BIAS IN CREATIVE ADOPTION DECISION POINTS: WHY RECEIVERS HINDER THE CREATIVITY–INNOVATION PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

Organizations may fail to innovate because receivers exhibit bias against adopting creative ideas. This paper explores many motivational, cognitive, and affective factors that can cause receivers to hinder the creativity–innovation process. In particular, receivers may engage in motivated reasoning and skepticism against creative ideas, face barriers to recognizing creative value, and experience negative affect when receiving creative ideas. Each creative adoption decision point during the creativity–innovation process is an opportunity for bias to derail progress. This helps explain why innovation can be so difficult. Understanding the biases that hinder the creativity–innovation process allows individuals and organizations to take action to mitigate them.

Keywords: Creativity; innovation; adoption; decision-making; biases; cognition; affect; motivation

INTRODUCTION

Creative ideas cannot progress to organizational innovations unless receivers choose to accept them. Receivers – those to whom something is presented – form stage gates in organizations through which creative ideas must pass. Extensive

The Generation, Recognition and Legitimation of Novelty
Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Volume 77, 205–228
Copyright © 2022 by Wayne R. Johnson
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited
ISSN: 0733-558X/doi:10.1108/S0733-558X20220000077016

work has examined the input side and output sides of these stage gates but with less attention to individual receivers themselves. On the input side, creativity is associated with positive affect, intrinsic motivation, and insight (Amabile, 1996). On the output side, innovation is theorized to benefit revenues, profitability, market share, market leadership, patent citation rates, firm renewal and efficiency, survival, and competitive advantage (Khessina, Goncalo, & Krause, 2018). Creativity and innovation have been called vital to the success of *any* organization (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014). Firm performance can hinge on how receivers respond to creative ideas.

Despite these benefits, organizational receivers have motivational, cognitive, and affective reasons – independent of idea utility – not to adopt creative ideas. Theorized benefits for generators and organizations may not apply to receivers, who may experience costs instead. This is particularly important when receivers have gatekeeping authority for an idea's progress such as being a relay to more senior management or controlling resources needed to develop creativity. Organizations may struggle to innovate because creativity is often undermined by the very people seeking to foster it (Mueller, 2017). Individuals paradoxically reject creativity due to implicit bias even when explicitly desiring it (Mueller, Melwani, & Goncalo, 2012). Individual receivers may not even want creativity despite its purported benefits at the organizational level (Staw, 1995). Scholars have called for research into bias against creativity that may exist independent of idea utility (Mueller et al., 2012). Many questions remain regarding *when* and *why* receivers accept or reject creativity; creativity reception is a "new and fragmented field of research" (Zhou, Wang, Bavato, Tasselli, & Wu, 2019, p. 16).

The purpose of this paper is to explore how barriers in creativity reception can hinder the creativity–innovation process. My particular focus is on bias unrelated to idea utility which is defined as elements of feasibility and value (Litchfield, Gilson, & Gilson, 2015). I conclude decision points where receivers respond to creativity are crucial for progress from creativity to innovation. I also identify over 20 motivational, cognitive, and affective obstacles unrelated to idea utility that may hinder receivers from adopting creative ideas. Motivational barriers result in motivated reasoning and motivated skepticism against creativity. Cognitive barriers prevent recognition of the value of creative ideas. Affective barriers create implicit resistance to creativity. These barriers help explain why organizations fail to innovate: receiver factors present obstacles along the path from creativity to innovation.

CREATIVITY RECEPTION'S PLACE IN INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

Creativity and innovation are intertwined but are usually studied separately because they involve different levels of analysis and focus on different phenomena. The literature historically approaches creativity and innovation as siloed and discrete, with few linkages between them (Anderson et al., 2014). However, creativity and innovation are "different parts of essentially the same process" where

creativity is generating novel and useful solutions at the individual or group level, while innovation is implementing such solutions at the organizational level (Amabile & Pratt, 2016, p. 158). Creativity is the beginning part of the process, while innovation is the ending part of the process (Khessina et al., 2018).

Despite the differences between creativity and innovation, both involve idea evaluation by individual receivers. It is important to note that while idea generation and idea implementation are both highly developed fields, creativity evaluation is relatively understudied in organizational literatures. Zhou et al. wrote

> surprisingly, limited research has been conducted in the field of management on the receiving side of creativity, especially compared to other business fields and social sciences such as education, entrepreneurship, marketing, psychology, and sociology. (2019, p. 2)

But organizational researchers have begun to recognize the importance of the role of creativity adoption decisions:

> The field of creativity may need to shift its current focus from identifying how to generate more creative ideas to identifying how to help innovative institutions recognize and accept creativity. Future research should identify factors that mitigate or reverse the bias against creativity. (Mueller et al., 2012, p. 17)

Some recent and valuable research has studied the receiving side of creativity such as the structural characteristics of social audiences (Cattani, Falchetti, & Ferriani, 2020), audience type and embeddedness (Cattani, Ferriani, & Allison, 2014), and contextual circumstances (Cattani, Ferriani, & Lanza, 2017). Additionally, Zhou et al. called for "bridging the creating and receiving side of creativity … to capture their interdependent and dynamic nature" (2019, p. 21).

My particular focus in this paper is on individuals receiving creative ideas in organizations who have the capacity to influence idea implementation and idea outcomes. Receiver motivation, cognition, and affect play an important role in how ideas are developed (creativity) and implemented (innovation). In creativity, generators rely on receivers in an organization for feedback, advice, and support to refine ideas (Harrison & Rouse, 2015). But if a receiver has reasons not to adopt creativity, then they may withhold support or respond in ways that cause a creator to prematurely abandon an idea. Creators and their ideas are vulnerable in early stages of the idea journey (Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017). In innovation, receivers also play a crucial role because they develop early-stage solutions through providing approval and resources based on their evaluations of the solution (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003). If a gatekeeping receiver evaluates an idea negatively and withholds resources, then it less likely to become an innovation in that gatekeeper's organization.

In both creativity and innovation, individuals must evaluate a creative idea before them. They need to choose between responses such as accept, reject, or refine. I refer to this decision as a *creative adoption decision point*. Creative adoption is accepting or intending to accept a creative idea, product, solution, or even a person (Zhou et al., 2019). Anything that is creative can be referred to as a *creative target*, an umbrella term that includes ideas, prototypes, processes, etc. Creative ideas are a subset of creative targets. For the rest of this paper when I refer to creative targets, I am including creative ideas. A creative adoption decision

point occurs when a receiver decides whether to accept, reject, refine, or ignore a creative target.

In Fig. 1, the arrows represent an iterative idea journey. A creative target may pass through many iterations of generation and evaluation. Evaluation has been described as a generative process that shapes and guides creativity (Harvey & Kou, 2013). For example, an employee may generate an idea and present it to a receiver. The receiver may point out flaws which revert the idea back to the "drawing board" of generation. Or the receiver may become co-opted into the generative process and develop the idea through providing feedback, defined as information communicated with the intent of approving a target (Harrison & Rouse, 2015). Receiver feedback may provide new directions for the creative target or meaningfully alter its nature. The receiver may give feedback to the same idea repeatedly as it develops: the same creative adoption decision point may be revisited. The receiver may wish to refine the idea many times before eventually deciding to accept or reject it. This is why it is appropriate to think of creative adoption decision points as belonging to an iterative cycle of generating and evaluating creativity.

Creative targets may return to the same decision point repeatedly in altered forms from previous occasions. Each version of an idea is comparatively evaluated through searches in existing patterns in a person's knowledge structures to be assessed for feasibility and suitability (Finke, Ward, & Smith, 1992). Such evaluation continues even after a receiver has accepted the idea. A receiver's supervisor may subsequently determine the idea needs revision. This could result in the idea reverting back to the "drawing board" or it could result in the idea being allotted resources to become a prototype. The idea could progress forward or revert backward each time it is evaluated. For innovation, proceeding with a target may identify challenges that require revisiting the decision to adopt it. In an organization, there may be many layers of decision-making receivers. Accomplishing the

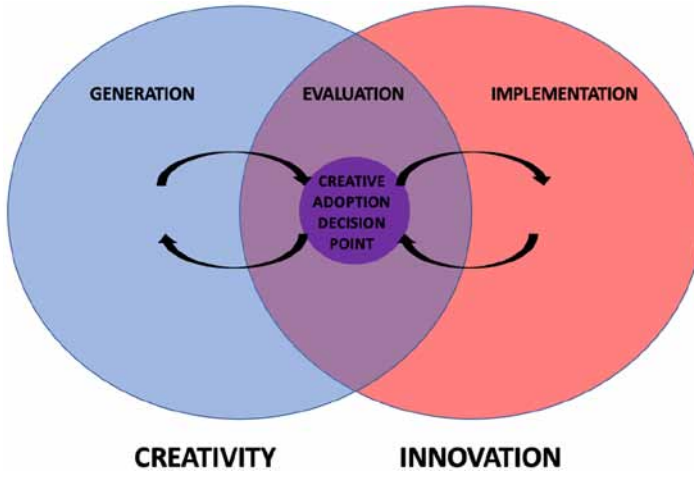

Fig. 1. Creative Adoption Decision Points Occur in Both Creativity and Innovation.

innovation process eventually requires many actors to engage in coordinated effort across different parts of the organization (Garud, Tuertscher, & Van de Ven, 2013). As organizational innovation progresses, adoption by one or few becomes adoption by many, in increasingly complex decision-making processes likely requiring formalized, collective decision-making. However, individuals still comprise a collective, making individual processes relevant throughout creativity and innovation.

Each creative adoption decision point is an opportunity for receiver biases to hinder the progress of a creative target. The frequency of such points in the creativity–innovation process underscores their importance. In vulnerable early stages of creativity development in an organization, a single receiver's adoption can be drive what might become an eventual innovation by determining whether it is implemented (Škerlavaj, Černe, & Dysvik, 2014). A single individual can reject or discourage a creative target or put it in the file drawer, preventing it from becoming an innovation. Bias in adoption decisions matters because there is a widespread consensus that innovation can benefit organizational performance (see Ahuja, Lampert, & Tandon, 2008, for a review) and receiver bias may hinder such benefits.

Given the importance creative adoption decision points have in the creativity–innovation process, there is value in understanding the motivational, cognitive, and affective factors that may hinder receivers from adopting creative ideas. Individuals have many reasons to engage in motivated reasoning and motivated skepticism against creative ideas. They have various cognitive factors that hinder recognition of the value of a creative idea. Individuals also have various causes to experience negative affect when receiving creative ideas. These factors combine to make adopting creative targets more difficult than many individuals and organizations may realize.

Table 1 includes various factors that may bias receivers against creative adoption. This is not an exhaustive list but rather is intended to convey many of the more common potential obstacles to creative adoption. I am excluding the endowment effect, confirmation bias, availability bias, and the planning fallacy as they have already been capably explored by Liedtka (2015), although the primary focus in that article is idea generation through design thinking.

The point is that there are significant motivational, cognitive, and affective barriers to creative adoption. Individuals and organizations need to be aware of these challenges to mitigate them.

MOTIVATIONAL BIASES IN CREATIVE ADOPTION DECISION POINTS

This section briefly reviews factors that create a motivational bias against creative adoption, concluding that there is extensive cause for individuals to display motivated reasoning and motivated skepticism against creative targets.

Psychological Inertia

Inertia can tilt individuals against adoption in decision points and may be a more parsimonious explanation than loss aversion. Individuals tend to maintain the

Table 1. Motivational, Cognitive, and Affective Factors That May Bias Receivers Against Adopting Creative Targets.

	Reason Why It May Bias Receivers Against Adoption
Motivational factors	
Psychological inertia	A motive is needed to adopt but not to reject creative targets
Status quo bias	Individuals prefer the status quo to making changes to it
Normality bias	Individuals prefer normality but creative ideas are abnormal
Omission bias	Individuals prefer harm by inaction to harm by action, but adopting creativity tends to require action, making it less preferrable
Motivation to reduce uncertainty	Individuals have motive to avoid the uncertainty of creative targets
Short-term focus and routine seeking	Change is often costly in the short term while beneficial in the long term, but individuals often focus on short-term consequences
Individual adoption costs	The costs of creativity provide motive to reject creative ideas
Unreceptivity to opposing ideas	Creativity may challenge existing beliefs or practices
Motivated reasoning and motivated skepticism	The motives individuals have against creative adoption can cause biased information processing to find flaws in creative targets
Cognitive factors	
Cognitive load	Novel information is more cognitively demanding to process
Disfluency biases	Disfluency makes novelty seem less valuable and trustworthy
Cognitive laziness	Humans seek to conserve the cognitive resources that novelty taxes
Information gaps	Novelty has more information gaps for those receiving the novelty
Cognitive entrenchment	Novelty may be difficult to integrate with rigid schemas
Functional fixedness	New combinations of old materials may be low in availability
Construal level	Low construal may make creativity more difficult to recognize
Distance discounting	Future benefits of innovation are discounted relative to costs now
Mere ownership effect	Owners of the status quo may overvalue it relative to potential changes; likewise, generators may overvalue their creations
Affective factors	
Uncertainty	It is difficult and uncertain to forecast the outcomes of creativity
Hot cognition	Negative emotions trigger reflexive, negative creativity evaluations
Blame and regret	Individuals may face greater blame and regret for creativity due to its abnormality
Associated behaviors	Creativity is associated with negative behaviors such as deviance

status quo unless impelled by a psychological motive to alter it (Gal, 2006). Because creative targets are novel, adopting them generates an alternative to an existing status quo. If adopting a creative idea makes an individual only equally well off as not adopting it, psychological inertia will cause the individual not to adopt (Gal, 2006). Individuals need a motive to adopt creative targets, but no motive is needed to fail to adopt them. The case for adoption must be stronger than the case against adoption to prevail. But the case against adoption need only be equal to the case for adoption to prevail. The motivational "burden of proof" is on adoption, creating a disadvantage for deciding to adopt creative targets.

Status Quo Bias

Individuals tend to prefer the status quo to alternatives to it (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988). Given an equivalent choice between things as they are now versus things with a change, most people tend to choose things as they are now. Creativity, however, represents a change to the status quo – an alternative. All else being equal, receivers will generally prefer to maintain the status quo rather than to alter it through adopting a creative target. Status quo bias is merely psychological preference for a default as opposed to alternatives. This preference for the default is related to but conceptually distinct from the other biases in this section.

Normality Bias

Individuals also exhibit preference for normality (Baron & Ritov, 2004; Prentice & Koehler, 2002) compared to abnormality. Behavior is abnormal to the extent that it is dissimilar to past behavior, unusual or unexpected, or does not resemble or conform to the behavior of others (Feldman & Albarracín, 2017). If a target is similar to existing solutions, usual, expected, and conforming to what others have done, it is not novel and therefore not creative. The novelty inherent in creative targets necessarily entails some degree of abnormality. Abnormality can also be defined in terms of having highly available alternatives (Kahneman & Miller, 1986). The status quo is highly available because it is existing reality. Receivers can more easily imagine the current status quo without an alteration than the status quo with an alteration. Action is judged to be more abnormal than inaction (Kahneman & Miller, 1986). Adopting a creative idea tends to involve action rather than inaction, increasing abnormality.

The abnormality of creative targets can influence adoption decisions. Creativity is associated with divergent thinking and may even require deviance when many individuals are motivated to converge and to conform (Mainemelis, 2010; McCrae, 1987). Therefore, it is not unlikely at some point along the creativity–innovation process a creative target will face resistance from a receiver whose reticence is at least partly based on factors unrelated to the utility of the target. However, such obstacles may be attenuated when creativity is less abnormal (Flynn & Chatman, 2001). The abnormality of creative ideas is also likely to result in increased regret and amplified affect, which will be discussed further in the affect section.

Omission Bias

Individuals exhibit preference for causing harm by inaction compared to action, which has been clarified as aversion to direct causation of harm (Baron & Ritov, 2004). While in status quo bias individuals prefer a default option, in omission bias individuals are seeking to avoid direct means of doing harm, though in practice both of these biases may yield similar results. Because adopting a creative target tends to require a motive, doing so may be more likely to be seen as goal-directed behavior linked to individual agency than failure to adopt. Thereby an individual is more likely to be seen as directly causing the results of action to adopt a creative target than the results of inaction to fail to adopt. Additionally, many individuals may have contributed to the status quo, conferring a generalized, indirect responsibility for its consequences. But an individual who alters the status quo may have more direct responsibility for the consequences of doing so. Such preferences suggest equivalent harms from adopting versus not adopting a creative target results in a tendency not to adopt.

Motivation to Reduce Uncertainty

People have a strong motivation to avoid or reduce uncertainty (Whitson & Galinsky, 2008). Creative targets entail uncertainty, particularly in forecasting how well others or the market might respond, whether they will reach completion, and what their eventual costs and benefits will be (Berg, 2016). Such uncertainty is an aversive state for individuals who may be particularly inclined not to adopt creative targets when they are motivated to reduce uncertainty (Mueller et al., 2012).

Short-term Orientation and Routine Seeking

Resistance to change is comprised of four components: routine seeking, emotional reaction to change, short-term focus, and cognitive rigidity (Oreg, 2003). Cognitive rigidity and affect will be discussed in the following sections. Many individuals tend to have a short-term focus which makes change appear unattractive, as often change is only beneficial in the long term, being disruptive and inefficient in the short term. Individuals may find it easier to maintain existing patterns and procedures in the short run, even if a novel idea will be more efficient in the long run (Ford & Ford, 1995). This short-term focus is an important reason why individuals may oppose change even when it benefits them (Oreg, 2003). Innovation also disrupts organizational routines (Gilbert & Bower, 2002) when many individuals prefer constancy in their routines. This preference for constancy is different from status quo bias because individuals are often willing to take active action to prevent disruption to their routines. Rather than a mere preference for default options, routine seeking is a goal-directed desire for stability. Adopting a creative target results in organizational change, possibly causing cascading alterations that individuals are motivated to avoid.

Individual Adoption Costs

Adoption may result in follow-on tasks such as refinement and testing that can be avoided by not adopting (Khessina et al., 2018; West, 2002). The desire to avoid such extra effort may give receivers motive to reject creative targets that may benefit the organization but also create extra work for themselves. Receivers may face increased workload in terms of development, adaptation, and championing costs. Development costs are the resources expended in refining a target such as the effort to give and obtain feedback or time spent in progress meetings. Adaptation costs are the resources expended in adjusting to a changing environment, such as functioning according to altered routines or earning new methods. Championing costs are the resources expended in persuading others to adopt a creative target, such as time, energy, or political capital.

Other costs include potential for conflict with others, negative affect, and status loss. For example, individuals who adopt the ideas of others may suffer rejection or status loss, particularly when the idea comes from an internal rival (Menon, Thompson, & Choi, 2006; Nemeth & Staw, 1989). Additionally, middle-status individuals may often be gatekeepers to higher organizational levels for targets produced by individuals or teams. But such middle-status individuals are likely to be motivated by fear of status loss to engage in conforming behaviors regarding creativity (Duguid & Goncalo, 2015). Even if a creative target ultimately benefits the organization, such personal costs may loom large to individual receivers. The change, uncertainty, and effort of accepting creative targets – independent of idea utility and organizational benefit – can make adoption preference inconsistent for receivers.

Lack of Receptivity to Opposing Information

Creative targets may challenge assumptions causing individuals to perceive them as opposing or disconfirming existing beliefs. Individuals tend to demonstrate bias against information that opposes existing beliefs through avoidance, inattentiveness, or negative evaluations of such information (Minson, Chen, & Tinsley, 2019). Biases such as selective exposure, congeniality, and confirmation drive search for cues that are consistent with existing mental representations and preferences (Nickerson, 1998) but avoidance of inconsistent cues (Hart et al., 2009). Lack of receptivity to opposing information is motivated information exposure and processing which differs from the mere tendency to select a default option, which is status quo bias.

Motivated Reasoning and Motivated Skepticism

This host of motives not to adopt creative ideas can easily make adoption preference inconsistent for the receiver. Individuals evaluate preference-inconsistent information to be lower quality than preference consistent information, regardless of the amount or quality of the information (Greitemeyer & Schulz-Hardt, 2003). Preference inconsistency can motive receivers to conclude the information supporting adoption is invalid or unreliable; they may also use

differential, suboptimum criteria on which to evaluate it (Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Ditto, Scepansky, Munro, Apanovitch, & Lockhart, 1998; Kunda, 1990).

Preference inconsistency can also cause receivers to divert attention from cues of the target that support adoption and instead focus on cues that oppose adoption. In practice, this may look like a critical focus that maximizes flaws and minimizes virtues. Receivers experiencing any of the motivations noted thus far are vulnerable to motivated reasoning and motivated skepticism. These factors may also impede recognition of the value of a creative target.

Preference Inconsistency of Creative Targets

Taken together, these biases create motivational disincentive for receivers to adopt creative targets. Presenters of creative ideas should recognize that instead of needing to make a good case for adopting their ideas, they need to make a better case for adoption than the natural case against. This suggests careful planning is needed for presenting creative targets. As noted by Kasof (1995), thinking of creativity as a form of persuasive communication may be useful, in which the source is the creator, the message is the creative target, and the receiver is the evaluator.

COGNITIVE BIASES IN CREATIVE ADOPTION DECISION POINTS

Creative targets often result from combining information in new ways, diverging from existing schemas, and incorporating new informational elements (Smith, Ward, & Finke, 1995; Ward, Smith, & Finke, 1999). Receivers may encounter cognitive biases when processing such targets. Novelty is defined as an evaluator lacking experience and familiarity regarding a target idea but individuals prefer familiar information (Förster, Liberman, & Shapira, 2009; Zajonc, 1968, 2001). Novel ideas are also more difficult to assess due to decreased relevant schemas and associative memory against which to compare them. The challenges of processing novel information elements and associations in creative ideas may bias individuals against adoption in creative adoption decision points. For example, an analysis of a peer review process for grant proposals, including those that deviate from existing paradigms showed a systemic penalty for novel proposals (Boudreau, Guinan, Lakhani, & Reidl, 2016). As novelty increases, individuals have decreased experience with the target and may have greater difficulty in recognizing value in it.

Cognitive Load

Processing novel information is more cognitively demanding than processing nonnovel information (Schnotz & Kürschner, 2007). Our knowledge is organized into schematic structures of associations. Familiar information is well associated and rapidly processed, but novel information is not. Receivers may lack schemas and cognitive architecture to assimilate novel information, constituting a heavier

cognitive load (Sweller, Van Merrienboer, & Paas, 1998). Receivers may not have relevant schemas or associative memory structures for processing novel information as they do for familiar information, which is already sorted and associated in long-term memory. As a result, making decisions about creative solutions is likely more cognitively taxing than making decisions about conventional solutions. Cognitive overload is not a particularly enjoyable experience, which could give receivers reason to delay or to avoid creative adoption decision points, particularly when those individuals are already experiencing significant cognitive load. Individuals may make different choices when cognitively exhausted than when not. The additional demands of processing, evaluating, and forecasting outcomes from a creative target may mean receivers are more likely to be cognitively tired as target novelty increases, which could influence adoption decisions. As receiver attention is compressed by workload, preference for novelty decreases (Criscuolo, Dahlander, Grohsjean, & Salter, 2017).

Disfluency Biases

Fluency is the subjective experience of ease in a cognitive processing task (Oppenheimer, 2008). When information is disfluent, individuals consider it less valuable, less trustworthy, and less important (Oppenheimer, 2008). While disfluency may be similar to cognitive load, the range of biases of how individuals interpret the cue of disfluency is conceptually distinct from load. Familiarity increases fluency; novelty and processing creative ideas are often experienced as disfluency (Lucas & Nordgren, 2015). The newer an idea is, the more unfamiliar it is likely to be and the more disfluent. Thereby, ideas that are novel to receivers are likely to be regarded as relatively less valuable, trustworthy, and important. Creative ideas by definition are novel and therefore relatively disfluent to receivers compared to conventional ideas, triggering disfluency biases, even for receivers who may have relevant expertise.

Cognitive Laziness

Humans are cognitive misers and apply a wide variety of heuristics to conserve mental resources (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). Cognitive laziness is the tendency to avoid cognitive load. Cognitive load is the demand and difficulty itself, while laziness is avoiding this difficulty, particularly when doing so produces suboptimum outcomes. When faced with a high cognitive load creative target, the simplest way to conserve cognitive resources is to find a readily available reason to dismiss the target. If the target is reflexively dismissed, the cognitive effort of understanding and evaluating the target, as well as forecasting the target's impact is conserved. The minds of those making adoption decisions may see all the mental tasks implied in adoption as cognitive demands to be minimized. Readily available responses to dismiss creative ideas that also happen to conserve cognitive effort are "don't rock the boat," "don't fix it if it isn't broken," "don't reinvent the wheel," and many others. Such maxims are often highly valid; I am not criticizing them. I am merely suggesting that they generally happen to conserve cognitive

effort for the utterer thereof. This could result in a tendency to apply such maxims even when doing so may not lead to optimum decisions.

Information Gaps

Receivers cannot contextualize novel information or fill in information gaps as well as with familiar information, leading to a lack of preference for novel information. Individuals may implicitly believe that there is a "novelty bonus"; that is, receivers prefer to listen to novel rather than familiar information and will think more positively about the speaker and the information when it is novel (Cooney, Gilbert, & Wilson, 2017). This lay theory is sufficiently strong that individuals predict and perceive receivers will enjoy familiar information much less than they actually do and also that receivers will meaningfully prefer hearing novel information more than familiar information (Cooney et al., 2017). However, newer information also has more information gaps that are more difficult for receivers to fill in with the decreased context of novelty. As a result, in contrast to the anticipated novelty bonus, the opposite occurs – a novelty penalty where receivers believe novel information is less enjoyable, less interesting, and less effective than familiar information due to informational gaps (Cooney et al., 2017).

Cognitive Entrenchment

Those who have successfully innovated in the past may construct mental models that become rigid, creating cognitive inertia that eventually impedes their ability to depart from those past innovations (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997). Early success can canalize an individual's focus to evolutionary improvements in an increasingly narrow area rather than in broader, diverse areas (Audia & Goncalo, 2007). Such inertia favors rejection of novel ideas. Generating new schemas is more demanding and disruptive than maintaining existing ones and may be particularly difficult for individuals with a high level of stability in their domain schemas, called cognitive entrenchment (Dane, 2010). As entrenchment increases, adopting a novel idea becomes more disruptive and requires greater cognitive effort to accommodate in existing mental models. Managers and other employees are also more likely to resist ideas based on unfamiliar information than familiar information (Tripsas & Gavetti, 2000). Novel ideas and experimentation may involve constructing new schemas and dominant logics. Domain expertise in general tends to increase cognitive entrenchment, though it can be mitigated by engagement in a dynamic environment and attention to outside-domain tasks. Narrowly focused expertise in more static environments may be a significant cognitive barrier for novel ideas. Receivers may have higher levels of organizational tenure and expertise, increasing their likelihood of susceptibility to novelty-resisting cognitive entrenchment.

Functional Fixedness

In a classic experiment, researchers gave subjects a matchbox, a tack, and a candle with instructions to suspend the candle from a pegboard (Duncker & Lees, 1945). The only viable solution required emptying the matchbox, then securing it to the

pegboard with the tack, and then placing the candle in the secured matchbox. But many subjects were unable to successfully identify the solution because they imagined the matchbox only as a holder of matches rather than as a potential shelf for a candle. For those subjects, the matchbox had a fixed function that was difficult to reimagine, hindering insight into a creative solution. Because creativity often involves novel combinations or applications that have potential to violate functional fixedness, receivers may have particular difficulty in envisioning successful outcomes from creative ideas. Such difficulty could cause receivers to lean away from adoption.

Construal Level

Construal level theory describes how individuals mentally represent or construe objects. More psychologically distant objects are construed more abstractly (high construal), while closer objects are construed more concretely (low construal) (Trope & Liberman, 2003). Importantly, at low construal, individuals tend to focus on feasibility of solutions – how to do them – compared to higher levels of construal where the focus is the desirability of solutions – why to do them (Wiesenfeld, Reyt, Brockner, & Trope, 2017). Creative solutions may be desirable but face greater feasibility challenges than conventional solutions. At high construal, individuals are more likely to recognize creative ideas than at low construal (Mueller, Wakslak, & Krishnan, 2014). However, decision maker roles can easily evoke economic mindsets which may prioritize feasibility at low construal, suggesting that decision makers' construal level may make them less receptive to creative solution.

Distance Discounting

Individuals also tend to discount choice alternatives that are psychologically distant, such as in the future, at higher geographic distance, occurring to other individuals or having a low probability (Trope & Liberman, 2010). For example, individuals may prefer to have $5 now instead of $10 in one year. This may introduce bias in creative adoption decisions because generally costs precede benefits in innovation. In innovation S-curves, firms may invest in a creative target for years before seeing a return, if a return does eventually occur (Christensen, 1997). The result is that that receivers likely discount psychologically distant benefits relative to closer costs. Therefore, even if the costs and benefits of implementing a creative target are equal, the fact that the benefits are more temporally distant from the creative adoption decision point than the costs can bias receivers against adoption. Even if implementation is ultimately beneficial, if the benefits are years in the future and the costs now, receivers may discount the future benefits enough to where they still choose not to adopt.

Mere Ownership Effect

Owners of objects tend to value those objects more than nonowners (Beggan, 1992). Psychologically, ownership entails an association between a person and a target, which can be a nonphysical entity such as an idea (Pierce, Kostova, &

Dirks, 2003). Psychological ownership is defined as a state in which an individual feels a target (or a piece of a target) of ownership is theirs; it is experienced as the target having a close connection to the self. As a result, individuals who generate creative targets may overvalue them relative to those who did not (see also Fuchs, Sting, Schlickel, & Alexy, 2019). Receivers who have contributed to or feel ownership of targets before them may be more likely to adopt those targets. Likewise, individuals who have contributed to or feel ownership of the status quo, such as those with long organizational tenure, may tend to overvalue the status quo relative to creative targets that represent an alternative to it. This could cause those who have greater ownership of the status quo than of the creative idea to fail to see value in the idea and reject it.

Difficulty of Creative Recognition

Taken together, these cognitive factors undermine receiver ability to recognize creative ideas as such or to see the value in them (Zhou et al., 2019). Scholars have begun to conduct research into creative recognition and find that, in contrast to earlier scholarly theories, contextual factors and biases may influence how much novelty and creativity is perceived in a target (Mueller et al., 2014, 2018; Zhou, Wang, Song, & Wu, 2017). The cognitive factors listed thus far complicate receiver creative recognition and hinder creative adoption.

AFFECTIVE BIASES IN CREATIVE ADOPTION DECISION POINTS

Although generating novelty may be associated with positive affect (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005), receiving novelty may facilitate negative affect because of the risk, change, costs, and uncertainty it may entail. Human beings have an affective preference for the familiar and tend to disfavor novel options over familiar ones (Zajonc, 1968, 2001).

Uncertainty

Assessing and adopting a novel idea may entail uncertainty in projecting its impact and eventually in adapting to the environmental changes it creates. Implications of creativity and innovation may include negative affective consequences that evaluators may have motive to avoid. The uncertainty of innovation development induces decision makers to experience negative emotions such as fear and stress (Vuori & Huy, 2016). The competitive stress of innovation may facilitate emotions such as envy, shame, and fear, undermining individual affective well-being (Baumgartner, Pieters, & Bagozzi, 2008; Vuori & Huy, 2016).

Creativity may increase uncertainty felt; research participants feeling greater uncertainly were more likely to reject creative ideas in order to reduce uncertainty (Mueller et al., 2012). In an experiment combining the uncertainty of a creative idea with existing feelings of uncertainty made participants meaningfully more likely to display bias against the creative idea. Novel ideas may make evaluators

feel less in control because of the difficulty of forecasting their potential success (Berg, 2016). Compounding this effect is that when individuals feel less in control, they are motivated to seek out familiar information and to view it more positively (Blair, 2020). Novel ideas may also challenge existing assumptions and raise new questions, decreasing closure, which may facilitate negative affect. Decreasing closure may trigger bias against novel ideas as the stronger the need for closure that a person has, the more likely that he or she will reject or ignore information that disrupts such closure (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Evaluators have a motive to evaluate a novel idea negatively to the degree that it facilitates negative feelings of uncertainty, lack of closure, and lack of control.

Hot Cognition

The negative feelings associated with creativity for receivers may distort evaluation accuracy. Cognition influenced by affect, called hot cognition, generates bias in information processing. The feelings-as-information theory argues that

> rather than computing a judgment on the basis of recalled features from a target, individuals may … ask themselves: "How do I feel about it?" [and] in so doing, they may mistake feelings due to a pre-existing state as a reaction to the target. (Schwarz, 1990, p. 529)

A person's long-term memory is structured into associative networks of nodes; direct thought or attention to an object of thought activates the most closely linked nodes while inhibiting activation of more distal nodes (Lodge & Taber, 2005). Affective associations are activated more quickly than semantic ones and a person's affective associations and state when processing an information element influences which nodes are activated or inhibited (Taber & Lodge, 2006). Additionally, negative affect increases skepticism while positive affect decreases it (Forgas & East, 2008).

A receiver in a negative affective state selecting a response to a creative target may more readily activate negative associations congruent with that state than positive ones incongruent with that state. These negative associations form part of the information the evaluator has about the idea and could justify target rejection. Individuals experiencing negative affect are much less likely to form positive associations and make optimistic inferences in ambiguous situations (Forgas, 2002) such as evaluating a novel idea. Affect intrusion is defined as affectively loaded information influencing and becoming incorporated in judgments; it is particularly relevant as affect elicited by one target can then infuse the judgment of an unrelated target (Forgas, 1995). Experiencing negative affect can focus critical attention on the weaknesses of an idea, while positive affect may result in less attention to such weaknesses. Positive affect is associated with abstract thinking (Freitas, Clark, Kim, & Levy, 2009), where greater acceptance is displayed toward novel ideas (Mueller et al., 2014). Evaluator mood states or an affective reaction to one aspect of evaluating a novel idea can color the evaluation of other aspects, even if they are unrelated.

Causality, Blame, Regret, and Responsibility

Individuals are more likely to be perceived as causing the consequences of altering the status quo by adopting a creative target than the consequences of maintaining

the status quo by failure to adopt. That is, individuals may not be held responsible for maintaining the status quo but are likely to be held more responsible for altering it. Selecting abnormal choice alternatives results in heightened affective consequences (Kahneman & Miller, 1986) such as greater regret and feelings of responsibility. Thereby, individuals may anticipate greater blame and regret for altering the status quo by adopting creative targets. Individuals are motivated to avoid such blame and regret.

The status quo is the normal state, the default, that is not seen as causative of effects (Kahneman & Miller, 1986). For example, it would not make sense to say "it was the presence of oxygen that caused the fire" unless the presence of oxygen was abnormal (Hart & Honoré, 1959). Because the status quo is a default state, an individual may not be seen as much of a causative agent for maintaining it. Failure to adopt may even be perceived as an omission or nondecision where the receiver did not even exercise a particular intent (Kordes-de Vaal, 1996). Additionally, many individuals and factors may have contributed to the status quo over time, bestowing only a generalized, diffuse responsibility for any one individual maintaining it. But if the same person alters the status quo, the person is seen as a causative agent of change, resulting in an individualized, direct responsibility for that alteration (Prentice & Koehler, 2002; Zeelenberg, van der Pligt, & de Vries, 2000). Thereby, individuals are more likely to incur responsibility for adoption than failure to adopt, with attendant blame and regret. "A sense of personal responsibility appears to be central to the experience of regret" (Gilovich & Medvec, 1995, p. 383). Thus, individuals may be more likely to experience regret for altering the status quo by adopting a creative idea than by maintaining the status quo.

Associated Behaviors

Creativity may be associated with behaviors that facilitate negative affect for receivers. Idea generation may question and break norms (Nemeth, 1986; Nemeth & Staw, 1989) which may feel uncomfortable to those not originating the idea. Novel ideas can be seen unpredictable, unconventional, even quirky (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003) by receivers. Creativity may defy norms of reducing uncertainty and supporting group identity by not conforming to group goals and norms (Phillips & Lord, 1981; Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004). Agreeability and sociability are not generally associated with creativity and positive factors like consistency may also run counter to it (Khessina et al., 2018). Idea generation has also been associated with antisocial behaviors such as dishonesty and theft (Gino & Ariely, 2012). Creativity and behavioral disinhibition are also intertwined, with disinhibition leading to creativity and vice versa, but convention-defying disinhibition may be socially undesirable (Hirsh, Galinsky, & Zhong, 2011; Khessina et al., 2018). Such factors may make receivers feel uncomfortable and trigger desires to avoid the unpleasant, antisocial behaviors associated with creativity.

The Impact of Affect

Taken together, these affective factors may result in implicit, intuitive resistance to adopting creative ideas. Combined with motivated skepticism and cognitive hindrances to recognizing value in creative targets, such affective factors make

creative adoption even more difficult. There may be some truth to Staw's (1995) declaration that no one really wants creativity, despite is theorized benefits and how much executives and organizations explicitly value creativity and innovation (Mueller, 2017).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The benefits of creativity and innovation have been studied extensively for generators and organizations, but the costs and barriers for receivers have garnered much less attention. Receivers have many reasons to engage in motivated skepticism and motivated reasoning against creative adoption. Receivers also have numerous cognitive barriers that can prevent recognizing value in creative targets, hindering adoption. Likewise, receivers' implicit negative affective reactions to adoption can represent an additional obstacle. Creative adoption decision points are common in both creativity and innovation; each one is an opportunity for receiver bias to derail progress. The primary approaches of this paper were to (a) highlight the importance of creative adoption decision points and (b) present ways individual-level biases may hinder organizational decision-making regarding creativity. The purpose of these approaches is to help individuals and organizations recognize and thereby mitigate obstacles in the creativity–innovation process.

The importance of creative adoption decision points for both creativity and innovation makes them theoretically interesting and practically relevant. Research into creative adoption decision points is a valuable means of better connecting creativity and innovation literatures. The variety of motivational, cognitive, and affective biases influencing receivers to make suboptimum choices at creative adoption decision points potentially harms organizational performance. Recognizing individual-level biases in innovation decisions aids scholars to understand such decisions and may enable practitioners to better compensate for such bias.

Theoretical Implications

Creativity is generally studied at the individual and group levels, while innovation is usually studied at the organizational level. This paper's compilation of individual-level biases that may affect processes and decision-making at the organizational level helps bridge these two levels of analysis. It is likely the differences in levels of analysis have contributed to the historical disconnect between creativity and innovation literatures (Anderson et al., 2014). This paper answers calls for research to bridge the creating and receiving side of creativity (Zhou et al., 2019). This paper situates creative adoption decision points within the larger creativity and innovation literatures. The model presented herein of overlapping target evaluation between creativity and innovation with creative adoption decision points facilitating and connecting them also serves as a useful means of helping integrate the literatures into a more cohesive whole, consistent with scholarly conception of creativity and innovation as different parts of the same process

(Amabile & Pratt, 2016; Khessina et al., 2018). By conceptualizing creative adoption decisions as a necessary, integral part of both creativity and innovation, there are transferrable concepts to both literatures.

Scholars recently noted that research on creativity reception is gaining momentum but is still a fragmented, new field with the majority of what work does exist being conducted outside of organizational domains, such as anthropology (Zhou et al., 2019). This paper has augmented the developing field of creativity reception studies by exploring how a variety of psychological phenomena may specifically influence creative adoption decisions. This integration enriches and aids the onward march of research into creativity evaluation.

Examining bias in creative adoption decisions also helps explain a paradox where individuals express desire for creativity in theory but reject it in practice (Mueller et al., 2012; Staw, 1995). Although the consequences of successful innovation are highly desirable, adopting creative targets involves overcoming numerous biases in motivation, cognition, and affect. Understanding how factors such as motivated reasoning, blockages to creative recognition and negative affect can bias receivers against adopting creative targets allows scholars to more accurately predict choices in creative adoption decisions. Approaching theories such as Norm Theory and Construal Level Theory from a creative adoption perspective extends their applicability and expands current understanding of creative adoption decisions.

The theory and biases presented in this paper have important implications for intraorganizational entrepreneurship and venture capital. For example, venture capital funding decisions are a type of creative adoption decision point because receivers are choosing whether to provide resources to further develop a creative target. And intraorganizational entrepreneurs need to present their creative targets to others for their evaluations.

Likewise, the factors explored in this paper apply to how organizational receivers respond to voice by employees. Voice and creativity are historically siloed literatures as well, with voice and creativity scholars citing each other exceptionally infrequently despite the extensive common ground they cover. For example, both voice and creativity often measure variations of "suggests new ways to achieve goals or objectives." The construct of adoption in the creativity literature (Zhou et al., 2019) is similar to endorsement in the voice literature (Burris, 2012). Employee voice may seek to cause some alteration in the existing status quo and thereby be subject to many of the same biases that status quo altering creative targets are. The factors applicable to creativity responses are applicable to voice responses, as voicing creative solutions is subset of voice itself. This paper helps connect the voice and creativity literatures by studying a relevant phenomenon for both: receiver responses.

Practical Implications

Organizations often struggle to implement creative ideas and to maintain existing creative success (Mueller, 2017). One reason for this challenge is receivers can believe they desire creativity without being aware of motivational, cognitive, and affective factors that can cause them to enact bias against creative targets.

Receivers unaware of such biases may have difficulty in mitigating them. Simply making receivers aware of potential bias in their decisions grants an opportunity to compensate for that bias. Understanding that even ultimately beneficial creative targets may face significant barriers allows practitioners to factor such bias into their organizational approval and decision-making processes. For example, organizations seeking to increase creative adoption may wish to provide incentives to overcome psychological inertia against adoption. Or such organizations may seek to normalize creative adoption by highlighting successful examples of creative adoption.

Given that disfluency and cognitive load pose significant barriers to creative adoption, presenters may wish to circumvent these barriers by presenting their targets piecemeal over time. The target generator likely slowly acquired the knowledge to generate the target over time, perhaps years. The generator can help the receiver by trying to replicate a similar path of learning. Rather than presenting the idea all at once, the generator can identify the assumptions and beliefs that were forerunners to the idea for themselves personally and then slowly introduce those concepts. This may be an increasingly effective strategy as the novelty and complexity of the target increase. Presenters can identify and present the basic analogs of an idea individually by breaking a target down into core component parts and presenting those one at a time. Then once the receiver has individually processed the analogs of the idea, being presented the full idea that incorporates the analogs is more likely to be seen as a natural progression. It may even seem obvious to the receiver – the goal should be to make the target seem obvious and not new. The newer that the idea actually is, probably the more important it is for presenters to make the idea seem not new through framing, where presenters attempt to reduce target novelty by presenting it as linked to existing products or business unit priorities (Sethi, Iqbal, & Sethi, 2012).

Presenting creative targets – and their attendant costs – to where managers construe them at a high level may not only make it easier for receivers to recognize creativity but also to implement it. Those presenting targets can do this by increasing temporal or social distance for receivers. For example, a presenter can pitch an idea weeks or months before the receiver needs to take any action on it. A presenter can pitch an idea but not ask for a decision, just simply introduce the idea. Doing so is much less likely to trigger resistance from the receiver and then later when action is required, the idea will have already been in the receiver's mind. This should make eventually adopting the idea seem less abnormal and less cognitively taxing. Another way to increase construal is first to present the idea to those not directly involved in its implementation, who may not have to pay the costs of adoption such as increased workload. This may be an effective coalition building strategy as well – first gain the approval of those more inclined to give it and then leverage that approval to better persuade other receivers.

Future Directions

Many unanswered questions remain in the relatively underdeveloped creative receptivity field, particularly regarding mitigating bias in creative adoption

decision points. This paper has highlighted that such bias exists and why it is consequential but gave little indication of how individuals and organizations can compensate for it. Which organizational structures, routines, and incentives are most effective at mitigating bias in creative adoption decisions? When are motivational, cognitive, and affective biases stronger versus weaker for individuals? How do group processes exacerbate or mitigate such bias when creative adoption decisions are made by a collective of individuals? It is likely that individual biases play a larger role at lower levels of the organization and in earlier stages of the creativity–innovation bias, but how does this lower level influence reverberate into higher level outcomes? Additional research is needed into the filtering role that lower levels of an organization play in determining which targets survive to arrive at higher level decision-making. Future research could also examine how the influence of bias evolves throughout the organizational progress of an initial idea to a finalized innovation. Additional research is also needed to determine which biases are most impactful as well as the moderating factors that strengthen or weaken their influence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Author would like to thank Elizabeth Mannix, Michelle Duguid, Angus Hildreth, Brian Lucas, and Wesley Sine.

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