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DataBrief

DataBrief provides arts educators and arts policy makers
with highlights of SNAAP data and insights
into the value of arts-school education.
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Arts Graduates in a Changing Economy (part 4 of 4)

This DataBrief highlights some of the findings in a recent special issue of *American Behavioral Scientist* (ABS) titled "Arts Graduates in a Changing Economy." The special issue engages with SNAAP findings and themes discussed at the 2016 *3 Million Stories* conference, covering several topics of interest both to academics and the broader arts community: the cultures of arts schools; job outcomes after college; the geography of artistic work; creative identity; and the multiple conceptions of creativity.

Thanks to Alexandre Frenette for editing the ABS special issue as well as coordinating this DataBrief.

"I Don't Take My Tuba to Work at Microsoft":
Arts Graduates and the Portability of Creative Identity

Danielle J. Lindemann, Steven J. Tepper, and Heather Laine Talley

This paper explores arts graduates' senses of their own creativity as they move into arts-related and nonarts jobs after graduation. It begins from the premise that many people who are trained as artists, or who have developed creative skill sets through other means, do not necessarily leverage their creativity across their lives. They may be inhibited because many working environments have cultures or systems that do not encourage creative expression and/or creative processes. However, creative people may also limit themselves because their senses of their own creativity are too narrow; they believe their creativity is relevant in some settings but not in others.

Drawing on data from the 2010 administration of the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) (*N* = 13,581)

and a study of double majors conducted with the support of the Teagle Foundation (N = 1,736), the paper assesses to what extent, and how, arts alumni and students view their creative skills as "portable" into various types of occupations.

Based on the SNAAP results, alumni working in arts-related occupations were more likely than those working in non-arts-related occupations to express satisfaction with their ability to be creative in their work (Table 1). Only 2.7% of arts workers said that they were "very dissatisfied" with their ability to be creative at their jobs.

Table 1: Satisfaction with Opportunity to be Creative within Current Joba in Arts-Related and Non-Arts Occupations (SNAAP data)

Occupational Category	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Total
Arts-Related Occupations	162 (2.7%)	608 (10.1%)	2232 (36.9%)	3044 (50.3%)	6046 (100%)
Non-Arts Occupations	879 (18.3%)	1028 (21.4%)	1642 (34.3%)	1245 (26.0%)	4794 (100%)

Note: If respondent has multiple jobs, she is asked about the job in which she spends the majority of her time.

The paper also finds that people with similar training who are working in similar jobs interpret the relationship between their creativity and their work differently. One arts-graduate-turned-attorney, for instance, indicated that his creative training translated to the legal sphere:

> "The communication skills and creative thinking I learned at [arts school] really help with lawyering."

Another attorney, on the other hand, did not view his arts training as relevant to his work. In fact, he described the "creative" domain of the arts in opposition to the "thinking" zone of the law:

> "I'm a lawyer. Arts is creative. Law is thinking."

While workplace context or other factors may explain some of this variation, differences in creative identity may also be one compelling key to understanding how arts alumni interpret their occupations.

Further, the results suggest that even among creative people, creative identity can vary not only between individuals but within an individual. Within a single context, some arts alumni appear to have stronger senses of creative identity than their peers. Additionally, some alumni may deploy their creative identity across a broader spectrum of contexts than others.

These results should be important to arts educators, creative employers, arts alumni, artists, and others who have a stake in the connection between arts education and careers. Arts graduates, along with others who have developed and honed their creative skills, can be critical assets for the postindustrial economy—but only if we better understand how to channel their creative skills and abilities across the economy and throughout their lives.

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Danielle J. Lindemann is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Lehigh University. Her work focuses on various topics at the intersection of culture, work and occupations, gender, deviance, and identity. She is the author of *Dominatrix: Gender, Eroticism, and Control in the Dungeon* (Chicago, 2012).

Steven J. Tepper is Dean of the Herberger Institute for Design and Arts at Arizona State University. His research focuses on creativity, conflict over art and culture, and cultural participation. He is author of *Not Here, Not Now, Not That! Protest Over Art and Culture in America* (Chicago, 2011).

Heather Laine Talley is a public sociologist whose work centers on transformative approaches to inequalities. Her book *Saving Face: Disfigurement and the Politics of Appearance* (NYU, 2014) was the recipient of the American Sociological Association's Body and Embodiment Best Publication Award 2016.

SNAAP News

As previously reported, the SNAAP survey is going on hiatus. We anticipate that the next survey will be offered in 2021-22.

The SNAAP Board of Directors is working to ensure that SNAAP research – including these DataBriefs – continue on. Please stay tuned!

For information on your institution's SNAAP data, or anything else SNAAP-related, please contact Angie Miller at snaap@indiana.edu or 812-856-5824 (beginning July 1, 2018).

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