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Employee incremental and radical creativity

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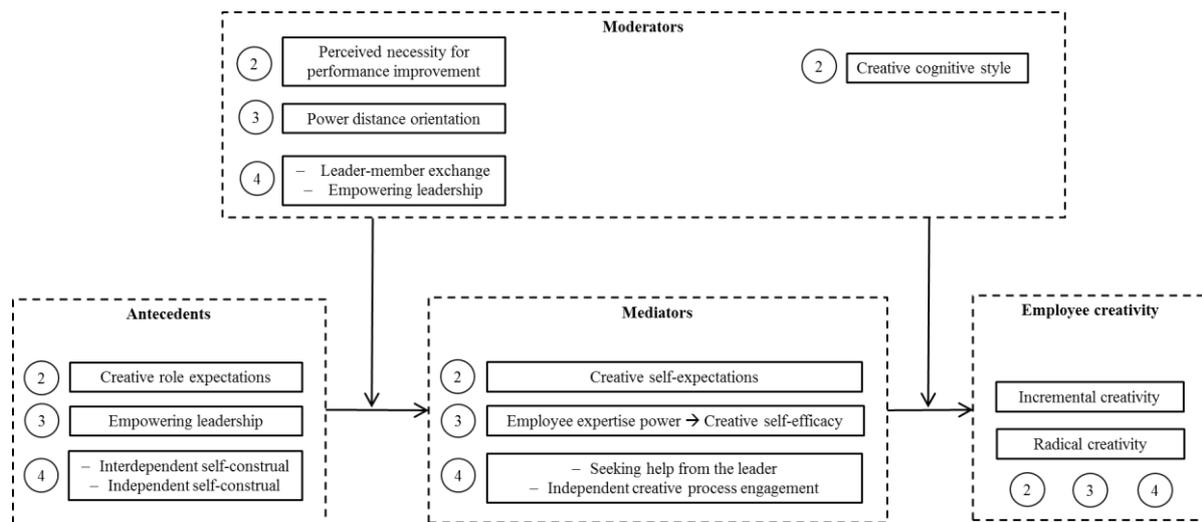
CHAPTER 5

GENERAL DISCUSSION

As creativity has become increasingly valued across a variety of industries, more and more organizations realize that they need their employees to generate creative ideas concerning procedures, processes, products or services. Incremental creative ideas are more likely to produce small-caliber advantages that allow organizations to adapt to changing environments, whereas radical breakthrough ideas can potentially bring about dramatic transformations that take pioneer companies in entirely new paths. Because creative ideas provide the raw material for subsequent development and implementation, it is critically important for organizations to understand how to stimulate the desired form of creativity, depending on the need of tasks or projects at hand. However, other than theoretical work, most empirical research has not distinguished between incremental and radical creativity and predominantly defined and measured creativity as if it were a unitary construct. To fill this important yet unaddressed gap in the extant literature, we conducted three field studies to examine potentially differential antecedents, process mechanisms and boundary conditions underlying two forms of employee creativity: namely incremental and radical creativity.

Summary of main findings

Throughout three empirical chapters, we investigated why, when, and how creative role expectations (Chapter 2), empowering leadership (Chapter 3), and self-construals (Chapter 4) may have differential effects on employee incremental and radical creativity. The relationships proposed between the constructs and the empirical findings are graphically summarized in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Graphical overview of investigated relationships in this dissertation

Creative role expectations and incremental and radical creativity: A sensemaking perspective

Creative role expectations have been theorized to be an effective way of encouraging employees to engage in creative courses of action, and some studies have connected them with the emergence of general employee creativity (e.g., Kim et al., 2010; Robinson-Morrall et al., 2013; Shin et al., 2017; Unsworth & Clegg, 2010). Yet, to date, we still know little about why, when, and how creative role expectations may differentially relate to incremental and radical creativity. In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, we take the sensemaking perspective to address these important questions.

Using organizational role theory (Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991; Katz & Kahn, 1978) as foundation and building on the sensemaking perspective of creativity (Drazin et al., 1999; Ford, 1996), we argued that employees' creative self-expectations is an explanatory mechanism through which creative role expectations promote employee incremental and radical creativity. In the face of role expectations for creativity, employees, as role occupants, try to construct personal meaning of having such expectations and thus internalize creativity as expectations for the self (i.e., creative self-expectations). Extending the sensemaking perspective, we additionally proposed that employees are more likely to interpret creativity

role expectations as important to fulfill when they perceive that the current performance of their work unit or organization needs to be improved. Based on the self-fulfilling prophecy at work model (McNatt & Judge, 2004), we further investigated how self-set expectations for creativity result in enhanced levels of creative performance. Specifically, we argued the motivational resource of creative self-expectations in and of themselves is sufficient for the generation of incremental ideas and that an individual's creative cognitive style, or the tendency to approach problems from original and unusual perspectives (Kirton, 1976; Miron-Spektor et al., 2004), is crucially needed for turning such self-expectations into radical creativity.

The field study we conducted in an academic institution in China provided empirical evidence for our theoretical predictions. Results presented in Chapter 2 showed that creative role expectations externally imposed by the organization do positively relate to creative self-expectations in employees, and that perceived necessity for performance improvement strengthens this positive relationship. Furthermore, we found that creative self-expectations have a direct effect on incremental creativity, and that creative self-expectations interact with creative cognitive style to predict radical creativity. That is, creative self-expectations only have a significant effect on radical creativity under high levels of creative cognitive style, whereas this effect is nonsignificant for those under low levels of creative cognitive style. Thus, Chapter 2 clarifies why, when, and how creative role expectations can increase employee incremental and radical creativity.

Empowering leadership and follower incremental and radical creativity: An expertise power-self-efficacy perspective

Although empowering leadership has been shown to be an important predictor of employee creativity (Chen et al., 2011; Harris et al., 2014; Zhang & Bartol, 2010), previous studies have capitalized on an intrinsic motivational perspective to explain the psychological

mechanism in empowering leadership-employee creativity relationship. Another limitation of existing research is that they have neglected to explore the potentially differential effects of empowering leadership on different forms of creativity, namely incremental and radical creativity. In Chapter 3, we took a social power perspective to advance theoretical and empirical understanding of the underlying processes and boundary conditions in the relationship between empowering leadership and employee incremental and radical creativity.

Integrating theory and research on empowering leadership (e.g., Ahearne, et al., 2005; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Zhang & Bartol, 2010), social power (French & Raven, 1959) and creativity (Amabile, 1983), we argued that employee expertise power is the most applicable and relevant power base that empowering leadership actually transfers to employees to increase their engagement in creative actions. As elevated expertise power is essential to the formation and expression of creative ideas (Amabile, 1983; Keltner et al., 2003), we further argued that employee expertise power would be a source of creative self-efficacy. In turn, such self-efficacy beliefs regarding creativity motivate employees to engage in and persist through the creative process, thereby eliciting incremental and radical creativity. As such, we expected employee expertise power and creative self-efficacy to serve as sequential mediators in the relationships between empowering leadership and employee incremental and radical creativity. Moreover, as employees differ in their values about the legitimacy of power differences and inequalities between superiors and subordinates, we proposed that power distance orientation might operate as a boundary condition that moderates the first-stage mediational path from empowering leadership to employee expertise power.

Notably, empirical field survey results from Chapter 3 revealed that the process mechanisms that link empowering leadership to employee incremental and radical creativity are, in fact, different. That is, empowering leadership leads to incremental creativity through employee expertise power, whereas empowering leadership leads to radical creativity

sequentially through employee expertise power and creative self-efficacy. As expected, we found empirical evidence for the moderating role that power distance orientation plays in the relationship between empowering leadership and employee expertise power. Taken together, the indirect relationship between empowering leadership and incremental creativity through employee expertise power is stronger for employees with lower power distance orientation. Likewise, the indirect effects of empowering leadership on radical creativity through employee expertise power and creative self-efficacy is more pronounced when employees hold lower power distance orientation. These results contribute to the literature by clarifying why, when, and how empowering leadership promotes incremental and radical creativity among their employees.

Seeking help from your leader or relying on yourself: How self-construals relate to incremental and radical creativity

Creativity researchers have suggested that leaders and their behavior, as a core aspect of the proximal work context, often have a powerful influence on employee creativity (e.g., Mainemelis et al., 2015; Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004). Nonetheless, little attention has been devoted to how employees interact with their leaders in the creative process. We differentiated two behavioral strategies that employees use to generate creative ideas for problem solutions within the context of leader-employee dyads: seeking creative help from the leader and independent creative process engagement. The main purpose of Chapter 4 was to examine different antecedents and consequences of these two creative behavioral strategies.

While both strategies seem to be conducive to the generation of creative ideas, we argued that the strategy of seeking creative help from the leader will lead to incremental creativity, because employees tend to conform to the norms specified by their leader, and that the strategy of independent creative process engagement is likely to elicit both incremental and radical creativity as employees are not subject to norms (Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017).

Drawing on self-construal theory (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), we further proposed that employees with an interdependent self-construal prefer help-seeking from their leader when they have a close relationship with their leader; and that employees with an independent self-construal prefer independent creative process engagement when they have an empowering leader.

Using field data collected from multiple companies in China, our empirical results in Chapter 4 revealed that self-construal can be a powerful antecedent shaping strategy use in the creative process and determining the form of creative outcomes when an individual is exposed to self-construal-relevant situations. More specifically, an interdependent self-construal is activated when employees perceive a high-quality LMX relationship with their leader, and that this activation leads employees to seek creative help from the leader and to show incremental creativity. In contrast, an independent self-construal is activated when employees feel empowered by their leader, and this activation leads employees to apply the strategy of independent creative process engagement and to suggest radical ideas. Overall, we introduce a new dichotomy that contrasts dependency-oriented strategy versus autonomy-oriented strategy for generating creative ideas in leader-employee dyads and elucidate differences in the antecedents and consequences of these two creativity strategies.

Theoretical implications

As we have established in the respective chapters, we make various specific contributions to the literature on creative role expectations (Chapter 2), empowering leadership (Chapter 3), and self-construals (Chapter 4). Beyond these specific contributions, however, the results of this dissertation also have important implications for creativity literature in general.

Differentiating incremental and radical creativity. Given the large volume of empirical research on workplace creativity (for reviews see Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou,

2014), however, it is surprising that very limited research has focused on a more refined conceptualization that differentiates between incremental and radical creativity. Only recently has research started to empirically examine different antecedents to these two forms of creativity (e.g., Gilson et al., 2012; Gilson & Madjar, 2011; Jaussi & Randel, 2014; Madjar et al., 2011), showing that some personal and contextual factors are more associated with radical creativity, whereas others may only influence incremental creativity. Whereas this emerging line of research has linked certain antecedents to each form, we take the extant literature one step forward by providing evidence for multiple underlying processes and boundary conditions that influence whether incremental or radical creative ideas are more likely to occur.

First, results of Chapter 2 suggest that creative role expectations could motivate employees to engage in the generation of creative ideas through the internalization of such expectations, and whether ideas generated are incremental or radical critically depends on employees' creative cognitive style. As such, we find empirical support that the nurturing conditions for incremental and radical creativity are, as expected, different, and particularly highlight that the cognitive threshold for radical creativity is higher, requiring employees to be high on creative cognitive style.

Second, as shown in Chapter 3, empowering leadership leads to incremental creativity through employee expertise power, whereas it leads to radical creativity first through employee expertise power and then creative self-efficacy. By doing so, we shed new light on the different mediating processes through which empowering leadership exerts its influence on incremental and radical creativity, and accentuate the far-reaching nature of radical creativity, requiring employees to have high self-efficacy beliefs regarding creativity to persist to the point of breakthrough.

Third, results of Chapter 4 suggest that, as a result of trait activation, employees with an interdependent self-construal use a leader-assisted strategy to generate incremental creative ideas in the context of a high-quality LMX relationship and employees with an independent self-construal use a self-reliant strategy to generate radical creative ideas when they work with an empowering leader. Thus, this study delves into the behavioral mechanisms through which different types of self-construals influence the occurrence of incremental or radical creativity and situational conditions that support the expression of relevant self-construals. In sum, our findings in this dissertation further corroborate the conceptual distinction between incremental and radical creativity and significantly advance the understanding of why, when, and how incremental and radical creativity occur.

Interactionist perspective on employee creativity. This dissertation also has clear implications for the interactionist perspective that views creativity as a function of an employee's personal characteristics, the characteristics of the context in which he or she works, and also the interactions among these characteristics (Shalley et al., 2004; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Woodman et al., 1993). Our findings in Chapter 2 point to the interaction among two contextual characteristics and the interaction among two personal characteristics. We account for how creative role expectations has a stronger positive effect on creative self-expectations (which in turn predicts creative behavior) when employees perceive strong necessity to improve the current performance condition in their work unit or organization, but a weaker, but still positive, effect when this necessity is weak. We also demonstrate that creative cognitive style (an employee characteristic; see Miron-Spektor et al., 2004) acts as an important boundary condition for the effect of creative self-expectations on employee radical creativity. Creative self-expectations do motivate radical creativity for employees who have highly creative ways of thinking, but employees who do not have such cognitive tendency fail to turn their creative self-expectations into radical creativity.

Based on the fundamental tenet “that certain contexts match individuals’ personal characteristics and that this match results in high levels of employee creativity” (Shalley et al., 2004: 935), Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 further detail the nature of how personal and contextual factors interact to impact creativity. In line with the interactionist perspective, we show that the indirect effects of empowering leadership on employee incremental and radical creativity vary as a function of employee power distance orientation such that these indirect effects were more positive under lower levels of power distance orientation. In addition, we delve into the joint effects of self-construals (personal factor) and relevant leadership styles (contextual factor) in shaping certain forms of creative behavior: an interdependent self-construal indirectly elicits incremental creativity only when it is activated by a high-quality LMX; an independent self-construal indirectly elicit radical creativity only when it is activated by an empowering leadership. Thus, this dissertation, which incorporates various patterns of interactions, provides important insights into how personal factors and contextual factors interact with one another to impact creativity.

Practical implications

As work environments become increasingly complex and dynamic, employees often encounter new and ill-defined work problems that need creative thinking to find solutions because pre-specified procedures and practices do not exist (Mumford, Medeiros, & Partlow, 2012; Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004). Sometimes, organizations may need incremental ideas for problem solutions to function in a more effective or efficient way, while at other times it is highly critical for employees to bring about radical breakthroughs. Inherently, the level of creativity needed may be dependent on the situation at hand. For example, the pursuit of radical creativity may be necessary when R&D professionals try to develop completely new products. In contrast, incremental adjustments in how the work is done may be more desirable for assembly line workers or office employees. Although the desired creativity of problem

solutions may differ, it is important for managers to align the context within which their employees currently work with the level of creativity (i.e., incremental or radical) desired.

Across the empirical chapters in this dissertation, one common theme is that while leaders oftentimes may not be the primary idea generators, they play a key role in triggering, enabling, and encouraging employees to engage in creative actions. Hence, leaders should provide the right type of support needed for incremental and radical creativity. There are a variety of things that leaders can do through their leadership behavior and human resource practices, ranging from the indirect way of developing a creativity-supportive work context to the direct involvement in the creative process (Mainemelis et al., 2015). The findings of this dissertation imply that leaders can make important contributions to employee creativity by creating role expectations for creativity, by implementing empowering leadership, and by supporting the expression of self-construals.

Setting creative role expectations. A simple yet powerful way for managers to facilitate incremental and radical creativity is to impose normative role expectations for creativity upon employees (Shalley 2008; Unsworth et al., 2005; Yuan & Woodman, 2010). By setting role expectations for creativity, managers effectively convey to their employees that coming up with new and better ways of doing things is an integral part of their job duties. Such role-based expectations can be set by incorporating creativity into job descriptions or by establishing clear goals for creativity. Moreover, managers also need to be aware that a less satisfactory performance situation of the work unit or organization could help employees to internalize creative role expectations as they are more likely to see how performing the expected creative behavior will contribute to organizational effectiveness. Another way to achieve this purpose is to explicitly spell out the rationale behind role expectations for creativity such that employees endorse the inherent value of the expected behavior. Managers should acknowledge, however, that these internalized creative expectations will not elicit the

same creative outcomes for all employees: incremental creativity is an attainable behavior to show regardless of employees' personal cognitive style, whereas the successful development of radical creativity requires employees to be high on creative cognitive style. Hence, collecting data on employees' cognitive styles would provide managers the additional information needed to anticipate the form of creative ideas their employees are able to come up with. When making work assignments, managers should take employees' ways of thinking into account. If a project or task requires groundbreaking ideas to complete, they may better delegate it to employees who are predisposed to think creatively.

Empowering leadership. Manager who would like to motivate their employees to show incremental and radical creativity can adopt empowering leadership by involving them in decision making, and providing them sufficient autonomy, confidence, and information to perform their job effectively. To make empowerment a more effective management practice, managers should learn to recognize individual differences in power distance orientation. Managers may find that low-power-distance employees are more receptive to their empowerment efforts. When working with employees who believe in high power distance in leader-employee relationship, managers may need to gradually increase the degree of empowerment. More importantly, our results suggest that incremental creativity is a direct behavioral manifestation of employee expertise power, whereas radical creativity is more far-reaching, requiring employees to develop strong self-efficacy beliefs for creativity. When incremental creativity is desired, managers can encourage employees to quickly become experts in a given domain through learning and practice. Although the generation of incrementally creative ideas is highly possible for experts, radical creativity requires employees to believe that (radical) creative outcomes are attainable and their attempts toward this behavior will be successful. Thus, building up employees' confidence in their creative

capacities would be particularly critical for managers seeking to infuse completely new or groundbreaking perspectives within their workgroup.

Supporting the expression of self-construals. Another way leaders can promote employee creativity is to support the expression of interdependent and independent self-construals in the pursuit of creative ideas for work-related problems. As our results showed, a high-quality LMX relationship activates employees with an interdependent self-construal to generate incremental creative ideas through seeking creative help from the leader, whereas empowering leadership enables those with an independent self-construal to generate radical creative ideas through independent creative process engagement. As leadership is always a strategic endeavor, the best thing managers can do is to align their leadership behavior with the specific type of self-construal held by individual employees. When employees hold an interdependent view of the self, managers should strategically establish and maintain good working relationships with them so that they feel comfortable to seek the help they need to solve problems creatively. Moreover, we also noted that while soliciting creative input from the leader can increase the creativity of help seekers who otherwise may be constrained in their difficulties, leaders' direct involvement in the idea-generative process may inadvertently squelch these seekers' differentiation mindsets and ultimately undermine the newness of ideas generated. With this caveat in mind, leaders, as help providers, may also encourage their employees to maintain independent thinking even when absorbing the creative input received. In the case of working with employees with an independent self-construal, we advise managers to empower them to capitalize on their own original and thus unique thoughts to dig into problems for creative solutions. However, these employees are more willing to assert radical breakthrough ideas to demonstrate their uniqueness and, to a large extent, limit their speaking up of incremental improvement ideas. In order to access the full range of ideas

generated, managers can let them know that all levels of creative ideas are highly appreciated, including those reflecting small adjustments or extensions of the existing framework.

Limitations and future research directions

In this dissertation, we present three empirical chapters examining differential effects of personal and contextual factors on incremental and radical creativity. We provided solid empirical evidence for the conceptual distinction between incremental and radical creativity and identified different antecedents, generation processes and cognitive thresholds underlying these two forms of creativity. Despite the significant theoretical and practical implications, there are also some limitations that need to be addressed. Given that we have covered theoretical and methodological limitations specific to each empirical chapter, in this section we will summarize the limitations and future research directions that are more generally applicable to our dissertation.

Conducting a uniqueness analysis of the contributions of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

First, although Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 dealt with different and clearly defined research questions, these two chapters utilized the same dataset collected from a large academic institution in China. Hence, we conducted a uniqueness analysis for these two chapters in terms of their research questions, theories used, variables included, and theoretical and managerial implications (Kirkman & Chen, 2011). As shown in Table 5.1, we demonstrated the unique value-added contributions for the two chapters using the same dataset. While Chapter 2 was designed to empirically address the question of why, when, and how creative role expectations relate to employee incremental and radical creativity, Chapter 3 was designed to clarify the process mechanisms and boundary conditions in the relationships between empowering leadership and employee incremental and radical creativity. Accordingly, the theoretical explanations used in these two chapters were highly distinct.

Table 5.1 A uniqueness analysis of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3

	Chapter 2	Chapter 3
Research question	Why, when, and how may creative role expectations have differential effects on employee incremental and radical creativity?	Why, when, and how may empowering leadership have differential effects on employee incremental and radical creativity?
Theories used	Organizational role theory; the sensemaking and interactionist perspective of creativity; self-fulfilling prophecy at work model; individual cognitive style; incremental and radical creativity	Empowering leadership; social power theory; the components model of creativity; the approach/inhibition theory of power; individual power value; incremental and radical creativity
Variables	Creative role expectations; perceived necessity for performance improvement; creative self-expectations; creative cognitive style; incremental creativity; radical creativity	Empowering leadership; power distance orientation; follower expertise power; creative self-efficacy; incremental creativity; radical creativity
Theoretical implications	Creative role expectations positively relate to creative self-expectations; perceived necessity for performance improvement strengthens this positive relationship; creative self-expectations directly relate to incremental creativity; creative cognitive style is a necessary condition for turning such self-expectations into radical creativity.	Follower expertise power mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and follower incremental creativity; follower expertise power and creative self-efficacy sequentially mediate the relationship between empowering leadership and follower radical creativity; both mediating relationships are conditional on power distance orientation for the path from empowering leadership to follower expertise power.
Managerial implications	Creative role expectations, in combination with the need for change, are effective in triggering employees to engage in creative behavior; to enhance radical creativity, managers should select employees scoring high on creative cognitive style.	Managers can use empowering leadership to promote employee incremental and radical creativity; the generation of radical creativity is more far-reaching, requiring employees to form strong self-efficacy beliefs for creativity.

With regard to variables used, there was only overlap in dependent variables (i.e., incremental and radical creativity). This should not be surprising as the theme of this dissertation is to provide a richer understanding of how to facilitate incremental and radical creativity among employees and leader-rated creative behavior is the basis of the measurement method. Finally, both scholars and managers can take different theoretical and managerial implications away when reading these two chapters.

Operationalizing incremental and radical creativity via more objective measures. Second, employee incremental and radical creativity were measured by subjective leader ratings on a Likert 7-point scale. Although leader ratings have been frequently used in previous studies (e.g., Tierney et al., 1999; Zhang & Bartol, 2010), and leaders do have a great deal of knowledge, experience, and expertise to assess the creativity level of ideas, we acknowledge that leaders may not witness all creative behavior or hear all creative ideas of their employees. Future work could also consider using peer ratings to measure incremental and radical creativity as employees often discuss ideas with each other in the conduct of their daily work. Researchers who want to assess the creativity of tangible outcomes, such as paintings, poems, research reports or written problem-solving suggestions, may find the consensual assessment technique particularly useful. Objective archival data, such as the number of suggestions or the number of patent applications, have the merit of meaningfully operationalizing incremental and radical creativity in realistic settings. According to Oldham and Cummings (1996), suggestions submitted to the formal suggestion system may often reflect incremental or minor adjustments, whereas patents that organizations want to protect their exclusive rights usually represent radical or major changes in processes,

procedures, products or services. Future research could use more objective indicators (i.e., not perception-based) as independent criterion to measure incremental and radical creativity to better understand the effects of personal and contextual factors on them. Extending this methodology further, we believe that a judicious multimethod approach including both subjective and objective measures would provide more compelling evidence to triangulate findings in incremental and radical creativity research.

Integrating with other processes of creative problem solving. Third, we mainly focused on the generation of incremental and radical creative ideas for problem solutions and neglected to investigate earlier processes of problem identification and construction and subsequent processes of idea selection and implementation. Several process models of creative problem solving (e.g., Basadur, Runco, & Vega, 2000; Finke, Ward, & Smith, 1992; Mumford et al., 2012) have identified a set of core processes that must be engaged in to solve problems creatively, including problem identification and construction, information search and encoding, idea generation, idea selection and idea implementation. The radicalness of ideas may be influenced by processes occurring early on in creative problem solving and may determine the effectiveness of later processes. We thus call for more process studies to explore the role of idea radicalness in different stages of the creative problem-solving process. Methodologically, future research endeavors could take creative projects as units of analysis to uncover these processes. While extant studies generally focus on the individual or team level of analysis, working on a creative project may move back and forth between individual effort and team effort over time (Montag et al., 2012). As such, using identifiable and clear-cut projects as the

units of study would make it more possible to establish causality between various creative problem-solving activities and outcome effectiveness.

A social network perspective on incremental and radical creativity. Another limitation lies in the fact that we have limited our examination on incremental and radical creativity within the social context of leader-employee dyads. To expand our understanding of the social side of creativity, future studies could examine the broader network of interpersonal relationships beyond working relationships with immediate leaders. In their seminal work, Perry-Smith and Shalley (2003) have proposed that the presence of boundary-spanning ties in combination with a peripheral position is expected to be associated with radical creativity and that moderate closeness is associated with incremental creativity. Research is much needed to directly test these propositions or explore other network properties that may have differential effects on these two forms of creativity. Furthermore, it would be fruitful to examine the reciprocal relationships between social networks and creativity empirically and theoretically. Another issue that warrants greater attention is the role that alters play in facilitating ego's own creative behavior. Beyond the focal employees' ("egos") network structure, social resources theory (Lin, 2001) argues that it is the characteristics of their social network contacts ("alters") that determine the quality of relevant resources that egos can garner through their network connections. Future work on social networks should take an alter-centric perspective to examine how alter characteristics, such as individual attributes and alters' network ties, might affect employees' level of creativity.

Cultural differences and incremental and radical creativity. Lastly, our conceptual models were derived from Western theories and tested in Chinese

organizations, which provides initial support for the application of Western theories in a Chinese culture. Nonetheless, we also want to caution our readers the potential limitations concerning the generalizability of our findings and recommend future researchers to test our conceptualizations in other cultures. The cross-cultural creativity literature has proposed that creativity can manifest as different forms in different cultures (Morris & Leung, 2010; Yuan & Zhou, 2015). For example, in the automotive industry, automakers in the USA (e.g., Tesla) invent electric vehicles that are completely powered by rechargeable batteries. In contrast, representative energy-saving vehicles in Japan use a combination of conventional fuel and electricity (e.g., Toyota Prius), which represent more incremental forms of creativity. Given the observation that the manifestations of creative products differ across culture, future research could examine how cultural factors affect creativity and why the cultural effects occur. One promising area of research would be to examine individual cultural values as antecedents of creativity because personal cultural values, such as individualism/collectivism, power distance orientation, and uncertainty avoidance, may influence the divergent thinking and convergent thinking that are critical to creative idea generation (e.g., Basadur et al., 2000; Finke et al., 1992). Going beyond individual-level examination on cultural values and creativity, future research could consider examining how and why distinct culture dimensions might influence group dynamics and group creativity (Yuan & Zhou, 2016). At the country level, research is much needed to compare and contrast how different factors and combinations of factors play out cross-culturally (Zhou & Hoever, 2014).

Concluding remarks

The purpose of this dissertation is to distinguish between incremental and radical creativity and examine why, when, and how certain factors may differentially relate to these two forms of creativity. Findings from three empirical chapters demonstrate that leaders, by setting creativity role expectations, exhibiting empowering leadership, and supporting the expression of self-construals, can substantially promote incremental and radical creativity among their employees. We also find an intriguing and differential pattern of results for incremental and radical creativity: compared with incremental creativity, radical creativity requires a higher cognitive threshold (i.e., creative cognitive style), a more far-reaching generation processes (i.e., creative self-efficacy), and a relatively independent behavioral strategy (i.e., independent creative process engagement). We hope this dissertation contributes to empirical research on incremental and radical creativity and stimulates more research endeavors examining potentially different antecedents, mediating mechanisms, and contingency conditions for these two forms of creativity. In sum, we provide solid empirical evidence for the conceptual distinction between incremental and radical creativity and suggest practical ways to appropriately foster specific forms of creativity.

