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How much does self-confidence affect creativity?

MA2

Introduction

By default, the human species looks for patterns to explain things in the world and their personal lives. An easy pattern to recognize is that talented and creative people produce more creative outputs. This often follows with the misconception that our creativity is predetermined. Set. Remained unchanged by our naturally given talent.

In this research project, I will explore what about our self-worth causes creativity.

We are often told, as we mature, to “just have confidence”. I never took this advice seriously. I never thought confidence had anything to do with it. I assumed I just had to be talented and work hard. What I thought about my abilities had no impact on the abilities themselves. This idea came from a misunderstanding of how self-efficacy relates to creativity and productivity. As I got older, I recognized that it isn’t a simple equation. There is a deeper reason why how we feel about ourselves translates in to creative output.

Materials and Methods

Overview

My design for this project was to take themes and form understanding from my library (outside) research, while simultaneously taking notes about my day-to-day tasks, mindset, thoughts, focus, efficiency, creativity, and confidence. Some points in the data connect and some as will be seen leave me yet looking for answers.

Defining Key Terms Research and Analysis:

Creativity: The ability to produce work that is both [original] and appropriate (Wang).

Creative Flow/Output: The speed and efficiency of the ability to produce work that is both [original] and appropriate

Self-Esteem: How you view and value yourself (Two Chairs).

Confidence: Trust in your view of your abilities and qualities

Library Research Focus

To come to a conclusion I researched how creativity and self confidence are seen by academics and blog posters alike. I researched how they relate to one another. Does one predict the other and is that a function of pre-determined characteristics?

I also took information from “creators”(Artists and founders)(Cowan, 2024) on how positive self-belief measures impacted their success in their field.

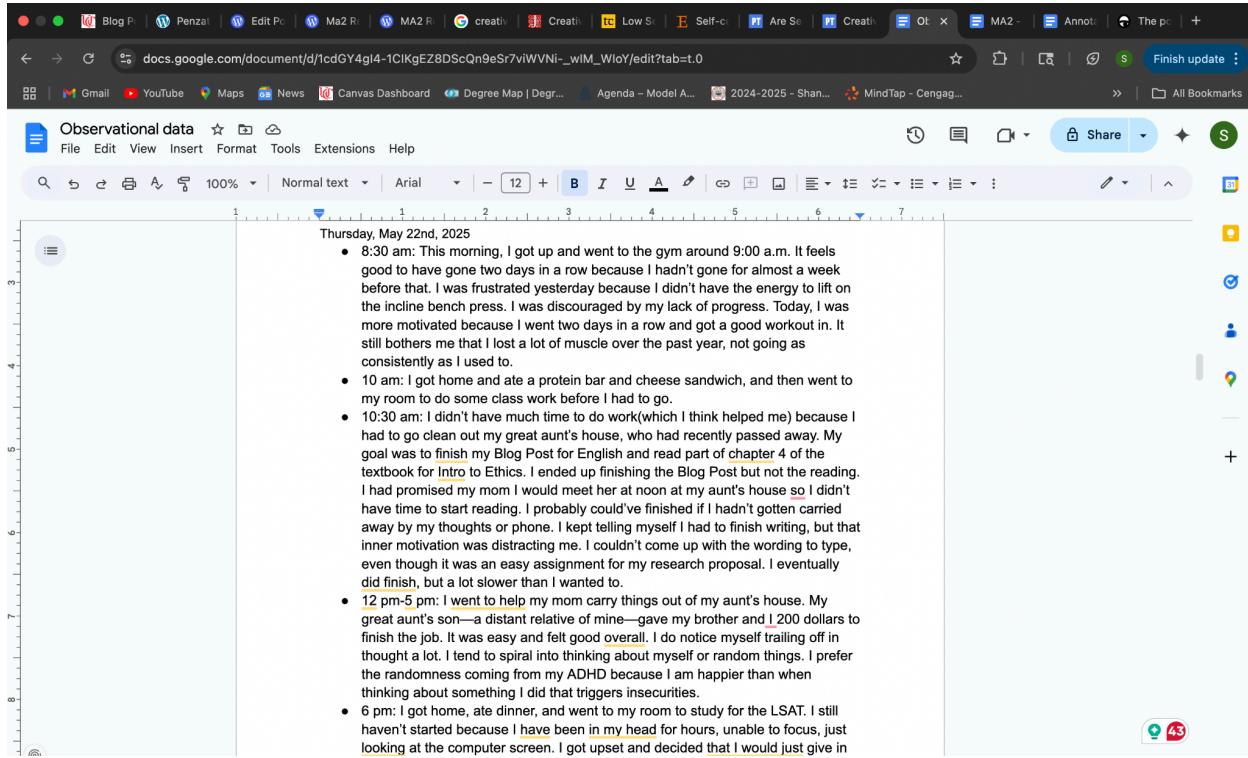
- ★ Creative professionals who advise silencing self-doubt as the most important step to maximizing success.(Cowan)
- ★ Psychologists confirm that creative output is not constant. It can fluctuate based on engagement.(Pringle)
- ★ Familiarity with complex material has a strong relationship with job performance. This is because confidence that you can understand complex topics or issues generates the realization that you are creative. This realization generates engagement. Engagement generates positive performance.(Tierney, Farmer)

Self-Observational Study

I found observations on myself quite insightful. Throughout the day when I remembered I would take note of the tasks I was doing and how I felt. I would also make note of whether I completed the task I intended to and how I felt about my completion/incompletion. These observations covered my routine, my tasks, and how I was feeling that day. Was I productive? Was I creative? How so? Did I get distracted? This was easy because, as will be seen, I tend to be very self-conscious and think about myself from an outside perspective quite a lot. I tried to get a complete account of the mental blocks that prevented me from being productive to try to make a connection to my outside research.

It was frustrating at times to document times I wasn't productive although for the sake of this study, it was convincing. I usually took notes on the notes app of my phone or on a separate document if I was working on something from home. I would then collect this data each day and document it on a separate doc for a week. Summarizing

and organizing these observations into daily journaling. I wanted it to be as authentic as possible and therefore wrote in plain simple terms. This is an example of the journal:



Thursday, May 22nd, 2025

- 8:30 am: This morning, I got up and went to the gym around 9:00 a.m. It feels good to have gone two days in a row because I hadn't gone for almost a week before that. I was frustrated yesterday because I didn't have the energy to lift on the incline bench press. I was discouraged by my lack of progress. Today, I was more motivated because I went two days in a row and got a good workout in. It still bothers me that I lost a lot of muscle over the past year, not going as consistently as I used to.
- 10 am: I got home and ate a protein bar and cheese sandwich, and then went to my room to do some class work before I had to go.
- 10:30 am: I didn't have much time to do work(which I think helped me) because I had to go clean out my great aunt's house, who had recently passed away. My goal was to finish my Blog Post for English and read part of chapter 4 of the textbook for Intro to Ethics. I ended up finishing the Blog Post but not the reading. I had promised my mom I would meet her at noon at my aunt's house so I didn't have time to start reading. I probably could've finished if I hadn't gotten carried away by my thoughts or phone. I kept telling myself I had to finish writing, but that inner motivation was distracting me. I couldn't come up with the wording to type, even though it was an easy assignment for my research proposal. I eventually did finish, but a lot slower than I wanted to.
- 12 pm-5 pm: I went to help my mom carry things out of my aunt's house. My great aunt's son—a distant relative of mine—gave my brother and I 200 dollars to finish the job. It was easy and felt good overall. I do notice myself trailing off in thought a lot. I tend to spiral into thinking about myself or random things. I prefer the randomness coming from my ADHD because I am happier than when thinking about something I did that triggers insecurities.
- 6 pm: I got home, ate dinner, and went to my room to study for the LSAT. I still haven't started because I have been in my head for hours, unable to focus, just looking at the computer screen. I got upset and decided that I would just give in

While the style is messy. The key points that are drawn from it are essential in drawing a picture of the roller coaster that is my daily routine and habits to connect to further research and come to a conclusion.

Results

Key results separated by commas.

Thursday, May 22nd, 2025

- ❖ Went to the gym, felt good about going two days in a row which kept me focused.

- ❖ Rushed to finish Class Work - Blog Post for English and Textbook for Ethics, got distracted by mind telling me to finish, got frustrated with my slow progress and lack of focus.
- ❖ Helped clean out my great aunt's house, felt good earning \$200, kept drifting into random thoughts steering away focus.
- ❖ Couldn't focus on LSAT for hours so I stopped, finished easier homework,

Friday, May 23rd, 2025

- ❖ Got up a little later, didn't go to the gym because I was late, also missed a conference appointment for English.
- ❖ Went to work(construction), mind wasn't focused on what I was doing kept telling myself how I need to get better and get up earlier, I got into an episode of negative thoughts and poor esteem, boss got mad at lack of progress
- ❖ Got home and played chess on my computer trying to get my mind off negative thoughts, little things like losing a game would keep me in a negative spiral, I notice that I am more creative on the chess board when I am truly focused
- ❖ I worked on homework before going to bed and was at first overwhelmed by the apparent amount of work I had to do for English and Law Office Tech in 2 hours. I got up and ignored the work out of stress. Luckily, I realized that the comprehension quizzes for English weren't that much work and I could do it quite quickly. Before midnight I looked more in depth at the Law Office Tech and I realized I could've done it in time if I had read the assignment first instead of assuming it was too much work. I got annoyed and went to bed.

Saturday, May 24rd, 2025

- ❖ Got up and went to work early, I had to unload material into the building, I like those tasks because my mid doesn't have to be completely focused but they are physically demanding on my body, because of the physical demand I feel good and motivated, the rest of the workday goes well even though towards the end of the day my efficiency stalls
- ❖ When I got home I studied for the LSAT, I was encouraged by my progress in the logical reasoning section and it left me more focused and I got more practice questions right. I was feeling good and starting thinking about the future in a positive light. Imagining by self in a year applying to Law school with a 170 LSAT. I noticed I started walking around the room while thinking this and wasn't studying. So I sat back down, told myself to focus and tried to humble myself so I would. That didn't help.

Sunday, May 25th, 2025

- ❖ Got up early and went to work, I had to frame a soffit so drywall could be put up. I like this kind of work and felt good about doing it, but I also felt the pressure to do it right. Negative thoughts filled my head at first and made me both slow and cautious. There were a couple of times I ran into challenges and was overwhelmed. My mind went into flight mode because I was worried I couldn't finish. As I started to overcome some of the challenges my speed doubled. All of

a sudden I worked at a much faster pace. I found my rhythm, my confidence began to grow. The tasks that had felt daunting at first, making clean cuts, getting a perfect fit in uneven areas, became easy and almost enjoyable. I realized that pushing past the fear of failure had allowed me to do my best work.

- ❖ Went Home, Studied for LSAT, did laundry and cleaned around the house, felt good about about those tasks, mind lingered on classwork I had to do, it was late so I was overwhelmed about finishing, didn't finish.

Results Analysis

- ★ If I do something I regret my mind tends to linger on that negative memory
- ★ Those regrets can trigger insecurities that I focus on rather than the task at hand
- ★ These distractions make me look for other distractions
- ★ Distractions pre-occupy your mind steering it away from creative use
- ★ This affects me more when doing tasks that are more intellectual i.e LSAT prep or classwork as opposed to construction work or house responsibilities.
- ★ As for the less intellectually stimulating tasks like cleaning, framing, and lifting despite participating in the tasks they are being done at much slower and less intense pacing causing belief that I am unable to work at a faster pace and not displaying my actual capabilities.
- ★ Difficult tasks will seem daunting and it is my self-efficacy that will restrict me from overcoming obstacles rather than my abilities.

- ★ When I presume I can not accomplish a task based on looking at it for the first time I tend to not complete it. I later realized I had the ability to complete it with ease when actually going through the steps.
- ★ When I successfully accomplish something that I am proud of it subsequently turns on greater focus. Greater focus in turn opens more avenues for creative ideas to flow.
- ★ The “realization” of creativity or confidence I gain is just as short-lived as negative spirals. My self-esteem swings heavily throughout the day.
- ★ Low Self-confidence = Lack of Focus = Poor Creative Flow
- ★ Self-confidence = Focus Mind on Task = Efficient Creative Flow

Conclusions

Creative ability is reflected in what we know and how we view ourselves in what we know. Creative blocks develop out of lack of focus and self-belief. For creatives in the workplace, how they feel about their self-efficacy in their job increases the likelihood that they perform creatively due to lack of hesitation and determination based on trust (Tierney, Farmer). Habits like getting up early and living a healthy lifestyle boost self-esteem and get your mind ready for creativity. Individual's creativity isn't set and can be expanded or diminished by working on self-image.

For me it is more about getting my mind off inner critiques or even positive words that try to combat those critiques. The big differences between what I read and what I observed in myself is focus. I wish I had more research into the relationship between self-esteem and focus. As well as more observational research into what caused my

focus. It is clear to me that I am a perfectionist that gets hung up on small failures which in turn derails me from being productive. I develop writing blocks and take longer to come up with ideas to complete challenging tasks. It isn't ideal that I couldn't have as much research so there is a component especially when studying myself that is left unanswered. I can however say with conviction that the data collected relays a positive relationship between self-confidence and creativity.

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