
ANALYZING ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE U.S. ARTS SECTOR: IDENTIFYING ARTS ENTREPRENEURS' DEMOGRAPHICS AND SHARED CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to lay a foundation for comparative analysis of arts entrepreneurs' demographics and shared characteristics in a given U.S. arts sector. Guided by a conceptual framework for the U.S. arts sector, I utilized a cross sectional survey design to generate data for analysis. In this article, I reflect on the research process, interpret findings, and utilize new understandings as a catalyst for guiding and informing directions for the emerging arts entrepreneurship research field.

Keywords: arts entrepreneur; arts entrepreneurship research; arts sector

Researchers from around the globe have long examined entrepreneurship; traditionally defined as both a process of innovation and new venture creation (Gartner, 1985; Kuratko, 2014, pp. 4-5, p. 23), situated in a for-profit context (Schumpeter & Opie, 1934), analyzed through an economic lens (Hayek, 1945; Steyaert & Katz, 2004, p. 187) and evidenced by way of business ownership (Hawley, 1907; Shane & Gartner, 1995, p. 293). However, perhaps due to the prevailing view of entrepreneurship as a for-profit seeking activity (Benz, 2006, pp. 23-24), and in the absence of a nationally adopted sectoral frame for the arts (Cherbo, Vogel & Wyszomirski, 2008), there is little to no research within top tier entrepreneurship journals for guiding and informing individual (Gilmore, Johnson, Levi, Markusen, & Martinez, 2006; Preece, 2014, 2015), organizational (Grandori & Gaillard, 2011, pp. 103-108; Kolb, 2015, p. 12;) and/or (infra)structural (Cherbo, Vogel & Wyszomirski, 2008, p. 15; McCarthy, Ondaatke & Novak, 2007, p.15; Wyszomirski & Cherbo, 2001) entrepreneurship practice in the U.S. arts sector (Cherbo, 1998a). For example, despite the framing of the arts as economic industries, and the merging of the arts into creative industry classifications (Towse, 2010a, p. 462; Prince, 2010, p. 122), a search within top tier entrepreneurship research journals suggests to me that the arts are largely absent from empirical entrepreneurship research. For example, a Boolean search using the respective terms "arts industry", "arts industries" and "arts sector" returned no hits within the *Journal of Business Venturing* and *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, and only two hits in *Research Policy*. Additionally, while the Kauffman Index of Entrepreneurial Activity does provide an annual measure of firm-level entrepreneurship activity by both industry and specific population groups, the index has historically focused on the following sectors of the U.S. economy: construction; manufacturing; trade; services; and other (Fairlie, 2014; <http://www.kauffman.org/microsites/kauffman-index>). Moreover, while research on the birth and mortality rates of non-profit arts organizations has been conducted (National Endowment for the Arts [NEA], 2008; Smith, Nichols, Ott, Ball, & NEA, 2003), there are many different types of arts organizations (Varbanova, 2013, pp. 1-4), and it is difficult to make meaning from rates and stocks of birth and mortality of firms outside of the unique sectoral context in which such activity occurs (Cherbo, Vogel & Wyszomirski, 2008, pp. 16-17). Furthermore, concerning the founding, establishment and organizing of new arts organizations, there is to date no national survey, database or public index from which to compare founders', establishers' and/or organizers' (hereafter referred to as arts entrepreneurs') demographics and shared characteristics. Although a model survey comes to mind (i.e. Characteristics of Business Owners Survey), the

U.S. census bureau discontinued that survey after 1992; adapting it into what is now known as the Survey of Business Owners (SBO). Notably, the SBO currently provides the only comprehensive regularly collected source of information on selected economic and demographic characteristics for U.S. business owners by gender, ethnicity, race and veteran status. However, while all businesses are organizations, not all organizations are businesses (Kolb, 2015, p. 12), and so entrepreneurs of both nonprofit and state-subsidized arts organizations may often be excluded from such national survey initiatives. Perhaps due to such exclusion, there is no easy way to identify those individuals who organize both non-profit and state-subsidized arts organizations across the U.S. Nor is there a way to easily identify common challenges amongst distinct groups of arts entrepreneurs, how much financial capital one might want to acquire before undertaking specific arts-based ventures, or where distinct arts organizations (e.g., producing, presenting, education, policy, service, etc.) tend to, respectively, start-up, endure and/or dissolve.

Notably, in discussing entrepreneurs in the arts, Varbanova (2013) situates her frame of entrepreneurship within a distinct sectoral context, and refers to arts entrepreneurship as, "...a socio-cultural activity based on innovations, exploitation of opportunities and risk taking behavior" (2013, p. 17). Additionally, Varbanova references a wide variety of entrepreneurs operating across the broader arts and cultural sector (e.g., producers, impresarios, art dealers, arts agents, artists' agents, independent project managers and others) (pp. 16-17). While Varbanova's frame is supported by a literature review, it is important to note that without a clearer and more specific understanding of who arts entrepreneurs are, there is little to no way to identify the majority of arts entrepreneurs, those arts entrepreneurs outside of the dominant socio-cultural majority (i.e. minority arts entrepreneurs), or to determine both rates and stocks of both business ownership and organizational control in the arts by specific population groups. Importantly, while both nonprofit and state subsidized arts organizations cannot legally be owned, arts entrepreneurs likely possess at least an initial capability to exercise control of such organizations via the establishment of rules of order (Fama & Jensen, 1983; Grossman & Hart, 1986; Janney & Dess, 2006). Furthermore, arts organizations are social constructions with the power to both affect society and change the structure of the society in which they are embedded (Staber, 2013; Sarason, Dean & Dilliard, 2006). Thus, where new arts organizations emerge, arts entrepreneurs will likely possess at least an initial capability to both affect society, and change the structure of the sector in which their organizational venture is embedded (Dimaggio, 1998; Sarason, Dean & Dilliard, 2006; Battilana, Leca & Boxenbaum, 2009; Valdez & Richardson, 2013).

While the arts management literature is a resource for guiding and informing organizational entrepreneurship practice in the nonprofit arts sector, it is important to note that the core arts management literature focuses on the internal management of non-profit arts organizations and their environments (Towse, 2010b). Notably, such a focus centers on the management of *existing* arts-based ventures, rather than the organizing of *new* arts-based ventures. Moreover, while the social entrepreneurship literature has emerged as a resource for guiding and informing entrepreneurship practice for non profit-seeking purposes (Benz, 2009), it is important to recognize that the venture aspirations of aspiring arts entrepreneurs may differ from those of aspiring social entrepreneurs. For example, scholars suggest that social entrepreneurs are primarily concerned with the resolution of social market failures, and the creation of social value for given members of society (Nicholls, 2006). However, in discussing

arts entrepreneurship in the nonprofit performing arts, Preece (2011) suggests that in the absence of a profit motive, arts entrepreneurs may be motivated by a sense of self-fulfillment brought on by the execution of an artistic organizational mission (p. 108). Alternatively, for-profit arts-based ventures may differ from social entrepreneurship ventures, as research in cultural economics suggests that new ventures in artist-labor markets are often short-term, project-based and never intended to be long lasting (Towse, 2010b, p. 384).

Research Question

Given the desire to extend arts entrepreneurship research, and the need to identify arts entrepreneurs within the unique sectoral context in which they venture, this study centers on the question, “What are the demographics and shared characteristics of entrepreneurs in a given U.S. arts sector?” To situate the study in the appropriate sectoral context, I first identify and disclose my sectoral frame via a conceptual framework. I then identify and discuss both the scope and methodology of my study. Afterwards, I report findings, interpret the data, and utilize key findings as a catalyst for guiding and informing directions for the emerging arts entrepreneurship research field. Please note that the research question is intentionally broad, both in an effort to make room for emergent discoveries, and to capture a wide range of data for comparative analysis.

Conceptual Framework

For the purposes of addressing the research question, entrepreneurship is narrowly defined in this study as the organizing of new organizations (Gartner, 1985), situated in an arts-based sectoral context, analyzed through a structuration lens (Sarason, Dean & Dillard, 2006), and evidenced by way of legal incorporation (Grandori & Gaillard, 2011; Kolb, 2015). However defined, scholars suggest that entrepreneurship practice remains across all dimensions, sub-categories and typologies, both subject to and influenced by the context(s) in which it is situated (Gelderens & Masurel, 2012; Welter, 2011). For example, in discussing the nature of entrepreneurial action, entrepreneurship scholar David Deeds (2014) compares the study of entrepreneurship to a study of context-dependent idiosyncratic ventures. Continuing, Deeds suggests that in an effort to produce high quality defensible and replicable research in entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship researchers should clarify the context of their studies by identifying both the level of analysis, and the specific environment wherein their frame(s) of entrepreneurship takes place (p. 16). Moreover, in framing new venture creation as an experience, authors Morris et al. (2012) identify the venture experience as “idiosyncratic”, and suggest the nature of one’s experience depends upon interactions (or interplay) among individuals, streams of events, and the context in which the venture occurs (p. 160). Forson et al. provide support by pointing out that mainstream entrepreneurship research still frames the entrepreneur as “...*homoeconomicus* stripped largely of affect, intersubjectivity, personal narratives, discursive groundings or intersectional complexities” (p. 54). Continuing, Forson et al. (2014) contend that widespread adoption of this view has led to, “...a monolithic framing of entrepreneurial activity as decontextualized, purely economic and universally convergent” (p. 56), and therefore propose a re-attention to the contextual micro, meso and macro-level interplay that both shapes and influences entrepreneurship practice in society. In taking this perspective, framing both arts entrepreneurship and the unique sectoral context in which it occurs seems a

necessary exercise; as the way in which researchers frame entrepreneurship guides the kinds of questions they ask about entrepreneurship (Gartner, 1990). Furthermore, the identification and disclosure of *context* in entrepreneurship research may point the reader to an appropriate level of analysis (or levels of analyses) from which to make greater meaning of research results.

Framing Arts Entrepreneurship

Scholars frequently position artists, arts administrators and technical creative workers (hereafter referred to as core workers) as the primary facilitators of art and works of art in the center of proposed art worlds, art(s) fields, creative and cultural industries and sectors; (Cherbo, Vogel & Wyszomirski, 2008; Hesmondhalgh, 2012; Peltoniemi, 2015; Maanen, 2009). In cases where core workers' shared concern and primary activity is the facilitation of art (both for pecuniary and non-pecuniary purposes), they will naturally seek out both new and existing opportunities to do so (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Mckenzie, Ugbah & Smothers, 2007). While common challenges and opportunity barriers await core workers in commercial arts and related entertainment industries (Alexander, 2003; Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013; Griswold, 1992; Peltoniemi, 2015; Sinckler, 2014), core workers in nonprofit arts fields may also face distinct challenges, including extensive social responsibility, public accountability, and policy restrictions on strategic and financial actions (Hull & Lio, 2006). Moreover, emerging challenges to free expression in the arts have been noted (Hawthorne, Szántó, & National Arts Journalism Program [NAJP], 2003), and economic challenges in the performing arts are often rationalized by Baumol and Bowen's (1966) cost disease thesis.

In an effort to overcome common challenges and opportunity barriers, there is evidence that core workers have engaged in various forms of entrepreneurship, both across art(s) fields and related U.S. industries. For example, after spending seven years trying to get his film financed and produced by major Hollywood studios, actor Nate Parker engaged in entrepreneurship via self-employment (Alvarez & Barney, 2010; Venkataraman, 2003), self-producing, directing, and starring in his film *The Birth of a Nation*. Parker presented his film at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, sold his film to Fox Searchlight for a record 17.5 million, and earned the Sundance Institute's Vanguard award. After recognizing the lack of national funding opportunities for individual artists, Ruby Lerner engaged in entrepreneurship via organizational development (Gartner, 1985; Stevens, 1999; Grandori & Gaillard, 2011) by founding and establishing Creative Capital, a nonprofit arts organization that provides both direct funding opportunities and technical assistance to individual artists pursuing adventurous projects across arts disciplines (see www.creative-capital.org). Moreover, in 1965, when U.S. Congress mandated that the NEA restrict financial appropriations to those U.S. states with official state-subsidized arts agencies, many U.S. states recognized an infrastructural opportunity, and subsequently exploited that opportunity by structuring their own state arts agencies in what is arguably a case study in what might be called "infrastructural entrepreneurship" (Wooley, 2013; Wyszomirski & Cherbo, 2001).

In considering the above examples collectively, arts entrepreneurship seems to be less a predetermined process of new business creation, and more broadly the discovery, creation, and exploitation of new venture opportunities across the broader arts sector (Alvarez, Barney & Anderson, 2013; Alvarez & Barney, 2010; Short, Ketchen, Shook & Ireland, 2010; Mckenzie, Ugbah & Smothers, 2007). Additionally, from the perspective of core workers, arts

entrepreneurship seems a normative rational response to unfavorable economic, political and juridical conditions, both in art(s) fields and across related arts and entertainment industries (Maanen, 2009, p 209). Where such unfavorable conditions are evidenced within a given U.S. arts sector, core workers may not be exempt from contextual challenges and barriers to arts entrepreneurship. As research suggests: (1) entrepreneurship education has not traditionally been recognized as essential to arts education (Beckman, 2007; Brown, 2007; Pollard & Wilson, 2014; White, 2013); (2) venture opportunity in related arts and entertainment industries is stratified by field gatekeepers (Alexander, 2003; Peltoniemi, 2015), and cultural stereotypes can influence the gatekeeping process (Griswold, 1992; Sinckler, 2014); (3) prominent U.S. public and private foundations have historically prioritized financial subsidy for mid to large-sized nonprofit arts institutions, rather than for individual artists and small community and cultural nonprofit arts organizations (Chang, 2010; Graves, 2005; Mañjon & Vega, 2012; Miller & Yudice, 2002). Importantly, where venture opportunity exists within a given non-profit arts sector, core workers' access may either be enabled or constrained by local, state and/or national arts and cultural policy (Miller & Yudice, 2002). Furthermore, research illuminates cases of nepotism, racial discrimination, and gender inequities in international creative, cultural, arts, and related entertainment industries (Banks & Milestone, 2011; Conor, Gill, & Taylor, 2015; Dunlop, 2007; Eikhof & Warhurst, 2013; French, 2014; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2015; Jones & Pringle, 2015; Shade & Jacobson, 2015). Such inequities in a given U.S. arts sector may motivate core workers to engage in arts entrepreneurship out of necessity, rather than as a result of the discovery of an opportunity (Verheul, Thurik, Hessels & Zwan, 2010; Valdez & Richardson, 2013).

Framing the U.S. Arts Sector

To think about how to define and illustrate the U.S. arts sector from the top-down, I was guided by Wyszomirski's proposed model of a U.S. creative sector (Cherbo, Vogel & Wyszomirski, 2008, p. 14), a notable published model that aided in visualizing the arts as a distinct socio-economic sector embedded within the broader U.S. economy. For example, in framing the arts and creative sector, Cherbo, Vogel & Wyszomirski define the sector as, "...a cluster of related arts and arts-related industries that require for production a pool of talented and skilled individuals, who along with ancillary organizations, provide products and services integral to the workings of the creative industries" (2008, pp. 9-10). Cherbo et al. later posit that a sectoral frame can help us to "...visualize the arts through a broader lens, widen and deepen our knowledge of how cultural affairs works, and aid us in devising better cultural policies and advocacy coalitions" (p. 10).

While the cultural policy benefits of adopting a U.S. sectoral frame for the arts are promising, primary points of departure between Wyszomirski's model and my sectoral frame include the way in which I define and organize general field/industrial activities and ancillary (infra)structural components. Additionally, it is worth noting that my justification for framing the sector in this study as "arts-based" rather than "creative-based" is largely due to definitional challenges, as what is/is not creative is notoriously difficult to distinguish and determine, and such an exercise seemed beyond the scope of this study (Towse, 2010a). Moreover, the term "creative" is highly subjective, and ironically, those businesses and organizational entities deemed "creative" are usually included within creative economy/industries reports, while those deemed "un-creative" are omitted. As such, subjectivity no doubt contributes to discourse both

towards and within the paradigm of creative industries research and policy (Trembley, 2011). Arguably it is such discourse that has stalled national adoption of the “creativity-based” sectoral frame across the decentralized U.S. arts and cultural policy infrastructure (Cherbo, Vogel & Wyszomirski, 2008, p. 12).

While employing an “arts-based” sectoral frame avoids the definitional discourse within the paradigm of creative industries, it is important to note that arts-based classifications and distinctions are not excluded from their own set of definitional challenges. As many scholars have come to recognize, “the arts” are socially-driven (Alexander, 2003, p. 2) and therefore are often what we (distinct members of a society) say they are (Davies, 1991). For the purposes of this study, the U.S. arts sector is framed broadly as a segment or division (i.e. a slice of the pie) of the broader U.S. economy in which related arts fields and entertainment industries are situated.

While a field is hereafter defined as an area or division of an activity, subject or profession (Martin, 2003; Lipstadt, 2003; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), within the realm of national statistics, an industry refers to an aggregation of groups of firms and individual producers classified as producing similar (but not the same) goods and services (Towse, 2010b). For the purposes of this study, both field and industrial producers are framed as core workers (Cherbo, Vogel & Wyszomirski, 2008; Hesmondhalgh, 2012; Peltoniemi, 2015; Maanen, 2009), firms are framed as arts organizations (i.e. nonprofit, for-profit, state-subsidized) (Essig, 2015; Varbanova, 2013), and similar goods and services are framed as arts and related entertainment products, services and performing arts experiences (Peltoniemi, 2015; Sayre & King, 2010). Moreover, while a reference to the “nonprofit arts sector” is a reference to a sub-sector (i.e. half of a pie slice) of the broader U.S. arts sector (i.e. a slice of the pie), a reference to the “for-profit arts sector” is a reference to a parallel sub-sector (i.e. the other half of the pie slice) within the broader U.S. arts sector. Collectively, a reference to the U.S. arts sector is a reference to the two sub-sectors, which plausibly co-enable “sectoral benefit”, or the collective socio-economic benefit that the U.S. arts sector affords to the broader U.S. economy.

Although the lines often blur (Pankratz, 2013), and core workers often crossover between sectors (Gilmore, Johnson, Levi, Markusen & Martinez, 2006), traditional distinctions between both the non- and for-profit arts sectors have often been based on the general perception of nonprofit activities as mission-driven and commercial arts and related entertainment activities as being driven by market considerations (Pankratz, 2013). In an effort to draw attention to the distinct yet interrelated fields and industrial activities within the two sub-sectors of study, sub-sectors are considered both one at a time (Fig.1, Fig.2), and then synergistically (Fig. 3). Notably each sub-sector possesses (1) a core labor force with assumed general motivations (Cherbo, Vogel & Wyszomirski, 2008; Hesmondhalgh, 2012), (2) interrelated field (Maanen, 2009) and/or industrial activities (Cherbo, Vogel & Wyszomirski, 2008; Sayre & King, 2010), and (3) an (infra)structure comprised of ancillary organizations that both aid in field/industrial activities and service core workers in areas of need (Cherbo, Vogel & Wyszomirski, 2008; Burgess & Pankratz, 2008).

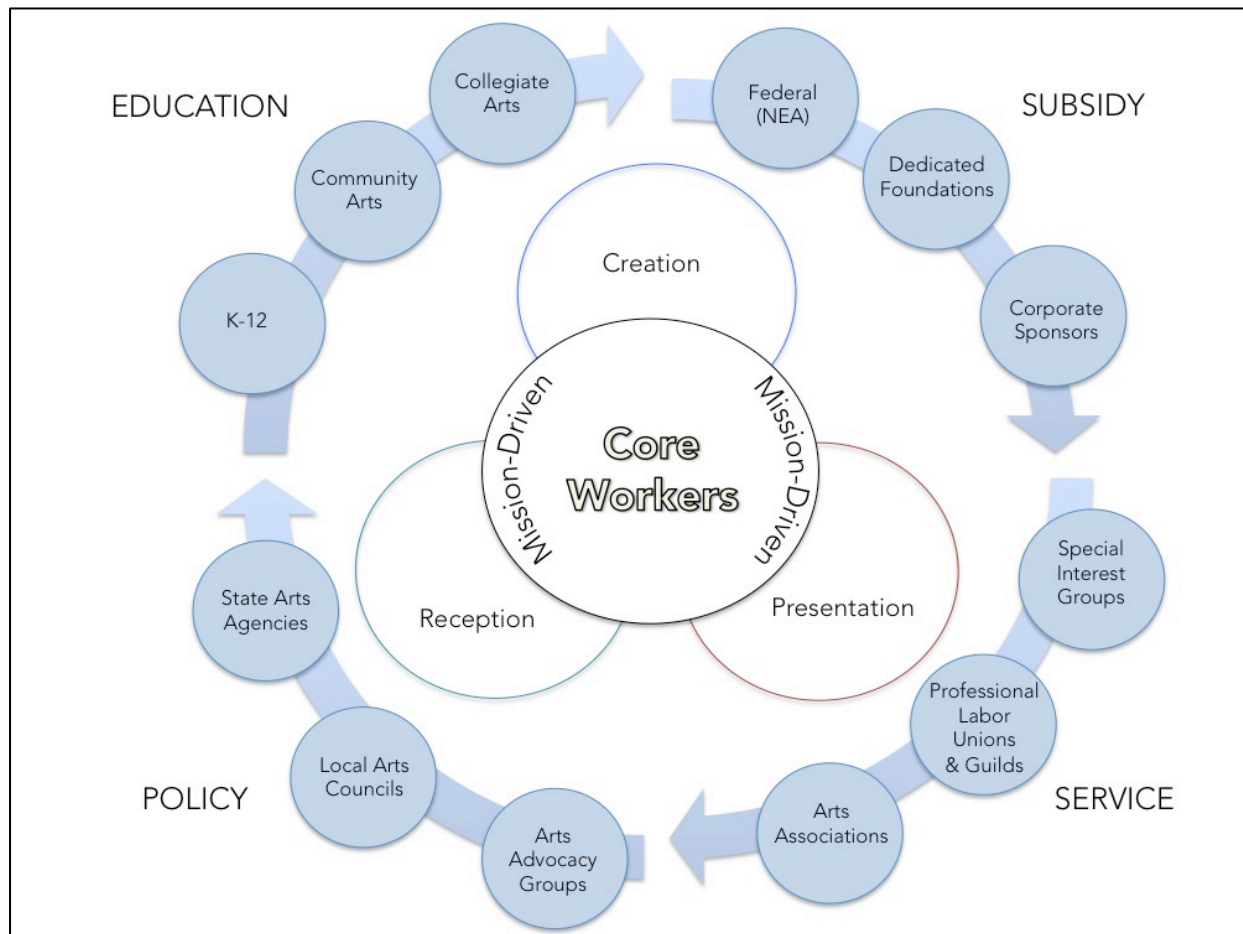


Figure 1.

The Nonprofit Arts Sector

For example, as can be seen in Figure 1, core workers are centrally situated in the core of the nonprofit arts sector. They plausibly and collectively work both within and across interrelated art(s) *fields* towards *mission-driven* purposes (Rosewall, 2014; Badelt, 1997; Hull & Lio, 2006; Salamon & Anheier, 1992). Concentric circles intersect core workers, representative of general field activities (i.e. creation, presentation, reception) (Becker, 1982; Maannen, 2009) that core workers must facilitate within the non-profit arts sector in order to enable sectoral benefit. Importantly, while “creation” refers to the internal coordination and management of talent, equipment, materials and resources towards the production of works of art, “presentation” refers to the external coordination and management of public and private encounters between artists, audiences and existing works of art. Moreover, “reception” refers to internal coordination and management of a dedicated physical or virtual space for the exhibition, display or performance of art. Note that the prefix (re) is hereafter utilized as a reminder that such field activities are iterative, and through repetition, may successively enable sectoral benefit over time. Additionally, in adopting the perspective that a constellation of support systems is an integral part of the infrastructure of the arts and creative sector (Cherbo, Vogel & Wyszomirski, 2008),

note that the outermost circle of Figure 1 both includes and represents distinct infrastructural components that both aid core workers in facilitating field activities and service core workers in areas of need (Burgess & Pankratz, 2008, pp. 32-34; Maanen, 2009, pp. 217-219).

Alternatively, in Figure 2, core workers are centrally situated within the core of the for-profit arts sector. They plausibly and collectively work both within and across interrelated arts and entertainment *industries* for *market-driven* purposes (Rosewall, 2014; Hull & Lio, 2006; Sayre & King, 2010). Concentric circles intersect core workers in Figure 2, representative of the general industrial activities of acquisition, commodification and distribution that core workers must facilitate in order to enable sectoral benefit (Sayre & King, 2010; Edwards, 2010; Bernstein, 2015; Trumble & Riemsdijk, 2016). Importantly, while “acquisition” refers to the procurement of legal rights and permissions to distinct works of art for the purpose of commodification, “commodification” in the for-profit arts sector refers to the shaping and transformation of an existing work of art into a product or content for sale. Moreover, “distribution” refers to the publication and dissemination of art and entertainment products and

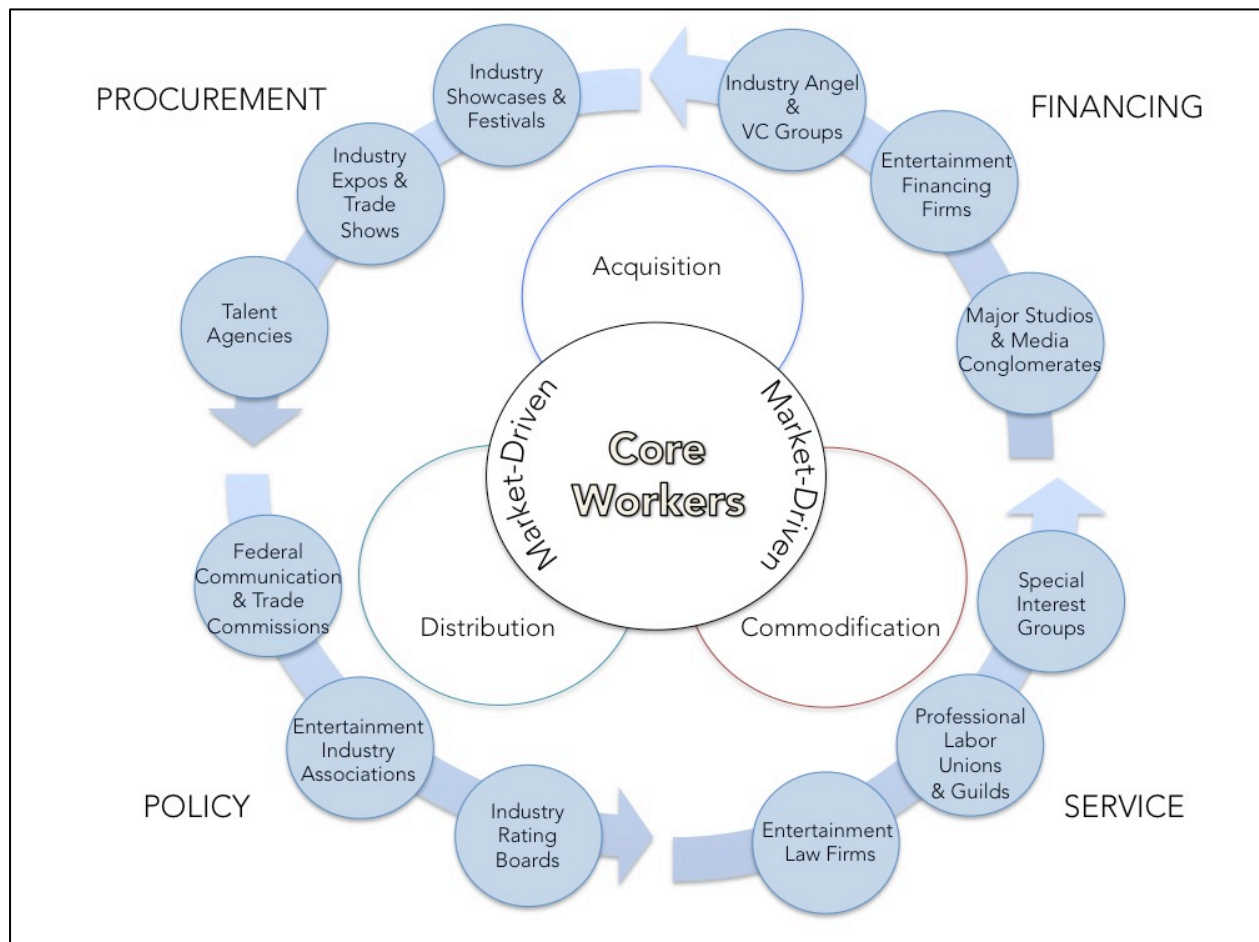


Figure 2.
The For-profit Arts Sector

content for mass consumption. Note that the prefix (re) is hereafter utilized as a reminder that such industrial activities are iterative, and through repetition, may successively enable sectoral benefit over time. Additionally, in taking the perspectives of Cherbo, Vogel and Wyszomirski (2008, p. 15), note that the outermost circle of Figure 2 both includes and represents distinct infrastructural components which both aid core workers in facilitating industrial activities, and service core workers in areas of need.

Conceptually, while Figure 1 enables an opportunity to theorize those distinct arts organizations that facilitate (re)creation, (re)presentation, and (re)reception in U.S. non-profit arts fields, Figure 2 offers us an opportunity to theorize those distinct arts organizations that facilitate (re)acquisition, (re)commodification, and (re)distribution in U.S. arts and related entertainment industries. Additionally, viewing both sub-sectors as distinct yet interdependent socio-economic systems (i.e. Figure 3) offers us an opportunity to theorize cross-sector collaborations that may uncover new and existing opportunities for synergy. For example, prior to working in the arts and related entertainment industries, core workers often first develop their skills, abilities and talents in the nonprofit arts sector, often by attending arts education programs (e.g. K-12, collegiate, community) embedded in the nonprofit arts infrastructure and/or by working directly in nonprofit arts fields to facilitate mission-driven field activities. Moreover, likely due to the benefit of public and private subsidy via 501c3 tax exemption, core workers in the for-profit arts sector may recognize the non-profit arts sector as a more cost-effective sector for arts education, workforce training, talent and skill development (Burgess & Pankratz, 2008, pp. 32-34). Additionally, research indicates that the non-profit arts sector may be a more favorable sector for research and development, largely because both market pressures and project development costs can be diminished by tax incentives and public subsidy (Cherbo, 1998b, p. 134). As Pankratz states, “Nonprofit leaders have tended to view commercial entertainment organizations primarily as funding sources that have not repaid, in philanthropic support, the essential research and development (R&D) that the nonprofit arts are said to provide the commercial sector” (2013, para. 3). For example, research indicates that Broadway theatre producers in U.S. arts and entertainment industries often remain connected to nonprofit performing arts organizations because of their cost effective ability to workshop, revise, and revitalize classical works of art (Cherbo, 1998b). Such cross-sector arrangements may help to alleviate research and development costs in the U.S. arts and entertainment industries, thus enabling the nonprofit arts sector as a less risky and perhaps more favorable environment for arts-based venturing in the broader U.S. arts sector.

Essentially, if we frame both sub-sectors one at a time (e.g., Fig 1, Fig 2), and then synergistically (e.g., Fig 3), we notice the cross-sector arrangements that have long enabled new venture opportunities across the broader U.S. arts sector (Cherbo, 1998b). Support for this position can be found in the results of the Crossover study (Gilmore, Johnson, Levi, Markusen & Martinez, 2006), in which the researchers found that artists in the sample frame (nearly 1800 responses) moved among arts sectors (i.e. commercial sector, nonprofit sector, community sector) far more fluidly than previously believed, and in addition, that each sector of study provided distinctive channels and support for artistic development (p. 5). Additional support can be found in Burgess and Pankratz’s (2008) relevant discussion on interrelations in the arts and creative sector, and also, in Pankratz’s (2013) research on interrelations within the nonprofit and commercial arts, in which he reports trends and identifies joint ventures made possible via cross-

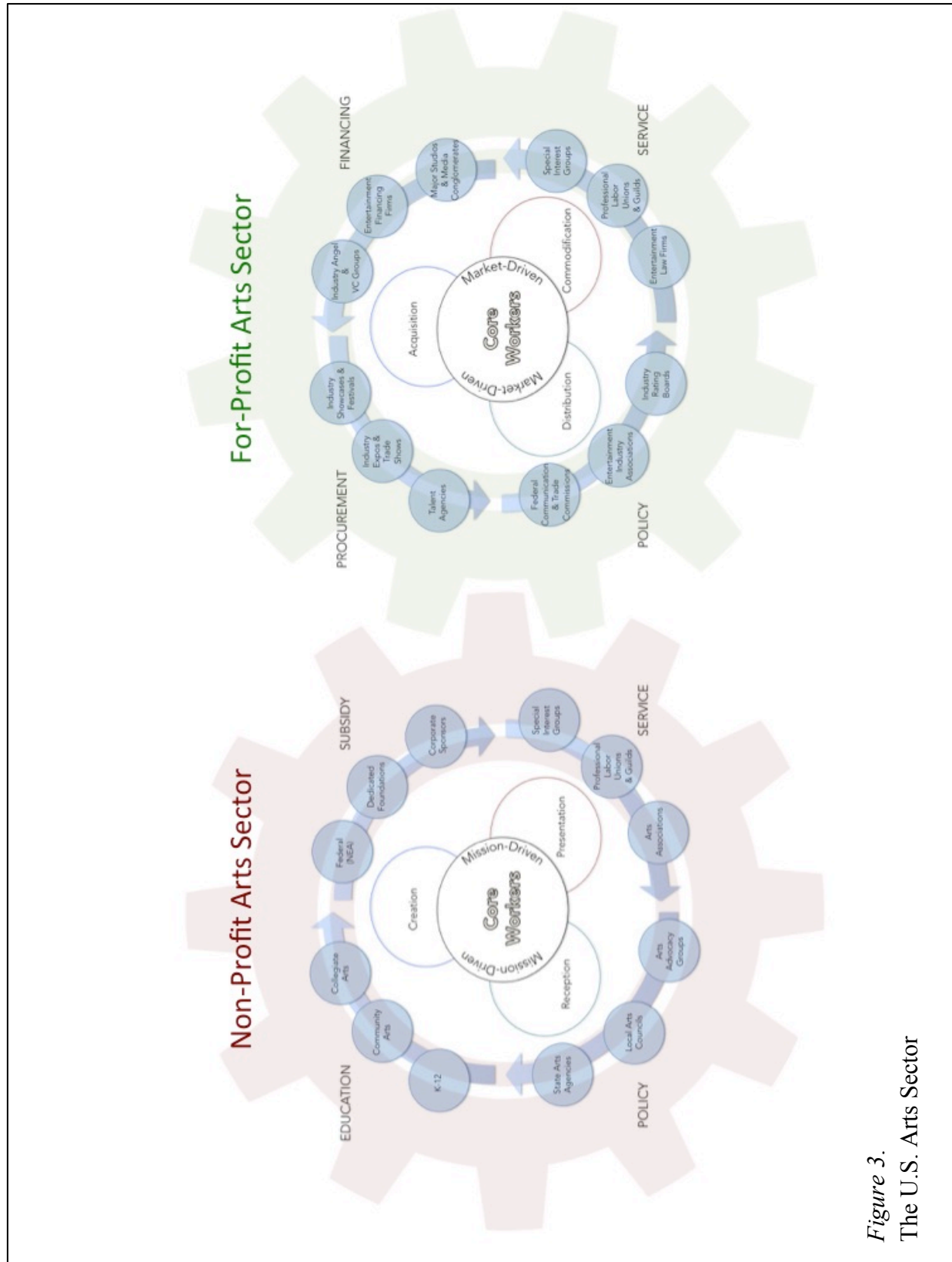


Figure 3.
The U.S. Arts Sector

sector collaborations. Moreover, if we frame that which is widely thought to be (re)created, (re)presented, and (re)received in the non-profit arts sector (i.e. art and works of art) from the perspective of core workers in the for-profit arts sector, we might view “art” as “product/content” yet to be acquired, commoditized, distributed and consumed en masse (Bernstein, 2015; Sayre & King, 2003; Vogel, 2011). In taking this systemic perspective, we can now recognize the U.S. nonprofit arts sector as the research and development wheel of the U.S. arts and entertainment industries, and the U.S. for-profit arts sector as the distribution and consumption wheel of the broader U.S arts sector. Importantly, while Figures 1, 2 and 3 represent conceptual models only, the models have nevertheless aided me in illustrating my sectoral frame, and additionally, in pointing the reader to a multi-level framework [i.e. core (micro) level, field/industrial (meso) level, infrastructural (macro) level] for analysis of arts entrepreneurship activity in a given U.S. arts sector.

Scope of the Study

In alignment with the sectoral frame and conceptual framework, and in an effort to identify a level of analysis, this study centers on an analysis of arts entrepreneurship in the core (i.e. micro) level of the U.S. arts sector. Generally within entrepreneurship research, to adopt a micro-view is to recognize the individual entrepreneurs’ ability to direct, control, or adjust the outcome of their respective venture by way of their own intrinsic traits (i.e. trait school of thought), recognition and awareness of opportunities (i.e. venture opportunity school of thought), or strategic planning process (i.e., strategic formulation school of thought) (Kuratko, 2014). Additionally, micro-level entrepreneurship research generally centers on the discovery of significant factors of influence that are part of an internal locus of control (Kurtako, 2014). Concerning the scope of the study, recall that there may be many arts sectors respective of the socio-cultural, ethnic, and regional diversity of the society in which the arts are situated. Bearing this in mind, I opted to narrow my sectoral frame to a state level, aligning socio-cultural and geographic boundaries with those of a selected U.S. state, the Ohio arts sector. To that end, a congressional district map of the State of Ohio was utilized to better visualize the geographic context in which arts entrepreneurs of study were situated (see www.sos.state.oh.us).

Although legal state lines collectively bind the study’s sample population, the sample frame equated to a random sample of legally registered founders that incorporated Ohio arts organizations both in and over the course of the years 2000-2015. Note that in an effort to encourage homogeneity in the sample frame (i.e. a focus on small arts organizations per Chang, 2010), I excluded arts organizations that reported annual revenue of \$100,000 or more in their first year of incorporation. Moreover, in an effort to control for self-employment, I excluded arts organizations that had less than two employees.

Before moving forward, it is important to note that due to the lack of a central office of cultural policy in the U.S., there is to date no official U.S. government sanctioned classification to indicate what does/does not constitute an “arts organization,” nor a national creative, cultural or artistic/arts field, industry or sector. Nor is there to date any official U.S. government sanctioned list of target businesses and/or organizational entities that are proposed to constitute or derive such concepts or constructs. However, in recent years the national arts advocacy organization Americans for the Arts (AFTA) both proposed and developed a list of both U.S. creative industries and organizational classifications, reportedly tracking over 700,000 arts-

centric businesses and organizations that are involved in the creation and distribution of the arts in the United States. Although AFTA creative industries classification was utilized to identify arts organizations of study, note that for the purposes of this study, the following AFTA classifications were excluded from the query: Botanical and Zoological Gardens; Aquariums and Zoological Gardens; Animal and Reptile Gardens; Aquarium; Zoological Garden, Noncommercial; Arboreta and Botanical Gardens; Arboretum; Botanical Garden.

Methodology

In an effort to generate data for addressing the research question (i.e. What are the demographics and shared characteristics of entrepreneurs in the Ohio arts sector?), I designed, pre-tested and administered an online survey to participants within the sample frame (Fowler, 2013). Feedback from pre-testing was used to inform the final survey draft, and pre-test participants received a small honorarium for their time. In addition, prior to survey administration, a final draft of the survey was presented to both an assessment expert (i.e., Dr. Kristin Koskey Associate Professor of Assessment and Evaluation, University of Akron) and a content expert (Dr. Wendy Torrance, Director of Research, Kauffman Foundation) in an effort to inform the final survey version.

To account for potential differences in intentionality between founders of for-profit arts-based ventures and founders of non-profit arts-based ventures, two survey versions were developed. Essentially, although survey questions and items were similar on both surveys, certain words and question prompts were changed in an effort to keep both questions and item selections as contextual and relatable as possible. For example, whereas one of the for-profit survey questions asked, “Prior to incorporation, did you have any experience starting a new business”, the non-profit survey asked the same question, but swapped the word “business” with “non-profit organization”. Likewise, whereas one for-profit survey question prompt used the terms “business venture” and “owner”, the non-profit survey swapped “business venture” with “non-profit venture” and “owner” with “founder.” In both cases, the purpose of both surveys remained the same: to generate relevant and meaningful data evidencing demographics and shared characteristics of entrepreneurs within the Ohio arts sector.

Although the AFTA 2015 Creative Industries reports estimated a population of 19,941 or more Ohio-based arts-centric business owners, a list procured from the NAICS utilizing both AFTA classification and the sample criteria returned 6,675 records to which to administer a survey (N = 6,675). Based on this estimated population, I used a sample size calculator (95% confidence level/ 5% confidence interval) to set the goal of achieving a representative sample (363) for the for-profit dataset. To encourage a greater return, I oversampled at 566, and included a raffled prize drawing incentive.

Guidestar served as the primary source for procuring the nonprofit dataset (Guidestar.org). A purchased query from the Guidestar association utilizing both selected NTEE classification (Category A) codes and the sample frame criteria returned 230 records to which to administer the survey (N = 230). Based on this estimate, I used a sample size calculator (95% confidence level/ 5% confidence interval) to set the goal of achieving a representative sample (166) for the non-profit founder dataset. To encourage a greater return, I oversampled at 230 and included a raffled donation incentive.

The Ohio Secretary of State business database was used extensively to crosscheck the validity of both datasets. For example, upon comparison of several of the procured records to the records in the Ohio secretary of state database, I found that several of the procured NAICS records possessed incorrect dates of incorporation and dissolution; an important finding that motivated me to begin inputting each procured record (both from NAICS and Guidestar) into the Ohio Secretary of State database for validity checking. With additional assistance, I was able to check the validity of 786 out of the 6,905 records. Whether or not a validated arts organization had since dissolved, invitational letters were addressed directly to all legally registered founders, and mailed to all target arts organizations within the sample frame.

Results and Discussion

The online survey remained open and accessible for 30 days. In full disclosure, new understandings arose both during and after survey administration, and thus future surveys will no doubt require revision. For example, not all survey questions were found to be relevant to the goals of the conceptual framework, and thus not all survey responses are reported in this article. Additionally, whereas Hawley's (1907) theory of the entrepreneur might aid one in identifying entrepreneurs as business owners, both non-profit and state-subsidized arts organizations cannot legally be owned, and thus going forward, a pragmatic definition of the arts entrepreneur is necessary. Supported by a theory of the entrepreneur as "Founder" (Hoang & Gimeno, 2010, pp. 41-53; Stevens, 1999, pp. 1-8), hereafter the arts entrepreneur(s) is/are identified as: the registered founder(s) who self-identified as being primarily responsible for organizing and establishing the target arts organization.

It is important to note that I was unsuccessful in achieving generalizable response rates for both the non- and for-profit datasets. Whereas the for-profit sample target was 363, total respondents to the for-profit (FP) survey were only 62. Whereas the non-profit sample target was 166, total respondents to the non-profit (NP) survey amounted to 53. These return rates mean that research findings are not necessarily generalizable beyond the scope of those who participated in the study. It also means that per the low survey response rate, I am unable to make statistical inferences from the data. Nevertheless, both surveys are useful for providing descriptive statistics for comparative analysis. For example, despite being legally registered founders with the Ohio secretary of state, the majority of NP arts entrepreneurs self-identified as a staff or board member (53%), rather than the founder (32%). Clearly this finding evidences a differentiation between the way in which I (the researcher) viewed the non-profit entrepreneurs of study (i.e., as "the" founders of nonprofit arts organizations), and the way in which the majority of nonprofit arts entrepreneur respondents actually viewed themselves, arguably as one part of a broader team of individuals; an important finding to remember for future arts entrepreneurship research studies in the nonprofit arts sector.

Results indicate that at the time the study took place, most of the participants were engaging in day-to-day activities within their respective arts organizations. This finding serves as an indicator of the most common stage and/or process of entrepreneurship (Deeds, 2014) and furthermore, situates participants' arts-based ventures in the maintenance and expansion phase of what might be called "arts entrepreneurship policy" (Lundström & Stevenson, 2005, p. 59). Additionally, the majority of participants identified as *nascent* arts entrepreneurs (i.e. first-

timers) (FP = 66%; NP = 86%), rather than *veteran* arts entrepreneurs (i.e. who had prior experience founding/establishing/organizing arts organizations).

To further summarize demographics and shared characteristics, the majority of Ohio arts entrepreneurs in the study were between the ages of 45-68, with the youngest being 24, and the oldest being 86. Additionally, while the majority (58%) of participants reported acquiring between \$1-\$999 in start-up financial capital (pre-incorporation), when given the opportunity to select from among a wide array of annual salary income ranges, the plurality of participants reported making between \$80-\$89,999 (FP = 15%) and \$100,000 or more (NP = 34%) in annual income (pre-incorporation). While it is unclear how participants' annual salary incomes were generated, this finding nevertheless evidences the presence of a substantial financial safety net among the majority of arts entrepreneurs of study, despite the seemingly low start-up financial capital requirements of arts entrepreneurship (as previously defined). Furthermore, when given the opportunity to select from among a variety of common venture financing options, the majority of FP respondents selected *earned income or personal savings* (47%), followed by *used no financing/started from scratch* (26%). Alternatively, the majority of NP respondents selected *public or private grant funding* (27%), followed by *used no financing/started from scratch* (23%). Notably, the option "bank loans" was not selected by any of the NP respondents.

Concerning shared characteristics in education, it is important to note that while a great majority of participants did receive a formal (sequential) arts education within the pre-K-12, community, and/or higher education settings prior to incorporation (FP = 68%; NP = 69%), ironically, the majority did not receive any formal entrepreneurship education (FP = 64%; NP = 58%). Interestingly, the majority of participants indicated that they did receive formal management education prior to incorporation (FP = 54%; NP = 57%). While a greater sample size is needed for correlational studies, future studies can assess the impact that such forms of education have on both arts entrepreneurs and arts entrepreneurship activity in a given U.S. arts sector. Additionally, analysis indicates that 70% of participants had a post-secondary degree at the Bachelors (38%) or Master's level (32%). This finding, when compared with the most prominent annual salary income ranges (pre-incorporation) selected by all participants (FP = \$80-\$89,999; NP = \$100,000 or more), the foremost gender of participants being male (FP = 60%; NP = 57%), and the most prominent race of the sample (i.e. 92% identifying as white), evidences the dominant socio-economic status (SES) among arts entrepreneurs of study (i.e. upper middle class college-educated white males).

Guided by the push/pull strand of entrepreneurship scholarship (Block & Wagner, 2007; Schjoedt & Shaver, 2007; Verheul, Thurik, Hessels & Zwan, 2010), survey response items served as push/pull proxies for participants' arts-based venture motivations. In addition to the option *other*, FP participants were given the opportunity to select from among the following proxies: (1) driven to do it myself; (2) did not make enough money at my previous job; (3) dissatisfaction in my previous career or place of employment; (4) pressured to go into the family business; (5) desired to support a non-profit mission; (6) desired greater autonomy in my career or work; (7) desired employment for either myself or others; (8) saw a profit-making opportunity. The plurality of FP respondents selected *driven to do it myself* (32%), closely followed by *desired employment for either myself or others* (19%). Notably, while 19% of the FP respondents indicated *other* reasons, only one of the FP respondents selected the option *desired*

to support a non-profit mission (i.e. organizing a for-profit arts-based venture to support a non-profit mission or purpose).

Alternatively, NP participants were given the opportunity to select from among the following push/pull proxies: (1) Desired greater autonomy in my work/career; (2) Desired to do it myself; (3) Needed access to public funding; (4) Pressured to go into the family business; (5) Did not make enough money at my previous place of employment; (6) Dissatisfaction with previous state of career; (7) Needed to employ myself and/or others; (8) Recognized an opportunity to address a social need; (9) Other. The plurality of NP respondents selected *other* (46%), closely followed by *recognized an opportunity to address a social need* (44%). While this rationale (i.e. addressing a social need) is typical of those who engage in non-profit entrepreneurship, it is important to note that most of the reasons given were outside of item choices (i.e. other). For example, whereas one participant who selected “other” expounded, “Desire to create something to benefit the community”, another expounded, “Loved playing music.” As additional “other” reasons are both unique and specific, I concluded that my NP item selections for this question were too narrow, and that more research was needed to uncover the diversity of arts entrepreneurs’ venture motivations and inspirations in the Ohio non-profit arts sector.

It is important to note minority arts entrepreneurship demographics and characteristics in the sample frame, as such disclosure can aid us in recognizing arts entrepreneurs outside of the dominant SES and, additionally, help researchers make meaningful group comparisons amongst minority arts entrepreneurs. While research on minority entrepreneurship need not be limited to race and ethnicity, it is important to note that the overwhelming majority of participants identified as White (FP = 77%; NP = 92%), rather than American Indian or Alaska Native, Arab, Asian, Black or African American, Bi-racial, Hispanic or Latino, Multi-racial, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Other, or “Prefer not to answer.” While this finding is not generalizable, it is worth noting that the racial makeup of the majority of Ohio arts entrepreneurs of study mirrors the racial majority of Ohio residents, in which 82.7% identified as White in the 2010 (latest available) U.S. census (see factfinder.census.gov). Given research on minority entrepreneurship (Butler & Kozmetsky, 2004), such findings arguably imply ownership and control of arts organizations by race and ethnicity (Fama & Jensen, 1983.; Grossman & Hart, 1986). Furthermore, concerning the gender of all participants, while there was a moderate concentration of female arts entrepreneurs in the sample frame (FP = 40%; NP = 43%), none of the participants identified as transgender. Such findings both encourage and challenge me to think about how I can work to make future arts entrepreneurship sample sizes more representative of the racial, ethnic and gender diversity of the United States.

Conclusion

Research from the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project evidences visual, literary and performing arts students’ desires for contextual entrepreneurship education (Lindemann, Tepper, Gaskill, Jones, Kuh, Lambert, Lena, Miller, Park, Rudolph & Vanderwerp, 2012). Alternatively, entrepreneurship scholars have recognized the ability of the arts to help facilitate learning associated with the study of creation opportunities (Alvarez & Barney, 2010, p. 574). While there is no consensus within the specialized literature on a definition of arts entrepreneurship (Chang & Wyszomirski, 2015), there is evidence that the arts entrepreneurship education field is

growing at an alarming rate. For example, according to a downloadable program inventory (file 6-20-2014-1.pdf) available on the Society for Arts Entrepreneurship Education (SAEE) website¹, there are at least 112 dedicated arts entrepreneurship courses within 96 institutions of higher education in the United States. New research published by the Pave Program in Arts Entrepreneurship indicates 372 documented arts entrepreneurship offerings within 168 institutions of higher education (Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities, 2017).

Common educational goals involve but are not limited to: the development of related skills and competencies for transitioning into professional artistic careers, the study and practice of new venture creation in art(s) fields and related entertainment industries, and the development of an entrepreneurial mindset (Essig, 2016, 2012; Beckman, 2007). In the book *Entrepreneurship in the Creative Industries*, Brown (2007) identifies similar pioneering efforts in arts entrepreneurship education that have taken place in the U.K. For example, Brown talks at length about the Performing Arts Creative Enterprise (PACE) project that originated out of the Performing Arts Learning and Teaching Innovation Network (PALATINE) from 2000-2011. Alternatively, Beckman (2007) both identifies and discusses similar pioneering efforts in arts entrepreneurship education throughout the U.S.

Despite these significant educational developments in the academic field of arts entrepreneurship, it is important to recognize the lack of published peer reviewed research for guiding and informing arts entrepreneurship education and practice. While specialized research journals have emerged (i.e. *Artivate: A Journal of Entrepreneurship in the Arts*, *Journal of Arts Entrepreneurship Research*, and *Journal of Arts Entrepreneurship Education*) a body of empirical research is needed in order to both legitimize and advance the arts entrepreneurship research field. As evidenced in this study, research that identifies demographics and shared characteristics of arts entrepreneurs can aid students, practitioners and educators in identifying and making meaningful group comparisons amongst arts entrepreneurs of interest.

Interestingly, Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides support for this position. To summarize, social identity theorists generally perceive social identities as both groups to which one belongs and meaningful aspects of one's self-concept (Deaux, 1993). As such, while individuals seek to maximize their self-esteem by striving to achieve a positive social identity (a successful artist) (Hechter, 2004), a disadvantaged position or capability may lead to a negative social identity (oft noted as the starving artist perception) (Mullen, Brown & Smith 1992; Tajfel 1982; Turner, 1987; Van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 1993). Recognition may trigger one's attempts to improve that position or status (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Contextually, where such negative social identities and/or disadvantaged positions are experienced in the arts, or evidenced in the core, field/industry, and/or infrastructural levels of the U.S. arts sector, coping strategies such as arts entrepreneurship may be desired. To that end, scholars suggest that strategies for coping with a negative social identity will likely be dependent upon how individuals perceive themselves in relation to their group affiliation (Mummendey et al., 1999). Notably, scholars who endorse a structuration frame posit that an entrepreneur's awareness of their own capability and position within a given social system (e.g., U.S. arts sector) will influence their sense of agency (Sarason, Dean & Dilliard, 2006). In cases where this is true, the identification of

¹ See <http://www.societyaee.org/resources.html>

demographics and shared characteristics among arts entrepreneurs may aid the field in making meaningful group comparisons in what might be called “arts entrepreneurship research.”

Beyond demographics and characteristics, arts entrepreneurship research may be very useful for identifying new venture opportunities across the broader U.S. arts sector; better situating arts incubators in communities where there are low rates of arts entrepreneurship activity; identifying correlations between arts entrepreneurship activity and arts entrepreneurship education initiatives; analyzing sectoral ownership and control amongst specific population groups; and perhaps most importantly, increasing the contextual entrepreneurship knowledge and opportunity awareness of both arts students and aspiring arts entrepreneurs.

In conclusion, while a greater sample size is needed in order to generalize results, I am confident this study can serve as both a proof of concept and a replicable model for future micro-level quantitative research studies in the academic field of arts entrepreneurship. While the question “Who is the entrepreneur?” has admittedly long been addressed in the business entrepreneurship literature (e.g., Gartner, 1988; McKenzie, Ugbah & Smothers, 2007), the question has yet to be addressed comparatively in our specialized literature and arguably, the field should not forsake this important question simply because entrepreneurship researchers within the business school have since moved on to other questions of interest. Furthermore, if there is truly a fundamental difference between business entrepreneurship (Kuratko, 2014, pp. 4 - 5, p. 23), and arts entrepreneurship, then the identification of arts entrepreneurs is of paramount importance, as it addresses the question, “Who are we researching?”

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