

“Following the Heart” or “Pursuing Ambition”? The Influence Mechanism of Feedback-Seeking Behavior on Ambidextrous Innovation Among Post-90s Generation Employees from a Values Perspective

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Date: 2024-08-06T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

In the current structurally resource-constrained market environment, post-90s generation employees as the primary workforce are critical for accelerating the development of new quality productive forces through the exploration of their unique traits and activation of their capabilities. However, their distinctive upbringing has shaped significantly different values from other generations, yet scant research has examined the unique attributes of this group’s work values and their internal logical relationship with innovation-driven development. Therefore, this paper first identifies, through qualitative analysis and theoretical comparison, that the uniqueness of post-90s work values lies in two core characteristics: a focus on “psychological preferences” (“following one’s heart”) and career development (“aspiring to one’s goals”). Furthermore, drawing upon Self-Determination Theory, this study explores the mechanisms through which “following one’s heart” and “aspiring to one’s goals” influence individual dual innovation from the perspective of motivation-activated self-regulation. Results from questionnaire surveys and scenario experiments indicate that psychological-preference-oriented work values and career-development-oriented work values respectively promote post-90s employees’ process-oriented and outcome-oriented feedback seeking, thereby stimulating their exploratory and exploitative innovation; sense of awe plays a moderating role between work values and feedback seeking; the interaction between sense of awe and structural resource scarcity positively moderates the relationship between psychological-preference-oriented work values and process-oriented feedback seeking. The findings reveal the distinctiveness of post-90s employees’ “following one’s heart” and “aspiring to one’s goals” values and their differential mechanisms in driving self-regulation

and innovation, providing managerial insights for how managers can “empower” post-90s employees, promote their sustainable “symbiosis” with enterprises, and accelerate the development of new quality productive forces.

Full Text

Preamble

Self-Check Report for *Acta Psychologica Sinica*

1. The target of *Acta Psychologica Sinica* is to publish “both scientifically excellent and of particularly broad interest and significance” frontier research in psychology. If your research only makes minor contributions without attempting to open new areas of inquiry or propose unique and innovative perspectives, especially if it purely studies algorithms or techniques without clear psychological questions, such research has a low chance of being accepted by this journal. We recommend submitting to other journals.

Response: (1) Based on modernization evolution theory and combined with the context of local social changes, this study uses qualitative research to explore two distinctive characteristics of post-90s new generation employees’ work values that differentiate them from the 70s and 80s generations: psychological preference (“following the heart”) and career development (“pursuing aspirations”). This provides a foundation for deeply understanding the uniqueness of post-90s personality tendencies and analyzing the stable behavioral driving patterns of this group. (2) Integrating self-determination theory, this study investigates the differentiated mediating mechanisms of process-oriented and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking between work values (i.e., psychological preference and career development) and ambidextrous innovation behavior from the perspective of motivation-activated self-regulation. It not only verifies the differences between “following the heart” and “pursuing aspirations” in driving innovation processes but also responds to scholars’ calls for exploring the internal mechanisms linking work values and innovation behavior, providing support for connecting related literature in the values and self-regulation domains. (3) By introducing awe and innovation resource structural tension as interactive moderators, and based on the perspective of the “following the heart” versus “pursuing aspirations” 博弈 (game), this study verifies “when” and “under what circumstances” motivation better drives self-regulation and innovation. This not only provides insights into the boundary conditions for values to exert their effects but also offers a basis for improving individual autonomous innovation under organizational resource scarcity.

2. Have you used the same data as this study in any previously submitted or published articles? If yes, please attach the article for review. (We do not approve of authors publishing multiple articles with the same variables using the same data, nor do we approve of

splitting a series of related studies into multiple publications.)

Response: No previously submitted or published articles have used the data from this study.

3. Non-experimental, non-intervention studies in management, clinical, personality, and social fields that rely solely on self-report (questionnaire methods) need to check for common method bias. What methods did you use to control or demonstrate that such bias does not affect the validity of your conclusions? What measures were taken? (For literature on common method bias, see: <http://journal.psych.ac.cn/xlkxjz/CN/abstract/abstract894.shtml>) Studies based on cross-sectional data, with only self-reports, and measured only in convenience samples, are easy to conduct but typically have limited innovative value and low chances of being accepted by this journal.

Response: This study primarily uses Harman's single-factor test and the factor control method proposed by Podsakoff et al. (2003) to test for common method bias. The results indicate that this study does not have a common method bias problem.

See main text P21 Common Method Bias Analysis section for details: First, this study analyzed the impact of common method bias through Harman's single-factor test. The results showed that the variance explained by the first factor was 24.57%, less than 40%, indicating no significant common method bias problem. Given that the academic community considers Harman's single-factor test to have insufficient sensitivity, this study further adopted Podsakoff et al.'s (2003) factor control method to test for common method bias. After adding the common method factor, the model fit did not change significantly ($\chi^2 = 575.78$, $df = 294$, $RMSEA = 0.06$, $TLI = 0.91$, $CFI = 0.93$), with TLI and CFI changes less than 0.1 and RMSEA changes not exceeding 0.05, which meets the reasonable error range proposed by Wen Zhonglin et al. (2018). Therefore, we infer that this study does not have a significant common method bias problem.

4. Did you report and analyze effect sizes (e.g., Cohen's d for t-tests, η^2 or p^2 for ANOVA, standardized regression coefficients)? (Many studies mechanically report effect sizes but do not provide necessary analysis or explanation, such as whether the effect size is small, medium, or large, or its theoretical or applied significance.) (Searching "effect size calculator" on Google will yield many convenient apps. For explanations of effect sizes in Chinese, see: <http://journal.psych.ac.cn/xlkxjz/CN/abstract/abstract1150.shtml>; in English, see: <http://www.uccs.edu/lbecker/effect-size.html>) Did you report 95% CIs for statistical analyses? (e.g., 95% CI for differences, 95% CI for correlation/regression coefficients) For calculations and graphing of confidence intervals, see <https://thenewstatistics.com/itns/esci/>.

Response: (1) This study reports effect sizes in the experimental design section and provides necessary analysis and explanation.

Specifically, see main text P26 manipulation check section: Independent samples t-test results showed that the high psychological preference group scored significantly higher ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.24$, $n = 72$) than the low psychological preference group ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.38$, $n = 82$), $t(152) = -14.66$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 2.39$. High awe group employees scored significantly higher ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.50$, $n = 74$) than low awe group employees ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.70$, $n = 80$), $t(152) = -5.15$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.84$. Therefore, the manipulation of variables in Experiment a was effective.

(2) This study reports and analyzes 95% CIs.

Specifically, see main text P22: The indirect effect of career development on exploitative innovation behavior through outcome-oriented feedback-seeking was 0.048, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.006, 0.108], not containing 0. Therefore, H2b is supported.

5. Please state the planned sample size and actual sample size. If there is a difference, please explain why. The problem of low statistical power due to insufficient sample size is widespread in previous psychological research. We recommend explaining in the methods section the basis for your sample size calculation and determination. Sample size should be determined based on a justified effect size and desired power, and report the software or program used for calculation. For rationale and practices regarding sample size planning, see <https://osf.io/5awp4/>.

Response: (1) **Multi-time-point questionnaire survey:** Using the domestic professional data survey platform Credamo to recruit participants, data were collected online at two time points. A total of 290 questionnaires were collected across two rounds. After deleting invalid questionnaires with obvious patterns or short completion times, 265 valid questionnaires were obtained, with an effective response rate of 91.38%.

(2) **Scenario experiment:** This study conducted two sets of 2 \times 2 experiments (Experiment a and Experiment b). Before the experiments, G*Power 3.1 software was used to determine the required sample size. With a medium effect size $f = 0.25$, significance level $\alpha = 0.05$, and statistical power of 80%, 128 participants were needed. Accordingly, Experiment a recruited 164 participants; after excluding samples that failed attention checks or did not meet completion time criteria, 154 valid questionnaires were collected. Experiment b had 159 valid samples. Both experimental datasets have good statistical power.

6. For p-values, report exact values (e.g., $p = 0.028$) rather than ranges (e.g., $p < 0.05$), except for $p < 0.001$. Does your paper meet

this requirement? If using Bayes factors, have you reported its sensitivity to prior distribution assumptions?

Response: This study reports exact p-values in the hypothesis testing section.

Specifically, see main text P22 moderation effect testing section: To reduce multicollinearity, this study standardized independent and moderator variables before constructing interaction terms. The results are shown in Table 7. According to Model 3, the interaction term between psychological preference work values and awe positively affects process-oriented feedback-seeking ($\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.039$), supporting H3a.

7. To ensure completeness of data reporting, if some data were excluded in statistical analysis, is this reported in the text? What were the reasons? How would the statistical results change if this data were included? How were missing data handled in statistical analysis? When using scales, were any individual items deleted? Why? How would statistical results change if these items were included? Were any measured items or variables not reported? Why? Please state where in the paper this information appears.

Response: (1) Some questionnaire data were deleted in statistical analysis, mainly because these questionnaires showed obvious patterns, failed attention checks, or had short completion times, and were therefore judged as invalid and deleted. This study reports the reasons for data deletion in the text.

See main text P19 Research Sample section for details: Using the domestic professional data survey platform Credamo to recruit participants, the survey targeted post-90s employees currently working in enterprises in Shaanxi, Henan, Xinjiang, Guangdong, and other regions, covering internet, service, and other industries. To avoid common source variance and multicollinearity, this study collected data anonymously online at two time points, using the “last 4 digits of phone number” as a matching criterion. At Time 1, participants completed work values, feedback-seeking behavior, awe, innovation resource structural tension, and basic demographic information; at Time 2 (one week later), participants completed ambidextrous innovation behavior. A total of 290 questionnaires were collected across two rounds. After deleting invalid questionnaires with obvious patterns or short completion times, 265 valid questionnaires were obtained, with an effective response rate of 91.38%.

(2) All scales used were mature scales that have been empirically validated, with no items deleted from the scales.

(3) All measurement methods for variables used in the article were reported.

8. Are any experimental materials, scales, or questionnaires that have not undergone peer review and examination attached at the end of the file for review? If not, please explain why. If this article is published, are you willing to share these materials with other researchers?

Response: The experimental materials, scales, and questionnaires used in the article have been attached at the end of the file for expert review. If this article is published, I am willing to share these materials with other researchers.

9. This journal requires authors to provide raw data. Please choose one of the following options:

- a) Submit data to editorial department email after submission
- b) Data can be obtained from the following link
- c) Raw data and programs have been shared on the Psychological Science Data Bank (<https://psych.scidb.cn/>)
- d) If unable to provide, please explain the reason or provide relevant proof.

10. Is your research a clinical intervention or laboratory experiment? Yes (If yes, please provide pre-registration number. If no, please explain why. Note: Clinical intervention or laboratory experiments are recommended to be pre-registered before data collection. Other experimental studies are also encouraged to pre-register. Pre-registration requires writing all research hypotheses and their support, as well as detailed procedures and steps of the experiment/intervention. This journal's pre-registration website is <https://os.psych.ac.cn/preregister> (see "Download Center" on the journal website for instructions) or <https://osf.io/> or <https://aspredicted.org/>. If your study is pre-registered, it will significantly increase the chance of acceptance. The importance of pre-registration can be found at <https://osf.io/5awp4/>) No (✓)

11. If your research used human or animal subjects, was it approved by your institution's ethics committee? If yes, please send a scanned copy to the editorial department email. If no, please explain why.

Response: This study was approved by the institution's ethics committee, and a scanned copy has been sent to the editorial department email.

12. Have you written a 400-500 word extended English abstract following the "English Abstract Writing Guidelines" published on the editorial department website? Has the English title and abstract been reviewed by English-proficient professionals or edited by professional SCI/SSCI paper editing companies?

Response: An extended English abstract of 400-500 words has been written following the "English Abstract Writing Guidelines" published on the editorial department website and reviewed by English-proficient professionals. The English abstract is attached at the end of the main text, see P39.

13. If the first author is a student, please ask the supervisor to send a separate email to the editorial department (xuebao@psych.ac.cn)

stating that they have read this paper and carefully reviewed it. Have you reminded your supervisor to send an email to the editorial department? (The editorial department will only consider entering the manuscript processing workflow after receiving the supervisor's email)

Response: The first author of this paper is the supervisor.

14. Please go to the “Download Center” on the right side of the editorial department website homepage to download and fill out the “Manuscript Non-Confidentiality Certificate,” stamp it with the confidentiality office seal of the corresponding author's institution, and send the scanned copy to the editorial department email (xuebao@psych.ac.cn). If there is no confidentiality office seal, please stamp it with the institution's official seal of the corresponding author. Have you sent the email?

Response: The scanned copy has been sent to the editorial department email.

“From the Heart” or “From the Will”? The Influence Mechanism of Feedback-Seeking Behavior of Post-90s New Generation Employees on Ambidextrous Innovation from a Values Perspective

Abstract

In the current market environment characterized by structural resource scarcity, post-90s new generation employees, as the mainstay of the workforce, play a critical role in accelerating the development of new quality productive forces through the exploration of their unique traits and activation of their capabilities. However, their distinctive upbringing has shaped significant value differences compared to other generations, yet few studies have examined the unique attributes of this group's work values and their internal logic in driving innovation. Therefore, this paper first combines qualitative analysis with theoretical comparison to identify that the uniqueness of post-90s work values lies in two key features: “psychological preference” (“from the heart”) and “career development” (“from the will”). Further, based on self-determination theory, this study explores the mechanisms through which “from the heart” and “from the will” influence individual ambidextrous innovation from the perspective of motivation-activated self-regulation. The results of questionnaire surveys and scenario experiments show that: psychological preference-oriented work values and career development-oriented work values respectively stimulate exploratory and exploitative innovation among post-90s employees by promoting process-oriented and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking behavior; awe plays a moderating role between work values and feedback-seeking; the interaction between

awe and innovation resource structural tension positively moderates the relationship between psychological preference-oriented work values and process-oriented feedback-seeking. The conclusions reveal the uniqueness of post-90s employees' "from the heart" and "from the will" values and their differentiated mechanisms for driving self-regulation and innovation, providing managerial insights for how managers can "empower" post-90s employees, promote their lasting "symbiosis" with enterprises, and accelerate the development of new quality productive forces.

Keywords: post-90s work values; feedback-seeking; ambidextrous innovation; awe; innovation resource structural tension

0 Introduction

Huawei's 5G technology leads industry development, with an R&D team average age under 30; ChatGPT has sparked an "AI revolution" wave, with a team of less than 100 people dominated by "post-90s"; Gree's continuous breakthroughs in core technology rely on a talent team with an average age of 28-29... These facts demonstrate that post-90s (born 1990-1999) new generation employees are gradually becoming an emerging force and main driver of enterprise innovation development (Wang Congying et al., 2024). Especially in the current reality where most enterprises face tight innovation resources such as funding, technology, and talent, post-90s employees are key to "breaking the deadlock." They step forward, take responsibility, and contribute, earning praise from General Secretary Xi as "good young people who are capable of shouldering great responsibilities." It can be said that exploring the characteristics, identifying contradictions, and activating the capabilities of this group are particularly critical for promoting the deep and sustainable development of new quality productive forces. However, existing research on the relationship between post-90s new generation employees and creativity has focused on cognitive factors (e.g., work calling, self-efficacy) and emotional factors (e.g., narcissistic tendencies), ignoring the fact that cognition and emotion are changeable and thus difficult to provide lasting support for creativity (Yao Zhu & Luo Jinlian, 2020; Zhang Ling & Lian Zhihua, 2017). In fact, "needs" are the source of all behaviors, and work values, as individuals' work-related goals, express intrinsic needs (Super, 1970), represent relatively stable personality tendencies with persistence and stability, and have more critical influence in predicting employee attitudes and behaviors (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). Therefore, exploring the uniqueness of post-90s work values can provide new insights for how enterprises understand, motivate, and fully release the innovation potential of new generation employees from the perspective of deep-level needs.

Compared with the post-70s and post-80s generations, post-90s employees grew up with reform and opening-up, rapid economic development, and the rise of the internet. Their work values of pursuing novelty, independence, and self-

expression can continuously inject fresh blood into enterprise innovation (Hou Xuanfang et al., 2021). However, many controversies and management challenges have also emerged regarding post-90s employees. For example, although post-90s new generation employees have strong achievement motivation, they are also more selective about work. Compared with the dedicated work style of older generations, they pay more attention to job-person fit, flexible working hours, vacation time, etc., and have even been publicly labeled with negative tags such as “slackers” and “rebels” (Wang Congying et al., 2021; Luan Zhenzeng et al., 2017). Moreover, current workplace phenomena such as “lying flat,” “slacking off,” and “Buddha-like” attitudes are typical manifestations of intergenerational differences in post-90s work values. That is, compared with post-70s and post-80s employees, post-90s new generation employees’ values show more diversified characteristics, having not only “will-oriented” achievement orientation but also “heart-oriented” intrinsic pursuits. Therefore, how to deeply grasp the characteristics and contradictions of their work values and effectively guide them is key to revitalizing high-quality enterprise innovation. However, existing research on work values often covers multiple generational groups (Zhan Xiaohui et al., 2016; Ren Hualiang et al., 2015; Hou Xuanfang et al., 2014), with few studies focusing specifically on the post-90s group, making it difficult to effectively explain emerging workplace issues. Therefore, this paper first combines grounded theory to explore the specific characteristics of post-90s new generation employees’ work values and further compares them with other generational groups’ work values to uncover the prominent features of post-90s new generation employees’ work values.

Further, according to self-determination theory, differentiated values often imply different motivational patterns, which in turn trigger different self-regulation behaviors (Deci et al., 2017). For example, individuals guided by “will-oriented” values pay more attention to external values such as career advancement space and development prospects, thus more easily activating controlled motivation and strengthening focus on outcomes (Gagné & Deci, 2005), leading to exploitative innovation through the improvement and optimization of existing knowledge. Conversely, influenced by “heart-oriented” values, individuals show strong interest and preference in their work, thus more easily activating autonomous motivation and strengthening attention to and enjoyment of the work process, thereby stimulating long-lasting, continuous work effort and generating exploratory innovation. Accordingly, this study intends to integrate self-determination theory and introduce “process-oriented/outcome-oriented feedback-seeking” as a mediator from the perspective of motivation-activated self-regulation to explain the dual-path mechanism through which differentiated values influence ambidextrous innovation by leveraging different self-regulation strategies.

Previous research indicates that “when,” “what type” of motivation is activated, and “how” strong the motivation is are influenced by the interaction of individual emotions and contextual factors (Song Meng et al., 2023; Tang et al., 2018). As the saying goes, “When the heart has something to fear, words have some-

thing to guard, and actions have something to stop,” this study believes that awe, as a complex positive emotion, can guide and regulate employee behavior from the spiritual level, strengthen their attention to their true selves, and thus enhance autonomous motivation while weakening controlled motivation to differentially influence process-oriented and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking (Piff et al., 2015). Moreover, the value of this positive emotion is more prominent in organizational environments with tight innovation resources (Zhao Le et al., 2019). The more resource-scarce the enterprise environment, the more employees with high awe will perceive the preciousness of resources due to their “reverence,” thus cherishing their work more and making more process-oriented feedback-seeking through continuously strengthening autonomous work motivation; conversely, under resource scarcity, employees with low awe will feel more “fearful,” “anxious,” and “panicked,” thus strengthening controlled motivation and showing more outcome-oriented feedback-seeking behavior.

Accordingly, this study will test the interactive moderating effect of the interaction term between awe and innovation resource structural tension between work values and feedback-seeking behavior. In summary, this paper first roots itself in the local context, using qualitative analysis and theoretical comparison to explore and uncover the construct and connotation of post-90s new generation work values. Second, based on self-determination theory, it deeply analyzes how “psychological preference” and “career development” work values influence ambidextrous innovation through feedback-seeking, and tests the interactive moderating role of awe and innovation resource structural tension in the above mechanism. This study hopes to provide suggestions for organizations to “empower” employee creativity through deep understanding of post-90s employees’ values; it also hopes to provide practical insights for the transformation and realization from “empowerment” to “symbiosis” from the interactive perspective of awe and innovation resource tension, and for leveraging and activating new generation employees’ self-capabilities in resource-scarce, complex, and changing organizational contexts to accelerate the development of new quality productive forces. The research framework is shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

Study 1: “From the Heart” or “From the Will”: Constructing Dimensions of Post-90s Employees’ Work Values Based on Grounded Theory

1.1 Theoretical Analysis

Through reviewing existing research, it can be found that current literature has accumulated a large number of studies on the dimensional division of work values (see Table 1). For example, early foreign scholar Manhardt (1972) divided work values into three dimensions: comfort and security, competence and growth, status and independence, and developed a scale. Su Xiaoyan et

al. (2021) used this scale to study intergenerational differences in work values among different cohorts, finding significant generational differences in employees' "competence and growth" dimension, with the market economy generation valuing it most, followed by the reform and opening-up generation, and the pre-reform generation valuing it least. Super (1980) developed a scale with three dimensions (intrinsic value, extrinsic value, and extrinsic reward) and 15 items based on this. Twenge et al. (2010) further divided work values into five dimensions: leisure view, extrinsic values, intrinsic values, altruism, and social view. It is not difficult to find that existing research has not reached a consensus on the dimensional division of work values, and often includes multiple generational groups, with few discussions specifically on post-90s employee groups. In addition, existing scale development mostly uses Western samples. Although a few scholars have explored the structure of new generation employees' work values based on Chinese cultural context (Li Yanping & Hou Xuanfang, 2012), they still use post-80s and post-90s employees as samples, which cannot clearly show the distinctive characteristics of post-90s employees, nor provide suggestions for enterprises to build more flexible management methods that meet young people's expectations.

It is undeniable that compared with post-70s and post-80s, post-90s employees' values have significant intergenerational difference characteristics. Based on modernization evolution theory (Inglehart, 1977, 1997), on the one hand, experiencing economic prosperity during critical growth periods generally enhances people's psychological security, thereby reducing the need for materialistic goals and shifting toward the pursuit of non-material goals such as self-actualization (Inglehart, 2016). Post-70s and post-80s lived in an era of relative material scarcity, and strong economic insecurity forced them to prioritize survival, support their families, and emphasize material satisfaction (Tang et al., 2017). In contrast, the post-90s generation witnessed economic takeoff and comprehensive national strength growth. Their affluent material living environment, harmonious and inclusive social environment, and diverse and open educational resources have promoted the comprehensive awakening of their "self-consciousness," making them begin to pay attention to their own interests and spiritual feelings (Inglehart, 2016). They not only view work as a means of making money but also endow their careers with ideals, and desire to have active choice in their work, pursuing freedom, innovation, and equality in work atmosphere and spiritual enjoyment.

On the other hand, China's social changes and evolution have both universality in the modernization process and particularity (Gao Haiyan et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2017). In the early 1990s, China clarified the grand goal of establishing a socialist market economic system. The transformation from a planned economy to fully promoting a market economy enhanced social mobility, increased social openness, and provided opportunities for post-90s to choose jobs more autonomously and freely. They are no longer limited to the traditional "iron rice bowl" concept but pay more attention to the value of the career itself. Among many career choices, they focus on the development prospects of the platform,

whether they can utilize their strengths, whether continuing work leads to skill atrophy or self-appreciation, and whether they can realize self-worth and social value. Therefore, this study believes it is urgent to further analyze the prominent characteristics of post-90s new generation employees' work values in the local context from the perspective of social change.

1.2 Research Method

Grounded theory is considered a relatively scientific methodology in qualitative research. It can directly induce empirical generalizations from actual observations or original data and then elevate them to systematic theory, effectively overcoming the problems of weak conclusion persuasiveness, difficult research process traceability, and difficult verification in general qualitative research (Jia Xudong et al., 2016). The purpose of Study 1 is to clarify the dimensional structure of post-90s new generation employees' work values. Therefore, grounded theory is used as the main research method, and through theoretical comparison with post-70s and post-80s work values, the prominent characteristics of post-90s employees' work values are finally explored.

(1) Interview Outline Compilation

To ensure the rationality of the interview outline, the research team (2 PhDs and 6 master's students from the project group) designed a preliminary interview outline through detailed discussions and reference to domain experts' suggestions on interview outlines for post-90s work values. Three MBA students were contacted through online and offline methods to participate in pilot interviews, and the interview outline was revised based on respondents' feedback to compile the formal interview outline. Interview questions included "What is your ideal job like?" To ensure the reliability of interview data, this study further expanded text data sources by collecting online materials as supplementary interview data, using multiple data sources for triangulation to ensure scientific rigor.

(2) Theoretical Sampling and Data Collection

Theoretical sampling is a process of purposefully selecting samples for theory construction. This study aimed to explore the characteristics of post-90s employees' work values. Therefore, based on the principle of theoretical saturation, 37 post-90s employees were selected as interviewees. Before interviews, we obtained respondents' consent to record the entire process, using a progressive questioning approach from shallow to deep to comprehensively obtain information about post-90s work value characteristics. Each interview lasted about 30-60 minutes, with respondents mainly from Henan, Shaanxi, Anhui, and other regions (48.6% male, 51.3% female; 8.1% with college degree or below, 51.3% with bachelor's degree, 24.3% with master's degree or above). After interviews, recordings and transcripts were promptly organized, yielding over 27,000 words of valid transcripts.

Additionally, following Yan Yu et al.'s (2024) method of using online materials for workplace “Buddha-like” theory construction, internet materials were also used as a data source. Post-90s employees’ work values have been widely concerned by the public, with distinctive workplace labels such as “involution,” “lying flat,” and “slacking off” sparking heated discussions, providing rich online materials. Therefore, this study used “post-90s employee work values” as keywords to search on Xiaohongshu, Zhihu, and other platforms, organizing about 20,000 words of transcripts after removing duplicate and irrelevant comments.

Thus, this study collected and organized about 47,000 words of valid text materials, primarily based on interview data supplemented by relevant online materials. This multi-source data approach further ensures research validity and effectively avoids the limitations of single-source data collection. Additionally, a word cloud was drawn using Nvivo 12.0 software for preliminary visual analysis of text data (see Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]), where larger font size indicates higher frequency in interview texts, laying a foundation for subsequent analysis of post-90s employees’ value characteristics.

1.3 Coding Process and Analysis

(1) Open Coding

Open coding requires line-by-line and sentence-by-sentence coding of respondents’ answers to extract corresponding concepts. Before formal coding, each respondent was assigned a code, using I and N to distinguish interview data and online text data (e.g., I01 represents the first respondent’s data) (Yan Yu et al., 2024). During coding, two researchers were required to code independently, focusing on “characteristics of post-90s employees’ work values,” repeatedly reading and thinking about text materials and using respondents’ original words as much as possible to allow characteristics of post-90s employees’ values to emerge naturally. An example of open coding is shown in Table 2 . After independent coding, the two researchers compared and discussed coding results, finally extracting 38 codes involving 422 reference points (see Table 3).

(2) Selective Coding

Selective coding involves discovering associations between open codes and further clustering them to extract sub-categories and core categories of this study. At this stage, two researchers continued to review and screen relationships between initial codes, using cyclic comparison methods to further condense the 38 codes from open coding into 13 new codes (see Table 3).

(3) Theoretical Coding

Theoretical coding reorganizes concepts formed through selective coding to explore their implicit relationships (Jia Xudong & Tan Xinhui, 2010). Drawing on the theoretical framework of intrinsic and extrinsic values proposed by existing research (Twenge et al., 2010; Elizur, 1984; Super, 1980), and through continuous comparison of selective coding and concepts, this study constructed

a conceptual model of post-90s new generation employees' work values centered on "psychological preference," "career development," "material incentives," and "friendly atmosphere" (see Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]).

"Psychological preference" refers to post-90s new generation employees' intrinsic preferences in career choice. Qualitative analysis results show that they tend to look for career paths that match personal interests, abilities, majors, and values, and value whether work is valuable and can bring a sense of achievement and satisfaction. They also prefer interesting and flexible work, have a strong consciousness of pursuing freedom and innovation, and are not afraid of risks and challenges.

"Career development" refers to post-90s new generation employees' emphasis on career development prospects, promotion mechanisms, and development space. They hope to develop on better platforms, have broad development prospects and promotion space, and pursue continuous career development and success. In addition, they also value whether the enterprise training mechanism is sound and perfect, whether the organizational structure is scientific and reasonable, and whether it can provide long-term learning and growth space.

"Material incentives" refers to post-90s new generation employees' concern about work compensation and welfare security. In terms of salary, they desire generous material rewards, but they are not completely utilitarian. They pursue a fair and healthy salary level and hope to receive compensation equal to their efforts. In terms of benefits, they prefer personalized and flexible welfare benefits.

"Friendly atmosphere" refers to post-90s preference for work environments with vitality, cleanliness, openness, and humanistic care, emphasizing internal and external interpersonal interactions in the organization and matching with team leadership styles, and desiring harmonious and harmonious superior-subordinate/colleague relationships.

(4) Theoretical Saturation Test

Theoretical saturation is an important reference and standard for judging and testing the quality of qualitative research and whether the sample size is reasonable. Therefore, to ensure the validity of qualitative research, this study continued to supplement interviews with 2 employees after coding. Through coding analysis of supplementary interview data and comparison with already formed codes, no new concepts or categories emerged. Accordingly, this study believes that the dimensions of post-90s work values constructed through previous coding have reached saturation standards.

1.4 Theoretical Comparative Analysis

The internet joke "Post-70s ask for leave because parents are uncomfortable, post-80s because children are uncomfortable, post-90s because they themselves are uncomfortable" vividly presents typical differences between generations.

Therefore, to further highlight the unique value characteristics of post-90s, this study conducted theoretical comparative analysis.

Reviewing existing domestic theoretical research on work values, Ma Jianhong and Ni Chenming (1998) believed that work values include three dimensions: organizational collective concept, work behavior evaluation, and personal requirements, reflecting post-70s employees' work principles of organizational loyalty, emphasis on collective concept, and concern for collective interests. Zhou Xia et al. (2010) found that post-80s work values include four dimensions: individual vs. group orientation, hierarchical orientation, work development and value realization orientation, and work-family orientation, reflecting post-80s tendency to share results in teams, desire for success and self-value realization, compliance with workplace hierarchy, and emphasis on family harmony. Comparing post-70s and post-80s, employees' work value attributes have begun to shift from collective principles to individual orientation, gradually focusing on self-value realization, pursuing material rewards, and seeking work-life balance.

This has certain similarities with post-90s new generation employees' work values. That is, post-90s groups also have similar collective orientation as older employees, hoping to create a harmonious team atmosphere and humanistic organizational environment, and desiring higher compensation and career success. However, the difference is that post-90s employees have stronger self-awareness, stronger intrinsic motivation to pursue their passions and interests, and they are truly a generation who dares to think and act, with strong innovation orientation, not afraid of risks, and achieving self-value enhancement through continuous challenges. In addition, post-90s employees are more planning-oriented and long-sighted about work, paying attention to career development prospects and space, and whether there is a sound promotion mechanism, which is inseparable from their cultural education and growth environment.

In summary, through theoretical comparative analysis, it can be found that compared with existing post-70s and post-80s values, post-90s employees have significant intergenerational differences in the two dimensions of psychological preference and career development (see Figure 4 [Figure 4: see original paper]). Therefore, this study takes psychological preference and career development as two prominent characteristics of post-90s new generation work values.

To further distinguish the differentiated personality tendencies shaped by “psychological preference” and “career development,” this study proposes four types of post-90s new generation values (see Figure 5 [Figure 5: see original paper]): involution type, lying-flat type, “from the heart” type, and “from the will” type. Specifically, Quadrant I refers to “involution” type post-90s, who pursue both self-interest satisfaction and self-value goals, and also desire broad development space and opportunities from their careers, representing a near-perfect pursuit of both psychological preference and career development. Quadrant II is “from the will” type post-90s, who focus more on whether the enterprise can provide a good platform and development space. Quadrant III is “lying-flat” type post-90s, who show a go-with-the-flow state in the workplace, lacking de-

sire for promotion and salary increases, and having no strong work interest. Quadrant IV is “from the heart” type post-90s, who have strong self-will and preferences. When engaged in interesting work, they have stronger sense of achievement and satisfaction and are willing to devote time and energy to work, not fearing innovation challenges and risks. Based on the above classification, Study 2 will further conduct empirical research on the differentiated impacts of “from the heart” type (Quadrant IV) and “from the will” type (Quadrant II) on innovation, not only further testing the distinguishing value and rationality of the proposed dimensions but also more deeply revealing “why” and “when” differentiated value types activate and strengthen creativity.

Study 2: The Influence Mechanism of “From the Heart” and “From the Will” Activating Differentiated Self-Regulation Behaviors to Drive Ambidextrous Innovation

2.1 Identifying the Power of Motivation: The Motivational Perspective of Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that motivation, as a typical psychological state, is a key force that triggers a series of work performance-related behaviors and determines the form, direction, intensity, and duration of these behaviors. Different from previous views that divided work motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, SDT divides motivation into autonomous and controlled motivation based on the degree of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomous motivation refers to motivation with full sense of willingness, volition, and choice when engaging in activities, such as promoting self-development, enhancing self-value, and satisfying interests and hobbies. Controlled motivation refers to motivation with a sense of being forced and controlled by external conditions or internal psychology when engaging in activities, such as pursuing promotion and career development opportunities.

Further, different manifestations of motivation happen to coincide with differentiated work value orientations of post-90s new generation employees. Among them, psychological preference values, as an intrinsic value orientation, emphasize whether work goals match personal interests, majors, and abilities, and whether they can enhance self-value, corresponding to autonomous motivation. Career development values are a typical extrinsic value orientation, where employees focus more on whether work can bring promotion and development space, corresponding to controlled motivation.

In addition, motivation is the driving force of behavior and an important source of individual behavioral differences. Different motivations may lead to different self-regulation tendencies among employees, triggering differentiated innovation outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Therefore, this study integrates self-determination theory and introduces process-oriented feedback-seeking

(autonomous motivation perspective) and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking (controlled motivation perspective) as mechanisms through which post-90s employees' work values influence ambidextrous innovation, predicting how "from the heart" and "from the will" drive employees' self-regulation to promote innovation. In addition, based on the predictability of motivation activation intensity, positive emotion awe and environmental cue innovation resource structural tension are selected as boundary conditions for the above relationships.

2.2 Where the Heart Leads: The Mediating Role of Process-Oriented Feedback-Seeking from an Autonomous Motivation Perspective

Feedback-seeking is employees' proactive behavior in organizations to obtain feedback information related to their own goals to achieve self-growth and meet organizational development needs (Ashford, 1986). Based on different types of information sought, it can be divided into process-oriented and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking (Krasman, 2010). Process-oriented feedback-seeking refers to employees seeking information about work strategy improvement and self-ability enhancement during task execution; outcome-oriented feedback-seeking refers to employees seeking relevant evaluations about their performance results (differences between the two are shown in Table 4).

Employees with psychological preference work values often have strong enthusiasm and interest in their work. This positive work attitude can drive them to continuously explore and learn new things, enhance self-ability, and strengthen self-management, serving as a "booster" for activating autonomous motivation (Deci et al., 2017; Boekhorst et al., 2024). Further, employees with high autonomous work motivation usually focus more on devoting their time and energy wholeheartedly to work tasks they are interested in, and then adjust task directions in real-time by continuously seeking information from others about work completion strategies and process optimization to meet organizational role expectations (Pei Jialiang et al., 2024). For them, work is not just a task but an exploration journey full of unknowns. They enjoy continuous trial and error, strategy adjustment, and learning and growth in the process. This exploration pleasure is irreplaceable by outcome-oriented feedback-seeking (Song Jiayi et al., 2020). In addition, employees with strong autonomous motivation have stronger psychological resilience and abundant emotional and energy resources. This resource advantage makes them fearless of resource loss risks brought by feedback-seeking, thus providing guarantee for continuous process-oriented feedback-seeking (Wu Shijian & Du Mengzhen, 2021; Mikkelsen et al., 2017). Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1a: Psychological preference work values significantly positively influence process-oriented feedback-seeking.

Building on the above inference, this study further believes that process-oriented feedback-seeking has stronger guidance and shaping effects than

outcome-oriented feedback-seeking (Krasman, 2010), thus providing more possibilities for exploratory innovation. Specifically: Exploratory innovation is often accompanied by high risk and uncertainty, requiring employees to have stronger intrinsic motivation to meet risks and challenges. At the same time, because it involves exploring and mining unknown fields, it also requires employees to have complete and diverse knowledge structures (Kraft & Bausch, 2016; Song Kantai & Zhang Zhengtang, 2019). Process-oriented feedback-seeking encourages employees to continuously iterate and optimize innovation plans during the action process. On the one hand, it helps cultivate employees' critical thinking and learning goal orientation, instantly identify and assess risks in innovation plans and formulate coping strategies, greatly improving the success rate of exploratory innovation (Zhao Jun et al., 2023). On the other hand, in the process of high-quality communication and interaction, collision of thinking can also provide employees with rich heterogeneous information and resources, expand employees' knowledge reserves, and diversify cognitive perspectives, thus providing more possibilities for exploratory innovation (Hou Guisheng et al., 2023). Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1b: Process-oriented feedback-seeking mediates the relationship between psychological preference work values and exploratory innovation behavior.

2.3 Where the Will Drives: The Mediating Role of Outcome-Oriented Feedback-Seeking from a Controlled Motivation Perspective

Different from psychological preference work values, employees oriented by career development values pay more attention to external incentives such as promotion, status, and career development opportunities. These external pressures guide employees to work toward achieving these clear, quantifiable performance goals, ignoring the meaning and value of work itself, becoming an important inducement for controlled work motivation (Zhao Yanmei et al., 2016). Employees with high controlled work motivation usually have lower risk preference. To survive and develop in organizations, they have stronger goal orientation and expect to achieve short-term benefits quickly (Deci et al., 2017). Therefore, compared with investing in process-oriented feedback-seeking, employees with career development work values prefer to seek feedback on performance results because this information is highly clear and quantifiable, can provide them with clear direction for effort and improvement space, and help them adjust their work behavior in a timely manner. Zhang Chunhu's (2019) research also shows that when employees feel more control and powerlessness at work, they will strengthen their focus on results. Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2a: Career development work values significantly positively influence outcome-oriented feedback-seeking.

Building on the above argument, this study believes that individuals with

outcome-oriented feedback-seeking are more likely to trigger exploitative innovation. Specifically: Because exploitative innovation focuses on “improvement” and “optimization” with low implementation difficulty and risk, it is easily driven by external motivation (Madjar et al., 2011). On the one hand, individuals with outcome-oriented feedback-seeking have stronger performance goal orientation, hoping to obtain fast, short-term returns rather than taking long-term risks, so they are more likely to choose relatively stable and conservative exploitative innovation (Benner & Tushman, 2003). On the other hand, outcome-oriented feedback-seeking can obtain others’ evaluations of self-performance results, with information cues being relatively simple and clear and directional, thus 更有利于 employees to adjust and optimize innovation strategies in a targeted manner, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of innovation behavior. This optimization process itself is an important component of exploitative innovation (Zhang Yong et al., 2022). Sung et al.’s (2020) research also found that frequent acquisition of single information is more likely to trigger individuals’ incremental creativity. Based on this, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H2b: Outcome-oriented feedback-seeking mediates the relationship between career development work values and exploitative innovation behavior.

2.4 The Game Between “From the Heart” and “From the Will”: The Moderating Role of Awe and Innovation Resource Structural Tension

(1) The Moderating Role of Awe Confucius said, “A gentleman has three things to fear: fear of destiny, fear of superiors, and fear of sages’ words.” Western philosopher Albert Schweitzer also said, “Only when we have reverence for life will the world present its infinite vitality before us.” This shows that both Chinese and Western cultures have emphasized maintaining a sense of awe since ancient times. Awe refers to the complex emotional experience that individuals produce when facing vast, outstanding, and currently incomprehensible things or phenomena (Dong Rui et al., 2013). The reason awe is complex is that it is dominated by positive emotions while also containing negative valence such as fear and anxiety (Li Ming et al., 2018; Gordon et al., 2017). Current research mostly discusses awe as a typical positive emotion and self-transcendent emotion, believing it is one of the most powerful methods for repositioning individual values and plays a key role in activating employees’ positive action tendencies (Rudd et al., 2018). Therefore, this study introduces awe as a moderator to explore its boundary role between work values and feedback-seeking behavior.

Existing research shows that high awe has powerful strength to awaken individuals’ pursuit of their true selves and higher-level spiritual concepts, helping employees break free from daily trivial matters, continuously engage in self-reflection and critical learning, and thus achieve self-growth and transformation (Jiang et al., 2018). This matches the “from the heart” values’ emphasis on “focusing on self-needs and interests” and “realizing self-value.” Therefore, high awe will further strengthen autonomous motivation, motivating employees

to acquire new knowledge through process-oriented feedback-seeking, cultivate self-awareness and deep thinking habits, thus providing strong support for self-growth and development and generating more innovative ideas (Perlin & Li, 2020; Chirico et al., 2018). In addition, Griskevicius et al.'s (2010) research found that awe can stimulate individuals' desire to explore the unknown and vast things, which can further enhance employees' intrinsic motivation when engaged in interesting work, making them more willing to invest time and energy in work and obtain solutions and skills through in-depth communication. Conversely, precisely because awe has the transformative ability to reposition individual values (Stellar et al., 2017), it can motivate individuals to explore their key values rather than merely satisfy external incentives such as career promotion (Schmader & Sedikides, 2018; Sedikides et al., 2019). Therefore, it will further weaken individuals' controlled work motivation and reduce outcome-oriented feedback-seeking behavior. Jiang et al.'s (2018) research also further corroborates that individuals who have experienced high awe have lower desire for money and enhanced pursuit of life meaning (Dai et al., 2022). Based on this, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H3a: Awe positively moderates the relationship between psychological preference work values and process-oriented feedback-seeking.

H3b: Awe negatively moderates the relationship between career development work values and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking.

(2) The Interactive Moderating Role of Awe and Innovation Resource Structural Tension Innovation resource structural tension refers to the insufficiency of innovation resources within an organization to support the implementation of all employees' innovative ideas (Zhao Le et al., 2019). In this state of resource scarcity, differences in employees' value orientations and focus will affect the activation degree of awe, thus having differential impacts on their work motivation and subsequent proactive feedback-seeking behavior. Specifically:

Employees with psychological preference work values work based on their own interests and passions. Therefore, even if enterprises face resource scarcity, it does not affect their work willingness and investment level. Instead, it makes employees show more "reverence" for work due to perceiving the preciousness of resources, further strengthening proactive feedback-seeking behavior. Existing research also shows that when employees are in a high "reverence" positive emotional valence, they are more inclined to actively seek novel external environmental information and stimuli to help them quickly integrate and adapt to new environments (Harrison & Sluss, 2011; Kashdan et al., 2004). In addition, in high resource scarcity environments, the mindfulness of high "reverence" individuals will also be enhanced (Ye Weiling et al., 2018), which is beneficial for shifting employees' attention from focusing on resource scarcity to work tasks themselves through self-regulation, further strengthening autonomous motivation, and thus continuously strengthening process-oriented feedback-seeking behavior to cope with this challenging stressful environment.

Conversely, employees with career development values pay more attention to whether enterprises can provide promotion opportunities and development space. However, in resource-scarce environments, the possibility of realizing these wishes is greatly reduced. Therefore, the more innovation resources are scarce, the more individuals with career development work values are likely to feel “fearful,” “anxious,” and “panicked” due to resource scarcity, thus further weakening their work motivation. Existing research also finds that when individuals experience awe due to negative phenomena, they often feel powerless. To cope with this low sense of control, employees will tend to activate defense mechanisms and avoid proactive behaviors to minimize uncertainty (Liu Wumei, 2022; Gordon et al., 2017). Therefore, in innovation resource-tight situations, career development employees in high “fear” will reduce outcome-oriented feedback-seeking to avoid further loss of existing resources.

Based on this, this paper proposes the following hypotheses:

H4a: The interaction term of awe and innovation resource structural tension positively moderates the relationship between psychological preference work values and process-oriented feedback-seeking behavior. That is, the tighter the innovation resource structure, the stronger the positive catalytic effect of awe on the relationship between psychological preference work values and process-oriented feedback-seeking.

H4b: The interaction term of awe and innovation resource structural tension positively moderates the relationship between career development work values and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking behavior. That is, the tighter the innovation resource structure, the stronger the weakening effect of awe on the relationship between career development work values and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking.

2.5.1 Multi-Time-Point Questionnaire Survey

(1) Research Sample

Using the domestic professional data survey platform Credamo to recruit participants, the survey targeted post-90s employees currently working in enterprises in Shaanxi, Henan, Xinjiang, Guangdong, and other regions, covering internet, service, and other industries. To avoid common source variance and multicollinearity, this study collected data anonymously online at two time points, using the “last 4 digits of phone number” as a matching criterion. At Time 1, participants completed work values, feedback-seeking behavior, awe, innovation resource structural tension, and basic demographic information; at Time 2 (one week later), participants completed ambidextrous innovation behavior. A total of 290 questionnaires were collected across two rounds. After deleting invalid questionnaires with obvious patterns or short completion times, 265 valid questionnaires were obtained, with an effective response rate of 91.38%.

(2) Variable Measurement

All variables were measured using mature scales from domestic and international sources, using a 5-point Likert scale. Specifically:

- 1) **Psychological preference and career development:** Based on this study's definitions and qualitative results, following Liu Xin and Xie Lishan's (2024) approach, the mature scale developed by Hou Xuanfang et al. (2014) was adapted. Psychological preference includes 8 items (e.g., "Work matches personal interests and hobbies"); career development includes 4 items (e.g., "Work has good development space is important"). Cronbach's α values were 0.87 and 0.87 respectively.
- 2) **Feedback-seeking behavior:** Using Krasman's (2010) scale, with 6 items each for process-oriented and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking (e.g., "To determine if my work results are correct, I will directly ask my superior"; "To determine if my methods during work are correct, I will pay attention to my superior's attitude toward me"). Cronbach's α values were 0.76 and 0.73 respectively.
- 3) **Ambidextrous innovation:** Using Mom et al.'s (2009) scale, with 7 items each for exploratory and exploitative innovation (e.g., "At work, I need to do innovative activities without clear existing policies"; "At work, my innovation focuses on achieving short-term goals"). Cronbach's α values were 0.83 and 0.87 respectively.
- 4) **Awe:** Using the awe subscale from Shiota's (2006) Dispositional Positive Emotions Scale (DPES), with 6 items (e.g., "I feel awe almost every day"). Cronbach's α was 0.86.
- 5) **Innovation resource structural tension:** Using Zhao Le et al.'s (2019) adaptation of Wiklund and Shepherd's (2003) scale based on local cultural context, with 3 items (e.g., "My project team lacks personnel support for developing new products"). Cronbach's α was 0.93.
- 6) **Control variables:** Following previous research, gender, age, education, work tenure, and position were included as control variables.

(3) Data Analysis Results

1) Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the main variables: psychological preference/career development work values, process-oriented/outcome-oriented feedback-seeking, exploratory/exploitative innovation behavior, awe, and innovation resource structural tension, to assess model fit. Following Wu Yan and Wen Zhonglin's (2011) approach, process-oriented/outcome-oriented feedback-seeking and exploratory/exploitative innovation were each parceled into 2 parcels. The results are shown in Table 5. Compared with other models, the eight-factor model showed the best fit ($\chi^2 = 710.52$, $df = 322$, SRMR =

0.06, RMSEA = 0.07, TLI = 0.90, CFI = 0.91), indicating good discriminant validity among variables.

2) Common Method Bias Analysis

First, this study analyzed the impact of common method bias through Harman's single-factor test. The results showed that the variance explained by the first factor was 24.57%, less than 40%, indicating no significant common method bias problem. Given that the academic community considers Harman's single-factor test to have insufficient sensitivity, this study further adopted Podsakoff et al.'s (2003) factor control method to test for common method bias. After adding the common method factor, the model fit did not change significantly ($\chi^2 = 575.78$, $df = 294$, RMSEA = 0.06, TLI = 0.91, CFI = 0.93), with TLI and CFI changes less than 0.1 and RMSEA changes not exceeding 0.05, which meets the reasonable error range proposed by Wen Zhonglin et al. (2018). Therefore, we infer that this study does not have a significant common method bias problem.

3) Correlation Analysis

The means, variances, and correlation coefficients of variables are shown in Table 6. The results show that psychological preference is significantly positively correlated with process-oriented feedback-seeking behavior ($r = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$); career development is significantly positively correlated with outcome-oriented feedback-seeking behavior ($r = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$); process-oriented feedback-seeking behavior is significantly positively correlated with exploratory innovation behavior ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$); outcome-oriented feedback-seeking behavior is significantly positively correlated with exploitative innovation behavior ($r = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$), providing preliminary support for the hypotheses.

4) Direct Effect Test

The regression results in Table 7 show that psychological preference significantly positively influences process-oriented feedback-seeking behavior ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$); career development significantly positively influences outcome-oriented feedback-seeking behavior ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1a and H2a. Further, this study used the Process program in SPSS to test mediating effects. The results showed that the indirect effect of psychological preference on exploratory innovation behavior through process-oriented feedback-seeking was 0.096, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.046, 0.157], not containing 0; the indirect effect of career development on exploitative innovation behavior through outcome-oriented feedback-seeking was 0.048, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.006, 0.108], not containing 0. Therefore, H1b and H2b are supported.

5) Moderation Effect Test

To reduce multicollinearity, this study standardized independent and moderator variables before constructing interaction terms. The results are shown in Table 7. According to Model 3, the interaction term between psychological preference work values and awe positively affects process-oriented feedback-seeking ($\beta =$

0.12, $p = 0.039$), supporting H3a. The J-N plot further shows (see Figure 8 [Figure 8: see original paper]) that when awe is greater than 0.62, the simple slope remains above the X-axis and the confidence band does not contain 0, thus the positive moderating effect of awe exists, providing further support for H3a. Model 7 shows that the moderating effect of awe on the relationship between career development work values and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking is not significant ($\beta = 0.01$, n.s.), so H3b is not supported.

Further, Model 4 shows that the three-way interaction term of psychological preference, awe, and innovation resource structural tension positively affects process-oriented feedback-seeking ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = 0.047$), supporting H4a. The three-way interaction plot is shown in Figure 9 [Figure 9: see original paper]. All four lines have positive slopes with obvious differences. Under high awe and high innovation resource structural tension, psychological preference has the strongest positive effect on process-oriented feedback-seeking behavior, providing further support for H4a. Model 8 shows that the moderating effect of the interaction term between awe and innovation resource structural tension on career development and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking is not significant ($\beta = -0.01$, n.s.), so H4b is not supported.

2.5.2 Scenario Experiment

The previous section used a multi-time-point questionnaire survey method to test the research hypotheses, supporting most hypotheses and confirming the external validity of the research results. However, the multi-time-point questionnaire survey did not find a causal relationship between awe and career development and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking. This study speculates that, on the one hand, awe as a profound emotional experience is difficult to effectively activate through simple questionnaire surveys; on the other hand, measuring awe, career development, and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking behavior at the same time point may affect the causal relationship and internal validity between variables. Therefore, this study will continue to verify the moderating effect of awe through scenario experiments.

(1) Sample Collection

This study plans to conduct two sets of 2 \times 2 experiments: Experiment a explores the moderating effect of the interaction between psychological preference work values (high vs. low) and awe (high vs. low) on process-oriented feedback-seeking; Experiment b explores the moderating effect of the interaction between career development work values (high vs. low) and awe (high vs. low) on outcome-oriented feedback-seeking. Participants were recruited through the Credamo platform. Since the research targets post-90s new generation employees, the participation condition was set as currently employed enterprise employees aged 25-34. G*Power 3.1 software was used to determine the required sample size. With a medium effect size $f = 0.25$, significance level $\alpha = 0.05$, and statistical power of 80%, 128 participants were needed. Accordingly, Exper-

iment a recruited 164 participants (imported into Credamo sample pool), and after excluding samples that failed attention checks or did not meet completion time criteria, 154 valid questionnaires were collected, including 103 females (66.9%) and mostly bachelor's degree holders (66.9%). Experiment b tracked the 164 samples from Experiment a through Credamo's sample pool function, and after excluding invalid samples, 159 valid samples were collected, with females accounting for 66.7%.

(2) Experimental Design

Taking Experiment a as an example. First, researchers told participants they would participate in a scenario experiment about individual self-regulation behavior and invited them to complete a mature scale of psychological preference work values (Experiment b required participants to complete the career development work values scale). Second, participants were asked to read scenario materials: "Suppose you are a sales representative for a national insurance company, responsible for providing customers with quality auto insurance solutions. Recently, your work group has been given an important task: to explore and design a new sales plan to improve sales performance. Since this is your first time participating in an important task, you lack professional knowledge in plan design, market research, and marketing strategy planning; budget, time, and manpower shortages also make the implementability of your sales plan questionable." [This material refers to Hetrick et al.'s (2024) scenario description focusing on help-seeking, adapted for this study's scenario. The reason for selecting this scenario material is that both help-seeking and feedback-seeking are spontaneous, proactive behaviors where individuals obtain tangible and intangible resources from the external environment to help them achieve desired goals. The conceptual relevance between these two concepts makes Hetrick et al.'s (2024) scenario material meaningful for reference.]

Next, using Credamo platform's "random block" function, participants were randomly assigned to high awe and low awe groups to watch videos. After watching the videos, participants completed the awe scale. Then, participants completed process-oriented and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking scales. The instruction was: "As the scenario material states, this sales plan design project is very important to the organization. However, since this is your first time participating in an important task, you lack professional knowledge in plan design, market research, and marketing strategy planning; and budget, time, and manpower shortages also make the implementability of your sales plan questionable. Therefore, to further improve your sales plan, what would you do?"

Finally, participants reported demographic variables (including gender, education, work tenure, position, etc.). In addition, to improve data quality, attention check questions were interspersed.

(3) Variable Manipulation and Measurement

1) Manipulation of psychological preference and career develop-

ment work values: In Experiment a, participants scoring above the overall mean were defined as the high psychological preference group, and those below the mean as the low psychological preference group. Experiment b used the same manipulation method.

- 2) **Manipulation of awe:** The high awe group watched edited clips of “The Future of the Universe” and “Nature Is Speaking” [video materials mainly refer to Piff et al. (2015) and Rudd et al. (2018) research processes]; the low awe group watched a video of electric piano installation [referring to Fei Xianzheng et al. (2021) research process]. Both videos were 3 minutes long.
- 3) **Measurement of variables:** The scales used were consistent with the previous multi-time-point questionnaire survey, using a 5-point Likert scale from “1” to “5” representing “very inconsistent” to “very consistent.” In Experiment a, Cronbach’s α values for psychological preference work values, process-oriented feedback-seeking, and awe were 0.74, 0.73, and 0.75 respectively. In Experiment b, Cronbach’s α values for career development work values, outcome-oriented feedback-seeking, and awe were 0.79, 0.74, and 0.75 respectively.

(4) Data Analysis Results

1) Manipulation Check

In Experiment a, psychological preference work values and awe were manipulated. Independent samples t-test results showed that the high psychological preference group scored significantly higher ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.24$, $n = 72$) than the low psychological preference group ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.38$, $n = 82$), $t(152) = -14.66$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen’s $d = 2.39$. High awe group employees scored significantly higher ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.50$, $n = 74$) than low awe group employees ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.70$, $n = 80$), $t(152) = -5.15$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen’s $d = 0.84$. Therefore, the manipulation of variables in Experiment a was effective.

Similarly, Experiment b manipulated career development work values and awe. Independent samples t-test results showed that the high career development group scored significantly higher ($M = 4.90$, $SD = 0.12$, $n = 83$) than the low career development group ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.29$, $n = 76$), $t(157) = -17.23$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen’s $d = 2.70$. High awe group employees scored significantly higher ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.51$, $n = 81$) than low awe group employees ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.86$, $n = 78$), $t(157) = -6.15$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen’s $d = 0.96$. Therefore, the manipulation of variables in Experiment b was effective.

2) Hypothesis Testing

ANOVA results showed that participants in the “high psychological preference group” had a significantly higher tendency for process-oriented feedback-seeking behavior ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.67$) than the low group ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.61$), $F(1, 152) = 5.47$, $p = 0.021$, Cohen’s $d = 0.37$. Participants in the “high career development group” had a significantly higher tendency for outcome-oriented

feedback-seeking behavior ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.48$) than the low group ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.40$), $F(1, 157) = 4.69$, $p = 0.032$, Cohen's $d = 0.34$. These results further support H1a and H2a.

Further, two-way ANOVA results showed that the interaction term between psychological preference and awe significantly positively affected process-oriented feedback-seeking ($F(3, 150) = 6.97$, $p < 0.001$, $p^2 = 0.12$), and the interaction term between career development and awe significantly positively affected outcome-oriented feedback-seeking ($F(3, 155) = 3.39$, $p = 0.019$, $p^2 = 0.06$). Simple slope analysis of the interaction effects (see Figure 10 [Figure 10: see original paper] and Figure 11 [Figure 11: see original paper]) showed that when employees' awe was at a high level, participants in the high psychological preference group had significantly higher process-oriented feedback-seeking levels ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.10$) than the low group ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.10$), and participants in the high career development group had significantly higher outcome-oriented feedback-seeking levels ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.07$) than the low group ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.07$), supporting H3a and H3b.

3 Results and Discussion

This study first used qualitative research to explore two prominent characteristics of post-90s new generation employees' work values: psychological preference ("from the heart") and career development ("from the will"). Second, based on self-determination theory, it explored the influence mechanism of "from the heart" and "from the will" activating differentiated self-regulation behaviors to drive ambidextrous innovation. Through questionnaire surveys and scenario experiments, this study verified that individuals with psychological preference tend to adopt process-oriented feedback-seeking to activate exploratory innovation, while individuals with career development orientation tend to adopt outcome-oriented feedback-seeking to drive exploitative innovation. In addition, the more resource-scarce the situation, the more awe as a positive emotional resource can "catalyze" individuals' intrinsic motivation to adopt process-oriented feedback-seeking, further interpreting the essence of "the times make the hero."

It should be noted that the hypothesis about "the interactive term of awe and innovation resource structural tension moderating the relationship between career development and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking behavior" proposed in this study was not significant. The possible reason is that the interactive term of awe and innovation resource structural tension has multiple complex moderating situations (see Figure 12 [Figure 12: see original paper]), and this study only focused on discussing "Zone 2: Non-action Governance Zone," ignoring the other three situations, leading to non-significant moderating effects.

The moderating mechanisms of the remaining three situations are specifically: Zone 1 is the "All-out Effort" zone, where strong awe interacts with high innovation resource structural tension. At this time, employees focusing on career

development worry about insufficient resources, and their sense of fear rises. In this situation, employees will “involute” and work harder to reduce the risk of loss and replacement. Controlled motivation dominates, and employees may pay more attention to seeking outcome feedback. Zone 3 is the “Unearned Gain” zone, where relatively abundant resources fully provide employees with room for improvement, but employees have weak awe and do not cherish resources and opportunities, possibly passively waiting for results rather than actively implementing self-regulation. Therefore, the motivation for outcome-oriented feedback-seeking may also be weak. Zone 4 is the “Self-Improvement” zone, where innovation resources are relatively abundant and employees have strong awe. Employees are more likely to cherish resources and continuously improve themselves in an organization atmosphere with strong psychological security, pay attention to feedback information during the work process, and promote self-growth and learning. In summary, among the four interactive situations, the outcome-oriented feedback-seeking motivation driven by “from the will” often has obvious uncertainty due to external situational cues, thus the moderating effect is not significant.

3.1 Theoretical Contributions

First, based on modernization evolution theory combined with local social change context, this study uses qualitative research to explore two prominent characteristics of post-90s new generation employees’ work values: the confidence to be “from the heart” and the courage to be “from the will,” enriching and expanding the research scope of new generation employees’ work values, and providing a theoretical foundation for identifying and predicting this group’s relatively stable innovation patterns from the perspective of personality tendencies. From “Buddha-like” and “mourning culture” to “lying flat,” “involution,” and “slash youth,” the development of a series of internet buzzwords marks the distinctive work value characteristics of post-90s new generation employees. However, existing work value research often covers multiple generational groups, with few studies specifically focusing on post-90s. To bridge this research gap, this study, based on grounded theory and comparison with post-70s and post-80s employees, summarizes two prominent characteristics of post-90s employees’ work values: “psychological preference” and “career development.” This values system that is both “from the heart” and “from the will” has complexity and contradiction, reflecting that post-90s new generation groups both follow their own interests and hobbies to pursue maximum self-value release (intrinsic value) and desire sustainable career development (extrinsic value), with distinct era characteristics. This research result is similar to Xu Shiyong et al.’s (2020) survey results on post-95s employees’ work values, laying a foundation for subsequent empirical research on the current situation and problems of new generation employees’ work values.

Second, combining self-determination theory, this study explores the dif-

ferentiated mediating mechanism of process-oriented and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking between values (i.e., psychological preference and career development) and ambidextrous innovation behavior from the perspective of motivation-activated self-regulation. This research discovers the differences between “from the heart” and “from the will” in driving innovation processes, enabling us to better identify which employees are more likely to achieve higher-level “exploratory” innovation through “slow and gradual” self-regulation, and which employees are more likely to promote lower-level “exploitative” innovation through “efficient and direct” self-regulation, indirectly demonstrating the profound value of intrinsic values (“from the heart”) for innovation, while extrinsic values (“from the will”) have “bottlenecks” in driving innovation. The findings both respond to scholars’ calls for exploring the internal mechanisms linking work values and innovation behavior (Ren Hualiang et al., 2016), open the “black box” between work values and ambidextrous innovation, and provide support for linking values and self-regulation literature, especially for the rarely involved feedback-seeking process domain. In addition, this study further provides a new perspective for accelerating high-quality innovation of post-90s groups, that is, through precise identification and personalized cultivation of post-90s employees who have both “from the heart” and “from the will” values, driving their matched self-regulation strategies, and ultimately achieving “both” ambidextrous innovation.

Third, by introducing awe and innovation resource structural tension as interactive moderators, and from the perspective of the game between “from the heart” and “from the will,” this study verifies “when” and “under what circumstances” motivation can better drive self-regulation and innovation. This not only provides ideas for the boundary conditions of values’ effectiveness but also offers a basis for how to improve individual autonomous innovation under organizational resource scarcity. First, awe as a positive emotion has been mostly applied in sociology, philosophy, and psychology (Piff et al., 2015), with limited understanding in management, especially organizational behavior. Therefore, this study introduces awe, which can deepen the understanding of awe and its effectiveness in the management field on the one hand, and on the other hand confirms that awe emotion has a “detonator” effect, capable of generating “sparks” through interaction with different-oriented work values, triggering self-regulation behaviors that drive ambidextrous innovation. Second, by combining situational cues, it provides a comprehensive explanation from the perspective of more “reverence” or more “fear” for whether awe strengthens or weakens self-regulation strategies. The study finds that the more resource-scarce the situation, the more employees show “reverence” due to perceiving resource preciousness, thus promoting process-oriented feedback-seeking and exploratory innovation. This conclusion can further provide theoretical basis and implications for how to “empower” and stimulate post-90s employees’ innovation through the interaction of situational cues and emotional resources, and promote their lasting “symbiosis” with enterprises.

3.2 Management Implications

First, this study finds that values play a key role in promoting and predicting stable innovation patterns. Therefore, it implies that managers should pay attention to the uniqueness of post-90s employees' values and promote innovation efficiency and quality by identifying their needs and expectations. Specifically, for employees focusing on career development, there is hope to strengthen their exploitative innovation under efficiency orientation. For example, managers can ignite their work enthusiasm and promote efficient exploitative innovation by formulating clear and sustainable career development plans, providing learning and growth opportunities, setting up innovation reward mechanisms, and giving more work autonomy. Conversely, for employees with significant intrinsic preferences, it is necessary to activate their exploratory innovation from the perspective of passion matching. For example, managers should focus on matching post-90s personal interests with positions, activate employees' internal drive for proactive work by providing flexible work methods and spaces, and assigning challenging work tasks, promoting the emergence of their exploratory innovation. In addition, in reality, since managers find it difficult to clearly perceive each employee's work values, they can promote the construction of a value remodeling system through identification, activation, and cultivation, matching organizational innovation's differentiated requirements from both efficiency and quality perspectives.

Second, organizations should pay attention to the activation and leverage of employees' self-regulation behaviors as the "bridge" between work values and ambidextrous innovation behavior. Managers can create a positive atmosphere for feedback-seeking in organizations, set up bottom-up feedback mechanisms, and encourage and support employees' feedback-seeking behavior. On the one hand, employees seeking process-oriented and outcome-oriented feedback from colleagues and superiors is a huge driving force for improving the organization's overall innovation level. Managers can set up leadership mailboxes or hold "star employee" exchange meetings to ensure smooth feedback-seeking channels and a good atmosphere. On the other hand, managers should encourage employees to balance process-oriented and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking. For example, when employees seek performance result-related feedback, provide them with information about areas needing improvement during task completion, appropriately guide them to seek feedback during the next task process, and simultaneously stimulate their exploratory and exploitative innovation behaviors. In addition, organizations should especially value the contradictory nature of values. When activating self-regulation strategies, they need to pay attention to the guidance and assistance of "both" process-oriented and outcome-oriented feedback-seeking to maximize ambidextrous innovation effectiveness.

This study finds that awe plays an important role in activating employees' regulation behaviors to promote innovation. Therefore, it implies that managers especially need to strengthen attention to employees' positive awe emotions when organizational structural resources are insufficient. On the one hand, some ac-

tivities can be organized regularly to enhance employees' awe. For example, exchange meetings can be organized for employees to deeply understand the company's development history and culture, enhancing their identification and belonging to the company, and maintaining awe for their positions; or, regular outdoor activities can be organized for employees to contact nature and feel their own smallness, reducing excessive attention to the "small self," promoting their attention to work processes and continuous exploratory innovation. On the other hand, although moderate resources are more conducive to creativity and innovation behavior (Burmeister et al., 2021).

Third, for employees with high awe, managers should recognize the power of "the times make the hero." Organizational resource scarcity is not entirely a bad thing, especially for post-90s employees who are "from the heart." Resource scarcity is often seen as challenging pressure. This situation acts like a stimulant, enabling capable people to "make something out of nothing."

3.3 Research Limitations and Future Directions

This study takes post-90s new generation employees as the research object and explores the influence mechanism of their psychological preference and career development work values on ambidextrous innovation behavior. Although some achievements have been made, there are still certain limitations that need to be improved:

First, the sample data collection method needs further improvement. Although this study adopted a multi-time-point data collection method to avoid common method bias to a certain extent, all data came from employee self-reports, which has certain subjectivity issues. Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt multi-source data collection methods, such as employee-supervisor paired measurements, to further improve conclusion accuracy and reduce common method bias. In addition, in the scenario experimental design, awe manipulation was divided into high and low levels, without setting up a strict randomized controlled experiment (i.e., no awe) for testing. Future research should conduct more rigorous randomized controlled experiments to ensure internal validity.

Second, this study takes post-90s new generation employees, the current backbone of the workplace, as the research object, and compares them with post-70s and post-80s to obtain significant dimensions of work values. However, post-00s, as an emerging force in enterprise development, have also begun to "rectify the workplace." Future research can further explore the prominent characteristics of post-00s new generation employees' work values. In addition, current work value scale development is limited to post-90s groups. Future research can continue to develop measurement scales suitable for post-00s employees in the local context, 弥补 current research limitations.

Third, based on self-determination theory, this study explores the mechanism through which individuals who are "from the heart" and "from the will" drive ambidextrous innovation by matching differentiated self-regulation behaviors.

However, in work situations with strong task urgency, even individuals oriented “from the heart” need to prioritize quickly completing work tasks, strengthen focus on results to achieve short-term rapid benefits, that is, “from the heart” individuals may also exhibit outcome-oriented feedback-seeking. That is, although this study focused on the “matching” effect between work values and feedback-seeking behavior, it cannot rule out the possible existence of a “crossover effect” between the two. Therefore, future research can further explore “when” and “under what circumstances” “from the heart” individuals will adopt outcome-oriented feedback-seeking, and “from the will” individuals will adopt process-oriented feedback-seeking.

Appendix A: References

References are preserved exactly as in the original text.

Appendix B: Scales and Experimental Materials

Scales and experimental materials are preserved exactly as in the original text.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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