

When and How Do Collections of Creatives Lead to Creative Collectives?

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Abstract—This paper discusses creativity in the context of group diversity. In this study, we introduce a collective of diverse creatives that forms from creative individuals to a group of creative collectives. We also propose task orientation -- the tendency a group focus on effective task performance -- as a moderator of the relationships between both expertise, skills diversity, and group identification, collective efficacy and, ultimately, group creative performance.

Keywords—group diversity; task orientation; group identification; collective efficacy; group creative performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Within dynamic, global environment, there is increasingly part of inquiries for competitive advantages, organizational effectiveness and performance; therefore, utilizations of workplace diversity, organizational creativity and innovation enact as key resources for organizational performance. Recent contextual theories of creativity have attempted to identify dimensions of integrating individuals with diverse skills and perspectives (Amabile, 1988, 1996; Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004), group characteristics (Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993) such as diversity.

In 1990, King and Anderson identified that creative performance may be reached by having a group of creative individuals from diverse fields or functional backgrounds. Diversity composes of “the distribution of personal attributes among interdependent members of a work unit” (Jackson, Joshi, and Erhardt, 2003). Nevertheless, there still is little understanding of the relationships between group diversity and creative performance due to variability across studies. So there is an urgent research call for disentangling person-context interactions (Shalley et al., 2004) in order to more fully understand the relationships between group diversity and contextual settings (Rousseau & Fried, 2001).

There has been a research call on group creativity corresponding with group diversity, largely concerned with task-related and relations-oriented diversity (West, Hirst, Richter, & Shipton, 2004). In addition, Mannix and Neale (2005) proposed that the underlying mechanisms deserve more attention. In line with previous research calls, we aim to build a conceptual model for the moderating and mediating relationships between group diversity and creative performance.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND PROPOSITIONS DEVELOPMENT

Creative performance in groups requires considerable diverse domain-relevant knowledge, creative-relevant skills, and motivations of individual member to construct, evaluate and implement for creativity. Other than that, contextual factors (e.g., task orientation) can regulate group identification, transmitting to exert collective efficacy, leading to subsequent collective creative performance. Figure 1 states the conceptual framework.

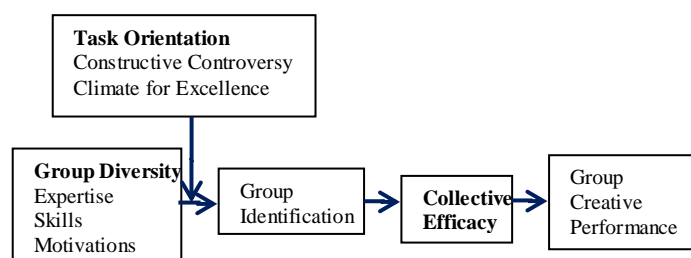


Fig. 1. Proposed Framework

III. GROUP DIVERSITY AND GROUP CREATIVE PERFORMANCE

How to form collections of creatives? According to Amabile's componential theories (1983), three major components – expertise, domain-relevant skills, intrinsic motivations – are required to achieve creative performance. Expertise comprises factual knowledge, special skills, and talents in the target work domain. Domain-relevant skills refer to strategic explicit and tacit knowledge, appropriate cognition, and working styles for producing useful and novel ideas. Task motivation includes either intrinsic or extrinsic motivations in determining how an individual perform creative acts.

To form a collection of creatives within groups, beyond demographic and functional diversity, we have to ensure that members are inclined to expertise, domain-relevant skills, motivation, and processes (Amabile, 1983). Such will create multiple perspectives and foster group creative performance. Therefore, we expect the group with diverse knowledge domains, skills, and motivations as the functional task-oriented aspect of diversity in relation to group creative performance. In sum, we posit:

Proposition 1: Groups with diverse knowledge domains, skills, and motivations will positively relate to group creative performance.

IV. THE MODERATION ROLE OF TASK ORIENTATION

A related construct called task orientation (i.e., West, 1990, Burningham & West, 1995; West & Anderson, 1996) defined as a shared vision, excellence climate related to the quality of task performance or outcomes (West, 1990, p. 38). Group creativity involves a complex process that includes levels of task orientation (West, 1990; West, & Anderson, 1996). However, too much diversity or heterogeneity means too much different information, too many divergent perspectives, and ideas; all of which may lead to differences in decision-making process on how to proceed. Then, group experiences controversy (Tjosvold, 1985). The concept of “constructive controversy” (Tjosvold & McNeely, 1988; Tjosvold, Wedley, & Field, 1986) emerges among group members, indicating the value of social interaction and controversy in creative ideas decision making which converges diversity into group identification among members. In addition, the notion of co-operative climate is likely to strengthen the relationships between group diversity and group identification (Anderson & West, 1998; West, 1990; West & Anderson, 1996).

Overall, task orientation will have a certain degree of impact on diverse teams and disseminate a motivational climate that hinders these dysfunctional effects caused by too many divergent perspectives (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Imposing high levels of collective team identification allows group members to enhance group identification among members of diverse task-oriented group (Van der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005). Based on the above discussion, we formally propose:

Proposition 2: Task orientation will moderate the relationship between groups with diverse knowledge domains, skills, and motivations and group identification.

Proposition 2a: High levels of task orientation strengthen the positive relationship between groups with diverse knowledge domains, skills, and motivations and group identification.

Proposition 2b: Low levels of task orientation weaken this relationship so that groups with diverse knowledge domains, skills, and motivations relate negatively to group identification.

V. GROUP IDENTIFICATION AND COLLECTIVE EFFICACY

Another flow emphasizes the importance of group process, especially the association of group identification with collective efficacy. Group identification occurs when an individual member's identity to be that of a member of the group (Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, & Popper, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Consequently, as highly efficacious people work together with confident group members, he or she tends to develop positive perception of his or her group. Overall, a positive collective efficacy is activated, leading the group to work, exchange, discuss, evaluate, screen, and implement novel and useful ideas. An efficacy belief forms that a group can handle certain tasks because of collective efficacy which influences a group to initiate action, to exert effort, and to

sustain such effort. Past empirical research (Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003) discovered that social identification has positive impact on follower perceptions of collective efficacy. Therefore, we propose:

Proposition 3: Group identification will positively relate to collective efficacy.

VI. RELATING COLLECTIVE EFFICACY TO GROUP CREATIVE PERFORMANCE

Once group members commit a group identification and believe their collective capability of integrating available expertise, skills, and motivations activates, then collective efficacy (Bandura, 1982) primes for group creative task performance. In line with social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), there is a positive relationship between the sense of collective efficacy and the team performance (Gully, Incalcaterra, Joshi, & Beaubien, 2002) in various work group settings (e.g., Campion, Medsker, & Higgs, 1993; Guzzo, Yost, Campbell, & Shea, 1993; Jung & Sosik, 1999). Also, this similar line of reasoning can be applied to creativity literature. Two studies (Tierney, 1997; Tierney & Farmer, 2002) confirmed that creative self-efficacy at the individual level is highly associated with performance via effective task-related strategies (Bandura, 1997; Maddux & Lewis, 1995). We assume that the same argument substantiates the relationship between collective efficacy and group creative performance. Therefore, the same logic works in groups. Integrating the above arguments, we propose:

Proposition 4: Collective efficacy will positively relate to group creative performance.

VII. CONCLUSION

There are several contributions of this conceptual based study, hopefully. This study suggests that there exists a complex relationship between group diversity and creativity, the forms of which vary with both diversity sources (i.e., componential creativity components) and boundary condition (i.e., task orientation). In addition, this research highlights the collective interactions of group members' diverse creative insights by exploring both moderating and mediating factors to unfold the group creative performance processes. We enrich the understanding of an enlarged pool of knowledge, skills, motivations, experience, and perspectives (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). On the other hand, we correspond with previous research attention focused on the joint effect of individual and contextual factors, an interactionist perspective of creativity (Woodman et al., 1993; Oldham & Cummings, 1996).

Concerning the group process, from group diversity, to group identification, till collective efficacy, disentangles the process of group creative performance. The research may advance our knowledge of organizational creativity with the increased attention to additional forms or types of diversity sources, to the underlying mechanisms of work group diversity along with the contingencies of these processes. Overall, this current study explores the effects of group diversity on group process and group creative performance, hoping to go well beyond the current diversity as well as creativity literature.

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