted the goal of the creative requirement as being driven by autonomous motives (goals that represent internal interests) rather than by controlled motives (goals that do not represent internal interests). All of the results in Study 1 were replicated in Study 2. Specifically, the hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) results in Study 2 revealed team creative requirement was positively associated with team performance and individual creativity, and individual creativity as a goal-directed effort mediated the relationships between team creative requirement and individual work performance and subjective career success, but had no significant effect on objective career success. In an increasingly competitive global market, the results provide some practical suggestions on how firms can develop their management practices or policies of the creative requirement of a job (or a team) by taking employees' self-regulated motives into account.

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