

Research proposal for **2011 Russell Ackoff Doctoral Student Fellowships**

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Title: Intrinsic Motivation and the Assessment of Creativity

Summary:

The purpose of this paper is to test the notion that intrinsic motivation, while it helps the generation of creative ideas, hampers accurate assessment of them. There could be two reasons why: i) intrinsic motivation leads to confirmation bias and thus less accurate assessment (people tend to think the ideas that fascinate them the most are the most creative) ii) intrinsic motivation leads to reduced psychological distance and thus less accurate assessment (intrinsic motivation can hamper people's ability to step back and see the idea in the context of other ideas and other perspectives). I also predict that this effect of intrinsic motivation on creativity assessment will be magnified when the assessment is about one's own ideas (due to the endowment effect). I would like to test these hypotheses at Wharton Behavioral Lab in May or June.

Relevance to Decision Making under Risk and Uncertainty:

When managers in organizations make creativity assessments, they are making decisions whether an idea is creative or not when ex ante it is uncertain that an idea will fly or not. There's a high risk involved as well, as losing a creative idea because the evaluator didn't recognize it can be very costly to organizations.

Lab Experiment Design:

I plan to recruit 180 Penn undergrads through Wharton Behavioral Lab. They will come to the lab and participate in the experiment for an hour. The experiment is divided into three parts: i) an idea generation task, ii) an evaluation task, and iii) a proposal task.

In the first 20 minutes of the experiment, participants will engage in an idea generation task in which they are asked to generate creative ideas for a new product. The intrinsic motivation level will be manipulated through two means: controlling vs. autonomy-supportive supervision and cool vs. boring firm. Previous research has shown that the level of perceived

autonomy is important for intrinsic motivation. Additionally, perceived coolness of the firm is another factor that can increase intrinsic motivation while keeping the task output the same.

The second part of the experiment involves an evaluation task. After finishing the creativity task, the participants will be asked to assess the creativity of a set of ideas (including their own). This will later enable me to examine whether the participants in high intrinsic motivation condition make less accurate assessments.

The third part of the experiment involves a proposal task in which participants are asked to pick one best idea from the set of ideas that they just evaluated and record a 2-minute presentation of the idea. In this part, I want to examine the behavioral implications of biased creativity assessment. Half of the participants will be given a positive feedback on their ideas and the other half will be given a negative feedback on them. The questions I am interested in are “Does intrinsic motivation and subsequent biased assessment lead participants to pick and advocate less creative ideas? Does intrinsic motivation lead people to pursue their ideas even after a negative feedback?” I predict that biased assessment caused by intrinsic motivation will lead to higher escalation of commitment behaviors.