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UTILIZING THE COSMOPOLITAN/LOCAL AND MARGINAL MAN CONSTRUCTS TO MEASURE STUDENTS' PROPENSITY FOR CREATIVITY

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ABSTRACT

Creativity has been found to be an important skill as managers increasingly deal with the challenges of a rapidly changing environment. Two measures for measuring creativity are the Raelin cosmopolitan-local scale and the Ziller marginal man scale. This research reports the results of empirical tests of these two instruments when used with student populations.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing levels of turbulence in the global environment demand creative, imaginative solutions. Typically however, managers are promoted based on operational skills, and may be deficient in the creative powers required by their new positions. Today's managers must respond to discontinuous, partially predictable changes. This requires an ability to think creatively about possible futures, and respond proactively (Ansoff, 1984).

The need for proactive responses to threats and opportunities dictates that managers be trained with greater emphasis on creative abilities (Wheatley, Anthony & Maddox, 1991). Business educators have recognized that existing pedagogy often fails to prepare managers for these new demands for creativity. Adding creativity to business pedagogy requires measurement devices for pre and post assessment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Humans have been shown to be quite limited in their ability to understand, represent, and create novel solutions to common problems, especially in complex and abstract management settings (Schwenk, 1984). For example, Matlin (1989) reports that a person in a "thinking" situation often calls on a standardized "problem solving set" for help. Many people have an inability to go outside this problem solving set, and much of their knowledge goes unused. Their representation and understanding is limited in the sense that they base thoughts and actions on a restricted set of rules and well-rehearsed repertoires.

Two models have been proposed that describe how people set artificial rules and boundary sets. The first is the degree

of integration into an organizations structure (Raelin, 1986). Higher levels of organizational socialization are perceived as being in conflict with the level of commitment to specialized role skills (Gouldner, 1957). Loyalty to the organization is termed 'local' and loyalty to an external group, such as a professional organization, is termed 'cosmopolitan'. The second model is that of the marginal man' (Ziller, 1973). In this model, individuals see themselves as *between* two groups rather than as a member of either of the groups.

The Cosmopolitan/Local Concept

Cosmopolitans and locals are the extreme ends of a continuum based on factors such as organizational loyalty and reference group orientation. Gouldner provided the following definitions (p290, 1957):

Cosmopolitan - low on loyalty to the employing organization; high commitment to specialized skills; likely to use an outer reference group orientation.

Local - high on loyalty to the employing organization; low commitment to specialized skills; likely to use an inner reference group orientation.

Raelin (1986) equated managers with the term local, where a local is characterized as being oriented toward competition and efficiency, with formalized roles, relationships and procedures. Raelin equated professionals with the term cosmopolitan, where the cosmopolitan is more individualistic and willing to question authority and organizational values. Raelin developed an instrument to assess the degree of cosmopolitan or local predisposition (p16, 1986). Because cosmopolitans are less bureaucratically restrained, it is likely that they are more creative and a high cosmopolitan score indicates creativity potential

The Marginality Concept

Stonequist (1937) described the marginal man as one who lives in two different, conflicting cultures, confronted by forces from two opposing groups representing incompatible expectations. The marginal man perceives himself as outside the boundaries of

both groups. As an occupant of a boundary role, the marginal man perceives more options and alternatives and is not constricted to a specific organization's perceptual boundaries, but is more creative and original in the vision of any situation. To assess the degree of marginality, Ziller (1973) developed a scale derived from the theory of self-orientation. Higher scores on the Ziller instrument indicate individuals who are less bound to organizations, and thus are likely to be more creative.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to administer two distinctly differently instruments designed to measure creativity.

The sample consisted of 170 undergraduate students at a medium-sized university. The majority of the students were either junior or senior business majors.

The following hypotheses were established:

H1: The Ziller instrument will identify those students who have marginal tendencies and those who have non-marginal tendencies.

H2: The Raelin Instrument will identify those students who have cosmopolitan tendencies and those that have local tendencies.

The first creativity instrument was the Self-Other Orientation Measure of Marginality developed by Robert C. Ziller, et. al. (1968). The instrument consists of eleven geometric exercises; six exercises are fillers and five are tabulated. The second instrument was a modified version of the Cosmopolitan Checklist developed by Joseph A. Raelin (1986). The Raelin questionnaire consists of 8 questions designed to determine cosmopolitan or local tendencies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results from analyzing the marginality data are quite conclusive. Responses to the Ziller instrument will identify students who have marginal tendencies and those who have non-marginal tendencies. The Cronbach Alpha was .8445 and the average correlation of the items was .6650. Thus, hypothesis one is supported.

The results from analyzing the cosmopolitan/local data collected using the Raelin instrument were far from conclusive. The Cronbach Alpha was only .4015 and the average correlation of the items was a low .1727

which is unacceptable for this type of research (Nunnally, 1967). Thus, hypothesis two is not supported. Responses to the Raelin Instrument did not identify those students who have cosmopolitan tendencies and those that have local tendencies.

Both the Raelin and Ziller instruments have been used previously to measure creativity in samples of college students. However, this research shows that the Raelin instrument is not valid for a sample population of college students. One possible interpretation is that most students have insufficient experiential bases for making the types of subjective determinations required for the Raelin instrument to generate valid results.

On the other hand, the Ziller marginal man instrument showed high internal consistency and reliability for the sample population of students. The use of figures in the Ziller instrument avoided the conceptual difficulties found in the Raelin instrument. It is suggested that future instruction and research using student populations avoid the Raelin instrument. Instead, use the Ziller instrument as a measure of student creativity.

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All statistical values available from the authors.