

DIFFERENT LIKE ME:
SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND THE RECOGNITION OF CREATIVITY
IN ADVERTISING ORGANIZATIONS

by

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“An idea, like a ghost, must be spoken to a little before it will explain itself.”
– Charles Dickens

I came to Erin when the idea for this dissertation was a ghost. She has, in the time since, read countless drafts in a wide variety of forms—grant proposals, survey instruments, interview schedules, recruitment emails, endless IRB forms, Stata output, first drafts, second drafts, third drafts, R&Rs, and now finally, this dissertation. Only through this process did my idea slowly begin to explain itself. I doubt it would have ever done so without Erin’s patience, encouragement, astute attention to topic sentences, and most of all, her enthusiasm and love for ideas that she transmits to those around her.

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DEDICATION

To Erin

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	7
LIST OF FIGURES	8
ABSTRACT.....	9
INTRODUCTION	10
What is Creativity? A Brief Review of the Literature.....	12
Present Study	16
REFERENCES	19
APPENDIX A: ENTERING THE CREATIVE CLASS: THE ROLE OF CULTURAL OMNIVOROUSNESS.....	22
APPENDIX B: THE GENDER OF GENIUS: EXPLAINING OCCUPATIONAL SEX SEGREGATION IN CREATIVE FIELDS	91
APPENDIX C: MAKING ART WORK: CREATIVE ASSESSMENT AS BOUNDARY WORK.....	141

LIST OF TABLES

APPENDIX A: ENTERING THE CREATIVE CLASS: THE ROLE OF CULTURAL OMNIVOROUSNESS

Table 1. Informant Characteristics: Agency Size, Industry Tenure, and Subject of College Degree	85
Table 2. Measurement Model: Omnivorous Socialization	85
Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix.....	86
Table 4. Comparison of Key Constructs with Nationally Representative Data	86
Table 5. Indirect Effects of Taste and Socialization on the Relationship between Class and Creative Employment	87
Table 6. Supplemental Analyses with Alternative Measures	88
Table A1. Coding Examples of Criteria for Evaluating Entry-level Job Candidates	89
Table A2. Coding Examples of Motivations for Choosing Occupation.....	89
Table B. Survey Items Used to Measure Omnivorous Socialization.....	90

APPENDIX B: THE GENDER OF GENIUS: EXPLAINING OCCUPATIONAL SEX SEGREGATION IN CREATIVE FIELDS

Table 1a. Univariate and Bivariate Statistics for Complete Sample, Together and Men and Women Separately, and Pearson Correlations.....	138
Table 1b. Univariate and Bivariate Statistics for Sub-Sample of Creative Workers, Together and Men and Women Separately, and Pearson Correlations.....	138
Table 2. Logistic Regression Models Predicting Occupational Entry and Advancement in a Creative Position (Log odds)	139

APPENDIX C: MAKING ART WORK: CREATIVE ASSESSMENT AS BOUNDARY WORK

Table 1. Informant Characteristics.....	186
Table 2. Summary of Boundaries Drawn as Grounds of Inclusion and Exclusion	187

LIST OF FIGURES

APPENDIX A: ENTERING THE CREATIVE CLASS: THE ROLE OF CULTURAL OMNIVOROUSNESS

Figure 1. Comparison of Conceptual Models	81
Figure 2. Geographic Distribution of Survey Responses.....	81
Figure 3. Number of Informants Who Used Each Criterion to Evaluate Entry-level Job Candidates.....	82
Figure 4. Number of Informants Who Described Each Motivation as the Reason They Chose Their Current Occupation	82
Figure 5. Cosine Similarity Matrix Derived from the GSS Culture Module (1993)	83
Figure 6. Structural Model of Class Background on Creative Employment through Omnivorous Socialization and Taste	83
Figure 7. Effects of Omnivorous Taste by Distinctiveness (z-score) on the Predicted Probability of Creative Employment.	84

APPENDIX B: THE GENDER OF GENIUS: EXPLAINING OCCUPATIONAL SEX SEGREGATION IN CREATIVE FIELDS

Figure 1a and 1b. Predictive Margins with 95% Confidence Internals for Personal Identity by Gender on Creative Employment.....	140
Figure 2a and 2b. Predictive Margins with 95% Confidence Internals for Personal Identity by Gender on Senior-level Creative Employment	140

APPENDIX C: MAKING ART WORK: CREATIVE ASSESSMENT AS BOUNDARY WORK

Figure 1. Emergent Data Structure	188
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ABSTRACT

Historically considered a “gift” from an other-worldly source, today creativity is championed by politicians and business leaders for its economic value. Yet we know relatively little about how people and ideas come to be viewed as creative in real-world business organizations. In this dissertation, I examine the social process of recognizing creativity through an investigation of a quintessential creative industry—advertising. Using a mixed methodological approach, I draw on original data collected through a survey of a probability sample of U.S. advertising agencies, semi-structured interviews with survey respondents, and several months of participant observation in an agency. I find that social exclusion shapes the recognition of creativity in these ostensibly open and tolerant sectors of the labor market. Socioeconomic status and gender affect occupational entry and advancement through evaluations that rely on familiarity with high-status culture and identity characteristics that match artistic stereotypes to signal creativity. Additionally, the assessment of creative work itself is used as a form of boundary work to exclude those outside the profession from making contributions considered creative. Taken together, this dissertation suggests that although creativity has been widely heralded as a force for expanding opportunity and social progress, inequality plays an enduring role in the formation and maintenance of this workforce.

INTRODUCTION

Occupations that add economic value through creativity (henceforth, “creative occupations”) first drew attention for their perceived contribution to economic growth in Western countries. In the face of deskilling, routinization, and technological advances that moved job growth to emerging markets like China and India, the United States Secretary of Labor (1992), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (1998), and the European Commission (2001) asserted that the “creative industries”—industries that produce intellectual property—would become the fastest growing sector in industrialized countries. Such predictions aligned with arguments that creative work is relatively resistant to deskilling and routinization because increases in productivity are impossible for creative tasks (Baumol and Bowen 1993; Blinder 2006). While this resistance was typically disdained by economists and managers, it came to be embraced as a source of labor market growth for developed economies around the world (Sparviero and Preston 2010).

Since then, the economic importance of the creative industries has come under serious scrutiny (e.g., Oakley 2004; Tepper 2002) but the surrounding rhetoric has nonetheless transformed ideas about work. Good jobs are increasingly described as “creative,” attracting applicants by highlighting work-based opportunities for creative expression (Lloyd 2010; Ross 2004). Popular discourse increasingly emphasizes the glamorous lives of creative professionals, intensifying interest in work that is “cool” and “hip” (Eikhof and Haunschild 2006; Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2010; Howkins 2002; McRobbie 2002; Neff et al. 2005). Widely considered interesting and fulfilling (Mirowsky and Ross 2003), creative work has been shown to have a positive effect on reports of emotional well-being and physical health (Mirowsky 2011; Mirowsky and Ross 2007) and give workers the feeling that they “own” the fruits of their labor

(Neff et al. 2005). In knowledge-intensive industries like software development (Metiu 2006), product design (Mattarelli and Tagliaventi 2013), architecture (Jones 2010), and semiconductor manufacturing (Bechky 2003), creative tasks are seen as the most desirable, performed by the highest status workers.

In spite of such praise, we know little about what makes creative occupations distinct. A notoriously slippery term, “creativity” is typically defined as the generation of novel, useful outcomes (Amabile 1996). Even though attributions of “novelty” and “usefulness” depend on social context (Guetzkow et al. 2004; Kasof 1995; Rosenblum 1978), the large literature on creativity largely ignores the social process of assessing whether a person or product is creative (Elsbach and Kramer 2003).

In this dissertation, I examine how people and their work products come to be viewed as creative through a multi-method investigation of a quintessential creative industry—advertising. Advertising is a business based around creativity, within which the division of “creative” and “non-creative” work is relatively well-defined (Bilton 2007). Every full-service advertising agency has a department called Creative Services, whose employees go by the moniker “creatives.” While clearly creative thinking also occurs outside these walls, this department houses the people widely recognized as creative within the organization. By studying how creativity is recognized in this setting, I reveal unconscious biases which subtly work to reproduce the status quo. In the following empirical articles, I show how class background (Article 1), gender (Article 2), and professional affiliation (Article 3) inform what comes to be viewed as creative.

What is Creativity? A Brief Review of the Literature

Historically, creativity has been considered an individual characteristic. The subconscious component of creativity lends itself to being subjectively experienced as natural, an individual “gift” from an unidentifiable source. Scientific studies of creativity, most commonly conducted by psychologists, locate it in the minds of select individuals. Over the last sixty years, psychologists have developed instruments that attempt to define the “creative personality type;” at last count, more than 255 such instruments have been designed (Torrance and Goff 1989). While this view continues to shape the perspective of most modern psychologists and the general public (Weisberg 2010), it is flawed and incomplete. Empirical applications are plagued by a lack of construct validity (Hocevar 1981), predictive validity (Cromptley 2000), and face validity (Zinkhan 1993), and run counter to strong experimental evidence (Amabile 1996). Most importantly, however, is the neglect of social context.

Other scholars conceptualize creativity as a facet of the social world; however, they often go to the other extreme by emphasizing social structure and devaluing individual characteristics. Sociologists have conducted extensive research on networks of artistic and intellectual worlds, underscoring how creativity is mobilized by systems of intersecting relationships (Becker 1984; Collins 1998; Fine 1992; Godart and Mears 2010; White and White 1993). Yet efforts to identify the optimal social network position for creative output have failed to reach a consensus: Some argue positions on the periphery are ideal (Perry-Smith 2006; Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003; Schilling 2005) while others advocate being closer to the core (Becker 1970; Hargadon 2005) or somewhere in the middle (Cattani and Ferriani 2008; Dahlander and Frederiksen 2012). Since creative production remains an uncertain enterprise—“nobody knows” which cultural

products will be a success (Caves 2000) and “all hits are flukes” (Bielby and Bielby 1994)—studies have focused on how uncertainty is managed through over-production (Hirsch 1972), information-sharing (Godart and Mears 2010) and signaling (Jones 2002). Yet variation at the individual level remains unexplained.

Social psychologists have proposed an “interactionist” theory that bridges these two perspectives. It posits that some individuals are more creative than others, but these individual characteristics interact with situations (Amabile 1996; Amabile et al. 2005; Ford 1996; Woodman et al. 1993). A promising direction, this theory has led to the development of methods—such as the consensual assessment technique—which account for industry-specific variation in the evaluation of creative objects by measuring creativity through experts’ subjective assessment of creative products. Yet for all its theoretical interest in situations, this body of work is still primarily conducted in laboratory contexts. As a result, the interactive and contextual aspects of the process of recognizing creativity remain underexplored.

This dissertation brings an interpretive lens to the study of creativity. I do so because creativity is notoriously difficult to define and operationalize at the individual level: “What creativity is, and what it is not, hangs as the mythical albatross around the neck of scientific research on creativity” (Prentky 2001: 97). Sixty years of psychological assessments are fraught with the aforementioned shortcomings. Part of the problem with existing approaches is that the assessment of whether a person or product is “creative” is highly subjective and depends on social context (Elsbach and Kramer 2003; Guetzkow et al. 2004; Kasof 1995). By examining creativity as a cultural construct rather than imposing an *a priori* definition, I overcome these difficulties. My interest is not in the cognitive activity or ability itself, but in how people come to be recognized as “creative” in real world organizational settings.

In this dissertation, I show how social class (Article 1), gender (Article 2), and professional affiliation (Article 3) shape the recognition of creativity. In the first article, I propose and test a model of creative employment as a cultural process of labor market sorting. I show how familiarity with high-status culture—measured by “omnivorous” (diverse and inclusive) taste and leisure pursuits—is used as “capital” to gain access to these desirable occupations, a process which, to date, has only been studied in market-oriented fields like banking. In the second article, I examine why, despite the widespread belief that women are the more emotional sex, they are less likely to be employed in creative jobs, work generally considered emotionally expressive. I find that identity characteristics that match artistic stereotypes—seeing yourself as “passionate” or a “loner”—have significant positive effects on entry and advancement in creative occupations only for men. In the third article, I examine how ideas earn the designation “creative” in real-world organizational settings. I find that creative professionals define “creativity” as ideas that are novel and relevant, but not all sources of novelty and relevance are considered creative. Sources that originate from outside their professional domain are often dismissed as not novel (e.g., “overused”) or irrelevant (e.g., “constraints”). I suggest that creative assessment can thus be understood as a form of professional boundary work.

Taken together, these chapters demonstrate that the way firms hire and promote employees in creative jobs actually reduces the diversity of this workforce. Assessments of creativity, I find, often reflect the meaning of “creativity” in a specific occupational community or social group, rather than objective appraisals of merit. These findings can have important implications for organizations. A less diverse workforce can have negative consequences for organizational creativity, since many scholars think that interacting with different people

enhances the potential for creative insight. A less diverse workforce can also have negative implications for the society at large. Creative occupations have been widely heralded as a force for expanding opportunity and social progress, yet these studies show that inequality plays an enduring role in the formation of this workforce.

This dissertation is organized as follows. Following this introduction and brief literature review, I summarize the findings from each of the three articles in the next section. The full text of each article follows this summary in Appendices A, B, and C.

PRESENT STUDY

Appended to this dissertation are three empirical research papers that examine the role of social exclusion in the recognition of creativity. Important findings are summarized below.

Appendix A – “Entering the Creative Class: The Role of Cultural Omnivorousness”

Occupations that add economic value through purported creativity were popularized by Richard Florida’s (2002) *Rise of the Creative Class* and have come to define desirable employment. Yet we know relatively little about who enters these “creative” occupations, how and why. I address this gap by proposing and testing a novel link from class background to creative employment through a cultural process of labor market sorting. Focusing on the case of the advertising industry, I combine primary survey data collected from a probability sample of U.S. advertising agencies and semi-structured interviews with advertising professionals. Qualitative data show how high-status culture—specifically, “omnivorous” (i.e., diverse and inclusive) forms of taste and socialization—signals creative potential to employers and motivates people to pursue these positions. Structural equation modeling reveals that these forms of high-status culture mediate the relationship between class background and creative employment. This study’s findings highlight a new direction for research on creativity, contribute to the debate on the role of culture in occupational attainment, and extend knowledge on the early origins of career choice.

Appendix B – “The Gender of Genius: Explaining Occupational Sex Segregation in Creative Fields”

In light of the widespread belief that women are the more emotional sex, the gender division of labor in creative fields is surprising. Here, women are less likely to be employed in creative

occupations—work generally considered emotionally expressive. I explain this role reversal through an overlooked source of gender inequality, the occupational belief system. Drawing on primary survey data and in-depth interviews from a probability sample of U.S. advertising practitioners, I examine how personal identity characteristics that align with occupational beliefs structure entry and advancement in creative occupations and the extent to which gender moderates this process. I find that identity characteristics that match the occupational ideal of the emotional and solitary creator have significant positive effects on entry in creative occupations only for men and art education has a significant positive effect on entry only for women. Identifying as a solitary creator also has a significant positive effect on advancement only for men. Qualitative data reveal these different paths are sustained through different conceptions of what it means to be creative. Men in creative occupations generally see themselves as creative people, whereas women see themselves as creative professionals, competing conceptions that shape differences in men and women's relationships to their work, their colleagues, and the field as a whole. In this way, I show how the social process of recognizing creativity contributes to the systematic exclusion of women.

Appendix C – “Making Art Work: Creative Assessment as Boundary Work”

Conflict in creative work is sometimes thought to emanate from the contentious personalities of creative workers. Drawing on several months of ethnographic field work at an advertising agency and semi-structured interviews with advertising professionals, I propose an alternate explanation for this antagonism, grounded in creative workers' and their market-oriented colleagues' competing definitions of good work. I find that while creative workers value "creativity," which they define as novel and relevant ideas, not all sources of novelty and

relevance are considered legitimate. Sources that originate from outside their professional domain are dismissed as not novel (e.g., "overused") or irrelevant (e.g., "constraints").

Consequently, I suggest that creative assessment can be understood as a form of professional boundary work, a conceptualization with implications for our understanding of conflict in the creative workplace and the evaluation of creativity more generally.

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APPENDIX A – ENTERING THE CREATIVE CLASS: THE ROLE OF CULTURAL OMNIVOROUSNESS

Paper is provisionally accepted at *Administrative Science Quarterly*

Abstract

Occupations that add economic value through purported creativity, a socioeconomic category popularized by Richard Florida's (2002) *Rise of the Creative Class*, have in recent years come to define desirable employment. Yet we know relatively little about who enters these "creative" occupations, how and why. I address this gap by proposing and testing a novel link from class background to creative employment through a cultural process of matching people to jobs. Focusing on the case of the advertising industry, I combine primary survey data collected from a probability sample of U.S. advertising agencies and semi-structured interviews with advertising practitioners. Qualitative data show how shared culture—specifically, "omnivorous" (diverse and inclusive) forms of taste and socialization—signals creative potential to employers and motivates people to pursue these positions. Structural equation modeling reveals that these forms of culture mediate the relationship between class background and creative employment. This study's findings highlight a new direction for research on creativity, contribute to the debate on the role of culture in occupational attainment, and extend knowledge on the early origins of career choice.

You're a bit of an outsider. A visionary. An innovator... You seek the revelatory experience, the creative epiphany, the Big Idea. It's what gets you up in the morning and what keeps you awake at night.

—Job Posting for a Chicago Advertising Agency¹

Popular perceptions of desirable employment are shifting. Occupations that add economic value through putative creativity (henceforth, “creative occupations”) first drew attention for their perceived contribution to economic growth in Western countries (e.g., OECD 1998; Reich 1992)—especially in the face of deskilling, routinization, and technological advances that have increasingly moved job growth to emerging markets like China and India. While their economic importance has come under scrutiny (e.g., Oakley 2004; Tepper 2002), the rhetoric surrounding the broadly defined creative class² (Florida 2002) has nonetheless transformed ideas about work. Good jobs are increasingly described as “creative,” attracting applicants by highlighting work-based opportunities for creative expression (Lloyd 2010; Ross 2004). Known as “cool jobs” in “hot industries” (Neff et al. 2005), creative occupations are glamorized by the media (Massoni 2004; McRobbie 2002), managerial discourse (Prichard 2002), and people employed in them (Lloyd 2010; Ross 2004).

Who gets these creative jobs? A notoriously slippery term, creativity is typically defined as the generation of novel, useful outcomes (Amabile 1996), a definition that depends on social context. However, the vast literature on creativity is dominated by psychological investigations, many of which try to specify fixed traits that characterize “creative types” to the neglect of social

¹ Plan B Agency. 2012. “Calling all Wanna Bs.” Chicago, IL. Retrieved: October 12, 2012.

² Florida’s definition of the “creative class” includes knowledge-intensive workers generally. My interest in “creative occupations,” refers to a more select group involved directly in creative production, what Florida calls the “super-creative core.”

factors. Meanwhile, the sociological literature on creativity relies heavily on situational factors like network position, leaving variation at the individual level uninvestigated. While creativity must somehow be recognized for people to enter these desirable occupations, we know very little about how this happens in the real world settings that determine these outcomes (Elsbach and Kramer 2003; Malakate et al. 2007).

To answer this question, I build and test a conceptual model of creativity employment. Labor market outcomes can be understood through the matching of people to jobs: firms seek employees with abilities and tastes they perceive as aligned with the local environment (“employer selection”) while individuals seek jobs that they perceive to be aligned with their abilities and tastes (“individual choice”) (March and March 1978; Sørensen and Sharkey 2014). This occupational sorting, long the focus of the sociological literature on status attainment (Blau and Duncan 1967; Breen and Jonsson 2005), has been recently re-conceptualized as a process of “cultural matching” (Rivera 2012). Drawing on theoretical arguments that shared cultural markers—such as tastes, cultural interests, and styles (Bourdieu 1984)—are central to society’s distribution of rewards such as desirable occupations, Rivera (2012) shows how elite investment banks, management consultancies, and law firms hire new employees culturally similar to their existing workforce.

Integrating insights from the literature on cultural sociology and education, I argue that creative employment can be partially explained through a similar process of cultural matching. Following Bourdieu (1984), I conceptualize culture as a form of “capital” that can be monopolized, strategically employed, and transmitted across generations. Building on arguments that the definition of cultural capital has shifted from an exclusive highbrow “snob” into a more inclusive and diverse cultural “omnivore” that enjoys a variety of cultural forms

(Peterson and Kern 1996), I propose an intergenerational model of omnivorous cultural capital transmission that provides benefits to people from privileged class backgrounds when entering creative employment.

To test my conceptual model, I rely on original data from a quintessential industry based on creativity: advertising. In this industry, a firm's key asset is its workforce, the main product is creative thinking, and the employees in creative positions are afforded relatively high status (Bilton 2007). Yet the majority of people in this industry are not employed in explicitly creative roles. Drawing on in-depth interviews with advertising practitioners inside and outside creative occupations, I find that shared cultural omnivorousness shapes creative employment directly, by signaling creative potential to employers, and indirectly, by motivating people to pursue creative occupations. Then, using an original, national survey of advertising practitioners, I statistically test whether these forms of cultural omnivorousness mediate the relationship between class background and creative employment. I conclude by discussing theoretical implications for research on creativity, the role of culture in occupational attainment, and the early origins of career choice.

WHO IS CREATIVE?

Historically, creativity has been considered an individual activity. The subconscious component of creativity lends itself to being subjectively experienced as natural, an individual "gift" from an unidentifiable source. Scientific studies of creativity, most commonly conducted by psychologists, locate it in the minds of select individuals. Over the last sixty years, psychologists have developed instruments that attempt to define the "creative personality type." At last count, over twenty years ago, more than 255 such instruments had been designed

(Torrance and Goff 1989). While this view continues to shape the perspective of most modern psychologists and the general public (Weisberg 2010), empirical applications are plagued by a lack of construct validity (Hocevar 1981), predictive validity (Cropley 2000) and face validity (Zinkhan 1993), and run counter to strong experimental evidence (Amabile 1996). Importantly, they neglect the social factors that shape perceptions of individual difference.

Other scholars conceptualize creativity as a facet of the social world; however, they often go to the other extreme by emphasizing social structure and devaluing individual characteristics. Sociologists have conducted extensive research on networks of artistic and intellectual worlds, underscoring how creativity is mobilized by systems of intersecting relationships (Becker 1984; Collins 1998; Fine 1992; Godart and Mears 2010; White and White 1993). Yet efforts to identify the optimal social network position for creative output have failed to reach a consensus: Some argue positions on the periphery are ideal (Perry-Smith 2006; Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003; Schilling 2005) while others advocate being closer to the core (Becker 1970; Hargadon 2005) or somewhere in the middle (Cattani and Ferriani 2008; Dahlander and Frederiksen 2012). Since creative production remains an uncertain enterprise—“nobody knows” which cultural products will be a success (Caves 2000) and “all hits are flukes” (Bielby and Bielby 1994)—studies have focused on how uncertainty is managed through over-production (Hirsch 1972), information-sharing (Godart and Mears 2010), and signaling (Jones 2002). Social psychologists have joined this conversation, analyzing the effects of organizational environment on creative outcomes (e.g., Amabile 1996; Ford 1996; Woodman et al. 1993). Yet variation at the individual level remains unexplained.

This article applies a sociological lens to individual variation in creative employment. I examine occupational outcomes because creativity is notoriously difficult to define and

operationalize at the individual level: “What creativity is, and what it is not, hangs as the mythical albatross around the neck of scientific research on creativity” (Prentky 2001: 97). Sixty years of psychological assessments are fraught with the aforementioned shortcomings. A large part of the problem with extant approaches is that they ignore the social process of assessing whether a person or product is creative (Elsbach and Kramer 2003; Guetzkow et al. 2004; Kasof 1995). By examining creativity as a cultural construct rather than imposing an *a priori* definition, I overcome these difficulties. My interest is not in the cognitive activity or ability itself, but in how people come to be recognized as “creative.” By analyzing the process of entry into these occupations, I highlight the subtle inequalities underlying how the designation “creative” is evaluated and attained.

Entering Creative Employment

In labor markets, people are matched to jobs through supply-side factors, such as individual choice, and demand-side factors, such as employer selection. Yet these factors are seldom studied in conjunction. Status attainment research historically focused on the former. The highly influential Wisconsin model posited that significant others (such as parents) shape children’s goals and aspirations through socialization, which in turn shapes occupational attainment (Sewell et al. 1969). This explanation, however, was called into question in the mid-1970s, when scholars realized that black and white students had similar aspirations but very different levels of attainment (Portes and Wilson 1976). What followed was a turn in the other direction: an emphasis on institutional context and opportunity structures to the neglect of individual motives and choice (Kerckhoff 1989). Termed the “new structuralism” (Baron and Bielby 1980), this research emphasized the demand-side of labor markets (for a review see

Breiger 1995). From this perspective, occupational attainment was the result of structural limitations and gatekeepers' selection criteria rather than socially-acquired motives (Kerckhoff 1989).

Cultural capital theory brings culture to the center of this discussion, adding a much needed integration of employer selection and individual choice. Cultural capital refers to widely-shared cultural forms—such as tastes, cultural interests, and styles—that confer social advantages and are transmitted intergenerationally. Notably, it is the *shared* quality of these cultural forms that marks their salience as “capital” (Bourdieu 1984; Lareau and Lamont 1988). As an unequally distributed resource, cultural capital shapes employers' selection of job candidates through embodied cultural similarities—such as a shared appreciation for highbrow cultural forms like classical music—that serve as grounds for evaluation of merit (Bourdieu 1984; DiMaggio 1987; Lamont 1992). At the same time, cultural capital is a product of class-privileged socialization that shapes individual choices and aspirations through socializing experiences with what is considered legitimate culture (e.g., playing the piano), themselves the result of parents' financial resources (buying a piano) and cultural capital (valuing musical instruction). Such socialization not only predisposes an actor to acquire and use cultural capital, but provides a seemingly natural affinity for the places or “fields” where this capital can be invested to yield social profits (Bourdieu 1977; Lareau and Lamont 1988).

Empirical research uses cultural capital theory to study both processes, yet these literatures are relatively distinct. Based on Bourdieu's (1984) study of French taste and consumption practices in *Distinction*, cultural sociologists have devoted considerable time to testing the relationship between highbrow taste and occupational attainment. Scholars have found that selection criteria used by gatekeepers varies cross-nationally (Lamont 1992); in North

America, taste associated with high-status occupations includes a broader range of consumption practices than originally hypothesized, described variously as “omnivorous” (Peterson and Kern 1996), “multi-cultural” (Bryson 1996), and “cultural variety” (Erickson 1996). At the same time, educational scholars, drawing on Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1990) analysis of the French educational system in *Reproduction*, follow DiMaggio’s (1982) extension of the Wisconsin model. Such research has demonstrated that socialization that exposes children to highbrow culture has positive effects on various aspects of academic achievement (Aschaffenburg and Maas 1997; DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; Kaufman and Gabler 2004). Yet the lack of a dialogue between these two literatures obscures the fact that cultural capital shapes occupational outcomes both as a resource valued by employers and as an aspiration guiding choices.

Integrating insights from both literatures, I build a conceptual model of omnivorous cultural capital transmission, which I suggest provides distinct career advantages in 21st century America. Building from Bourdieu’s (1984) original model that linked class background to occupational attainment via highbrow taste and socialization (Figure 1, Panel A), I extend observations about the “omnivorous” nature of contemporary cultural capital to childhood socialization and examine its impact on a new occupational outcome, creative employment (Figure 1, Panel B). I posit that omnivorous cultural capital shapes creative employment in two ways: directly, through employer selection, and indirectly, through individual choice. In the following sections, I develop a theoretical case for these paths.

~Insert Figure 1 Here~

Employer Selection: The Role of Omnivorous Taste

Omnivorous cultural capital matters for entry into desirable occupations. Bourdieu (1984) famously argued that cultural capital (in his time, highbrow taste) could be converted into wealth by highlighting its association with occupational status. Such a relationship exists, he theorized, because shared taste facilitates social bonding: “Taste is what brings together things and people that go together” (Bourdieu 1984: 241). More recently, research has examined *how* contemporary cultural capital (in our time, omnivorous taste) shapes occupational status. In a study of the private security industry, Erickson argues that business-related culture is a source of distinction in the private sector and that having a variety of non-work-related cultural interests is useful only because it increases the chance of shared interests with colleagues (Erickson 1996). In a study of elite professional service firms—management consulting, investment banking, and corporate law—Rivera (2012) refines this argument by focusing on the hiring transaction. Finding that cultural interests shared by job candidates and interviewers produced positive evaluations, she argues that hiring can be conceptualized as a process of cultural matching. In the industries she studied, cultural matching was based on time- and resource-intensive leisure pursuits such as sailing and tennis, leading her to conclude that upper-middle class culture determines which cultural interests are valuable. Ultimately, she follows Erickson’s argument that omnivorous taste is valuable because it increases the chance of shared interests with evaluators.

Creative occupations are different from previously studied fields in an important way—they have different “rules of the game” or logics that privilege different symbolic resources. According to Bourdieu (1984), society is stratified by two hierarchies, one economic and one cultural, each with their own elite. The private security guards studied by Erickson (1996), as well as the bankers, consultants, and lawyers studied by Rivera (2012) occupy positions in the

economic hierarchy, which is stratified by market value. As such, the content of culture that function as “capital” in these fields—e.g., leisure activities like sailing (Rivera 2012) and business publications like *Forbes* magazine (Erickson 1996)—reflects this logic by displaying wealth and economic interest. In contrast, cultural fields are stratified by a logic that prioritizes *form* or style over *function* or content (Bourdieu 1984). For example, a painting is valued based on how it is composed (the form) not what is composed (the function). As a consequence, I expect that the cultural matching in cultural fields differs from that in economic ones because the similarity in question is based on the *form* rather than the *content* of culture. To my knowledge, there have been no empirical investigations of how omnivorous taste shapes access to desirable jobs in cultural fields like creative occupations.

Omnivorous taste may help explain entry into creative occupations by serving as the basis for cultural matching. Selecting employees for creative positions is a difficult task, since traditional indicators of competence like credentials have less relevance (Mears 2013) and the traits that purportedly identify creative individuals are not easily observable (Malakate et al. 2007). As a result, such assessments often rely on implicit theories of what a creative person should be like. For example, screenwriters whose behavior matched the stereotype of artists as “quirky” were seen by Hollywood executives as more creative because they fit this stereotype (Elsbach and Kramer 2003). Among participants in the for-profit creative sector, an omnivorous form of cultural consumption is linked to conceptions of creativity (Deresiewicz 2015; Johnston and Baumann 2007; Lloyd 2010; Vangkilde 2013). In line with the long-standing Western ideal—from polymaths in ancient Greece to the multi-talented Renaissance man—these contemporary members of the creative class find multiple and distinct cultural interests “integral to establishing a unique creative identity” (Florida 2002: 13). In these fields, creative identities

are forged through omnivorous cultural consumption (Bookman 2013) and firms encourage employee creativity by promoting omnivorous cultural pursuits (Lloyd 2010; Vangkilde 2013). Whether omnivores are actually more creative is unclear, since this consumption-based ideal contradicts other stereotypes of creative people (e.g., “starving artist”) and can indicate indifference (Ollivier 2008), failure (Zuckerman et al. 2003), or a lack of commitment (Leung 2014). More likely, omnivorous taste is interpreted as creative potential because, much like “brilliance” in the French educational system (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979) or “dedication” in elite professional firms (Rivera 2011), evaluators that share this form of cultural consumption view this similarity as a signal of merit (Bourdieu 1984; Lamont and Molnar 2002; Rivera 2012). Thus, I expect that omnivorous taste increases the chance an individual will be employed in a creative occupation through similarity to the existing creative workforce.

Individual Choice: The Role of Omnivorous Socialization

Not only is omnivorous cultural capital a valuable signal to gatekeepers, it is also a powerful motivator. Parents transmit their values, interests, and tastes to their children through socialization, predisposing them to acquire and use certain symbolic resources like cultural capital. Children then choose to enter fields that reward these resources, a process described as a “natural affinity” by individuals and a “natural talent” by observers (Bourdieu 1977). In particular, socialization that exposes children to elite culture—experienced primarily by those from privileged class backgrounds—has lasting effects on educational choices (e.g., DiMaggio 1982; Wildhagen 2009). For example, children of the economic elite are more likely to choose to study economics and law, where their commercial knowledge and skills are most useful, while the children of cultural elites are more likely to choose majors, like the humanities, that reward

their cultural knowledge (Van de Werfhorst et al. 2001). While such effects can likely be extended to occupational choice, empirical assessments of the impact of cultural socialization beyond educational attainment are scarce (Rivera 2012). This is a regrettable omission, since we can only understand the accumulation of cultural capital—and thereby, its effects on social inequality—by considering its trajectory over the life course (Aschaffenburg and Maas 1997).

Class-privileged childhood socialization may shape creative employment indirectly, by providing the motivation to choose a creative occupation. Middle-class parents transmit skills to their children through a process called “concerted cultivation.” A crucial part of this process is spending leisure time in organized activities arranged by adults such as cello lessons or club soccer (Lareau 2003). Parents say they encourage these activities in order to foster their children’s creativity by “exposing” them to a wide variety of experiences (Weininger and Lareau 2009). Whether this actually fosters creativity better than the working-class “accomplishment of natural growth” is unclear, because working-class children have more unsupervised time and opportunities to be imaginative and invent their own forms of entertainment. However, there does not need to be a causal connection between this exposure (henceforth, “omnivorous socialization”) and creativity for individuals to attain rewards. People need only *believe* in the power of omnivorous socialization for them to realize benefits in the form of enhanced potential for creative employment. By providing exposure to a wide range of cultural experiences, omnivorous socialization may increase an individual’s likelihood of appreciating diverse forms of culture (omnivorous taste) as an adult. Thus, through omnivorous socialization, I expect that the children of middle-class parents are more likely to possess omnivorous taste and choose to pursue occupations in which it is rewarded because they believe they have an affinity for such work.

In this article, I propose and test a model of creative employment through the lens of cultural capital theory. Using advertising as a case study, I analyze in-depth interviews to uncover how omnivorous taste and socialization shape creative employment through employer selection and individual choice. I then use nationally representative survey data from this industry to test the extent to which these forms of cultural omnivorousness mediate the relationship between class background and creative employment. I conclude with a discussion of my model's contribution to the literature on creativity, culture, and occupational attainment, and the origins of career choice.

RESEARCH DESIGN

My research design employs mixed methods, using a concurrent triangulation strategy (Creswell 2013) to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data. Specifically, I integrate qualitative insights from interviews with a quantitative analysis that tests my conceptual model. In doing so, I maximize the scope and depth of my analysis, as well as address falsifiability (Denzin 1989; Flick 1992). I built my sample from one industry (advertising) in order to observe relationships within a field (Erickson 1996), as well as control for extraneous variation (Eisenhardt 1989).

The analysis proceeds in two parts. I begin by examining how employers select creative employees and why people choose creative jobs. While theory and research suggest that cultural capital shapes both processes, a complete explanation emerges through the specification of mechanisms, the “cogs and wheels of the causal process” (Hedström and Ylikoski 2010: 50). Once I identify the mechanisms by which culture shapes entry into creative occupations, I apply structural equation modeling techniques to nationally representative survey data from this

industry to test whether they mediate the relationship between class background and creative employment across a larger sample of the population (Maxwell 1998).

Research Setting

The advertising industry is an ideal case in which to examine how people enter creative occupations. The division of “creative” and “non-creative” work is relatively well-defined within this industry. Every full-service advertising agency has a department called Creative Services, whose employees go by the moniker “creatives.” While clearly creative thinking also occurs outside these walls, this department houses the people widely regarded as creative within the organization. Most advertising practitioners, however, are not employed in this department. Client management or *Account Services* is the largest department, accounting for 25 percent of the workforce. Other well-represented occupational categories include administrative support (20 percent), management (11 percent), and business operations specialists such as market researchers and strategists (8 percent) (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013). These advertising practitioners differ from creatives in their career advancement strategies (McLeod et al. 2011), self-presentation methods (Morais 2007), how they evaluate aesthetic objects (Koppman forthcoming), and how they define “good” advertising (Fox 1997). Pre-established boundaries ease the analytic burden of specifying which employees are recognized as creative.

The advertising industry also allows for a strong test of my conceptual model. Much like architecture (Jones 2010), product design (Mattarelli and Tagliaventi 2013), and software development (Metiu 2006), creative work in advertising is considered desirable and afforded relatively high status—so much so that members of the creative department use informal closure strategies to exclude others from contributing to creative tasks (Article 3). The presence of

differences between occupational sectors in an industry where creativity is highly valued indicates that differences would be even larger if advertising creatives were compared to professionals in industries where creativity was not highly valued.

Additionally, the nature of this labor market eliminates organizational advancement as an alternative explanation. In advertising, creatives rarely rely on formal organizational structures to further their careers, as they are not typically promoted within organizations. Reputation and creative awards serve as the basis for offers from competing agencies with more “creative” reputations (McLeod et al. 2011), making hiring the key site through which creative employment is attained. Outside the creative department, advancement follows a more traditional corporate model of intra-organizational promotions based on seniority and performance.

Sample

I drew a random sample of full-service advertising agencies in the United States, stratified by organizational size, from the *Standard Directory of Advertising Agencies* (2012) (henceforth, “Agency Red Book”), a commonly used sampling frame for the advertising industry (see Cohen and Broschak 2013). For each sampled agency, I sent a personalized email to the organization contact listed in the Agency Red Book. Organization contacts were typically upper-level management (e.g., CEO, CFO, COO). I sent two emails: an initial invitation asking them to forward the survey invitation to everyone in their organization and a reminder one week later. I offered respondents a report of survey findings and the possibility of winning a \$50 giftcard to Amazon.com as incentives. I successfully sent requests to 600 organizations. Unfortunately, I am unable to precisely calculate the response rate because, by IRB mandate, the survey is completely anonymous at the individual level. Given that the survey asked respondents about

information that is generally not publically shared within organizations (e.g., salary, personal feelings about their organization), anonymity was also needed to elicit truthful responses. I am, however, able to calculate an approximation using IP addresses. Of the 600 organizations contacted, 202 unique IP addresses were used to access the survey, for a response rate of 34 percent. I received responses from 405 people, which for a total response rate of approximately 39 percent at the individual level.³ Of these individuals, 334 people completed the entire survey, for a complete response rate of 32 percent. This is above the average 20 percent response rate for an email survey (Kaplowitz et al. 2004), especially considering the survey's length (more than 70 questions). To assuage concerns about demographic representativeness, I compared my sample with industry averages from the 2013 *Current Population Survey* (CPS). According to this source, my sample is demographically representative of U.S. advertising practitioners in age (CPS 40.4 median; sample 40-49), gender (CPS 53 percent female; sample 51.5 percent), and race (CPS 75.8 percent non-Hispanic white; sample 82.5 percent).

Interviews were conducted with a subgroup (N=41) of this larger sample. Following the completion of the initial survey, I asked respondents if they were willing to be contacted further

³ I requested contacts forward the survey to their whole organization, but it is unlikely everyone complied. A study of email forwarding behavior found that only 18-56 percent of emails requesting to be forwarded were (Phelps et al. 2004). In my sample, only 42 IP addresses were used more than once, indicating that only 21 percent of the 202 initial contacts forwarded the email to their colleagues. Whether they sent the email to all their colleagues or a few is unknown; as a conservative estimate of my response rate, I assumed the former. Cross-referencing IP addresses with email addresses collected in a separate database not linked to survey responses, I identified the 42 organizations that forwarded the email and their size in the Agency Red Book. The sum of all organization sizes that forwarded the email was 878. Summing this with contacts that did not forward the survey but took it themselves (160) produces 1038 potential respondents.

about the study and 111 respondents said yes. Later, when I contacted these respondents with an interview request, 41 scheduled interviews (36 percent response rate). I conducted an additional 13 interviews (attained through personal contacts) with a purposive sample of advertising practitioners employed in the industry's most competitive sector in Manhattan, NY (total N=54). I asked all 54 informants questions about their decision to enter advertising and whether they had been involved in hiring decisions. Informants with experience hiring entry-level creative (N=36) or other roles (N=37) were asked additional questions about how their agency selected new employees. Interviews, averaging 25 minutes in length, were conducted in-person, by video chat on Skype, and by phone in 2012 and 2014. Table 1 summarizes interviewee characteristics, including occupation, organizational size, industry tenure, the subject of their bachelor's degree, when they were interviewed, whether they were involved in hiring, and whether they were survey respondents. In all, half of my informants worked in Creative Services (N=27), seven in Account Services, fourteen in management, and six in administration or business operations.

~Table 1 ~

I found little evidence of response bias. The mean organization size in my sample is 31; according to my survey's categorical measure, the median for all responding organizations and the subset of that forwarded the email is between 25 and 49. As shown in Figure 2, respondents were geographically distributed across the country. Responses from firms with more than two respondents are represented by black circles; those from firms with fewer than two are represented by white ones. The Mid-Atlantic region, Los Angeles, and Chicago—places with the highest concentrations of firms—had the highest concentration of responses. Respondents from organizations that forwarded the email do not significantly differ from respondents from organizations that did not on any key variables.

~Insert Figure 2 Here~

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Interview Procedures

To understand how cultural capital shapes creative employment, I rely on the interview data. Informants who reported experience hiring for entry-level jobs in creative or other roles were asked questions about employer selection (e.g., “What do you look for when hiring entry-level copywriters and designers?”). All informants were asked interview questions about individual choice (e.g., “How did you get into advertising?” and “Why did you choose this occupation?”). To avoid leading the informants, I did not directly ask about early life or parental influences on their decision to enter advertising, since I wanted to leave open the possibility that they might not consider them important. Instead, I used follow-up questions to probe further when they mentioned related concepts on their own. Relying on this strategy, 34 informants described early life influences (26 from creative departments, 8 from other departments) and 23 described parental influences (18 from creative departments, 5 from other departments). The fact that 26/27 of informants in creative positions, but only 8/27 from other departments, mentioned early socializing experiences in their interviews *without being explicitly asked* strongly suggests that socialization was involved in this process. Interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed verbatim.

Analytic Strategy

I used a grounded theory approach to analyze interview data. I began by open coding the interview transcripts of informants with hiring experience using *Atlas-ti* 6.2, seeking to

understand how employers selected entry-level employees for creative and other roles. The reoccurring themes identified by this stage of analysis were aggregated into the following higher-order categories: cultural similarity, passion, business skills, abstract thinking, and interpersonal skills (see Appendix A, Table A1 for coding examples). Although I began by coding any mention of culture (e.g., tastes, interests, and styles), I soon realized what was sought was culture that was *shared*—of the 30 informants that used culture to evaluate aspiring creatives, 27 described it as valuable due to similarity with themselves or their firm. I used these categories in the second stage of coding, finding that cultural similarity was the most commonly evoked criterion for hiring entry-level creatives. In the third stage of coding, this category was refined by what cultural similarity meant and how it was used. In line with Rivera’s (2012) study of bankers, consultants, and lawyers, I found that cultural similarity worked through the cognitive, emotional, and (to a lesser extent) organizational processes. In contrast to her study, the cultural similarity in question was based not on shared cultural interests but shared cultural omnivorousness.

I followed a similar process to analyze the mechanisms underlying individual choice, although in this case I analyzed interview transcripts for all of my informants. While examining why they chose to enter advertising in my initial stage of coding, I noticed that their explanations were patterned by orientations to work rewards that are known to shape career choice (e.g., Johnson 2002). For example, people chose to enter their advertising because it provided intrinsic rewards like creativity, extrinsic rewards like economic compensation and professional status, altruistic rewards like the chance to help others, and social rewards like friendship (see Appendix A, Table A2 for coding examples). Using analytic coding, I classified all of my informants’ choices by these work rewards. I found that “creativity” was the most common motivating factor

regardless of occupation. Economic compensation and professional status were the second most common reward for job holders outside creative departments, while social rewards were for those inside. Given that “creativity” was the most prevalent and theoretically interesting motivator, I used selective coding to examine variation in its meaning, origins, and priority.

Employer Selection

How do employers select creative employees? Given the glamour and mystique of advertising, there are many more would-be Mad Men than positions. Employers described frequent experiences with applicants who they deemed “untalented,” “uninteresting” or “ill-suited.” For example, a creative director described a recent experience trying to hire a copywriter. Despite an enthusiastic response to his job posting, he found the majority of candidates disappointing. “There’s a reason a lot of these people aren’t working: they’re not that talented,” he explained. Likewise, another creative director expressed frustration with the lack of “interesting people” evident from his experience interviewing a large number of candidates who “have really nothing to say about life.” “They [job candidates] watched *Mad Men*,” an agency owner complained, “and they think it’s just all fun. ‘You guys just sit around and you create stuff and you throw spit wads.’” Given the surplus of job candidates, the hiring process became a crucial mechanism for occupational sorting.

While the literature generally views cultural signals as “unproductive” and thus nonessential to the hiring relationship (Tilly 1998), in a situation of high uncertainty where traditional markers are considered largely irrelevant, evaluators rely on cultural similarities as an indicator of merit (Rivera 2012). No degrees are necessary to enter advertising and evaluators further devalued standard indicators: “I tell students all the time, your GPA or your diploma is

like the last thing I look at, if ever,” a creative director reported. “No one really cares that much about your resume, and how long you’ve been [working],” explained another. Instead, as shown in Figure 3, cultural similarities were the most frequently invoked criterion for evaluating candidates for creative jobs—more so than abstract thinking, presentation skills, and interpersonal skills (see Appendix A, Table A1 for coding examples). When evaluating candidates for jobs outside creative departments, by contrast, interpersonal skills were the most frequently invoked criterion.

~Insert Figure 3 Here~

The cultural similarities valued by evaluators of aspiring creatives were not based on the *content* of cultural interests, but rather *how* they were experienced. While investment bankers, management consultants, and corporate lawyers favored candidates with whom they shared upper-middle class interests like golf or tennis (Rivera 2012), evaluators in this field favored candidates with whom they shared a way of consuming culture. Two-thirds of my informants with experience hiring creative employees described how cultural omnivorousness—manifest in diverse tastes, interests, and styles—influenced their evaluation of potential creative skill. Cultural omnivorousness was valued through evaluators’ assessment of a candidate’s merit (mentioned by 71 percent), emotional responses to a candidate’s work (58 percent), and explicit consideration of compatibility with the firm’s “personality” (38 percent).

Assessments of merit: Using the self as a model

Culturally omnivorous tastes and interests were interpreted as a signal of potential creative skill by evaluators of aspiring creatives. To be successful in the creative department, you needed more than a command of business culture (Erickson 1996)—you needed a broader

interest in the world and a desire to acquire a diverse array of knowledge. As an agency president explained,

I don't hire very many people who have advertising degrees. Because they think they know everything. They've been taught the processes and procedures about advertising. Then you have people they've studied anthropology, or journalism, or English or Spanish, those people, they have what's most important. *They have diversity of knowledge and also a quest for knowledge.*

Evaluators used their own omnivorous taste as a frame through which a candidate's creativity was interpreted. Like bankers and consultants (Rivera 2012), evaluators inside creative departments used themselves as models of merit. They figured that since they were creative, candidates that were similar to them were also likely to be creative. In the example below, a creative director described his approach to interviewing candidates for entry-level positions:

It doesn't matter, a copywriter, designer, [they need] a tremendous intellectual curiosity. A lot of times, one of the first questions I will ask is 'Do you read? What do you like to do in your own time? What are your hobbies?' Because you can tell a lot about someone, about their own intellectual curiosity. We're artists at the end of the day and I like the fact that when I go into Barnes & Noble, like if you were to look at the magazines I take out or the books I'm reading, they are all over the place because I want to know about everything.

He expressed preference for diverse cultural genres ("the books I'm reading are all over the place") is the result of his curiosity ("*because* I want to know about everything"). This evaluator specifically looked for candidates who shared his mode of cultural consumption. He had omnivorous taste in books and sought a similar quality in employees. To him, this mattered above and beyond the role (copywriter or graphic designer) the candidate sought to fill. This method of assessment was even used by evaluators outside creative departments, who drew on personal experience with people they considered creative. For example, an agency vice president described how she looked for candidates that were "creative sponges for the world

around them.” “That’s what makes them interesting people,” she explained. “We have some creative people here who play accordion in alternative bands. We have people who like to make films on the side. That’s the kind of thing we look for.”

Omnivorous interests beyond cultural consumption signaled merit in the same way. For example, a creative director described his method of evaluation in the context of his own circuitous path to advertising. “I studied artificial intelligence,” he explained, but “halfway through my degree I tried to change to politics.” This abrupt shift led him to a self-realization, “I realized at an early age that I’m a generalist. I like to know a little about a lot of things.” This experience informed his evaluation of job candidates: “The biggest problem I find is that the young people that come into the industry do degrees in advertising and filmmaking, and I don’t care about that stuff.” Instead, he sought entry-level candidates who like himself, were interested in many different things: “What is lacking in the people that we see coming into the business is knowledge of the classics, understanding of archaeology, degrees in artificial intelligence. People with that level of information about the world have more to say, more interesting things to say.”

While cultural omnivorousness signaled creative potential for the vast majority of informants, this signal worked through cultural similarity. Most evaluators favored candidates that were omnivores like themselves, but there were exceptions in which, through cultural similarity, creative potential was attributed to the opposite form of cultural consumption—deep investment in a small number of cultural interests. For example, a graphic designer asserted, “I always think it’s important to know the fine arts basics, like the drawing and typography I took in art school.” Taking typography as an example she explained, “They [the professors] wrote the fonts. They didn’t type fonts. So, it just makes us more knowledgeable about how spacing

should look. Once you know those basics, then you can go as crazy as you want.” Her emphasis on cultural depth rather than breadth, while rare in my sample, is aligned with the view that dominates higher education in art—that “technique” and “visual fundamentals” are prerequisites to creativity (Singerman 1999). Such variation suggests that cultural similarity, more than anything intrinsically creative about omnivores, underlies the link to creativity.

Emotional reactions to work: Listen to your heart

Cultural omnivorousness was also assigned value during the assessment of a candidate’s work, through their use of diverse styles. Along with a resume, candidates for creative positions submitted portfolios or “books” containing examples of past work. Those lacking professional work would use “spec ads,” personal projects that highlighted design or writing capabilities. Portfolios were, first and foremost, evaluated for their use of a mix of diverse styles. “A lot of portfolios will be focused in a single style, but I love to see people with different styles, with writers and designers,” a creative director explained. Another creative director illustrated the point through the following example:

I’m looking for an ability to change tonality...don’t become Tom Cruise, be Sean Penn. When you see Tom Cruise in a movie it’s Tom Cruise as a lawyer, Tom Cruise as a fighter pilot. But when you see Sean Penn in a movie it’s like the difference between Jeff Spicoli in *Fast Times at Ridgmont High* and the guy in *Dead Man Walking*. The guy just totally erases himself and puts himself into the role.

Even evaluators from firms specializing in one industry (N=7) and one client (N=2) expressed this preference for diversity. For example, a head copywriter whose agency worked solely in pharmaceutical advertising described how he looked for candidate portfolios that displayed “flexibility.” “I try to make sure there’s a mix, you know? I want headlines in there that are

more playful, and then I want some that are more direct and clinical.” Serving clients from multiple industries was thus not necessary for valuing diverse styles.

Evaluators used their emotional reactions to diverse styles as an indicator of creativity. For example, a copywriter described how she was “drawn to” candidates whose portfolios had “a good range” and a creative director asserted he knew immediately when a candidate was “not talented” because “everything in their portfolio had the same tone, all their designs felt very familiar.” “I just say ‘Wow, I would have done that.’ You’re looking for that kind of spark,” a creative director explained. “If they’ve taken an approach or a style that I haven’t seen before, that’s what really gets me excited.” Through these affective responses, diverse styles were equated with creativity: “Creativity’s hard to define, but I look at it as something different,” explained a creative director. “I get a gut feeling when I look at something and I see enough of those differences in a portfolio, I know this is the kind of person we’re talking to.” Similarly, another asserted, “Most people will kind of lean on the same technique they’ve done all the time, but really good people will come up with really fresh ideas.” When I asked how he identified “really good people,” he responded “It’s tough. You just kind of get a feel for them.”

Although diverse styles were usually seen as a signal of creative potential, this was not universal. As one creative director explained, when she evaluated portfolios she looked for a consistent style: “I look for a flavor...I like to have a sense of the person who is writing. I love to have a sense that they inject something of themselves into their work.” In the same intuitive way (i.e., “a sense of the person”) as other informants, she preferred a single consistent style, even though she too worked with clients in multiple industries. An exception in my sample, her response is aligned with a prominent definition of creativity in fine art, in which the hallmark of success is a distinctive, independent style (Sgourev and Althuizen 2014; Simpson 1981). Again,

this suggests that the link between omnivorousness and creativity is driven more by interpersonal connection than omnivorousness itself.

Compatibility with the firm: Different like me

The explicit consideration of a candidate's perceived similarity or "fit" with the firm's existing workforce reinforced the preference for cultural omnivores. Members of creative departments saw themselves as "different" and "interesting" and therefore favored candidates who were different and interesting like them. As an art director explained,

They [job candidates] have to work well with us. Everyone that you're working with has similar insights and they're able to tap into culture inside the office and outside in similar ways that you can. Everyone's in a similar mindset, in such a way that you read something online or in a magazine, and you just decipher in a different way than normal. It's just a different way of looking at the world.

In addition to signaling creative potential, omnivorous tastes and interests were valued because they suggested that the candidates saw themselves as "different" in the same way as evaluators. For example, a creative director described how he and his colleagues were different because they were cultural omnivores: "You're surrounded by people who care about different kinds of art and music and fashion, clothing, all that stuff. Other places where I worked, people are buttoned up and sort of guarded. Here is the polar opposite." To him, hiring was about looking for people who fit this mold. Notably, my informants explicitly stated that this preference was not, as other scholars have argued (e.g., Erickson 1996; Rivera 2012), because such diversity increased the chance of shared interests with applicants. As a copywriter explained, "Having an interesting personality is important, *even if that person is not like me*. I'm not saying the greatest personality but something that makes you interesting."

Similarly, the consideration of the fit of a candidate's work with the firm reinforced preferences for stylistic diversity. Evaluators often described their firm's work as "different" and sought employees who could produce the same kind of different work as they did. For example, a creative director explained, "We look at it [the portfolio] and we say, 'Would they be a fit for us?'" Since his firm was "edgy," he looked for candidates whose work used diverse styles: "We do work that's pretty edgy, so can they be versatile? Can they have an illustrative style? Can they go kind of dirty and do things that are organic, as well as something that looks like it's been tuned by a computer?" Likewise, another creative director described how he first asked himself, "Is there a feeling that the kind of work they do is the kind of work that my agency is doing? We're looking for a type of work that is very creative, unique, some people use the word 'edgy.'" When seeking work that was "creative" like his agency, he explained, "I'm looking for a lot of different solutions. I'm looking for different ways to stop people."

Notably, when asked about hiring outside the creative department, fit with the firm was the *only* form of cultural similarity mentioned by informants. Unlike evaluators of candidates for creative jobs, these evaluators emphasized "fit" because, they said, shared interests maximized their enjoyment of shared time. Like the evaluations of bankers and consultants (Rivera 2012), fit was considered important because it determined whether the candidate would make a good office mate and travel companion: "Account management, you have to fit in with the majority of people personality-wise, because you have to be able to share space, to travel together," an agency president explained. In short, cultural similarity's role when hiring for jobs outside Creative Services appeared to be more similar to its role in consulting and banking than in creative departments.

In summary, the large number of individuals seeking to enter creative occupations meant that those hired had to successfully signal their creativity to potential employers. In this context, evaluators assigned little value to traditional signals of merit such as grades, degrees, or work experience. Instead, they preferred candidates who were cultural omnivores like themselves. Although omnivorousness was regarded as a signal of creative potential, it was interpreted through similarity to evaluators and had social origins, as I show in the following section.

Individual Choice

Where does cultural omnivorousness come from? While creativity is often regarded as a “natural talent,” the omnivorous culture that serves as its signal is shaped by social experience. As shown in Figure 4, when asked why they entered the field, advertising practitioners from all lines of work were more likely to mention “creativity” than motives like compensation, prestige, or sociability (see Appendix A, Table A2 for coding examples). Creativity was, however, assigned different meaning, origins, and priority by those employed in creative occupations and those who were not. Members of creative departments defined creativity as a general skill, evidenced by their early experience with (often multiple) cultural interests unrelated to advertising (e.g., painting, architecture, film)—interests they cited as proof of their natural affinity for their current occupation. Practitioners in other departments by contrast defined creativity as a “fun” and “exciting” work environment of the industry itself, which was often secondary to economic or professional motivations.

~Insert Figure 4 Here~

Inside the creative department

For members of creative departments, creativity was defined as a general competency which they possessed. When I asked an art director how he attained his current position, he first corrected me: “I see myself more as a ‘creative’ than as an ‘art director.’ We’re trying to not settle into being either an art director or a copywriter, we’re trying to be creative.” He then answered my question, stating, “I knew *it was what I was*, what I always wanted to do.” To him, creativity was a competency he viewed as an essential part of himself. This creativity was expressed as being more a general skill that crossed domains than a specific ability that required expertise and intense effort in a specific domain (e.g., Becker 1984). A similar view was reported by a creative director:

Most of the creatives I’ve talked to will say if you have this ability to be creative, like you’re really good at this, but you’re not good at all at most anything else. It’s the only thing I’m good at. [Laughs] You’re at a job that highlights this thing and God forbid it ever goes away, I’ll be sweeping streets, because it is a very specific skill.

He spoke of creativity as a competency that was general in its applications, but specific in the sense that it defined him, so much so that he saw his career choice as a lack of choice.

Members of creative departments described creativity as a predisposition they had from early age, evidenced through their interest in multiple cultural pursuits that were not advertising. Such interests included creative writing, art, design, filmmaking, music, architecture, art history, comedy, literature, painting, photography, poetry, printmaking, product design, and woodworking. Only a minority (11/27) actually described interests directly related to their current jobs (e.g., a copywriter interested in writing). More frequently (18/27), informants described more than one pivotal interest (mean = 2.3) in which there was *no* direct link between the interest and their occupation: “I had always wanted to be a filmmaker” (Creative Director); “As a kid, I was always interested in architecture” (Graphic Designer); “I was in a rock band in

high school, I wanted to be a musician” (Creative Director). For two-thirds of these informants, such interests were supported by their parents’ investment of time and resources. “When I was young, my parents were very supportive of me being creative. Like always in creative writing and they were putting me into you know, summer programs, or whatever sort of creative programs,” a graphic designer recalled. Similarly, a creative director recounted, “My parents always encouraged creativity in general. They always appreciated it and encouraged it and had patience for me when I wanted to show them the latest thing I’d made.”

By defining creativity as a general skill, the link between these disparate cultural interests and current occupations came to be seen as a natural affinity. For example, a graphic designer described a childhood attraction to computer programming (“In eighth grade I was learning how to make websites”), a college degree in film (“I wanted to be a writer of TV shows”), and his first job in the music industry (“I love music, so I was working at this record label”). He made sense of this path through his predisposition to general creativity: “I’ve always had that knack, I just have a lot of creativity to offer.” Similarly, a creative director recalled: “I used to write quite a bit for fun. Paint some. Make things...It’s something I’ve always knew that I had and that I enjoyed. I [just] didn’t know where in business I’d be able to apply that creative energy.” In his eyes, writing, painting, and making things were all evidence of an underlying skill that had driven him to advertising. Likewise, an art director explained, “I knew it was what I always wanted to do. I was always painting and like, you know, constructing things. My father’s an architect, my mother’s an interior designer, so I’ve always wanted to get into a similar field.” His decision to enter advertising was motivated by early cultural interests and his parents’ occupations. Even though constructing, architecture, and interior design did not seem directly

related to his current job supervising the creative team's graphic designers, they provided (at least from his perspective) evidence he was well suited for a creative occupation.

Outside the creative department

Outside the creative department, most (21/27) informants also described how their decision to enter advertising was motivated by the desire for "creativity" but there were notable differences in the meaning, origin, and priority of this motivation. To these informants, "creativity" was attractive because it made work "fun" and "cool." As a vice president explained,

Advertising really suited me really well. I knew that I did not want to work with numbers or science. I liked being in a creative environment. It was a kind of a robust kind of environment with people that were expressive and verbal and out there and interesting... being around creative people is fun.

Compared to occupations involving "numbers or science," she saw advertising as attractive because of the "creative environment." Given that math and scientific jobs often require considerable creativity, her explanation suggests she was motivated by the environment she associated with creativity rather than viewing it as a competency she necessarily had.

By and large (25/27), these informants did not see their decision to enter advertising as the fulfillment of an early interest in a cultural pursuit. Instead, advertising itself was the motivating interest. "It was a fun industry, I just liked the thought of being able to talk to people and create," explained an agency president. Only a quarter asserted that early life experiences drew them to advertising and when they did, their responses emphasized the industry itself: "I was interested in the creative culture of the industry. As a kid, I was just always interested in advertising culture. It was just being exposed a lot to interesting TV spots" (Account Executive). "I've been fascinated with advertising since I was 16, 'cause for my sixteenth birthday, my

mother got me this coffee table book called *Advertising Today*,” an account planner explained. “It seemed like a fun, cool, dynamic industry to work in.”

Unlike members of creative departments, they did not describe their occupational choice as a natural affinity. While most informants mentioned the intrinsic rewards of creativity, for many these were combined with economic and professional motives, mentioned by 20/27 informants (see Figure 4). The “excitement” of advertising was frequently combined with an interest in economic compensation. For example, an agency president was attracted to advertising during her initial encounter as a model: “I was hired to represent different brands and I just thought, ‘Wow, this is kind of cool.’” Eventually, though, she entered advertising for financial reasons: “I was getting a broadcast journalism degree, because I thought I wanted to work on-air....but I found out that marketing people have much better cars.” Similarly, a desire for professional status was often combined with an attraction to the industry. As an agency owner recalled: “I was the marketing manager for a company and I managed a million dollar budget, but I wasn’t on a growth path on the corporate side and it wasn’t particularly creative. And I managed an ad agency and I realized they were having a lot more fun than I was.”

Advertising practitioners both inside and outside creative departments reported being drawn to advertising for its “creativity” yet their respective decisions to enter the industry were markedly different. Outside the creative department, informants described an attraction to the advertising industry’s “creative environment,” an attraction rarely rooted in early life and typically secondary to economic and professional motivations. Informants in creative occupations by contrast accounted for their choices by describing early predispositions for often multiple cultural interests unrelated to advertising. Through these early socializing experiences, informants in creative positions developed a view of themselves as “creative” in a way that

matched the definition of creativity widely accepted in the field of advertising. These informants' beliefs that they were broadly "creative" largely because of multiple cultural interests would not likely function as capital in all creative domains—for example, in a field emphasizing technical competence such as ballet. In order to earn social profits, they rather had to invest their "capital" in a field where it was valued.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Measurement

Thus far my analysis has shown that the cultural capital valued in advertising is not directly related to business (Erickson 1996) or upper-middle class culture (Rivera 2012) but is instead omnivorous. It suggests furthermore that the possession and profitable investment of this capital lies in early cultural experiences that instill a view of creativity as broad exposure, what I term "omnivorous socialization." Primary survey data allows me to test whether omnivorous taste and socialization mediate the relationship between class background and creative employment. The key concepts that constitute this argument are operationalized below.

Endogenous variables

Creative employment. My survey instrument used department names indigenous to the advertising industry to demarcate creative employment. Eight broad categories were included: Creative Services, Account Services, Media, Interactive, Operations, Planning, Production, and senior management. Creative Services describes the agency's artists, which include graphic designers, copywriters, illustrators, and their managers: art directors, copy supervisors, and creative directors. Given that employees in smaller agencies frequently have more than one job function, my survey asked for a departmental affiliation and, if applicable, a secondary

affiliation. Since my primary interest is whether respondents were able to earn the organizational designation of “creative,” I included both primary and secondary affiliations in my measure of creative employment, which was coded “1” if either the primary or secondary affiliation was Creative Services and “0” otherwise.

Omnivorous taste. Omnivorous taste is defined as “choosing a large number of distinctive tastes or activities” (Peterson and Kern 1996). This definition is based on Bourdieu’s assertion that “Nothing more clearly affirms ones ‘class,’ nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music” (Bourdieu 1984: 18). My survey instrument used the same wording for this question as the most commonly used data source to study omnivores: the 1993 General Social Survey (GSS) question on whether respondents “like” a particular musical genre. “Liking” musical genres, “passing knowledge” (Van Eijck 2001) or “weak culture” (Schultz and Breiger 2010) functions as a signal of status in a way stronger affinities do not.

Scholars disagree over whether measurement of omnivorous taste should emphasize the quantity or distinctiveness of musical genres (Warde et al. 2008). Most studies use the former approach, called *omnivorous taste by volume*, counting the number of musical genres each respondent likes (e.g., Erickson 1996; Fishman and Lizardo 2013; Peterson and Kern 1996). However, this operationalization does not take into account how distinctive selected genres are from one another: classic and contemporary rock, for instance, are not as distinctive as classic rock and opera. This is especially important given that, in my qualitative analysis, evaluators of potential creative employees emphasized difference more than quantity. To account for genre distinctiveness, I created a co-occurrence matrix of musical preferences using data from a

nationally representative dataset, the General Social Survey's (1993) Culture Module.⁴ The resulting matrix was symmetrical, with the total number of likes for each genre running along the diagonal. I converted this matrix into a cosine similarity matrix, presented as a heat map in Figure 5. Musical genres frequently selected together by the same respondent are considered similar and are represented by a lighter square (e.g., oldies and contemporary rock); musical genres rarely selected together by the same respondent are considered distant and are represented by a darker square (e.g., opera and heavy metal).

~Insert Figure 5 Here~

Relying on this cosine similarity matrix and my person-level data, I used a modified version of Porter and colleagues' (2007) measure of Integration—i.e., a scientific paper's integration of knowledge from diverse disciplines—to account for what I term *omnivorous taste by distinctiveness*. This index incorporates not only the variety of categories—in his case, subject categories describing references in a paper's bibliography—but their cognitive distance using a cosine similarity matrix based on the co-occurrence of subject categories from the population of Thomson Reuters Web of Knowledge articles. Porter's measure is a particular parameterization of the Sterling Index:

$$\sum_{ij} s_{ij} p_i p_j$$

where p_i is the proportion of referenced papers in subject category i and s_{ij} is the similarity between subject categories i and j based on the cosine similarity matrix (Rafols and Meyer

⁴ A newer dataset with this question is available from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (2008), but includes fewer musical genres. To ensure distinctiveness did not change considerably since 1993, I calculated the QAP correlation between cosine matrices from both sources, finding they were highly correlated ($r=0.92$).

2010). To convert this to a measure of distance rather than similarity, the total from the formula above is subtracted from 1. This creates a score that ranges from 0 to 1 and increases as more, unrelated subject categories are referenced. To use this index to measure the distinctiveness of a person's musical taste, p_i is the proportion of all musical genres "liked" by a respondent that a given genre i represents (e.g., if a respondent liked two genres, p_i is always $\frac{1}{2}$; if a respondent liked four genres, p_i is always $\frac{1}{4}$) and s_{ij} is the similarity between musical genres i and j , based on my cosine similarity matrix.

Omnivorous socialization. Omnivorous socialization is a latent construct measured by three observed variables: (1) the number of types of organized *activities* (e.g., organized sports, music lessons, community service, and martial arts) the respondent participated in as a child, (2) the number of types of cultural *events* they attended as a child (e.g., art galleries, street fairs and the rodeo), (3) the number of types of family *vacations* they went on as a child (e.g., Disneyland, national parks, and historical sites). The specific items used to measure each observed variable are listed in Appendix B. For all three socialization processes, "omnivorous" was operationalized using the number of different options chosen by the respondent as a continuous variable (Peterson 2005).

The measurement model for this latent variable is presented in Table 2. Only two factor loadings are estimated because one must be set to "1" to scale the latent variable (Bollen 1989). Both factor loadings are relatively large and statistically significant at $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed tests). The model is just-identified, which means that the number of parameters estimated is equal to the

number of data points in the sample covariance matrix.⁵ Just-identified latent variables are advantageous because they are more stable than over-identified ones; their one and only solution does not depend on what other variables are included in the model (Little et al. 2002).

~Insert Table 2 Here~

Exogenous variables

Father's occupation. Occupational data for this study were collected using the scale for occupational categories inductively derived by Peterson and Simkus (1992), based on the respondent's father's occupation when the respondent was fourteen years old. This scale was developed as a critique of aggregations used in existing class schemas. For instance, the categories used by the U.S. Census lump physicians and exotic dancers under the category "professional." Other commonly-used occupational schemas have similar limitations (for a thorough review of occupational classification schemas see Bergman and Joye 2001). In contrast, Peterson and Simkus (1992) group together occupations with similar job conditions, cultural competencies, and social skills into twenty categories, thus incorporating volume (e.g., high or low) and composition (e.g., cultural or economic) of capital, which I aggregated further into seven categories: professional (e.g., architects, lawyers, doctors), cultural (e.g., teachers, social workers, and artists), technical (e.g., software developers, accountants), service (e.g., barbers, waiters, firemen), managerial, sales, and manual. Aggregation involved combining two levels of the same category (e.g., "high managerial" and "low managerial" were combined into "managerial"). I used an even more aggregated measure that distinguishes only between

⁵ Global goodness of fit indices (e.g., CFI, TLI) are not presented because they have no meaningful interpretation for just-identified models. Such indices assess the validity of over-identifying restrictions that just-identified models, by definition, do not have (Reichardt 2002).

working-class (manual and service) and middle-class occupations (professional, cultural, technical, managerial, and sales) in the main models as well as two robustness checks that used the more refined categories aligned with Bourdieu's predictions (e.g., cultural and professional occupations). Although my survey contained a similar question about mother's occupation, 35 percent of respondents had mothers who did not work outside the home, which was common for women from all social classes for the time period covered by this analysis. Given that dropping this category would introduce a large number of missing values, I chose not to include mother's occupation in my analysis.

Father and mother's education. Research on work and the family has generally focused on father's occupation as the determinant of class (Mortimer 1976), however, parental education has been found to affect cultural capital more than occupation or income (DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; Hughes and Peterson 1983). For this reason, both father's and mother's education were included in this analysis. Each was coded "1" if the respondent reported that the parent in question had a bachelor's degree or higher, and "0" if they did not.

Control variables. Although gender is not the focus of this study, it was included as a control at each stage of the analysis because of its previously documented effects on all three endogenous variables (Lizardo 2006b; McCoy et al. 2010; Nixon 2003; Sherman 2011). To control for the possibility that creative employment was attained through social contacts (Granovetter 1974), I used a dichotomous measure of whether or not a respondent attained their first job in advertising through a referral from a friend, family member, or acquaintance. A dichotomous measure for private art school attendance was used to account for possible effects of elite artistic education. A dichotomous measure of age, coded "1" for respondents over forty, "0" for respondents under forty, was also included. A threshold was chosen because the survey

contained a categorical rather than continuous measure of age, a decision made to ease the burden on respondents in a long (70 question) survey.

Analytic Strategy

To assess the extent to which my conceptual model explains creative employment, I used structural equation modeling (Bollen 1989). This statistical method is ideal because it can incorporate a measurement model for an endogenous variable of interest (omnivorous socialization) and the indirect effects specified by the conceptual model. This process-oriented approach also fits well with the theoretical framework of intergenerational cultural capital transmission.

I present structural equation models estimated in MPlus 7 (Muthén and Muthén 2010), using the weighted least squares means- and variance-adjusted (WLSMV) estimator. WLSMV is robust to non-normality, providing accurate parameters for binary outcomes with clustered samples. It provides linear regression coefficients for continuous outcomes and probit regression coefficients for binary outcomes (Muthén 2010). Mplus uses full information maximum likelihood procedure to estimate models with missing variables; the WLSMV estimator uses a modified version of this procedure (see Asparouhov and Muthén 2010 for a technical discussion). Models run with this missing data procedure and listwise deletion were compared, without significant differences in the results. Models run with the missing data procedure are presented in this article.

Due to model equivalence and other mathematical problems associated with structural equation estimation (MacCallum et al. 1993), a strong rationale for each model tested is crucial. I began by testing the direct effects of class background on creative employment. I then tested

the conceptual model, examining the extent to which the relationship between class background and creative employment was mediated by taste and socialization. Gender was included at each stage because of its previously documented effect on all three endogenous variables, while other control variables were used to assess the robustness of the final results. Covariances between gender and indicators of class background (e.g., father's occupation, father's and mother's education) were constrained to zero, because men and women are equally likely to be born into a given class position. All indicators of class background were positively correlated ($p < 0.05$) in all models presented.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics and a correlation matrix for all observed variables. As a child, the average respondent participated in 4 organized activities, attended 3 types of events, and went on 3 types of vacations. On the average, respondents like almost 6 different musical genres and have an omnivorous taste by distinctiveness score of 0.48—for example, someone who likes rock, oldies, new age, and jazz. Forty-four percent work in creative positions. The sample is equally divided between men and women (approximately 52 percent are female) and between respondents over and under 40 years old (approximately 56 percent are over 40). Forty-two percent of respondents' mothers and 56 percent of respondents' fathers had at least a bachelor's degree, and almost 80 percent of respondents' fathers worked in middle-class (or higher) occupations.

~Insert Table 3 Here~

To test whether the measures of omnivorous socialization are conceptually and practically distinct from omnivorous taste and class background, I examined the correlation

matrix of the observed variables. As shown in Table 3, the correlation coefficients between omnivorous taste by volume and each of the measures of omnivorous socialization are respectively 0.146 (activities), 0.230 (events), and 0.155 (vacations). Correlation coefficients between middle-class fathers and measures of omnivorous socialization are 0.134 (activities), 0.275 (events), and 0.219 (vacations). Omnivorous socialization appears to be analytically distinct from omnivorous taste and class background, although these measures are positively correlated.

Comparisons between my data and nationally representative samples temper concerns about industry effects. In Table 4, I compare the distribution of my novel construct, omnivorous socialization, with similar measures of childhood participation in organized activities from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) (1988) and Lareau's (2003) qualitative work. Although the comparison is crude—the scales are not equivalent and were assessed at different moments in the lifespan (measured during childhood, rather than retrospectively, like in my study)—the standardized proportions are quite similar. I also compare my measure of omnivorous taste by volume with that of the GSS Culture Module (1993) and the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (2008). Results likewise indicate that an industry effect is unlikely.

~Insert Table 4 Here~

Structural Equation Modeling Results

I began by testing the direct effects of indicators for class background on creative employment, none of which appears to be statistically significant (Table 5, Model 1). According to the goodness-of-fit statistics for structural equation models, this model does not fit the data

well: the CFI (Comparative Fit Index), the TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index), and 1-RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) are far from their ideal of 1. Without a significant direct effect, traditional mediation analysis (e.g., Baron and Kenny 1986) might end here. However, most statisticians now agree that an indirect effect can be present without a direct effect due to a suppressor effect (see Hayes 2009; Shrout and Bolger 2002; Zhao et al. 2010), a common occurrence in models, like the one hypothesized here, with more than one mediator (Hayes et al. 2011).

~Insert Table 5 Here~

As shown in Table 5, Model 2, the effect of class background on creative employment is mediated by omnivorous socialization and omnivorous taste. Adding socialization and taste (measured by volume) as mediators provides a better-fitting model. The CFI, TLI and 1-RMSEA are very close to their ideal of 1 (0.995, 0.992, and 0.984 respectively). As expected, the path from taste to creative employment is positive and statistically significant, although the magnitude of the coefficient is modest. Holding gender constant at zero, at the mean of omnivorous taste (liking approximately 6 out of 15 possible musical genres) the predicted probability a respondent will be employed in a creative position is approximately 51 percent. Increasing this by one standard deviation (about 3 musical genres) increases the predicted probability 2 percent. Also as hypothesized, the path from parental class background through omnivorous socialization to taste is positive and statistically significant. For every one unit increase in the latent variable for omnivorous socialization, the expected value of omnivorous taste—specifically, the number of musical genres the respondent enjoys—increases by 0.56. There is no direct path from omnivorous socialization to creative employment (results not shown), only via omnivorous taste.

Omnivorous taste's effect appears to be driven by the distinctiveness of musical genres more than the quantity (see Table 5, Model 3). Substituting omnivorous taste measured by volume with omnivorous taste measured by distinctiveness substantially increases the magnitude of the coefficient, from standardized probit $\beta=0.116$ in Model 2 to standardized probit $\beta=0.174$ in Model 3. Results from this model are presented in Figure 6, without error terms, controls, and intercorrelated exogenous variables for interpretability. Unstandardized estimates are presented due to the presence of binary variables (Muthén 2010). In Model 3, a change from the theoretical minimum (0) to the theoretical maximum (1) increases the odds of creative employment more than 6 times ($e^{1.164*1.6}=6.439$).⁶ While the magnitude of the coefficient for omnivorous socialization decreases in this model (standardized probit $\beta=0.264$ to standardized probit $\beta=0.153$), all other coefficients remain relatively unchanged.

~Insert Figure 6 Here~

To aid interpretation, predicted probabilities associated with the final step of the path in Table 5, Model 3, are illustrated in Figure 7. Holding gender constant at zero (i.e., for men), increasing omnivorous taste one standard deviation from the mean—e.g., moving from someone who likes classical, jazz, folk, and rock to someone who likes new age, blues, rap, and heavy metal—increases the predicted probability of creative employment by 43 percent. Holding gender constant at one (i.e., for women), increasing omnivorous taste one standard deviation from the mean increases the predicted probability of creative employment by 39 percent.

~Insert Figure 7 Here~

⁶ Given the difficulty interpreting probit coefficients, probits were converted to exponentiated logits. This conversion was accomplished using the “1.6 rule:” $\beta_{\text{logit}} = 1.6 \beta_{\text{probit}}$ (Amemiya 1985).

While gender is the focus of another article (Article 2), it is clear from the model that its effects are significant. Women are less likely to be employed in creative positions, but the positive indirect path from gender to creative employment via omnivorous socialization and taste ($p=0.069$) suggests that women may be more likely than men to attain creative employment via omnivorous socialization. To formally test whether these relationships are conditioned on gender, I conducted a multiple group analysis (Kline 2005). When the chi-square from the model with parameters allowed to vary by gender ($\chi^2(38) = 36.382, p = 0.544$) is compared to the chi-square for the model with parameters constrained to be equivalent for men and women ($\chi^2(46) = 41.228, p = 0.672$) the difference is not significant ($\chi^2(8) = 4.846, p = 0.774$). This confirms the model is not conditioned on gender.

Hypothesized paths remain positive and statistically significant with the inclusion of controls for elite artistic training, social capital, and age (see Table 5, Model 4 and Model 5, with taste measured by volume and distinctiveness respectively). While these models have slightly lower model fit indices, the R^2 for creative employment increases. As would be expected, elite art education and age increase the likelihood of creative employment. Social capital has a negative coefficient, indicating that advertising practitioners in creative departments were less likely than their colleagues to use social contacts to get their first job in advertising. While the direction of this coefficient is initially surprising, it reflects the fact that managers are more likely to use social ties to enter advertising than those in other occupations (Koppman 2014).

My results are robust to alternative specifications and measures (see Table 6). While I chose to include gender in all the aforementioned models, due to its established effect on all three endogenous variables, I also ran the model without gender and found no significant differences (Model 6). The effect of father's occupation remains positive and significant using

more refined measures, such as whether the father worked in a “cultural” occupation (e.g., teacher, social worker, artist) or a profession (e.g., architect, lawyer, doctor) (Model 7 and 8). Third, I addressed the relatively low R^2 for organized activities in the measurement model by running the model with the observed variable for number of organized activities rather than the latent omnivorous socialization variable. The paths are robust to this modification (Model 9).

~Insert Table 6 Here~

The path from omnivorous taste to creative employment is robust to an alternative outcome and subsample—creative employment in a high-status firm (Table 6, Model 10 and 11). While prior studies and my qualitative analysis suggest that creative jobs are highly desirable, not all advertising practitioners may want to work in the creative department. Therefore, I tested the best-fitting model on this alternative dependent variable, using a subsample limited to those employed in creative departments. Employment in a high-status firm was measured by whether respondents worked for an agency that had won prestigious awards (e.g., Clio, One Show, and the Art Directors Club), which provide higher salaries and increased visibility (McLeod et al. 2011). Model 10 is specified in the same way as previous models; however, according to goodness-of-fit statistics it does not fit the data well. Due to this lack of fit, I re-specified the model. In Model 11, the best-fitting model for this dependent variable, the path from omnivorous taste to creative employment is positive and significant (probit $\beta=0.061$, $p=0.029$).

To assuage concerns about implicit causal ordering, I conducted supplemental analyses. I directly tested the alternative explanation that network positions inform creativity (Burt 2004) and taste (Erickson 1996) by re-specifying the model to include a reciprocal effect between creative employment and taste, as well as a path from network position as “broker” to creative employment. To measure brokerage, I asked respondents to list four friends (i.e., friendship ties)

and four people they would ask for advice on a project (i.e., advice-seeking ties), and to specify relationships between those listed. Respondents with relationships to people not otherwise connected were “brokers,” a desirable position for creativity (Burt 2004). Although structural equation modeling cannot offer a definitive test of causality, the direction and significance of the effect of taste on creative employment were robust to this inclusion.

A final supplemental analysis provides support for the cultural matching mechanism, showing that the positive effect of omnivorousness on creative employment is stronger in organizations with a more culturally omnivorous workforce. In my qualitative analysis, cultural omnivorousness was interpreted as a signal of creative potential through similarity—evaluators sought job candidates who were cultural omnivores like themselves. To statistically test these homophilic tendencies, I examined the extent to which organizational-level omnivorousness moderates the relationship between individual-level omnivorousness and creative employment. While a multilevel approach would be ideal, my data do not have a sufficient number of clusters with the number of observations needed to reliably fit multilevel models. Instead, using a subsample limited to respondents from organizations with more than one respondent, I re-specified the model to include a variable for organizational-level omnivorousness, which was coded “1” if organizational mean was greater than the overall mean and “0” otherwise. As expected, the interaction between omnivorous taste at the organizational level and the individual level was positive and significant (probit $\beta=0.490$, $p < 0.01$).

CONCLUSIONS

This article proposes and tests a novel path from class background to creative employment through a labor market process of cultural matching. Using qualitative data, I

illustrate two ways omnivorous culture shapes the matching of people with creative jobs: directly, through employer selection based on omnivorous taste, and indirectly, through individual choice rooted in omnivorous socialization. Using quantitative data, I test my conceptual model, confirming that these cultural processes create inequalities in access to creative occupations. Taken together, I find the way firms select new candidates for creative jobs reduces the diversity of this workforce, even though contact with diverse others is thought to enhance organizational creativity (Ancona and Caldwell 1992; Kanter 2000; Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003).

My findings have implications for research on creativity. Despite a vast literature, we know little about how creativity is evaluated in real world settings (Elsbach and Kramer 2003; Malakate et al. 2007). By studying creativity as a cultural construct, I explore what it means to those who value it highly. In this context, I find that creativity is understood as a general skill signaled through omnivorous culture. Such an understanding actually goes against much of what we know about creative fields: that success requires extensive and deliberate practice (Ericsson et al. 1993), that production depends on collectives of individuals with specialized skills (Becker 1984), and that producers that specialize experience enhanced employability (Faulkner 1983; Zuckerman et al. 2003). Furthermore, I find that the evaluation of a job candidates' creative potential is based on interpersonal processes—a definition of merit in one's own image, gut reactions to work, and explicit evaluations of “personality” fit—rather than identification of individual traits. Both findings highlight the need to move beyond standard psychometric and laboratory-based studies of individual creativity, which treat social context as a “contaminating” influence to be controlled, to approaches that treat it as central to the process (Elsbach and Kramer 2003; Kasof 1995).

My results also contribute to the debate on the role of culture in occupational attainment. While the positive correlation between omnivorous taste and occupational status is well-documented (see Peterson 2005 for a review), scholars disagree over whether omnivorous taste is actually used to gain entry into desirable occupations, particularly in corporate settings (Erickson 1996; Lamont 1992; Rivera 2012). In a study of private security, Erickson (1996) argues that elites do not use culture to gain advantages in the workplace unless it has a direct application to the job involved. More recently, Rivera (2012) argues that they do, through a process of cultural matching in which evaluators favor job applicants who, like themselves, participate in upper-middle class culture. Bringing this question to a cultural field, I show how omnivorous taste shapes creative employment by serving as a signal of creative potential. In my study, evaluators sought creative employees with similar forms of cultural consumption and used that similarity as an indicator of potential skill. In this context, similarity was manifest in the omnivorous way culture was consumed (e.g., I like capoeira and opera, you like ballet and heavy metal) rather than the specific cultural content (e.g., we both like tennis). This suggests that in the creative industries, omnivorous taste is used to gain entry to desirable occupations and that it is not, as others have argued (Erickson 1996; Rivera 2012), because it increases the probability of shared interests—omnivorous taste itself is the shared interest. Such findings suggest that similarity in the form rather than content of cultural consumption differentiates cultural matching in cultural labor markets from that in economic ones. In economic fields, cultural matching is based on the content of shared interests, which display wealth and economic interest (Rivera 2012; Erickson 1996). In cultural fields, cultural matching appears to be based on the *form* of cultural consumption, which displays the preference for form over function said to characterize the cultural elite (Bourdieu 1984).

Finally, my findings extend knowledge on the early origins of occupational choice. Bourdieu famously argued that the cultural capital necessary to enter desirable occupations originates from class-privileged familial socialization, yet, to my knowledge, this relationship has been unexplored since. This study highlights how patterns of childhood socialization, studied in education (e.g., Bodovski and Farkas 2008; Lareau 2003) shape adult taste and occupational status studied in the sociology of culture (e.g., Erickson 1996; Peterson and Kern 1996). Bringing Bourdieu's model of cultural capital transmission to the contemporary United States, I show how middle-class children's participation in a wide variety of cultural activities leads them to possess and value omnivorous taste that becomes a valuable signal of creativity in employment contexts. Such findings build on research that middle-class parents expose their children to diverse leisure activities to further their children's success (Weininger and Lareau 2009) by showing this type of socialization has a positive indirect effect on creative employment. However, this relationship does not occur, as parents claim, so much because this socialization actually makes their children more creative, but more because it makes them more likely to choose to enter fields where they will be recognized as creative by gatekeepers.

I have argued that omnivorous taste works as "capital" by serving as the basis for cultural matching. One might consider the possibility that omnivorous taste is valued because it indicates a candidate's ambiguity tolerance, a dispositional trait that psychologists link to creative performance. I believe this is not the case for two reasons. First, as shown in the qualitative portion of this article, omnivorous taste was not assigned value through the identification of traits, but through an interpersonal process: evaluators selected new hires based on their *own* preferences, gut feelings, and sense of their firm's personality. Second, this interpersonal process was fundamentally based on a preference for the familiar—evaluators liked candidates

who were cultural omnivores like them—a preference considered indicative of ambiguity *intolerance* in the relevant literature (Furnham and Ribchester 1995).

Another plausible explanation is that the value of omnivorous taste is an artifact of the specific job's cultural demands. My quantitative results strongly suggest this is not the case. While liking a large number of musical genres could help in the production of advertisements (the more genres someone likes, the larger the audience they can appeal to), liking the *most distinctive* genres was a stronger predictor of creative employment. Given that advertising is targeted to the general public, one would expect the *most common* combinations—those that resonate with the largest number of people—to be valued. Distinctive tastes are not desirable if the goal is to reach the largest number of people possible. While a person that likes opera and heavy metal is considered “creative” by their peers, they have little in common with the public targeted by advertisements.

Like all studies, this article has limitations that can guide future investigations. Although the processes I observed were interpersonal rather than based on the identification of candidates' dispositional traits, the relationship between these interpersonal processes and the traits identified by the large experimental literature is a potentially rich direction for future research with important practical implications. Ideally, such knowledge would provide organizations with alternative ways to identify people with a high potential for creative insight that do not privilege a particular social group. Additionally, while I advance the argument that individuals enter the industry already possessing this taste, the relationship is likely reciprocal, reinforced through interactions with other members of the creative department. Within creative industries, interaction plays a vital role in assessing who and what is creative (Godart and Mears 2010). Likewise, interaction shapes and is shaped by taste (DiMaggio 1987; Erickson 1996; Lizardo

2006a). Future research should aim to specify the mechanisms that guide causality in the other direction, from creative employment to taste. Finally, there could be a more nuanced way to capture omnivorous socialization than simply quantities of childhood activities. These might include intensity (Schultz and Breiger 2010) or the activities' relative distinctiveness from one another.

While this is a study of a single industry, I expect my findings are generalizable to creative industries beyond advertising, for example, to new media companies that similarly value diverse cultural activities (Lloyd 2010) and video game producers that similarly reward diverse cultural styles (De Vaan et al. forthcoming). Within the cultural field more broadly, I expect labor market matching based on the shared *form* of cultural consumption shapes occupational attainment, although the particular form in question may vary. Conceptions of creativity and omnivorousness are likely linked in the for-profit creative sector because, due to the lack of a widely-accepted body of knowledge and institutionalized training, creatives in these industries have a diverse range of prior work experiences—informants were former musicians, writers (television, film, and poetry), visual artists (painting, book-making, and illustration), and designers (of media, software, and toys)—with little in common except the distinction that they are “creative.” Cultural occupations that do have accepted bodies of knowledge or trainings may be more likely to embrace a definition of creativity associated with a single independent style or “visual fundamentals” and thus value the depth of cultural interests (i.e., a cultural “univore”) over the breadth. For example, Google hires people with diverse cultural interests (Page 2008) but seeks candidates deeply invested in a single pursuit or hobby such as astronomy, Sanskrit, or restoring old pinball machines (Schmidt and Rosenberg 2014). I also expect this process shapes creative recognition beyond employment. For instance, recent work has linked distinctive

combinations of knowledge to visibility in academic science (Leahey et al. 2012; Leahey and Moody 2014; Trapido 2015). A promising direction for future research is to develop a typology of *creativities* to delineate what creativity means and how it is evaluated in different contexts. Such work could identify which meanings prevail in non-commercial contexts and in evaluative practices other than hiring.

The creative class has been hailed as a force for equality and progress, purportedly democratizing the workplace (Florida 2002). By conceptualizing creative jobs as a desirable occupation and examining the way new hires are screened, I show how the evaluative process used to identify creative people limits diversity in these ostensibly open and meritocratic sectors of the labor market. Western businesses and governments, claiming that creative work is central to economic growth, have increasingly called upon prospective employees to demonstrate creative abilities (Lloyd 2010), giving this stratification process the potential to influence employment patterns throughout the society more generally.

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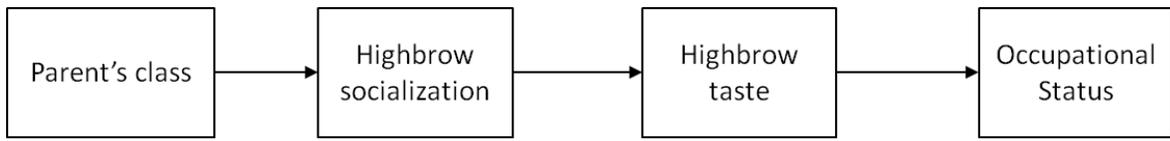
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Figure 1. Comparison of conceptual models

Panel A. Highbrow cultural capital transmission



Panel B. Omnivorous cultural capital transmission

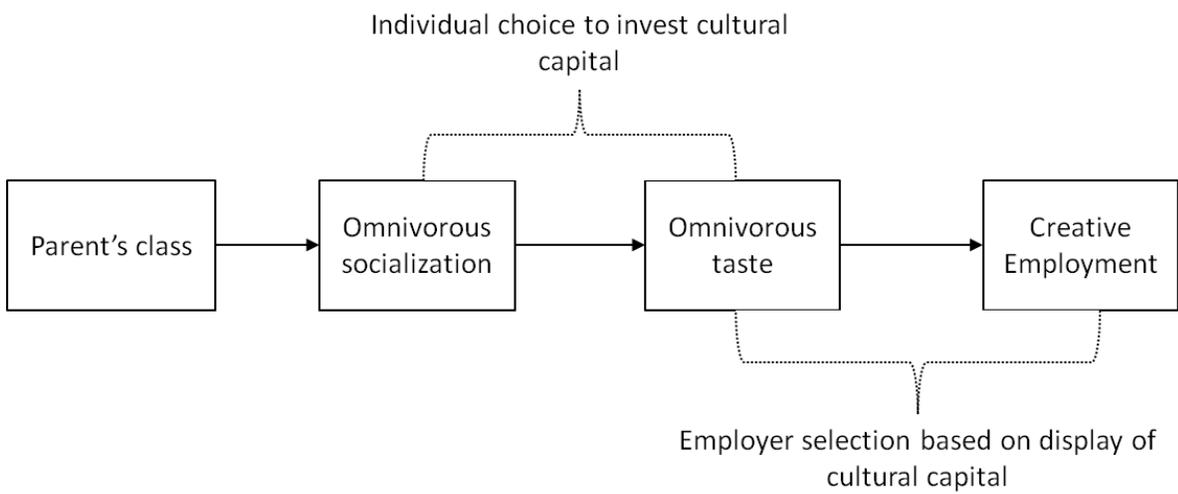


Figure 2. Geographic distribution of survey responses



Figure 3. Number of informants who used each criterion to evaluate entry-level job candidates

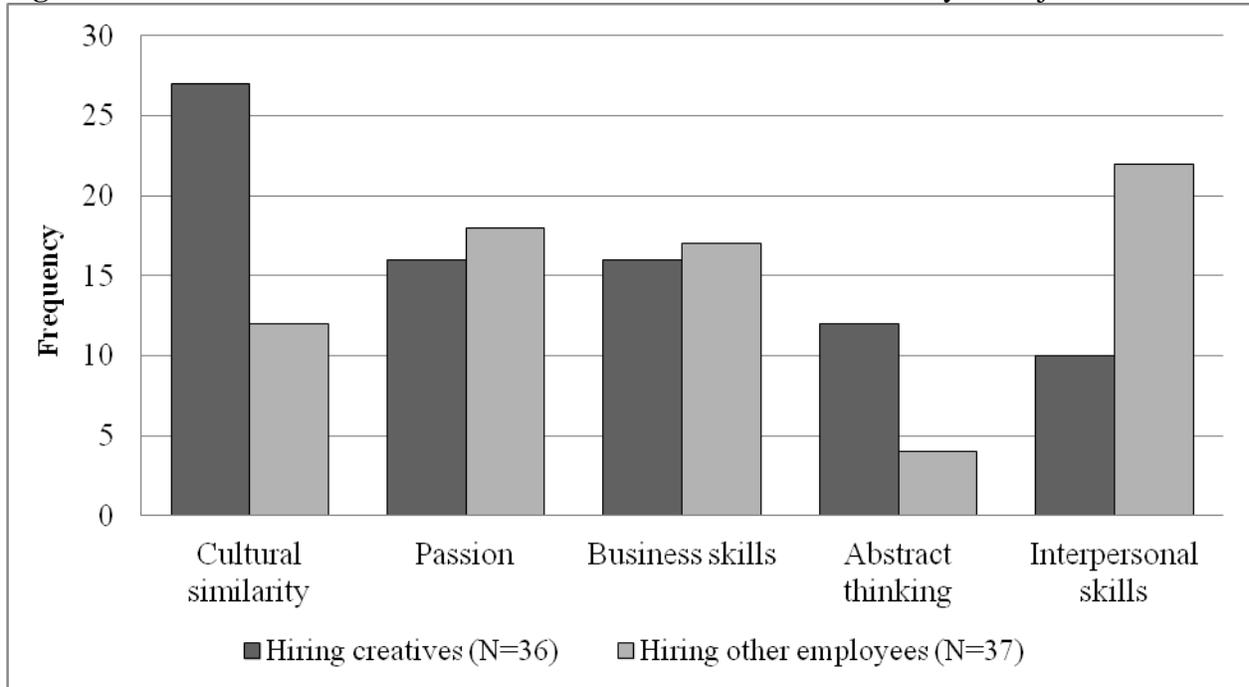


Figure 4. Number of informants who described each motivation as the reason they chose their current occupation

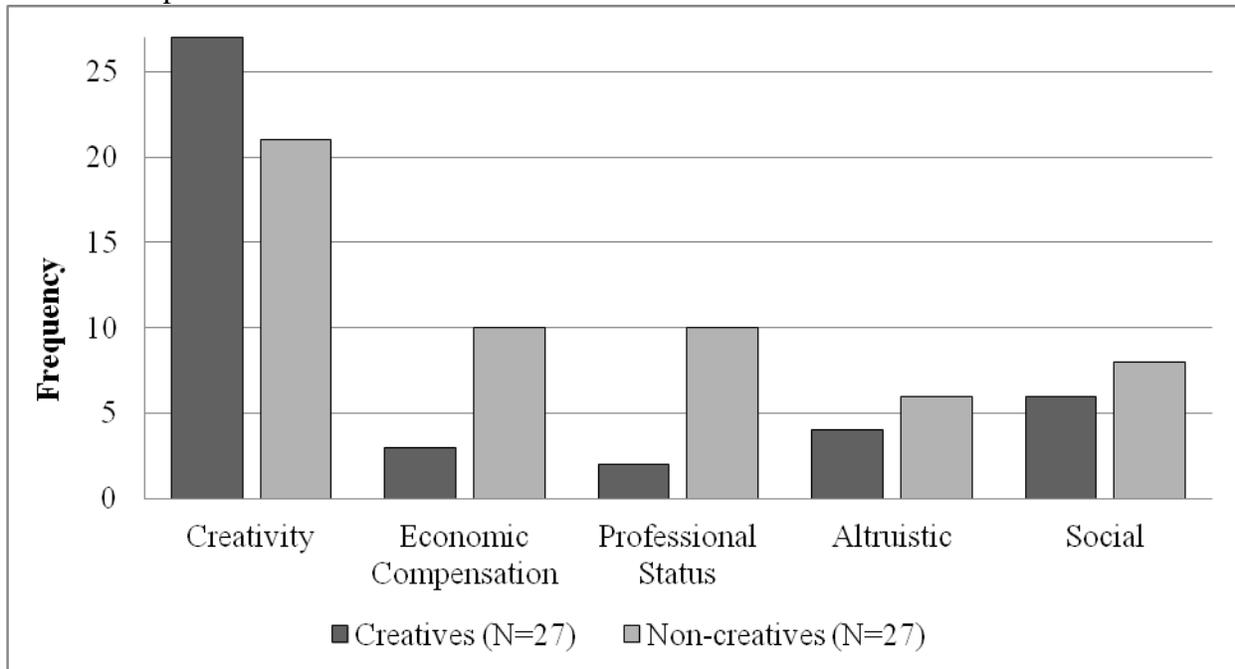


Figure 5. Cosine similarity matrix derived from the GSS Culture Module (1993)

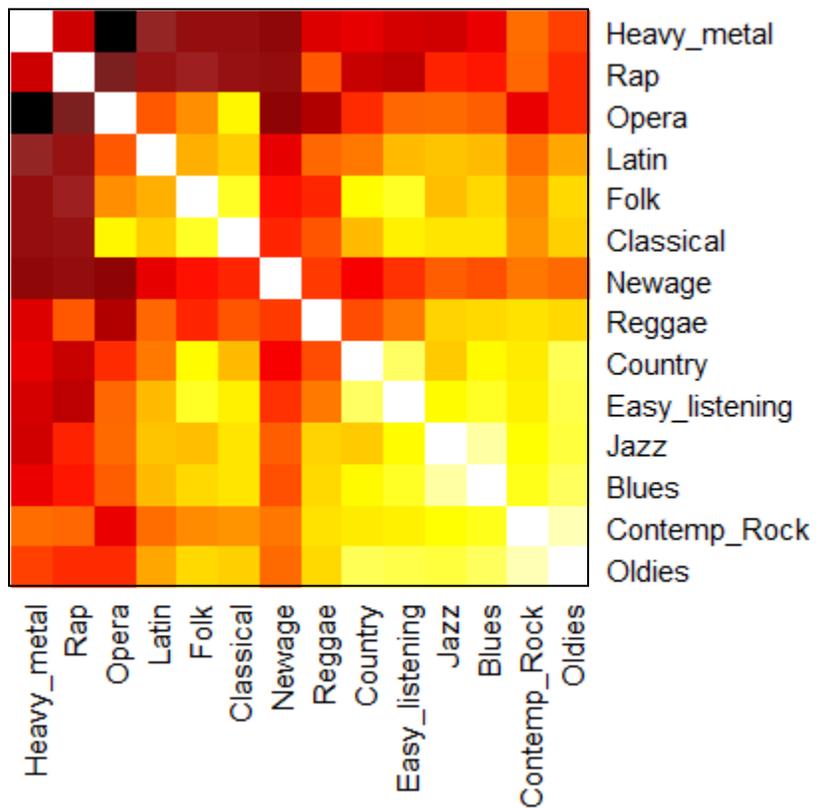


Figure 6. Structural model of class background on creative employment through omnivorous socialization and taste.

Note: Model fit statistics: χ^2 (df)= 27(23) p = 0.261; CFI = 0.989; TFI = 0.983; 1-RMSEA = 0.978. Unstandardized estimates are displayed. ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001 (two-tailed tests).

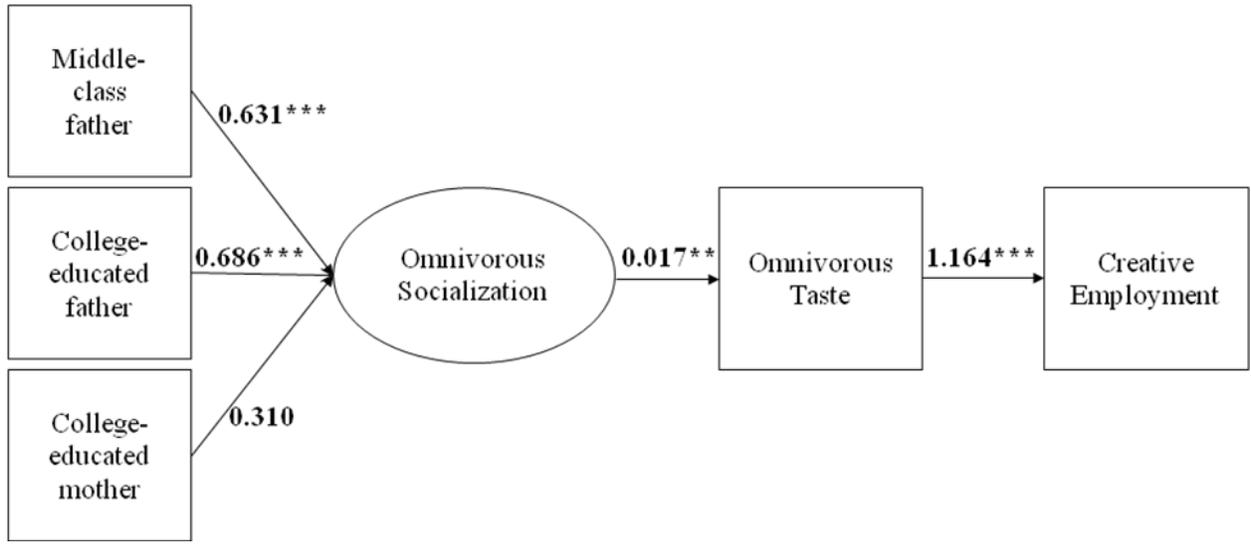


Figure 7. Effects of omnivorous taste by distinctiveness (z-score) on the predicted probability of creative employment. Mean = 0, Min. = -3.2 SD, Max. = 1.6 SD. Computed from probit regression coefficients in Table 5, Model 3.

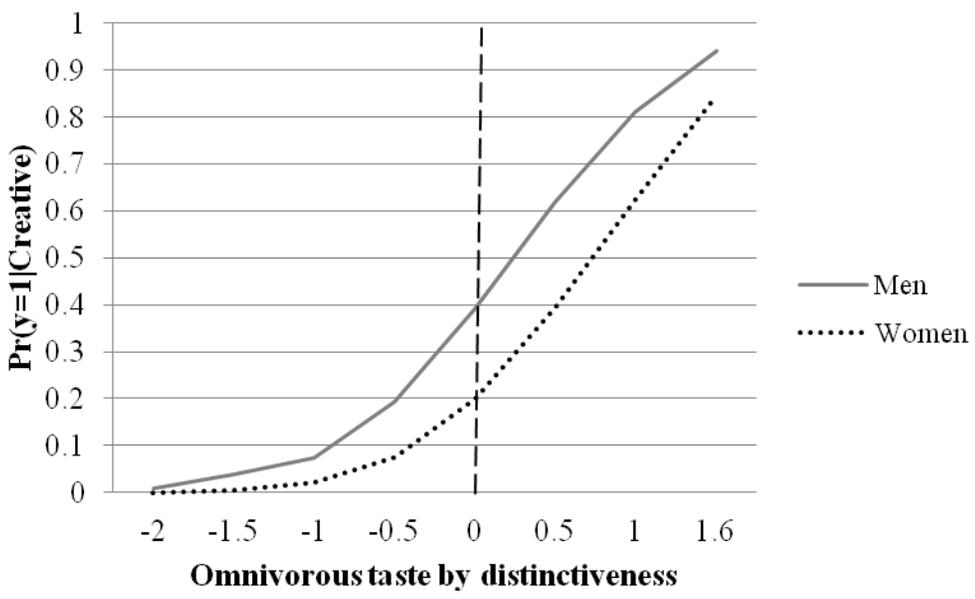


Table 1. Informant Characteristics: Agency Size, Industry Tenure, and Subject of College Degree

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Hired</u>	<u>Hired non-</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>Survey</u>	<u>Agency Size</u>			<u>Industry Tenure</u>			<u>College Degree¹</u>					
	(N=54)	(N=36)	(N=37)	(N=36)	(N=18)	(N=41)	< 11	11-50	51-99	100+	Mean	Min	Max	Art	Hum	Soc	Sci	Sci
Creative Director	16	16	10	8	8	12	4	8	1	3	25.09	2.5	42	5	4	2	1	2
Designer/Art Director	7	3	1	4	3	4	1	1	1	4	4.42	1	8	3	1	0	1	0
Copywriter	4	2	0	3	1	1	1	1	0	2	2.87	0.1	4.5	0	0	2	1	1
President/Owner/ Vice President	14	14	14	9	5	14	6	7	1	0	24.86	13	40	2	3	5	1	2
Account Services	7	0	6	6	1	5	0	1	1	5	7.36	2.5	22	0	1	1	0	5
Other (media, strategy, planning, admin)	6	1	6	6	0	5	1	2	0	3	12.25	0.5	30	1	1	2	0	1

Note: ¹ Five informants did not have a college degree: a designer, an art director, a creative director, an owner, and a marketing consultant

Table 2. Measurement Model: Omnivorous Socialization

	Estimate	S.E.	R-squared
Events	1.000	0.00	0.538
Vacations	1.018***	0.121	0.485
Activities	0.768***	0.111	0.195
Chi-square (T)		--	
Degrees of freedom		0	
N		351	

Note: Model is just identified; *** p < .001 (two-tailed tests)

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1 Creative employment	1														
2 Activities (0-11)	-0.002	1													
3 Vacations (0-8)	-0.004	0.324	1												
4 Events (0-7)	-0.053	0.308	0.511	1											
5 Omniv taste volume (1-15)	0.077	0.146	0.230	0.155	1										
6 Omniv taste distinct (0-1)	0.124	0.084	0.119	0.137	0.758	1									
7 College-educated mother	-0.062	0.093	0.162	0.306	0.045	0.04	1								
8 College-educated father	0.010	0.137	0.270	0.293	0.106	-0.01	0.438	1							
9 Middle-class father	0.050	0.134	0.275	0.219	0.025	0.024	0.224	0.421	1						
10 Cultural occupation father	0.094	0.119	0.027	0.02	0.101	0.094	0.091	0.109	0.121	1					
11 Professional father	-0.04	0.099	0.157	0.088	0.017	-0.04	0.228	0.356	0.306	-0.18	1				
12 Female	-0.342	0.202	0.105	0.096	-0.032	-0.1	0.057	-0.055	-0.063	-0.09	0.109	1			
13 Social capital	-0.100	0.056	0.041	0.067	0.010	-0.01	0.086	0.046	-0.042	0.035	-0.02	-0.01	1		
14 Private art school	0.116	0.003	-0.075	-0.075	0.045	0.026	-0.062	-0.024	-0.063	-0.04	0.036	-0.076	-0.043	1	
15 Over 40	0.152	-0.164	-0.248	-0.121	0.039	0.072	-0.275	-0.136	0.032	-0.07	-0.02	-0.252	0.099	0.038	1
Mean	0.444	4.259	3.079	3.076	5.740	0.483	0.423	0.558	0.795	0.080	0.265	0.515	0.469	0.080	0.559
SD	0.498	2.180	1.795	1.660	2.735	0.150	0.495	0.497	0.404	0.272	0.442	0.501	0.500	0.272	0.497
N	351	351	340	340	334	330	324	321	312	313	313	326	350	349	322

Note: Coefficients > 0.11 significant at 0.05 level (two-tailed tests)

Table 4. Comparisons of Key Constructs with Nationally Representative Data

	This study (N=351)	Lareau 2003 (N=88)	NELS 1988 (N=24,559)	GSS 1993 (N=1,606)	SPPA 2008 (N=5,371)
Omnivorous socialization	0.364	0.319	0.38	--	--
Omnivorous taste	0.383	--	--	0.418	0.254

Note: Standardized proportions are presented. The mean for omnivorous socialization was derived by summing the three indicators and z-scoring the sum.

Table 5. Indirect Effects of Taste and Socialization on the Relationship between Class and Creative Employment: Unstandardized Regression Coefficients and Robust Standard Errors Adjusted for Clustering by Organization

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 3</u>		<u>Model 4</u>		<u>Model 5</u>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>								
<i>Effects on creative employment</i>										
Middle-class father	0.186	0.177	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
College-educated father	0.056	0.12	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
College-educated mother	-0.215	0.17	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Female	-0.813***	0.093	-0.821***	0.091	-0.818***	0.093	-0.814***	0.091	-0.812***	0.092
Omnivorous Taste	--	--	0.043**	0.015	1.164***	0.331	0.045**	0.017	1.17***	0.341
Social capital	--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.264*	0.108	-0.263**	0.108
Private art school	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.494**	0.165	0.494**	0.164
Age: over 40 years	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.354***	0.101	0.335**	0.106
R-squared	0.178		0.178		0.194		0.203		0.256	
<i>Effects on taste</i>										
Omnivorous socialization	--	--	0.556***	0.116	0.017**	0.007	0.597***	0.109	0.021**	0.007
Age: over 40 years	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.549+	0.331	0.033*	0.013
R-squared	--	--	0.069		0.022		0.082		0.036	
<i>Effects on socialization (latent)</i>										
Middle-class father	--	--	0.545**	0.185	0.631***	0.215	0.592***	0.17	0.684***	0.202
College-educated father	--	--	0.721***	0.153	0.686***	0.167	0.721***	0.142	0.672***	0.155
College-educated mother	--	--	0.256	0.186	0.31	0.196	0.195	0.195	0.26	0.208
Female	--	--	0.396*	0.186	0.426*	0.21	0.344+	0.189	0.364	0.222
Age: over 40 years	--	--	--	--	--	--	-0.489***	0.109	-0.508***	0.117
R-squared	--	--	0.210		0.219		0.244		0.247	
Chi-square (T)	112.265		24.996		26.89		51.843		53.955	
Degrees of freedom	26		23		23		36		36	
CFI (ideal=1)	0.775		0.995		0.989		0.955		0.947	
TLI (ideal=1)	0.688		0.992		0.983		0.917		0.904	
1-RMSEA (ideal=1)	0.903		0.984		0.978		0.965		0.962	
N	351		351		351		351		351	

Note: Coefficients are linear regression, except for paths with a dichotomous outcome (creative employment) which are probit. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Table 6. Supplemental Analyses with Alternative Measures

	Model 6 [§]		Model 7		Model 8		Model 9		Model 10		Model 11	
	Alternative measure used											
Father's occupation:	Cultural				Professional				Only activities			
Socialization:	Only activities											
Creative employment:	High-status firm						High-status firm					
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
<i>Effects on creative employment</i>												
Female	--	--	-0.816***	0.091	-0.820***	0.093	-0.805***	0.092	0.216	0.17	--	--
Omnivorous taste	0.027*	0.013	0.046**	0.016	0.038*	0.017	0.042*	0.02	0.040+	0.024	0.061*	0.028
Social capital	-0.282*	0.134	-0.258*	0.109	0.082	0.158	-0.265*	0.105	-0.519**	0.164	-0.455**	0.164
Private art school	0.258	0.218	0.500**	0.166	-0.29+	0.167	0.499**	0.167	0.058	0.212	--	--
Age: over 40 years	0.445**	0.153	0.339***	0.097	0.568**	0.181	0.365**	0.119	-0.219	0.208	--	--
<i>Effects on taste</i>												
Omnivorous socialization	0.828***	0.118	0.664***	0.097	0.560***	0.11	0.203**	0.065	0.535***	0.152	0.488**	0.181
Age: over 40 years	0.806**	0.284	0.626*	0.318	0.512	0.362	0.207	0.35	0.29	0.442	--	--
<i>Effects on socialization (latent)</i>												
Middle-class father	0.538**	0.188	0.359*	0.204	0.967***	0.162	0.588**	0.199	2.531**	0.895	1.007***	0.268
College-educated father	0.489***	0.146	0.900***	0.137	0.143	0.122	0.374+	0.198	-0.838+	0.447	--	--
College-educated mother	0.169	0.183	0.204	0.197	0.258	0.182	0.081	0.28	1.123**	0.43	0.647***	0.17
Female	--		0.338+	0.185	0.400*	0.188	0.583+	0.306	0.792**	0.275	0.782**	0.304
Age: over 40 years	-0.534***	0.111	-0.444***	0.106	0.039	0.183	-0.592***	0.177	-0.652***	0.197	--	--
Chi-square (T)	27.006		58.729		45.764		33.013		58.573		27.354	
Degrees of freedom	27		36		36		18		36		22	
CFI (ideal=1)	1		0.936		0.967		0.927		0.868		0.946	
TLI (ideal=1)	1		0.883		0.94		0.816		0.759		0.912	
1-RMSEA (ideal=1)	0.999		0.958		0.972		0.951		0.937		0.961	
N	351		351		351		351		156		156	

Note: Models were run with the more conservative measure of omnivorous taste.

[§] Female is not included in this model

+ p < 0.1; * p < 0.05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table A1. Coding examples of criteria for evaluating entry-level job candidates

Code	Example
Cultural similarity	"A love of art in general helps, even though its graphic design or whatever. I have a love of architecture and I also love to photograph too." (Graphic Designer)
Passion	"That they [creatives] love what they do, and just want to do good work, that's the most important thing." (Creative Director)
Business skills	"People who are good presenters. Good at explaining why they did what they did." (Creative Director)
Abstract thinking	"You just want to talk to them, to see if they understand certain conceptual things. So I wouldn't say, like, oh if I gave you this brief what would you do off of it? What was the idea behind this, this work?" (Senior Strategist)
Interpersonal skills	"Be able to work with the client...We've had a wonderfully brilliant creatives work here, but then they don't work out because they can't get along with our clients." (Creative Director)

Table A2. Coding examples of motivations for choosing occupation

Code	Example
Creativity	"It was something I kind of got drawn into. It was exciting. New York was exciting and big and that environment [advertising] was exciting...I would say the creative side is the most exciting part" (VP)
Economic compensation	"I worked on a film set as an intern and I was like, 'No, that's not really reliable income.' And the other one I was offered, an internship at a television station, was not enough pay so I was like, 'Let's give an advertising agency a shot.'" (Media Buyer)
Professional status	"By the time I was 20, because I was kind of aggressive and I wanted more responsibility, I handled a \$12 million dollar TV spot budget that my boss gave me. He let me buy the individual spots, all across the country. So it was like, I was in advertising!" (Marketing Manager)
Social	"You're surrounded by people that typically enjoy drinking, and just a lot of good socialization. And even, like the older people, the old soldiers of the company, they'll still be like, 'Hey let's go get a drink, you know, let's go get some dinner'" (Creative Director).
Altruistic	"What I love about advertising is it's about people, how to understand people and help them make the connection between whoever is doing the advertising and the human being on the other end. I guess it was that humanity that is really what drew me there" (Agency Owner).

Appendix B. Survey items used to measure omnivorous socialization

All three measures were developed based on other surveys of cultural activities -- e.g., *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* and *Creative Communities Index* -- and categories were refined through pre-testing on a sample of undergraduates (N=79) and advertising professionals (N=15).

Activities (1-11)

- 1 visual arts (e.g., drawing, painting, ceramics, woodworking)
- 2 theater arts (e.g., school musicals, choir, theater club)
- 3 dance classes
- 4 music lessons
- 5 creative writing/journalism (e.g., school newspaper)
- 6 scholastic (e.g., kumon, math club, chess club)
- 7 religious activities (e.g., youth group, lessons)
- 8 community service clubs (e.g., Interact, Rotary)
- 9 outdoor skills (e g., Girl Scouts)
- 10 individual sports (e.g., skiing, fencing, martial arts)
- 11 organized sports (e.g., baseball, soccer, football)

Vacations (1-8)

- 1 national parks or monuments (e.g., Grand Canyon)
- 2 theme parks (e.g., Disneyland)
- 3 cultural heritage or historical sites (e.g., Colonial Williamsburg)
- 4 camping
- 5 cruises
- 6 resorts
- 7 overseas
- 8 family vacation home or cabin

Events (1-7)

- 1 live sporting event
- 2 rodeo
- 3 county or state fair
- 4 dance performance
- 5 live music performance
- 6 live theater
- 7 art gallery opening

**APPENDIX B – THE GENDER OF GENIUS:
EXPLAINING OCCUPATIONAL SEX SEGREGATION IN CREATIVE FIELDS**

Abstract

In light of the widespread belief that women are the more emotional sex, the gender division of labor in creative fields is surprising. Here, women are less likely to be employed in creative occupations—work generally considered emotionally expressive. I explain this role reversal through an overlooked source of gender inequality, the occupational belief system. Drawing on primary survey data and in-depth interviews from a probability sample of U.S. advertising practitioners, I examine how personal identity characteristics that align with occupational beliefs structure entry and advancement in creative occupations and the extent to which gender moderates this process. I find that identity characteristics that match the occupational ideal of the emotional and solitary creator have significant positive effects on entry in creative occupations only for men and art education has a significant positive effect on entry only for women. Identifying as a solitary creator also has a significant positive effect on advancement only for men. Qualitative data reveal these different paths are sustained through different conceptions of what it means to be creative. Men in creative occupations generally see themselves as creative people, whereas women see themselves as creative professionals, competing conceptions that shape differences in men and women’s relationships to their work, their colleagues, and the field as a whole. In this way, I show how the social process of recognizing creativity contributes to the systematic exclusion of women.

The belief that women are more emotionally expressive than men is widely-held and long standing (Simon and Nath 2004). As a consequence, women are thought better suited for occupations that involve emotions, and work that involves emotional labor is most often performed by women (Folbre 2002; Hochschild [1983] 2003; Wharton and Erickson 1993). Thus, the fact that relatively few women are employed in occupations involved in the production of creative output—work widely-considered emotionally expressive—is surprising. This is particularly unexpected because women form the consumer base of many creative industries (Henry 2009), are more likely than men to participate in highbrow cultural activities (DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; Lizardo 2006), earn relevant degrees in art and design at higher rates (Carnevale, Strohl, and Melton 2011), and match or outperform men at the competencies valued by creative fields, like verbal skills (Correll 2001). Yet, nationally only 32 percent of musicians, 30 percent of television writers, 25 percent of architects, 16 percent of web designers, and 9 percent of film directors are women (A List Apart 2008; Hunt 2013; Rickley 2013; U.S. Department of Labor 2012).

An explanation for this paradox lies in an aspect of creativity largely neglected by contemporary organizational scholars—the social process of valuation. Creativity is defined as output that is novel and valuable, yet studies often assume that novelty is the defining feature (Amabile 1996). However, the production of novelty and its valuation are two distinct processes. As Hargadon (2005: 9) explains, “the creative process requires the ability to rebel against existing ideas and yet wholly commit to a new one, the ability to scoff at existing customs yet ceaselessly promote your own.” In other words, a creative person must not only produce novel ideas, they must also be able to persuade others of their value. While a new idea may be conceived in isolation, the recognition of value is inherently a social process.

In this article, I examine how people are recognized as creative, by themselves and others, a process which I argue drives the occupational sex segregation in creative fields. Firms seeking to enhance their creativity often do so by procuring employees to whom they attribute high creative potential (Elsbach and Kramer 2003). While in theory such efforts rely on assessments of existing products (Caves 2000; Kelley 2007), the quality of past work is often contested or ambiguous. Even if a consensus about high quality exists, there is often widespread disagreement about why work is high quality (Lampel, Lant, and Shamsie 2000). As a consequence, creative potential must be inferred from signals (Elsbach and Kramer 2003), which can themselves conceal subtle mechanisms that inhibit diversity. For instance, a class-based status marker—expressing omnivorous preferences for diverse cultural objects—is considered a signal of creative potential when evaluating candidates for entry-level creative jobs (Article 1). In much the same way, the process of recognizing creativity may lead to the unconscious and unintentional exclusion of women.

To build this argument, I focus on the case of women in advertising. In this industry, only 20 percent of all creative positions (Grow and Broyles 2011) and three percent of senior creative positions are held by women (Windels 2008). Past studies of this industry have credited homophilous networks (Ibarra 1992), organizational policies (Hakim 1998; Martín Llaguno, Beléndez Vázquez, and Hernández Ruiz 2007), and departmental subcultures for this disparity (Alvesson 1998; Gregory 2009; Klein 2000; Mallia 2009; Nixon 2003; Windels and Lee 2012). I argue that underlying same-sex ties and “masculine” subcultures is the gendered process of recognizing creative people.

To do so, I use a mixed methods approach. I begin by using original survey data (N=351) to test whether personal identity characteristics aligned with occupational beliefs that

valorize an emotional and solitary creator shape entry and advancement in creative positions and the extent to which these effects are moderated by gender. I find that women are less likely to enter and advance in creative occupations: there is a sizable negative effect for being female when controlling for variables commonly thought to shape occupational sex segregation, such as gender essentialist ideology. When I add the aforementioned personal identity characteristics, however, the estimate for the effect of being female is indistinguishable from zero.

Building on this analysis, I analyze qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with fifty-four advertising practitioners. I find that informants use two competing definitions to recognize creativity. Most rely on the Romantic view of the *creative person* as an emotional and solitary genius. The alternative definition, more likely to be evoked by women employed in creative occupations, is grounded in the view of the *creative professional* as someone who achieved technical mastery through formal training. These competing definitions shape men and women's relationships to their work, their organizational colleagues, and the field as a whole. Notably, at the field level, creativity is defined by the Romantic view and as such, men who exemplified the creative person archetype were more likely to be recognized as creative. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of this study for scholarship on occupational sex segregation, identity in creative fields, and the social patterning of personal identity.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Creativity has long been of interest to organizational scholars for the benefits it provides employees, such as work satisfaction (e.g., Mirowsky 2011), and organizations, such as improved performance (e.g., Sood and Tellis 2009). Research on the subject has largely focused on the first part of creativity's definition, novelty (Amabile 1996). Scholars have specified

environmental (e.g., Amabile 1996; Oldham and Cummings 1996; Woodman, Sawyer, and Griffin 1993), relational (e.g., Becker 1970; Dahlander and Frederiksen 2012; Perry-Smith 2006; Perry-Smith and Shalley 2003), and social factors (Hargadon and Bechky 2006) that stimulate or impede the production of novelty. Much less attention has been paid to creativity's second component, value (see Fleming, Mingo, and Chen 2007 for a notable exception). This omission is regrettable since without value, a scientific discovery will be relegated to obscurity and a new product will fail to capture a market.

To incorporate the social processes of recognizing value into our understanding of creativity, I turn to the literature on cultural legitimation. Research in this vein examines how the novel and unaccepted is rendered valuable and accepted (Zelditch 2001), i.e., how a person, object or idea is designated as worthy of admiration (Bourdieu 1984). Bortolini's (2012) study of Robert Bellah's civil religion debate, Heinich's (1997) study of Van Gogh, and Illouz's (2003) study of Oprah Winfrey are examples of this approach. While rich case studies such as these have limited generalizability (Allen and Lincoln 2004; Schmutz and Faupel 2010), the broader goal of this work is to highlight social mechanisms underlying the recognition of cultural goods (e.g., Becker 1984; Lamont 2012; White and White 1993).

I bring this approach to the study of creative occupations, by examining how creative professionals are evaluated. In the popular imagination, creative people are considered inherently different from others. Following the historical view of an artist as an "an alienated and a tempestuous figure" (Bain 2005: 28), creative people are seen as emotional, solitary, and introverted (Dacey, Lennon, and Fiore 1998; Feist 1999; Fletcher 1999; Mumford 2000; Piirto 1998). This view is further reinforced by the psychological research that portrays creative

people as “autonomous and independent,” “hypersensitive,” and “suffused with intense but chaotic emotions” (Stephoe 1998: 253).

Personal characteristics such as these—their links to creative ability real or imagined—inform the recognition of people as creative by themselves and others. For example, toy designers who see themselves as *idealist* (i.e., valuing aesthetic and intellectual satisfaction over practical concerns) or *independent* (i.e., seeking independence and control over their work) reaffirm their identity by developing a “signature style” that links their commercial creations back to them (Elsbach 2009). A similar process shapes recognition by gatekeepers and peers. Screenwriters who exhibit behavior consistent with artistic stereotypes are seen as highly creative by Hollywood executives. For instance, one writer was called “a real artist” because his “social graces were not so intact,” his hair was “wild,” and he was “incredibly shy” (Elsbach and Kramer 2003). Likewise, in a study of NASA scientists, those described as the “most creative” by their peers were also considered those most emotionally attached to their ideas, as evident from their “pronounced ability to hang onto their ideas and defend them with all their might to theirs and everyone else’s death” (Mitroff 1974: 586).

In this article, I break from the common view of creative people as inherently different and special and instead argue that the personal characteristics attributed to creative people actually reflect the system of beliefs and rewards that govern creative occupations. Over half a century ago, Robert Merton (1957) asserted that the frequent conflict over priority in science was not the result of “contentious personalities” but rather the institutional norms of science. From his perspective, scientists did not choose their profession because they sought fame. Rather, it was the institution of science, which emphasized and rewarded originality above all else, that pressured scientists, even those normally “meek and unaggressive,” to ardently defend their

work's novelty (Merton 1957: 639). Pierre Bourdieu made a similar argument about art and intellectual life more broadly: "It is a structural law, and not a fault in nature, that draws intellectuals and artists into the dialectic of cultural distinction—often confused with an all-out quest for any difference that might raise them out of anonymity and insignificance" (Bourdieu 1993). In short, the seemingly distinct behavior of cultural producers is not the result of their personalities, but rather the "structural law" of the field of cultural production (Bourdieu 1993).

Behaviors can reflect "institutional norms" or "structural laws" and still be experienced as unique or idiosyncratic self-understandings or *personal identities* (Thoits and Virshup 1997). Indeed, extant research on creative workers suggests that these institutional norms are experienced as individual characteristics. More likely to describe themselves in terms of personal identities like "independent" than social identities like "artist" (Elsbach and Flynn 2013), creative professionals derive authenticity—both sincere (Svejenova 2005) and "manufactured" (Peterson 1997)—from verifying these identities (Stets and Burke 2000). And because personal identities are generally considered too idiosyncratic for proper social scientific analysis, they have received little scholarly attention (Deaux and Burke 2010; Hitlin 2003), with a few notable exceptions (see Beyer and Hannah 2002; Elsbach and Flynn 2013; Snow and Anderson 1987). Yet for an occupational community whose belief system values personal identity—as is the case for creative occupations organized around the mythical and charismatic figure of the artist—personal identity characteristics, even those which are *anti-social* in character, can serve a social function.

In creative occupations, personal identities aligned with occupational belief systems may serve as a crucial professional resource. Occupational belief systems are particularly important in creative fields (e.g., fine art, architecture, advertising) where professional rewards such as

visibility, legitimacy, and recognition are allocated by occupational group members, rather than the organization (Bourdieu 1983; McLeod, O'Donohoe, and Townley 2011; Mears 2011). In such fields, occupational belief systems are organized around on the myth of the emotional and solitary creator and people who exhibit behavior consistent with such occupational ideals are seen as highly creative (Bain 2005; Bourdieu 1993; Elsbach and Kramer 2003). As a result, professional rewards can be obtained by drawing on these occupational ideals to construct and project an identity that exemplifies these characteristics (Bain 2005). For example, toy designers who see themselves as “idealists” are emotionally attached to the toys they create; they are elated when their ideas are adopted and depressed when they are “killed.” Toy designers who see themselves as “controllers” resist changes to their “vision” and seek ownership of their commercial products (Elsbach and Flynn 2013). While the *emotional* idealist and the *autonomous* controller are personal identities, they also closely tied to the occupational beliefs that have the potential to enhance occupational entry and advancement. Even though the products toy designers create do not bear their names, they may still be linked back to them through their “signature style” (Elsbach 2009). In this way, emotional and controlling personal identities may serve as a resource: emotional attachment to his vision increases the chance a toy designer will have his ideas attributed to him through a recognizable style, thereby gaining recognition from other toy designers in the field. Such recognition is particularly crucial to occupational entry and advancement in advertising, which typically requires moving between agencies (McLeod, O'Donohoe, and Townley 2009; Nixon 2003) and being known by one's professional peers (McLeod, O'Donohoe, and Townley 2011). Therefore, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Advertising practitioners who see themselves as emotional and autonomous are more likely to work in the creative department.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Creative workers who see themselves as emotional and autonomous are more likely to work in high-level positions.

I also expect that the paucity of women in creative work originates from this very process; that occupational beliefs shape sex segregation through expressions of identity. While we know that societal beliefs about gender shape individual-level processes of self-assessment (Correll 2001), self-expression (Charles and Bradley 2009), and self-conceptions (Cech 2013b), *occupational beliefs* have been largely ignored as mechanisms of gender inequality. Yet emerging evidence suggests that occupational beliefs influence the gender division of labor. In engineering, where the occupational belief system elevates technical activities like research above social ones like management, women are more likely to perform the less valued social tasks (Cech 2013a). In finance, where the occupational belief system elevates social activities above technical ones, women are more likely to perform the less valued technical tasks (Ho 2009). In short, occupational beliefs can shape which tasks and attitudes are defined as “male” within a given occupation.

I suspect that in creative occupations, where the occupational belief system valorizes creative talent above all else, men are more likely to benefit from exhibiting behavior consistent with occupational myths of creative genius than women. We know that women are disadvantaged when occupational belief systems emphasize creative talent. Women are less likely to work in academic disciplines whose members believe innate talent is necessary for success, such as philosophy (Leslie, Cimpian, Meyer, and Freeland 2015), and more likely to be hired when evaluations of talent are “blind” to gender, such as when screens are used in auditions for symphony orchestras (Goldin and Rouse 2000). I suspect this is at least partially because women face a double-standard when they act in ways that counter gender stereotypes (for a review see Foschi 2000). Thus, while a man seeking to control the execution of his idea

may signal creativity, for a woman the same behavior might be viewed as uncooperative. I suspect this can also work in the other direction: the very same emotional outburst seen as a signal of genius when expressed by a man might be viewed as commonplace hysterics or sensitivity when expressed by a woman. Therefore, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The positive effects of seeing oneself as emotional and autonomous on working in the creative department are stronger for men.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): The positive effects of seeing oneself as emotional and autonomous on working in high-level positions are stronger for male creative workers.

To enter and advance in creative occupations, I suspect women must rely on another signal of creativity. We know women are disadvantaged when evaluative criteria are subjective. For example, female engineers are less likely to advance in unstructured organizations compared to those with a bureaucratic structure (McIlwee and Robinson 1992), and female lawyers are less likely to be promoted in specialties where work tasks are ambiguous (Gorman 2006). As a result, women may try to compete with men by using a more objective signal of competence, such as advanced degrees and credentials. Therefore, I expect that:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Formal art education has a positive effect on working in the creative department for women.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Formal art education has a positive effect on working in high-level creative positions for women.

RESEARCH DESIGN

To examine whether and how personal identity characteristics shape entry and advancement in creative occupations I rely on original survey and interview data. Diverse data collection techniques address falsifiability (Denzin 1989) and maximize the scope and depth of

my analysis (Flick 1992). Original survey data allow me to test my hypotheses across a large sample of the population (Maxwell 1998), while semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of survey respondents uncover underlying mechanisms (Small 2011).

The Case of Advertising

Advertising is an ideal case to examine how gender shapes who is recognized as creative. First, the industry has clear designations of which jobs are widely considered creative. Agencies are typically divided into different departments, each with a clearly delineated function. In Creative Services, the agencies' artists—creative directors, art directors, copywriters and graphic designers—are responsible for the campaign's concept (an interpretation and application of the creative brief), copy, and design. Simpler projects (like logos and website design) are also executed by the department, while more complex projects (like television advertisements) involve collaboration with external contractors (e.g., directors, actors, cinematographers, and photographers) (deWaal Malefyt and Moeran 2003). Other departments include Account Services, the professionals who interact directly with the clients and represent their interests within the agency; Media Services, primarily involved in placing advertisement in media outlets; Production/Traffic, which handles printing and other aspects of implementation; and Account Planning, which conducts consumer research. While employees outside Creative Services also have creative ideas, this clear designation allows us to understand how the label “creative” is attained and maintained.

Second, advertising presents an empirical puzzle to scholars of gender inequality. Existing explanations have highlighted the role of social networks, organizational policies, and departmental sub-cultures; mechanisms which certainly contribute to the status quo yet cannot fully account for this disparity. For instance, although male advertising practitioners are more

likely to benefit from (homophilous) social relationships than their female counterparts (Ibarra 1992), homophily (i.e., “love of the same”) cannot fully account for change. Traditionally a male-dominated industry (Cobaugh 2008), the integration of women in advertising actually began in Creative Services, where women—like *Mad Men*’s Peggy Olsen—moved from secretarial roles to copywriting (Giges 2008). In fact, women were systematically excluded from Account Services, where work was often conducted in golf courses, strip clubs, and other places women were not welcome (Pueyo Ayhan 2010). In 1970, fewer than ten percent of the directors of Account Services were women. Today, however, they fill over 60 percent of top positions in Account Services, but just 20 percent of all creative positions (Grow and Broyles 2011). Women were able to integrate into Account Services without female mentors or contacts. Why would this be different for the creative department, which was initially *more* open to integration?

Theories crediting organization policies and interdepartmental differences are also insufficient. A lack of family-friendly policies (Hakim 1998; Martín Llaguno, Beléndez Vázquez, and Hernández Ruiz 2007) affects all departments equally, and therefore cannot explain the gender division of labor inside individual firms. Likewise, the argument that creative departments have more time-consuming and irregular schedules (Mallia 2009) is incomplete, since the advertising practitioners who frequently appear on popular media lists of the “most stressful jobs” are more likely to be members of female-dominated Account Services (CNBC 2011; Kensing 2012). Finally, while a masculine departmental culture (Alvesson 1998; Gregory 2009; Klein 2000; Nixon 2003; Windels and Lee 2012) certainly can exacerbate existing differences, this does not make sense for the average size agency with nine employees (United States Census Bureau 2007). A creative department of two or three employees cannot sustain a separate “masculine” culture, especially when other high-status departments are dominated by

women (U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010-2011). As such, advertising presents an opportunity to interrogate the details of a case that cannot be completely explained by existing theory (Burawoy 1998).

Data Collection

The survey is based on a random sample of full-service advertising agencies⁷ in the United States, stratified by organizational size, from the *Advertising Redbooks Standard Directory of Advertising Agencies* (2012), a commonly used sampling frame for the advertising industry (see Broschak and Block forthcoming; Broschak 2004). For each sampled agency, I sent a personalized email to the organization contact listed in the Redbooks, typically upper-level management (e.g., CEO, CFO, COO, Chief Creative Officer). I sent two emails: an initial invitation that asked the organizational contact to forward the survey invitation to everyone in their organization, and a reminder one week later. I offered respondents a preliminary report of survey findings and the possibility of winning a \$50 giftcard to Amazon.com as incentives to participate. I successfully contacted 600 organizations.⁸

I am unable to precisely calculate the response rate because the survey is completely anonymous. Given that the survey asked respondents about information generally not publically shared within organizations (e.g., salary, personal feelings about their organization), anonymity was needed to elicit truthful responses and to comply with IRB mandates regarding ethical

⁷ Although a sampling frame of individuals would be preferable, I was unable to attain a directory of the population.

⁸ This was the desired sample size based on an a priori power analysis conducted using G*Power 3.1. In order to reach 600 organizations, I attempted to contact 875 organizations. Emails were undeliverable primarily due to incorrect addresses and addresses that would not accept emails from unknown senders.

treatment of human subjects. I am, however, able to calculate an approximation using IP addresses. Two hundred twenty-two organizations (unique IP addresses) were used to access the survey (34% response rate at the organizational level).⁹ I received responses from 405 people, for a total response rate of 39% at the individual level.¹⁰ Of these individuals, 334 people completed the entire survey, for a complete response rate of 32%. This is above the average 20% response rate for an email survey (Kaplowitz, Hadlock, and Levine 2004), especially considering the survey's length (more than 70 questions).

I found little evidence of response bias. The mean size of organizations in my sample was 31; the median for the responding organizations was between 25 and 49.¹¹ Responding organizations were geographically distributed across the country, with respondents from almost every state. There was a concentration of responses in the Mid-Atlantic region, Los Angeles,

⁹ This is an approximation. Given the possibility that agency's had multiple IP addresses I examined each addresses' geographic coordinates and combined those at the same location.

¹⁰ Although I requested that the organizational contact forward the survey to everyone in the organization, it is unlikely every contact complied. A study of email forwarding behavior found that only 55% of emails (in the study's most relevant category, "work-related") requesting to be passed along were actually forwarded (Phelps, Lewis, Mobilio, Perry, and Raman 2004). In my sample, only 42 IP addresses were used more than once, indicating that only 21% of the 202 initial contacts forwarded the email to their colleagues. Cross-referencing IP addresses with email addresses, I identified the 42 organizations that forwarded the email and their size listed in the Agency Red Book. The sum of all organization sizes who forwarded the email was 878. Summing this with contacts that did not forward the survey but took it themselves (160) produces 1038 potential respondents.

¹¹ This is larger than the average size agency, likely because the *Agency Redbook* only includes firms that are the agencies of record for at least one national or multi-state client that spends \$200,000 or more on media annually.

and Chicago, three places with high concentrations of firms. Firms that forwarded the email had the same median size as all responding organizations. They were also geographically distributed across the country. Finally, respondents from forwarding organizations did not significantly differ from respondents from non-forwarding organizations on any of the key variables.

Interviews were conducted with a subgroup (N=41) of this larger sample from a pool of survey respondents who indicated a willingness to participate in follow-up interviews. I conducted an additional 13 interviews (attained through personal contacts) with a purposive sample of advertising practitioners employed in the industry's most competitive sector, in New York City (total N=54). Interviews were conducted in-person, by video chat on Skype, and by phone in 2012 and 2014. Averaging thirty minutes in length, they ranged from twenty minutes to an hour and a half. The interview schedule was modeled on Lamont's (2009) protocol to uncover the criteria actors use to evaluate merit. In particular, interview questions were designed to understand how hiring and promotion decisions are made in creative occupations. Interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed verbatim.

Measures

Dependent variables. My first outcome of interest is *creative employment*, measured via a survey question about department affiliation. Respondents were asked about primary and secondary departmental affiliations. Nine options were given: Account Services, Creative Services, Interactive (a subset of Creative Services), Media, Production, Public Relations, Senior Management, Internal Operations, and an "Other" option. From these two questions, individuals were coded as "1" if they selected "Creative Services" or "Interactive" as a primary or secondary

affiliation.¹² In order to understand how gender shapes advancement in creative occupations, my second outcome is *senior creative employment*, based on respondents' job titles. For respondents in Creative Services and Interactive, six options were given: Chief Creative Officer, Creative Director, Art Director, Copywriter, Graphic Designer, and Multimedia Designer.¹³ Of the six, the first three were classified as "senior" and coded "1," all others were coded "0."

Independent variables. Items used to measure personal identity characteristics came from the attitude spectrum scales designed by Lee (1998) and more recently used by Cech (2013b) to study the effect of self-expressive beliefs on entering male or female-dominated occupations.¹⁴ The scales I use—*emotionality* (emotional to unemotional) and *autonomy* (autonomous to collaborative)—are aligned with common artistic stereotypes (Bain 2005; Feist 1999; Steptoe 1998). Survey questions were worded: "I prefer working alone to working with a group," with a scale ranging from "1" for "strongly prefer groups" to "5" for "strongly prefer

¹² Interactive is a subset of Creative Services dealing with new media (e.g., website creation, social media, and internet banners). Individuals in this department are actively involved in design, frequently have had formal training in the subject, yet they also have computer programming skills which, due to their quantitative essence, may be distinct from graphic designers and copywriters. Given this ambiguity, models with this outcome were run with a version that excluded interactive employees with no significant change to predictors. Models run with only primary affiliation had no significant change to predictors, with the exception of being under forty, which had a significant positive coefficient. Given that the most common primary affiliation held in conjunction with creative was senior management (55 percent of responses with creative as their secondary affiliation), this variation makes sense: those in management positions would be expected to be older.

¹³ There was also an "other" option, although it was not used by any respondents in Creative Services.

¹⁴ The original survey instrument included six spectrum scales. Not included in this analysis are aggressive, logical, systematic, and oriented towards people vs. things.

alone;” and “Compared to the average person, usually I am ___ emotional than average,” with a scale ranging from “1” for “much less” to “5” for “much more. Gender, specifically whether the respondent was *female*, was measured based on respondent’s identification and coded “1” if the respondent identified as female and “0” otherwise. Possession of an *art degree* was coded “1” if the respondent had attended a private art institute or had a bachelor’s degree in fine arts and “0” if they had not.

Controls. Because individual differences in demography, social capital, belief in the “naturalness” of gender difference, and education may also affect entry and advancement in creative occupations, I controlled for the following variables: *Age*, with respondents less than forty years old coded as “1,” those over forty were coded as “0.”¹⁵ *Race* was a dichotomous measure of whether the respondent was non-white.¹⁶ *Middle-class father* was measured by respondents’ categorization of their father’s occupation when they were fourteen years old, coded “1” for middle class and “0” for working class.¹⁷ *College-educated father* and *college-educated mother* were also included, coded “1” for their attainment of a bachelor’s degree. *Social capital* was measured by response to the question “How did you get your first job in advertising?” Out of eight possible answers, two were coded as “1:” referrals from family and friends, and referrals from acquaintances. Since beliefs that gender differences are attributable to natural differences may shape preferences for same-gender dominated occupations (Cech 2013b;

¹⁵ A threshold was chosen because the survey contained a categorical rather than continuous measure of age, a decision made to ease the burden on respondents in a long (70 question) survey.

¹⁶ The very small percentage of non-white respondents (7 percent) calls the utility of this measure into question, although it is representative of the broader population.

¹⁷ Original categorizations were based on a 10-category scale that included designations such as professional, managerial, sales, clerical, manual, etc.

Correll 2001), adherence to such *gender essentialist ideology* was assessed respondent's agreement with the statement "The sexes are naturally talented at different things." Agreement was measured on a four-point scale: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). To account for the influence of education not directly associated with advertising, I included a dichotomous measure of a *bachelor's degree* in any subject and informal introduction to the competencies of a profession, i.e., anticipatory *art socialization* (Cech, Rubineau, Silbey, and Seron 2011; Schleef 2006), a dichotomous measure of whether the respondent participated in visual arts or creative writing between the ages of 6-18.

The analysis proceeds in two parts. I begin by describing my quantitative results. Using logistic regression techniques, I test the extent to which personal identity characteristics and art education shape entry and advancement in creative occupations, and whether these effects are moderated by gender. The second portion of the analysis draws on the interview data to examine how personal identity characteristics and art education shape the recognition of creativity in practice.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Logistic regression techniques were used to examine predictors of entry and advancement in creative occupations. Means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients for the all the variables used in modeling are presented in Table 1A and 1B. Robust standard errors were used to adjust for clustering in organizations; multiple imputation was used to address problems arising from missing data.¹⁸ I compared models using the pseudo- r^2 , likelihood-ratio X^2 tests, and the Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC), a commonly used fit statistic for such models

¹⁸ Models run with listwise deletion have no significant differences.

(Hilbe 2011). All models presented were also run with measures of organizational size and prestige, without any significant changes to predictors.

~ Insert Table 1 Here ~

Models predicting entry and advancement in creative occupations are shown in Table 2. Model 1 includes only control variables as predictors of entry in creative occupations. Beyond the large negative effect of being female, other significant effects are present for possession of a bachelor's degree, artistic socialization, and art education. Perhaps surprisingly, neither gender essentialist ideology nor social capital has significant effects on entering a creative position. To test my predictions about advancement in creative occupations, I ran models on a sub-sample of professionals employed in creative positions. Model 3 includes only control variables as predictors of advancement in creative occupations. Again, women were less likely to attain senior creative positions. Like the model for entry into creative occupations, the main effect of art degrees on advancement is strong and positive. However there are notable differences. While having a bachelor's degree has a negative effect on entry into the creative department, it has a positive effect on advancement.

~ Insert Table 2 Here ~

As expected (H1), respondents who entered the creative department were more likely to have a personal identity that matched stereotypes of an artist: they had a greater chance of seeing themselves as emotional and strongly preferring to work alone (see Model 2). For men, a one-unit increase in emotionality increased the odds of creative employment almost 50 percent ($e^{.381} = 1.46$) and a one-unit increase in autonomy almost doubled the odds of creative employment ($e^{.527} = 1.69$). For women, a one-unit increase in emotionality increased the odds of creative employment 25 percent ($e^{.381 + .159} = 1.25$) but the effect for autonomy was not statistically

significant ($e^{-.527+-.529} = 1.00$). This model has a higher pseudo- r^2 and lower AIC than Model 1, and the likelihood-ratio test statistic reveals that the added variables significantly improved model fit ($p=0.02$).

Also as predicted (H2), emotionality and autonomy had significant positive effects on attainment of senior-level creative employment (see Model 4). Compared with Model 3, Model 4 has an improved pseudo- r^2 , a drop in the AIC, and a significant improvement in model fit according to the likelihood-ratio statistic ($p=0.04$). A one-unit increase in emotionality increased the odds of senior-level creative employment 25 percent ($e^{.225} = 1.25$). For men, a one-unit increase in autonomy increased the odds of senior-level creative employment by almost 75 percent ($e^{.541} = 1.72$). For women, the effect ($e^{-.541+-.557} = .98$) was not significant.

In line with Hypothesis 3, the effects of personal identity on entry into a creative occupation were moderated by gender (see Model 2). Seeing oneself as autonomous and emotional had stronger effects on occupational entry for men. This is evident from comparing Model 1 and Model 2: when personal identities are included in the Model 2, the large negative main effect of gender disappears. This suggests that I have identified a mechanism driving the association between gender and occupation. Negative coefficients for the interaction terms suggest that they are more important for men, although only the one for autonomy is statistically significant (see Figure 1a and b). To better understand these interactions, I ran models separately for men and women. As shown in Model 2M, I find that identifications as autonomous or emotional are *only* significant predictors for men.

~ Insert Figure 1a and 1b Here ~

I find some support for the Hypothesis 4. As evident by comparing Model 3 and Model 4 in Table 1, when indicators of personal identity were included, the main effect of gender

disappears. The interaction term for autonomy is significant and negative, indicating that autonomy has a stronger effect for men (see Figure 2a). However, as shown in Model 5, the interaction term for emotionality does not have a significant coefficient (see Figure 2b).¹⁹ Emotionality appears to help creative workers of both sexes reach senior positions.

~ Insert Figure 2a and 2b Here ~

Finally, as expected (H5), the positive influence of artistic education on occupational entry applies only to women. When this interaction term is included in Model 2, the large positive main effect of art education disappears. In the models run separately for men and women, I find that art degrees are only a significant predictor for women (Model 2F). Women with art degrees are more than nine times ($e^{1.861+0.373} = 9.34$) as likely to work in creative positions. I do not, however, find support for Hypothesis 6. The interaction term for art degree, shown in Model 5, does not have a significant effect on attainment of senior-level creative positions, suggesting that art education helps creative workers of both sexes. Indeed, including interaction terms for emotionality and art degrees does not improve model fit: compared to Model 4, Model 5 has a decreased pseudo- r^2 , a higher AIC, and a likelihood-ratio statistic that indicates no significant improvement ($p = 0.79$).

To assuage concerns about the implicit causal ordering of the models predicting occupational entry, I conducted supplemental analyses. While redefining personal identity in adulthood is considered very difficult (Swann 1987), within an occupation that values and rewards personal identity characteristics, said characteristics may become exaggerated and even

¹⁹ In Model 3, the coefficient for the interaction of autonomy by gender drops below the threshold of significance because of multicollinearity (the interaction terms for autonomy and emotionality are highly correlated, $r = 0.77$) in conjunction with the small sample size.

integrated into occupational members' view of themselves over time. As such, working in the creative department could conceivably cause someone to identify as an emotional and autonomous person. To address this potential endogeneity issue, I used a two-stage Heckman correction. I used age as an instrument for first-stage equation predicting identification as an emotional person and childhood participation in collective organized activities (e.g., community service organizations, religion, organized sports) as an instrument in a separate model predicting identification as an autonomous person. These variables were used as instruments because they were correlated with the independent variables in question but not the outcome of interest (creative employment). In the first stage, each instrument and relevant control variables were used to predict each personal identity characteristic. In the second stage, the predicted values for emotionality and autonomy were used in place of the original values, along with the remaining control variables. The results of these analyses (available upon request) are consistent with my original results.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

What processes drive these effects? Logistic regression modeling reveals significant positive effects of personal identity characteristics aligned with artistic stereotypes on entry in creative occupations only for men and a significant positive effect of art education on entry only for women. In the following section, I develop an explanation for these findings, through an in-depth interrogation of the mechanisms underlying the social construction of creativity in this context.

I began the analysis of interview data with a broad question: How are people recognized as creative? Data were coded inductively in three stages (Corbin and Strauss 1990) using *Atlas-*

ti 6.2. In the first stage, I used open-coding to group informant concepts. Then, in the second stage, I combined these codes into analytical categories. Through this iterative process, two competing conceptions of creativity emerged: a *creative person* who was emotional and autonomous and a *creative professional* who was formally trained. In the final phase of coding, I examined how these two conceptions of creativity shaped informants' relationships to their work, their organizational colleagues, and their professional peers. Within each category, I compared examples by gender, occupation, and education. Overall, my findings suggest that emotional and autonomous personal identities shape who is recognized as "creative" in creative occupations. In the following section, I describe these two conceptions of creativity and how they inform gender differences in the work process.

How merit is constructed: The creative person versus the creative professional

Two competing conceptions of what it meant to be creative emerged from my interviews. The conception of creativity most commonly described by informants reflected the Romantic view of the *creative person* as an emotional and solitary genius. The alternative conception was based on the view of the *creative professional* who achieved technical mastery through formal training.

Notably, which conception informants held appeared to vary by gender. No women interviewed identified with the Romantic view of the creator. Women that had successfully entered the creative department saw themselves as creative professionals. Women that had tried to enter the creative department but had not succeeded held the Romantic view of creativity, but did not identify with it.

Creative person

Among my informants, the Romantic view of the creative person as an emotional and solitary genius was the dominant conception of creativity, held by men in creative occupations and members of both sexes in other advertising occupations. According to this perspective, creativity was a quality of a person that could not be taught: “You’re born creative or you’re not, you either can dream stuff up or you can’t” (Ron, agency president); “Creativity is not really like knowledge. You have it or you don’t” (Carla, strategist); “You can’t teach someone how to come up with an idea” (Todd, creative director). Consequently, formal education was considered irrelevant. “I probably wouldn’t look for a creative position from a university at all; I don’t know that university curriculum will prepare them,” Joseph, an agency president, asserted. Charles, a creative director, went so far to say he “doesn’t care” about degrees, because technique can be taught in “a couple of days:”

The biggest problem I find is that the young people that come into the industry do degrees in advertising and filmmaking, and I don’t care about that stuff. You can teach that stuff to anyone in a few weeks. Orson Welles said that a young man can learn everything he needs to know to be a film director in a couple of days. And, it’s absolutely true...Good advertising is not about technique.

Instead, the creative person was defined by personal characteristics like emotionality. As Mark, a creative director, asserted, “Creatives tend to be sort of fiery and sort of obsessive about their own little details. At least the good ones have a more tendency to like, get angry about things, and put up a fight and throw a mini-tantrum.” From his perspective, getting angry and throwing a tantrum was a sign someone was a “good” creative. Agency owner Kevin agreed: “In a creative person, I would want somebody who can really express themselves well as opposed to boring passives.” Kevin saw emotionally expressiveness as a desirable personal characteristic of a creative person. Others were less sanguine, although the perceived relationship between

emotionality and the image of the creative person remained strong: “Creative people come with a whole host of different personality spectrums than the rest of us who deal in the day to day world and they can be very temperamental,” Penny explained. But when I asked if she looked for creatives who were less “temperamental,” she responded as if she could not have one without the other: “No, I look for the creativity. If you can get the creativity, that’s gold. Graphic design is commercial art. And a truly, truly creative artist is just going to be very frustrated with it.” Again, Penny described creative people through their personal characteristics, associating emotional expressiveness with creativity.

A creative person, in this view, was also defined through their autonomy. Full of admiration, Todd described how Alex Bogusky, a well-known creative director, was “really smart” and “really good” because he would tell potential clients at a pitch: “This is it. If you like this, hire us. If not, don’t hire us because this is what we’re going to do.” To Todd, Bogusky’s refusal to collaborate was evidence of his quality. Accounts of the evaluations of job candidates echoed this belief: “In Creative Services, I usually look for somebody that’s probably not as, I know this sounds crazy, but they’re good on working alone and coming up with their things,” Debra, an agency president, explained. Others concurred: “Usually on a creative side, I really like to hire somebody that does okay working alone” (Laura, agency vice president); “I want to hire someone who can kind of go off on their own into a room for an hour and come back with something pretty solid” (Mark, creative director). As Paul, a creative director, explained, “The best creatives are just not very dynamic people. Some really, really great creatives are very introverted and quiet and not at all dynamic or charismatic. For example, Stephen Jobs. He wasn’t charming. He was self-focused and territorial and he was brilliant.”

Women who had tried without success to enter creative occupations tended to describe their attempts through the Romantic view of the creative person—in their words, they failed because they were not “creative people.” For instance, Sandra, an account executive described how she “realized” she was not a creative person: “I just didn’t think that I was creative enough to be a creative. I’m kind of creative, but not in that way, like to constantly be creative, be thinking of ideas, and be like that. I just realized that I’m more of a manager kind of person.” Likewise, Penny, an agency owner, did not see herself as a creative person despite more than thirty years of experience with graphic design. As she reasoned, “I’m not an artist. For the non-profit groups that I’m involved with in a free basis I make their little fliers and posters and they seem to appreciate it. But it’s no great graphic design.” Charles, a creative director, described this tendency more generally: “This is kind of hinting at an entire sex with one brush, but perhaps many women don’t have the self-belief to actually get through that initial period of ‘Faking it until you make it’...The biggest problem is the self-limiting belief that you’re not creative.”

Creative professional

Alternatively, to women in creative occupations as well as creative workers involved in higher education in art, creativity was defined a professional skill that could be mastered through formal training. This conception was constructed in opposition to the Romantic view—in fact, the very personal characteristics that defined the creative person were described as detrimental. For example, Pete, a creative director and liberal arts college instructor, characterized emotional expressiveness negatively: “If there’s a sense of being non-professional, sort of an ‘I don’t care, I’m an artist’ mentality that is a turn off to me, especially if they are incredibly defensive about

their work.” Rather than seeing emotionality as a sign of quality, he was “turned off” by what he described negatively as “defensiveness.” Similarly, copywriter Ariel explained how emotions hindered creatives’ ability to be objective: “It is important for a creative to be able to listen and walk away from their personal preferences, just have more of an unbiased approach.” Indeed, Kieran, a creative director who had completed doctoral work in English, described the perils of too much passion. “I look for passion about wanting to do the right work, but not so emotional that you don’t take advice from others. There are some people who are so passionate that they don’t want to listen.”

Autonomy was similarly devalued. As creative director Christina explained, “We’ve had a wonderfully brilliant creatives work here, but then they don’t work out because they can’t get along with our clients or they just want to be left alone or they think they’re kind of better than everyone else and don’t want anyone else’s input.” Christina did not look for creatives who could work alone; she saw this as a negative quality. Similarly, Gavin, a creative director with formal training in art recalled a recent job candidate with an impressive portfolio, “He made the comment that he liked to be given a project and do it himself. He said he liked to *own it*. And we said, ‘Well, that’s great. We believe in people owning it. But we believe in the process to where there’s going to be some other people looking over your shoulder giving you some suggestions.’” Gavin did not seek a solitary genius but rather someone who could work with others.

Instead of relying on personal characteristics to identify creative people, merit was defined and evaluated through the mastery of techniques. When I asked what was most necessary for their position, Nora, a graphic designer, responded immediately, “Fine arts basics like the drawing and the typography I took in art school. You just see things a different way

when you take all those classes that drive you crazy and you have to do things over and over again and be really precise. When you meet people that don't take stuff like that, you see how they're not as quick to see things." Anna, a designer, concurred, "You can tell if someone has taken a basic course in textography or in the grid system or in color theory. These are like basics of what we do. It's the comfort level in taking those core things and then sort of blowing them up." Similarly, Christina, a creative director, described how although technology had changed substantially since the 1980's when she received her art training, the skills she had learned were still invaluable: "The bigger picture of the creative doesn't change, interestingly enough. It's still about color type, layout, it's all there."

How different constructions of merit shape the work process

Gender differences in adherence to differing conceptions of creativity led to differences in the work process. Men who saw themselves as creative people and women who saw themselves as creative professionals had different relationships to their work, their colleagues, and their industry peers. Men who saw themselves as creative people were more likely to see their work as an extension of the self—they were emotionally attached to their ideas and sought to control their realization. As a consequence, they were more likely to display behaviors, such as emotional outbursts and refusing to integrate the ideas of others, consistent with this view of the self. My analysis further suggests that these different conceptions produced differences in rewards in the larger professional field. Identities and behaviors consistent with the occupational ideal of the emotional and solitary creative person increased workplace visibility because they increased the chance that a creative worker's ideas were recognizable as *their* ideas.

Relationships to work: Psychological ownership versus professional detachment

Creative workers that identified as creative people saw their work as an extension of the self and were emotionally attached to their ideas. “If the work is really good then it’s very personal,” Aaron, a creative director, explained. “It’s not possible to create really great things where you didn’t *put your heart and soul* into them, so when someone wants to change that thing, you want to jump through a window.” As a result, emotional attachment to work was actively sought in hiring: “I want them to show me what they love and tell me why they love it” Grant, a creative director, asserted. Rodney concurred: “You look for, does this person have the creative spark? Whether they’re a writer, an art director, a designer or a digital, a coder, are they into it? Here’s someone who really wants to express themselves.” Through emotional attachment, work produced positive feelings like joy: “I really enjoy the feeling of creating” (Tom, copywriter); “I felt like I needed to express that creativity in some way, have that outlet on a day to day basis” (Jon, designer). On the other hand, emotional attachment meant that work could also be heartbreaking. “A very small fraction of the ideas that you create that you actually *fall in love with* will be produced,” Rodney, a creative director, explained.

A creative person, from this perspective, also sought to control their work. As Aaron explained, “Creative people are all about the work, so their chief concern and most important thing to them is *getting the work to look the way they envisioned it*, that’s all they really care about.” Others agreed: “Controlling the idea; that’s the main thing for me” (Todd, creative director); “I like work so much more when I have more of a vision in it” (Jon, senior designer); “It is the ability to make something that you could see *was yours*, to create something that you could identify and be proud of” (Charles, creative director); “In the case of the writer, art director, and designer, there’s this desire to see your work in print. Even after forty some odd

years and the thousands of pieces I've written, it's still kind of like, 'Oh, *I did that*'" (Patrick, creative director). Aaron disguised the same feeling in general terms, "I think every human's biggest fear is 'Did I leave my mark?' Is there anything physical I can point to that I did that is recorded for all time?' Whether it be winning a Nobel Prize or just a simple 'I did that TV spot, everybody saw it,' it's there and no one can take that away from me.

Creative professionals, in contrast, viewed their work with professional detachment. Much like medical and mortuary students that learned emotional detachment from their subjects through their professional education (Smith III and Kleinman 1989), creative professionals were expected to learn how to explain their aesthetic choices rationally through formal training. "I can tell their level based on their portfolio and how they talk about it, especially if they show process work," Anna, a copywriter, explained. "Then I can see into their brain about how they're making decisions and it's not just, 'Oh, I want to use a crazy font because I don't know what else to do' versus 'I chose to use this really simple font because I'm using it in such a sophisticated, carefully placed way that actually the design is more elegant.'" Ibrahim, a web designer who had attended art school explained, "I look for primarily process. I look for the ability to sort of think through a solution from beginning to end...how they explore whether they're solving the right problem or about what the range of possibilities are and, I like to hear them talk about sketching, about making prototypes, testing their assumptions, essentially." Roger, a creative director agreed: "If there's something in the book that's interesting, you've got to get them in there and talk to them about it. "What made you take that approach?" And just try to get an insight into their thought process. It's that insight into their thought process that really gets me excited and gets me to possibly think about bringing them on."

Relationships to organizational peers: Owning the idea versus idea-taking

Through the lens of the creative person, emotional outbursts were seen as displays of emotional attachment. “In the agency world, people can get their feelings hurt a lot,” Jessica, an account executive, explained. “That’s *their heart* on the page and if you rip it apart they take it very personally.” Agency Vice President Rachel made a similar argument, by way of a comparison to female-dominated Account Services: “Compared to creative, we are more grounded in our expectations and the reality of getting things done. We are less tempestuous and more diplomatic and put our foot down less in the process... We don’t throw tantrums as much.” Creative people, she explained, would rather “be off in a corner creating music or painting or something for themselves, their own expressive work.” By her account, the “tempestuous” behavior of creatives originated from their desire to express themselves in their work.

As a result of tendency for this emotional creative person to be held up as the occupational ideal, the absence of workplace emotions could be interpreted as an absence of creativity. For example, a male creative director at a large Manhattan agency argued that men were naturally better at creative work than women because they were *more* expressive:

Men are funnier and I think they have better taste. Better taste in writing and in narrative storytelling. And that’s what advertising essentially is, its storytelling... I think that there are certain types of personality traits, certain styles of interaction, certain sort of casual, crude behavior which sort of—and like the obsession with story and storytelling and pitch—getting up there and moving our hands around and being a raconteur which for whatever reason men tend to gravitate towards, tend to be, I don’t know, better at?

While he began by describing “natural” differences in humor and taste, ultimately his assertion was based on the emotionally expressive manner of storytelling involved in generating support for one’s idea.

The desire for autonomy also informed workplace behavior, namely the tendency for self-identified creative people to resist integrating the ideas of others, or “idea-taking” (Hargadon

and Bechky 2006). Not only was this true for the ideas of clients and colleagues from other departments—whose ideas were disparaged on a spectrum from “silly changes” and “dumbing down” to the less generous “killing ideas” and “creating monstrosities” (see Article 3 for a detailed analysis)—but this was also true for colleagues within their departments. “You come up with ideas that you think are awesome, and you kind of see them slowly die through the process,” copywriter Tom explained.

What kills you even more than losing an idea, or having an idea killed early, is when you have a good idea, and it makes it all the way from start to finish, but it barely resembles your original idea... That’s extremely frustrating, because you had something good, and then by committee thinking it just gets bashed and watered down until it’s a shadow.

From his perspective, rather than improving upon his ideas, the collective group process “bashed” and “watered down” his ideas until they were merely shadow of their former glory. Jon, a designer, expressed a similar resistance to collaboration, explaining, “If it’s collaborative, you know, then it doesn’t feel like it’s mine.” Accordingly, his favorite project to date was for a friend’s start-up because he had complete control: “The office has a huge logo on the front, which I made, and I designed the bags, I designed everything about it. He’s got business cards and I designed that. There’s just something really prideful about that for me....like, *I made this, look at what I did.*”

In line with the autonomous creative person as occupational ideal, creative workers who did not actively promote and defend their ideas could be seen as less creative. Jessica, an account executive at one of the largest U.S. agencies, made this point through the example of internal vetting process within the creative department, in which creative directors pick which team’s idea is good enough to use. “That’s a way that they start weeding people out, so the talent rises to the top,” she explained. In her experience, gender shaped the dynamics of this process:

I think in order to get ahead in a very cutthroat atmosphere like in an ad agency you kind of have to be an asshole. When you sit in an internal creative presentation and you see the teams and you have a male/female team, a male/male team and a female/female team. The team that gets the most time presenting is always the male/male team. With the female lead teams they try to appease everybody involved and they wait for their turn and they're polite about it. And with the male team it's extremely aggressive. They state their claim. They stand by their concept. 'And by God I'm right.'

In contrast, those that saw themselves as creative professionals placed a high valued on collaboration and idea-taking. For example, Carolyn, a copywriter, explained how creatives in her agency were assessed for more than the quantity and quality of their ideas, but also "Can they bounce ideas off of other people? Are they interacting with us in a brainstorm process? Are they working off each other? Because that's how our environment works." This was explicitly contrasted with the emotional expression that characterized work in the competing perspective. For example, Nora recalled a former colleague's temper tantrums when his design was not chosen: "The client chose my design, not his design, and oh my God! You could see his face turn red, he got so mad, and after that he didn't want to talk to me the rest of the day. I was like, 'Aren't you like 40 years old? What's the difference?'" Her current job was better, she argued, because "We talk more, we collaborate more, and I like that, 'cause I feel like I'm working with my team." Gavin similarly described how the desire for control and "owning" the idea was ill-suited to work in his agency: "We ideate on white walls. We do brainstorming sessions where we use focal point exercises. We work on group dynamics...So *if somebody's going to like sit and 'own it,'* and then we're going to hear from them in three days, in that three days, they could be in a completely different direction than we might need to be." Christina, a creative director, agreed: "You want someone that is confident of their own ideas as well as open and listening to the bigger group and their needs," she explained. Unlike informants that espoused the Romantic view, she emphasized a process of "listening" over "pushing." As she elaborated, "We talk

about it being a collaborative effort, we listen to what the client has to say, and we'll sort of work together on coming with a solution that's good. It's not 'here's my idea and I'm throwing it on the table for you.'"

Relationships to industry peers: Building yourself versus building with others

The personal qualities thought to characterize the creative person not only shaped workplace behavior—they also had the potential to produce rewards in the larger professional field. By acting like the archetypical creative person, creative workers increased the chance of being recognized as highly creative because ideas were more likely to be seen as *their* ideas.

Emotional expression helped creative workers convince gatekeepers—peers, superiors, clients, and judges—their idea had merit, thereby increasing the chance it would be actualized and recognized as their idea. For example, Mark, a creative director, explained, “People who are good at this [creative work] are passionate about it. And because they feel strongly about it, they end up being better at selling it and sort of rallying people to the cause.” Similarly, account director Sondra explained, “Creatives have such a personal connection to what they create that I think that really comes out. Every creative person I’ve ever known is very passionate about their work. And I think when you’re able to express that with clients, they really respond well to that.” Rachel, an agency vice president, agreed: “There’s a certain energy and vibe that's involved in the development process and in bringing it to a client and convincing them that it's the right thing to do. It’s something that you have to be very passionate about in order to really sell it well.”

Similarly, autonomy was used by creative workers to convince others of the merit of their idea, improving the chance it would be actualized and recognized as theirs. Ron, a creative

director, described how successful mentorship of new creatives depended on “helping them recognize their ideas and helping them push their ideas through.” From his view, learning how to push one’s own ideas through the collective process was an essential part of the job. “You kind of win awards by saying ‘I did this’ and ‘I did this,’” Todd summarized. Charles described this in less generous terms: “In the creative department, you have to be a bit of an asshole to succeed.” As he elaborated, “In order to get noticed, you have to walk around telling people that you are creative... You have to be pushy. You have to find out where that line is between pushy and arrogance, and you got to walk right up to it.”

In contrast, the workplace behavior of the creative professional did not increase the chance of being recognized as highly creative. In fact, those who defined creativity as a professional skill often noted that their definition went against the occupational reward system.

As Gavin explained,

We want someone that shows their work is communal. If you are working in a traditional advertising background it is hard shifting over to do this bizarre thing where you’re building with people. That means you’ve got to give up control. And every person at that level of creative director, *you get there because you’ve done great work and it’s your work*. So, how do you give up control? How do you learn that? And that’s tough.

According to Gavin, advancement in his creative occupation depended on controlling ideas—a defining characteristic of the creative person—but his agency sought people who were willing to give that up. Similarly, Joe, a long-time agency president, asserted that the behavior typically expected of professionals, such as putting the client’s interests above one’s own, negatively influenced the career mobility of creative workers. “Creatives, although they’ll never tell you this, they want portfolio work, because if you put together a good portfolio and you win awards you get a better job,” he explained. “If you have a really mediocre portfolio but your clients were really, really successful and you take that to somebody it’s going to be difficult for you to

say, ‘I’m an art director. I’m a creative director. I’m creative.’” Advancement in creative positions, he asserted, depended on an individual’s ability to identify as a creative person through the realization of his own ideas.

Summary

Taken together, my qualitative analysis reveals that gender differences in how creative workers see themselves shape entry and advancement in creative occupations through the social process of recognizing creativity. Gender differences in what it meant to be creative—men were more likely to see themselves as emotional and autonomous creative people, while women were more likely to see themselves as formally-trained creative professionals—produced gender differences in relationships to work, colleagues, and industry peers. Men who identified as creative people were emotionally attached to their work and sought control because they saw their work as an extension of the self. This personal identity informed emotional outbursts and refusing to integrate the ideas of others, behavior *consistent* with the occupational ideal of the emotional and solitary creative person. In contrast, creative professionals, who saw their work as the mastery of technique, were emotionally detached from their work and sought to integrate the ideas of others, behavior *inconsistent* with the occupational ideal. Ultimately, women’s conception of themselves as creative professionals and their commensurate behavior left them disadvantaged because identities and behavior consistent with the occupational ideal shaped the evaluation of merit and the chance their ideas were actualized and recognized as theirs.

DISCUSSION

In this article, I examined gender differences in entry and advancement in creative occupations. Quantitative results demonstrate that the positive effect of personal identities on

entry in creative occupations holds only for men and the positive effect of art education on entry holds only for women. Qualitative findings reveal *how* gender moderates entry and advancement in creative occupations through the process of recognizing creativity. I found that men in creative occupations were more likely to identify as emotional and autonomous creative people, a personal identity coherent with the occupational belief system. Women in creative occupations, on the other hand, were more likely to identify as a formally-trained creative professionals. Gender differences in identification produced gender differences in career outcomes, since personal identity characteristics aligned with occupational beliefs enhanced creative recognition. Below, I describe how these findings contribute to research on gender in organizations, creativity, and identity.

This study examined a frequently overlooked source of gender inequality in the workplace, occupational beliefs (Cech 2013a). Given the large literature on emotional labor, women's purported disposition for emotional expression, as well as their higher qualifications and interest in creative work, we would expect creative fields to have more gender parity than other industries. This is not the case, I argue, because of the occupational belief system that structures such fields. This study extends prior research by proposing and testing an underlying mechanism. I found that women were less likely to enter and advance in creative positions, a difference I attributed to their lower chance of expressing personal identities coherent with the occupational belief system. Such identities are valuable because they signal creativity to peers, colleagues, and clients.

My findings also extend recent work on the relationship between gender and organizational belief systems to occupational belief systems. Specifically, following research that organizations with "commitment" logic (attachment based on emotion, hiring based on

cultural fit, and control by peers) were less likely to hire women in core roles (Baron, Hannan, Hsu, and Koçak 2007), I show how the same applies to occupations. Creative occupations are a model of commitment logic—professionals are driven by passion, hired based on cultural fit (Article 1), and controlled via peers (McLeod, O'Donohoe, and Townley 2011). As such, the occupation's reliance on subjective (and gender-typed) signals for hiring and promotion constrains women's integration (Bielby 2000; Reskin 2000). In contrast, occupations which are seemingly less open to women may be, in some ways, more hospitable upon entry because of their more formalized processes of hiring and promotion. For example, women in finance are more likely to be found in the technical positions, where their skills can be more objectively evaluated (Ho 2009).

I also contribute to organizational studies of creativity by examining the largely neglected social process of novelty's valuation. We know that dense social networks increase the likelihood of a novel idea's social acceptance (Fleming, Mingo, and Chen 2007), but we do not know *how* this occurs. This paper takes a first step to explore how the designation "creative" is expressed, recognized, and awarded. I find that social and behavioral cues—specifically, privileging emotional expression and preferring autonomy—act as signals of a person's creativity. For instance, Todd described how a well-known creative director was "really smart" and "really good" for his refusal to collaborate with clients. In this way, a person's unwillingness to sacrifice control generated recognition throughout the industry. Dense social networks support this process because they aid the transfer of such signals through stories, rumors, and gossip (Coleman 1988).

By bringing the symbolic interactionist tradition (Cooley [1902] 1992; Goffman 1959; Mead [1934] 2009) to the study of personal identity, I also extend recent work on the creative

professionals' identities. In a study of toy designers, Elsbach and Flynn (2013) examine the link between collaborative behaviors and personal identities, observing an “especially strong need to affirm a distinctive personal identity when that identity was related to creativity” (Elsbach and Flynn 2013: 537). Citing research that people who derive self-worth from personal characteristics are more likely to be motivated by their own interests rather than by those of others (Ellemers, De Gilder, and Haslam 2004), they argue that toy designers' resistance to idea-taking was due to their reliance on personal rather than social identity (Elsbach and Flynn 2013). By highlighting the origins of this relationship in the occupational belief system of creative fields, I show how such personal identities are not (only) the result of individual self-perceptions. Rather, their anti-social behavior, such as refusing to collaborate or throwing a tantrum, is better understood as expressions of social group membership in a community that values (anti-social) personal identity characteristics.

I argue that occupational sex segregation in creative fields is driven by personal identities, which shape occupational entry and advancement because they serve as the grounds for the evaluation of merit. Yet one might consider the possibility that personal identities shape occupational choice and men are simply more likely to choose to enter creative occupations. I have strong reasons to believe this is not the case. Personal identities certainly can reproduce occupational sex segregation through occupational choices. For example, college students who see themselves as emotional, unsystematic, and people-oriented—personal characteristics considered “female”—are more likely to choose to enter female-dominated occupations (Cech 2013b). Yet two out of three of those “female” characteristics are valued in creative occupations, which would lead us to expect that more women than men choose to enter creative occupations. In fact this expectation is supported by students' educational choices. Art schools

are typically 60-75 percent female (Salazar 2013) and 61 percent of recipients of fine art degree are female (Carnevale, Strohl, and Melton 2011). This strongly suggests that women are actually *more likely* to choose to enter creative occupations and that the sex segregation of these occupations is not primarily the result of individual choices.

Another alternative explanation is that emotional and autonomous people are actually more creative and that men are more likely to see themselves in this way because men are more likely to be creative. However, empirical research has consistently shown a lack of significant differences between the sexes in creativity test scores and creative accomplishments as children (for reviews see Baer and Kaufman 2008; Kogan 1974). Indeed, women match or outperform men at the competencies valued by creative fields, like verbal skills (Correll 2001).

Like all studies, this article has limitations which pave the way for future work. While my quantitative analysis shows women are less likely to identify with the occupation ideal of the emotional and solitary genius and my qualitative data show how this disadvantages women because these identity characteristics are used to evaluate merit, the origin of this difference in identification is beyond the scope of my analysis. I suggest it originates from the double standard faced by women: acting like an emotional and autonomous creative person is not a viable strategy for women because their behavior is perceived differently than that of men. To empirically test this argument, however, would require an experimental approach that allows for the isolation of differences in *perceptions* of the behavior of the creative person by gender. Additionally, I argue that people who see themselves as emotional and autonomous are more likely to enter and advance in creative occupations because these personal identities are rewarded by the occupational belief system. Personal identities are generally regarded as relatively stable but it is possible for them to change throughout the life course. In particular, working in an

environment that rewards these personal attributes may lead to their adoption and their exaggeration. Future research should examine mechanisms that guide causality in the other direction—how working in creative occupations causes people to see themselves as more emotional and autonomous. Additionally, this is a case study of a single industry. Future work should examine this process in other creative fields, preferably with longitudinal data (e.g., Pratt, Rockmann, and Kaufmann 2006) that would allow for a richer exploration of the process of identity construction.

This study also has practical implications for organizations. We know that recombining diverse ideas through social interaction produces novel insights (Burt 2004; Hargadon and Bechky 2006), yet this study shows that individuals are recognized as creative for having *their ideas realized*. In other words, individuals who internalize and express identities coherent with the belief systems of creative occupations are more likely to resist the very collective behaviors—such as idea-taking (Hargadon and Bechky 2006)—shown to produce creative output (Elsbach and Flynn 2013). In short, a personal identity with the potential to stifle collective creativity informs perceptions of individual creativity. To resolve this contradiction, the occupational rewards system of creative work would have to change. One approach may be to offer more opportunities for promotion within organizations. This would make signals of emotional expression and autonomy less likely to be rewarded and perhaps also facilitate the integration of women.

As our scientific understanding of creativity evolves, a more objective approach to identifying creative potential will hopefully develop. Until then, we can only increase our awareness of the biases inherent in the process of creative recognition.

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Table 1A. Univariate and Bivariate Statistics for Complete Sample, Together and Men and Women Separately, and Pearson Correlations

	All	Women	Men	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	(N=326)	(N=168)	(N=158)														
1 Creative Services (yes=1; no=0)	0.567	0.399	0.747	1													
2 Female (yes=1; no=0)	0.515	--	--	-0.362	1												
3 Emotionality (1=I am much less emotional than average to 5=much more)	3.416	3.381	3.456	0.114	-0.037	1											
4 Autonomy (1=I strongly prefer groups to 5=strongly prefer alone)	3.088	2.934	3.241	0.196	-0.132	-0.081	1										
5 Art degree (yes=1; no=0)	0.160	0.145	0.177	0.228	-0.044	0.031	0.072	1									
6 Art socialization (yes=1; no=0)	0.670	0.669	0.680	0.197	-0.012	-0.011	0.041	0.178	1								
7 Under forty (yes=1; no=0)	0.441	0.567	0.316	-0.056	0.252	-0.199	-0.060	-0.001	0.035	1							
8 Non-white (yes=1; no=0)	0.069	0.090	0.047	-0.050	0.083	0.025	-0.064	0.020	-0.058	0.095	1						
9 Middle-class father (yes=1; no=0)	0.799	0.775	0.826	0.064	-0.063	-0.022	0.047	0.042	0.079	-0.032	0.019	1					
10 College-educated father (yes=1; no=0)	0.560	0.533	0.588	0.003	-0.055	-0.033	-0.047	-0.036	0.007	0.136	0.088	0.421	1				
11 College-educated mother (yes=1; no=0)	0.425	0.452	0.396	-0.049	0.057	-0.024	-0.058	-0.029	-0.070	0.275	0.006	0.224	0.438	1			
12 Social capital (yes=1; no=0)	0.469	0.464	0.471	-0.068	-0.007	-0.048	-0.046	-0.063	-0.106	-0.099	-0.005	0.042	0.046	0.086	1		
13 Bachelor's degree (yes=1; no=0)	0.823	0.825	0.824	-0.079	0.002	-0.026	-0.126	0.047	0.065	0.153	0.059	0.167	0.223	0.209	-0.015	1	
14 Gender essentialist ideology (1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree)	2.54	2.60	2.45	0.014	0.089	-0.023	-0.024	-0.083	-0.049	0.173	0.023	-0.053	-0.004	0.043	0.109	-0.048	1

Note: Correlations $\geq |0.106|$ significant at the 0.05 level

Table 1B. Univariate and Bivariate Statistics for Sub-Sample of Creative Workers, Together and Men and Women Separately, and Pearson Correlations

	All	Women	Men	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	(N=170)	(N=55)	(N=109)														
1 Senior Creative Services (yes=1; no=0)	0.335	0.200	0.385	1													
2 Female (yes=1; no=0)	0.335	--	--	-0.187	1												
3 Emotionality (1=I am much less emotional than average to 5=much more)	3.529	3.509	3.541	0.128	-0.014	1											
4 Autonomy (1=I strongly prefer groups to 5=strongly prefer alone)	3.311	3.000	3.468	0.182	-0.190	-0.115	1										
5 Art degree (yes=1; no=0)	0.241	0.327	0.202	0.182	0.138	0.017	-0.014	1									
6 Art socialization (yes=1; no=0)	0.762	0.852	0.721	0.100	0.146	-0.021	0.003	0.184	1								
7 Under forty (yes=1; no=0)	0.414	0.519	0.368	-0.222	0.144	-0.302	-0.051	0.097	0.006	1							
8 Non-white (yes=1; no=0)	0.057	0.091	0.039	-0.110	0.106	0.111	0.041	0.123	0.057	0.133	1						
9 Middle-class father (yes=1; no=0)	0.821	0.827	0.824	0.012	0.004	0.024	0.136	0.018	0.003	-0.061	0.049	1					
10 College-educated father (yes=1; no=0)	0.559	0.519	0.581	0.010	-0.060	-0.050	0.028	-0.125	-0.068	0.114	0.061	0.414	1				
11 College-educated mother (yes=1; no=0)	0.399	0.418	0.396	-0.094	0.021	-0.079	-0.034	-0.104	-0.164	0.283	0.030	0.138	0.437	1			
12 Social capital (yes=1; no=0)	0.438	0.418	0.444	0.001	-0.025	0.013	-0.015	-0.110	-0.108	-0.058	0.007	0.071	0.067	0.111	1		
13 Bachelor's degree (yes=1; no=0)	0.793	0.815	0.779	0.083	0.042	0.069	-0.061	0.080	-0.003	0.133	0.020	0.095	0.127	0.162	-0.043	1	
14 Gender essentialist ideology (1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree)	2.547	2.564	2.505	-0.062	0.034	-0.088	0.029	-0.122	-0.045	0.117	0.054	-0.022	0.016	0.065	0.166	-0.061	1

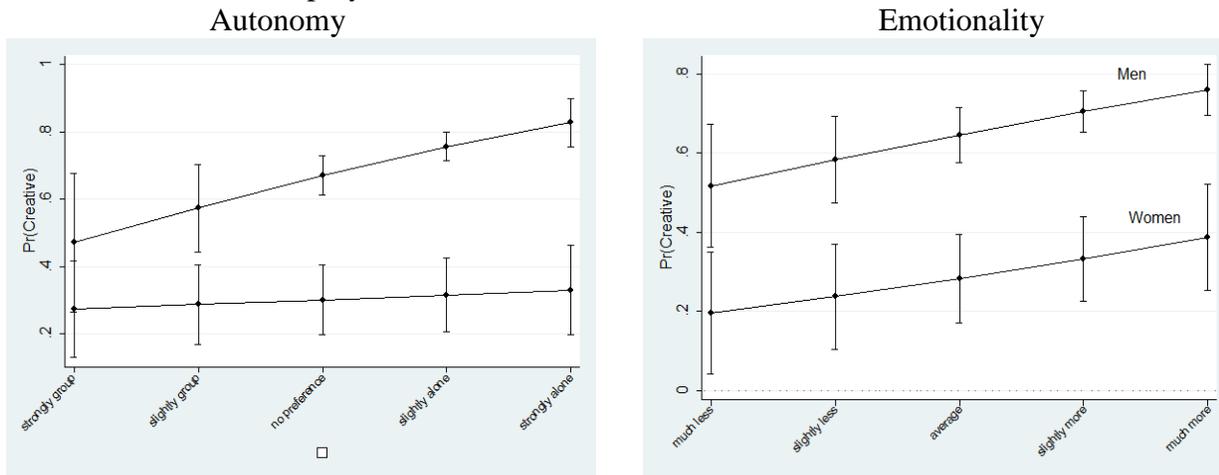
Note: Correlations $\geq |0.15|$ significant at the 0.05 level

Table 2. Logistic Regression Models Predicting Occupational Entry and Advancement in a Creative Position (Log odds)

	<u>Model 1</u>		<u>Model 2</u>		<u>Model 2M</u>		<u>Model 2F</u>		<u>Model 3</u>		<u>Model 4</u>		<u>Model 5</u>	
	Entry		Entry		Entry (Male)		Entry (Female)		Advancement		Advancement		Advancement	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Female	-1.735***	0.272	0.146	1.197					-1.040***	0.301	0.862	0.738	-0.496	1.499
Personal identity														
emotionality			0.381**	0.121	.520***	0.127	0.222	0.209			0.225+	0.131	0.156	0.149
emotionality*female			-0.159	0.243									0.259	0.320
autonomy			0.527***	0.154	.560***	0.163	0.022	0.141			0.541***	0.119	0.526***	0.143
autonomy*female			-0.529*	0.236							-0.557**	0.197	-0.343	0.229
Art education														
art degree	1.387***	0.422	0.373	0.465	0.656	0.458	2.094***	0.518	1.220**	0.464	1.374**	0.490	1.516**	0.578
art degree*female			1.861**	0.663									-0.510	0.811
Controls														
art socialization	0.839***	0.183	0.907***	0.189	0.640*	0.281	1.215***	0.318	0.564	0.348	0.594+	0.335	0.607*	0.296
under forty	0.279	0.248	0.524	0.277	1.470**	0.522	-0.443	0.330	-1.071	0.749	-0.957	0.807	-1.055	0.839
non-white	-0.086	0.555	-0.113	0.501	-0.714	0.765	0.390	0.497	-1.318**	0.467	-1.681***	0.482	-1.448+	0.641
middle-class father	0.406	0.389	0.440	0.427	0.275	0.553	0.441	0.564	-0.098	0.469	-0.294	0.507	-0.383	0.421
college father	-0.079	0.189	-0.095	0.185	-0.334	0.336	0.194	0.400	0.385	0.319	0.445	0.356	0.455	0.363
college mother	-0.076	0.345	-0.091	0.345	0.009	0.413	-0.529	0.539	-0.240	0.256	-0.269	0.241	-0.096	0.419
bachelor's degree	-0.789***	0.235	-0.866**	0.299	-.952**	0.362	-0.095	0.500	0.536+	0.312	0.641+	0.343	0.623	0.386
social capital	-0.244	0.190	-0.127	0.201	-0.255	0.309	-0.300	0.312	0.195	0.277	0.315	0.259	0.233	0.289
gender essentialist	0.178	0.107	0.139	0.109	.294*	0.152	0.135	0.134	-0.0259	0.135	0.013	0.136	0.027	0.150
Constant	0.128		-2.719**		-3.405***		-2.791**		-1.171***		-4.052***		-3.776***	
AIC	402.063		392.071						210.091		207.734		212.668	
Pseudo R ²	0.183		0.236		0.174		0.166		0.142		0.180		0.176	
N	334		334		158		168		170		170		170	

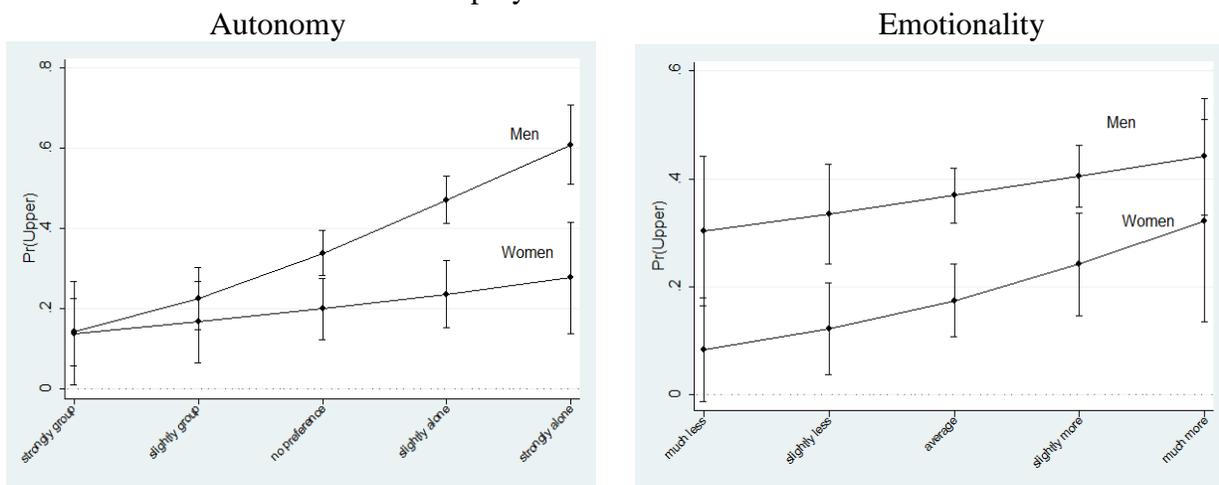
Note: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05, +p < 0.10 (two-tailed tests), multiple imputation used to replace missing data, robust standard errors to adjust for clustering in agencies.

Figure 1a and 1b. Predictive Margins with 95% Confidence Internals for Personal Identity by Gender on Creative Employment



Note: Graphs are plotted based on the parameter estimates in Model 3 of Table 1. I use the mean value for other continuous variables and the minimum for other dichotomous variables.

Figure 2a and 2b. Predictive Margins with 95% Confidence Internals for Personal Identity by Gender on Senior-level Creative Employment



Note: Graphs are plotted based on the parameter estimates in Model 2 and Model 3 of Table 2. I use the mean value for other continuous variables and the minimum for other dichotomous variables.

APPENDIX C – MAKING ART WORK: CREATIVE ASSESSMENT AS BOUNDARY WORK

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Abstract

Conflict in creative work is sometimes thought to emanate from the contentious personalities of creative workers. Drawing on several months of ethnographic field work at an advertising agency and semi-structured interviews with advertising professionals, I propose an alternate explanation for this antagonism, grounded in creative workers' and their market-oriented colleagues' competing definitions of good work. As an illustration of this larger struggle, I focus on the tension that arises during creative assessment. I find that while creative workers designate ideas as "creative" based on novelty and relevance, not all sources of novelty and relevance are considered legitimate. Sources that originate from outside their professional domain are dismissed as not novel (e.g., "overused") or irrelevant (e.g., "constraints"). Consequently, I suggest that creative assessment can be understood as a form of professional boundary work, a conceptualization with implications for our understanding of conflict in the creative workplace and the evaluation of creativity more generally.

*Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The trouble-makers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules, and they have no respect for the status-quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify, or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius (Isaacson 2011: 329).
Advertisement for Apple Computers, 1997*

So went the battle cry of Apple. It was this mantra—that creative people were rebels with “no respect for the status-quo”—that Steve Jobs embodied in the workplace. After making developers redo the title bars twenty times, he responded to their complaints by shouting: “Can you imagine looking at that every day? It’s not just a little thing, it’s something we have to do right” (Isaacson 2011: 131-132). Following a screaming match with an Apple executive, he stormed out when the executive insisted on writing on what Jobs considered *his* whiteboard (Isaacson 2011: 245). When asked if Apple should use market research he replied, “No, because customers don’t know what they want until we’ve shown them” (Isaacson 2011:143).

Such anecdotes, used by Jobs’ biographer to paint a portrait of an exhausting and difficult man (Gladwell 2011), are illustrative of a more general pattern of conflict in creative work. Creative work is rife with conflict, with battle lines typically drawn between creative workers and their market-oriented managers (Bilton 2007; Caves 2000; Florida 2002; Scase and Davis 1995) and salespeople (Hirschman 1989; Koslow et al. 2003; Kover et al. 1995; Rubtsova and Dowd 2004). Creative workers’ “renegade” personalities—such as that of Jobs—are often credited for this tension (Florida 2002; Howkins 2002; Scase and Davis 1995).

Drawing on data collected through field work in an advertising agency and semi-structured interviews with advertising professionals, I argue that such conflicts actually arise from the struggle between occupational communities to define good work. As an illustration of this larger struggle, I focus on the tension surrounding a central activity of creative production: creative assessment. I find that, while creative workers follow the standard definition of

“creative” as a novel and relevant outcome (e.g., Amabile 1996a), they only consider some sources of novelty and relevance legitimate. Creative workers protect their position, within organizations and the field itself, by defining good work as “creative” and defending the perimeters of what constitutes a creative contribution against the competing claims of other professionals. In this way, the process of defining creativity can be understood as a form of boundary work used to maintain authority over an occupational jurisdiction.

CONFLICT IN CREATIVE WORK

Conflict in creative work is sometimes attributed to the fixed traits of creative workers. Research on creative visionaries, traditionally the “Great Men” of science, attempts to build an average portfolio of their unique type (Roe 1953), psychological profile, and life-path (Gardner 1994). For example, through a rich comparison of the lives of Pablo Picasso, Sigmund Freud, and Albert Einstein, among others, Gardner argues that exemplary creators enter a Faustian bargain that requires “masochism and unbecoming behavior towards others” (Gardner 1994: 362). Similarly, the literature on creative personality traits emphasizes purported tendencies towards nonconformity, hostility, and anxiety (Feist 1999), and extensive personal troubles (Barron 1999). Laboratory studies show that traditional managerial strategies to promote worker efficiency are counterproductive for creativity (Amabile et al. 2005). As a result, managers are frequently instructed to leave creative workers alone (Bilton and Leary 2002) because “creative people tend to rebel at efforts to manage them overly systematically” (Florida 2002: 133).

An alternative explanation for this conflict lies in the theory of Pierre Bourdieu. Like Karl Marx, Bourdieu sees society as characterized by a constant struggle waged between social classes vying for power. However, unlike Marx’s emphasis on the means of production, he sees

the stake of this struggle as the legitimate system of valuation—the criteria by which worth or value is assessed (Lamont 2012). In his view, society is divided into specific domains or “fields” (e.g., art, politics, or business) that each have their own system of valuation or “logic” that governs the definition of appropriate action (Bourdieu 1977). Social action is thus viewed as the result of individuals drawing on their possession of resources or “capital” in relation to those which govern the rewards of the field (Bourdieu 1984). Individuals with accumulated capital have a vested interest in their legitimacy and thus, they are likely to downgrade the alternative logic as a bid for “symbolic power,” i.e., the power to define, assign and evaluate status (Bourdieu and Thompson 1991).

Creative industries such as advertising sit on the boundaries of two fields and thus experience a clash of logics competing to be the primary system of valuation (Bourdieu 1983; Eikhof and Haunschild 2007). On one side is *economic logic*, the primary determinate of which is market value. The explicit market orientation of economic logic, associated with large-scale production, values exchange and cost efficiency. In advertising, this is reflected in the agency’s desire to create a campaign that reaches as broad an audience as possible and thereby maximizes their client’s profits. On the other side is *artistic logic*, based around the ultimate goal of art for art’s sake. Artistic logic, associated with restricted production, is motivated by an interest in economic disinterest, which devalues cultural products that have commercial success and favors those that appeal to other producers (Bourdieu 1984). In advertising, this is reflected in creative workers’ desire to do work considered “good” by their peers (McLeod et al. 2011).

The presence of competing logics produces tension in the creative workplace. Hence, the conflict endemic to the creative industries—observed in fields as diverse as Renaissance painting (Berger 1972), 19th century literature (Bourdieu 1996), contemporary art (Velthuis 2005),

publishing (Van Rees and Vermunt 1996), television production (Powell and Friedkin 1986), video game production (Tschang 2007), product design (Andriopoulos and Lewis 2009), and fashion (Crane and Bovone 2006; Mears 2011)—can be interpreted as a result of this clash of logics. By their own accounts, chefs (Fine 1992), editors (Thornton 2004), and actors (Eikhof and Haunschild 2007) view market demands as constraints on their creativity. Meanwhile, the managers and colleagues of creative workers often view them as selfish for not considering the collective needs of the organization (Elsbach and Flynn 2013) and as “babies” for their unwillingness to compromise (Hackley 2000).

Logics are defended and maintained by enacting symbolic boundaries, i.e., the “tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality” (Lamont and Molnar 2002: 168). Boundary work legitimates group practices by serving as grounds for inclusion and exclusion (Armstrong 2002; Lamont and Molnar 2002; Swidler 2001) between social classes (Lamont 1992), professions (Abbott 1988; Arndt and Bigelow 2005), and occupational communities or “thought-worlds” (Bechky 2003a; b; Dougherty 1992). In such a way, legitimacy, the collective construction of social reality consistent with the values and beliefs that individuals are presumed to share (Weber [1922] 1978), is socially constructed. While legitimacy can be validated locally or universally (Johnson et al. 2006), the legitimacy of a specific logic, such as that of art, is validated locally, since those outside the group—be it a social class, profession, or occupational community—may ascribe to a different logic and thus may never see the same practices as legitimate.

In the setting of interest to this study, the workplace, boundary work is often enacted when an occupational community or profession’s claim over a task area, or jurisdiction, is threatened. Given the centrality of jurisdiction to an occupation’s existence, such claims are

fiercely guarded (Abbott 1988; Bechky 2003a). For example, lawyers fight with psychologists to define mental competence as a legal issue (Abbott 1988), while engineers maintain their authority over technicians by defining good work as “built to the print” (Bechky 2003a). For cultural workers whose professional interests are aligned with artistic ideals, this means using boundary work to defend artistic logic against the market’s economic logic. For example, tasting room hosts at exclusive wineries derisively call Wine Spectator, a lifestyle magazine devoted to wine, “Wine Speculator,” and avoid customers looking to “buy a status symbol” (Jamerson 2009), while Greek hip hop artists position their work as “real” and “clean” to the commercially successful genres that are “tasteless” and “too American” (Elafros 2013). Even when employed in commercial enterprises, such workers affirm their artistic identity by designing products that can be recognized through a signature style (Elsbach 2009) and distancing themselves from products they consider inauthentic (Wei 2012).

Advertising is an ideal site to examine this alternative explanation for conflict in the creative workplace. Research on advertising work has documented interdepartmental tension over issues such as client deadlines (Rubtsova and Dowd 2004), self-presentation at client meetings (Morais 2007), and the use of research (Hackley 2000). Studies have typically attributed this conflict to “creative” personalities (Gelade 1997), organizational roles (Hirschman 1989; Koslow et al. 2003), or the lack of common codes, repertoires, and knowledge (Cronin 2004; Hackley 2003; Kover et al. 1995). I argue that this conflict is better understood as a struggle between occupational communities over the definition of good work. The importance of creativity in advertising has been contested since its inception (Fox 1984). Creative workers define good work as “creative” (Hirschman 1989; Rubtsova and Dowd 2004) and thus regard client deadlines, meetings, and research as impediments to good work. Meanwhile, managers

and account service professionals define good work based on clients' needs and thus regard client deadlines, meetings, and research as central to good work. Although this antagonism manifests in multiple forms of interdepartmental conflict, I focus on the tension that arises during creative assessment as an illustration of this larger struggle. Since creative workers define good work as "creative" and see their occupational jurisdiction as "creativity," it logically follows that they would counter actions viewed as encroachments on their domain with defensive boundary work.

I am also interested in *how* the designation "creative" is used to defend an occupational jurisdiction. To be "creative," an idea must be somehow new or original, different from what has been done before (Amabile 1996b). But different groups can have different understandings of what is new or original (Guetzkow et al. 2004; Rosenblum 1978). In *Distinction*, Bourdieu highlights how such differences originate from social relations. Specifically, he takes issue with Immanuel Kant's ([1790] 1952) argument that the appreciation of art produced by "exemplary originality" should prioritize style or *form* over the object's content or *function*. Within this Formalist framework—a perspective which dominated the art world from the late 19th century to the mid- 20th century, art history for much of the 20th century (Williams 2009), and art education almost to the present day (Feldman 1992)—novelty in art is novelty of form. Bourdieu (1984) argues that this preference for form is the result of the gradual systemization of the upper-class disposition by professional artists. Ultimately, he asserts, the ability to have what is considered legitimate taste is dependent on one's social location—occupying a privileged position distanced from economic necessity (Bourdieu 1984).²⁰ Applied to the creative workplace, creative

²⁰ As an illustration, he presented Parisians with a photograph of a French gas refinery at night. Working-class respondents tried to identify the subject and evaluated function: "I can't make out what it is, it's a mystery to

workers, distanced from the economic demands of clients, may use boundary work to include sources of novelty informed by economic disinterest (i.e., new forms) and exclude of sources of novelty informed by economic interest (i.e., new functions) as a way to defend their occupational jurisdiction.

This is not, however, the only way creative workers may use creative assessment to defend their occupational jurisdiction. A new form, in and of itself, is not enough to constitute a creative contribution—by definition, a creative outcome is novel *and* relevant (Amabile 1996a). While some have conceptualized the relationship between novelty and relevance as an opposition (e.g., Becker 1984), recent research suggests that truly creative combinations are those that are both highly novel and highly relevant: they “reach toward both frontiers” (Uzzi et al. 2013: 471). In art, relevance is defined by conventions that create beauty, meaning, and emotion by manipulating the audience’s expectations (Becker 1984). For example, poets rely on the associative materials embedded in language, meanings that are signaled by their sounds, such as the sound “gl” association with light (e.g., glow, glint, glare) (Bolinger 1950). Since by definition, the process of evaluating relevance is social (Fleming et al. 2007), the social group serving as the source of conventions is a potential site of boundary work. In advertising, relevant conventions can come from the culture of the elite or the general public; the client firms, industries, or targeted consumers; or the art world itself. Thus, the process of assessing what novelty is also relevant, and thus, “creative,” is also a process of defining and defending legitimate conventions.

me” (Bourdieu 1984: 46). Upper-class respondents ignored the subject and evaluated form: “It’s inhuman but aesthetically beautiful because of the contrasts” (Bourdieu 1984: 47).

Using evidence from an ethnographic study of an advertising agency and semi-structured interviews with advertising professionals, I show how creative workers use creative assessment to draw symbolic boundaries that protect their occupational jurisdiction. Finding that the outcome of creative assessment depends on whether individuals draw on sources of novelty and relevance considered legitimate by the occupational community, I illustrate how the very practice of defining creativity is patterned by professional interest.

METHODS

Studying creativity is difficult due to practical problems of observation and documentation. Most creative actions are not expressed verbally, making observations all but impossible. Moreover, people often a difficult time explaining why they make aesthetic decisions (Mears 2011) and creativity's unconscious character makes it hard for them to recall how they came up with a specific idea. As a result, they frequently "downplay the mundane social processes involved in knowledge making in favor of discourse of creative genius, leaving few traces in autobiographical recollections or standard historical treatments"(Gross 2008: xiv).

To address these methodological concerns, I relied on a combination of field work and interviews. Through field work, I was able to document the creative process as it naturally occurred. Through interviews, I am able to extend my findings beyond the site of my field work, to other advertising organizations and work contexts. Combining field work with interviews conducted outside my initial field site also allows me to triangulate data (Denzin 1989), thereby addressing concerns of falsifiability. In Table 1, I describe study participants by data collection technique, job title, organizational size, urban environment, and college degree. As shown, most

of my interview informants were employed in medium to large agencies in mid-size to large cities.

~Insert Table 1 Here ~

Case rationale

Advertising provides an opportunity to study the social process of creative assessment *in situ*. Like other creative fields, advertising is dominated by tales of “Great Men” and creative geniuses. From Alex Osborn, the inventor of brainstorming, to David Ogilvy, the “father of advertising,” to Alex Bogusky, the creative director at the world’s most awarded agency, industry lore is dominated by individuals. However, unlike some creative fields where collaboration is relatively hidden, creative work in advertising is explicitly a collective process, which provides a chance to observe the creative process in action. Like other studies focusing on creativity in commercial contexts (e.g., Lingo and O’Mahony 2010), I examine this observable process, rather than relying on the common strategy of interviewing people widely recognized as creative after they have achieved acclaim.²¹

The relative separation of work that is designated as “creative” in advertising makes an ideal site to examine the assessment of creativity. Creative workers in this industry, referred to by their colleagues as “creatives,” have work functions explicitly distinguished from technical skill. While creatives produce a “concept” for an advertisement, they typically do not have all the skills to execute their ideas, particularly in the case of television advertisements. Once a client buys an idea, professional illustrators, photographers and production houses are called

²¹ The collaborative nature of creativity in advertising makes it suitable for a sociological and ethnographic analysis of the *social* process of creative assessment. The *cognitive* process of creativity that occurs inside individual minds, however, is beyond the scope of this study.

upon by the agency (deWaal Malefyt and Moeran 2003). By eliminating technical artistic skill as a cause of the classification “creative,” I strengthen my argument that creative assessment, in this context, is primarily a form of boundary work.

Data collection

Field work at Quality Solutions Co.

In the spring and summer of 2011, I conducted field work twenty hours a week (320 hours total) at Quality Solutions Co. (a pseudonym), a full service advertising agency located in the United States. Despite the United State’s prominence as an producer of advertising, it has been relatively neglected by previous work that has focused on Japan (Moeran 1996), Sweden (Alvesson 1994), the United Kingdom (Hackley 2000; McLeod et al. 2011) and Eastern Europe (Rubtsova and Dowd 2004). Quality Solutions Co. had thirteen employees, marginally larger than the national industry average of nine (U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010-2011). The main office was located in a mid-size city with around one million inhabitants. The agency produced work for a diverse array of industries, which included international, national, and regional organizations, many of whom were well-known regionally.

The employees at Quality Solutions Co. were demographically representative of the industry as a whole. The majority of employees are women, with the exception of the creative department, which is predominantly male (Mallia 2009). A lack of racial diversity exists in the advertising industry generally (U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010-2011); this agency, through the duration of my tenure, employed one Mexican American manager, two Asian American employees and an African American intern. Creative workers were more likely

to be hourly, rather than salaried employees, reflecting the overall trend for creative workers to be in precarious employment contracts (Bilton 2007).

At Quality Solutions Co., as with most advertising agencies, the employees directly involved in the process of creative production resided in the account and creative services departments. The account services department was primarily responsible for securing and managing clients. In my field site, this department had four members: the chief executive officer (CEO), two account directors, and the account coordinator. The CEO's primary work consisted of bringing clients into the agency and overseeing the work of the two account directors. Account directors were mainly responsible for managing the clients the CEO brought in, although they each had contacts throughout the community and often brought in clients themselves. The account coordinator primarily assisted the account directors by helping them manage client relationships.

The creative department was primarily responsible for creating the ideas and designs for the agency's products, including print and television advertisements, logos, collateral (i.e., marketing materials like brochures, business cards, flyers, coupons), and websites. Execution (printing, photography, and programming) was often handled by other departments within the firm or outside contractors. The creative department was headed by the creative director, who was also co-owner of the agency. She was responsible for leading brainstorming meetings and other project-related meetings, and approving all creative work before it was sent to clients. Below her was the art director, who was in charge of complex design projects. Brainstorming meetings, where initial client "concepts" (the central idea for a campaign) were developed, were attended by the creative director, art director, and an account director. Members of the creative department below the art director—a graphic and a web designer—did not participate in

developing client concepts and were mainly tasked with executing design concepts. Aside from the creative director, creative department employees rarely interacted with clients.

Participant observation

While at Quality Solutions Co., I was a participant observer at brainstorming meetings, weekly traffic meetings where project progress and deadlines were discussed, employee trainings, staff meetings, presentations, client conference calls, and social gatherings. As an intern, I assembled a manual on the organization's workflow, compiled pitches, prepared client proposals, wrote copy, and collected content for the agency's internal knowledge base. Everyone at the agency was aware of my status as a researcher and gave informed consent to participate in the project. I was able to overtly take field notes in the majority of settings, but took discrete jottings in situations where note-taking would draw attention (Emerson et al. 1995). Overt note-taking gave me the unique ability to reproduce conversations verbatim in my field notes, particularly valuable for a study analyzing spontaneous processes (like creativity). Notes were typed immediately upon exiting the field to maximize validity. I wrote weekly memos to summarize emerging patterns. The field work was triangulated with informal interviews with agency employees and archival evidence.

Interviews

In addition to the field work described above, thirty-six semi-structured interviews were conducted with advertising professionals throughout the United States. Recruitment was based on a probability sample of U.S. advertising agencies from the *Advertising Redbooks Standard Directory of Advertising Agencies* (2012), a commonly used sampling frame for the advertising

industry (see Broschak and Block forthcoming; Broschak 2004), and a subsample, recruited through personal contacts, of professionals working in the most competitive sector in Manhattan, NY. Interviews were conducted in the summer of 2012, in-person in New York City, by video chat on Skype, and by phone. They were approximately thirty minutes in length, ranging from twenty minutes to an hour and a half. In this article, I draw on a subset of interviews (N=19) with informants who presently or previously worked in creative positions. I focus on informants' responses to the following questions: "Describe your favorite and least favorite campaign" and "Describe your favorite and least favorite aspect of your work." To avoid leading questions that privileged "creativity" over "effectiveness," my interview protocol did not ask about creativity directly. However, if the informant mentioned creativity on their own (which they usually did), I would ask follow-up questions probing the evaluative criteria underlying this assessment, following a protocol similar to Guetzkow et al. (2004) in their study of originality in academia. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist.

Data analysis

I used ATLAS.ti 6.2 to code both field notes and interview transcripts using grounded categories. Although the traditional approach to grounded theory requires the researcher to enter the field *tabula rasa* (Glaser 1978), I follow the approach that takes sensitizing concepts from the literature as a starting point (Charmaz 2000; Corbin and Strauss 2008). The process of coding was an iterative process between the literature, the data, and the categories, which proceeded in three stages. Figure 1 illustrates how I progressed from raw data to emergent themes (Gioia et al. 2012). First, I used open coding to label and categorize the data into first order concepts.

This stage began while I was still in the field, which allowed me to adjust, test, and compare categories, using *in vivo* codes derived from respondents' terminology. After the field work and interviews were completed, I began the process of axial coding, by grouping first order codes into second order themes. Finally, selective coding was used to refine the main analytic dimensions (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

~ Insert Figure 1 Here ~

FINDINGS

By definition, creativity is an outcome that is both novel and relevant (Amabile 1996a). To creative workers, however, only certain types of novelty and relevance earned the label “creative.” This distinction, I argue, emerged from a desire to defend their occupational jurisdiction from the claims of other professionals. Illegitimate sources were so defined because they represented a different logic than that of art itself; in the words of Abbott (1988), they were less “professionally pure.” Marking them as illegitimate was a way for creative workers to exercise their symbolic power. Below, I describe sources of novelty and relevance that emerged from my data, highlighting how creative assessment was used to draw symbolic boundaries that served as grounds for inclusion as well as exclusion. I begin with an examination of what was considered novel and then turn to an analysis of how this novelty was also relevant.

Sources of novelty: form and function

My analysis yielded a pattern similar to that observed by Bourdieu (1984) in his study of mid- 20th century France social classes. Creative workers, distanced from “economic necessity”—in this case, client demands and the economic needs of the firm—were more likely to view new forms as legitimate sources of novelty, dismissing new functions as crude economic

interest (e.g., sales).²² However, there were some exceptions to this rule. When a new form threatened professional authority, it was dismissed as not creative. Likewise, if a new function was disinterested, it could be considered creative.

Form as grounds for inclusion

In my organizational capacity as an intern, I was given an early assignment that served as an initiation into the use of form as a source of novelty. My second day in the field, I was given the task of finding words for a new name for a client's company. The creative director explained the assignment: "We really like the words 'pizzazz,' 'uber,' and 'lift.' Also, 'amplify' is a really good word, find words like that." She handed me a piece of hotel stationary with a hand-written list of examples (Field Notes, 2011).

The creative director wanted words with the same qualities as "amplify," a different task than requesting words with the same meaning. Before that moment, I had never (at least explicitly) thought about whether I "liked" specific words. Rather, I picked words based on their meaning, what they convey, in other words, their *function*. When it came to choosing between two words with the same meaning, I might instinctively prefer one word over another. However, I never thought about why I was making this differentiation.

The creative director expressed a preference for a word's *form*. By saying that she "likes" the word "uber," she conveyed a distance from the word's meaning. She did not say she

²² Advertising is not generally considered art, but creative workers in advertising—like the chefs studied by Fine (1996)—often compare their work to art and themselves to artists. As I show in other work, their taste resembles that of fine artists (author reference removed) and they identify with artistic stereotypes (author reference removed).

liked the meaning of the word “uber,” she said she liked something about it aesthetically—perhaps the way it sounded, or the way it looked on a page. In doing so, she took an object that most people would consider a means to an end and made it an end in itself.

The significance of this exchange was further clarified when the new name was announced at a weekly traffic meeting. Immediately after the creative director shared the name she had chosen (“Moxie Vacations”) with the group, a designer exclaimed: “Oooh, I like words with ‘x!’” This comment inspired nods of approval and smiles from the other creative workers (Field Notes, 2011). “Moxie” was considered a good word because of its form, specifically the typographical possibilities presented by the letter “x,” rather than its meaning or function, which was notably quite different from “lift” or “uber.”

Accounts of interview informants followed a similar pattern. In their descriptions of their favorite campaigns, a substantial majority noted that such work was “new,” “different,” or “original” because of *how* the campaign, image, or commercial was presented. For instance, an art director described how his team made an advertisement for a HIV drug creative. The campaign had been running annually as a photo contest, in which people whose lives had been affected by HIV sent in photographs and their story, with the winning entries displayed in an art gallery. This time, he described, “We wanted to step up, to the next level, so we pretty much started with some new ideas.” In this case, the “new idea” was to change the form of the presentation. Rather than hanging the winning photographs in a gallery, the winners’ stories were presented as interpretative dance by an internationally acclaimed modern dance theater (Interview, 2012).

Technology was also described as a means to recombine form in new and different ways. For instance, a creative director described how the primary source of novelty for a recent

campaign devoted to reducing drunk driving was how technology was used. By shooting the commercial using an iPhone, it looked as though it was shot by a teenager. In his opinion, the commercial was creative (“it looks great, it’s creative, it’s powerful”) because of the new way it was presented (Interview, 2012). Another interview informant, also a creative director, described how a less advanced technology—a letter press—was the source of novelty for a recent campaign: “Hand printing the posters, that was a fun neat thing, because so much of what we do is with technology and computers, so that was creative because we got to do *something different* with applications” (Interview, 2012). In her view, the resulting piece was creative because it used technology in a different way.

Form as grounds for exclusion

Form, however, was not always a legitimate source of novelty. When form-based ideas were considered a threat to the jurisdiction of creative workers, they were dismissed as “not creative.” For instance, at a weekly meeting early in my field work, an account director announced that her client had rejected the agency’s layout for a brochure because “they hate orange.” Instead, the client had suggested the agency use a new color scheme. The creative director grimaced and let out an exasperated sigh. By proposing a form-based idea, the client had broken the unspoken rule that they would defer to the agency’s creative team on questions of form. While it was legitimate for the creative director to say that she liked the word “amplify” without requiring further explanation, the same behavior was inappropriate for a client. Although this incident initially seemed trivial, it soon became a running joke in the agency: whenever a client had what they considered an illogical request, someone would chime in “at least they like orange!” The account director even took to asking new clients whether they were

“averse to any colors,” an inquiry met with laughter by the creative staff when repeated at a meeting (Field Notes, 2011). In short, the idea that a client would express a form-based preference was considered absurd.

This reaction was not the exception, but the rule. Another example from my field work elaborates this point further. The creative director had assigned a designer a small project. As the three of us sat in the creative director’s office, she scanned the email she had received from the client. “The client explained that they have this graphic but it’s not well done, it’s not professional,” the creative director read. She looked down at the graphic, “Yeah, it’s just a picture with words over it.” In other words, it lacked a new use of form. Turning to the designer, she explained how she could remedy this problem, “Show them a bunch of different styles. This is 3D, but when we do it we can make it more graphical.”

“He [the client] wants to do puzzle pieces,” the graphic designer responded. She had received a separate email from the client. “The email says ‘we were thinking that there should be puzzle pieces that all come together.’”

In response, the creative director groaned. “Ugh, puzzle pieces is Design 101. Every student in Design 101 does puzzle pieces on their first project. There should be another way of doing this.” She looked down at the graphic again, “You can just have separate objects that fit together as a whole; they don’t have to be puzzle pieces” (Field Notes, 2011).

In this example, the client’s form-based idea—to use puzzle pieces—was dismissed as not novel (e.g., “puzzle pieces is Design 101”) and thereby, not creative. Her assertion that puzzle pieces were not new, however, while likely the case for other designers, was less true for

the piece's intended audience, the general public, whom have probably not been overexposed to the puzzle piece metaphor.²³

Interview informants expressed similar reactions to clients' form-based suggestions. A creative director expressed frustration with clients "second-guessing" his decisions and proposing new ideas that he considered "silly changes." "That kind of stuff makes me crazy. Make it pink instead of blue or the client doesn't like red, just silly stuff" (Interview, 2012). Likewise, an agency president with creative experience explained how a client's form-based idea—to use a new color paper—inspired an on-going joke at her agency. "We call it the beige campaign, to this day. We joke about, like, when we have a client who wants to dumb something down, we're like, 'oh let's redo the beige campaign.'" She explained the rationale for the joke thusly: "You're a product manager [for the client]. Your job isn't to be creative. Your job is to tell us what you need done. And then we make it creative" (Interview 2012).

This last comment lends insight into why such suggestions were excluded. Creative workers frequently felt that their professional authority was under assault. A client who made a form-based suggestion, such as proposing the agency use a new color, was one such threat. "It's very difficult when you have a client who for whatever reason thinks they know better or is adding ideas you know won't work," one of my interview informants, a creative director, explained. "The hardest part [of my job] is not being trusted that your answer is right. Other professionals, like if you are a doctor or lawyer, you come with a degree and when people come

²³ This is also a good example of professional peers as a source of relevance, see pg. 25. The fact that this example falls in both categories is not a problem, since creative ideas have to be both novel (new forms) *and* relevant.

into your office needing legal advice or heart transplant, they don't argue with you on what's the best way to do it." Technological advances, in his opinion, had exacerbated the problem:

In the *Mad Men* days you [clients] didn't have the tools. You didn't have literally the physical ability to do it, even if you thought you might have the mental ability. But now that everybody has the tools, everybody thinks because we have a video camera we're going to be Steven Spielberg. We all have pencils and paper but we are not all Shakespeare (Interview, 2012).

By likening his work to that of elite professions like medicine and law, as well as more autonomous art fields like film and literature, he defended his occupation's authority over their jurisdiction (Fine 1996). To him, a client's form-based suggestions were the equivalent of a patient telling his cardiologist how to perform a heart transplant—the unwanted interventions of an amateur.

Function as grounds for exclusion

When a client contracted an advertising agency, they typically hoped to convey the new and different functional attributes of their product to a wider audience. These attributes, or “product benefits,” while a part of the work process, were generally not considered a valid source of novelty by creative workers. Product benefits, by virtue of their relationship to sales and economic interest, presented a threat to creative workers' “pure” motivation. Thus, while product benefits were positively portrayed by their market-oriented colleagues as key to “effectiveness” and “strategy,” these definitions and objectives were openly dismissed by creative workers.

For my interview informants, product benefits were not a legitimate source of novelty, a pattern made evident in their preferences for certain clients. For instance, a creative director explained his ambivalence to work with car dealers and lower-end retail, because, as he put it,

“There’s no real room for creativity. It’s all about getting the phone to ring or cash registers to ring. I like to be involved in things that have more to it than that” (Interview, 2012). Since clients in these industries were focused on having the new or distinctive uses of their products (e.g., their benefits) extolled to increase sales, he dismissed them as not creative. This view was echoed by another creative director who liked “working on non-profits a lot more than figuring out how to sell more ice cream or whatever.” He held this preference because non-profits were, in his opinion, less likely to impose a product benefit-oriented agenda on the creative process (Interview, 2012). Another creative director described his work for his favorite client thusly: “It’s very creative, because the client says, ‘just make it funny and make it about [animal],’” he explained. “That’s the kind of brief that you want. And whether it’s effective or not, who knows?” (Interview, 2012). Again, a client was desirable because they did not require creative workers to explicitly promote the “unique” benefits of their product—a strategy which, while key to advertising effectiveness, was considered detrimental to creativity.

In my field work, this distinction was also evident. Brainstorming sessions would always begin with the account director presenting product benefits as potential sources of inspiration: they were written on large pieces of butcher paper, affixed to the glass walls of the conference room, and discussed at great depth. Yet, they were seldom seen by creative workers as a legitimate source of novelty. Throughout the brainstorming process, the account director would tirelessly attempt to return the conversation to these benefits, yet the creative and art director resisted her attempts. For instance, when the account director complained that the creative director’s idea was “not making them [the consumer] see the benefits” the creative director responded simply: “Benefits are hard.” When pressed on further, she explained, “It’s not benefit oriented, I’m hoping it will get us somewhere else” (Field Notes, 2011).

Aware of this tendency, the chief executive officer at my field site coached account service employees on how to steer creative workers to product benefits. “Strategy is the most important thing to this agency,” she explained at an account executive training meeting. “Think of creative work as a mini-marketing plan.” In her view, clients contracted the agency to increase their sales, and thus, anything that did not help the company achieve this goal was superfluous. “Clients typically have specific content for copy” she explained, “and if the copy is not approved first, creatives will design space for copy based on *what looks pretty*” (Field Notes, 2011). Through this statement, she conveyed her belief that an advertisement’s main purpose was to fulfill a function not to “look pretty.” From her perspective, “copy,” the term used to describe the written component of an advertisement, fulfilled a function, specifically notifying consumers about the unique attributes of a product (i.e., new functions), and therefore it was more important, in her eyes, than new forms.

What was the reason for this distinction? Certainly creativity in other contexts, such as engineering or product design, relies on utilitarian function as a source of novelty. Again, this illustrates how creative assessment was used to defend artistic logic and thus, their occupational jurisdiction through boundary work. Product benefits, by virtue of their link to sales and profit, were profane in a world committed to art. Creative workers, although employed in a commercial context, did not want to see themselves as subordinate to the market. “Every now and again, you will get into one of those moments where you will be reminded that you are someone’s vassal and serf, as opposed to someone who has their own control,” one of my interviewees, a copywriter, explained. “When the client gets pissed, I hate watching people sort of grovel.” Accepting a client’s evaluation of creative work—such as their frequent insistence to feature

product benefits more explicitly—was described negatively as “groveling” because it was a direct threat to artistic logic; it reminded him that advertising was a vehicle for profit.

Function as grounds for inclusion

Function was predominantly used to draw boundaries between economically-interested parties (clients, account executives, managers) and creative workers, however, as long as this boundary was maintained, function could also inspire novelty. The Ipod shuffle exemplifies this point. While the inspiration for its design was a function of the product, it was not the Ipod’s main function (storing and playing hundreds of songs) but a rather trivial one (a shirt pin) (Rawsthorn 2009). Hence, although function was a source of novelty, the end result was not related to utilitarian value, and thereby, distanced from economic interest.

Although it was uncommon, one interview informant described a product’s utilitarian purpose (or “function”) as a legitimate source of novelty. A copywriter described how creativity for his favorite campaign, for a mobile phone, emerged thusly, “What we basically did was find a whole bunch of bizarre idiot savant technologists, people who make things in their garage, or were particle physicists, or astronomers, or whatever, and basically gave them one of these phones and then *challenged them to do something weird with it.*” Notably, participants were not instructed to use the phone in ways that highlighted their new product benefits to consumers, but rather to “do something weird.” As a result, one made a three-hundred-sixty degree camera rig out of phones, attached it to a bike, and rode out into the desert in Utah. Another connected the phone’s driving game to an actual car, allowing the phone user to use the game to drive through an obstacle course. Like the Ipod shuffle example above, function was considered a source of

novelty, but only when that new function was relatively peripheral to the product's defined purpose.

Sources of relevance: peers, cultures, and emotions

What sources of novelty are also relevant? Although by definition a creative outcome is both novel and relevant, most research on creativity focuses on novelty (Amabile 1996a; Fleming et al. 2007). This omission is regrettable. Without relevance, a scientific discovery will languish in obscurity, a new product will fail to capture a market, and a sculpture will be viewed as a curiosity rather than as art.

By defining which new forms were also relevant, creative workers defended their jurisdiction against the intrusion of other professionals. Generally, their professional artistic logic—its communities, products, and emotional effects—was regarded as the sole source of relevance. Competing claims by clients, lawyers, brand managers, and consumer researchers were countered as “not creative” or “restrictions.” Consequently, although other professionals contributed to creative production, their input was viewed by creative workers as a constraint rather than a source of creativity.

Professional peers as grounds for inclusion

Professional peers were regarded as a legitimate source of relevance by creative workers. For instance, during a brainstorming session at my field site, the creative director suggested an idea for a new way to present the product in question—a piece of landscape irrigation equipment aimed for a target audience of professional landscapers—based on a prediction of color theorists. “What about superheroes?” she suggested, “They are going to be very high in the cultural

consciousness since all those superhero movies are coming out. Maybe we can use superhero colors. In the design magazines, the color theorists are saying that these colors are going to be really important, what about a green cape with their logo on it?” (Field Notes, 2011). Relying on color theorists’ assessment of a macro-level “cultural consciousness,” she made a suggestion that was well-received by the creative team and ultimately informed the final creative product: a coupon with the landscape equipment fitted in a superhero cape. Yet superheroes were only relevant in reference to an idea circulated among her professional peers. Professional landscapers, not privy to the commentary of color theorists or likely to watch superhero movies, were unlikely to see this form-based idea as relevant.

Interview informants likewise described their professional peers as legitimate sources of relevance. A graphic designer explained the demands of creativity thusly: “You have to be really up to date with like the current trends. You have to go to the websites, the blogs, *you have to see what people [other designers] are doing.*” He illustrated this point through an example,

There was this Web 2.0 movement several years back where all the buttons on websites were glossy, glass-looking buttons. *Now that trend has been wiped out and everything is matte.* If you were to come out with a Web 2.0 website now it would be disgusting and everybody would be like, ‘what is that?’ That wouldn’t be good design (Interview 2012).

In this quotation, the designer distinguished between two types of form-based novelty—glossy versus matte buttons—based on the perceived reaction of his professional peers. Glossy buttons were not considered good design, in fact they were “disgusting,” because “the trend has been wiped out.” In other words, the convention was no longer relevant. In this instance, the creativity of a form-based novelty was defined by its relevance to the designer’s professional peers, even though the general public, the most likely audience for such a website, would be unlikely to have the same reaction to glossy buttons.

Professional peers as grounds for exclusion

On the other hand, the client's community of professional peers was decidedly not a legitimate source of relevance. This was made evident in my field work during the process of generating a tagline for a solar power company. Standing around in the hallway, the art director, creative director, and account director shared ideas informally. The art director made a suggestion ("Reflect the sun") which the account director rejected due to a widespread concern among the client's professional peers: "You can't say reflect in their industry. People are afraid of planes coming down." Specifically, the client had told her that they had heard from their industry peers that the public was worried that solar panels blinded airplanes with their reflections. But when she offered an idea without this problem ("What about 'Solar One'?"), neither of the creative employees liked her suggestion. Although the exchange passed without resolution, when the project was discussed later the creative director expressed disappointment in their ideas but reasoned that, because of concerns circulating in the client's industry, "We are kept from being too clever" (Field Notes, 2011).

The professional peers of the client's legal team were likewise excluded from making creative contributions. For instance, an account planner (with experience as a copywriter) described the devolution of a creative campaign for a new drug. Despite the fact that the product tripled cure rates, "We were so tied up by the legal department within the pharmaceutical company about how we could talk about the product, our final message was so watered down." When asked to provide specifics she explained, "It basically had a person going like this, making a peace sign. And the message was 'For the love of my family.'" At the request of the client's legal department—worried about lawsuits from *their* professional peers—the agency had

changed the message to “Why do you want a greater chance of cure?” “It sounds really weird,” she complained (Interviews, 2012). From the perspective of the legal team, the change was certainly relevant: the product did not guarantee a cure but rather a greater chance of a cure. However, in her mind, it had ruined the advertisement’s creativity.

Creative workers’ professional peers, such as color theorists, were relevant to creativity, but those of their clients and lawyers were not. Again, this highlights how creative assessment was used to defend creative workers’ occupational jurisdiction. By asserting that a client’s peers were irrelevant to creativity, they downgraded the importance of the client’s assessment of their work. As a graphic designer described in our interview,

If we try to work with those [client] restrictions, then that's not good enough. It's hard to be creative with people who are just like—of course, people are not always going to like your things. I'm okay with that. I mean, there are a lot of people who get all pissed off about that. But, I guess going to art school, dealing with people who critique you on a daily basis, you should be okay with that...But, that's different when a client is just really hard. [laughter] That's different, 'cause it's like then you just don't know what to do.

In this quotation, she equated a client’s suggestions with “restrictions” that made it “hard to be creative.” In contrast to the *relevant* critiques given by her professional peers in art school, the client’s reactions were nonsensical and irrational (“then you just don’t know what to do”). By disregarding their claims to relevance, she protected her work from their judgment.

Culture as grounds for inclusion

References to popular culture were considered a legitimate source of relevance. Such relevance was often achieved through “intertextual references,” i.e., a relationship a text or utterance has to previous texts. Intertextual references create expectations that allow audiences to make meaning (Culler 2001). Through the use of explicitly identifiable references, a text can

acquire another level of meaning (Allen 2000). For example, Volkswagen's slogan "Drivers Wanted" is an intertextual reference. It takes a familiar text ("help wanted") and applies it to a different context to create a new combination.

A brainstorming session at my field site illustrates how intertextual references to popular culture were considered a source of relevance by creative workers. Tasked with finding a new slogan for an energy company, the art director, creative director, and accounts director suggested numerous ideas, which were selectively written down on a large piece of butcher paper by the creative director. By choosing whether or not to write down suggestions, the creative director decided which ideas were valuable contributions. The art director made a number of contributions to this list, from a diverse array of intertextual references that included the classic novel *The Sun Also Rises* ("the sun always rises"), hip hop culture ("innovate or die"), American folklore ("stand and deliver"), and religion ("be one with the sun"). The majority of the account director's suggestions, on the other hand, were dismissed by the creative director. When the creative director did like one of the account director's ideas ("Boarding on the future"), she changed the suggestion while she was writing it down into an intertextual reference ("Now boarding, the future"). When the account director questioned why the creative director did not write down her original suggestion, she responded simply, "It sounds bleh" (Field Notes, 2011). By describing the account director's idea as "bleh" the creative director meant no ill will; she was simply commenting on the lack of a second layer of meaning provided by an intertextual reference.

Popular culture was also considered a legitimate source of relevant by interview informants. For example, a creative director proudly recalled his involvement in a campaign that had won multiple awards for creativity, what he called "the biggest campaign in advertising."

These commercials for light beer, which ran from the mid 1970's through the 1980's, used retired athletes and references to their lives off-camera for comic relief. For example, a baseball player and team owner involved in an on-going feud had an argument about why the beer in question was good and a baseball player remembered for record setting loses haplessly wonders why he had not been asked to be in the commercial (Interview, 2012). Again, by playing with audience expectations, a second layer of meaning—in this instance, humor—was created.

Culture as grounds for exclusion

While popular culture was considered a legitimate source of relevance, a client's culture—their brand identity, mission statement, or corporate culture—was not. I use an exchange from the same brainstorming session described above to illustrate this point. In this particular example, the client's brand identity (referred to below as “words”) was dismissed as a legitimate source of relevance:

Creative director: These [ideas] are too straightforward.

Account director: I don't think they are too straightforward. The client is straightforward.

Creative director: We want something more clever, right [to art director]? That's what you were trying to do. This is very straightforward.

Account director: The words or visually?

Art director: It's about tone; they may prefer one or another.

Creative director: We have the words. [She gestures towards the sheet of butcher paper.] We want to use them in a more interesting way.

Account director: We could take the “we” from power and make it pop out visually.

Creative director: I mean more like a clever headline.

Account director: The problem is that these are the words. I don't understand. Can you give me an example?

Creative director: Something like “where power meets passion”

Account director: But that's what we have with alliteration!

Creative director: But that's just words.

(Field Notes, 2011)

By “straightforward,” the creative director commented on the lack of a second layer of meaning (e.g., the opposite of “clever”), much as she had in her earlier assessment of the account director’s idea as “bleh.” The example she gave the account director was creative because it referenced a popular expression (“where XX meets XX”). Her rejections of the account director’s ideas were not based on function—“make it pop out visually” and “alliteration” are actually form-based suggestions—but rather, because their primary (and only) source of relevance was the client’s brand identity. By describing the client’s brand as “just words,” the creative director dismissed their relevance to the creative process at hand. She wanted to use the words in a “more interesting way,” so that they were meaningful and appealing. Despite the account director’s claim that her suggestions were relevant because the client’s brand and corporate culture was “straightforward,” this was insufficient, in the eyes of the creative director, for a creative contribution.

Interview informants shared the perspective that a client’s corporate culture or brand identity was not a legitimate source of relevance. For instance, a designer explained why he preferred to work with small companies: “It is way more freedom, you don’t have to work with like, crazy brand standards that are, you know, Bible-thick tomes” (Interview, 2012). Another designer concurred: “If you have a big client, and they have a brand, they start to get a template for things, and a look, and so every job that comes in, it’s not really creative” (Interview 2012). In both instances, the client’s culture was described as a hindrance rather a facilitator of creativity.

Like the “restrictions” posed by a clients’ professional peers, the client’s corporate culture, usually defined by an in-house brand manager, was yet another potential intrusion on their professional domain. Brand managers, typically fulltime employees of the client, were

responsible for defining and maintaining the company's identity and image. Most of the time they did not have a creative background; they were more likely to possess MBAs. The overlap between their jurisdiction and that of creative workers, combined with the very different means they had of achieving the same ends, inspired professional boundary work. As one interviewee, a copywriter, described:

There's lots of client bashing behind closed doors, as always. But I hate the idea that, you know, you put tons of effort into a pretty brilliant campaign and some great work, and then some 32-year-old brand manager just says, 'eeeh, I'm not feeling it, for reasons I can't really articulate or back up, I'm just not feeling it.' And then the whole thing goes out the window and all of your work goes for naught (Interview, 2012).

Brand managers' evaluations of his work were, in his eyes, arbitrary and based on irrelevant criteria ("for reasons I can't really articulate or back up"). Since brand managers were not "creative," the products they created—a company's brand standards, identity, and templates—were not legitimate sources of relevance. By disregarding brand managers ability to evaluate his work, he defended his occupation's jurisdiction against competing claims from other professionals.

Emotion as grounds for inclusion

Creative workers regarded "impact," the emotional effect of a creative piece's form, as a central source of relevance. While Bourdieu largely described his survey respondents' emotional reactions to art as evidence of their function-based evaluation (Bourdieu 1984), aesthetic appreciation, at least in the Kantian tradition, is also an emotional experience. From this perspective, aesthetic pleasure is very distinct from ordinary emotions—it is not about desire (i.e., it is disinterested), it is universal, and it is an end in itself (Ginsborg 2013). As noted art

critic Clive Bell asserts, “A good work of visual art carries a person who is capable of appreciating it out of life into ecstasy” (Bell 1914:36-37).

Interview informants often described their most creative work as that which provided an aesthetic experience. For example, a head copywriter described his work on a recent campaign for an ADHD drug. “My creative director gave me one directive,” he recalled. “He said, we’re gonna show this video at the beginning of the pitch, and it has to make sure that [drug company] understands that we *get* this condition.” Rather than consulting consumer research, the copywriter said he “dug back into my childhood and things I was focused on or really enjoyed.” He began by recording interviews with ADHD sufferers and their families, whose stories were intended to evoke sympathy. However, while looking over this footage with the art director, he thought “If we really wanna convince them we understand this disease, we can do more than just show them clips of people talking about it. What if when you watch this, it actually gave you the experience of having ADHD?” As he explained,

We started messing with the structure of the video and the style of it, and we came out with something that I thought was very powerful. Basically latched onto one story thread, but then disrupted it with cuts from other interviews, and we did it more, and it got more and more chaotic. And we just started messing with your experience as you’re trying to follow this one thread. You know, just like the attention deficit disorder, right? You’re trying to follow one line of thought, and you can’t, because of all of these interruptions (Interview, 2012).

This video was creative, in his eyes, because, through form-based novelty, it produced an emotional effect far superior—an “experience” that was “very powerful”—to that of simply showing interviews with ADHD sufferers and their families.

A similar pattern prevailed in my fieldwork. The creative team frequently expressed an interest in “impact,” a visual image’s ability to capture people’s attention and evoke an emotional response. Impact was, in their opinion, one of the agency’s main products. Like

fashion models, for whom the aesthetic effect of their physical beauty is described as a “look”(Godart and Mears 2010; Mears 2011), the aesthetic effect of a company logo and accompany brand standards (e.g., colors, font, formatting) was described (and listed on invoices) as a “look and feel.” Consequently, impact was a primary source of relevance for novel ideas. For example, in a brainstorming meeting, the creative team discussed the client’s instructions about text size, namely, that they could not make any text larger than the company’s logo. The creative director summarized the situation thusly: “The client is very restrictive on creative, which makes it really hard, because the more impactful ads have really big headlines.” From her perspective, the client’s suggestions were an obstacle to creativity because they limited its ability to have an impact. In order to comply with this request without compromising impact, the creative team took a picture of the equipment (which was circular) and used it as an “o,” making a headline (e.g., text) that was technically an image (Field Notes, 2011). Ultimately, they had the large headline they wanted, but had also followed the client’s instructions. In their minds, however, even though the client’s input *had* served as a source of relevance for this idea, it was regarded as a constraint.

Emotion as grounds for exclusion

While emotional experience and “impact” were considered legitimate sources of relevance, psychological research on consumer desires, a seemingly logical basis for these insights, was not. To creative workers, legitimate emotion came from an intimate understanding of the human condition. As a creative director explained, creativity required “a very firm grasp of the human condition, of how people operate. What you find is that whether people are old, rich, young, or poor, or black, or white, there are sort of key truths of how people operate that

don't change.” Therefore, rather than focusing on one particular target demographic, the most creative campaigns could be shown “to a Midwestern housewife in Ohio or a guy in Kenya, and if they understand the language they would be like, ‘I get it.’ That’s a larger impact” (Interview, 2012).

As a consequence, interview informants often described efforts to incorporate consumer research and psychology into the creative process negatively. A creative director described his team’s reaction to the suggestion of a client that was “huge into research” to brand a vegetable: “We thought he was nuts” (Interview, 2012). Likewise, a copywriter credited a client’s “hyper-targeted strategies” for the fact that they were “completely dissatisfied with everything at all times” (Interview, 2012). Another creative director expressed this view through his preference for working for luxury brands: “You’re getting a chance to be more creative and communicate with consumers at a higher level,” he explained. “You’re appealing to aspirations that are higher up the pyramid, the hierarchy of needs. You’re appealing to self-actualization rather than basic emotions” (Interview, 2012).

In turn, the two account planners I interviewed (both of whom also had experience as copywriters) described creative workers’ resistance to research, albeit in more amicable terms. “Account planners often act as the voice of the consumer, we do lots of interviews and focus groups, really trying to get into the customer mindset,” an account planner explained. “We kind of walk a fine line with the creatives, because you definitely want them to feel like you're on their side, but you also have to make sure it fits with the consumer insights” (Interview, 2012). The other account planner agreed: “Creatives are trying to create the best possible work possible regardless of whether it meets the business objectives of the clients. Our role is really to make sure that the needs of the consumer are voiced and stay in there” (Interview 2012).

A similar pattern held in my field work. For instance, at one weekly traffic meeting, an account director asked the art director on what research he had based his latest design. The client, a hair salon, had ordered business cards that the art director had made slightly smaller than the normal size. The account director regarded this difference as inconvenient—“They slip through things” she complained—and sought a rational explanation for the decision. She did not receive one. The art director responded politely, “Well, Kelly [the creative director] and I got together and it seemed from where the client is located and who they serve, that *it screams* something not traditional” (Field Notes, 2011). Rather than drawing on research, he had simply relied on his sense of the client and their audience. By doing so, he protected his professional domain from the influence of other professionals.

By defining the emotions relevant to their work as more complex than appealing to the desires of target audiences, creative workers defended their occupational jurisdiction. “Advertising essentially is storytelling,” a copywriter explained. “All these Iphone commercials, it’s not about actual properties of the device, it’s about the way it integrates into lives. All these taglines about, ‘Just Do It,’ in and of itself, the term means nothing, until you overlay it with like these crazy, simple stories of pushing the boundaries of athleticism.” It was this aspect of advertising, in his opinion, that clients relying on internal market researchers often missed. As he elaborated,

Every now and again you’ll get a client who will like, actually take a Photoshop file and say, ‘this is what I had in mind,’ and they’ve created some monstrosity. I’ve never seen one of those that was good. There’s a reason why these companies typically hire outside agencies because the internal stuff [from the client’s marketing department], it seems like it’s easy, it seems like you should be able to do it, but it is [expletive] bad when you see amateur hour stuff (Interview, 2012).

In this way, he aligned creativity with “simple stories” that spoke to larger ideals. In his opinion, marketers’ attempts to do such work produced “monstrosities.” In this way he excluded them, as well as researchers, psychologists, and account planners, from making contributions he deemed creative.

DISCUSSION

Taken together, these findings strongly suggest that creative assessment can be characterized as a form of boundary work, an argument summarized in Table 2. A new use for a product that was non-utilitarian (e.g., strapped to a bike to offer 360 degree view of the desert) was novel, but a new use that incorporated real product benefits was not. Likewise, the opinions of professional peers from the artistic realm (like color theorists) were relevant, but the opinions of the professional peers of a client were a constraint. In short, creative assessment was a tool used to lay claims over occupational jurisdiction and the conflict surrounding this process resulted from competing professional interests.

~ Insert Table 2 Here ~

Like Bourdieu’s (1984) treatment of taste in *Distinction*, this article shows how a seemingly neutral process—creative assessment—is used to attain social distinction between competing social groups. By analyzing the difference between legitimate and illegitimate sources of creativity, creative assessment is revealed as a process rooted in professional interest. In this context, boundary work is used to defend the professional artistic logic of creative workers from the profaning effects of the market (economic logic) and other professions (law, brand management, and consumer research). In addition to Bourdieu’s distinction between form and function, I find that boundary work was also used to define whose peers, cultures, and

emotions were legitimate sources of relevance. As a consequence, account executives and managers, as well as clients and their lawyers, brand managers, and consumer research team, were all excluded from offering ideas considered “creative.” Such exclusion was symbolic rather than material—their suggestions were ridiculed but not ignored—because of creative workers’ dominated position in a commercial enterprise. Like the academics and fine artists that occupy the upper echelons of the cultural field (Bourdieu 1984), their resources (i.e., cultural capital) were ultimately subordinate to economic capital. Yet symbolic exclusion is still very important: along with economic forces, it shapes how power is situated and reproduced (Bourdieu 1984).

This study also contributes to knowledge on how creative workers assess creativity. To date, the majority of research has focused on the creative judgments of outside evaluators. For instance, we know that lay observers (Sternberg 1990) and film executives (Elsbach and Kramer 2003) use stereotypes to evaluate creative potential, while venture capitalists rely on entrepreneurs’ preparedness (Chen et al. 2009). Relatively little is known about how the subjective process of creative assessment occurs within artistic communities (Elsbach and Kramer 2003; Fine 1992). I find that internal assessments of creativity rely on whether individuals drew on sources of novelty and relevance considered legitimate by the occupational community. Such findings suggest that peer assessments of creativity may function more as a signal of “professional purity”—the extent to which an individual is able to exclude non-professional issues from their work (Abbott 1988) or, in Bourdieusian terms, one’s proximity to the “pure” cultural or economic pole (Bourdieu 1993)—than creative ability per se. This raises questions about the validity of creative reputations, built and sustained through exactly such peer assessment, as an indicator of quality.

While my analysis focuses on interdepartmental conflict in the creative workplace, I suspect that such conflict is actually productive for the organization. Despite their title, creative workers did not create the agency's products alone. Although they went to great lengths to distinguish themselves from their colleagues, their ability to create the products desired by clients was stimulated by interaction with the very perspectives they so vehemently opposed. For example, during in the brainstorming session previously described, the account director made a suggestion that referenced a client's brand identity as "innovative" ("Boarding on the future"), which the creative director modified to reference popular culture ("Now boarding, the future"). The resulting expression was considered creative by creative workers (a new form that referenced a popular expression) and fulfilled their client's desire to communicate that their company was innovative. By combining competing logics, the agency created ideas they could sell.

In addition, my methodological approach uncovered patterns that would likely remain hidden using other analytic strategies. Words like "clever," "straightforward" and "boring" were used to compliment or reject their colleagues' creative contributions, yet these words were insufficient to convey exactly what was lacking. By analyzing naturally-occurring language use, this article illuminates patterns unlikely to be consciously described by the individuals and presumably absent from the interviews, journals, and other self-reflexive means typically used to study creative individuals.

The limitations of this study lay the groundwork for future research. By combining a case study with semi-structured interviews, I extend my findings generalizability beyond Quality Solutions Co. However, there are likely differences between industries that limit the applicability of this study's findings beyond (and even perhaps within) the creative industries.

For example, the distinction between form and function is likely less prominent in creative fields like architecture or engineering, where the profession has self-consciously rejected this distinction (e.g., Frank Lloyd Wright's assertion that "form and function are one"). Likewise, the extent to which my findings apply in fields where creative production is more individualized and less dependent on the market (e.g., fine art, poetry) is an open question, as Rosenblum (1978) found that advertising photographers focused on form (which she called, "technical variation") because they were given no control over the content, whereas fine arts photographers who did used both form and function (which she called, "thematic variation"). Similarly, while competing logics produce interdepartmental conflict in advertising, they may produce cooperation in other occupational communities (Becker and Pessin 2006). Additionally, comparative case studies of larger and more prestigious agencies could also provide interesting data on the effects of organizational size and prestige. Throughout my interviews, I noticed that informants from larger agencies seemed relatively more eager to use boundary work, while those at smaller agencies often insisted that their workers "wore many hats" and the traditional departmental divisions did not apply. Finally, an analysis of the relationship between creative assessment and economic outcomes, particularly for client organizations, would enrich our understanding of creative markets generally.

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Table 1. Informant Characteristics

	Field site	Interview	Agency Size			Industry Tenure			Current Location			College Degree			
	(N=13)	(N=19)	<10	11-99	100+	Mean	Min	Max	Large	Mid-size	Rural	Design	Business	Science	Humanities
CEO/President	1	2	1	2	0	26	20	33	0	2	1	1	0	0	2
Creative director	1	7	2	5	1	22	12	32	2	6	0	2	3	1	2
Art director	1	1	0	1	1	12.5	5	12	1	1	0	2	0	0	0
Designer	4	3	1	5	1	5	0.5	15	2	4	1	5	0	0	1
Copywriter	0	4	1	0	3	1.8	0.02	4	4	0	0	0	1	1	2
Account Services	2	2	0	2	2	14	2.5	27	2	2	0	0	0	0	2

Note: The 4 employees from my field site excluded from this table were involved in operations.

Table 2. Summary of Boundaries Drawn as Grounds of Inclusion and Exclusion

Defining	Code	Inclusion	Exclusion
Novelty	Form	New forms (color, styles, techniques)	New forms suggested by client
	Function	Disinterested new functions	Interested new functions (product benefits)
Relevance	Peers	Artistic peers (color theorists, designers)	Client industry peers (solar power industry)
	Culture	Popular culture (novels, films, music)	Client culture (brand, mission statement)
	Emotion	Disinterested emotion (aesthetic pleasure)	Interested emotion (consumer desires)

Figure 1. Emergent Data Structure

