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Friends, Cliques and Gifts: Social Proximity and Recognition in Peer-Based Tournament Rituals

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**Friends, Gifts and Cliques:**

**Social Proximity and Recognition in Peer-Based Tournament Rituals**

Erik Aadland  
Department of Strategy  
BI Norwegian Business School  
[erik.aadland@bi.no](mailto:erik.aadland@bi.no)

Gino Cattani  
Department of Management & Organizations  
Stern School of Business – NYU  
[gcattani@stern.nyu.edu](mailto:gcattani@stern.nyu.edu)

Simone Ferriani  
Management Department  
University of Bologna  
&  
Cass Business School  
City University London  
[simone.ferriani@unibo.it](mailto:simone.ferriani@unibo.it)

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## Friends, Cliques and Gifts:

### Social Proximity and Recognition in Peer-Based Tournament Rituals

#### Abstract

Two main accounts of the effect of proximity between candidates competing for recognition and members of the evaluating audience in the underlying social structure can be extrapolated from extant literature on peer-based tournament rituals and cultural fields. Following a Bourdieusian tradition, one account – which we label *self-reproduction* – insists on the catalyzing effect of social proximity in shaping recognition along relational lines. Drawing from recent scholarship on social evaluation, a second account – which we label *intellectual distance* – suggests that social proximity deters recognition. We probe the influence of different articulations of social proximity (i.e., direct ties, cliquishness and reciprocity) on recognition by studying awarding decisions within the context of the Norwegian advertising industry. Interviews with key informants and econometric results suggest that, while self-reproduction tends to prevail over intellectual distance, these effects co-exist and their relative influence varies across levels of recognition. We gauge the relative saliency of the two accounts by using a mix-method approach. Important implications for research on social evaluation and recognition in peer-based tournament rituals are drawn.

**Keywords:** Peer evaluation, audiences, jury, direct ties, reciprocity, cliques/clans, status, awards, recognition, tournament rituals, cultural fields, advertising.

## INTRODUCTION

There is no form of symbolic capital so ubiquitous, powerful, and widely talked about as the award. Operating as judgment devices that channel evaluating audiences' attention and create sharp discontinuities between winners and losers, awards serve as crucial mechanisms for shaping the prestige structure of existing fields (Goode, 1978; English, 2005). As a result, selecting whom to recognize for an award invokes fascinating social dynamics. It entails interpersonal judgments of worth, calls into question standards of evaluations, initiates deference, and ignites antagonism among those who strive for recognition and those who regulate access to valued symbolic and material resources (Bourdieu, 1993; Reschke, Azoulay, & Stuart, 2017). Not surprisingly, recognition has been the object of considerable attention from social scientists interested in understanding who/what is recognised and by which metrics (e.g., Allen & Parsons, 2006; Cattani & Ferriani, 2008; Heinich, 2009; Rossman, Esparza, & Bonacich, 2010).

Despite working in different research streams, scholars concerned with the social drivers of recognition typically agree on two types of arguments. One class of explanations focuses on the characteristics of the producers, i.e., the actors who are part of the consideration set of the audiences in charge of allocating symbolic capital. Studies in this tradition have drawn attention to such characteristics as producers' status, reputation and categorical cues as critical judgment devices structuring the audience-producer interface (Bielby & Bielby, 1994; Zuckerman et al., 2003; Rossman et al., 2010; Braden, 2016). Central to this stream of work is the general idea that an actor's identity becomes the lens through which her offers are evaluated (Merton, 1968). Another line of inquiry examines particular features of the evaluating audiences, including their disposition, cognitive orientation or structural position, and how they ultimately affect award allocation choices (Negro & Leung, 2012; Cattani, Ferriani, & Allison, 2014; Fini, Jourdan, & Perkmann, in press). These studies have identified a number of factors shaping evaluative outcomes beyond the "true" quality of the object under evaluation, thus contributing to unveiling the "social magic" that creates discontinuity

out of continuity (Bourdieu, 1984: 117). Yet, by focusing on either side of the producer-audience interface, these perspectives have overlooked the existence of social relationships between audience members and producers that often characterize the settings in which awards allocations occur (for an exception see Aadland, Cattani, & Ferriani, 2018). In particular, when we zoom out from the individual producer or the audience level, the focus on the producer-audience dyad raises an important question to which extant literature lacks compelling answers: How does the underlying social structure cutting across the audience-producer evaluative interface affect the allocation of recognition among competing candidates?

Two motivations propel our interest in addressing this question. First, social proximity between producers and audiences is a defining feature of peer-based evaluative settings, where producers and audiences partake in the same professional community and so may have few degrees of separation from each other (Heinich, 2009). Yet, as Lamont notes, there is still “an urgent need for more systematically cumulative work on [...] the impact of prior network contacts on evaluative [...] outcomes” (2012: 214). Second, and more crucially, the existence of “social intercourses” (Blau, 1977: 32) between audiences and producers exposes in a particularly vivid manner the tension between achievement and ascription that lies at the core of meritocratic evaluative settings, whereby decision-makers are supposed to justify their deliberations based on standards that can be articulated independently of the available options (Correll et al., 2017). To illustrate this point, consider the controversial deliberation of the 67th Venice Film Festival’s Jury led by Quentin Tarantino. Although Tarantino asserted that the award decisions were based on film’s intrinsic merits, his former partner Sofia Coppola won the award for best picture for her film – *Somewhere* – and his long-time friend Hollywood director Alex de la Iglesia won two awards, one of which was for best Director for the film *Balada Triste De Trompeta* (*A Sad Trumpet Ballad*). Also, his mentor (he was the executive producer of Tarantino’s 1992 debut feature film *Reservoir Dogs*), Monte Hellman, won a special career prize that the Jury created ad hoc for him. Journalists and commentators the world’s over voiced their outrage

pointing fingers at Tarantino's social intercourses with award recipients, with many of them also referring to the Jury's awarding decisions as manifestations of a "clan" effect.<sup>1</sup> But when asked whether he thought he had privileged his acquaintances, Tarantino replied that it was Hellman himself who around 20 years ago had taught him how award-giving at festivals works: "I remember talking to him [Hellman] in 1992 at the Sundance Film Festival, when I was there with my film *Reservoir Dogs* ... I actually had a friend on the jury and he told me that *a friend on the jury is your worst enemy* as they would be too embarrassed to give you a prize" (reported in *The Hollywood Reporter*, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010).

There is a paradoxical quality to this example and, more broadly, to the research question that prompted it. On the one hand, the fact that recognition and rewards may be patterned along relational lines rather than achievement-based criteria resonates with the key claim in contemporary sociological theory that modern institutions often fall short of the meritocratic allocation ideal (Parsons & Shils, 1951). Intellectually, this claim owes much to the work of Bourdieu and the profound influence his view has had on the understanding of consecration rites in symbolic and cultural fields as mechanisms for reproducing the authority of the élites.<sup>2</sup> Following Bourdieu's relational approach to consecration, to the extent that socially proximate actors are seen as privileged targets of interaction beyond the level that is justified on the basis of "objective" achievements, relationships that increase audience-producer proximity are expected to catalyze recognition. On the other hand, Tarantino's reply in the previous example aptly illustrates how social proximity between audience and candidates may increase susceptibility to claims against moral character (Hahl, Zuckerman, & Kim, 2017) to such a degree that it deflects recognition away from those who are socially closer to the audiences. This point dovetails

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance:

<http://elnacional.com.do/triunfa-en-venecia-el-clan-tarantino-con-premio-a-coppola-y-de-la-iglesia/>;  
[http://www.la-razon.com/index.php?url=/la\\_revista/clan-Tarantino-consagra-Venecia\\_0\\_1248475178.html](http://www.la-razon.com/index.php?url=/la_revista/clan-Tarantino-consagra-Venecia_0_1248475178.html);  
<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2010/09/12/espectaculos/a09n1esp>;  
<http://lahora.com.ec/index.php/noticias/show/1101016851/-1/EI%20%E2%80%98clan%20Tarantino%E2%80%99%20triunfa%20en%20Venecia.html#.WLCzcs1-00>.

<sup>2</sup> Earlier versions of this idea can be found also in Parsons and Shils' (1951) characterization of universalism in terms of the social relationship that exists between evaluators (henceforth audience members) and prospective candidates. Blau (1964) too noted that in distinguishing between universalistic and particularistic standards of evaluation "the differentiating criterion is whether the standards that govern people's orientation to each other are dependent on or independent of the particular relationships that exist between them" (p. 265).

with Bourdieu's classic observation about the crucial importance of "disinterestedness" in cultural fields as a marker of authenticity. Likewise, explicit reliance on relational cues may jeopardize the credibility of the consecrating institution by cheapening the prestige of the activity that formal honours are expected to assert (Goode, 1978; Heinich, 2009). If anything, these observations imply the opposite effect: social proximity should deter recognition.

Aadland et al. (2018) offer supportive evidence of this dual effect in what is, to our knowledge, the only study to date to explore the effect of proximity between candidates competing for recognition and members of the evaluating audience in the underlying social structure. Yet their framework does not elaborate a general theoretical account that encompasses both positive and negative effects of social proximity on recognition, thus they only advance speculative interpretations. In the present article, we erect a framework for understanding this duality by combining Bourdieusian insights into prestige dynamics in symbolic fields with recent scholarship more attentive to actual evaluative practices on the ground (Lamont, 2009; Heinich, 2009). The framework allows us to articulate two contrasting accounts of the consequences of audience-candidate social proximity on recognition outcomes. We label these two accounts *self-reproduction* and *intellectual distance*, respectively, and gauge their relative saliency in explaining the catalyzing (self-reproduction) or inhibiting (intellectual distance) effect of social proximity between producers and audiences on audiences' awarding decisions.<sup>3</sup> Although we develop the arguments for each of these mechanisms separately, we also emphasize how the observed empirical outcomes are the result of their counterbalancing forces.

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<sup>3</sup> Research on knowledge spaces often employs the notion of distance to capture the extent to which two different knowledge domains relate to one another (Piezunka & Dahlander, 2015; Wang, Veugelers, & Stephan, 2017), or the relatedness between evaluators' expertise and the knowledge embodied in social objects subject to evaluation (Boudreau et al., 2014). Instead, intellectual distance here refers to the symbolic value of disavowing personal interests, which is foundational to the perceived legitimacy of evaluative judgments in cultural fields (Bourdieu, 1993). In particular, our usage builds on the observation that cultural producers seek to gain authority in the cultural field by distancing themselves from self-serving interests (Shymko & Roulet, 2016). The idea that intellectual distance is driven, at least in part, by a search for legitimacy is especially echoed in Chong's (2013, 2015) analysis of the epistemic norms that peer reviewers in the literacy field uphold in order to buttress the perceived fairness of their judgments, and so dissipate potential concerns about their moral character. Chong's work, in turn, owes much intellectually to Lamont's (2009, 2012) extensive evidence indicating that extra-cognitive considerations such as morals, emotions and feelings of self-validation as fair judges, whose judgment matter, are intrinsic to the evaluation process in peer-based evaluative settings.



Accordingly, we do not follow a standard hypothesis-based falsifiability logic – whereby explicit predictions that embrace one or the other account are tested – thus causing the invalidation of the competing effect. Our goal, in other words, is not to establish whether one or the other account is at work, but to ascertain which one prevails and under what conditions.

Analytically, we capture the saliency of these effects by examining the following three articulations of social proximity: direct ties, cliquishness and reciprocity. Conceptual reasons corroborated by our interview data and archival sources suggest that each of these variables provides different yet complimentary insight into the relational underpinnings of audiences’ evaluation of producers’ offers. To derive such insight, we rely on a unique dataset on the Norwegian advertising field, first introduced by Aadland (2012) and then further elaborated by Aadland et al. (2018). We integrate this dataset with new field-based qualitative evidence that we combine with large sample statistics to gain stronger analytical leverage. We use this evidence to expose the existence of self-reproduction and intellectual distance, as well as gauge their relevance in shaping audience evaluations. Consistently with a Bourdieusian perspective, our econometric findings lend general support to self-reproduction. Yet our findings also afford a window into other recognition-inhibiting mechanisms that point to evaluators’ self-understanding as fair judges and stewards of evaluative practices that signal disinterestedness and intellectual distance, so suggesting that self-reproduction is not the only dominant effect. We tease out the relative importance of these effects by leveraging the unique features of our data along with an econometric approach ideally suited to explore how such effects vary across ordered levels of recognition. We then conclude by reflecting on the conditions that may amplify or inhibit one effect relative to the other, thereby providing new impetus to the growing scholarly debate on social evaluation’s impact on prestige dynamics in cultural fields.

## **THEORETICAL ORIENTATION**

### **Fields, Rituals and Rewards**

The ability to impose judgments of symbolic legitimacy, or the power to consecrate, is central to the understanding of the ritualistic dynamics by which cultural fields operate. Typically, formal rites of cultural consecration occur in the course of tournament rituals entailing the presentation of prizes and awards that recognize excellence. These rituals operate via ceremonial judgments of worth in which authoritative field audiences with the power to dispense symbolic capital disclose their preferences by selectively allocating esteem and approbation among competing producers (Anand & Watson, 2004). Examples of such tournaments include the Oscars, Grammy Awards, Tony Awards, the Judgment of Paris wine-tasting contest, and so on. What is at stake in such rituals, however, is not just rank, fame or prestige, but also and perhaps more importantly, “the disposition of the central tokens of value in the society in question” (Appadurai, 1986: 21), or, in other words, the very definition of what constitutes value in a field. As such, they are entangled in complex social dynamics that invoke evaluative practices (Lamont, 2009), principles of justification (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991) and orders of worth (Stark, 2017).

Perhaps one of the most prominent manifestations of these social dynamics is the disproportionate amount of formal recognition accorded those who already occupy high-status positions. Merton’s notion of the “Matthew effect” is a reminder that honour begets honour, attracting recognition and resources that make subsequent honours more likely (Merton, 1968). For instance, studies have shown that screenwriters of equivalent accomplishment receive more recognition when represented by high rather than low status agencies (Bielby & Bielby, 1994). The same is true for the consecration of movie professionals who work with elite collaborators (Rossman, et al., 2010). But there are other subtle ways in which producer- or audience-level socially derived stratifying criteria may creep into the rewarding choices of evaluators. Producers’ legitimacy as inferred, for instance, by their position within the core or the periphery of the field’s social structure is one of those criteria (Cattani & Ferriani, 2008). The consistency between the producers’ offers and those of their masters is another such criteria, as evidenced in the analysis of the ritualistic conferral

of stars to top chefs in haute cuisine (Slavich & Castellucci, 2016). Other studies point to the patterning of cultural producers' recognition along gendered lines (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Schmutz & Faupel, 2010). Socio-cognitive fit between the schema-based identity – defined by the audience – and the features of the producers under scrutiny is another well-known stratifying selection mechanism that operates independently from the actual skill or ability on the part of the producer. For example, evidence on the bestowal of awards of distinction on wine producers in the context of wine tasting rituals is consistent with this idea (Negro & Leung, 2012). A similar view focuses on the correspondence between the particular discourse of value that regulates the practice of consecration within different audiences and the socio-topographic location of the cultural producers they evaluate. Findings on consecration of competing professionals by different audiences in the context of the feature film industry are supportive of this view (Cattani et al., 2014).

In short, there is increasing evidence that points to the role of producer or audience level socially derived criteria in patterning the distribution of honours in society. Yet, surprisingly no systematic effort has been made to theorize on the evaluative implications of the potential proximity between audience and producers in the underlying social structure and the intriguing conceptual tension that this shortcoming subsumes. The only exception to this general observation is the study by Aadland et al. (2018) on awarding decisions in advertising contests, in which the authors demonstrate how audiences' evaluative outcomes are a function of their geodesic distance from the professionals whose work they are invited to judge. Although Aadland et al (2018)'s approach is promising, it also runs into difficulties, which we attempt to overcome. It is promising because it introduces a simple but plausible analytical framework that leverages the unique features of the data to explore the evaluative repercussions of ties that cross the audience-candidate interface, so causing audience members and candidates to be variably distant from each other in the underlying social space. Yet, it is problematic because it suffers from three important limitations. First, the proposed theoretical framework does not account for the puzzling empirical evidence pointing to the existence of both

positive and negative returns of social proximity to recognition (measured as award attainment). Thus, the authors can only offer ex-post speculative explanations for the observed results. A second limitation is its sole reliance on quantitative evidence: evaluative mechanisms are inferred in the absence of any contextual information or socio-cognitive cues stemming from actual evaluative practices on the ground, including interactions among audience members. Thus, the study provides little insight into the actual judgmental process that audience members experience when making allocative choices. Third, the use of a geodesics-based measure of social distance captures only one of the many types of audience-candidate relationships that may cut across the screening interface in peer-based evaluative settings, as the previous vignette on the Venice Film Festival suggests. In fact, Aadland et al. (2018) advocate for additional research to “further unpack the structure of this fabric, providing more granular measures of the different types of ‘social intercourses’ Blau (1977, p. 32) that may envelope the audience-candidate evaluative interface” (2018: 152).

These observations are integrated into a general framework that builds on Aadland et al. (2018) work in important regards while attempting to overcome – both theoretically and empirically – its limitations. First, we juxtapose the Bourdieusian understanding of symbolic fields with recent insights on evaluative practices in cultural domains to illuminate the ambivalent nature of social evaluations in peer-based settings. Accordingly, we argue that at least two different accounts of the consequences of audience-candidate social proximity in awards allocation decisions can be extrapolated from extant literature on peer-based tournament rituals and social evaluation in cultural fields. As mentioned earlier, we label one account *self-reproduction* and the other *intellectual distance*. Self-reproduction is a stratifying effect: if self-reproduction dominates, then social proximity catalyzes recognition. In contrast, intellectual distance implies that audience members may have a negative incentive to reward socially proximate producers, which would occur if proximity reduces the likelihood of observing a patterning of recognition along relational lines. We frame the arguments separately for the sake of clarity, not because we think they are mutually exclusive. After introducing our framework, we attempt

to validate it through a combination of new qualitative insights and analytic strategy ideally suited to reveal the contrasting effects of social proximity on recognition not only across different types of proximity, but also across ordered levels of recognition intensity. Indeed, our analysis suggests that these two effects coexist and the observed outcome reflects the relative influence of one over the other at any given point in time.

### **Self-reproduction**

Arguments for a positive social proximity effect can be traced to the classic Bourdieusian understanding of consecration rituals as a “fundamentally relational social process” (Childress, Rawlings, & Moeran, 2017: 51) that serves the primary purpose of facilitating and/or reinforcing the expression of shared meaning and understandings as reflected in the field canons (Bourdieu, 1993). To articulate this point, we further elaborate on two earlier observations. First, members of the evaluating audience are selected based on their legitimacy and power to consecrate, i.e., they are elite peers who received multiple awards in the past and, as such, they embody the field’s dominant aesthetic logics. It is important to point this out because prior literature has systematically shown that elite peers are especially prone to resist work that departs from the established canons given their vested interest in guaranteeing “the continued reproduction of the legitimacy of those who produce or defend the canon” (Bourdieu, 1993: 20). As Taylor (1987: 145) notes, “the formal conferring of honour [...] is especially important for maintaining legitimacy of the elite” and reinforcing the status position of its members (see also Goode, 1978). In line with this view, ritual theorists emphasize that tournament rituals provide order to fields by encapsulating “a particular vision of reality that those staging it wish to impose on the social structure in which they are embedded” (Anand & Jones, 2008: 1038). Particularly in the context of peer-based evaluative settings, such judgements “perpetuate accepted practices by reinforcing quality and values” (Patterson, Cavazos, & Washington, 2014: 79; Shymko & Roulet, 2016) that resonate with who the evaluators are and what they stand for – a process that Bourdieu (1988: 259) labels as “consecration through contagion.” This brings us to our second

observation. The collaborative networks that peers develop in the course of subsequent creative projects are the forum in which tastes flow and interpenetrate (Godart and Mears, 2009) – or, as McLean put it, they are “sites of taste convergence” (2016: 101). As Hagstrom noted long ago in his work on the collaborative production of culture in scientific projects, participants in these networks “share commitments to values, heuristics, models and exemplars” (1976: 97). That is, they tend to share not only particular ethical orientations but also cognitive predispositions and linguistic practices. Joint creative enterprises elicit bonding and encourage shared value commitments that allow the congealment of different visions into a unitary project identity. This is a crucial observation because we know from social psychological research on social identity that independence of judgment is “compromised by any relationship that builds a common identity” (Moore et al., 2006: 7) between evaluators and those evaluated, even without any conscious intention to indulge in favoritism (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Thompson, 1995). Likewise, our interviews suggest that project participants do not merely exchange information; they produce and reinforce similar attitudes towards the field as well.

To the extent that prizes and awards symbolize ideals – and, therefore, are part of a ranking process of social desirability – they are associated with actors who themselves are likely to share the core values of the élite through their positions in the social structure (Cattani et al., 2014). The self-reproduction effect implies that, all else being equal, audience members will reward those projects whose members are more closely located to them in the underlying social structure. This point is forcefully present throughout Bourdieu’s treatment of consecration rituals and also implicit in founding statements in the field of the “New Economic Sociology,” such as Granovetter’s proposition that “people in all cultures seek, in varying degrees, the non-economic goals of approval status and power which are available only in social contexts through networks of others” (2017: 22). This argument also resonates with research showing that individuals are more willing to share their resources – in our case their prestige – with people who are just a few steps removed in their social network than towards more distant others (Goeree et al., 2010; Baldassarri & Grossman, 2013). Recent

findings on the preferential allocation of funding to projects whose members share their spatial location with members of the evaluating panel (Criscuolo et al., 2017) or the preferential allocation of attention to suggestions from external contributors with whom the organization has interacted before (Piezunka & Dahlander, 2015) are consistent with this idea as well. Accordingly, if the self-reproduction effect prevails, we expect that, *ceteris paribus*, social proximity will catalyze recognition.

### **Intellectual distance**

The self-reproduction view emphasizes the catalyzing effect of social proximity. Yet recognition-inhibiting effects of social proximity also are present in the literature. Extensive fieldwork by Lamont and associates in fields of cultural production (i.e., art and science) is especially instructive as it captures the main sources of concerns associated with the strategic, self-serving understanding of evaluative practices which features so prominently in Bourdieu's theory of symbolic fields (Heinich, 2009). Through in depth empirical analysis of actual evaluative processes and deliberations "on the ground" this line of scholarship has drawn attention to the evaluators' self-understanding in shaping their actions as well as the emotional consequences of their work (Lamont, 2009; Beljean, Chong, & Lamont, 2015). For instance, in her study on evaluative practices in the world of scientific peer review Lamont and her colleagues find that peer evaluation represents "more than just an opportunity for panelists to [...] reproduce their positions in the academic field. Panelists are driven by the desire to contribute to collective problem solving and through the process they derive feelings of pleasure and validation of their self-concepts as fair judges and experts whose opinions matter" (Beljean et al., 2015: 42; see also Lamont, 2009). Chong (2013) reaches similar conclusions based on the qualitative analysis of peer-based evaluative practices in the literary field. She focuses in particular on the steps that writers take in their double role of authors and evaluators of fellow-peers in order to increase the legitimacy of their assessments and sustain their identity as impartial judges. In a follow-on study, she further exposes how a complex mix of competition and stewardship comes to bear on writers' evaluative practices as they endeavour to *distance* themselves from the subject matter in order "to push their

judgment toward intersubjectivity [...] and remove corrupting influences” from it (Chong, 2013: 278; Chong, 2015). It is this intersubjective quality – enabled by the pursuit of intellectual distance – that is foundational to the perceived legitimacy of evaluators’ judgments and thus key to avoid the potential “stain” of peer opinions. Writers actively reflect upon the consequences and risks of their judgments, and these considerations inform how they choose. These close-up empirical analyses of judgments “in the wild” show that peer evaluators face a mix of emotional and professional tensions amplified by their role-switching to which they respond by investing themselves in customary rules and practices that signal intellectual distance, which is an epistemic virtue characterized by intellectual autonomy. These customary rules refer to the taken-for-granted norms governing what is considered right behaviour for cultural producers engaged in evaluation in ostensibly meritocratic settings (Lamont, 2009, 2012). The collective outcome of adhering to these rules is the perceived fairness of the evaluation process.

Thus, insofar as the accomplishment of intellectual distance is a key determinant of peers’ evaluative orientation in meritocratic settings, producers-audience connections in the underlying social structure represent “contaminating” influences and, as such, should discourage judgments favourable to the producers within such pairs. Though perhaps counterintuitive, we believe this is a plausible expectation given the evaluative ambivalence that some of our informants, faced with the task of adjudicating among competing candidates displaying different degrees of social distance from them, reported to have experienced. Two related observations broadly represented in past research reinforce this supposition. First, the importance of the “disinterestedness” ideal for careers in cultural fields and the aura of authenticity associated with its pursuit. Social proximity between audience members and producers may nurture the suspicion that the actual motivation of the audience is not to pursue the disinterestedness ideal, but to further the personal interests of (some of) its members, so raising concerns about the audience’s moral authenticity (Hahl et al., 2017). To the extent that these concerns increase susceptibility to claims against audience members’ moral character, they should deter the



patterning of allocative choices along relational lines and thus result in the dominance of intellectual distance over self-reproduction. This is, in essence, the speculative interpretation that Aadland et al. (2018) propose in their attempt to account for the puzzling observation that the probability of awarding choices favoring the “connected candidates” declines as the social distance between audience members and producers diminishes significantly.

Second, the public bestowal of symbolic capital not only serves the award recipient; it also enhances considerably the prominence of the tournament ritual that sustains the awarding rite (Heinich, 2009; Gallus & Frey, 2016). As tournament rituals are deliberately organized to increase the likelihood and appearance of fairness (Taylor, 1987) explicit reliance on relational criteria would jeopardize their credibility. Exchange theory treats the perceived equity of the exchange as fundamental to the stability of relationships. As pointed out by Taylor (1987), if honours allocated in the course of tournament rituals can be understood as part of an exchange process, then we should “expect to find formal honours allocated by achievement rather than by direct ascription” (Taylor, 1987: 144). In summary, the previous arguments allow for the possibility that the intellectual distance effect may counterbalance the self-reproduction effect. Accordingly, if the intellectual distance effect prevails, we expect that, *ceteris paribus*, social proximity will deter recognition.

As we anticipated earlier, our goal is to disentangle the relative importance of self-reproduction and intellectual distance by exploiting the unique features of our data along with an analytic approach well suited to explore how such effects vary across ordered levels of recognition. Different levels of recognition are indeed a distinctive feature of many tournament rituals. In the case of the Oscar, for example, winners are chosen from a pool of nominees. The winner then must first become part of the consideration set – i.e., enter the evaluating audience’s *attention* space – before receiving the final award – i.e., enter the audience’s *consecration* space (Cattani, Ferriani, & Lanza, 2017). If self-reproduction prevails, then social proximity should help candidates enter not only the audience’s attention space (e.g., receive a nomination), but also the audience’s consecration space (i.e., win). If,

on the contrary, intellectual distance prevails, then social proximity may impede candidates' entry into the evaluating audience's attention and/or consecration space.

## **DYNAMICS OF RECOGNITION IN THE DIGITAL ADVERTISING INDUSTRY**

Informed by mixed-methods analysis of jury deliberations within the context of digital advertising awards in Norway, we seek to test these two effects by focusing on three complementary facets of social proximity, which correspond to the three mechanisms evoked in the opening Tarantino vignette: prior direct ties (Coppola/Iglesia), reciprocity (Coppola /Hellman), and cliquishness ("clan" effect). After illustrating some important features of the awarding process in the context of the Norwegian advertising industry, we summarize interviews conducted with key informants that echo and give nuance to the two theoretical accounts presented earlier. Next, we describe our analytical strategy, which allows us to gain a more systematic understanding of the implications of social proximity for awarding choices.

### **Choice of the Norwegian Digital Advertising Industry**

We examine the importance of a relational understanding of tournament rituals by focusing on audiences' awards allocation choices within the context of the Norwegian digital advertising industry. Like in other fields of cultural production, advertising excellence is usually honored through awards contests (Helgesen, 1994) in which competing producers are evaluated by juries composed of peers who specialize in the same advertising categories as the contestants. In the area of digital advertising, The Silver Tag Award is one of the most prestigious award contests in Norway. Arranged by the Norwegian Interest Organization for Interactive Marketing (INMA) – a non-profit interest organization that works for the advancement and utilization of digital advertising media – The Silver Tag is a contest open for participation to all Norwegian advertising agencies. As the contest runs on a monthly basis, active professionals tend to submit their latest work on an ongoing basis, so participating into the contest multiple times. The multiple entry nature of the contest produces a

repeated game in which active professionals that are appointed jurors may happen to evaluate the projects of professional peers who previously served as jurors. This point notwithstanding, all jury members share one important characteristic: they are high status professionals who won in previous competitions and hence tend to be the expression of the prevailing canons in the field (Bourdieu, 1993). To illustrate this point, during our observation period jury members on average won 10 times as many awards as non-jury members.

The conservatism of the field is reflected in its extremely high degree of concentration of recognition. Among the 1,734 professionals who ever entered The Silver Tag contest over the 2003-2010 period, only 299 individuals won the award one time while only 53 individuals won the award twice. In the tail of the distribution, only 32 individuals won 4 or more awards during this period. In Figure 1 we plot the award distributions for jurors and non-juror professionals on a log-log scale (with log of awards on the x-axis and log of the number of jurors or professionals on the y-axis). Note that unlike the tail of a random bell curve whose distribution thins out exponentially as it decays, the distributions resemble a power law. Although these distributions aggregate awards over the study period, they offer some hint of the prestige dynamics that shape the field, mimicking what one would expect from a process of stratification whereby every increase in recognition (here award attainment) leads to a greater chance of recognition in the future.

**<Insert Figure 1 here>**

The sociological implications of this type of distribution are highly consequential. When a relatively small group catalyzes a large proportion of the field's recognition, its members gain resource and power advantages that accumulate over time and lead to the formation of an élite (Kadushin, 1995). In our study, we explore awards allocation mechanisms resulting from the underlying social structure in which both audience members and producers partake. This leads us to a very important feature of our setting that substantiates the meaning of such structure and affords its empirical tractability. Organized as an ecology of temporary projects, the advertising industry relies significantly on extended

personal networks and one-off teams (Grabher, 2002, 2004; Ferriani, Cattani, & Baden-Fuller, 2009). As summarized by Grabher (2002: 252) “Like jazz bands [...] vary their composition of instruments and players from time to time [...] teams in the creative realm of advertising production regroup from project to project.” From a network analytic point of view, the industry entry (and exit) of professionals as members of a project-team translates into a traceable and tractable bipartite collaborative structure. The links in this structure are direct ties among professionals who work on the same project as well as indirect ties among professionals linked by other professionals who work on more than one project. Both types of ties have substantial meaning because, in spite of the temporariness of each project, the professionals that usually form a project-team work intensely together to combine their diverse skills into a single, seamless production. Each project involves several weeks of collaborative brainstorming, storyboarding and difficult editing, as well as moments of celebration and commiseration that promote strong social bonds among the teammates. These ties form “the basic social infrastructure of project-based organizing in advertising” (Grabher, 2002: 249).

### **Background: Key Informant Interviews**

We conducted several interviews to gain deeper contextual understanding of the Norwegian advertising field and the prestige dynamics associated to The Silver Tag tournament. One of the authors also followed the Norwegian advertising news press very closely during the study period and consulted archival materials. Our goals were to verify the role of relational dynamics in evaluative tasks, and ascertain how these dynamics are interpreted and enacted. We were also interested in gaining insights into the aesthetic criteria underlying allocation choices and their perceived role in shaping the field’s professional identity. The interviewees include a panel of field insiders consisting of elite advertising professionals, advertising professionals struggling to make their mark, advertising awards contest jurors, and representatives from industry associations. Specifically, we interviewed professionals who competed in The Silver Tag contest and past jurors. While most of our respondents worked for elite advertising or digital media agencies, some also worked for less prestigious agencies.

Finally, we interviewed the managers from the Norwegian interest organization for interactive marketing (INMA) that arranges “The Silver Tag” awards contest. Overall, we conducted 19 interviews that lasted between 20 minutes and 2 hours.<sup>4</sup> Descriptive data on the sampled agencies and respondents are reported in Table 1.

< Insert Table 1 here >

All respondents agreed that awards are a source of prestige within the Norwegian advertising field. The tagline used by one of the industry flagship magazines in the aftermath of The Silver Tag award’s institution was: “*The award is going to create new heroes in the advertising industry.*” Likewise, two of our interviewees emphasized the crucial role of the award as a source of credibility as well as power:

*“To win The Silver Tag means an enormous amount, in particular for a job where we all have put down so much work... (winning) proves that we have achieved something we have worked hard for, and that is to deliver at a high level in everything we do regardless of how big or small the task is.”*

*There is no single factor other than those awards that I can think of that suddenly makes somebody very attractive and that moves them from one agency to another at any cost [...] What gives power and influence here? There is no getting around it; those awards matter a lot... There is no doubt that it makes everything much easier for you as a professional in the profession in all possible ways... Winning awards... is the most important parameter for your personal career development, salary, status, everything.”*

These awards not only shape individual careers but also signal stylistic standards at the field level, reflecting precise position takings and symbolic demarcation efforts. For instance, in the course of our interviews, some interviewees pointed to the existence of a clear distinction between an élite and the rest, a distinction that appears to mirror a “magical division” (Bourdieu, 1984: 6) between the official canon and everything else (Braden, 2009; DiMaggio, 1982). There was also a consensus about the tendency of juries to reify this division through conventional choices based on a canonical understanding of what a good idea is supposed to look like. When asked about the criteria for judging quality, interviewees often invoked the idea of conservatism and reproduction of established categories. Two, in particular, noted:

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<sup>4</sup> Topics included collaborative practices, meaning and relevance of awards, evaluation criteria, perceptions of distance or proximity in the social space, personal anecdotal evidence of jury decisions and deliberation processes.

*“What characterizes a good idea... is formula oriented. It’s been like that for many years. Ideas they you recognize are formula ideas. There are certain ideas that win...and they are quite similar... That says something about conservatism in the juries. If you see something you are not familiar with, and you don’t know whether it’s good or bad because you just get a strange feeling...then it’s difficult to discuss it. When it’s easy to discuss it...it’s easier to get it through because of the confidence of those present.”*

*Those awards... are not catalyzers for thinking in new ways. They are catalyzers for clinging to old ways of looking at things, old formulas and old categories.”*

Unsurprisingly and consistently with established cumulative advantage arguments, when we probed the basis of these tendencies towards self-reproduction various informants stressed the existence of “status beliefs”—beliefs that are discussed as valid in public displays of honor, and which rank individuals, organizations, or objects according to their expected ability to contribute to valued outcomes (Ridgeway, 2014). Advertising professionals expect prestigious colleagues to create work of better quality and this expectation creates an evaluative advantage. As one of our interviewees with significant jury experience put it:

*“It’s always much easier to win if you have won before ... because jury members are humans that make choice based on experience. And it’s a bit like that [well-known creative teams] have a tendency to score incredibly well on work that is really only average. And that is because you are positively biased... You really want that the work they do is of high quality.”*

Interestingly, several of the interviewees went a long way in characterizing the inner workings of the jury as “professional,” “fair,” “impartial,” “made with best intentions” and cautiously designed to avoid any favorable treatment.<sup>5</sup> Some even framed the decision of accepting an invitation to be part of the Jury as a matter of authenticity, invoking the disavowal of personal calculus as foundational to their evaluative culture and to their moral role as custodians of the industry’s unique professional ethos. Yet, despite rules and procedures that aim to reduce possible conflicts of interest, most former members of the jury we interviewed openly admitted experiencing an ambivalent mix of professional and emotional tensions amplified by their “double hat” of being evaluators as well as peer producers, that caused them to actively reflect upon the consequences of their judgments. As one of the jurors

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<sup>5</sup> For more details on how the jury evaluation process is designed to ensure procedural fairness, please see the Appendix.

summarized, there are personal risks and benefits that inform a juror's decision because *"you are saying something about yourself when you declare who deserves gold. You expose yourself."*

On the one hand, throughout our interview industry participants appear keenly aware of the fact that jury deliberations are enveloped into "interpersonal patterns of value commitments" that – as one of them put it – inevitably channel attention, energy and information, subtly shaping attributions of ability. For instance, when asked about the evaluative implications of juries composed of individuals with prior experience working in project-teams together with contest participants, interviewees routinely invoked the possibility of relationship-driven preferential allocation processes. One of them in particular, an account manager, was very explicit about this point:

*"If two projects are equally good, then the project where project members and jurors know each other will win [...] it is that these people share the same opinion about what is "important" and "not important", as well as what is "right" and not "right." They (the projects by candidates previously tied to the jurors) might therefore score higher on the criteria valued by the jurors who 'administer the truth' about what is good and not so good."*

A senior copywriter and frequent juror with more than 20 years of experience described his experience in the industry as somewhat similar to being a member of a "gang" to convey the sense of belonging and commonality in aesthetic preferences elicited by intense patterns of direct and indirect interaction. Another interviewee echoed this point by characterizing the industry as cliquish, due to a combination of small numbers, interpersonal acquaintance and frequent interaction:

*"The Norwegian advertising industry is small...you meet the same people time and time again. It is therefore unavoidable that it becomes cliquish. Project members and jurors who know or who ... [know about] each other are part of this cliquishness."*

Likewise, one copy writer hinted at one preferential-allocation process based on some sort of mutual support, what he referred to as "camaraderie":

*"I am convinced that good old-fashioned camaraderie plays a big part, not in terms of explicit bargaining, but more as an implied and continuous levelling of 'some for all' – within a circle of people who know each other."*

On the other hand, our interviews also unearthed a fundamental evaluative ambivalence caused by actors' strong susceptibility to claims against their authenticity. Avoiding conflicts of interests may in fact be a matter of moral conviction or adherence to epistemic values. Juries' compositions are in the

public domain; likewise, the existence of professional relationships between members of the jury and candidate producers is relatively visible to other members of the industry, as professionals have a rather good sense of who has worked with whom. Lurking suspicions of deliberations along these relational lines can therefore easily surface and undermine personal reputations, even if the jury members genuinely endorse those deliberations. This type of occurrence can sometimes render a jury member's proximity to a candidate more of a liability than an advantage. One of our informants, reflecting upon the painful experience of finding himself in a jury where voicing his genuine preferences for a particular project could raise reputational concerns due to his prior collaborations with some members of that project-team, noted:

*"It is a big problem if they (i.e., the members of the industry) come to believe you have a vested interest. If you favour that project [...] you may end up in big trouble. I usually keep quiet or alternatively try to mention what is good about other projects in such situations."*

One copywriter, referring to a stint with the jury a few years earlier, described facing a similar dilemma due to his acquaintance with one of the contestants. He stressed the risks of being perceived as biased, which can hurt one's status and therefore require factoring into one's final decision the personal consequences of alternative outcomes:

*"... you have to be careful [...] To sit in juries is an ungrateful job because you may get a lot of criticism."*

There are two summary points worth making about these professionals' observations. First, due to the role switch structure of peer-evaluative settings actors may face a particularly acute problem of consistency between their "frontstage" and "backstage" (Goffman, 1959). This may lead to a general authenticity concern: do the jurors perform their role for the sake of implicit personal gains rather than the epistemic values and standards that govern what is considered appropriate behaviour for those engaged in evaluation? Without a window into an actor's backstage, the existence of implicit personal interests will elicit suspicion on the actor's inauthenticity and thus threaten her reputation. Second, issues of aesthetic merit ("We want to stretch ourselves after the pursuit of aesthetic ideals")



seem to coexist with concerns about the personal implications that awarding choices yield (“You expose yourself”) resulting in conflicting emotions and professional dissonance.

In sum, the image that emerges from our qualitative immersion into the advertising field appears to mirror the general understanding of tournament rituals as means of symbolic demarcation, but it also reveals how emotional considerations (i.e., competition and stewardship, empathy alongside self-preservation as well as feelings of validation jury members derive from their self-understanding as fair judges) all come to bear on audiences’ evaluative practices. Table 2 reports some of the most representative quotes evoking the two perspectives that shape these practices. For, however one conceives of them, audience members’ evaluations of advertising projects do not occur in a social vacuum. Not only are audiences cognizant of producers’ identities, which then results in well-known status-driven attributions, but their judgments flow across peer-based relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition that render jury members and producers variably proximate to each other. These judgments arise in social settings that can be conceptualized as networks of interpersonal loyalties, reciprocity and influence, and so can be depicted using the vocabulary of network theory and analytic tools – to which we now turn.

< Insert Table 2 here >

## ANALYTIC STRATEGY

To unpack the role of social proximity in shaping the level of recognition in the context of the Norwegian advertising industry, our analytical strategy is to focus on three distinct but complementary variables at the jury-project level that capture as many facets of social proximity: direct ties, cliquishness and reciprocity. While direct ties and cliquishness reflect socio-structural features of proximity, reciprocity rests on socio-cognitive considerations. The first variable – *direct ties* – hinges on the most basic definition of social proximity, i.e., simple adjacency in a network, whereby two actors are proximate if and only if they are directly tied (Marsden & Friedkin, 1993). In our setting, this tie exists whenever a member of the jury has prior experience working with a member of the

project under evaluation. While the most restrictive structural definition of social proximity is simple adjacency in a network, generalizations of adjacency – as measure of social proximity – retain the idea that actors are proximate to the extent that they are jointly located in structurally cohesive regions of the network. Thus, our second variable – *cliquishness* – focuses on how audiences’ evaluations of producers’ work may be affected by their being jointly located in structurally cohesive regions of the network, i.e., clans. Network-analytic literature on social capital suggests that network cohesion is likely to divide actors into insiders and outsiders. According to Bourdieu, members of a cohesive social group develop a specific habitus, which is socialized, shared, and maintained (often unconsciously). The habitus imparts the “feel for the game” (Blair, 2009: 121) and makes membership visible, creating distinctive features that signal belonging or exclusion. *Reciprocity*, or the giving of gifts to another in return for gifts received (Schwartz, 1967), is a socio-cognitive measure of social proximity. It stems from the understanding of the formal conferring of honour which can be inferred from Goode’s (1978) seminal work, namely that honours received may increase the recipient’s sense of allegiance to the award giver thereby increasing her/his perceived closeness to the latter (see also Taylor, 1987). As summarized by Sherry (1983: 158), “The giving of gifts can be used to shape and reflect social integration (i.e., membership in a group) or social distance (i.e., relative intimacy of relationships).”

Focusing on these three dimensions of social proximity allows us to establish whether social proximity catalyzes or inhibits recognition. To this end, it is important to clarify that recognition is not a dichotomous variable, but rather can be present in widely varying amounts that, in our context, range from no placement, to receiving an honorable mention, to winning an award. Besides identifying the winner, in fact, the jury has the “opportunity to bestow an honorable mention to work that in its opinion it has solved or contributed something in a very good way, to which it is desirable to grant extra attention” ([www.inma.no](http://www.inma.no)). Less prestigious than an award, an honorable mention still has the effect of identifying work that deserves esteem and attention in the eyes of the evaluating audience. Because of this layered pattern of recognition, audience decisions’ outcomes vary in their saliency as

they serve to separate the “great from the merely good” (Allen & Lincoln, 2004: 874): unlike less defining forms of recognition (bestowing an honorable mention), consecration decisions (bestowing an award) tend to catalyze greater public attention and even face public scrutiny. This observation affords a window into a more granular analysis of the conditions under which self-reproduction and intellectual distance operate. Examining the previous three articulations of social proximity and their impact on evaluative outcomes, however, poses several empirical challenges. It requires complete information on the full set of producers struggling for recognition, and such data are rare. In addition, information about the relationships between audience members and producers is difficult to obtain. Tracking these relationships through prior joint experience – the approach pursued here – further requires detailed information on the career histories of both audience members and producers. Finally, the true quality of cultural producers’ offers is typically unobservable and difficult to infer unequivocally even after consumption. The challenge, therefore, is to adopt an approach that enables the researcher to ascertain the presence of relational effects independent of the true quality of the producer’s offer. Below we discuss how we addressed each of these challenges and provide operationalization details for each of the three social proximity measures we selected.

## **Data**

To identify organizations and professionals competing for symbolic recognition in the Norwegian digital advertising field, we used data on all projects entered into “The Silver Tag” – the monthly Norwegian digital advertising awards contest – from May 2003 to April 2010. The data were originally collected by Aadland (2012; 2013) from the online “The Silver Tag” archive published by INMA. We strengthened this data by collecting all missing data for some of the project participants. While, in fact, most of the firms submitted their projects indicating the names of all project participants, some firms did not. To address this shortcoming one of the co-authors contacted each agency by email or by phone to retrieve the names of these producers. In the process, we also double-checked the names we had collected directly from the archive published by INMA and corrected any inconsistency with

the help of people from the advertising agencies. As a result, the dataset is truly unique. The data comprise a total of 1,734 distinct individuals, 350 distinct organizations and 902 projects over a total of 75 contest months.<sup>6</sup> Unlike the usual award scheme practice of reporting winners and/or nominees only, the data contain the losers as well. Thus, the data enable comparisons between winners and losers as well as comparisons between previously consecrated and non-consecrated producers.<sup>7</sup> We collected data on all jury members in “The Silver Tag” awards contest from May 2003 to March 2010 from “The Silver Tag” website and industry press. Each jury served from May to April in the following year during the years 2003-2006 and from April to March during the years 2006-2010. In total, we collected data on 7 juries, whose size over the study period varied from 4 (for the first jury) to 11 (for the last jury) members.

### **Dependent variable**

The dependent variable measures the outcome of an evaluation process where jury members must decide whether to bestow an accolade (honourable mention or award) on projects selected from among the larger set of projects eligible in a given contest month. We coded the dependent variable 0 if a project did not receive any accolade; 1 if a project received an honourable mention; 2 if a project reached the 1st place (i.e., won the award).<sup>8</sup> The dependent variable, therefore, is categorical and ordered in terms of levels, or intensity, of peer recognition. As mentioned earlier, this ordered structure affords a nuanced window into the influence of social proximity on recognition: receiving

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<sup>6</sup> June/July each year was combined into one contest generation by the Norwegian interactive marketing interest organization responsible for the contest, INMA. In addition, INMA combined March/April 2004 and August/September 2004 into two distinct contest generations. This practice produces a total of 11 competitions per year – without counting the aforementioned exceptions in 2004.

<sup>7</sup> In two contest months, August 2005 and May 2006, no projects were deemed worthy to win.

<sup>8</sup> Although jurors further rank honorable mentions from 5th up to 2nd place, we preferred to collapse them into the single ‘honorable mention’ category. Based on our field interviews, the placement makes no significant difference and the really meaningful comparison is between no placement, honorable mention and award won. This level of recognition mirrors the way the accolades are announced through The Silver Tag press releases, where the winning project figures prominently with a description of the jury’s deliberation, and an interview with the head of the jury and a representative of the advertising agency for which the winners work. A picture of the winning team typically accompanies the press release. The projects that receive an honorable mention also feature in the press release but are only briefly mentioned at the bottom. Given the econometric approach used in the analysis, collapsing honorable mentions into a single category also facilitates the interpretation of the results (Williams, 2016).

an honorable mention means that a project enters the evaluating audience's attention space, while winning an award (i.e., moving from a weak to a strong form of recognition) means that a project enters the audience's consecration space.

### **Independent variables**

***Direct Ties.*** We capture the first manifestation of social proximity by looking at the impact of direct ties between audience members and candidates on the likelihood of receiving an accolade. We computed this variable by first generating bipartite project affiliation network matrices based on the monthly "The Silver Tag" digital awards contest using Ucinet, version 6 for Windows (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002). A well-known issue in establishing the existence of a social connection is how long this connection should persist. Assuming no relationship decay over the study period would imply an overestimate of the number and duration of connections in the network by maintaining false ties to inactive professionals. However, given the fast-paced nature of the industry and, in particular, after our interviews with industry participants, it was unclear whether a professional not involved in any advertising projects for about 2 years should still be considered an active member of the industry. Accordingly, we created our adjacency matrices adopting a 24-month moving window that was updated monthly.<sup>9</sup> Using these matrices, we then calculated the nearness between each individual advertising project member and the peer jury members. Because our unit of analysis is the project, we created the variable *direct ties* by counting only the number of jurors with direct ties to project members.

***Reciprocity.*** An important condition for the emergence of reciprocal behavior is the repetition of the exchange situation which allows actors to decide whether or not to reciprocate for benefits received in previous exchanges (Axelrod, 1984). In our setting, for instance, producers might one day become judges and therefore be asked to evaluate the work of former jury members who evaluated their work in previous awards competitions. Accordingly, we created the *reciprocity* variable that

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<sup>9</sup> Adopting a shorter (one year) or longer (3 years) moving time window yields very similar results.

captures the extent to which jury members reward project whose members were jurors in the past and who – in that role – had rewarded one or more of the current jury members. For each project, in other words, the measure tallies the number of current jurors who won or received an honorable mention by project members serving as jurors over the previous two years and whose work happened to be under evaluation during the focal contest month.

***Cliquishness.*** As pointed out by Marsden and Friedkin (1993: 131), generalizations of social proximity “permit two actors to be proximate, *while not directly tied*, if they are connected by numerous short connections via intermediaries” (emphasis added). This idea can best be appreciated by referring to Figure 2. As illustrated, nodes 1 and 2 can be jointly located in the same cohesive set, despite not being directly connected (sub A); or they can be directly connected without necessarily being members of the same cohesive subset (sub B). Note that due to the project-based structure of collaborations, at any given point in time audience members and producers can simultaneously be members of more than one cohesive subset. Thus, cohesiveness is not merely a dichotomous state resulting from joint location in a structurally cohesive regions of the network but may vary dramatically depending on the number of mutually interpenetrating cohesive structures that audiences and producers share, that is, how cliquishly interconnected they are. In order to capture the degree of cliquishness, the strict clique definition (maximal fully-connected sub-graph) is extremely strong for many purposes. It requires every member of a sub-group to have a direct tie with each and every other member. A more common approach is to allow for cliques where members are not so tightly connected. For instance, one could define an actor as a member of a clique if this actor is connected to every other member of the group at a distance greater than 1. This approach to defining sub-structures is called *n*-clique (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). The *n*-clique criterion specifies that the maximum geodesic distance or path length between any dyad cannot exceed *n*. For example, a 2-clique is one in which the members are connected either directly (distance 1) or indirectly through a common neighbor (distance 2). Yet, even in a 2-clique, the distance 2 path that connects any dyad might still run through a non-member of the clique.

In other words, the diameter of the clique – i.e., “the path distance between its most distant members” (Scott, 2000: 117) – may be greater than the value of  $n$  used to define the clique. Some researchers, therefore, propose a relatively minor modification on the  $n$ -clique approach, called  $n$ -clan, which requires that all the ties among actors occur through other members of the group (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). An  $n$ -clan is an  $n$ -clique in which (a) all actors are connected by paths of length  $\leq n$ , and (b) every node is also a member of the  $n$ -clique (Wasserman & Faust, 1994; Scott, 2000). In the paper, we chose a value of  $n$  equal to 2 for the identification of clique members: this gives the smallest group size which is to be considered a 2-clan.

**< Insert Figure 2 here >**

To compute our *cliquishness* variable, we first computed the  $n$ -clan measure for each juror-professional dyad over the 24-month moving window that was updated monthly using Ucinet, version 6 for Windows (Borgatti et al., 2002). This measure indicates whether a juror and a professional are both members of the same clan (as defined earlier). For each project, we computed the median of the  $n$ -clan values of the professionals working on the same project. The variable thus measures to what extent jury and project members competing in a given monthly contest also partake in the same clan.

### **Control variables**

To rule out alternative explanations, we included several control variables in our models.<sup>10</sup>

***Project quality.*** The main empirical challenge to estimate the actual effects of social proximity is to control for the quality of the project under evaluation. In cultural fields, social evaluations are only marginally based on an objective observation of quality. For this reason, evaluators focus on the elements they can directly associate with the quality they are trying to assess (Shymko & Roulet, 2016). The advertising field insiders we interviewed suggested that, during our observation window, projects of high quality were likely to exhibit certain measurable attributes besides the un-measurable

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<sup>10</sup> Except for the project quality measure, all controls are consistent with those used in Aadland et al. (2018).

idiosyncratic aspects of the creative idea underlying each project. First, higher quality projects tended to be technologically advanced and innovative in terms of technological application.<sup>11</sup> Second, high quality projects were usually the result of inter-firm collaborations through which specialized technical knowledge and resources were combined. The likelihood of observing social ties between jury members and producers also increases with the size of the project, i.e., the number of individuals working on the same project. Although other unobserved characteristics might affect project quality, the technical sophistication of a project and the number of people working on it represent a reasonably good approximation of a project's underlying quality.

Based on these insights from field insiders, we thus generated the variables *project sophistication*, *joint project* and *project size* as proxies for these general characteristics of high quality projects. To measure *project sophistication*, we generated a variable that differentiates projects based on the type of technologies that they employed. The variable tallies the number of agencies specializing in 3D-animation, film production, radio production, or back-end streaming involved in a given project. Although this variable does not capture the actual manner in which the technologies are applied, it discriminates projects for which the producers had the opportunity to leverage those technologies from projects for which this opportunity was unavailable. In other words, the variable captures the 'potential' technical sophistication of a project. Also, the variable does not simply reflect jury members' perceived level of sophistication, which then reduces the risk that purely subjective considerations might be driving jury members' decisions. We measured *joint project* as inter-firm collaboration at the project level by creating a dummy variable that takes on the value of 1 if the project was created by two or more firms, and 0 if the project was created by one single firm. Lastly, we measured *project size* as the total number of individuals on each advertising project. In this respect, a larger number of project participants serves

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<sup>11</sup> In the early years of digital advertising, the technological constraints on creative digital advertising solutions were considerable because downloading speed was slow. As a result, creative work in digital advertising was mostly limited to relatively static, low resolution, banner advertisements. With the diffusion of broadband technology and increasing downloading speeds, the opportunity space for creating digital advertising solutions expanded. In particular, digital advertising professionals seized the opportunity to create more sophisticated solutions involving visually appealing interactive content based on video/film, sound, 3D animation and streaming technologies.



as a proxy for larger project budgets and a higher number of hours available in the project to create ambitious high effort solutions. We generated our *project quality* variable by estimating a single-factor measurement model based on our three proxy variables for project quality using the SEM command in Stata 14. The variables yielded positive and highly significant factor loadings on the latent project quality factor. The *project size* factor loading was 9.908 and  $p < .000$ , the *project sophistication* factor loading was .896 and  $p < .000$ , while the *joint project* factor was constrained to 1. Finally, we obtained our *project quality* variable by calculating the predicted values for the latent project quality factor.

**Status.** Previous research has used network centrality to measure status (for a review see Sauder Lynn, & Podolny, 2012). While awards reflect social esteem and respect, i.e., some form of public valuation, centrality pertains to a position of importance in a network. Accordingly, we created the *status* variable using Bonacich beta-centrality (Bonacich, 1987). The measure counts the number of individuals in the project with a Bonacich beta-centrality above the median in the global “Silver Tag” network over the total number of individuals working on the same project in a particular month contest based on a 24-month moving affiliation network window (see below). We also chose a more conservative cutoff to define high-status professionals – i.e., values greater than .85 (for a similar approach see Jensen 2008) – which yielded very similar results.

**Prior positive co-experience.** Some jurors may have collaborated with candidates on projects in the past and won with them. Such prior positive co-experience may represent a source of positive disposition when the juror in question casts her votes over the competing candidates. Previous social network research has shown how social ties can be a source of social benefits (e.g., more favorable evaluations) or social liabilities (e.g., less favorable evaluations) depending on whether relationships between evaluators and candidates are positive or negative (Labianca & Brass, 2006). Insofar as prior interactions have resulted in the achievement of a positive outcome they are likely to affect evaluators’ disposition towards the work of their past collaborators. We therefore identified The Silver Tag projects in which a current candidate and juror collaborated and won the award during the prior 24

months. We created the indicator variable *prior positive co-experience* for which we assigned a value of 1 if there were one or more such instances for a given project and 0 if there were no such instances.

***Median experience.*** Project members' past experience with digital advertising projects might account for their differential ability to contribute to the project as well as understand what exactly jury members are looking for in a project. We then tallied the number of projects prior to the focal project that each producer entered into The Silver Tag contest. For each project, we then calculated the *median experience* of all producers involved.

***Conflict of interest.*** Jurors with a conflict of interest are not allowed to partake in the evaluation of a particular project. Two cases that INMA contemplates as conflict of interest are: a) project and jury members work for the same firm, and b) jurors are members of projects they are supposed to evaluate. To control for effect of these situations on jury deliberations, we generated an indicator variable that is equal to 1 if one or more project members had a colleague in the jury or a juror was a member of the project, and 0 otherwise. It is worth noting that the variable does not measure prior collaborations but only employment in the same firm or focal project co-membership.

***Competitive intensity.*** The larger the number of projects competing for recognition in a given contest month, the more intense the competition and the lower the likelihood that a given project will win. We therefore counted the number of projects competing for recognition in each contest month to control for project concentration.

## MODEL

Given our interest in modelling ordered levels of recognition (i.e., from no placement, to honorable mention, to award won), the ordered logit model specification would seem the appropriate choice. The ordered logit model is based on the assumption that there is a latent continuous outcome variable and that the observed ordinal outcome arises from discretizing the underlying continuum into  $j$ -ordered groups. This implies that all of the corresponding coefficients (except the intercepts), regardless of which of the collapsed logistic regressions is estimated, are the same across the different

logistic regressions, other than differences caused by sampling variability (Williams, 2006). Only the intercepts are allowed to vary across levels or categories of the outcome variable, thus generating a series of parallel lines with constant slope but different intercepts. That is why the ordered logit model is also known as the proportional odds model. Brant (1990) devised a test that is commonly used to assess whether the observed deviations from what the proportional odds model predicts are larger than what could be attributed to chance alone. Since the assumptions of the ordered logit model are frequently violated, generalized ordered logit odds models are sometimes a superior alternative as they are less restrictive than proportional odds models and more parsimonious than other methods (e.g., the multinomial logit model) that ignore the ordering of categories altogether. The generalized ordered logit, in fact, “selectively relaxes the assumptions of the ordered logit model only as needed, potentially producing results that do not have the problems of the ordered logit model while being almost as easy to interpret” (Williams, 2016: 7). More crucially, in the generalized ordered logit model both the intercepts and the slopes of the explanatory variables are allowed to vary across the different categories of the outcome variable. For instance, if the outcome variable has three possible values (like in our case), the model will have two sets of coefficients as two equations are estimated simultaneously. The model then compares all categories greater than the current category to those less than or equal to the current category. In our case, the original ordinal variable (i.e., no placement, honorable mention, award won) is collapsed into two categories and a series of binary logistic regressions are estimated clustering for a given contest-month. First, it is category 0 (no placement) versus categories 1 and 2 (honorable mention and award won); then it is categories 0 and 1 (no placement and honorable mention) versus categories 2 (award won). In each dichotomization the lower values are, in effect, recoded to 0, while the higher values are recoded to 1. A positive coefficient means that higher values of the explanatory variable (e.g., direct ties) are associated with higher category levels of the outcome variable (e.g., honorable mention or award won) than the category level under consideration (e.g., no

placement), while negative coefficients mean that higher levels in the explanatory value increase the likelihood of being in the current or a lower category.

We assessed the proportionality assumption of the proportional odds model in our data using the Brant test. The test provides a global test of whether any variable is significant in the model, as well as a specific significance test for each explanatory variable separately. Based on the test, the variables *reciprocity* and *cliquishness* violated the assumption. The other variable of interest, i.e., *direct ties*, did not violate the assumption but, for theoretical reasons (our interest in gauging the relative influence of the *self-reproduction* and *intellectual distance* explanations), we decided to allow it to vary across categories of the outcome variable.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, we estimated partially constrained generalized ordered logit models (Williams, 2006) by imposing constraints for parallel lines for all controls and allowing the variables of theoretical interest to vary across categories. This is a key feature of the model, which makes it particularly appealing to our goals. Indeed, by allowing the slopes of the explanatory variables to vary across the different categories of the outcome variable, it is possible to establish whether the effect of social proximity changes as the intensity of implied recognition varies too; whether, in other words, a project is likely to enter the evaluating audience’s attention space (no placement vs. honorable mention/award won) or consecration space (no placement/honorable mention vs. award won) for higher values of (each dimension of) social proximity. We estimated our models with the `gologit2` command in Stata 14. We report significance levels based on Huber-White robust standard errors to control for any residual heteroscedasticity. We also clustered projects on jury, but the results were qualitatively similar to those reported here (see below).

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<sup>12</sup> Our decision is consistent with Williams’ (2016: 19) suggestion that “the researcher must somehow decide which variables should have the proportional odds constraint imposed and which should not. Ideally, researchers should have strong theoretical rationales to guide them. But since such theory rarely exists, empirical means are often used instead.”

## RESULTS

The descriptive statistics and correlations for our measures are presented in Table 3. We first checked the correlations among all independent and control variables and found no evidence of multicollinearity. The condition number (Belsley, Kuh, & Welsch, 1980) for the matrix of independent variables was 5.30. This value and the singular values – which range between 1 and 5.30 – were all well below the suggested threshold of 30. The low condition numbers confirm that multicollinearity is not an issue in our models. Because the *conflict of interest* and *prior positive co-experience* control variables are highly correlated (.50) and also highly correlated with *direct ties*, we further checked whether the main results were affected when we entered each variable separately: the results were not affected.

The results for the partially constrained generalized ordered logit model are presented in Table 4. We first estimated a model with robust standard errors in which we entered the three variables of theoretical interest – i.e., *direct ties*, *reciprocity*, and *cliquishness* – separately, without imposing constraints for parallel lines. Their coefficients, therefore, are allowed to vary across categories of the dependent variable. The model stratifies by contest month, i.e., each stratum corresponds to a choice set for the jury in a particular month, and produces two sets of coefficients for each of the unconstrained variable. In Model 1 of Table 4, the coefficient for *direct ties* in the first cumulative logit model (panel 0) was .513 ( $p < .01$ ), while in the second model (panel 1) was .406 ( $p < .01$ ). The results indicate that as the number of jurors with direct ties to project members increases the odds that a project will receive an honorable mention or win an award will also increase compared to the case of no placement (category 0); similarly, as the number of direct ties increase the odds of winning an accolade relative to the case of no placement/honorable mention will increase as well (panel 1). In Model 2, the coefficient for *reciprocity* was 7.484 ( $p < .01$ ) for the first cumulative logit model (panel 0) and .359 ( $p < .01$ ) for the second model (panel 1). In Model 3, the coefficient for *cliquishness* was positive (.128) and significant ( $p < .05$ ) for the first cumulative logit model (panel 0), but negative (-12.079) and significant ( $p < .01$ ), for the second (panel 1). Next, we introduced our control variables as shown in Model 4 of Table 4.

Since these variables do not violate the proportional odds assumption, they are not allowed to vary across different categories of the outcome variable. That is why we obtain only one coefficient estimate for each control. Specifically, the coefficients of *status*, *project quality*, *median experience* and *competitive intensity* were significant and in the expected direction. The coefficients for *conflict of interest* and *prior positive co-experience* were not statistically significant.

After all controls were included, the coefficient for *direct ties* remained highly significant ( $p < .01$ ) and positive (.247) for the first cumulative logit model (panel 0) of Model 5. However, it was positive but not significant in the second cumulative logit model (panel 1). Higher levels of *direct ties* help to enter into the attention space of the jury members (i.e., moving from no placement to being at the risk of receiving an accolade) but do not increase the likelihood of entering into the consecration space (i.e., winning an award). The coefficient for *reciprocity* was positive and highly significant for both cumulative logit models – i.e., 7.084 ( $p < .01$ ) in panel 0, and .190 ( $p < .01$ ) in panel 1, respectively – even after controlling for the same set of variables (Model 6). As reported in Model 7, the coefficient for *cliquishness* was positive (.280) and highly significant ( $p < .01$ ) in the first cumulative logit model (panel 0), but negative (-10.419) and highly significant ( $p < .01$ ) in the second model (panel 1). This change in the coefficient sign suggests that higher levels of cliquishness help producers to gain some recognition (an honorable mention) but prevent them from further progressing towards consecration. When the three variables of theoretical interest were included together, the previous basic patterns were confirmed (Model 8). To tease out the relative differences in magnitude of the coefficients of the variables of interest in the full model (Model 8), we calculated the percentage point increase/decrease in the probability of moving levels of the dependent variable for 1 standard deviation (SD) increase in the independent variables. In particular, a 1 SD increase in *project quality* increases the probability by 60.05 percentage points, while *status* increases the probability by 20.38 percentage points. By contrast, *competitive intensity* decreases the probability by 47.41 percentage points. In panel 0, a 1 SD increase in

*direct ties* increases the probability by 28.94 percentage points, *reciprocity* by 826.73 percentage points,<sup>13</sup> and *cliquishness* by 12.86 percentage points. In panel 1, a 1 SD increase in *reciprocity* increases the probability by 24.48 percentage points, while *cliquishness* decreases the probability by 630.28 percentage points. Finally, Model 9 in Table 5 reports the results for the full model when we clustered on jury: the main patterns of Model 8 were confirmed.

**<Insert Tables 3, 4 and 5 here >**

In summary, despite finding strong support for the catalyzing effect of social proximity, the results further indicate that the intellectual distance effect is also at work: projects whose members are directly connected to jury members tend to receive some level of recognition (an honourable mention), but do not necessarily win an award. More precisely, the finding that direct ties to jury members are helpful to enter into the evaluating audience's attention space is consistent with arguments pointing to the impact of self-reproduction on the preferential allocation of symbolic capital. On the other hand, the finding that direct ties do not increase the odds of entering into the evaluating audience's consecration space – i.e., moving from a weak form of recognition (honourable mention) to a strong one (winning an award) – is consistent with arguments invoking intellectual distance. Likewise, to the extent that producers and jurors are also members of a tightly knit clique (i.e., a clan), projects have a greater chance of entering into the jurors' attention space (in accordance with self-reproduction arguments), but less likely to win an award. This negative effect of cliquishness for higher levels of recognition reflects the greater self-monitoring typical of tightly knit cliques or communities: cohesive relationships do in fact provide for the rapid dissemination of information about unethical behaviour. As Brass et al. (1998) noted, if actors are “all connected each can easily monitor the behaviour of the others, and any noted unethical behaviour by one will be transmitted quickly ... Thus, surveillance is high and loss of reputation is swift” (p. 21). Following the logic of this argument, we interpret this finding as evidence supporting the influence of intellectual distance. The effect of reciprocity, though

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<sup>13</sup> This large increase reflects the very small range of variation of the *reciprocity* variable.

varying in magnitude, remains significant across categories of the dependent variable: jurors are more likely to reward projects in which producers who rewarded them in the past are also involved. This further implies that self-reproduction tends to prevail over intellectual distance when reciprocity considerations shape jury members' decisions. Unlike the strong self-monitoring feature of cliquishness, the dynamic of reciprocity is more elusive and, therefore, less easily detectable by audience members.<sup>14</sup>

<Insert Figures 3, 4 and 5 here>

### **Boundaries of the *Self-Reproduction* and *Intellectual Distance* Effects**

The previous analysis suggests that self-reproduction tends to prevail over intellectual distance but the two coexist. With this core result in place, we further explored the conditions under which self-reproduction and intellectual distance operate. First, in light of the previous results, we expect the strength of a tie between jury and project members to amplify the effect of direct ties across levels of recognition. Accordingly, we looked at whether project members collaborated only once or repeatedly with the same jury members in the past and re-estimated the full model including a variable that captures the strength of the relationship between them. The tie strength variable was positive (.645) and significant ( $p < .05$ ) for the first panel (contrasting categories 0 vs. categories 1 and 2), but non-significant for the second panel (contrasting categories 0 and 1 vs. category 2), confirming the basic pattern observed for *direct ties*. We also checked whether having prior positive experiences affects the

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<sup>14</sup> To further explore the differences in magnitude between our variables of interest and illustrate the substantive significance of the findings, we calculated the conditional marginal effect (Williams, 2012) for *direct ties*, *reciprocity*, and *cliquishness*. A marginal effect, or partial effect, typically measures the effect on  $y$  of a change in one of the regressors on the conditional mean (Cameron & Trivedi, 2010). We calculated the marginal effect for each variable of interest with the variables in the full model at their means to reflect a typical project in our sample. Figure 3 shows that the conditional marginal effect of *direct ties* with 95% confidence intervals increases the likelihood of entering the jury's attention space with a positive and significant coefficient for panel 0 (.045,  $p < .05$ ). However, the conditional marginal effect of *direct ties* does not significantly influence entry into panel 1. Figure 4 shows that the conditional marginal effect of *reciprocity* with 95% confidence intervals increases the likelihood of entering the jury's attention space with a positive and significant coefficient for panel 0 (1.374,  $p < .01$ ) and a positive and significant coefficient for panel 1 (.006,  $p < .05$ ). Finally, Figure 5 shows that the conditional marginal effect of *cliquishness* with 95% confidence intervals increases the likelihood of entering the jury's attention space with a positive and significant coefficient for panel 0 (.422,  $p < .01$ ), but the conditional marginal effect of *cliquishness* on entering panel 1 is negative and significant (-.371,  $p < .01$ ).



impact of direct ties on recognition by interacting the *prior positive experience* variable with the *direct ties* variable. If self-reproduction prevails, the interaction term should be positive because the direct ties effect would be primarily driven by past positive experiences; but if intellectual distance is at work, then the interaction could even become negative as a previous joint victory renders the producer-jury member relationship more salient and visible. The interaction was negative and significant in both panels:  $-.403$  ( $p < .05$ ) for the first panel and  $-.465$  ( $p < .05$ ) for the second panel. We interpret this result as evidence supporting intellectual distance: the suspicion of favouring project members with whom jurors worked and won in the past puts the latter under stronger peer scrutiny, so reducing the likelihood that jury members will try to reward projects in which past collaborators are involved.

We also looked at the impact of having mediated (i.e., indirect) ties to jury members on the likelihood of being rewarded. Previous studies have shown how individuals are more willing to share their resources (here prestige) with people who are just a few steps removed in their social network (Goeree et al., 2010; Baldassarri & Grossman, 2013). Accordingly, following Aadland et al. (2018) we calculated the median geodesic distance between each individual advertising project member and the peer jury members. We then grouped together individual producers with a degree of separation from jurors equal to or greater than 6, and assigned them the value 6. This operationalization follows the six degrees of separation theory (Milgram, 1967). To facilitate the interpretation of the results, we measured the variable in terms of nearness between jury members and producers. We did so by computing the reciprocal of the median geodesic distance between each individual advertising project member and the peer jury members. As our unit of analysis is the project, we created this variable as the median of each project member's median distance from jury members. Although not reported here, the results confirmed the previous patterns: the coefficient of the variable was positive (5.579) and significant ( $p < .01$ ) in the first panel (contrasting category 0 to categories 1 and 2), but non-significant in the second panel (contrasting category 2 to categories 0 and 1). This suggests that the preferential allocation of symbolic resources by members of the evaluating audience is not

circumscribed to direct ties, but also flows through indirect connections. Since the impact of the variables of theoretical interest changes across categories of the dependent variable, we further probed the existence of a curvilinear relationship between social proximity and awarding decisions. We then checked for the existence of a quadratic effect of *direct ties* on the outcome variable, but found no evidence for it. Yet, in line with Aadland et al. (2018), we found evidence for a curvilinear (inverted U-shaped) effect for the variable based on degree of separation in the second panel (contrasting categories 0 and 1 to category 2):<sup>15</sup> the coefficient for the linear term was positive (36.770) and significant ( $p < .05$ ), while the coefficient for the quadratic term was negative (-62.068) and significant ( $p < .05$ ). Consistently with the patterns reported in Table 4, this result suggests that project members are less likely to win an award the closer they get to jury members. Thus, while awarding choices are patterned along relational lines, the likelihood of favoring the connected producers starts to decline when audience members and producers are too close within the peer-based professional network.<sup>16</sup>

**Robustness Checks.** We conducted several additional analyses to gauge the validity of our findings. First, in order to rule out any aggregate effect stemming from our latent quality measure, we estimated our full models with the latent quality measure components. The results of the full model with the separate coefficients for *project size* (.094,  $p < .01$ ), *joint project* (.267,  $p < .10$ ), and *project sophistication* (.486,  $p < .01$ ) in the model are qualitatively similar to those presented here, confirming the main pattern for the variables of theoretical interest. Second, advertising agencies may be inclined to invest more resources in advertising projects completed right before or during the Christmas holidays, when consumers have more time to watch media and go shopping. This might then affect not only the quality but also the type of projects on which advertising agencies work. Accordingly, we included

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<sup>15</sup> For the first panel comparing category 0 to categories 1 and 2 only the linear effect was statistically significant, in accordance with the main patterns reported in Table 4.

<sup>16</sup> We also used different cutoffs values for the *degree of separation* variable – e.g., 5 and 4 (following Dodds, Muhamad, & Watts, 2003) – but the curvilinear pattern did not change markedly. We still found evidence for a curvilinear (inverted U-shaped) pattern for the *degree of separation* variable. For the 4 cutoff value, however, the coefficient for the linear term was positive (286.406) and marginally significant ( $p < .06$ ), while the coefficient for the quadratic term was negative (-484.422) and marginally significant ( $p < .06$ ) in the second panel (contrasting categories 0 and 1 to category 2).

a dummy for projects participating in The Silver Tag in the November and December contests. The dummy was not significant and the overall pattern remained stable. Third, the results were basically the same when we estimated the full model (Model 8) orthogonalizing all explanatory variables. Although not reported here, the results for the orthogonalized models are available from the authors upon request. Forth, we re-estimated the full model using a multinomial logit model to analyze the different established dichotomies comparing each of the dependent variable categories to a selected baseline category (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). Although the multinomial model does not consider the ordinal nature of the dependent variable, it nevertheless allows one to estimate how the impact of a particular variable varies between the baseline category and the other categories. In the analysis, we first set each of the three categories (no placement, honorable mention, and award won) as the baseline category. These additional analyses, available from the authors upon request, yielded results that confirmed the patterns of Model 8. Finally, we checked the robustness of our main results by estimating the average treatment effect (ATE) of *direct ties*, *reciprocity*, and *cliquishness* on the likelihood of receiving an accolade using the Inverse Probability Weighting (IPW) technique (more details on how we estimated the ATE are reported in Appendix 2).

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

Over the past twenty years a large and growing stream of work at the intersection of organizational research, economic as well as cultural sociology has contributed to our understanding of evaluative processes as deeply interactional, emotional and mobilizing the self-concept of evaluators as much as their connoisseurship. In particular, organizational scholars have revealed various forms of preferential allocation at play in cultural fields such as peer bias (Cattani et al., 2014), status beliefs (Bielby & Bielby, 1999) and typecasting (Zuckerman et al., 2003). These studies demonstrate that recognition is not the result of a socially disembodied process of quality assessment in which audiences in charge of relinquishing valued symbolic resources apply a set of objective criteria consistently. Our findings extend this line of work by highlighting the influence of relational dynamics that are critical

for understanding the evaluative outcomes of peer-based tournament rituals. With only a few exceptions (Aadland et al., 2018), the reward patterning caused by the existence of “social intercourses” (Blau, 1977: 32) cutting across the audience-producer interface has been mostly bracketed out from studies concerned with the distribution of recognition in cultural fields. Juxtaposing the Bourdieusian understanding of symbolic fields with recent insights on evaluative practices and judgments in cultural domains (Lamont, 2009; Chong, 2013), we developed contrasting expectations about the consequences of audience-candidate social proximity on recognition outcomes. According to the self-reproduction view social proximity catalyzes recognition, as competing candidates that are more closely located to the audiences in the underlying social structure are seen as preferred award targets beyond the level that can be justified on the basis of achievement-based criteria. According to the intellectual distance view, social proximity deters recognition because it heightens audiences’ susceptibility to claims against their moral character, rendering reputational concerns more acute.

We assessed the relative impact of these views by focusing on three different facets of social proximity – direct ties, reciprocity and cliquishness – and examined their role in shaping audiences’ allocation of awards among competing cultural producers. Based on an unusual combination of qualitative findings and statistical analyses, we found these three articulations of social proximity to be significantly associated with recognition (above and beyond status and quality considerations), thus offering evidence supportive of the “consecration through contagion” process postulated by Bourdieu (1988: 259) and first documented by Aadland et al. (2018). Interviews with field insiders helped us to substantiate the supposition that these effects underlie a fundamental process of self-perpetuation inherent to peer-based consecration rites, whereby the allocation of symbolic capital to a particular social object (i.e., actor, project, style, etc.) is at the same time a claim to the cultural legitimacy of the object itself. However, those interviews also revealed a much more nuanced story than would be expected by embracing a purely Bourdieusian view. Although we generally find that social proximity

increases recognition along relational lines, this result is neither univocal nor unequivocally indicative of the absence of intellectual distance-related dynamics. Some of our analyses do in fact offer compelling indications that the intellectual distance effect is at work as much as the self-reproductive mechanism. In particular, while all three measures of social proximity are predictive of candidates' entry into audiences' attention – i.e., moving from no recognition to honorable mention – only reciprocity appears to exert the extra boost that it is required to move from audiences' attention to consecration space – i.e., moving from honorable mention to award victory. The effect of direct ties dissipates once candidates have achieved honorable mentions, that is to say audience-candidates ties do catalyze recognition (honorable mentions) but not its strongest manifestation (consecration). This change of significance across levels of recognition stands out even more strikingly for projects whose members and evaluating juries are jointly located in structurally cohesive regions of the network. Indeed, while being part of the same clan helps candidates to enter the restricted *élite* of professionals who are deemed worth of admiration, it actually depresses the odds of moving up from the merely good to the great, thus indicating that a purely self-reproductive account cannot fully explain our results. That we observe an inverted U-shaped relationship between consecration and our alternative measure of structural proximity based on degrees of separation, as first shown by Aadland et al. (2018), also appears to reinforce this ambivalent view, suggesting that at very high levels of structural proximity intellectual distance may actually outweigh self-reproduction.

It is useful to further reflect on the possible conditions that may stifle or amplify one effect relative to the other. We start by noting two features that pertain to the nature of the evaluative setting, and then we discuss one feature that relate to the institutional environment in which the tournament ritual is embedded. First, because intellectual distance is premised on the key idea that cultural producers care deeply about the reputational ramifications of decisions that transgress the disinterestedness ideal, we expect the recognition-inhibiting effect of social proximity to be especially salient in settings in which audiences are subject to a high degree of scrutiny. This expectation is easy

to appreciate in our empirical setting, where the glass-looking nature of the evaluative interface not only implies that audience members know candidates' identity, but also the identity of the evaluating audience members is itself in the public domain. Insofar as no public window exists into audience members' identity, susceptibility to claims against moral character should decrease and the self-reproduction effect should then dominate. Second, a depiction of audience-candidate social proximity as deterring recognition may benefit from organizational design mechanisms explicitly intended to dissuade the pursuit of self-serving interests. For example, turning to our setting, it is perfectly conceivable that the rotating structure of the jury mitigates preferential allocation along relational lines: audience members today will be competing candidates tomorrow. As Heinich noted (2009: 102), "those who grant recognition also depend on those who are granted it, in that their capacity to recognize is itself framed by strong expectations about its fairness." Audiences whose choices signal departure from the professed values of their position can become tomorrow's target of potential retributive behavior. Absent this rotating structure, dominance of self-reproduction over intellectual distance probably would be much more likely. Third, the expectation that recognition wanes with social proximity should vary with the evaluative cultures that constrain how evaluators behave and inform the content of their judgment (Lamont, 2012). To the extent that evaluative cultures embedded in different institutional environments vary with respect to the customary rules that govern what is perceived fair, institutional settings characterized by strong meritocratic ideals should amplify intellectual distance dynamics over self-reproductive ones. The fact that we focus on Norway, the country with the highest level of social mobility in the world (Wilensky, 2002) and one of the countries with strongest meritocratic beliefs across societal strata (Mijs, 2016), may facilitate the surfacing of intellectual distance related effects. Of course, the ultimate validation of our framework should come only when these scope conditions are allowed to vary and tested for their implied interaction with the social proximity variables. Overall, our findings point to the importance of "bringing relationships back" into the analysis of consecration processes and, in so doing, offer new material for enriching

the vibrant scholarly debate on the role of social interactions in evaluative settings. We conclude by highlighting two general contributions to extant literature and delineating avenues for future research.

### **Research on Social Evaluation**

As Jean-Paul Sartre (1948: 98) famously quipped: “There are qualities that we acquire uniquely through the judgment of others.” This is especially so for the quality of a cultural object “which is so difficult to define because it exists only in, and through, the circular relations of reciprocal recognition among peers” (Bourdieu, 1985: 19). Because cultural objects are subject to different interpretations, they exist within overtly competitive social arenas of consensual or contested meaning, in which peers – in their quest for distinction – engage in symbolic struggles over the criteria defining the legitimate modes of production and expression. The outcomes of these struggles are canonical understandings of worth, which elite peers enforce and reinforce through award contests. As stressed by Shymco and Roulet (2016: 41): “The process of peer recognition [...] relies on the institutionalization of tools such as awards or rankings and is hence more likely to lead to a self-reinforcing [...] evaluation.” In fact, not only are elite peers likely to have vested interests in preserving established notions of worth but also to use their own “power to consecrate” to protect them. The rich body of sociological evidence on peer resistance in art (White & White, 1965) and science (Barber, 1961) is especially indicative of this protective attitude. As an illustration, consider the French Academy of Fine Arts (Académie des Beaux Arts) in the 19th century. The French Academy assessed artwork and rewarded artists with prizes based on the evaluation of gatekeepers, who were members of the Academy. Success in the system depended upon receiving recognition from the Academy. In theory, the work by the artist was evaluated objectively; in practice, the gatekeepers tried to maintain their own power and that of their followers. As a result, artists associated with Academy members were more likely to win awards. Over the years, the members of the Academy took turns obtaining symbolic awards for their own affiliates, thus effectively assuring the continuity of the Academy’s orthodoxy (White & White, 1965).

The relational dynamics we highlighted are part and parcel of this Bourdieusian self-reproductive process of recognition. Yet, as we noted above, our findings also help us to paint a more nuanced picture than would be afforded by the adoption of a purely Bourdieusian account of recognition as a “mere step in the search for personal distinction and [...] domination” (Heinich, 2009: 86). Such an account is not, in fact, fully reflective of the recognition dynamics permeating the Norwegian advertising rituals to the extent that it overlooks the self-understanding of individuals as fair judges and experts, whose evaluative practices are charged with emotional and reputational significance. In ostensibly meritocratic cultural settings characterized by strong vocational drive and professional ethos, the suspicions stemming from alleged transgressions of this ideal may be particularly severe for one’s reputation. Besides, any award winner depends on audience members’ judgment about the quality of her work, just as much as any audience depends on actual and potential awardees’ judgment about the quality of its choices: evaluators are called to the stand and held responsible for their own judgments. As Heinich (2009: 103) pointed out: “We certainly depend on those who have the power to recognize us, but this power is itself subordinate to our capacity to recognize it as relevant.” This, we believe, is key to understand the ambivalent effect of social proximity, namely that evaluators may be moved by self-serving interests and search for distinction (as largely predicated by Bourdieu-inspired scholarship), as much as the desire to signal their intellectual distance and deflect potential inauthenticity concerns away (as predicated by research more attentive to actual evaluative practices on the ground).

Our study also seeks to respond to a few recent calls from tournament theorists who have voiced the need to be more sensitive to the social context in which tournaments’ evaluative practices take place. An important insight of our paper is to demonstrate how incorporating constructs and analytic tools from network theory helps to place tournaments more squarely into their contexts and, in so doing, to inform tournament theory by “exploring the influences of the social characteristics of participants on tournament outcomes” (Connelly et al., 2013: 36). Notably, because only a subset of



all social interactions are captured by a network constructed exclusively from project affiliation data, our findings should be interpreted as a lower bound on the importance of the social structure in patterning recognition. This interpretation is strengthened by the additional finding that the relational effects remain salient despite the co-location (i.e., in Oslo) of most of the advertising firms in our data set. In other words, while geographical proximity allows for multiple types of interaction among economic actors, it does not wash away the effect of interactions that involve project collaboration, be they direct or indirect.

### **Research on Symbolic Capital**

Our relational approach offers a new lens through which appreciating the economic conversion value of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1993). Particularly in societies where the search for knowledge about one's worth in relation to others is intense, awards are crucial sources of recognition (Gallus & Frey, 2016) and consumers treating them as judgment devices “transmute the producer's symbolic capital into economic capital” (Rossman & Schilke, 2014: 88). Thus, awards won in film festivals may increase tenure at the box office, literary prizes may ensure access to exclusive distribution channels, and medals in science may increase an actor's chances of getting research grants. All these may help in the same way as general prestige rankings do, but their presumed objectivity gives them special independence in swaying decisions, especially of people who have little direct knowledge of the recipient in question (Goode, 1978). In our contest, winning awards likewise is highly consequential for producers and their employers as awards help advertising agencies attract clients:

*“Awards become an easy measurement tool of where on the creative ranking the agency is. So, if a client is looking for a very creative agency, they know where to look because those are the ones that have won the most awards”* (interview with the art director from a digital advertising agency).

The economic conversion of symbolic capital is even more evident in the following quote:

*“[Awards] is our only marketing channel. This, I can write press releases about. I cannot write press releases about anything else. I can write press releases about how well we perform internationally or nationally. I can get a lot out of that. For us, it means business. Because we get press, we get clients”* (interview with a copy writer from a digital advertising agency).

Thus, while one might be tempted to consider the relational allocation process documented in our study for its purely symbolic import if it had no effects beyond the attainment of recognition, recognition in turn has significant economic conversion value. This strong relationship can best be appreciated in Figure 6, which plots the linear prediction of operating profits based on the total number of The Silver Tag awards won by each firm in the previous year. Recognition is patterned along relational lines and is conducive to economic opportunities. This preferential allocation pattern, as a result, places a significant burden on peripheral cultural producers who are loosely connected to the field's insiders. Stated differently, relational dynamics contribute to stratifying organizations not only in symbolic space, but also in economic space – particularly in those contexts where awards are used as proxies for the quality of a firm's product offerings. As agents of consecration, social audiences play a key role in strengthening the market power of some firms by promoting their product offerings vis-à-vis those of other firms, so enhancing the perceived level of differentiation of those firms relative to competition (Cattani, Porac, & Tomas, 2017).

**<Insert Figure 6 here>**

### **Limits and Future Research**

Peer-based tournament rituals and awards contests more broadly share similarities with other settings that should encourage efforts at generalizability, but they also present unique features that should invite cautious consideration of possible boundary conditions. Promotion processes in labor markets strike us as a particularly interesting case in point for appreciating this tension. Let us first focus on the commonalities. Just like awards' recipients in our setting, employees who are given promotions rank higher in prestige than those who are not. Also, similarly to our setting, social networks structure the matching process between professionals and positions, and symbolic resources (e.g., promotion) are allocated on the basis of evaluative practices among peers. There is even evidence suggesting that these decisions are patterned along cognitive lines in a way that closely resemble the normatively laden judgments that shape the distribution of symbolic capital in Bourdieusian fields. Recent research, for

example, has demonstrated that job candidates exhibiting cultural fit with evaluators receive more attention and enjoy more favorable hiring outcomes because evaluators are more likely to fight for candidates with whom they feel a spark of commonality (Rivera, 2012). Indeed, a comparison of the fine-grained interpersonal processes through which relational and cultural based similarities shape homosocial reproduction in labor markets and domains of cultural production seems to us a promising avenue for future research. But let us now consider the differences. First, while the recipient of an award is certified as having already performed a particular task at an exceptional level, someone who is promoted has not yet proved he can do the job at all. The judgment is a manifestation of the evaluator trust about the future, rather than the evaluation of an achievement already reached (Goode, 1978). Second, to accept a promotion is to agree to carry out a specific set of performances as long as one holds the position. In this respect, promotions clearly differ from awards. Third, and related to the previous point, awards are typically bestowed for an exceptional achievement in a specific type of activity. By contrast, the range of activities expected for one who has been promoted is usually wide. Words of caution should therefore accompany efforts at extending our results to the prestige dynamics that distinguish this, as well as other similar peer-based evaluative contexts such as funding committees in science (Boudreau et al., 2016), selection panels in charge of R&D decisions (Criscuolo et al., 2017), auditioning of musicians for symphony orchestras (Goldin & Rouse, 2000), or online user communities (Dahlander & Frederiksen, 2012). In short, if individuals aspire to awards and participate in tournament rituals it is because the prestige they get from them is socially distinct and embedded in a very particular symbolic structure (Goode, 1978). Thus, we encourage studies seeking to further explore the allocation of prestige with respect to both the stratifying impact of awards and the nature of the social processes that foster or inhibit their allocation to certain producers and not others.

To the extent that the relational dynamics discussed in this paper place a burden on players less entrenched in the field's prevailing canons, the question is then how peripheral players – whose view is more likely to challenge the orthodoxy – can gain traction in an established cultural field. The

question is particularly relevant considering that, with relatively few exceptions (e.g., Cattani et al., 2014; Cattani & Ferriani, 2014; Goldberg, Hannan, & Kóvacs, 2016; Criscuolo et al., 2017; Fini, Jourdan, & Perkmann, in press), previous organizational research assumes that audiences are homogeneously aversive to novel claims, especially so when evaluative canons are agreed upon. When audiences are receptive to novel offers, prevailing research conventionally attributes such a reaction to the reputational resources deployed by the producer. Yet these resources are unlikely to be available to producers who are weakly embedded in the social structure of the field (i.e., newcomers, outsiders, mavericks, etc.) and therefore unconnected to the field's insiders. Understanding the sources of variability in audiences' receptiveness to novel claims is a fascinating problem. This study emphasizes the role of intellectual distance in curbing the stratifying effect of self-reproduction, but other such mechanisms merit further inquiry.

The arguments we presented to articulate the impact of social proximity on recognition are all at the individual level even though the analysis is at the project (team) level. While this makes the statistical analysis a more conservative test, admittedly extending arguments at one level of analysis to a different level is not straightforward. However, as our field work also suggests, the influence of dyadic interactions between project and jury members are channelled into the collective deliberation of the jury by its members. Our data do not capture the process by which jury members arrive at such decisions, in particular how their (often) conflicting opinions are reconciled and consensus on which projects to reward is reached. Our combination of archival and interview data offered some insights, but future work should examine the underlying micro (individual) to macro (team) level processes in greater detail. We should also emphasize that the potential misalignment across levels may not be as critical as one might think because when a project receives an accolade every project member receives it as well. A different methodological approach such as conducting an experiment in a more controlled setting (i.e., laboratory) would be better suited to gain such a nuanced understanding of the evaluative

dynamics as well as better control for the quality of the project under evaluation. Future research might find this aspect worthy of more systematic investigation.

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Figure 1. Awards Distribution for *Jurors* and *Non-Jurors*

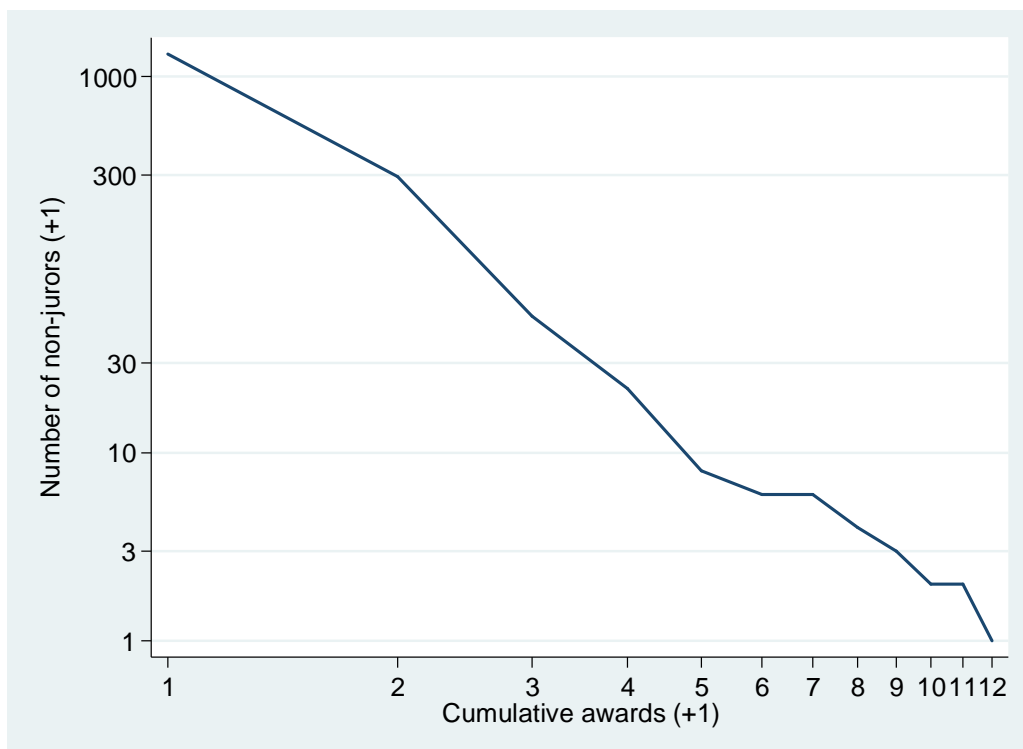
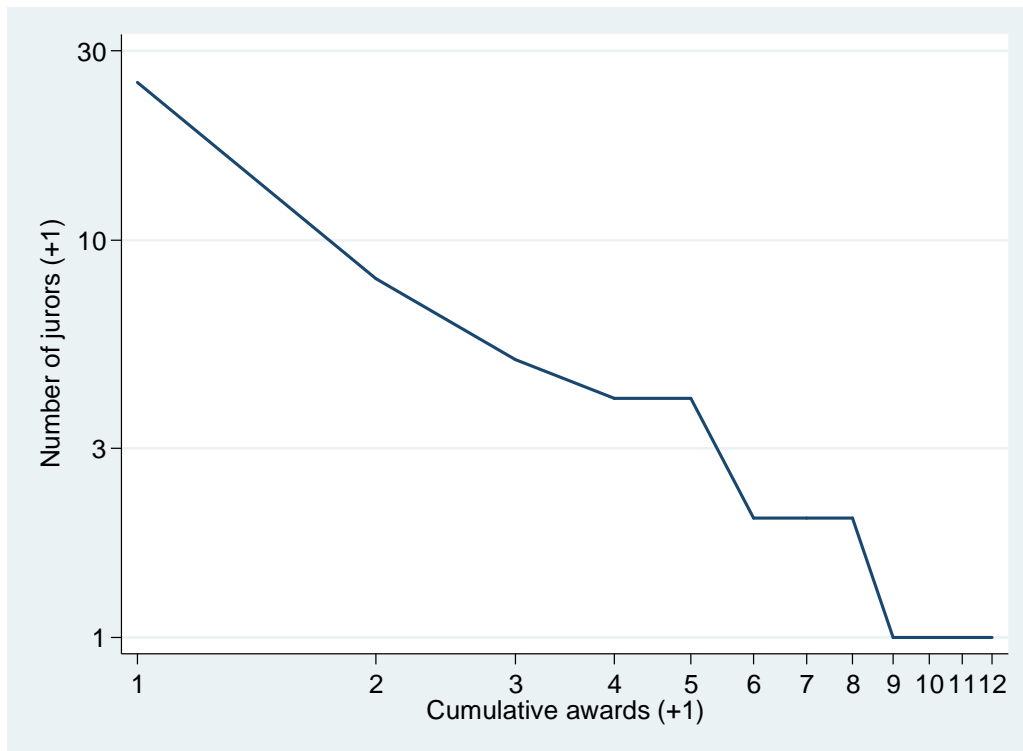


Figure 2. Cohesion vs. Connection

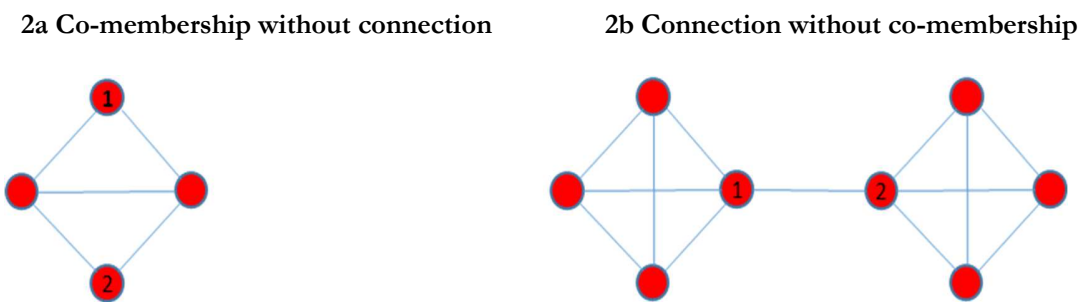


Figure 3. Conditional Marginal Effect of Direct Ties

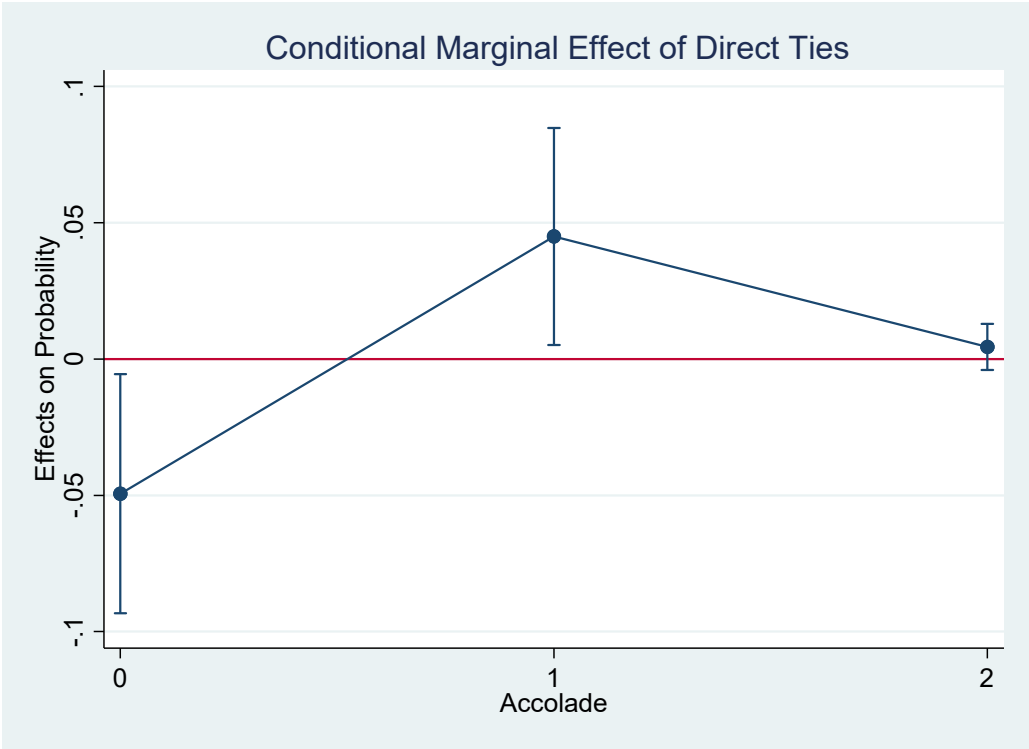


Figure 4. Conditional Marginal Effect of Reciprocity

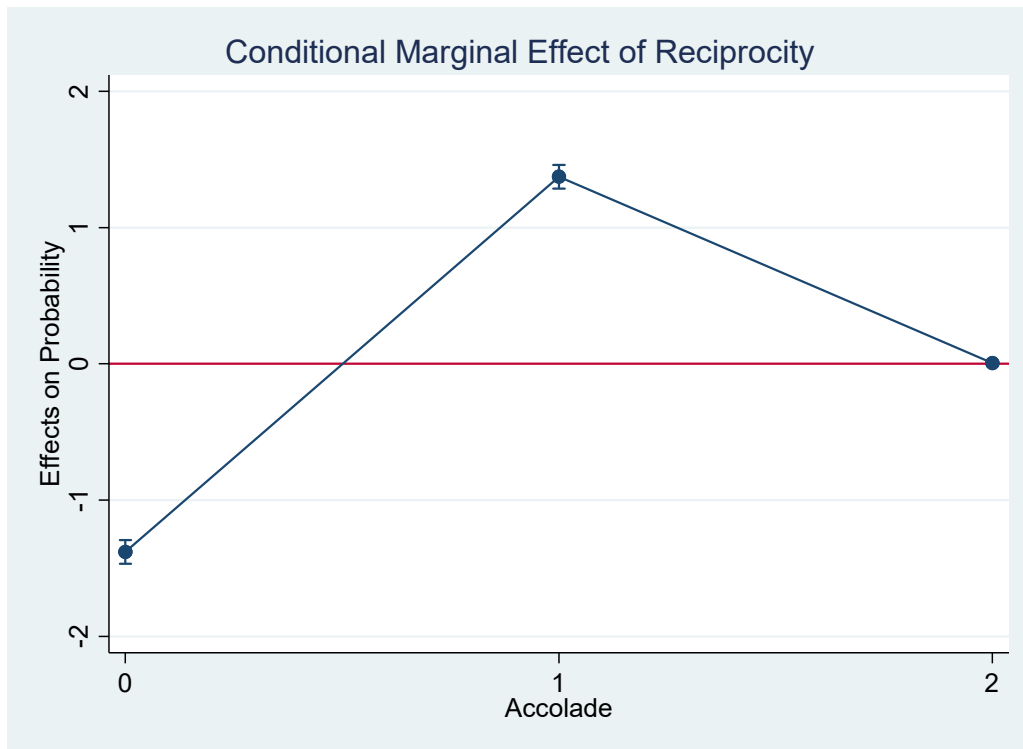


Figure 5. Conditional Marginal Effect of Cliquishness

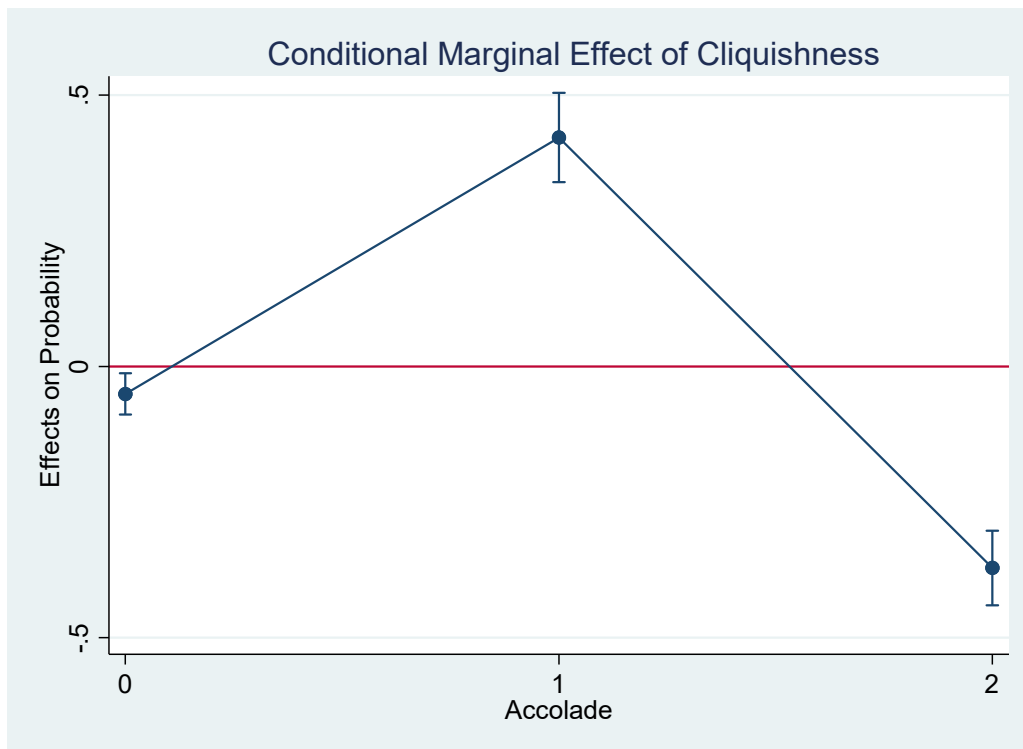


Figure 6. The Silver Tag Awards Won and Operating Profits

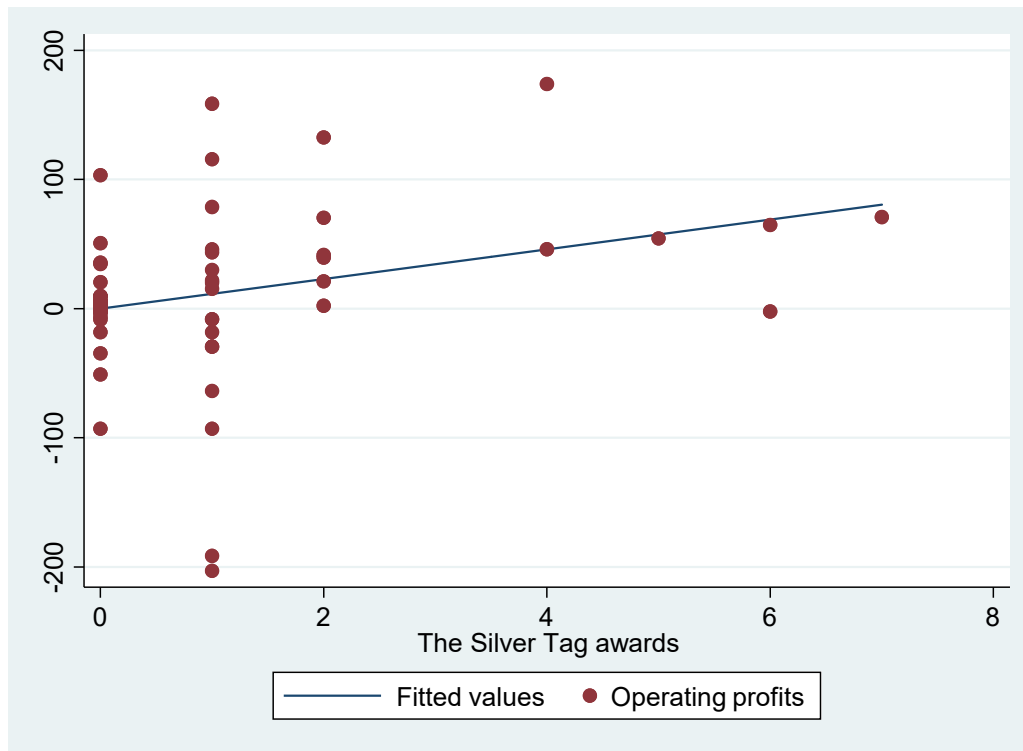


Table 1. Descriptive Data on Agencies Sampled for Interviews

Agency	Agency size	Services	Digital awards	Respondent's role
Advertising	75-100	Full service <sup>a</sup>	Yes	Digital advisor
Advertising	75-100	Full service	Yes	Copywriter; Managing director
Advertising	50-75	Full service	Yes	Digital advisor
Advertising	40-50	Mass communication	Yes	Copywriter
Advertising	10-20	Mass communication	No	Copywriter
Advertising	10-20	All media	No	Art director
Digital	20-30	Digital	Yes	Art director
Digital	5-10	Digital	No	Digital advisor
Digital	5-10	Digital	Yes	Digital advisor

<sup>a</sup> Full-service agencies typically offer a wide range of services such as mass communication, direct marketing, digital, design, and sometimes media brokering. For some roles, we interviewed more than one professional for a total of 19 distinct interviews.

**Table 2. Qualitative Evidence for Self-Reproduction from the Field<sup>17</sup>**

Perspective	Representative Quotes
<b>Self-reproduction</b>	<p><i>“If two projects are equally good, then the project where project members and jurors know each other will win [...] it is that these people share the same opinion about what is “important” and “not important”, as well as what is “right” and not “right.” They (the projects by candidates previously tied to the jurors) might therefore score higher on the criteria valued by the jurors who ‘administer the truth’ about what is good and not so good” (Account manager)</i></p> <p><i>“The Norwegian advertising industry is small...you meet the same people time and time again. It is therefore unavoidable that it becomes cliquish. Project members and jurors who know or who ... [know about] each other are part of this cliquishness” (Former jury member)</i></p> <p><i>“And there is a small gang, for example, there is a small gang who has always gone to Cannes, and we sit and talk advertising all the time. Ok, this is going in this direction, this is what is right now, this is what we would like to emphasize. We want to stretch ourselves after these ideals, these goals. And then we share a common platform for what we think is good. And that makes us share common things. And if we think the same things, then we tend to reward... we tend to reward ideas that are common to our own. Those that we think is nice ourselves” (Copywriter)</i></p> <p><i>“I am convinced that good old-fashioned camaraderie plays a big part, not in terms of explicit bargaining, but more as an implied and continuous levelling of ‘some for all’ – within a circle of people who know each other” (Copywriter)</i></p>
<b>Intellectual Distance</b>	<p><i>“[...] you are saying something about yourself when you declare who deserves gold. You expose yourself” (Former jury member)</i></p> <p><i>“It is a big problem if they (i.e., the members of the industry) come to believe you have a vested interest. If you favour that project [...] you may end up in big trouble. I usually keep quiet or alternatively try to mention what is good about other projects in such situations” (Former jury member)</i></p> <p><i>“That people in a way pay you back, that would surprise me a lot. ... You don’t want to be caught in voting tactically” (Copywriter)</i></p> <p><i>“I want to underscore that my opinion is that jury’s actions and decisions made are made with the best intention [...] The whole process is very human yet extremely professional” (Former jury member)</i></p> <p><i>“When I have been sitting in juries myself, I experience, I don’t know if its tactics. But there are different types of juries and different types of jobs. And quite easily a jury member with a “loud voice” can say that this is not very good. And then all the jobs are automatically devalued and jury members start competing to give lower scores because it is a little dangerous to award gold. You say something about yourself if you say that this deserves gold. Then you expose yourself. It’s easier to say that a job is bad than good” (Copywriter)</i></p>

<sup>17</sup> Most of the quoted respondents did not have English as a first language. Some quotes have been slightly edited by the author. Many quotes come from notes taken by one of the co-authors during the interviews and not from recorded material because respondents generally did not wish to have their answers recorded on tape for confidentiality reasons.

**Table 3. Correlation Coefficients**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
1. Allocation of accolades	.409	.631	0	2	1									
2. Project quality	0	.254	-.405	1.277	.34*	1								
3. Median experience	3.529	3.989	0	30	.10*	-.10*	1							
4. Competitive intensity	15.369	5.960	3	30	-.21*	-.04	-.01	1						
5. Conflict of interest	.436	.496	0	1	.19*	.21*	.17*	-.09*	1					
6. Prior positive co-experience	.261	.439	0	1	.19*	.28*	.20*	-.03	.55*	1				
7. Status	.439	.402	0	1	.27*	.37*	.26*	-.05	.28*	.38*	1			
8. Direct ties	1.021	1.178	0	5	.28*	.35*	.27*	-.07	.59*	.71*	.50*	1		
9. Reciprocity	.280	1.206	0	7	.34*	.18*	.15*	-.15*	.21*	.22*	.17*	.23*	1	
10. Cliquishness	.045	.510	0	7	.01	-.03	.03	.17	.09	.14	.10*	.17*	-.02	1

\* $p < .05$

N = 654

Condition number = 5.30

**Table 4. Partial Proportional Ordered Logit Model (clustered on contest/month)**

	Model 1 Coeff.	Model 2 Coeff.	Model 3 Coeff.	Model 4 Coeff.
Accolade all levels				
Project quality				2.651** (.41)
Median experience				.046* (.02)
Competitive intensity				-.086** (.02)
Conflict of interest				.319 (.20)
Prior positive co-experience				.077 (.21)
Status				.712** (.24)
Panel 0: category 0 vs. categories 1 and 2				
Direct ties	.513** (.07)			
Reciprocity		7.484** (.36)		
Cliquishness			.128* (.06)	
Constant	-1.280** (.17)	-.890** (.08)	-.713** (.09)	-.175 (.31)
Panel 1: categories 0 and 1 vs. category 2				
Direct ties	.406** (.11)			
Reciprocity		.359** (.08)		
Cliquishness			-12.079** (1.00)	
Constant	-2.990** (.17)	-2.676** (.10)	-2.459** (.07)	-2.230** (.29)
N	654	654	654	654
Wald chi <sup>2</sup>	63.25**	449.23**	146.03**	151.90**
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.05	.08	.00	.13
Log pseudolikelihood	-505.57	-489.13	-531.78	-465.07
AIC	1019.15	986.25	1071.56	946.15

† $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$  -- Robust standard errors in parentheses



**Table 4. Partial Proportional Ordered Logit Model (clustered on contest/month) – cont'd**

	Model 5 Coeff.	Model 6 Coeff.	Model 7 Coeff.	Model 8 Coeff.
Accolade all levels				
Project quality	2.540** (.41)	2.431** (.42)	2.710** (.41)	2.368** (.42)
Median experience	.037† (.02)	.032 (.02)	.048* (.02)	.024 (.02)
Competitive intensity	-.086** (.02)	-.075** (.02)	-.091** (.01)	-.080** (.01)
Conflict of interest	.186 (.21)	.257 (.22)	.310 (.20)	.119 (.22)
Prior positive co-experience	-.196 (.24)	-.013 (.23)	.044 (.22)	-.316 (.26)
Status	.571* (.26)	.674** (.24)	.681** (.23)	.506* (.26)
Panel 0: category 0 vs. categories 1 and 2				
Direct ties	.247** (.10)			.246* (.11)
Reciprocity		7.084** (.37)		6.856** (.38)
Cliquishness			.280** (.09)	.252** (.10)
Constant	-.214 (.30)	-.335 (.32)	-.097 (.26)	-.299 (.25)
Panel 1: categories 0 and 1 vs. category 2				
Direct ties	.143 (.13)			.148 (.15)
Reciprocity		.190* (.09)		.203* (.09)
Cliquishness			-10.419** (1.00)	-12.356** (1.05)
Constant	-2.121** (.31)	-2.321** (.31)	-2.139** (.23)	-2.148** (.28)
N	654	654	654	654
Wald chi²	152.13**	548.40**	274.17**	714.22**
Pseudo R²	.13	.17	.13	.18
Log pseudolikelihood	-462.67	-441.65	-463.24	-437.50
AIC	945.35	903.30	946.48	903.00

† $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$  -- Robust standard errors in parentheses

**Table 5. Partial Proportional Ordered Logit Model**

Accolade all levels	Model 9 (Clustered on Jury)
Project quality	2.368** (.53)
Median experience	.024 (.03)
Competitive intensity	-.080** (.01)
Conflict of interest	.119 (.27)
Prior positive co-experience	-.316* (.16)
Status	.506** (.15)
Panel 0: category 0 vs. categories 1 and 2	
Direct ties	.246* (.12)
Reciprocity	6.856** (.42)
Cliquishness	.252* (.12)
Constant	-.299 (.32)
Panel 1: categories 0 and 1 vs. category 2	
Direct ties	.148 (.24)
Reciprocity	.203** (.07)
Cliquishness	-12.356** (1.22)
Constant	-2.148** (.34)
N	654
Wald chi <sup>2</sup>	418.49**
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.18
Log pseudolikelihood	-437.50
AIC	885.00

† $p < .10$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$  -- Robust standard errors in parentheses

## **Appendix 1**

### **The jury deliberation process**

Our interviews and archival sources clearly suggest that the jury evaluation process during our observation window was cautiously designed to ensure procedural fairness. It proceeded as follows. All jury members scrutinize the competing projects individually during the days prior to the jury meeting and produce a personal shortlist of their five favorite projects that they bring to the jury meeting. All the projects on the jury members' short lists are part of the first cut. The projects that made the first cut are then discussed by the jurors in the jury meeting. Through the discussions, the jury collectively discriminates between the projects that made the first cut and rejects the projects that are not deemed sufficiently worthy to make the jury's shortlist of five projects. Next, the jury discusses each project on this shortlist and each juror argues for his or her preferred winner under the leadership of the jury president. After collectively discussing the jury's shortlist, each jury member assigns points to the different projects on the jury's shortlist. The project that the juror prefers the most receives 5 points, the project the juror thinks is second best receives 4 points, and so on. Once all the jurors have cast their votes, the jury sums up the points each juror has awarded each project and divides the sum for each project by the number of jurors. Whenever jury members have a clear conflict of interest – e.g., they were involved in a project that was submitted to the contest or an advertising agency for which they were currently working submitted a project – they are not allowed to partake in the evaluation of that project: they have to exit the jury room and wait in the hallway while the project is being discussed. For this project, the score of the juror with a conflict of interest is set equal to the average of the other jurors' scores. Once the jury evaluation process is finished, the jury issues a justification – drafted by the jury president – that accompanies the announcement in industry media.

## Appendix 2

### Results with the Inverse Probability Weighting (IPW)

To further check the robustness of our main results reported in Model 8 (Table 4), we estimated the average treatment effect (ATE) of *direct ties*, *reciprocity*, and *cliquishness* on the likelihood of receiving an accolade. We estimated the ATE from our observational data using the Inverse Probability Weighting (IPW) technique. This technique uses estimated probability weights to correct for the missing data problem stemming from the fact that each subject (here project) is observed in only one of the potential outcomes. The IPW estimator uses a model for the treatment instead of a model for the outcome and estimates the predicted treatment probabilities to weigh the observed outcomes. The inverse probability of being in the observed treatment group is obtained by modeling the observed treatment as a function of the project's characteristics that determine the treatment group. The difference between the average weighted treated outcomes and the average weighted non-treated outcomes estimates the ATE. We calculated the estimated probability weights and ATE for each of our treatments based on *project quality*, *median experience*, *competitive intensity*, and *status* as they were the statistically significant controls (Model 4).

We first defined the treatment level for each project based on our *direct ties* variable. Specifically, each project was treated using a cut-off rule of  $\geq 4$ . This cut-off classifies as treated projects in the upper decile, making the test very conservative. All projects with a value of *direct ties*  $\geq 4$  were assigned the value of 1 (treated) while those with *direct ties*  $< 4$  were assigned the value of 0 (untreated). The results presented in Table 6 show a significant positive ATE for treatments greater than the chosen cut-off value. In Model 10, the ATE for *direct ties*  $\geq 4$  is .635 ( $p < .05$ ). We also estimated the ATE of the *reciprocity* variable using the cut-off rule of  $\geq 1$  to identify the treatment group based on our set of covariates. This cut-off classifies as treated the projects in the upper decile, again making the test highly conservative. The results are reported in Model 11 and shows a positive (.866) and significant ( $p < .01$ ) ATE for *reciprocity*  $\geq 1$ . Finally, we estimated the ATE of the *cliquishness* variable using a cut-off rule of  $> 1$  to identify our treatment group based on our set of covariates. The results show a negative (-.382) and significant ( $p < .01$ ) effect for *cliquishness*  $> 1$  (Model 12). Finally, we assessed the issue of covariate balance. When the

distribution of a covariate is the same for all levels of treatment, the covariate can be said to be balanced. If a treatment model is well specified, the IPW functions of the covariates from the model are balanced. We performed over-identification tests for covariate balance for all treatment models, and none of the tests were statistically significant indicating that we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the IPW models balance all our covariates. Although we cannot claim causality, the results of these analyses lend additional support to the relationship between our variables of theoretical interest and the allocation of awards in peer-based tournament rituals.

**Table 6. Inverse Probability Weighting Models**

	<b>Model 10</b> Direct ties ≥ 4	<b>Model 11</b> Reciprocity ≥ 1	<b>Model 12</b> Cliquishness > 1
ATE	.635* (.26)	.866** (.09)	-.382** (.05)

AI robust standard errors

N =

654

\*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$

**Erik Aadland** is Associate Professor of Strategy at the BI Norwegian Business School where he received his PhD in Management. His research interests include evaluation and reception of creative outputs, collaborative networks, and adaptation to technological change.

**Gino Cattani** is Associate Professor of Management & Organization at the Stern School of Business, New York University. He received his PhD in Business Administration from the Wharton School of Management, University of Pennsylvania. His research focuses on creativity, innovation, and market/industry formation and evolution. In his current research he has investigated the socio-structural foundations of individual creativity by looking at the role of audiences recognizing and endorsing creative work and individuals' position along the core/periphery continuum of the field's social network.

**Simone Ferriani** is Full Professor of Management at the University of Bologna and Honorary Visiting Professor at Cass Business School. He is also a lifetime member of Clare Hall College at Cambridge University. He received his PhD in Business Administration from the University of Bologna. Recent publications have focused on the emergence and evaluation of novelty, social network determinants of individual creativity, and technology-based entrepreneurship.