WHO STAYS AND WHO LEAVES?

ARTS EDUCATION AND THE CAREER TRAJECTORIES OF ARTS ALUMNI IN THE UNITED STATES

(working paper)

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Executive Summary

This report examines the pathways between higher education and paid forms of artistic creation. Career success for arts alumni can take on an assortment of forms, including the success associated with maintaining a desired career in the arts. However, there is little research focusing on the career patterns of arts alumni who stay in the arts after graduation compared to arts alumni who leave. We thus attempt to shed some light on important yet understudied questions: how do experiences during the postsecondary education of arts alumni combine with their early experiences working in arts-related industries to shape the decision to leave or stay in a career devoted to artistic work? For all those that ever embarked upon arts-based employment, what factors allow some to remain in that work while others exit it and turn to work outside of the arts?

To answer these questions, we analyze the responses of arts alumni to the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project survey (collected between 2011 and 2013). Given our interests in career trajectories, we turn to a subset of survey respondents (some 52,000 of them) who are 30 years of age and older, who ever worked in an arts-related occupation, and who are still active in the labor force. We use logistic regression to discern how a range of factors combine to shape the likelihood that respondents stay in arts-based careers rather than leave them, namely: inequality stemming from gender, race and class background; the formative impact of the higher education experience (including curricular and extra-curricular aspects of that experience, such as completing a particular arts major); and the skills and experiences acquired after graduation. We also focus on two open-ended items in which over 50,000 respondents detail what their respective alma mater did well and could have done better in equipping them for an arts-based career. While some critics question the value of an arts school education, our findings reveal that certain activities undertaken during higher education (e.g., building social networks and undertaking arts-based internships) have long-lasting effects on careers.

Regarding their higher education experience, arts graduates report being dissatisfied with their entrepreneurial, business, and financial training. Specifically, respondents wish that their respective alma mater had taught them about the nuts-and-bolts aspects of their work, including

how to network and promote themselves, how to handle debt and budgets, how to manage the business concerns associated with their particular arts-based work, how to be entrepreneurial, and how to find jobs. It does not seem to us that arts alumni are requesting a curriculum tightly adhering to career training, however. Instead, they are asking for a liberal arts type of curriculum that likewise incorporates the knowledge needed for those careers that many students will one day pursue.

In terms of who stays and who leaves, regarding educational experiences, we find considerable variation by major. Some majors have no statistically significant impact on whether their alumni remain in the arts-based careers or leave them, but some majors do. For instance, majoring in architecture or design increases the odds of being a stayer (versus a leaver) while arts alumni majoring in art history and several other majors are less likely to stay after ever having worked in the arts. Beyond major, other significant predictors of who stays and who are leaves include timely completion of degree, the securing of advanced degrees as well as the pursuit of personal connections and internships.

We find evidence of considerable inequalities within the arts – during school and well after graduation – particularly by race/ethnicity and gender. Controlling for all other factors, the odds of women alumni staying in arts-related occupations (after entering a career in the arts) are lower compared to men alumni, and the odds of people of color staying are lower when compared to white alumni. Also, alumni with large amounts of student debt (over $50,000) are significantly more likely to leave the arts than individuals who report lower levels of debt.

Finally, we consider the role of "generalism" in artistic careers and find that respondents with a double major that combines a major in the arts with one *outside* the arts are less likely to stay in the arts as a career compared to respondents with only a single arts major. However, compared to arts-based workers who are more prone to specialization, those that expand the number of occupations in which they have worked ("generalists") are much more likely to stay in the arts.

Introduction: Higher Education and Artistic Careers

Speaking to workers at a General Electric manufacturing plant in Waukesha, Wisconsin in 2014, President Barack Obama made the case for technical training as a pathway to viable careers, despite concerns from worried parents: "A lot of parents, unfortunately, maybe when they saw a lot of manufacturing being offshored, told their kids you don't want to go into the trades, you don't want to go into manufacturing because you'll lose your job." He specified that a four-year college degree is not necessary to make an honorable living, adding: "folks can make a lot more potentially with skilled manufacturing or the trades than they might with an art history degree" (Obama, 2014). While he promptly added, "Nothing wrong with an art history degree – I love art history. So I don't want to get a bunch of emails from everybody," he nevertheless received several emails in response. Obama later apologized for the "glib remark" and clarified to one art historian that he simply meant to highlight the promise of technical training and related career paths (Mueller, 2014), but his comment fueled ongoing debates regarding the so-called "return on investment" of some degrees over others and served as yet another provocation for arts education advocates. Note that we use the term "arts" throughout this report to refer broadly to the performing arts (e.g., dance, music, theater), visual arts (e.g., cinema, painting, sculpting), literary arts (e.g., fiction, poetry), design (e.g., architecture, fashion, interior design), as well as arts education, arts administration, and art history.

President Obama's comments not only fueled debate, they also resonated with existing concerns in the broader debate regarding the value of higher education, in general, and the value of advanced arts education, in particular. Regarding higher education in general, some question its continued utility and relevance in terms of preparing students for work and employment in the 21st century – particularly that type of higher education provided by a "liberal arts" curriculum that exposes students to a wide array of knowledge and topics rather than a curriculum tightly focused on occupational training (see McMillan Cottom, 2017; Noble Jones & Heard, 2018). To be sure, young workers (and their parents) are right to worry about educational decisions and career prospects. The year after Obama's triumphant celebration of manufacturing careers in Waukesha, General Electric announced plans to close its plant in that very community and move those 350 jobs to Canada (Lohr, 2015). What occurred in Waukesha is part of a larger pattern

that has been unfolding for decades – a pattern that involves the disappearance and relocation of full-time jobs in manufacturing and other sectors (Barley, Bechky & Milliken, 2017; Bluestone & Harrison, 1982). Since the 1970s, the world of work has also become increasingly precarious because of the considerable rise in part-time and temporary jobs, which offer few worker benefits and no job security (Kalleberg, 2009, 2011). While young workers in recent years are increasingly considered "at-risk" in their school-to-work transition if they lack a college degree, amidst these long-term and tumultuous shifts in employment, a growing body of research documents career pathways of college graduates that are often delayed, adrift, and unequal (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Arum & Roksa, 2014). In other words, some benefit more from their college education than do others (see also Rivera, 2015). This disparity in the "return on investment" has become all the more pressing given the rising cost of tuition for higher education and growing alarm over student debt that some compile while pursuing higher education (Frenette & Tepper, 2016; Jackson & Reynolds, 2013; McMillan Cottom, 2017).

Despite such concerns about higher education in general, it is difficult to dispute the payoffs of college education for most students. When assessing such outcomes as income, job satisfaction, and employment status, young adults with college degrees fare much better, on average, than do individuals without those degrees (Taylor, Fry & Oates, 2014). Furthermore, amidst the major shifts in work and jobs occurring since the 1970s, there has been both an increasing demand on the part of employers for the analytical skills associated with liberal arts training – such as the abilities to think critically and deductively, to gather and synthesize information, and to devise solutions to problems – as well as heightened earnings for individuals that possess those very skills (Liu & Grusky, 2013). These payoffs bode well for the growing number of young people who now seek to benefit from a college education. As of 2013, more than one third of 25- to 32-year-olds in the United States have a college degree, up from an average of one in four within that age group over previous decades (24% in 1979 and 25% in 1995; Taylor, Fry & Oates, 2014). Clearly, then, higher education still holds an attraction for a sizable number of people, regardless of the debate swirling around it.

The general debate about the relevance of higher education is mirrored by a similar debate regarding arts education that occurs in conservatories, colleges and universities across the

nation. On the one hand, there is some question about the *necessity* of arts education: certain studies find, for instance, that arts education has no impact or a very small impact upon the earnings that flow from artistic work. This suggests that artists who are self-taught may earn just as much as those artists educated at conservatories, colleges and universities (BFAMFAPhD, 2014; Rengers, 2002; Towse, 2006). A few even wonder if something as ephemeral and ineffable as "creativity" (and the talent it requires) can actually be taught via a higher education curriculum (see Elkins, 2001). Certain jazz musicians, for instance, view conservatory training as being too cerebral and clinical rather than aesthetically helpful and, instead, stress the knowledge that comes from mentorship by fellow musicians (Berliner, 1994). On the other hand, there is some question about the *dividends* that arts education offers: those who major in the arts tend to earn less income than those who major in other fields (Abreu et al., 2012). Of course, that is assuming that such individuals actually attain an arts-related job, for long-term and stable forms of employment can sometimes be elusive in the arts (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010; Frenette & Tepper, 2016; Menger, 1999, 2014).

These questions about arts education are well founded, but they do not provide a complete picture. Regarding the necessity of arts education, work in artistic careers has a notable divide between those jobs requiring academic credentials and those that do not. Whereas physicians and lawyers need advanced degrees to claim professional status (Abbott, 1988), academic credentials are not needed for someone to claim the honorific title of "artist" or "creator" (Becker, 2017; Fine, 2017). However, there are some occupations within arts-related industries where arts education at conservatories, colleges or universities is expected, if not required, for employment – with architects and orchestral musicians being among those examples (see Blau, 1994; Murninghan & Conlan, 1991; Ravet, 2015; Sarfatti Larson, 1993). The variable nature of credentials in artistic careers may partly result from the relatively late emergence of curricular programs available for interested individuals. Colleges and universities in the US did not regularly feature music and the visual arts in the curriculum until after the 1920s (DiMaggio, 1991a, 1991b; Dowd et al., 2002). In 1960, when the College Art Association approved the Master's of Fine Arts (MFA) rather than the PhD as the terminal degree for studio artists, there were 72 MFA programs in existence (Fine, 2017; Singerman, 1999). Today, there are 568 such accredited programs in the fine or literary arts, of which half were founded in the

last three decades (Gerber & Childress, 2017). Yet, the recent ascent of educational credentials in some careers (e.g., Bachelor's Degree in Music Business) has been accompanied by a cultural lag in acknowledging the value of such credentials (Frenette, 2013).

Regarding the dividends of arts education, those majoring in the arts may indeed make relatively lower salaries in their work following graduation than do those with non-arts majors; however, those working in the arts are also more likely to be satisfied with work than are other professionals – with some in arts-related industries even stressing that they have a "calling" to engage in such work (Bille et al., 2013; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010; Steiner & Schneider, 2013). Meanwhile, those artistic workers with higher levels of education tend to be better positioned in a number of ways (including earnings) than are artistic workers with less education (Anheir, Gerhards & Romo, 1995; Bille & Jensen, 2018; Woronkowicz, 2015). As Gary Fine (2017, p. 1468) aptly summarizes for the visual arts, "Whether required, having a degree matters…" when considering both the cachet and opportunities that flow to those artists with an MFA (see also Giuffre, 2009). The degree likewise matters for jazz musicians but is not required: those with advanced degrees are prominently located in their field of jazz – combining their academic credentials with higher pay, critical recognition, and numerous connections to their jazz peers (Dowd & Pinheiro, 2013; Pinheiro & Dowd, 2009). Not surprisingly, then, the number of arts education students and alumni has grown in recent years and decades (Fine, 2017; Gerber & Childress, 2017; McRobbie, 2016).

We do not attempt to resolve the debate surrounding arts education in this report. Instead, we attempt to shed some light on an important yet understudied question:

> *How do experiences during the postsecondary education of arts alumni*
> *combine with their early experiences working in arts-related industries*
> *to shape the decision to **leave** or **stay** in a career devoted to artistic work?*

Contributors to scholarship on arts alumni have focused mostly on the "front end" of these arts-based careers – such as the difficulties that arts alumni face in establishing a career in arts-related industries shortly after college graduation (Comunian, Faggian & Li, 2010; Fine, 2017; Martin &

Frenette, 2017). We complement those efforts by focusing on the careers of arts alumni with a long-term perspective, thereby capturing more the "middle" and the "back-end" of these careers. While we discuss in detail the results of our study below, we highlight here a central finding: **the higher education experiences of arts alumni have a long and lasting impact on their respective careers in arts-related occupations**. A number of studies find that, given the numerous challenges associated with careers in the arts (e.g., scarce opportunities for full-time employment, an abundance of temporary jobs, and a surplus of would-be artists who can drive down wages for all; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010; Menger, 2014), it is not unusual for creative workers to "give up" on their dreams and aspirations for a career in the arts and seek employment elsewhere (Bille & Jensen, 2018; Frenette, 2016; Mayer, 2016; Ursell, 2000). Indeed, in our own study, we find a number of individuals leave their employment in arts-related industries. Yet, we also find that some alumni have drawn deeply on opportunities afforded in their arts education and, in turn, are much more likely to stay in arts-related careers. Hence, by heeding those who **stay** and those who **leave** arts-based careers, we introduce an important new element to the debate regarding the import of arts education for careers and employment.

Before we get to the results of our study, we briefly deal with two important issues that lay at the heart of our analysis – the nature of careers in arts-related occupations and the difficulty of attaining data on those who aspire to have such careers.

The Nature of Arts-Related Work and the Challenges of Data for Assessing Such Work

We focus broadly in this report on work and careers in "artistic" domains – including the performing arts, the visual arts, the literary arts, design, arts education, and arts administration. Some may find that broad approach confusing: after all, there are substantial differences between, say, the production of ballet, sculpture, poetry or a building. Yet, there are several reasons that importantly support such a broad approach to the "arts" and the work and careers that stem from them. First, while dealing with a huge variety of content, all arts-related careers involve at their core the production of aesthetic works that are distinctive in some fashion, with that distinctiveness protected and enforced by professional norms and intellectual property laws (Becker, 1982; Bille, 2012; Mathieu, 2012; Reilly, forthcoming). Furthermore, that

commonality even applies to the production of content meant to be transcendent and enduring (i.e., "high culture") and content that is meant to be entertaining if not fleeting (i.e., "popular culture;" DiMaggio, 2006; Dowd, 2011). Second, as Becker (1982) has compellingly reminded us, arts-related work is fundamentally a collective effort – as when actors, musicians, composers, lyricists, writers, and choreographers come together in the production of a single Broadway musical (see also DiMaggio, 1992; Uzzi & Spiro, 2005). Despite the myth of the "isolated creator," most arts-related production involves not only those who do the creative work, but also the administrative and support personnel who are integral to the collective effort (such as publicists and stage managers for Broadway musicals). Finally, it makes sense to consider the arts in broad fashion because there is growing recognition that the careers of many artistic workers involve participation in multiple disciplines (e.g., music and film), working in arts and non-arts industries (e.g., graphic design for a design agency vs. graphic design for a banking conglomerate), and spanning several sectors and roles (e.g., deploying creative skills in addressing community development challenges; see Cornfield, 2015; Frenette et al., 2018; Janssen, 1998; Koppman, 2014; Lingo & Tepper, 2013; Throsby & Hollister, 2003).

In taking this broad approach to the arts and arts-based careers, we nonetheless are mindful of marked divisions that occur within the arts, of which we mention two. First, as noted above, work in creative careers has long been divided between, on the one hand, long-term employment within a given organization and, on the other hand, temporary employment across a succession of jobs (Menger, 1999, 2014). The former is marked by relative stability in terms of daily work, whereas the latter is marked by an almost continual concern with securing the next job before the current job is completed. While this division between the two types of employment is longstanding, certain creative fields have experienced a notable increase in the preponderance of the more precarious type (Cornfield, 2015; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010; Skaggs, 2018). Temporary employment now abounds in film production, for example, because major studios have abandoned their in-house production of the past and, instead, now rely upon "temporary organizations" for the production of a given motion picture – temporary organizations that are populated by freelance workers, and ones that disband after the completion of their respective film (Blair & Rainnie, 2000; Christopherson & Storper, 1989; Zuckerman, 2005). Film workers that succeed in acquiring temporary job after temporary job are those who

know how to generate positive recommendations and expansive connections, all while handling the long hours associated with a brief project and the uncertainty that occurs between hired work. This is the case both for those film workers engaged in the "creative" side of the project and for some of those involved in the support and business side (Bechky, 2006; Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2012; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010).

The second divide that marks arts-based employment is the one between the exceedingly large numbers of individuals who aspire to have an artistic career versus the small number of individuals who actually do (Menger, 1999, 2014). This oversupply of would-be creative workers creates logjams at both points of career entry and subsequent points of career advancement – logjams that only a fortunate few successfully navigate (Alper & Wassall, 2006; Craig & Dubois, 2011; Dowd & Kelly, 2012). Indeed, it is commonplace to speak of the "superstar effect" given how especially great success in artistic careers is enjoyed only by a small number (Bille & Jensen, 2018). In his classic study of one arts-related occupation, for instance, sociologist Robert Faulkner (1983) differentiates between the periphery, middle, and inner circles among Hollywood soundtrack composers to highlight stark differences in status and career mobility: he finds that 252 composers had only one film credit (periphery), 150 had two to six credits (middle), and approximately 40 had produced between 7 and 50 scores (inner circle). Faulkner (1983, p. 101) asserts that transitioning from the "middle" to the "inner" circles is akin to "jungle warfare" and as such "is no easier than breaking into the business originally." We suspect that the divide between those who have employment versus those who seek such employment is especially pronounced in arts-related occupations that do not require educational credentials – such as those *other* than architecture – because such occupations have low entry barriers for would-be artistic workers (see Menger, 2009, 2014).

These two divides complicate the ability of scholars to gather accurate data that cover the whole range of arts-related workers. Many of the studies detailing arts-related careers are based upon data for individuals who actually *have* such jobs as their primary source of income (e.g., Alper & Wassall, 2006; Coulangeon, Ravet & Roharik, 2005; Florida & Jackson, 2010). That approach, while understandable given available information, cannot account for the substantial number of individuals who seek and compete for such jobs, and perhaps work in them

intermittently, but lack such jobs at the time the statistics are gathered. Those studies that move beyond that common data limitation reveal that, at any given point in time, while some do indeed have primary employment as full-time arts-related workers, many struggle *and* persist in following their dreams (Faulkner, 1983; Gerber, 2017). They make alternative employment choices so that they may continue to be involved in creative work, with hopes of a "break" eventually materializing and allowing them full-time employment (Menger, 2014). Second, over time, there are those who once worked full-time in arts-related careers but eventually change fields, leaving those ambitions behind to pursue more stable employment elsewhere (Frenette, 2016). Hence, there is considerable churn among the abundant supply of arts-related workers, which is not fully captured by statistics and surveys that typically address individuals' primary line of work – a churn that is very much shaped by larger inequalities regarding race, class, and gender (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; McRobbie, 2016; O'Brien et al., 2016). Thus, in order to study who *stays* and who *leaves* arts-related careers, we need data that are different than the typical censuses of those currently employed full-time in such careers. As we detail in the next section, we are fortunate to have data in the form of a survey of arts alumni.

The SNAAP Alumni Survey: Data on Arts-Based Careers

We draw upon data that come from the 2011, 2012, and 2013 survey conducted by the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP). This survey targets the arts alumni of 153 institutions in the US – with 140 of those being institutions of higher education (i.e., college, conservatories, and universities) and 13 of them being arts high schools. Each of those institutions made available to SNAAP lists of their respective alumni who majored in the "arts" broadly construed, whereupon SNAAP embarked upon recruiting those alumni to take a lengthy survey administered online – resulting in a total of 92,113 survey respondents. The response rate for the alumni of each educational institution in these three years, on average, was 18% (Frenette & Tepper, 2016). That response rate is low for online surveys in general, which can hover between 35 to 40 percent (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000). Yet, Lambert and Miller (2014, p. 39) maintain: "…response representativeness is an even more important concern than response rate." To that end, they demonstrate that the respondents tapped by the SNAAP survey (i.e., arts alumni) are statistically no different from cohorts of graduating seniors tapped by the National

Survey of Student engagement, thereby lending credence to the usefulness of the SNAAP data (Lambert & Miller, 2014).

The SNAAP survey instrument is retrospective in nature: respondents in 2011-2013 answered questions, among other things, about their earlier experiences in higher education, about their first and other jobs following graduation from an institution of higher education, and about their current jobs. However, before we embarked upon any analysis, we took two steps to deal with the problem of insufficient information found among certain respondents. First, due to the online nature of the survey, we have information on how long it took each respondent to complete the survey. Given that the SNAAP survey is both lengthy and involved, we dropped from our analysis those 1,162 respondents who spent 5 minutes or less in total answering the survey questions. For a point of comparison, Lambert and Miller (2015) note that the median time for completing one of the SNAAP surveys is almost 28 minutes.[1] We then dropped from our analysis those respondents who only made it through roughly half of the entire survey. Those respondents provided too little information for meaningful comparisons in a statistical sense, particularly on our items of interest. That reduced the total sample size to 76,909. While that reduction in the total number is unfortunate, it also gives us more confidence when presenting our results because they are based on respondents who provided relatively more extensive and detailed information.

Figure 1 shows how we use the SNAAP survey to delineate between those who **stay** in a career and those who **leave** a career in the arts broadly construed (artists, support personnel, educators, etc.). We do so by targeting three points in the career trajectories of arts alumni. All of our 76,909 respondents begin their respective trajectories (i.e., the first point) by intently engaging in the arts during higher education – such as majoring in the arts while pursuing a bachelor's degree or such as concentrating on the arts during graduate education while completing, say, an MFA or PhD program. That time in higher education is depicted in the circle on the left side of Figure 1.

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[1] Lambert and Miller (2015) also find that some platforms used when taking the SNAAP survey (desktop computers) have slightly shorter median time and other platforms (i.e., smartphones) have a slightly longer median time.

FIGURE 1: Conceptualizing Career Trajectories in the Arts with SNAAP Data

Given our interests in career trajectories, we turn to a subset of survey respondents who are 30 years of age and older and are still active in the labor force. Those who are at least 30 years old have likely had sufficient time to establish a work-history and career; those who are active in the labor force (unlike retirees) are still compiling a work-history / career, possibly an arts-related one. This subset thus allows us to get at the second point in a particular career trajectory: those 52,315 individuals who completed their arts education and, at least, several years later have "**ever-had" a job in an arts-related occupation** – as depicted in the middle circle of Figure 1.

Why the difference between the 76,909 for the full survey and the 52,315 for the subset? As already mentioned, some of the respondents are either too young for our criteria or have left the labor force and, hence, are done with careers in the formal sense (19,311 respondents).[2] Yet, the bottom of Figure 1 also points out those 5,283 respondents whose trajectories have taken them *away* from an arts-based career (rather than simply being too young or done). Although the SNAAP survey questions do not allow us to discern the detailed motivations for all those not pursing and securing arts-based work,[3] we do know that 12,452 respondents reported that, when entering higher education, they had no intention of ever working as an "artist" narrowly defined (versus the broad notion that we use here, where ours includes support personnel who work in the arts but do not claim the mantle of "artist").[4] Yet, as commonly observed, higher education sometimes has a way of changing initial work intentions. Frenette and Tepper (2016) find that, among arts alumni who did not foresee themselves as pursuing an artist career, some 43% would eventually do so. That gives some clarification as to why 12,000 or so respondents did not initially want to be artists whereas only 5,200 or so would eventually never pursue arts-based work.

The empirical focus in this report is on the third point in the trajectories of those who "ever-had" worked in the arts. In particular we are keenly interested in accounting for why 30,048 of those respondents are still engaged in such work in the present versus why more than a quarter of those who have ever-worked in the arts (14,267 out of 52,315) have since taken a trajectory away from arts-related occupations. Thus, like Daniel Cornfield (2015) and others (e.g., Faulkner, 1983; de Laat, 2015) who have investigated the career trajectories of arts-related workers in qualitative fashion, we are able to assess factors that explain the divergence of these

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[2] There are 18,861 respondents who are less than 30 years of age and 2,297 who report being retired (a total of 21,158). These numbers do not add to the 19,311 reported above because some respondents are *both* older than 30 and retired.

[3] However, the SNAAP survey does have motivational questions administered to a subset of respondents who specifically identify themselves as "artists." We are engaged in current research that addresses the "stayers" and "leavers" within that group, complete with survey items that detail the reasons for why they left work as artists.

[4] Working in the arts, even arguably as an artist in the narrow sense, does not mean that individuals will automatically claim the title of "artist." This is a point that Lena and Lindemann (2014) address in detail by way of SNAAP data.

latter two career trajectories (what Cornfield calls "pathways"). We add to such qualitative studies by quantitatively discerning, via a statistical technique known as "logistic regression" (which we explain below), how a range of factors combine to shape the likelihood that respondents stay in arts-based careers rather than leave them.

The SNAAP survey also has another feature that allows for further exploration: open-ended answers from survey respondents. As is common in large-scale surveys, the SNAAP survey relies upon questions with pre-specified answers, from which respondents choose those that apply to them. Yet, for a number of topics, the SNAAP survey *also* asked respondents to address a particular question in their own words. We focus in this report on two open-ended items in which respondents detail what their alumni institution did well and did *not* do well in equipping them for an arts-based career.[5] Given that each of these open-ended questions generated more than 50,000 answers from survey respondents, we rely on rudimentary techniques from what is known as "computational linguistics" (which we also explain below), not only to make our way through the wealth of words found in those open-ended responses, but also to make sense of underlying patterns found in the respondents' own words. Qualitative studies have admirably plumbed the difficulties that art students face as they transition to the workplace – by way of interviews and observation (e.g., Fine, 2017). We add to those efforts here by detailing concerns that especially matter for tens of thousands of arts alumni.

In the analyses that follow, we will tell two stories. The first concerns what some 50,000 arts alumni have to say about their experiences in higher arts education. The disjuncture between the "ivory tower" and the "real world" figures prominently in this story. In our view, the collective responses of these alumni should encourage artists, educators and administrators to re-think what a liberal arts curriculum needs to offer those that are engaged in the arts themselves. The second story concerns what arts alumni have done when pursuing their post-graduation careers. The importance of their arts education comes to the fore, especially in terms of extra-curricular aspects of that experience, as do things that these respondents have learned and done

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[5] See Roberts and colleagues (2014) for a cogent discussion regarding the advantages and disadvantages associated with open-ended questions in surveys. Like those scholars, we find usefulness in evaluating the responses generated by these particular types of question.

in the real world – real world knowledge that they likewise emphasize when evaluating what their arts alma matter should have taught them. Although we use both computational linguistics (rudimentarily so) and statistical analysis to tell these two stories, we also want the moral of those stories to come through loud and clear.

SNAAP Data: Arts Alumni Who Ever-Worked in an Arts-Related Occupation

A story requires characters.[6] It is helpful, then, first to present briefly some background information on the characters who figure so prominently in this study: the arts alumni who have *either* continued arts-based work or have once done such work and have now left it behind (i.e., the stayers and the leavers). Consider, for instance, how they earned the "arts alumni" designation.

Architecture	3,532	Fine Arts	15,766
Art History	1,993	Media Arts	5,528
Arts Admin. & Mgmt.	532	Music Performance	6,986
Arts Education	4,473	Music History	1,234
Dance	7,758	Theater	4,952
Design	7,628	Writing	932
		Other	732

TABLE 1: Number of Arts Alumni, by Majors/Concentrations. Who "Ever-Had" Arts-Based Work

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[6] For a linguistic take on this claim, see Franzosi (2010).

Table 1 indicates the expansiveness of the term "arts alumni" by summarizing the broad categories of majors / concentrations completed by the SNAAP survey respondents who have ever-worked in an arts-related occupation. The main characters in our stories thus have backgrounds that collectively encapsulate the performing arts, visual arts, literary arts, design, and education / administration. We are particularly interested in the architecture major (or concentration), as its curricular programs tend to be highly formalized and closely connected to future work opportunities; for example, architectural internships are a key component in the professionalization process, as well as in the attainment of educational credentials required of architects (Quinn, 2003). We thus expect a relatively tighter link between completion of the major and arts-based work for architecture majors than for the other majors in Table 1. Note that the total number of majors in Table 1 is larger than the group of ever-worked that we are studying (62,046 vs. 52,315). That is because these arts alumni could major / concentrate in more than one area. We return to that point below and in the statistical analysis.

The breadth of our characters' backgrounds also becomes apparent when considering the 23 arts-related occupations in which 68% of our SNAAP survey respondents ever worked (see Figure 1). As we will show in the analysis, the largest groups of occupations do not necessarily denote those with the most success in terms of staying. The occupations listed below in Table 2 likewise encompass the full gamut of the performing arts, visual arts, literary arts, design, and education / administration. As is the case with the majors / concentrations listed in Table 1, many respondents have engaged in more than one of the arts-related occupations listed in Table 2 below. That is a point to which we will also return below, as well as in the logistic regression analysis for the second story. The question remains, though: **for all those who ever embarked upon this arts-based employment, what factors allow some to remain in that work while others exit it and turn to work outside of the arts?** If we think of staying in the arts, as a type of "success," then sociological research offers a number of potential answers for making sense of why these characters diverged in their trajectories.

Characters, as colleagues in acting remind us, need a "back-story" – which includes, among other things, the context that shapes both who the characters are and what they do. The

confluence of all the characters' back-stories, in turn, helps us understand and explain the bigger story that develops. Hence, after describing the background of the survey respondents in this study (e.g., the majors they earned, the types of art-based work they have done), we now draw upon existing scholarship to offer three potential back-stories regarding why some working in the arts stay and why others leave.

Architect	4,255	Craft Artist	5,726
Arts Administrator or Manager	9,406	Fine Artist	11,043
Museum or Gallery Worker / Curator	6,806	Film, TV, Video Artist	6,494
Graphic Designer, Illustrator or Art Director	14,359	Multi-Media Artist or Animator	3,440
Interior Designer	3,286	Photographer	7,214
Web Designer	6,476	Actor	5,011
Other Designer	5,250	Dancer or Choreographer	2,527
Higher Education Arts Educator	13,168	Engineer or Technician (Sound, Light, Other)	2,306
K-12 Arts Educator	11,363	Musician	11,098
Private Teacher of the Arts	11,904	Theater Stage Director, Producer	4,048
Other Arts Educator	4,848	Writer, Author, or Editor	11,270
		Other Arts Occupation	7,106

TABLE 2: Arts-Related Occupations in which Arts Alumni Have "Ever-Worked"

In social science terms, these back-stories are the theories (and the research supporting them) that help us make sense of the context that both constrains and empowers individuals. As will be seen, one back-story stresses the inequality stemming from gender, race and class that marks society as a whole, as well marks the workplace and those within it. Heeding the

advantage versus disadvantage flowing from that inequality helps us realize why some succeed and why others do not. Another back-story stresses the formative impact of the higher education experience. For those individuals fortunate enough to spend a few years at such institutions, there are curricular and non-curricular aspects of that experience that potentially help them to succeed in later life, depending on the extent to which they can take advantage of such aspects. Another back-story stresses what goes on in the rough-and-tumble of precarious work settings that are commonplace in arts-based occupations – where skills learned in the "real world" help some succeed while others around them falter. When detailing these back-stories below, we are actually offering "hypotheses" as to why some stay and why some leave careers in the arts. We start with the first back-story stressing inequality.

When investigating differential success in the many realms of society, including but not limited to employment and careers, sociologists often emphasize the impact that gender, race, and class play in that success or the lack thereof (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Harvey Wingfield & Taylor, 2016). Consideration of those three attributes likewise matters in terms of how they shape the types of trajectories that artistic workers follow. In a number of arts-based settings, but not all of those settings, women and people of color have historically faced barriers that their male and white counterparts have not faced and, in turn, they have tended to secure less success in terms of opportunities and recognition (see Bledsoe, 2018; Braden, 2009; Conor, Gill & Taylor, 2015; Corse & Griffin, 1997; Dowd & Blyler, 2002; Dowd, Liddle & Blyler, 2005). Meanwhile, certain scholars argue that, due to larger systems of class inequality, the higher education environment tends to favor those from higher rather than lower social class backgrounds – whereby more affluent students are comfortable in navigating the "culture" of the campus, and more affluent students are adept at translating their class advantages into occupational ones, such as securing higher relative pay (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Kane, 2011; Rivera, 2015; Witteveen & Attewell, 2017). Relatedly, some argue that those individuals whose parent were active in arts-related work will likewise enjoy advantages (such as higher pay) when they themselves enter arts-related industries (O'Brien et al., 2016; see also Negus, 2002).

GENDER		
	Female	55.7%
	Male	38.9%
	Transgender	0.1%
RACE-ETHNICITY		
	White (including White Hispanic, Latino, Spanish)	81.2%
	Black or African-American	2.6%
	Asian	3.4%
	Hispanic, Latino, Spanish Origin (Non-White)	3.8%
	Other & Multi-Racial	4.2%
	No Race-Ethnicity Claimed	4.5%
CLASS		
	First Generation Student	19.9%
	Parents Are Artists	20.0%

TABLE 3: Predictors of Stayers / Leavers: Societal Inequality

We thus consider how these fundamental attributes predict the trajectories of those who stay in arts-related occupations and those who leave. Table 3 lists the distribution of these attributes across the SNAAP respondents who ever-worked in arts-related occupations: it reveals that, in terms of sheer numbers, women (56%), whites (81%) and the relatively affluent (~80%) predominate in this group. Three points bear mentioning. First, while we are pleased that the SNAAP survey gathered information on transgender individuals, these individuals are not numerous enough to be included in the logistic regressions that we describe below, which we regret. Second, we report those who did *not* answer the race-ethnicity questions in case such individuals comprise a non-random group that could compromise our multivariate analysis; for example, they would be a non-random group if a sizable number of white individuals are the

ones not claiming any racial-ethnic category (Alexander, 2018).[7] Among our respondents, those who make no claims constitute the second largest racial-ethnic group. Finally, we gauge social class background with the variables that are available in the survey: one of these is consistent with the approach of O'Brien and colleagues (2016), assessing whether a respondent's parents or guardians are also artists; the other is consistent with Wilbur and Roscigno's (2016) approach of assessing class background by comparing those college students (in our case, alumni) whose previous generations of family members did not attend college to those continuing a family tradition of college matriculation – with that comparison tapping distinctive challenges that the former face when making sense of the collegiate experience. Both social-class predictors are only slightly correlated (-0.11) but yet they tap similarly sized groups of survey respondents (around 20%). That said, we should acknowledge that in the grander scheme of things, the respondents featured in this study are relatively well-resourced; they have benefitted from the esteem accorded their college degrees when seeking employment and when competing for jobs against those without degrees (see Fine, 2017; Frenette & Tepper, 2016; Martin & Frenette, 2017).[8] Nonetheless, the implications of this back-story should be stressed: it holds that the divergent trajectories of stayers and leavers likely reflect the larger system of inequality that places barriers for certain groups – namely, women, people of color, and the less affluent.

The second back-story brings the focus from society as a whole to the higher education campus. Indeed, when assessing success specifically in labor markets and employment outcomes, a number of sociologists hone in on aspects of the higher education experience so as to explain differential patterns of success – such as we have already noted with the scholarship of Rivera (2015), Wilbur and Roscigno (2016) and others. What we now stress is not the social

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[7] There is missing information for other predictors items, as well – but none as consequential as for those involving race-ethnicity and debt. We have worked to minimize that missing information as much as we could. For instance, a number of respondents did not report their gender; where possible, we relied upon their gender as reported by their respective alma mater to fill in the information for nearly all of those missing cases. Likewise, for people who did not report their age; where possible, we drew upon their year of graduation to estimate ("impute") their age, greatly reducing the missing information for that predictor.

[8] Unlike the singular items covered respectively in Tables 1 (majors / concentrations) and 2 (occupations), our items summarized in Tables 3 through Table 5 are multiple and somewhat incommensurable. As a result, the tables detailing our predictors will rely upon percentages for items that are categorical and percentages that are continuous in some sense. Those standardized measure facilitate comparison.

class-based aspect of this experience but, instead, the components of this experience that potentially equip individuals with the tools by which to succeed when they venture forth into the world of work and careers. In keeping with this approach, there is a virtual cottage industry devoted to discerning which college majors best prepare students for employment and which ones are the worst at this (Carnevale & Cheah, 2015). Indeed, we can easily do that by examining how each of the majors listed in Table 1 fare in predicting the likelihood of arts alumni staying in arts-based careers.

There are other curricular aspects of the higher education experience that we can also assess. Those who pursue double majors are arguably broadening their pool of knowledge – which could lead to heightened success in future employment (Pitt & Tepper, 2012). Yet, we also wonder if all double-majors are alike. For example, those doubling in arts majors are likely making themselves "generalists" who are able to engage in a number of activities as an arts-based worker, expanding the range of jobs for which they are eligible (see Dowd & Pinheiro, 2013; Pinheiro & Dowd, 2010). Yet, those combining an arts major with a non-arts major / concentration may feel the pull of the non-arts major – especially as jobs in such fields as finance or engineering can be more plentiful, or the pay can be higher, than is the case within arts-based occupations (see Carnevale & Cheah, 2015). Interestingly enough, Table 4 shows that almost four times as many SNAAP respondents double-majored or double-concentrated *within* the arts compared to those respondents combining an arts program of study with a non-arts one. Regarding another curricular predictor, those who complete their program of study in a timely fashion will likely do better as they enter the world of work and career than those who struggle to finish their efforts in higher education (see Alexander, Entwisle & Olson, 2014). Those taking two or more years longer than recommended comprise some 7% of all the SNAAP respondents in this study. Finally, while a college degree may prove beneficial, we know that in many settings advanced degrees are even more beneficial (Hout, 2012). The SNAAP respondents fare well on that front, with these 30% of these alumni holding master's degrees or doctorates of some sort.

Of course, not all the benefits of higher education are curricular; in fact, extra-curricular elements are especially noteworthy in how they prepare students for career success. On the one

CURRICULAR		
	Majors / Concentrations	(See Table 1)
	Double Major within the Arts	13.1%
	Double Major of Arts with Non-Arts	3.4%
	Took 2+ Years Longer than Recommended To Complete Degree / Program	7.3%
	Advanced Degree	30.5%
EXTRA-CURRICULAR		
	Influence of Social Capital on Career (5 point-scale)	0.95 Avg.
	Arts-Related Internship	38.8%

TABLE 4: Predictors of Stayers / Leavers: The Experience of Higher Education

hand, networks of connections established at this point in life can yield all sorts of dividends following graduation – with expansive networks leading to more opportunities than do small networks (Franzen & Hangartner, 2006; Marmaros & Sacerdote, 2002; Martin, 2013). The SNAAP survey allows us to approach such "social capital" by counting the types of people whose connections with the respondents have influenced their subsequent careers – with those types of people being students; faculty and instructors; educational staff; guest artists; and other arts alumni. Most of the respondents in our study, around 25,000 of them, stunningly report no type of connections as benefitting their careers (earning a score of 0 on the scale), while about 750 claim that connections with all five types of people proved to be influential (earning a score of 5); most other respondents fell towards the lower side, averaging a score of 0.95, as shown in

Table 4. On the other hand, the exposure and experience that flows from internships, particularly those related to one's future field of work, can likewise set up people in various positive ways – not necessarily in the securing of an immediate job but, rather, in acquiring the know-how needed to succeed in whatever job does appear (Frenette, 2013; Martin & Frenette, 2017). Table 4 shows that more than a third of the survey respondents had an internship. We will see if that and other predictors in Table 4 matter for who stays and who leaves. People are fortunate to attend a course of study in higher education, those who can draw upon a full range of resources and opportunities while there, goes this back-story, are even more fortunate because they are especially likely to succeed in the years following their relatively brief time on campus.

Our final back-story draws the focus even tighter – considering a particular type of work and employment. Indeed, a group of scholars helps us think about success as it pertains to "stayers" and "leavers" by focusing particularly on success in what is deemed "precarious work" given the abundance of temporary jobs and the like – a type of work that abounds in arts-related industries (Cornfield, 2015; Kalleberg, 2009, 2013). For example, these scholars tend to stress, not the dividends that flow from arts education when accounting for success, but rather the skills and dispositions learned on the job by arts-based workers navigating both the well-documented oversupply of artistic workers and the abundance of temporary jobs (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010; Skaggs, 2018). As workers gain experience in securing temporary work, they often become increasingly better at securing more work, thereby keeping them successfully in the type of work they desire – such as arts-related work (Bechky, 2006; Evans & Barley, 2004; Faulkner, 1983). Other arts workers successfully navigate the vagaries of temporary work by becoming stylistic "generalists" who can work in a variety of projects and settings and, thus, enhance the range of jobs that they can attain (Dowd & Pinheiro, 2013; Faulkner, 1983; Frenette et al., 2018; Giuffre, 1999; Pinheiro & Dowd, 2009; Zuckerman et al., 2003). Of course, when jobs are especially scarce, some creative workers handle that dilemma by way of entrepreneurial efforts – creating their own organizations for themselves and fellow arts workers, managing arts organizations that benefit the broader community of artists and audiences, as well as teaching the next generation of artists (Cornfield, 2015). These scholars note that these skills are what help in a precarious line of work, but that precarity is not always overcome. Indeed, we expect that as arts-workers navigate their situation by working in non-arts jobs, such jobs (and the opportunities

that they contain) will entice them to leave the precarious work of the arts for more stable work elsewhere. That tug away from the arts towards occupations that pay more could especially be intense for those arts-based workers who have accrued a large amount of debt, including from their time of study in higher education (Field, 2009; Rothstein & Rouse, 2011).

If entrepreneurial strategies sometimes involve the pooling of resources, so too can arrangements at home. Mates and partners can provide needed financial support to those arts-related workers who are bringing home modest paychecks, and they can also provide temporal support by covering for each other in terms of parenting responsibilities by way of the flexible schedules that are common in precarious work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Taylor & Littleton, 2016). That being said, some research shows that artistic workers feel a tug to leave the arts when they become responsible for children for whom they must provide (Frenette, 2015; Stokes, 2017; Wing-Fai, Gill & Randle, 2015). Of course, it also may matter where your home is located: some arts-workers benefit from living in locales that contain vibrant scenes in which audiences, patrons and venues are plentiful (Florida & Jackson, 2010; Markusen & Schrock, 2006; Pinheiro & Dowd, 2009; Shaw, 2015; Tai, 2014).

Finally, we should note a very real aspect of creative work at play in this point of the trajectory: there is a tendency to "age out" of various arts-based work – especially in settings where the "newest," the "latest," the "hippest," is paramount; in settings where workers are evaluated primarily on their recent success rather than on their track records; and in settings where youth is a prerequisite for work in terms of appearance and/or performance (Frenette, 2016; Jeffri, 2005; McRobbie, 2016; Stokes, 2017; Ursell, 2000).

This precarious work scholarship and its back-story offer an intriguing array of predictors to consider for our analysis of stayers versus leavers. Fortunately, the SNAAP survey provides us with ways to incorporate those predictions, as summarized in Table 5. That precarity is cast in bold relief by the sizable number of respondents who have ever freelanced (78%) or worked

WORK ARRANGEMENTS		
	Ever Freelanced or Been Self-Employed	77.9%
	Generalism (23-point scale)	3.22
	Entrepreneurial Activity (3-point scale)	1.14 Avg.
	Ever Worked Outside of the Arts	84.1%
	Debt in Excess of $50,000	6.6%
	Silent about Debt	7.5%
HOME ARRANGEMENTS		
	Never Married	20.6%
	Reporting Having Kids	36.6%
	Reside in NYC Area	8.9%
AGING OUT		
	Year of Graduation	1992.1 Avg.

TABLE 5: Predictors of Stayers / Leavers: The Experience of Precarious Work

outside of the arts (84%). Recall that these are individuals who trained in the arts and who also have ever-worked in the arts broadly construed, but they also have to turn to themselves and to other industries for employment. In light of that precarity, though, it is surprising that only 6.6% have large amounts of debt; indeed, more people are silent about their debt (i.e., they did not answer the question) than are owing more than $50,000. Given that people are especially reluctant to answer questions about finance on surveys, and given that those who did not answer are such a relatively large share, we include them in the subsequent analysis to make sure that they are not a "non-random" group – thereby replicating here what we are also doing for those who neglect to list their race-ethnicity in the SNAAP survey (see Table 3).

The precarity also brings about industriousness for certain respondents in the survey (but not all of them). We assessed entrepreneurialism in a way that is consistent with Cornfield's (2015) formulation – given respondents a point on the scale for doing each of the activities he highlights (e.g., founding an arts organization, managing one, and teaching). Nearly 14,400 of the respondents did none of those things, while 4,302 did all three (an impressive combination on their part). The typical respondent did, on average, 1.14 of these things. Meanwhile, we counted as "generalism" the number of distinct occupations that a responded has ever done – including arts and non-arts occupations. Six respondents reported working (amazingly) in 20 or more occupations. Most, however, worked far less – with respondents averaging work in three distinct occupations.

The average respondent graduated from their arts alumni program in 1992 – some 20 years prior to answering the survey, thereby showing that this group ranges across a number of years. Given this age range, it is not surprising to see that 80% of the sample has ever been married, but somewhat surprising to see that only 36% report having children. Note that when it comes to the impact of geography, we focus especially on a common outcome in the arts, whereby one metropolitan area is so stocked with opportunities that it overshadows the opportunities found elsewhere in the nation – such as the New York City metro area in the US, the London metro area in the UK, and the Taipei metro area in Taiwan (Dowd & Kelly, 2012; Oakley et al., 2017; Tai, 2017). When referring the NYC area residence in Table 5, we specifically mean those arts alumni residing in the immediate metro area that spans New York City, Newark, and Jersey City. The rationale for doing so becomes especially apparent when seeing the concentration of arts-alumni found centered in and around the NYC metro area (see Figure 2). The back-story offered by this group of scholars points to a wide range of predictors. They might seem somewhat ad hoc in nature, that is, until realizing that all the predictors have in common how they do (or do not) help individuals better position themselves in a work environment where opportunities are often fleeting.
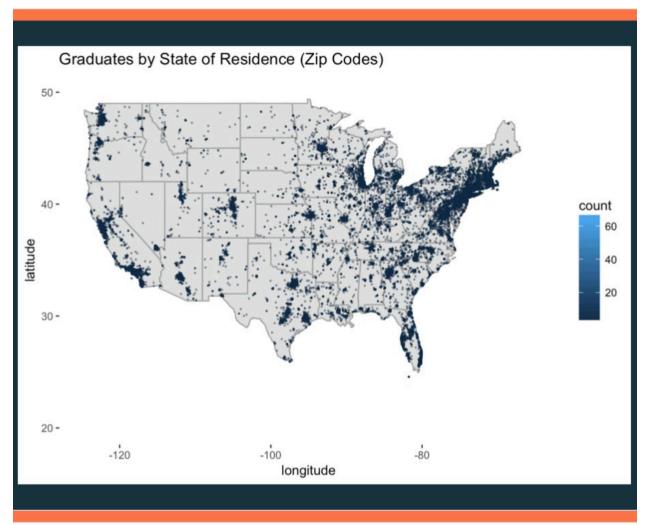
Graduates by State of Residence (Zip Codes)

FIGURE 2: The Residential Location of Alumni Who "Ever-Worked" in the Arts

The First Story: Arts Alumni in Their Own Words

Having introduced our characters and their possible back-stories, we now turn to our first overarching story. We tell this story by considering answers to two open-ended questions regarding what postsecondary institutions could have done better to prepare alumni for their careers, as well what those institutions did well in preparing them. We thus move in an arc from the "bad" to the "good" – with the good offering ways to think about how to improve the bad.

Until now, there has been very little systematic investigation of the open-ended answers found in the SNAAP survey, in good part, because there are tens of thousands of such answers. In fact, relying upon conventional methods of textual analysis could prove especially daunting,

as it would involve reading closely each of the thousands of responses, and then developing, implementing, and double-checking time- and labor-intensive coding schemes by which to reveal patterns among the onslaught of words (Roberts et al., 2014; but see Lindemann et al., 2017 as a rare and recent exemplar of taking the conventional approach). Instead of relying on such conventional methods, we handle the tens of thousands of responses by relying on computational linguistic tools that are now making considerable headway into sociology (see Mohr & Bogdanov, 2013). The attraction of these tools is that they allow for relatively quick analysis of millions of words. Also attractive is that researchers have grown more sophisticated in developing algorithms for analysis that are not "distracted" by substantively unimportant words like "the" and that can also recognize that words like "worker" and "workers" should be treated as similar while, based upon their linguistic context, words like "cash" (the noun) should be distinguished from "cashed" (the verb; see Franzosi, 2010; Wagner-Pacifici et al., 2015). For the purposes of this report, we rely on two rather rudimentary techniques that nonetheless reveal interesting patterns. Simply put, we first rely on a collection of "dictionaries" that enable us to distinguish the sentiments expressed in the open-ended responses – documenting both the presence and the amount of positive and negative sentiment evoked by words. We then rely upon examination of the co-occurrences of words, both in two- and three-word combinations, so as to understand better what alumni had to say when answering the two questions about their arts alma mater.[9]

What could postsecondary institutions do better?

Recent accounts of the experiences, opportunities, and challenges of arts alumni paint a seemingly contradictory picture: some accounts stress the apparently limitless opportunities for such artistic workers (e.g., Florida, 2002) whereas others highlight the challenges that artistic

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[9] To be more specific, we used a combination of the "tidytext", "igraph", and "ggplot2" packages in the R statistical software package to analyze the text responses to the two open-ended questions (R Core Team, 2013). Tidytext and related packages are suitable for analyzing and visualizing large text corpora in a variety of ways including word frequencies, sentiment analysis, wordclouds, and relationships between groups of words (e.g., n-grams and correlations). We carried out our preliminary analysis in two stages: (1) simple frequencies and sentiment analysis on single words (the latter of which eventually relied upon the bing dictionary), and (2) co-occurrence and trigram counts of words. The n-gram method proved more useful in providing context to the survey responses than did the sentiment scores.

workers themselves face such as debt and precariousness (e.g., BFAMFAPhD, 2014). Yet, what often remains unaddressed are the collective views of arts alumni that they themselves formulate as opposed to the percentage of alumni who check one response or another on a survey.

Building on prior research that aims to bring a more nuanced understanding of the challenges *and* opportunities for arts graduates (Bridgstock & Cunningham, 2016), we consider how arts alumni who ever-worked in arts occupations answered the question **"Is there anything that [your postsecondary institution] could have done better to prepare you for further education or for your career?"** We expected that, when able to articulate their own responses, these arts alumni would split the difference between limitlessness and precariousness of their careers, noting what they needed from their institutions in positive and in negative fashion. That is somewhat what we find among the 55,301 open-ended responses: alumni offered suggestions while using particular words conveying sentiment, as shown below in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3: Sentiment Analysis: What Arts Education Should Do

This "sentiment cloud" in Figure 3 charts both the positive (depicted in turquoise) and negative (depicted in coral) words that the graduates most frequently used in their answers (with greater frequency noted by larger font). The negative is well represented, including: lacking, hard, limited, debt, and unprepared. However, alumni also frequently used words such as loved, support, beneficial, happy, and excelled. In fact, in terms of raw numbers, their responses leaned more heavily toward expressing positive sentiments, such as the usage of "good" appearing far more frequently than "bad." That being said, this basic visualization of sentiment expressed by alumni has little to say, other than that these alumni are neither collective optimists nor collective pessimists in terms of the educational preparation; instead, they have a mixed assessment from the vantage of having worked in the arts in some capacity. Hence, we will move beyond any reliance on sentiment analysis in this and the next section.

There is greater clarity when we move from considering the sentiment of the words employed by arts alumni to the combinations of words that they used. Let us start, for instance, by visualizing the most frequently used words among these roughly 55,000 or so responses (all the words – and not just ones that denote a positive or negative sentiment). This frequency is shown in Figure 4; once again, the words with the largest font are also the ones most frequently used by the survey respondents. One aspect of this figure is especially striking: when alumni collectively list how their institution could have better prepared them for their careers in the arts, there is a notable absence of prominent words regarding arts-related subject matter. In other words, there is no collective call for more training, say, in aesthetics, in technique, in theory, in critical analysis, etc. Instead, the collective emphasis is clearly on "real world" aspects of career and work. Consider, for example, the mention of "time." It is the third most frequently used word (after "art" and "students"), and it is often mentioned by respondents in combination with other telling words – such as "school" (combined with "time" in 3473 instances), "art" (3028 instances), "career" (2839 instances), "program" (2113 instances), "job" (1972 instances), and skills" (1932 instances). This frequent linking of "time" with these other words (i.e., co-occurrences) suggests a strong, collective concern among these arts alumni with the temporal elements of education and career, although it is unclear how institutions of higher education could help address this concern. We know from other research that the grueling pace of student
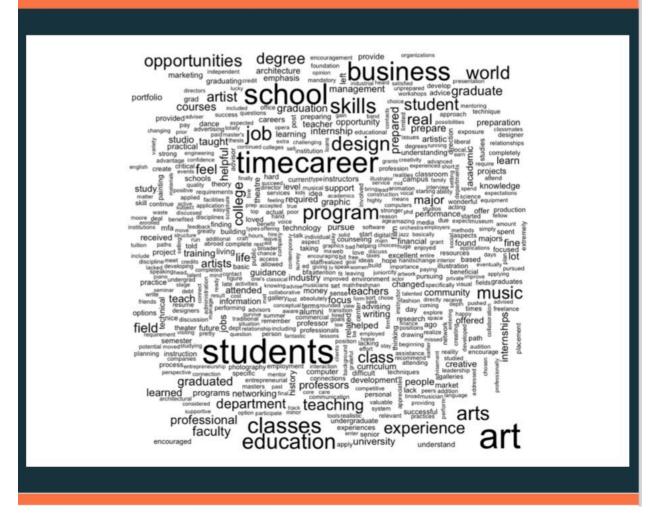
FIGURE 4: Word-Cloud on What Arts Education Should Do for Arts Alumni

life, often paired with work and debt, make it challenging for aspiring artists to locate, draw from, and thrive based on resources provided by one's postsecondary institution (for instance, see Frenette et al., 2018; Throsby & Zednik, 2011). We see here that this grueling pace and attendant challenges come to the collective fore when alumni are invited to assess what their institution could and should do for them.

The collective concern with the preparation for the "real world" becomes especially clear when we map systematically the most common co-occurrences of words in the responses of these art alumni. That systematic mapping is contained in Figure 5, wherein the bigger the line between two words, the more frequently those words are used together in the 55,000+ open-

ended responses. In fact, the second most frequent combination of two words uttered is "real world" (occurring 3583 times) – following only the combination of students and school (which comes in at 3969). As concern with time continues to be evident in this Figure 5 (as it is in Figure 4), we see here also the point that these alumni wish that they had received more preparation in terms of art and career, of art and business, of business and classes, and so forth.
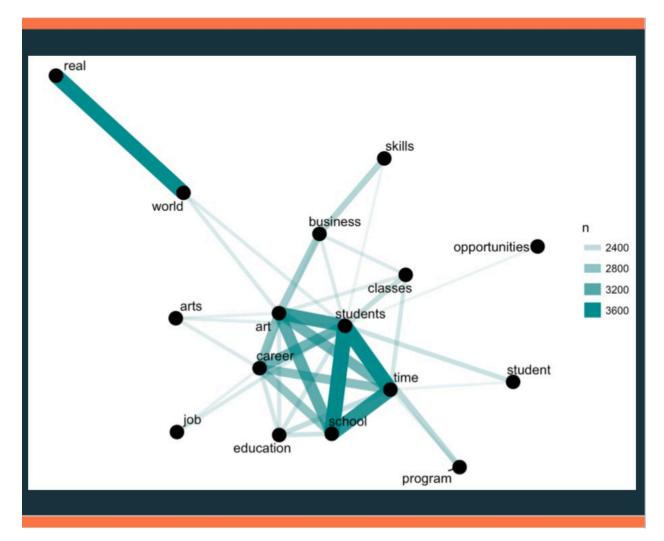

FIGURE 5: Co-Occurring Words Regarding What Arts Education Should Do for Alumni

To delve even further into such real world concerns – particularly as they relate to managing one's career (e.g., freelance) and one's finances (e.g., debt) – we look at three-word combinations in which "business" and such related topics as "freelance" and "debt" are the middle word in those combinations. Those are depicted in Figure 6. The focus here is not on
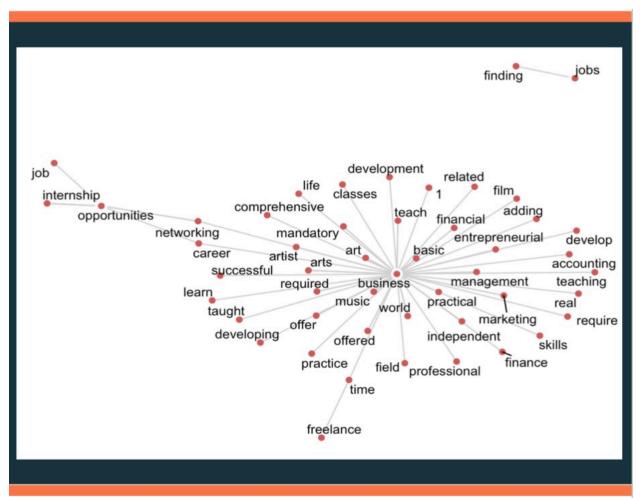
FIGURE 6: Linked Words Evoking Business Concerns among Arts Alumni

frequency of word combinations, but rather on gaining a clearer understanding of how "business" is evoked by the respondents. Out of school, at least 30 years old (and often much older than that), and having worked in an arts-related occupation, these survey respondents wish that their alumni institution had taught them about the nuts-and-bolts aspects of their work – including how to network and promote themselves, how to handle debt and budgets, how to manage the business concerns associated with their particular arts-based work, how to be entrepreneurial, and how to find jobs. Previous work has found that such things matter greatly for those who work in the arts (Frenette & Tepper, 2016). We see here that for a broad swath of arts-based workers, it matters for them to such a degree that it is on the tip of their tongue, so to speak.

What do postsecondary institutions do well?

When arts alumni speak of what their arts institutions *should* have done to prepare them for their respective careers in the arts, they overwhelmingly emphasize factors that veered more towards real world concerns (e.g., business, jobs, finances) and away from arts-related and traditional liberal arts concerns (e.g., aesthetics, history, critical thinking). The latter concerns are not unimportant. Indeed, we suspect that the alumni are relatively silent on those issues when answering the previous question because their institutions have already prepared them well in such subject matters (see Frenette & Tepper, 2016). Our suspicions are borne out when turning to their collective response to the following prompt: "**Please describe how your arts training is or is not relevant to your current work.**" As this query was only targeted to the currently employed respondents in the SNAAP survey, we are not surprised to see a smaller

FIGURE 7: Word-Cloud on What Arts Education Has Done for Arts Alumni

number of arts alumni who chose to offer a response (50,322 for this item versus 55,301 for the previous item).

Figure 7 visually summarizes the words that arts alumni most frequently used when describing their arts training. When turning from what these arts workers *should* have received from their education to what they *did* receive, their responses take on a strikingly different character. Indeed, words like "art" (offered 13,646 times), "arts" (17,455), "training" (20,874) and "relevant" (13,056) are among the most frequently mentioned words. Looking closely at the word-cloud in Figure 7, we also see that words like "creative," "thinking," and "critical" are somewhat common words mentioned in the same response as the word "skills." Unlike what is depicted in Figure 4, this particular query does *not* prompt students to mention frequently the word "business" – thereby reinforcing the conclusion regarding the need for more real world training that we drew in the previous section.

What Figure 7 begins to reveal about the strength of arts education in higher education grows even clearer when, in Figure 8, we turn the most frequent co-occurrence of words offered by respondents. The combination of "arts training" is the most frequent one used (9,785 times) – followed by "relevant training" (5607) and "art training" (4132). Even more interesting are the frequent combination of words that address arts content (i.e., those involving "music," "design," and "graphic" and "history") and that address a core aspect of the liberal arts curriculum ("critical thinking," see Liu & Grusky, 2013).
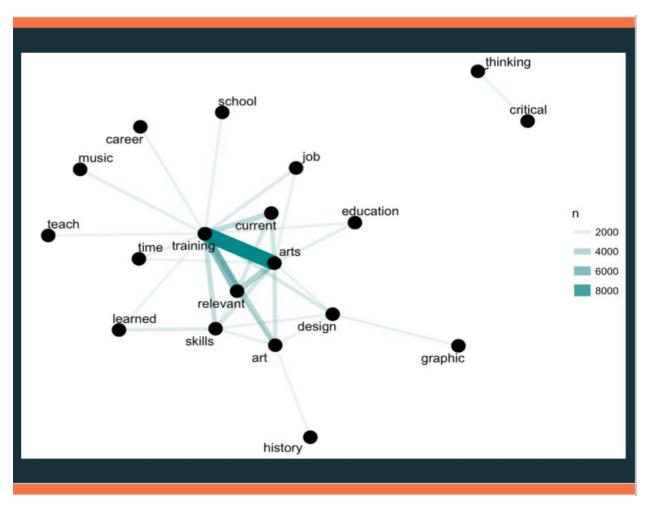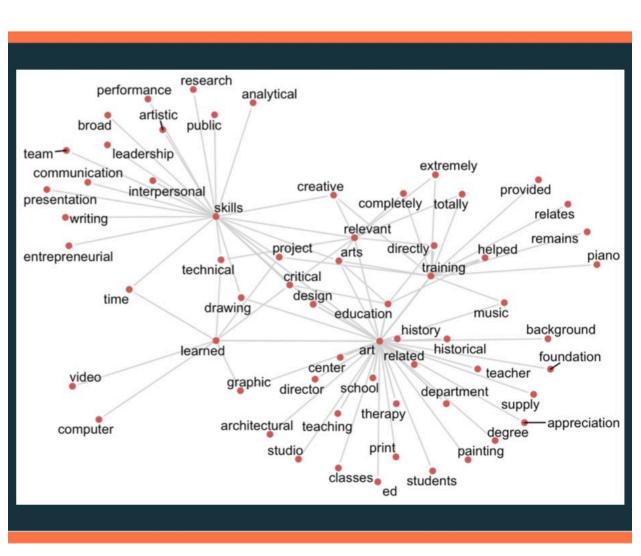
FIGURE 8: Co-Occurring Words Regarding What Arts Education Has Done for Alumni

In fact, when we zoom in tightly on three-word combinations that end with words dealing with the knowledge gained while pursuing an arts curriculum ("skills," "learned," "relevant," "training," and "art"), a wonderfully instructive constellation of topics emerges. This is shown in Figure 9 below. In the upper left corner of that figure, there is a linking of the "well-rounded" traits that the liberal arts curriculum offers – leadership, presentation, communication, and interpersonal skills (Astin, 1999). Note that these are likely the *abstract* version of the *concrete* skills that arts alumni would have provided them about the real-word of arts-based work (compare Figure 9 to Figure 6): that is, while higher arts education imparts to their alumni the ability to be entrepreneurial in the general sense, those same alumni are requesting training on the specifics of being entrepreneurial in arts-related occupations. Meanwhile, the abstract skills depicted in the left-hand corner of Figure 9 are closely aligned with the intellectual (e.g., critical,

technical, appreciation) and the artistic (e.g., piano, drawing, video, historical background) skills that the survey respondents maintain that they were provided by their respective alma mater.

FIGURE 9: Linked Words Evoking Acquired Knowledge among Arts Alumni

The moral of the story

We have used computational linguistics to tell a story that uses arts alumni's own words to make sense of arts education and its effectiveness. Although the techniques we relied upon were rudimentary, a clear story nonetheless emerged. It is not a story of limitless horizons (e.g., Florida, 2012) or crushing constraints (e.g., BFAMFAPhD, 2014). When offering their collective assessments regarding what they did and did not receive from their respective alma

mater, arts alumni clearly articulated both strengths and weaknesses, both positives and negatives, and both have and have not. Nor was the story one that pits the "real world" against the "ivory tower" – with the supposedly cerebral and clinical things offered in higher education having no bearing on or relevance for the heart and soul of the arts and their artists (see Berliner, 1994; Elkins, 2001). In fact, arts alumni noted the valuable things they learned from an arts education – including arts-specific knowledge, intellectual skills, and general traits that are beneficial beyond the campus. Rather than downplay such valuable aspects of their education, they also noted that higher arts education should also *add* more types of knowledge to its curriculum. Arts-related occupations are often precarious (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011; Skaggs, 2018). While artistic knowledge and general knowledge are valuable assets for negotiating that precarity, so too the alumni propose is that very specific business and managerial knowledge that could give them that extra resource – an important resource that will not eliminate the precariousness found in arts-based occupations, but a resource that will hopefully help them keep that precarity at bay.

Here then is the moral that we see for this story. In our experience, the liberal arts curriculum is often cast as encouraging those in the sciences and other "applied" areas of study to expand their horizons by generously sampling from other domains that will enrich them intellectually and, shall we say, spiritually (Chew & McInnis-Bowers, 2004; Tepper et al., 2014). The arts play a key role in this liberal arts curriculum, edifying students by way of literature, music, painting, and the like. We see less of an emphasis on the latter part of this "equation," whereby those students in the arts are likewise encouraged to ground themselves in the "applied" areas of study on campus – particularly those dealing with finance, management and law. It does not seem to us that the arts alumni participating in the SNAAP survey are requesting a curriculum tightly adhering to career training. Instead, they are asking for a liberal arts type of curriculum for the arts that likewise incorporates the knowledge needed for those careers that many students will one day pursue.

The Second Story: Arts Alumni in Their Own Deeds

In emphasizing the precariousness of arts-based occupations (e.g., Skaggs, 2018), we do not mean to suggest that people working in those occupations are paralyzed by that precarity. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Indeed, arts-based workers *do* a number of things to cope with that precarity, as well as to by-pass it where possible (Frenette & Ocejo, 2018; McRobbie, 2016; Throsby & Zednik, 2011). At the most basic level, for instance, we know that a good portion of arts alumni go on to arts-based work, and we know that some continue that work in the present (see Figure 1). Thus, characters in our second story (the arts alumni) are active characters. Their deeds are also motivated by various back-stories – including the three we detailed in previous pages regarding societal inequality, higher education, and precarious employment. Those three back-stories provided us with a large group of "hypotheses" by which to understand (if not predict) what our characters do with regards to staying or leaving arts-based occupations. In this section of the report, we actually test those hypotheses in order to see which ones matter in combined fashion for the success of arts alumni – "success" here being conceptualized as staying in (rather than leaving) arts-based work.

This testing of multiple hypotheses requires that we move from the rudimentary techniques of the previous section to a somewhat more advanced one here.[10] Thus, to tell our second story, we make use of a statistical technique known as "logistic regression." Paraphrasing Dowd and colleagues (2016, p. 18) this technique:

> …allows us to gauge the likelihood that a given outcome will occur [i.e., that respondents will stay in arts-based work], while simultaneously examining the impact of the [many predictors]. We can see whether each [predictor] has any independent bearing on the outcome of interest (as denoted by attaining "significance") and, if so, how much it shapes of the odds of that outcome occurring…

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[10] In other research, we are also moving toward much more sophisticated techniques in computational linguistics to analyze a range of the open-ended surveys in the SNAAP survey. In that regard, we are very much following in the trail that Roberts and colleagues (2014) have blazed.

In the pages that follow, we present the results of a single regression model that contains all the predictors at once. Yet, for purposes of clarity and ease of interpretation, we present that single model in installments. We thus remind the readers, then, that whether the impact of, say, being a freelancer increases the odds of staying in the arts by a given number – that impact is calculated by simultaneously assessing the impact of *all* the other predictors (see Pampel, 2000). The results are very much about weaving together all three back-stories and their elements.[11]

Architecture	+ 185.1%	**Writing**	Not Sig.
Design	+ 140.1%	**Art History**	- 28.5%
Arts Education	Not Sig.	**Other**	- 31.6%
Music History	Not Sig	**Theater**	- 43.7%
Media Arts	Not Sig.	**Dance**	- 46.9%
Music	Not Sig.	**Arts Admin. & Mgmt.**	- 47.5%
		Fine Arts = Reference Category	

N = 43,638; Pseudo R-Squared = 0.333; p < .001, one-tailed tests

TABLE 6: The Net Impact That Majors / Concentrations Have Upon the Odds of Staying

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[11] The results that we present here are part of an ongoing project undertaken by Dowd and Frenette.

Table 6 provides the first installment from our larger statistical model. Given the spotlight that President Obama unintentionally put on the art history major, and given the cottage industry associated with assessing which majors are best for a successful career (Carnevale & Cheah, 2015), we start by considering the impact of majors / concentration on the odds that those alumni who have ever worked in an arts-based occupation will continue to do so. Note that when employing a categorical variable (like "architecture major") in logistic regression, one of the related categories must be used as a reference. To make that intuitive, it is somewhat like in compositional grammar, whereupon the use of "than" necessitates a comparison ("than *what*?"). The results in Table 6 are comparing all the majors to the reference category of the fine arts major (which is the largest in terms of alumni numbers; see Table 1).[12]

The majors / concentrations are arrayed in descending order – starting with the major that has the highest, positive associated odds with staying in an arts-based occupation, and ending with the one that has the lowest, negative odds. Five of the majors are not significant, meaning that they do not stand out in terms of predicting who stays or leaves the arts (arts education, music history, media arts, music, and writing). As we expected, given the relatively formalized and credentialed nature of this domain (Quinn, 2003), architecture has the strongest link between its major and the success of its alumni remaining employed in arts-based occupations. Indeed, majoring in architecture increases the odds of being a stayer (versus a leaver) by 185% when compared to fine arts majors – that is nearly doubling the odds. In fact, of all the majors, only architecture and design have a positive relationship with staying in the arts. Meanwhile, arts alumni who majored in four other areas face a reduced likelihood of staying in arts-based work. Those majoring in art history, when compared to those majoring in fine arts, are almost 29% less likely to stay after ever having worked in the arts.

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[12] While we drew upon imputation wherever possible to handle missing cases (see footnote 7), we could not address all such missing cases. Even if each predictor variable has but a couple of hundred cases of missing information, the total number of missing cases grows when more than 30 variables are all used in the analysis. That is how we "lost" roughly 8,600 cases – resulting in the N of 43,638 for our final logistic regression model. That said, we did explore the missing cases for each variable, working to ensure that those missing were not a non-random group (see Alexander, 2018). For substantive reasons, we report the missing as a group for both race-ethnicity and debt.

It appears, then, that President Obama was right when initially musing about the returns on an art history major – at least with regards to remaining in the arts for employment. That being said, other majors fare worse in that regard than does art history (e.g., dance, arts administration and management). However, we strongly caution against over-emphasizing the findings as they pertain to the arts majors / concentrations. The significant findings in Table 6 are not the only ones that matter, as we show in the pages below. For example, other aspects of the higher education environment also matter for the successful continuation of an arts-based career – such as forming connections with key individuals or having an internship. Hence, for those majors listed above that have no impact or a negative impact on sustained careers in the arts, there are other ways for students to offset that negative impact via curricular and extra-curricular interventions. That point must be understood when looking at Table 6.

GENDER		
	Female (vs. Male)	- 15.1%
RACE-ETHNICITY		
	Person of Color (vs. White)	- 23.4 %
	No Race-Ethnicity Claimed (vs. White)	Not Significant
CLASS		
	First Generation Student	Not Significant
	Parents Are Artists	Not Significant

N = 43,638;   Pseudo R-Squared = 0.333;   p < .001, one-tailed tests

TABLE 7: The Net Impact That Social Inequality Has Upon the Odds of Staying

We can now move from the President Obama quip to the three back-stories that we detailed in a previous section – back-stories involving social inequality, the higher education environment, and precarious employment. Table 7 offers the portion of our logistic regression model that assesses the impact of social inequality by way of gender, race and class. As shown in Table 3, except for the group of white survey respondents, all the other racial-ethnic groups are respectively small in number. Given that, we combined those groups into a larger one that we describe as involving "people of color."

Proponents of the social inequality "back-story" argue that inequalities in the larger society permeate other social settings, such as those of home, neighborhood and work (see Choo & Ferrer, 2010; Harvey Wingfield & Taylor, 2016; Sewell, 2016). Hence, historical patterns in the construction of gender and race, as well as the attendant racism and sexism, "get into" contemporary interaction, employment practices and so forth. The results in Table 7 starkly show that to be the case for arts-related work. Recall that the results shown in this table are "net" of all other predictors: we are seeing the impact of race and gender after controlling for a host of *other* factors that mark the SNAAP survey respondents – such as their level of education, age, generalism, entrepreneurialism, etc. Even when taking all those factors into statistical account, the odds of women alumni staying in arts-related occupations (after already arriving there) are reduced by 15% when compared to men alumni, and the odds for people of color are reduced by 24% when compared to white alumni. Note that, according to Table 3, women are more numerous than men, yet in terms of a career trajectory within the arts they fare less well. It is also revealing that those respondents who do not claim a race in the SNAAP survey are statistically *no different* from the white individuals who do (the reference category in Table 7). This suggests, in turn, that many of those who do not divulge their racial-ethnic identity in the survey are, indeed, white individuals (see Alexander, 2018). If that is the case, then the arts alumni who are people of color occupy an even smaller share of arts-related occupations than it seems at first glance – all while also occupying a disadvantaged position relative to white alumni. In additional analyses not reported here, we examine whether or not race and gender "intersected," as when women of color are especially less likely to stay in the arts than everyone else (see Choo & Ferrer, 2010). We find no statistical support for that intersectionality – at least not as it pertains to SNAAP alumni and their arts career trajectories.

We suggested earlier in this report that, in the grander scheme of things, the SNAAP arts alumni are relatively privileged when compared to the many aspiring artists who lack higher education degrees and the "perks" that accompany such degrees. The nonsignificant findings regarding class are consistent with that suggestion. SNAAP survey respondents do not differ along these two social class elements in terms of whether or not they remain in the arts: the trajectories of first generation students are no different from the trajectories of the more affluent, while the trajectories of those who are children of artists are no different from the trajectories of those who, say, are children of accountants. We suspect that class-based differences among those in the arts likely appear when comparing the careers of those with college degrees to those without.

CURRICULAR		
	Majors / Concentrations	(See Table 6)
	Double Major within the Arts (vs. Single Major)	Not Sig.
	Double Major of Arts with Non-Arts (vs. Single Major)	- 37.9%
	Took 2+ Years Longer than Recommended To Complete Degree / Program (vs. All Else)	- 17.3%
	Advanced Degree (vs. Bachelor's Degree)	+ 133.1%
EXTRA-CURRICULAR		
	Influence of Social Capital on Career (5 point-scale)	+ 124.9%
	Arts-Related Internship (vs. No Internship)	+ 112.5%

N = 43,638; Pseudo R-Squared = 0.333; $p < .001$, one-tailed tests

TABLE 8: The Net Impact of the Higher Education Experience Upon the Odds of Staying

Proponents of the second back-story acknowledge that social class matters greatly for the higher education experience, especially when the lifestyles and sensibilities that are common for affluent students are likewise endorsed and rewarded by the colleges and universities that they attend (McMillan Cottom, 2017; Kane, 2011; Rivera, 2015). Yet, these proponents also make the point that there is something distinctive about this environment that is consequential in preparing and launching people into careers. Put another way, "class" in the curricular sense may have an impact on career trajectories that operates by a different logic than "class" in the social inequality sense.

We already have seen the particular impact of the curriculum in previous results: the majors of architecture and design have notable impact on the career trajectories of their respective alumni, raising the odds that those alumni will stay in an arts-based occupation. Yet there are also limits to that type of curricular impact: five majors have no significant impact on whether their respective alumni will stay or leave the arts years down the road – with some majors also associated with a *reduced* likelihood of their alumni remaining in arts-based occupations (see Table 6). Hence, it is not surprising that, in Table 8, the results show that double-majoring *within* the arts has no significant impact on the choice to stay or leave the arts. For instance, if students combine two arts majors that each have no significant impact, then their double major will likewise have no significant impact with regards to staying or leaving the arts. What is striking, however, is that those respondents with a double major that combines a major in the arts with one *outside* the arts, when compared to respondents with only a single major, those particular double-majors are 38% less likely to stay in the arts as a career. That suggests that those with one foot outside the arts (in this case, intellectually and curricularly) likewise have a "tug" to move beyond the arts in terms of employment – something that we will also see for those with one foot outside the arts in terms of work experience.

Table 8 shows that, in certain ways, the world of arts alumni is like other worlds: those who struggle to complete their program of study in a timely fashion are also less likely to stay in the arts over an extended time compared to those who complete their program of study within the expected time. Meanwhile, those with advanced degrees are more successful than those with

only an undergraduate degree – "successful" in that the odds of them remaining in an arts-based career are 133% greater in comparison to those who did not pursue a graduate degree.

Table 8 also illuminates in compelling fashion that that the impact of class in the curricular sense is joined by the impact of the "extra-curricular." Indeed, the higher education experience is not only one of absorbing knowledge in the classroom, it is also one in which students can forge key connections. While it may be difficult for a student to predict which connections will *eventually* have a positive influence on their subsequent careers, the retrospective nature of the SNAAP data clearly show that such influential connections are consequential – with each type they have (be it influential peer, influential faculty, influential guest artist, and so forth) raising the odds that they will later remain in the arts by an additional 125% when compared to those alumni (the majority of the SNAAP respondents) who did not make such connections. Scholars have previously argued that social capital is among the easiest "currencies" to acquire – especially when compared to the effort needed to acquire money (economic capital) and cultural capital (specialized knowledge) – and that social capital can, in turn, be converted into other types of capitals, as when musicians use their connections to secure paying jobs (see Anheier et al., 1995; Dowd & Pinheiro, 2013; Scott, 2012). The results in Table 8 do indeed confirm the wisdom and benefits of acquiring such social capital while a student.

The higher education environment is also one in which students learn other types of knowledge not conveyed in the classroom. This is a point that, in the previous section, we saw SNAAP respondents forcefully make in their own words. If the arts curriculum in higher education is indeed short on information regarding the "real world" of arts-based occupations and industries, one way of gleaning that knowledge is by way of an arts-based internship. There are admittedly debates and drawbacks associated with internships of all types – including the possibility of students being exploited for free labor (see Frenette, 2013). That being said, there are also career benefits associated with arts-based internships. Indeed, the formalized internships associated with architecture – and the somewhat formalized internships in design – likely add to the heightened success of their majors in terms of staying in arts-based work (see Table 6; see also Frenette et al., 2015; Quinn, 2003). Table 8 also reveals that those alumni with arts-based internships of all types (not just in architecture or design) are 112% more likely to have a career

trajectory that involves staying in the arts, an advantage that stands out in comparison to those alumni who did not have such an internship while pursuing a program of study.

The results in Table 8 thus give further clarity to the results that Table 6 offers about various arts-based majors. Consider the example of a student majoring in art history – the very major mentioned by President Obama. If that student spends her time and effort solely on classroom requirements, she will have slightly decreased odds of staying in an arts-based occupation years later. To be sure, she may get a positive bump in those odds by completing her art history degree in a timely fashion. But for additional and substantial returns regarding that arts-career trajectory, she should also expand her efforts beyond the classroom by making connections with peers, faculty, staff, guest artists and alumni, and she should also consider an arts-based internship. The positive returns on those extracurricular activities will, in turn, greatly bolster the odds that she will have a career trajectory that will involve her staying in the arts – regardless of her major.

Of all the three back-stories we emphasize, the precarious employment is the most closely linked to the context at the heart of our study: the career trajectories of those in arts-related industries. While proponents of the other two back-stories have taken core arguments and ideas and, then, applied them to the study of arts-occupations (among other things), major proponents of the precarious employment back-story devised their core argument and ideas *while* directly addressing arts-occupations. That being said, the predictors that we draw from the precarious employment back-story have more of a "list-like" feel to them than the predictors that we glean from the other back-stories. That is a reflection of the main concept undergirding the respective back-stories. The social inequality back-story rests upon a concern with discrimination, and the higher education back-story rests upon a concern with edification. In contrast, the precarious employment back-story rests upon a concern with survival. Hence, it tends to point to the various things that people "gotta do" in order to succeed (even modestly) in career settings where work is temporary, where educational credentials are not required, and where competitors for jobs are numerous.

WORK ARRANGEMENTS		
	Ever Freelanced or Been Self-Employed (vs. Not)	+ 187.3%
	Generalism (23 point scale)	+ 140.0%
	Entrepreneurial Activity (3-point scale)	+ 140.8%
	Ever Worked Outside of the Arts (vs. Not)	- 88.8%
	Debt in Excess of $50,000 (vs. No to Some Debt)	- 16.4%
	Silent about Debt (vs. No to Some Debt)	Not Sig.
HOME ARRANGEMENTS		
	Never Married (vs. Ever Married)	Not Sig.
	Reporting Having Kids (vs. None)	Not Sig.
	Reside in NYC Area (vs. Elsewhere)	+ 118.2%
AGING OUT		
	Year of Graduation	+ 101.0%

N = 43,638;   Pseudo R-Squared = 0.333;   p < .001, one-tailed tests

TABLE 9: The Net Impact of Precarious Employment on the Odds of Staying

It is that concern with career survival that lies at the heart of the predictors in Table 9. To be sure, as Menger (1999, 2014) notes, there are some in the arts who have full-time and stable employment by way of arts-based organizations – such as orchestras, museums, universities, etc. (see DiMaggio, 2006 regarding such organizations). But, as Menger and many others note (e.g., Bechky, 2006; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010; Skaggs, 2018), a good portion of those in arts-related occupations also face the prospect of temporary jobs, with those who can undertake such jobs doing better than those who cannot do so in this precarious world. In fact, we find clear evidence of that among the SNAAP respondents. When compared to those who have not freelanced (or worked for themselves), arts alumni who *have* done so increase the odds that they will stay in arts-based work by more than a 180%. In other words, they have a very different

career trajectory than their counterparts, being much more likely to stay in rather than leave the arts.

While the quip of "jack of all trades, masters of none" pejoratively describes those who do not settle into a single specialization, and supposedly do not hone particular skills and abilities, research in arts-based careers suggests that "generalism" (rather than specialization) can be beneficial (see Faulkner, 1983; Pinheiro & Dowd, 2009; Zuckerman et al., 2003). For some in arts-based work, the ability to work across occupations can bolster such things as pay and work opportunities (see also Frenette et al., 2018). Thus, generalism too can be something that arts-based workers "gotta do" to survive. The results in Table 9 give considerable support to that idea. Compared to arts-based workers who are more prone to specialization, those that expand the number of occupations in which they have worked, in turn, raise the odds of staying in the arts by 140% for each occupation (recall, though, that most SNAAP respondents work only in one or a few occupations).

In the precarious world of work, where there are many things that people "gotta do" to succeed, there are other factors that pull alumni away from arts-based careers. While generalism has its positive benefits on staying in the arts, ever working in occupations that are *not* arts-based reduces the odds of staying in the arts by 89%, when compared to those who only work in arts-based occupations. Hence, those with one foot out of the arts – be it by way of double-major during a program of study or by way of post-graduation work experience – are more likely to be leavers rather than stayers. Meanwhile, those who accrue more than $50,000 in debt from their educational experience and other activities, they are slightly less likely to stay in arts-based employment than are those with small or no debt. Interestingly enough, those who do not divulge their debt in the SNAAP survey are not substantially different from those who report no or minimal debt – at least with regards to career trajectories.

If temporary work and generalism are some of things that certain arts-based workers "gotta do," Dan Cornfield (2015) also emphasizes those things that are generous of them to do. Drawing on his extensive research in Nashville, he pays particular attention to those musicians who build a community for other musicians in terms of work and connections, even as the larger

world of music is growing more precarious with each passing decade. Such musicians, he notes, start arts-organizations of their own, administer and manage arts-organizations founded by others, and pass on their artistic knowledge to others by way of teaching. The results in Table 9 strongly show that such efforts, not only create solidarity for arts-based workers, they also benefit those very individuals who engage in that entrepreneurialism. Indeed, in the 3-point scale that we use, a SNAAP respondent gets 1 point for each of the activities stressed by Cornfield. Recall, that most of the SNAAP respondents do one or none of the entrepreneurial activities. In comparison to those that do none, for each one that an arts alumni has done, the odds of them staying in the arts rises by 141% – an increase that also accompanies doing another and then another of these entrepreneurial activities.

Whereas the jack of all trades quip does not necessarily apply to career trajectories in the arts, the quip "location, location, location" certainly does, at least in terms of geography and time. The concentration of arts-based workers in particular locales is often accompanied, if not enabled, by a larger "infrastructure" that supports these arts-based individuals. That infrastructure includes the types of entrepreneurial organizations described by Cornfield (2015), but it also includes such organizations as venues, unions, professional associations, media companies, periodicals, booking agents and agencies, etc. – as well as a large and developed audience for such efforts (see Florida & Jackson, 2010; Shaw, 2015; Skaggs, 2018; Tai, 2014). While a number of cities in the US have such an infrastructure to varying degrees, New York City stands out for the massiveness of its infrastructure – which in turns affords more opportunities for arts-based workers there than elsewhere in the United States (see Dowd & Kelly, 2012; Pinheiro & Dowd, 2009). Such opportunities are evident in Table 9: those arts-based workers who reside in and around New York City, when compared to those who live elsewhere, are 118% more likely to have a career trajectory that keeps them in the arts. While "domestic location" does not matter (as noted by the two nonsignificant findings), we do see that "temporal location" does. As the graduation year of arts alumni moves further and further away from the current year, arts alumni are increasingly less likely to stay in the arts. They appear, then, to be aging out.

Moral of the Story

We have relied upon logistic regression to tell a story about arts alumni. These individuals are certainly active characters in this big story. They have done a great deal, as evidenced by their efforts in the classroom, in extra-curricular settings, and in post-graduation work settings. The story that we tell by way of logistic regression and SNAAP data, while only hinting at the full level of their collective activity, nonetheless demonstrates forcefully the ramifications regarding not only who these characters are in terms of race and gender, but also in what they have done – ramifications that apply to the very career trajectories they have taken.

These active characters are also very different from each other. We know that because of the correlations that exist between all the predictors that we employ in our logistic regression. If these characters were all cut from the same cloth, so to speak, they would have the same attributes and traits, thereby leading to high correlations among all the predictors. We see the opposite, however. In fact, correlations among most of the predictor variables are remarkably low. In other words, these arts alumni tend to combine the elements mentioned above in relatively unique fashion. Hence, for example, even among those alumni who are similar in age, they can nonetheless differ greatly in terms of their majors, their entrepreneurial activities, their location of residence, etc. Just as all the arts can be very different from each other, so too can those who work in the arts.

The moral of our second story is this: despite this impressive variety covered by the SNAAP survey, there are clear patterns that nonetheless span all the arts and their arts-based workers. First, the arts are not immune from the inequalities that occur in the larger society. Hence, women and people of color are more likely to have trajectories that take them away from arts-based careers than are men and whites. Second, just as Gary Fine (2017) notes that having an arts degree matters, we demonstrate that the higher education experience as a whole likewise matters. It would be a mistake to equate this educational experience with majors alone. Indeed, timely completion of degree, the securing of advanced degrees – as well as the pursuit of personal connections and internships – all combine to bolster a career trajectory that involves staying in rather than leaving the arts. Third, while higher education can have a palpable and

positive impact on the career trajectories of arts alumni, what those arts alumni do in the post-graduation, "real world" can likewise have an important impact. These deeds include where they choose to live and the ways that they manage the oft-precarious work that they encounter, as when being freelancers, entrepreneurs, and generalists. It is not the ivory tower versus the real world that shape career trajectories across the arts, it is the ivory tower *and* the real world.

Concluding Comments

Who stays, and who leaves? That simple question inspired us to complete this report. While doing so, we were reminded continually that this simple question requires considerable information to answer. That is why, on the one hand, so many scholars have grappled with the question of success in the arts – approaching that question explicitly or implicitly from vantages that stress societal inequality, higher educational effectiveness, and worker strategies and dispositions. We benefitted profoundly from the insights and research that these scholars have provided. That question, on the other hand, is partly the reason why SNAAP undertook this large-scale survey. This survey provides detailed information on tens of thousands of arts alumni and their experiences in arts-based work – including whether they stayed in or left the arts.

Who stays, and who leaves? We answered this question by telling two stories about arts alumni tapped by the SNAAP survey. One story drew upon their words, and the other story drew upon their deeds. Of course, both stories were based upon empirical analysis of the survey, by way of certain types of linguistic and statistical analysis. We then summarized our two stories – and their empirical results – in detail by way of the "moral of the story" sections. Hence, we will not replicate those summaries in this section.

We use this concluding section, instead, to emphasize that, although we have provided theoretically and empirically informed answers to that simple yet weighty question, we have not exhausted all the answers, let alone all the related questions. Indeed, the results that we present here are part of our own ongoing research efforts; hence, we are not done with this question ourselves. Furthermore, we see the need for future work that digs into aspects that our results

could not fully address – the ways that social class inequality may work in arts-based careers and the complexities invoked in the relationship between the ivory tower and the real world.

We find that arts alumni with college-educated parents are no more likely than first-generation college graduates to stay in the arts, which could imply – contrary to previous research (O'Brien et al., 2016) – that artistic labor markets are relatively meritocratic. We would hope, however, that no one would draw that conclusion from our research. Instead, we encourage the readers to think about other ways that social class can matter. For example, Martin and Frenette (2017) find that arts alumni with a parent or close family member who is an artist are more likely to report career skills development and social engagement while in school; those resources are predictive of shorter job searches after graduation. Put differently, existing research shows that social class background – in the form of cultural capital (i.e., specialized and valued knowledge) and connections – helps arts graduates launch their careers, but our data suggest that such connections and knowledge are not sufficient for people to *stay* in the arts long-term. Such a finding is consistent with prior research on creative labor which shows that one's career is continually under scrutiny; you are only considered as good as your recent exploits, and relationships for sustaining a career must continually be forged or maintained (Blair, 2001; Faulkner, 1983; Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2012).

Although social class background as measured by parents' level of education does not predict who stays and who leaves the arts, differences in economic resources become more evident when we consider the role of student debt. Prior SNAAP research finds that debt levels among arts students have increased considerably in recent decades (Lena et al., 2014), and early SNAAP research tentatively suggested that having any student loan debt is associated with shorter artistic careers (Lindemann et al., 2012). We find that alumni with large amounts of student debt (over $50,000) are significantly more likely to leave the arts than individuals who report lower levels of debt. Clearly, student loan debt is a national problem, but one that specifically applies to the arts. However, data from SNAAP surveys only tell us about the economic challenges and shortfalls faced by *arts alumni* as they pursue career trajectories within or outside the arts. We expect that economic challenges and shortfalls are even more pressing and consequential for those arts-based workers *without d*egrees who find themselves wondering whether they should stay or leave. In order to show the full impact of social class background on

arts-based careers, there is a need for research that also systematically tracks those without degrees who move in and out of the arts.

Consider now the relationship between the "ivory tower" and the "real world." On the one hand, we find that experiences in both matter for the career trajectories of arts alumni. On the other hand, we also find that arts alumni are clearly distressed by the disconnect between these two. That distress echoes previous statistical analyses of SNAAP data, which reveal "skills mismatches" in terms of entrepreneurial skills as well as financial and business management skills: only one out of four arts alumni report that their postsecondary institution helped them develop those skills, but about three out of four arts alumni indicate that these skills are "very" or "somewhat" important to their work life (Frenette & Tepper, 2016). On the whole, arts majors are good at helping people think and communicate, but they could be better at training for entrepreneurial and business practicalities.

This disjuncture between the ivory tower and the real world in arts education has a long history. The landmark study *Investing in Creativity* (Jackson et al., 2003), a national study on the support structure for artists in the US, finds that one of the types of training artists need the most – business skills – is often not available from conventional postsecondary arts programs. Instead, artists must rely on training and guidance from local arts agencies, artist-focused organizations and networks, learning from peers and mentors, and community-based organizations. Moreover, the study concludes that one of artists' most salient needs is for "training and professional development that helps them make shifts throughout their careers – in artistic skill level, from emerging to mid-career to master levels" (Jackson et al., 2003, p. 63). In essence, this study (supported by the Ford Foundation as well as 37 other prominent foundations and arts donors) reports that artists would greatly benefit from more entrepreneurially focused curricula within higher education. In recent years, several scholars and arts leaders have also called for more professional and business-related training within postsecondary arts education (e.g., Dempster, 2017; Essig, 2009; Gerber & Childress, 2017; Skaggs et al., 2017). The problem is partly structural, as the dean of an arts school (and the head of the SNAAP board) diagnoses: "most faculty members in most arts schools have limited or little experience with the professional practices required of an artist employed entirely outside the patronage of an

educational organization" (Dempster, 2017, p. 1590). Moreover, in his ethnography of three MFA programs in Chicago, Fine (2017) finds that faculty consider "professional practice" courses geared towards career development "unserious" and such training implies "careerism" and "selling out" among some students and faculty. Future research should further investigate the culture surrounding entrepreneurial training in postsecondary arts programs among students, faculty, and administrators.

Whether one stays in or leaves an artistic career, each option undoubtedly carries its own benefits and costs, often in ways that are difficult to diagnose, let alone measure using surveys. Through interviews with fine arts alumni in London, Kate Oakley (2009) remarks upon the surprising persistence of the Romantic ideology of the artist. Rather than resenting the self-sacrifices necessary to even aspire to, let alone sustain, an artistic career, Oakley (2009) finds that arts graduates emphasize the ethical importance of art. In this way, on one hand, the Romantic ideology of the artist as an outsider, as an ethically important figure to society, is linked to a strong sense of personal responsibility and, on the other hand, such a finding implies that leaving the arts means that "falling short is a personal, almost ethical failing" (Oakley, 2009, p. 287).

Who stays, and who leaves? We have attempted to answer this question as thoroughly as our evidence at hand allows. We also, though, have come to see the related questions that need answering as well. How do artistic workers balance the costs or challenges of staying in the arts (including potentially lower salaries, less stable sources of income, and no social benefits compared to non-arts work) as well as the joys, purpose, meaning, and other benefits stemming from such work? How do artistic workers balance these ups and downs of their careers day-to-day (see Frenette & Ocejo, 2018)? When is leaving the arts construed as an affront to one's identity and sense of self versus an embrace of greener pastures? Put differently, future research should link the process of identifying deeply with one's "calling," how artists experience the dilemma to "stay" or "leave," and how this dilemma informs and is shaped by one's identity (Brook & Comunian, 2018; Pitts, 2012).

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