

The Relationship between Unethical Behaviors and Creativity

Creativity presupposes going against the status quo, and this can mean disregarding social norms, rules, and conventions. On the other hand, organizations set norms and rules that need to be respected by employees to ensure the smooth functioning of processes. So, is it really necessary (or even beneficial) to break the rules in order to be creative? What rules should be broken, and to what extent? Interestingly, past research has found a positive effect on creativity of both ethical and unethical behaviors. Therefore, it is currently unclear whether and when behaving unethically or immorally can help or hinder creativity in organizations. Students interested in writing a thesis on this topic could explore the relationship between unethical behaviors and creativity at large. Possible directions of research include but are not limited to:

- What is the relationship between creative identity and unethical behaviors?
- What comes first, unethical behaviors or creativity? Is there a reciprocal relationship, or a virtuous/vicious cycle between the two?
- Does fostering unethical behaviors actually enhance creativity? How, and in what circumstances?
- When is it beneficial for one's creativity to break the rules, and when is it damaging? What (kinds of) rules should or should not be broken?
- What kinds of unethical behaviors relate to what dimensions of creativity (e.g., novelty vs. usefulness)?