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Innovators' Acts of Framing and Audiences' Structural Characteristics in Novelty Recognition

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Introduction

When are novel ideas more likely to obtain recognition? Research on creativity and innovation has long been catalyzed by the belief that major creative achievements are sparked by imaginative and uniquely gifted individuals who succeed in bringing novel ideas to life. Several scholarly contributions have supported this view, spurring a vibrant body of work that has contributed to enhancing our understanding of

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which individual dispositions, talents and agentic characteristics underlie the emergence of novelty. Although the individual—i.e., the person who serves as the source of variation in the field—is critical, it is the field that ultimately sanctions whether or not an idea deserves recognition (e.g., Amabile, 1982, 1996; Csikszentmihályi, 1990, 1996; Gardner, 1993; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988). One important implication of this observation is that the success of novelty in gaining recognition is located in neither the creator nor the outcome of the creator's efforts, but rather the interaction between the creator and the field's audiences that selectively retain or reject novelty (Kasof, 1995). Thus, an essential determinant of whether novel ideas (and those who pitch them) are recognized as worthy of attention and support is whether audiences (e.g., peers, critics, investors or users) perceive those ideas as valuable on the basis of cues that matter to them. As noted by Kasof (1995: 366), "it may be useful to think of creativity as a form of persuasive communication, in which the creator is the source, the original product is the message, and the judge [audience] is the recipient."

Of particular interest here is the role of social audiences in charge of channeling the symbolic and/or material resources that innovators need to further their ideas. An audience-based perspective, in fact, helps to expose some puzzling facets of novelty recognition. Consider, as an example, the groundbreaking work on mobile genetic elements by Barbara McClintock who was rejected by top biology journals for many years before being recognized and honored with a Noble Prize. Johann Sebastian Bach's extraordinary innovation in harmony and counterpoints was eclipsed for more than one hundred years and rediscovered by Felix Mendelssohn during the nineteenth century. John Harrison struggled for almost 40 years before his marine chronometer was recognized as the most effective solution to measure the longitude at sea (Cattani, Ferriani, & Lanza, 2017). Similarly, George Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* was rejected by several editors before becoming an American classic (Mueller, Melwani, Loewenstein, & Deal, 2018).

The previous cases suggest that novelty recognition is challenging and fraught with uncertainty in any field of cultural production (i.e., art and science). However, novelty recognition is also "the crucial starting point in the long process of putting new ideas generated into good use"

(Zhou, Wang, Song, & Wu, 2017: 180) as relevant social audiences must come to appreciate those ideas before they take hold and achieve success (Adarves-Yorno, Postmes, & Haslam, 2007; Cattani & Ferriani, 2008; Cattani, Ferriani, & Allison, 2014; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017; Wijnberg, 1995; Wijnberg & Gemser, 2000). As stressed by Mueller et al. (2018: 95), the question of "why decision-makers can sometimes view groundbreaking ideas as "trivial" and not creative or worth pursuing remains an unresolved puzzle and one that carries potentially far-reaching consequences" (Mueller et al., 2018: 95). Thus, we ask: When do novel ideas elicit favorable evaluations from relevant audiences and then progress in their journey toward recognition?

Our goal is to advance understanding of novelty recognition by bringing together insights into the enabling role of rhetoric in framing novelty-claims with recent findings on audience-based evaluative mechanisms. In particular, we argue that innovators can deploy *acts of framing*—through the skillful use of storytelling and rhetorical tactics—to try to influence audiences' evaluation and, in so doing, the recognition of their novel ideas. The effectiveness of those acts of framing, however, depends on the level of audience evaluative heterogeneity—that is, the extent to which audience members are diverse in their evaluation criteria, and on whether an evaluating audience is *internal* or *external* to an innovator's professional community. Marrying a rhetorical with an audience-mediated perspective is important because novelty recognition is as much the result of an innovator's agentic (micro-level) efforts (here *acts of framing*), as it is the result of audience (meso-level) features that do not fall under an innovator's direct control but can render fields more or less permeable to the reception of novel ideas. Integrating these two perspectives affords a window into a more nuanced understanding of how novel ideas become recognized and eventually accepted in the field, thus contributing several insights into research on innovation and entrepreneurship and, more generally, social evaluation.

The chapter is organized as follows. We start by examining the *framing* approach and theorize on how innovators can frame their novel ideas in order to enhance their chances of winning audience recognition for them. In the next two paragraphs, we expose two main audience-level structural characteristics and elucidate how they can affect field

permeability to novel ideas. Finally, we discuss some important implications of focusing on the interplay between innovators' acts of framing and the identified audience features and delineate possible venues for future research.

Novelty and the Act of Framing

Innovators' struggle for recognition is a central theme in the literature on creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation (e.g., Cattani, Colucci & Ferriani, 2016; Cattani et al., 2017; Mueller, Melwani & Goncalo, 2012; Zhou et al., 2017). One way by which innovators can overcome the liability of newness of their ideas is through the use of rhetorical tools (e.g., Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Czarniawska, 1998; Gabriel, 2004). A growing body of research in management and entrepreneurship now adopts a framing approach to study creativity and innovation, where framing refers to "the use of rhetorical devices in communication to mobilize support and minimize resistance to a change" (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014: 185). Several studies in entrepreneurship, for instance, emphasize the importance of *acts of framing* (e.g., storytelling and narratives) in reducing audiences' perceived risk of novel entrepreneurial ideas, but also motivating them to commit capital to a new venturing idea (Garud, Gehman, & Giuliani, 2014; Manning & Bejarano, 2016; Martens, Jennings, & Jennings, 2007; Pollack, Rutherford, & Nagy, 2012; van Werven, Bouwmeester, & Cornelissen, 2015). The frames innovators use as well as the terms and categories they borrow from dominant discourse are critical to gain access to audiences' symbolic and/or material resources (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Navis & Glynn, 2011).

Recent research further suggests that innovators should elaborate frames that match the novelty level of their ideas. For instance, van Werven et al. (2015) argue that a specific type of rhetoric can be effective in convincing an audience when the idea is incremental but not when an idea is radical and vice versa. Indeed, the degree of novelty of an idea ultimately determines the informational content that innovators should incorporate in their acts of framing: *What* exactly they should communicate during an entrepreneurial pitch, and *how* it should

be communicated. It is then critical for innovators to rely on different types of *cues* in framing their ideas and also use cues that match the degree of novelty of those ideas.

An apt illustration of the importance of choosing the appropriate framing is Thomas Edison's invention of the electric light system. Edison designed the incandescent light around many of the concrete features of the already-familiar gas system by drawing on "the public's preexisting understandings of the technology, its value, and its uses" (Hargadon & Douglas, 2001: 480), and this proved critical to obtain audiences' recognition. Embedding radical ideas in familiar forms that evoke existing categories has important implications for the success of an innovation (Rindova & Petkova, 2007). Framing radical ideas around cues that evoke familiarity requires innovators to identify those features that members of the evaluating audience are likely to know and understand. For instance, radical ideas can build on materials or techniques with which social audiences are familiar or be characterized by familiar designs or uses. Also, innovators may tailor their more radically novel claims to fit or match the preexisting prototypic expectations held by those who evaluate them (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003). Hence, innovators who have more accurate knowledge about audience-specific familiar prototypes will be in a better position to know which features or attributes to emphasize (or downplay) in their framing strategies. In short, after identifying familiar cues, innovators can strategically frame their presentation (or pitch) around such cues to enhance the probability of obtaining audiences' recognition.

In the case of incremental ideas, on the contrary, the use of familiar cues might hinder their recognition. Because their value is more easily understood, incremental ideas are less appealing to relevant audiences (Rindova & Petkova, 2007). Framing them around familiar cues can actually downplay their perceived novelty. Innovators can enhance the probability of recognition by relying instead on cues with which relevant audiences are less familiar: Unfamiliar cues are more likely to evoke novelty and make incremental ideas more appealing. For instance, innovators can strategically frame their ideas around features (e.g., materials, design, applications, etc.) that audience members do not know as yet. Accordingly, acts of framing should aim to carefully balance the degree of novelty and the use of (un)familiar cues.

The justification for the previous arguments rests on the idea that the novel and the familiar must combine in ways that neither bury the novelty nor shed the familiar. As suggested by Hargadon and Douglas (2001: 493) "Innovations that distinguish themselves too much from the existing institutions are susceptible to blind spots in the public's comprehension and acceptance, particularly those innovations viewed as radical or discontinuous. But innovations that hew too closely to particular understandings and patterns of use may incite resistance or assimilation into the current technological environment" (Hargadon & Douglas, 2001: 493). Accordingly, we propose:

Proposition 1 *Radical (incremental) ideas are more likely to be recognized when innovators frame them by using familiar (unfamiliar) cues.*

Thus far, we have considered actions (i.e., *acts of framing*) that fall under the innovators' direct control delineating ways in which innovators can proactively enhance audiences' receptiveness of their novel ideas. In order to understand how the process of novelty recognition actually unfolds, one must also account for the structural characteristics of the evaluating audiences—in particular, whether they are *internal* or *external* to cultural producers' (innovators') professional community and their degree of *heterogeneity*—to which we now turn.

Novelty and Internal/External Audiences

As previously noted, although novel ideas originate from an innovator's agentic efforts, it is up to the audiences that populate the field to decide whether or not to recognize them. By controlling the material or symbolic resources innovators need to advance their ideas, audiences are in a critical position to shape which new ideas are taken up and how. They form the field and set the criteria by which competing ideas are evaluated, rejected or recognized as desirable, proper or appropriate (Suchman, 1995)—and hence legitimate—often regardless of their comparative technical superiority. Audiences not only set the criteria by which competing ideas are evaluated, but also act as gatekeepers by

evaluating to what extent novel ideas conform or depart from those criteria. As Crane put it: "If an innovator wishes to win recognition for his innovations […] he must conform to the cognitive norms concerning the appropriate problems or themes for innovation […] He must also follow technical norms concerning the appropriate methods and techniques for use in producing innovations" (1976: 720).

Following Crane's (1976) reward systems model, we distinguish between *internal* and *external* audiences. This distinction is important to shed light on the type of criteria that audience members are likely to apply as they evaluate novel ideas. When audiences are internal to the field, their constituency is made up of members of the same field as the innovators they evaluate, although they take on different roles (Debackere, Clarysse, Wijneberg, & Rappa, 1994). In this case, audience members are usually recruited from a restricted group of insiders that are élite representatives of the field's dominant canons. This is, for instance, the case in most scientific fields where gatekeepers are recruited from prominent scientists. As Wijnberg noted, science can be understood as "a competitive process in which scientists attempt to successfully market scientific products. Published papers are the best equivalents of products […] Consumers are also producers, fellow-scientists: the editors and referees of journals, other writers who quote you and use your models and theories" (1995: 226). Acting as field gatekeepers, insiders set the canons against which future work (including their own) is evaluated. As such, they have the authority to determine the legitimate definition of a given type of work and, by extension, the authority to define which works configure the field's canon (Bourdieu, 1993). Therefore, they tend to define excellence as "what is most like me" (Lamont, 2009) and provide a disproportionate amount of material and/or symbolic resources to "members of the field who are more strongly associated with its dominant canons" (Cattani et al., 2014: 262).

Different considerations can be made for external audiences such as critics, analysts, policymakers and regulators that are not directly involved in setting the field's dominant canons—thought they can theorize on and contribute to the institutionalization of those canons. In general, external audiences represent what White (1992: 69) called "onlookers"—i.e., actors who observe, comment on and even influence

what innovators do and how they do it. As such, they usually enjoy what Simmel (1971) called the objectivity of the stranger—he who is not bound by stable social ties to other group members. Critics are the typical example of external audience. Of course, critics are members of the same field as cultural producers, but they can be considered an external audience as they are not embedded in the same professional community. In principle, this situation should promote an unprejudiced perception, understanding and assessment of producers' work, thus "allowing critics to make evaluations with more objectivity" (Cattani et al., 2014: 264). They also have a greater incentive than peers to discover new talents with the potential to rise to fame (Bourdieu, 1984). Indeed, it may be "dangerous for critics not to embrace a new style, as they risk losing reputation if that style becomes popular" (Cattani et al., 2014: 264).

Although in reality the situation is less polarized, focusing on the extremes of the continuum between internal and external audiences helps explain some key theoretical and empirical differences between the two cases. As argued earlier, internal audiences have the power to shape the field's subsequent evolution, but also the incentive to resist work that does not conform to field's dominant canons. In the field of photography, for instance, Robert Frank's groundbreaking book, *The Americans*, was disliked by peer photographers when it first appeared in 1958 since it departed from the then conventional view. Indeed, "[…] the angriest responses to *The Americans* came from photographers and photography specialists… Who recognized how profound a challenge Frank's work was to the standards of photographic style—photographic *rhetoric*—that were in large part shared even by photographers of very different philosophical postures" (quoted in H. Becker, 1982: 112).

By contrast, external audiences usually hold different norms and standards of evaluation and, therefore, should be less vested in the field's dominant standards. Accordingly, external audiences might help different perspectives to coexist, thus offering crucial entry points for radical ideas. For instance, evidence from the context of French cuisine indicates how code-violating changes introduced by creative chefs enhanced external third parties' evaluations (i.e., the number of stars awarded by *Guide Michelin*) rather than triggering penalties (Durand, Rao, & Monin, 2007).[1] For these reasons, we propose:

Proposition 2 *Innovators' radical (incremental) ideas are more (less) likely to receive recognition from external than internal audiences. Unlike internal audiences that tend to favor ideas that conform to the field's dominant canons, external audiences are more open toward ideas that depart from such canons.*

Novelty and Audience Evaluative Heterogeneity

The previous distinction between internal and external audiences does not address explicitly whether audiences are homogeneous in their evaluative criteria—and hence their members tend to agree on which novel ideas deserve recognition—or multiple diverse criteria coexist within the same audience, each embodying distinct set of norms and standards of evaluation (Cattani, Ferriani, Negro, & Perretti, 2008). Moreover, any audience—whether internal or external—is never fully homogenous but usually consists of groups or segments that can embrace rather different standards and norms by which novelty is evaluated. Audience evaluative heterogeneity, in other words, stems from the coexistence of multiple types of audiences—e.g., peers, critics, investors or users—but also from diversity within each audience type. Substantial variation, for example, may exist among audiences of critics in their openness to novelty, with prestigious critics paying significantly greater attention to the work of established cultural producers (Janssen, 1997). Given the lack of compelling empirical grounds for accepting or rejecting novel ideas, a critic may be more or less inclined to risk her reputation by expressing a judgment that differs from those of her colleagues. Because they have more to lose, established critics may be less inclined to support and recognize radical ideas (Cattani et al., 2017). In the field of literary criticism, for instance, Janssen (1997) found that more occasional, and therefore less established, reviewers tended to make more deviant choices.[2]

Conceptualizing evaluative plurality as the result of both inter- and intra-audience heterogeneity is important because it helps explain why this structural characteristic does not necessarily overlap with the previous distinction between internal and external audiences. Diana Crane's seminal 1976 work on reward systems in cultural

institutions (such as art, science and religion) was among the first to examine how the existence of heterogeneous evaluative criteria may affect innovation. Crane suggested that it is easier for members of an internally homogenous audience to agree on which criteria should be used to evaluate individuals' work and also to identify deviant behaviors promptly. Such audiences are willing to tolerate lower amounts of variation (in terms of new ideas, perspectives or styles) and are more likely to enforce restricted cognitive styles supported with reified symbols and dogmatic rules—leading to continuity in the types of ideas being produced and lower tolerance for dissenting ideas. In contrast, when audiences are heterogeneous in their evaluative criteria, the coexistence of various types of evaluation is possible—which, in turn, allows for more cosmopolitan and liberal cognitive styles, thus raising the chance that innovators will find a homologous[3] space, that is, friendly to their subversive ideas. Overall, this plurality of perspectives makes for a more receptive social space where both conforming and dissenting ideas can be voiced and listened to by interested audiences. As Aldrich and Martinez recently pointed out, discrepancies "in expectations across multiple audiences […] can create opportunities for entrepreneurs to select niches in which they can satisfy one set of expectations while being shielded, at least temporarily, from alternative expectations" (2015: 449). Despite lack of widespread consensus on what novel ideas should be supported, the presence of multiple evaluative criteria facilitates recognition. A novel idea might indeed stand outside the field of comparison of—and hence fail to elicit affirmative commitment from—one evaluator, but still win the "intellectual attention space" (Collins, 1998) of another one whose criteria differ from those adopted by the focal evaluator.

In sum, the contemporary presence of heterogeneous evaluative criteria provides greater opportunities for experimentation and tolerance for ideas that vary in their degree of novelty. Conversely, homogeneity fosters the formation of consensus on a common set of norms and standards that specify what novel ideas are worth recognizing, thus restricting the required latitude in novelty assessments. Since this generalized consensus is more easily achieved when the ideas under evaluation do not deviate or deviate only marginally from the field's dominant canons,

audience homogeneity in evaluative criteria is likely to encourage innovators to advance ideas that conform with rather than break away from those canons. Taken together, the previous arguments lead to the following proposition:

Proposition 3 *The likelihood that radical (incremental) ideas will be recognized is higher when audiences' evaluative criteria are heterogeneous (homogeneous). Members of heterogeneous (homogeneous) audiences are less (more) likely to share the same set of norms and standards, thereby exhibiting more (less) openness towards ideas that deviate from (conform to) the field's dominant canons.*

Discussion

Novelty emerges from actions that combine elements of otherwise disconnected categories. Many studies demonstrate that some novel combinations hold the potential for great impact and change, yet they also consistently find that more radical combinations typically encounter resistance—if not outright opposition—rather than support (Cattani et al., 2017; De Vaan, Stark, & Vedres, 2015; March, 2010, Chap. 4). Understanding the journey of a novel idea, therefore, requires one to distinguish between the production and the recognition of novelty. Distinguishing between these two phases places the study of novelty as a social process on stronger theoretical foundations. Contrary to popular wisdom, in fact, the recognition of an idea as novel is less contingent upon an individual's actual achievements than it is upon the social consensus that forms around her unique contribution within a particular field. A systematic study of the journey of a novel idea, therefore, must take into account the processes through which social audiences come to recognize novel contributions. Although many studies have focused primarily on the generation of novel ideas, only recently have scholars started to examine systematically the process by which novelty becomes recognized (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014; Cattani et al., 2014, 2017; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017). Drawing on psychological research that distinguishes between incremental and radical novelty

(Kirton, 1994; Madjar, Greenberg, & Chen, 2011), we proposed a framework that combines agentic and non-agentic mechanisms that account for novelty recognition.

In our conceptualization, the reception of novel ideas stems from an innovators' ability to communicate their ideas as well as the characteristics of the social space that decides whether or not to recognize those ideas (Csikszentmihályi, 1996; Elsbach & Kramer, 2003; Kasof, 1995). Innovators deploy rhetorical strategies—e.g., narratives or storytelling—in an effort to influence the sense-making processes of relevant audiences, whose members have the authority or power to decide whether or not novel ideas are socially valuable. In particular, we argued that innovators can enhance the likelihood of obtaining recognition for their *radical* ideas by framing them around familiar cues, whereas the use of unfamiliar cues is more helpful for the recognition of incremental ideas.

We further argued that audiences vary in their openness toward novelty. We identified two important audience-level features that are relevant in this regard: audience evaluative heterogeneity and whether an audience is internal or external to novelty producers' professional community. Internal audiences, whose members belong to the same community as the producers they evaluate, typically have an interest in defending the field's dominant canons. As a result, they tend to resist ideas that have the potential of disrupting such canons and challenging the very basis of their legitimacy and prominence in the field. External audiences, on the contrary, are more amenable to those ideas because their members are less interested in perpetuating the field's prevailing canons. That explains why we expect innovators to be more likely to see their radical ideas be recognized by external than internal audiences. Audiences' degree of evaluative heterogeneity has additional implications for the type of novel ideas the field tends to validate. Consensus on which novel ideas deserve recognition is indeed more easily reached when audiences are homogeneous in their evaluative criteria. In this case, ideas that conform to those criteria are more likely to be recognized. On the contrary, when audiences are heterogeneous, the coexistence of multiple evaluative criteria opens up opportunities for dissenting ideas to emerge and, therefore, enhances the chances that even radical ideas will find a supportive audience willing to recognize them.

Implications for Theory

Our conceptualization extends current research on novelty recognition by building upon and integrating three distinct but complementary research streams: research on narratives in innovation and entrepreneurship (Garud et al., 2014; Kahl & Grodal, 2016; Navis & Glynn, 2011; Vaara, Sonenshein, & Boje, 2016); research on field-level features shaping its permeability to novel ideas (Cattani et al., 2014; Padgett & Powell, 2012; Sgourev, 2013); and research on novelty evaluation (Anderson et al., 2014; Cattani et al., 2017; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017; Zhou et al., 2017). By focusing on the *evaluative* rather than the *generative* phase of the journey of a novel idea (Burt, 2004; Lingo & O'Mahony, 2010; Perry-Smith, 2006; Uzzi & Spiro, 2005), we theorized on the role of agentic and non-agentic mechanisms that are responsible for idea recognition: acts of framing at the individual level and structural characteristics at the audience level.

By focusing on *acts of framing*, we elucidated how individual can communicate a novel idea by strategically framing it so as to enhance its recognition. While scholars debate on the different type of rhetoric that can aid innovators to garner support from critical audiences (Garud et al., 2014; van Werven et al., 2015), our theory suggests that the choice of *what* innovators should communicate and *how* they should communicate it critically depends on the degree of novelty of their ideas. Framings that are focused on *familiar* cues enhance audiences' receptiveness of radical ideas; on the contrary, framings that are focused on *unfamiliar* cues are more appropriate for incremental ideas. This insight represents an extension of extant research on entrepreneurial narratives (for a recent review, see Vaara et al., 2016) that has recently suggested that the power of a rhetorical strategy is contingent upon the novelty of the ideas (van Werven et al., 2015). Exploring entrepreneurial narratives in crowdfunding campaigns, for instance, Manning and Bejarano (2016) identified two main styles to frame novel ideas—the *results-in-progress* frame and the *ongoing journey* frame. Among the features of an idea that influence the effectiveness of the frame, they found technological sophistication to play a relevant role in the act of framing an idea. Their findings reveal that "projects based on sophisticated

technology, such as 3D printers and software, are typically presented as results-in-progress, whereas projects relying on more basic technology, such as food or clothing, are predominantly presented as ongoing journeys" (Manning & Bejarano, 2016: 20). As they suggest, sophisticated technologies (i.e., radical ideas) will benefit from a *results-in-progress* frame because this frame allows audience members to appreciate the value of their utility, but simple technologies (i.e., incremental ideas), whose utility can be easily appreciated, will benefit from an *ongoing journey* frame that highlights "the new contexts in which they will be used" (Manning & Bejarano, 2016: 20). Our framework complements this line of work by proposing that social audiences evaluate radical ideas more positively when these ideas are grounded in *familiar* cues, yet incremental ideas are more appealing when *unfamiliar* cues are used to frame them.

The article also extends prior research examining field-level features that might render them more or less permeable to the recognition of novelty (Padgett & Powell, 2012). By focusing on audience-level structural characteristics, we could explain why an audience-mediated perspective sheds new light on the conditions that facilitate the recognition of novel ideas as well as the individuals to whom those ideas are credited (Csikszentmihályi, 1990, 1996). But while extant studies typically consider the role of one single monolithic audience, only recently have scholars begun to recognize the role of multiple audiences whose members may hold different evaluation criteria and, therefore, exhibit different dispositions toward novelty (e.g., Cattani et al., 2014; Goldberg, Hannan, & Kovács, 2016; Pontikes, 2012). As noted by Parker and Corte (2017: 269): "in fields with a plurality of gatekeeping units, there are multiple potential venues for receiving creative legitimation, and some kinds of gatekeepers may be more likely to reward avant-garde contributions […] in fields where gatekeeping is centralized […] creative deviance is most often met with intense emotional resistance and criticism." We conceptualized heterogeneity in two ways. First, we distinguished between internal and external audiences. We think this is especially important in the context of social evaluation studies, because in spite of the burgeoning body of work looking at categorization processes as determinants of innovation (Khaire & Wadhwani, 2010), the discussion of how we ought to "bridge between studies of internal and

external classification" (Vergne & Wry, 2014: 78) seems to be missing (Seong & Godart, 2018). We contributed to such debate by elaborating on the evaluative differences that shape attributions of novelty across internal and external audiences. Second, and perhaps more importantly, in our framework heterogeneity is not limited to audience plurality (e.g., peers, critics, investors or users) but encompasses evaluative differences among members of the same audience type (e.g., high- vs. low-brow critics), implying that novel ideas may be evaluated relative to a variety of perspectives rather than a single dominant one.

Responding to recent calls for more research on the evaluation phase of novelty (e.g., Anderson et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2017), some scholars have argued that innovators can activate different social networks to enhance their odds of success throughout different stages of a novel idea journey (Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017). We have attempted to respond to this call by looking instead at how innovators can strategically deploy acts of framing to shape audience evaluations, as well as examining audience-level features that affect the recognition of novelty. Consistently with recent research on social movements and institutional theory suggesting that the effect of framing varies with the centralized or fragmented structure of the field (Furnari, 2018), we elucidated the reasons why innovators should strategize their acts of framing based on the structural characteristics of the social audiences evaluating their novel ideas as well as the degree novelty of these ideas. Since these audiences contribute to defining the criteria by which novel ideas are evaluated, exposing which characteristics affect their disposition toward certain ideas as opposed to others is crucial for any study concerned with the conditions that facilitate or inhibit novelty recognition. To this end, idea framing is an important factor in shaping audience disposition. If in fact audience heterogeneity increases the chance that radical ideas will find a receptive social space—that is, an audience willing to recognize and support them—it is still critical to frame them using familiar cues. As we argued before, familiar cues will enhance an audience's understanding of radical ideas and, by implication, their likelihood of being recognized. Focusing on the dynamic interplay between acts of framing and audience-level characteristics, we believe, constitutes a promising area for future research on novelty recognition in cultural fields.

Implications for Practice

Our theoretical framework has several important implications for innovators. At a general level, the notion that novelty is determined as much by the innovators' acts of framing as by the receptiveness of the field should make innovators more sensitive to the rhetorical strategies available to them and organizations more sensitive to the evaluative systems responsible for recognizing individuals' novel ideas. The present study suggests that innovators can increase their probability of receiving support for their novel ideas by making strategic use of acts of framing. For instance, innovators are more likely to obtain recognition for their radical ideas if they frame them by using *familiar cues*; in contrast, incremental ideas have a better chance of being recognized if innovators employ *unfamiliar cues* to frame them. This idea is consistent with Kahl and Grodal's (2016) work on discursive strategies showing how IBM's communication strategy of making the computers' radical technology seem familiar helped the company to outperform Remington Rand in the introduction of the computer among insurance firms.

The importance of being able to recognize novel ideas with high creative potential is obvious. One significant practical implication of our model is that it might help organizational decision makers run more discriminating assessments of novelty by informing their organizational design choices. Our arguments suggest that managers should design evaluative systems that are coherent with the type of novelty under evaluation. For instance, if the objective is to further pursue radical ideas, managers should staff internal selection committees (those evaluating new investment proposals) including also non-peer members who might be more open to deviant ideas. Relying on peer selection committees, in fact, might be more suitable for ideas that do not entail any major departure from the status quo (Cattani et al., 2014). In this regard, it is important to note that these design features appear to run counter to such prevailing practices such as the selection of leading experts into scientific panels, accomplished professionals into artistic juries or top managers into companies' investment committees. By following these practices, which privilege the design of internally

oriented audiences, decision makers may routinely favor incremental novelty, while passing on truly disruptive ideas that do not fit well with the evaluative orientation of peer-based audiences. The question of how to define the optimal composition of a selection committee (e.g., the NFS or NIH panelists involved in grant allocation decisions or the jury members of the Cannes or Venice Film Festival) is, therefore, central to any future research that aims to study the recognition of novelty.

Novelty Framing and Social Audiences in the Era of Digitalization

Our framework has also the potential of shedding light on the phenomenon of digitalization in cultural industries. The digital transformation we are observing nowadays has further increased the importance of innovators' act of framing and social audiences' characteristics. Indeed, innovators can decide whether or not to put their novel ideas online, which community to reach using different platforms or social networks, and how to frame the stories they want to tell about their novel ideas. Also, digitalization increases the innovators' chances of finding a supportive audience as they can now bypass traditional gatekeepers and directly reach out to multiple audiences (e.g., different user groups) that do not share the same evaluative criteria and, therefore, may be more open to their novel ideas. Finally, the digital transformation has triggered new dynamics among different audiences: While in the non-digital age innovators could reach their target users only through the mediating role of traditional gatekeepers (whose endorsement was critical), users can now decide on their own which novel ideas to recognize.

An interesting example illustrating this new dynamic is the case of the famous fashion blogger, Chiara Ferragni, who is listed among the top-ten ultra-influencers by the Financial Times (Harrod, 2018). The Harvard case *The Blonde Salad* (Keinan, Maslauskaite, Crener, & Dessain, 2015) documents Chiara Ferragni's phenomenal immediate success: Since the very beginning, the fashion blogger's posts attracted many viewers, allowing her to gain popularity as well as the attention

of various designers. Dior Italy was one of the first to ask the fashion blogger to create a partnership. Contrary to the traditional sequence, it is the critical audience (i.e., Dior Italy) that now reaches out to the innovator (i.e., Chiara Ferragni). More importantly, as the case study emphasizes, the key of *The Blonde Salad*'s success was the fashion blogger's selectivity in choosing which designers to collaborate with: "[…] the stories Ferragni would tell about these brands had to reflect her own lifestyle" (Keinan et al., 2015: 5). Specifically, "Chiara would tell a story about wearing a certain garment, having a trip, driving a car – just having a particular experience that she was living with the company – and would include a couple of companies' website links in the text. This would really engage her followers who were then way more likely to convert – to click on the link leading to the brand's website and to buy" (Keinan et al., 2015: 5). Besides emphasizing the importance of innovators' act of framing when they tell their stories in the digital age, this case also confirms the role that multiple heterogeneous audiences play and how the fashion blogger has captured their attention over time: "With the strategic shift from being a blog to becoming an online lifestyle magazine, the audience of The Blonde Salad changed significantly … In 2011, the main followers of my blog were young girls who were inspired by what I was doing. In 2014, fashion insiders, who previously looked down on bloggers, came to read the blog" (Keinan et al., 2015: 11). In sum, our conceptualization affords a more nuanced understanding of how digitalization is shaping cultural industries.

Conclusion

The emergence of novelty has long been center stage in scholarly research in strategic management, organization theory and sociology. Yet several questions pertaining to the recognition of novelty still demand further investigation. In this article, we argued that novelty recognition stems from the individual ability to communicate novel acts and the enabling social space that decides whether or not to recognize and eventually endorse such acts. We emphasized how innovators can use storytelling strategies (i.e., framings acts) to present their

novel ideas and discuss the implications that those framing acts hold for their recognition depending on the degree of novelty of those ideas. We further argued that the recognition of novel ideas varies with specific audience-level characteristics. In this article, we focused in particular on whether audiences are *internal* or *external* to the innovators' professional community, as well as their degree of evaluative heterogeneity. Although these characteristics shed important light on the reasons why certain ideas are eventually recognized while others are not, future research might explore additional characteristics (e.g., audience members' cognitive orientations or an audience's internal dynamic during the evaluative process) that might further influence the observed evaluative outcomes.

Notes

1. "A code-preserving change is any variation that conforms to the rules of conduct representative of the social form within which the organization is nested. By contrast, a code-violating change is any variation that violates the rules of conduct representative of the social form" (Durand et al., 2007: 457).
2. This resonates with Bourdieu's view of cultural fields as networks of relationships among actors struggling for legitimacy: "The structure of the field of cultural production is based on two fundamental and quite different oppositions: first, the opposition between the sub-field of restricted production and the sub-field of large-scale production, i.e. between two economies, two time-scales, two audiences, which endlessly produces and reproduces the negative existence of the sub-field of restricted production and its basic opposition to the bourgeois economic order; and secondly, the opposition, within the sub-field of restricted production, between the consecrated avant-garde and the avant-garde, the established figures and the newcomers, i.e., between artistic generations, often only a few years apart, between the 'young' and the 'old', the 'neo' and the 'paleo', the 'new' and the 'outmoded', etc.; in short, between cultural orthodoxy and heresy" (Bourdieu, 1993: 53).
3. According to Bourdieu (1980), a structural homology signals the presence of a social space whose members share the same or very similar dispositions as those of the focal actor and thus whose view of the social world, beliefs and tastes are attuned to the focal actor's ones.

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