

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

The Passion Paradigm:
Why the Ideology of Work Passion Thrives in the New Economy

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Sociology

by

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The Dissertation of Lindsay J. DePalma is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Andrew, whose passion delights and inspires me.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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For decades, scholars of work have recorded structural changes rendering a ‘new economy.’ In the new economy, professionals experience unprecedented precarity whereby their careers are more unpredictable, insecure, and risky, compared to the postwar model of work. An enormous amount of scholarship analyzes the causes and effects of these structural changes. Although cultural scholars have long argued that when structures change, so must their protecting ideologies, far less scholarship has analyzed ideological structures of work in the new economy.

In this dissertation I analyze the ideology of work passion—what I call the passion paradigm—as an ideology sustaining and motivating professional work in the new economy. The

concept of work passion has peppered literature on structurally precarious professionals for the last two decades, and scholars have recently theorized work passion as an increasingly hegemonic cultural script, however its pervasiveness, definition, and function remain unknown. Using interview data from a sample of 74 graphic designers, engineers, and nurses split evenly between males and females who work in either more or less precarious positions, I analyze what work passion *is* and why the passion paradigm thrives in the new economy.

I find that professionals conceptualize work passion as attraction, enjoyment, motivation and perseverance, and conceptualize the passion paradigm as a coherent and rational ideology of work which centers the prioritization of individual happiness. I argue that the passion paradigm thrives in a precarious economy because it grants adherents clarity and reliability; respondents adhere to it because they find it empowering. Second, I argue that the passion paradigm also thrives because it serves the institution of work by deeply individualizing, thereby depoliticizing the experience of work for professionals, while committing them to work hard and work well. The very cunning of the passion paradigm is convincing adherents that that which ultimately serves and preserves structures of work is of primary service to the self. The findings in this dissertation contribute rich empirical data on worker well-being, expectations, and adaptations to work in the new economy—data which are essential for the tasks of fighting for and building more equitable and sustainable work.

CHAPTER ONE: STRUCTURE AND CULTURE IN THE NEW ECONOMY

“You live this life once.”
-Olivia Lipkin, organization engineer

In May 2019 I ran into a friend from college that I had not seen in over a decade. Jon was a sociology major like me—which is how I knew him. Remembering that he was an avid surfer I asked him if he still surfs and he told me this story: Right after he graduated from college, as he waited to begin law school, he was in a surfing accident. Someone learning to surf cut in on Jon’s wave and when they collided the novice’s board smashed into Jon’s head. He went unconscious immediately. The friends Jon was surfing with dragged his body out of the water and performed CPR. They thought he was dead. Jon regained consciousness in the hospital two days later, with two metal plates in his head. When the doctor came in, he told Jon that it was truly a miracle that he survived and survived with no brain damage. Then he told Jon, “I don’t know what you’re doing with your life, but it better be something you love and are passionate about, because you shouldn’t be alive.” So, Jon never started law school. Instead, he runs his own company distributing fine meats and cheeses from around the world to artisan chefs throughout California. And he loves it. Jon’s story, though perhaps more dramatic, is not unlike many of the career trajectories I heard from the seventy-four professionals I interviewed for this dissertation.

To be clear, their stories were also stories of job insecurity, career changes, non-standard employment relations, job uncertainty, financial anxiety, and psychological turmoil—precisely the types of stories scholars of work would expect me to hear from professionals coming up in an age of unprecedented precarity. Many of their stories included structural changes and material needs—being laid off after company downsizing, fired due to client complaints, or downgraded to a

contract employee so their company could avoid paying for benefits. By and large, however, the professionals aged 30-40 in my sample narrated their work histories and speculated about their work futures as a story about the pursuit of passion.

Consider Delfina Madsen,¹ a graphic designer, who described herself as an artist who works on a project by project basis. Delfina attained an AA in visual communications and her bachelor's degree in business management. After graduation she landed a job in the fashion industry working with models, photographers, and clothes. She described the position as both creative and lucrative, in a booming industry with job security and opportunity for growth. According to industry standards and objective measures she recognized that she had a "dream job." But Delfina felt like she was not fulfilling her life's purpose. "It wasn't fulfilling to my soul," she explained, "I knew that I had creativity in me to do more and create more to inspire more people." She started applying to other companies, but nobody hired her. Soon, "reality set in" and she told herself "I could either be working [here] and be really unhappy or I could...try to do my own thing and feel really fulfilled. Without knowing what she would do next, she quit.

Over the next five years Delfina focused on regrouping and finding her "passion, purpose, and voice." She moved back in with her mom (a privilege she recognized as crucial to her success), got an art studio, and paid the bills with "side hustles" as a Starbucks² barista and nanny. She described how "she made the best of the situation," but told me the transition was full of meltdowns, panic attacks, and tears as she slowly let go of her ego and fears. In the end, she was "willing to be like okay, I'm going to watch these kids and make these coffees *if that means I'll be able to do what I love*" [emphasis mine]. As I scrolled through Delfina's website after our

¹ All respondent names are pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality.

² Starbucks was a strategic choice, as employees who work an average of 20+ hours/week get benefits.

interview, I was greeted by her bright smile and platinum blond short hair. She concludes a summary about herself and her work #livingthedream, and signs off: “I love you already x.”

The professionals I interviewed took pay cuts, sacrificed stable salaries, lost benefits, risked unemployment, moved their families, and left work they already liked...all in pursuit of work that they love. Despite their precarity—or perhaps because of their precarity—their stories centered on individual adaptation, decision making, and personal preferences. Though respondents articulated their work lives as uncertain, unpredictable, and malleable, they spoke more of agency than constraint, opportunities more than limitations, clarity rather than fog. In an economic and legal context in which many institutions of work offer their employees so little, respondents perceived agency over their career paths, articulated freedom in open opportunity, and ultimately found clarity in prioritizing work that they love.

This is a dissertation about the relationship between culture and structure, in which I focus on the agentic professional pursuit of work passion as a cultural phenomenon whose success can only be fully understood in its structural context of precarious work in the new economy. Using qualitative data collected from equal numbers of engineers, graphic designers, and nurses working in either less precarious roles or more precarious roles, I analyze what work passion is and what adherence to an ideology of work passion does both for professionals and professional work in the new economy. I have two central arguments. First, the passion paradigm thrives among young professionals in a precarious economy because it deeply individualizes the experience of work, allowing professionals to perceive control over their work in an otherwise vulnerable and unstable context. Though there are ample data that suggest that professionals in a precarious economy would cling to sources of security and become risk averse, there are also data that suggest that when tragedy befalls individuals, like in Jon’s surfing accident, or when one’s sense of structural

security is otherwise rattled or shown as illusory, individuals abandon the sources of security they once clung to and turn their attention to intrinsic sources of security and fulfillment (Vallas and Prener 2012).³ The latter is what I find in my data; I argue that one of the reasons the passion paradigm is so resonate with professionals in the new economy is *because* of its unprecedented precarity, not despite it.

Second, because the passion paradigm relies on the individualization of work in order to empower adherents, the passion paradigm is also fundamentally depoliticizing; it obscures structural causes of work strife and inequality, thereby disempowering individuals from demanding structural change for the collective benefit. In consequence, though professionals perceive that work passion contributes to their individual happiness via perceptions of control, it simultaneously precludes their potential to demand cultural and institutional changes to promote more equitable access to economic and psychological well-being at work.

In the remainder of this chapter I introduce the historical and theoretical backgrounds of structures of work, cultures of work, and work passion, and end with a preview of chapters.

STRUCTURE AND CULTURE IN 20TH CENTURY WORK

In order to analyze work in the new economy, it is helpful to understand old structures and cultures of work for two central reasons. First, though professionals live and work in a world

³ As an interesting side note, a little known fact is that Harvard Business School alumni Patrick McGinnis who coined the term FOMO (fear of missing out) was inspired to come up with the concept after the crash of the dot.com bubble decimated his venture capital firm and soon after, he watched in horror from the streets below his downtown Manhattan apartment as the Twin Towers fell on 9-11. His response was not to cower in fear or become risk adverse, but to fully “carpe diem.” FOMO is a life philosophy which promotes capitalizing on all that the world has to offer and maximizing one’s enjoyment on this earth. It is the polar opposite of playing it safe and seeking security and consistency. From “Overcoming FOMO and FOBO with Patrick J. McGinnis” published May 3, 2020 on the podcast “Hello Monday with Jessi Hempel.” <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/overcoming-fomo-and-fobo-with-patrick-j-mcginnis/id1453893304?i=1000473494231>

perhaps unimaginable to the architects of work a century ago, historic structures and cultures of work remain influential in how professionals experience work today. Second, the history of work is a history of both structural and cultural changes. As structures of work shift, so must cultures; as cultures of work shift, so must structures. I therefore describe modern work in the 20th century with two particular emphases: new systems of work are built on top of the old, without wholly replacing them, and structure and culture are naturally coupled.

Modern Work

Structures of work have undergone considerable amounts of transformation over the last two centuries, as have the relationships that professionals have with their work. Classical sociologists describe the foundations of modern work as the division of labor and bureaucratization. According to Emile Durkheim (1997), industrial structures of work necessitated a division of labor in which workers are assigned unique tasks but work in unison towards communal goals. Like a human body, though individuals have different roles, taken together their labor sustains a complete, functioning social body. According to Max Weber, the coordination of individual work in a modern division of labor is regulated by bureaucracy. Bureaucratization offers the optimum possibility for carrying through functions; individuals have specialized training and life becomes objective and calculable (Weber 1946: 215).

The division of labor and growth of bureaucratic organizations over the 19th and 20th centuries fundamentally altered professionals' relationships to work. First, the highly differentiated labor force and distribution of skills led to what Kerr et. al (1964) calls an 'open society,' within which professionals were free to choose their work. These structural changes gave way to the meritocratic ideals of the American Dream and what Barley and Kunda (2006) call the

earliest mode of professional practice: free professionalism. Though the growth of professional associations led to increased professional norms and barriers to entry, practitioners in this mode of professional practice were considered to be operating in “a free market for their services” (Barley and Kunda 2006: 50). The competitive open market of the 19th and early 20th centuries produced what is now considered traditional liberal capitalism. From it we get ideologies like the American Dream, meritocracy, and the idea that every person can pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.

Weber astutely predicted that the rational system of bureaucracy was an overwhelming force. With time, extreme bureaucratization replaced an open market for success with a strict and limiting occupational hierarchy (Mills 1951). As competition and specialization increased, free professionals began organizing into professional firms, and eventually into corporate firms (Barley and Kunda 2006). Davis (2016) calls the 20th century “the corporate century in America” (3). Corporations were “the most important institutions in the economy providing goods and services, jobs, and profits for investors (3). These new structures of work also supported new conceptions of work, including the concept of an individual career.

Though the structures of work were newly constrained by extreme bureaucracy within organizations, Mills (1951) argued that the professional culture of work was still dominated by an entrepreneurial ethos in which people were responsible for their own success (93). But, “[i]f men are responsible for their success,” Mills (1951) warned, “they are also responsible for their failure” (283). There is little account for structural barriers to success in the ideology of meritocracy; the only thing preventing a professional from achieving success is their own ingenuity in the marketplace. Mills, like Weber before him, recognized that cultures of work can be misaligned with structures of work, but nevertheless persist, often to the psychological detriment of adherents

who experience the contradiction as a personal failure. As Weber (1992) famously wrote about the fate of the Protestant ethic, past ideas prowl about in our lives like a ghost (124).

Though the ideologies of meritocracy and the American Dream persisted, the growth of corporate structures of work were accompanied—by necessity—by new cultures or ideologies of work. One prominent shift was the development of consumer culture. The onset of mass production, mass marketing, and consumer credit expanded time honored ideals of satisfying work, economic independence, and devotion to God, and reworked the definition of success to include "having lots of goods—goods bought in the market and made by unknown hands, [and] more goods this year than last year" (Calder 1999: 7). Within this reworked culture of work, the ideal worker was not just one who works hard and saves, but one who consumes. Structures like the installment plan and consumer credit financed the middle class as consumers and enabled the structural transition from "hand to mouth living" to "regulated abundance" (Calder 1999: 208). Simultaneously, ideological adaptations removed the stigma associated with credit (Calder 1999: 206). Consumer credit and consumer choice became the foundation for a new concept of freedom (Bauman 1988) and a new mechanism of distinction (Veblen 1973; Bourdieu 1984). This development was so consequential that some scholars described consumption as the linchpin of 20th century society.

The structural and ideological changes that accompanied consumerism were part of a larger structural shift which split work and leisure into two distinct spheres and ultimately created leisure culture. Complements of modernization and the division of labor, work-life was physically separated from home-life, but it was also ideologically separated. The cultural structure that supported the structural split of work and leisure was the conception that work is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Whereas the 19th century middle class were self-employed entrepreneurs,

the modern middle class were bureaucrats. No longer in control of their ascent or holding ownership over the enterprise, bureaucrats perform specialized, monotonous tasks within rigid bureaucratic organizations. Mobility for the bureaucrat meant climbing the ladder within a pre-arranged hierarchy (Mills 1951). Largely stripped of ownership and agency in their work-life, workers had to seek expressions of the self and meaning elsewhere. Leisure culture therefore emerged in consequence of alienation in the workplace, the re-conceptualization of work as fundamentally instrumental, and the development of consumer culture. Leisure was the necessary complement to work as a means of replenishment and source of personal development (Rojek 2004).

Consumption and leisure only worked as successful antidotes to the drudgery of work when the structural systems of work made jobs and salaries secure, and cultural systems of work affirmed that secure salaries were what workers should expect from work; this was the social contract between employers and their employees. These structural and cultural systems of professional work were hard fought for and reflect what is now called postwar work—the so-called golden age of work which lasted from the 1940s -1970s.

The Fight For (and Collapse of) Post-War Security

Postwar work is the form of secure employment that scholars of the new economy often lament the demise of. Cultures and structures of work are social constructions, and postwar work was hard fought for. As Ross (2003) reflected, “A good job is neither a product of nature nor an extraterrestrial life-form. It is one of the most highly crafted inventions, and at times, it seems as if all of history’s hard knocks and sweetest yearnings have gone into its making....the right to enjoy humane work has been more difficult to attain than the right to vote” (1). The disintegration of the

postwar work model has been lamented not necessarily because scholars and pundits believe it was the best way to structure work, but because it was so deeply embedded in how America rebuilt its society in the postwar years that its disintegration destabilized the educational, financial, health, and family institutions that it was intertwined with.

The golden age of employment from approximately the 1940s to the 1970s—what Davis (2016) called “the golden 30”—was preceded by tremendous efforts by labor leaders and legislators in the 1930s. Faith in the free market reached a crescendo in the 1920s as the industrial economy created unimaginable wealth for the owners of industry, which unspooled with the Great Depression (Hyman 2018: 15). With the passage of the New Deal in 1938, Hyman (2018) argued that industrialists, unionists, and policy makers made the intentional decision to create a new industrial security for both labor and capital, which turned industrial growth into democratic prosperity (at least for white professional men) (Hyman 2018: 15-28). The confluence of the organizational success of the multidivisional (M-form) corporation, federal intervention and oversight in industry, and the strength of labor movements created a system in which American social reform went *through* corporations (Davis 2016; Hyman 2018).

Architects of postwar security built a system in which the federal government partnered with corporations to build a strong middle class, and the American economy more generally. As corporate power grew in the years between 1945 and 1975, so did GDP, productivity, and income (Davis 2016). Kalleberg (2011) cites this postwar boom period in the United States as the Great Compression, where economic compensation increased for most people and full-time jobs were the norm (3). It was in this era that Americans, regardless of class, came to perceive steady work with reasonable wages as their right as citizens—as the social contract between good employers and their employees (Hyman 2018: 48). For professionals, in particular, the concept of a “good

job” with a living wage, employment security, and fringe benefits like pensions and health insurance was born (Kalleberg 2011: 3). At the time, the American corporation was expected to be a permanent fixture, “providing a bedrock of stability of American life” (50). But by the 1970s the American corporation and the social securities it provided were already unraveling.

The unraveling of the postwar work model was both cultural and structural. The social contract between employers and employees in the postwar work model was built on the collective consensus that economic security was most important. In exchange for the corporation absorbing the volatility of the market in order to protect workers, workers gave up their independence (Hyman 2018). The corporate career was a “safe bet” (Davis 2016: 45), but it was one that professionals came to experience as stifling and restrictive (Hyman 2018). As Mills (1951) wrote, the sphere of work became a place of submission, where individuals had to “try to build their real life outside their work” (228). While consumer culture and leisure society may have sufficed during the postwar golden era, critiques of the postwar split of work and leisure were bubbling under the surface. Critical scholars called the work/spend cycle of the postwar economy entrapping and degrading (Schor 1992), accused the postwar work model of alienating individuals from their work (Mills 1951), and criticized that the compartmentalization that the split of work and leisure necessitated forced individuals to fracture themselves in two (Kerr et al. 1964, as quoted in Grusky 2008: 964). By the late 1960s, individuals were concerned about the stale conformity of Whyte’s (1956) “organization man” and, having had their material needs met, turned their attention to evaluating the noneconomic aspects of their jobs (Kalleberg 2011: 4).

Following social upheavals in the 1960s, individuals in the 1970s expressed their desire for authentic identities through lifestyle and self-fulfillment movements. Inglehart (1977) proposed that young individuals in rich democratic nations were driving a cultural shift towards post-

materialist values. Having satisfied their essential material needs, Inglehart documented that this new generation had the privilege to contemplate and pursue non-material needs. This fundamental cultural shift was perhaps symbolized by the 1972 labor strike over the *quality* of work (not hours, security, or wages) at General Motors—GM being the site where both the gold standard for the M-form corporation and the strength of the United Auto Workers (UAW) organizing efforts were built in the 1930s (Hyman 2018: 32, 142; Kalleberg 2011; Ross 2003). In the affluent decades of the 60s and 70s, Kalleberg (2011) argued that the standard for evaluating a good job was raised to one which provided “meaningful and interesting work that enabled persons to ‘self-actualize’ (9).

The cultural shift in which professionals reconceptualized good work as jobs with intrinsic job rewards and revoked their commitments to institutions of work as the primary authors of their identities, however, occurred in tandem with the structural decline of institutional commitments to their employees. The structural decline of institutional commitments marked the end of the golden age of secure employment. It was caused by a myriad of structural changes.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES TO WORK IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Over the last several decades sociologists have documented broad changes in the global economy, in organizations of work, and in the relationships between employers and their employees. Davis (2016) borrows the phrase “third industrial revolution” to describe today’s “wrenching social changes, as economics and politics [collide] over how to organize people and productive technology” (168). The changes have been so significant that many scholars describe their research as investigations of the “changing nature of work” and the “new economy” (Beck 2000; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Hollister 2011; Kalleberg 2009; Sennett 1998). This new economy is characterized by the “severing of obligations between firms and employees” and the

“collapse of the protections that we, in our laws and our customs, fought hard to enshrine” (Hyman 2018: 12).

Scholarship focused on professionals, in particular, suggests that their relationship to work has profoundly changed (Barley and Kunda 2006). Instead of commitment, employers offer trust; instead of encouraging workers to feel for an organization, employers encourage workers to behave like an organization (Kunda and Aiolon 2006). The workplace, like the economy more generally, is less about loyalty and more about adaptation and insecurity (Orrange 2003:453). The career-path is less clear, giving way to “destandardization of the life course” (Johnson and Mortimer 2011) characterized by “discontinuous career paths” (Orrange 2003).

The overwhelming consensus is that structural changes led to “unprecedented precarity” in the professional class (Hollister 2011). Esteemed work scholar Arne Kalleberg (2009) defines precarious work like this: “employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker” (2). Work conditions that were once typical of peripheral employees in an organization are now shared by core employees (Kunda and Ailon 2006). Or, as Barley and Kunda (2006) put it, the expansion of contingent work threatens the collapse of the primary labor market (characterized by career ladders, job security, and benefits) into the secondary labor market (characterized by instability, reduced wages, and diminished benefits). In her book *The Tumbleweed Society*, Pugh (2015) calls this broad vulnerability “insecurity culture:” a culture of personal responsibility and risk, linked to a spread of precariousness at work, the neoliberal receding of the state, and the dominance of the market” (4). As the above scholars make clear, it is of course not precarious work itself that is unprecedented, but the new broad vulnerability of the professional class who “like flyaway balls of tinder,” as Pugh (2015) poetically describes, “roll hither and yon” (10).

There has been an enormous amount of scholarship on the causes of this precarity,⁴ most citing structural changes beginning in the 1970s. Barley and Kunda (2004) call this period “the unraveling of permanent employment” (9), referring to the dismantling of the post-World War II social contract between white-collar workers and their employers wherein workers “were promised stable pay, health insurance, and steady promotions” in exchange for good performance, commitment, loyalty, and obligation to their company (Gershon 2017: 6). Kalleberg (2009) identifies a host of changes including the spread of globalization, the growth of technology, the resulting increase in worldwide competition, the decline of union protections, legal deregulation, the subsequent unleashed power of firms, privatization, and an overarching shift from a manufacturing-based economy to an information or knowledge based economy.

These changes in the structural features of work shifted the balance of power to employers (Kalleberg 2009; Vallas 2015) at the same time that corporate strategies shifted from steady progress to disruptive wealth creation. While the corporation in the golden era sought security for itself and its employees, the postmodern corporation of the 1970s sought growth and flexibility; Kalleberg (2009) referred to this shift back to insecurity the “double movement.” Between these eras the model of capitalism swung from careful planning for stable profits, internal savings, and the minimization of risk to the lean and flexible corporation chasing economic growth in an unpredictable market (Hyman 2018: 142-145).

The shift from long term stability to short term profits was in part the result of the shareholder revolution in the 80’s, which shifted the balance of power from managers—“who tended to be relatively kind to workers”—to shareholders demanding high stock prices (Hollister

⁴ Precarity, or an iteration thereof, is the term I use most frequently. The term is imprecise, but so is the concept. In general, I use it to mean professional employment and career trajectories that are more unpredictable, unstable, insecure, and risky, compared to the postwar model of work.

2011: 308). In his book *The Vanishing American Corporation*, Davis (2016) traces the rise of conglomerates in the 1960s and 1970s, loosened laws against monopolies resulting in increased mergers, horizontal acquisitions, and piecemealed conglomerates in the 1980s, and declares that by the 1990s the corporation existed to create shareholder value (51-67). With shareholder as king, the American corporation was transformed from an institution that was responsible to stockholders, employees, customers, the company, and the general public, into an institution with one relevant stakeholder: the shareholders (Davis 2016: 60). Louis Hyman (2018) described the transition like this:

The postwar institutions—big unions, big corporations, powerful regulations—that insulated us from volatility and made possible the steady economic growth and broad equality of the postwar era were swept aside in the name of resurgent faith in the “market” (5).

By the 1990s, the effects of deindustrialization, outsourcing, and changes in investment made stable and secure postwar work a relic (Ross 2003).

Corporate faith in the market manifested in the creation of flexible firms. “The general theme across all accounts of the New Economy,” Hollister (2011) writes, “is the increased need for companies to be flexible and to focus on short-term outcomes” (308). Management consultants, minted as corporate guides through the new terrain of rapid technological change, blamed bloated bureaucracies for declines in profit and encouraged corporations to downsize and restructure (Hyman 2018). In order to cut costs and improve agility, companies were encouraged to cut non-essential roles (downsize), do more with less people (restructure), and rely on other organizations for non-essential tasks (outsource). Scholars have described these strategies as numerical or external flexibility and functional or internal flexibility, respectively (Kalleberg 2003), or reducing both vertical and horizontal headcounts, respectively (Barley and Kunda 2006: 55). The result of organizational delayering is leaner, more specialized organizations.

The culmination of these trends is the collapse of bureaucracy and vertical integration, “[reversing] the industrial era’s strategy of making firms self-sufficient” (Barley and Kunda 2006: 55). Instead of managing everything, companies focus on doing one thing well, and outsource the rest (Davis 2016: 70). The model of the flexible firm supplanted old models of work, moving society from a postwar economy to what over the last few decades has been called post-industrialism, neoliberalism, age of turbulence, the service economy, late capitalism post-Fordism (Hyman 2018)—or the most general term: a new economy.

Though there is evidence that organizations have benefited economically from adopting flexible work practices and employment systems in the short term (Kalleberg 2003), it remains unclear what the new social contract between employers and employees is. The transition into a new economy has generated an incredible amount of scholarship debating the long-term consequences for the shape and responsibilities of institutions of work in this country and, more specifically, for the professionals who used to rely on them. One of the debates centers on how the model of flexible firms will necessarily stratify the professional workforce. Kalleberg (2003) finds evidence that the pursuit of flexibility creates a segmented workforce consisting of organizational insiders (standard employment relations) and organizational outsiders (non-standard employment relations) (156). Using the logic of the dual labor market theory—traditionally designating a primary and secondary labor force stratified along class lines—the professional class will necessarily bifurcate into precarious professionals who are in the market and non-precarious professionals who retain the security of bureaucratic membership.

The recognition that core employees are “saved” from the effects of nonstandard employment is in part a recognition that the corporate form will not entirely disappear and that standard work arrangements involving stable full time employment with benefits and a living wage

are likely to persist even as society moves into a new era of work. But it also belies the notion that standard work arrangements are the better option and that some individuals are less vulnerable than others. The alarm of unprecedented precarity is that fewer professionals are “immunized against such trends” (Vallas 2015: 463).⁵ Though there is some debate, the overwhelming consensus in the sociological literature is that the changing nature of work is bad for professional workers. This is an institutional perspective or what scholars call “the new structuralism” (Vallas and Prener 2012; Vallas 2015), which describes the deterioration of job rewards as a cautionary tale “threatening the security of the workforce and the American system of social welfare” (Barley and Kunda 2006: 46). The structuralist perspective centers structural changes to the organization of work and their negative consequences, which bear down on vulnerable individuals. In this scholarship, there are clear “winners” and “losers” of insecurity culture (Pugh 2015).

Scholars recognize that precarious professionals are not a monolithic group and that the experience of non-standard work is unequal, but there is nevertheless widespread worry about how professionals who were once accustomed to, or in expectation of, postwar work will cope with insecurity as normative. In his book *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* Richard Sennett (1998) argues that the shift to flexible capitalism forces workers to behave nimbly, to be open to change on short notice, to take risks continually, to become ever less dependent on regulations and formal procedures” (9). Post-modern work characterized by a quick changing economy is hard to predict. This contributes to the growing proportion of risk individuals take on in our post-modern society. Within the new economy, work

⁵ Many scholars implicitly recognize that romanticizing the post war stable work arrangements fails to acknowledge the marginalized individuals who have always been left out. In his book summarizing the history of temporary work in the United States, Hyman explicitly (2018) writes, “For those excluded from those jobs—women, Latinos, African Americans, undocumented migrants—the rest of the economy was not so glorious, and their work helped make that economy possible. In many ways...the experiences of the people who were left out of the good postwar jobs became the rehearsal for most people’s jobs today” (13).

is being “constantly repotted, like a growing plant, with the worker as the gardener” (Sennett 1998: 80). In a risk-oriented economy, success goes to risk takers. Risk takers have to have the confidence or willpower to dwell in disorder, ambiguity, and uncertainty (Sennett 1998: 62, 85).

For many scholars, these changes represent the ongoing fulfillment of what Beck (1992) called risk society: a society in which risk is increasingly taken from the state or other social institutions and transferred to the individual. For example, as fragmented careers become normalized and government welfare funds dissipate, individuals are increasingly responsible for their provisions in old age (Rojek 2004). Whereas institutions formerly offered stability and predictability, the new employment narrative “emphasizes that workers can no longer rely on employers to provide a career...today's career must be managed and driven by the individual” (Hollister 2011: 316). Within the “reflexive modernity” of risk society, individuals exist in a “runaway world,” a global environment characterized by uncertainty, restlessness, and contradiction—a “bureaucratic and institutional jungle” in which individuals are forced to quickly (almost reflexively) self-manage and self-regulate with little sense of certainty (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001:24). In society's best efforts to stave off these vagaries, society gravitates towards individualization (Beck 1992). History, Beck (1992) writes, "...shrinks to the (eternal) present and everything revolves around the axis of one's personal ego and personal life...the proportion of biography which is open and must be constructed biographically is increasing" (135-7).

In new economy in which work is unstable and the worker is flexible, individuals do not experience work as static and fully legible. The experience of work must undergo constant negotiation. The problem individuals face within structural precarity is “how to organize [their] life histories now, in a capitalism which disposes [them] to drift” (Sennett 1998: 117). Similarly, Bauman (2007) writes that departures currently happening are creating an “unprecedented setting

for individual life pursuits, raising a series of challenges never before encountered.” The first that he identifies is passage from the solid to a liquid phase of modernity:

[It is] a condition in which social forms (structures that limit individual choices, institutions that guard repetitions of routines, patterns of acceptable behavior) can no longer (and are not expected) to keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them...Forms...cannot serve as frames of reference for human action and long-term life strategies because of their short life expectation...shorter than the fulfilment of an individual life project requires (1).

The structuralist perspective portrays individuals as untethered and floundering, cut loose from the stable institutions that were once responsible for holding them together. For some people—and from some perspectives—this severing “is liberation from the stifled world of corporate America. Yet for the vast majority of workers the freedom from a paycheck is just the freedom to be afraid.” (Hyman 2018: 12). Even for those core or otherwise “lucky” professionals who have retained standard employment in large bureaucratic organizations, insecurity may loom. As Hyman (2018) quips, “you don’t need to replace everybody to make the rest insecure.”

In summary, structuralists tend to minimize or neglect cultural and individual agency in lieu of emphasizing how structures either enable or constrain individuals. From this perspective, myriad problems in the new economy are primarily structural in nature, as are the solutions. But the structural perspective is not the only one to take when studying the experiences of work in the new economy. In this dissertation, I focus on the cultural structures of work in the new economy.

CULTURAL STRUCTURES OF WORK IN THE NEW ECONOMY

From a cultural perspective, it is not just economic or material circumstances that determine the relational, affective, and material experiences of work, it is also cultures of work which shape subjective interpretations (Arvidsson et al. 2010; Boltanski and Chiapello 2005; Neff

2010; Neff et al. 2005; Vallas 2015; Vallas and Hill 2018; Vallas and Prenner 2012). The sociological tenet that ideology shapes work traces back to Max Weber who famously used the Protestant ethic to explain how the psychologies of the religious man and the economic man were melded to produce the “driven man, bent on proving his moral worth through his work” (Sennett 1998: 105). As described above, as structures of the economy changed throughout the 20th century, so did cultural conceptions of work (Wuthnow 1996: 4).

Following history, if changes to the material structures of work have ushered us into a new economy, cultural scholars assume that there must also be changes to the ideological or cultural structures of work (Kunda and Ailon 2006). Scholars investigating emergent cultural structures of work are generally concerned with three interrelated things: 1) How culture operates as an independent variable shaping the structures of work (culture as an independent variable); 2) How culture enables the psychological, emotional, and identity work that is necessary to survive and/or shape perceptions of work in the new economy (the psychological power of perception); 3) How culture legitimates or protects precarious work arrangements and/or controls workers in the new economy (culture as obstruction and self-regulation). All three are relevant to this dissertation, but the second and third are especially relevant to my central arguments. The relationship between culture and individual psychology is relevant for the argument that the passion paradigm increases individual perceptions of power, and how culture obstructs power relations is relevant for the argument that the passion paradigm simultaneously disempowers individuals by individualizing, thereby depoliticizing work. Because of their relevance, below I will describe the latter two literatures in more detail than the first.

Cultural Structures of Work: Culture as an Independent Variable

First, many scholars demonstrate how culture operates as an independent variable that shapes both work and workers. It is scholars in this vein that typically note the skew towards structuralism in analyses of work in the new economy, for they believe that cultural explanations deserve more recognition for how economic structures are constructed (Budd 2011; Vallas 2015; Vallas and Prenner 2012). For example, scholars in this area have demonstrated that preexisting cultural attitudes about risk enabled the dot.com boom (Neff 2012), that changes in culture precipitated and fostered the growth of temporary work (Hatton 2011), that long hours with no expectation of company loyalty came from the imposition of wall street culture on the broader economy (Ho 2009), and that rejection of smothered individuality, bland cultures, and oppressive bureaucracy came from tech culture which lauds chaos, stimulation, and play at work (Pink 2001; Ross 2003).

Though culture as an independent variable is not a central theme in this dissertation, it is certainly relevant to arguments made throughout, particularly in Chapter 6 which is about emotional cultures and gender inequalities in work, and in the Conclusion, in which I reflect on the potential for adherence to the passion paradigm to motivate collective efforts towards building better structures of work.

Cultural Structures of Work: The Psychological Power of Perception

Sociologists of culture who study work at the individual level have long demonstrated that individuals use culture to understand or cope with structures of work.⁶ An enormous body of scholarship in this genre comes from scholars studying the working class. This genre has been

⁶ Culture is also important at the organizational level, but because I am analyzing interview data about individual meaning making, adaptation, and behavior, I focus on how individuals shape their experiences of work.

fueled by a desire to understand how workers in dull, monotonous, insecure, low paying, or dangerous jobs make meaning out of their work and maintain their motivation to work.

Decades of sociological research on dirty work, edgework, and the working class finds that individuals deal with a lack of organic meaning in their work both by seeing their work more instrumentally (as means to an end) and creating meaning in creative ways (Aronowitz 1973; Dubin 1992; Kidder 2006). For example, in Buroway's (1979) famous book, *Manufacturing Consent*, he argues that one reason workers work so hard is because shop floor games instituted by the organization changed the work culture to value noneconomic things—such as “making out” in the game. In Kidder's (2006) study of bike messengers in NYC, he finds that rather than using organizational structures and workplace cultures to find meaning, bike messengers rely on the agentic creativity and spontaneity that the job allows to cultivate personal emotional attachment. In a slightly different example, Ocejo (2018) studies how college educated workers have transformed previously working-class jobs (bartending, distilling, and butchery) into a form of professional knowledge work regarded as high status and middle class. Though the manual work is the same, he finds that the *conception* of the work changed—it was gentrified.

In general, findings in this literature emphasize how workers cultivate perceptions of choice or control over their work through both their behavior and conceptualizations of work. They agentially change what they do in their work and how they think about it, in order to cope with their structural work conditions.

Scholars investigating cultural structures of work for professionals in the new economy are also concerned with how individuals use culture to understand and cope with precarious structures of work. They find that there is a striking amount of emotional and identity work that is necessary to survive. Professionals recalibrate their conception of work from necessity to opportunity

(Cabanas and Illouz 2017), create meaningful work by reframing perceptions of their roles to match desired work (Berg et al. 2010), learn to leverage their social skills and capital (Barley and Kunda 2006), and focus on developing their identity, sustaining their relationships, and maintaining their emotional health (Ashford et al. 2018; Petriglieri et al. 2019). Identity scholars have also found that worker satisfaction increases when individuals feel that they can enact their identity preferences at work, which requires both emotional intelligence and identity management (Pratt 2000; Ramarajan and Reid 2013). In his study on no-collar professionals in New York's Silicon Alley, Ross (2000) argues that "the most important influence of the New Economy will be on employees' expectations of work conditions, not on the nature of investment or business opportunities" (15). In other words, understanding professional perceptions is crucial to understanding the mutual influence between individuals and structures in the new economy, including the new social contract between employers and their employees.

There is a huge body of work on how individuals perceive and cope with precarity in the field of psychology.⁷ Psychologists define job insecurity (precarity) as uncertainty about the future or involuntary and unwanted feelings of powerlessness or a lack of control (Lee et al. 2018: 338). Psychological research has long shown, in many arenas, that subjective expectation and interpretation shapes individual reactions to their objective realities.

In other words, data show that experiencing the potentially negative effects associated with precarity in the new economy are contingent on how an individual perceives what is going on. Individual perception includes expectations, disposition, preferences, interpretations, culture, and beliefs. For example, data show that setting appropriate expectations can temper the psychological

⁷ Instead of using the word precarity, psychologists study the experience of job insecurity (JI), which beginning in the nineties shifted in definition from the perception of powerlessness to stay in a threatened job to the perception of a potential threat to continuity in a current job (Lee et al 2018). In this section I continue to use the word precarity for the sake of clarity.

blows of bad news or events. In one study on romantic breakups, scholars found that one reason why the initial intensity of heartbreak and subsequent time required for healing are higher for those who were broken up with, compared to than those who did the breaking up, is because those who initiated the break-up *expected* the break-up (Eastwick et al. 2008). The value of appropriate expectations for weathering challenge is also the topic of Cerulo's 2006 book *Never Saw it Coming* and Ehrenreich's 2009 book *Bright-sided*. The authors make similar arguments that engineering optimistic thinking to replace worst case thinking creates a conceptual deficit that makes actually coping with catastrophe more difficult, as well as identifying the structural sources of the catastrophe in order to ameliorate them.

Expectations of work have also proven important. For example, sociological data show that women tend to be more satisfied than men because they are assumed to have different reference groups and lower expectations, and that education and work satisfaction are negatively correlated presumably because college increases expectations on work (Kalleberg 2011). Psychological data show that individuals with objectively insecure jobs who perceive job loss as likely report actual job loss as less severe, compared to individuals with more secure jobs who reported job loss as less likely (Klandermans et al. 2010). These studies suggest that one way to successfully adapt to or survive precarious work is to be realistic about precarious potentials, and to prepare for them. This conclusion is supported by a recent study finding that disengagement strategies, including wishful thinking and problem avoidance, do not help individuals mitigate the negative mental effects of precarity—in fact they aggravate them (Tomás et al. 2019).

In addition to being able to temper the negative effects of setbacks in work, scholars interested in job satisfaction, and happiness more generally, have found that individual disposition also matters a great deal for positive affective experience. Structural scholars often study job

satisfaction as a function of situational variables, thereby focusing on how structural adjustments can increase employee satisfaction. But there is also evidence that individual perception and disposition determine job satisfaction, not just salary, security, status, benefits, flexibility, or policy. We know that disposition plays a role in job satisfaction because studies have shown that individuals in the same job report different levels of satisfaction, individual job satisfaction has been shown to be stable across time and situations, and that previous job satisfaction is a better predictor of job satisfaction than changes in salary or status (as summarized in Bianchi 2013).

In addition to expectations and disposition, psychological research has shown that worker preferences, culture, and perceptions of control shape affective experiences of precarity. Silla et al. (2005) find variation in the affective consequences of precarity among contract workers leading to the conclusion that researchers must consider individual preference, rather than treating precarious workers as a homogenous group. Other scholars have found that the relationship between precarity and job satisfaction depends on cultural values, which can shape how individuals perceive precarity (Ngo and Li 2015). Finally, psychologists have long demonstrated that the relationship between precarity and well-being is moderated by perceived control (Vanderelst et al. 2014). Perceived control can be manipulated by both individual and organizational factors, including having an internal locus of control (Keim et al. 2014), increased self-esteem (Kinnunen et al. 2003), career adaptability and perceived marketability (Spurk et al. 2015), participatory decision making (Huang et al. 2012; Probst 2005), and organizational information transparency (Huang et al. 2012). Increased control is also the motivation behind recommendations from positive psychology, perhaps most famously Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) recommendation that individuals capitalize on their autonomy to craft their jobs into work that is more self-controlled, self-affirming, and socially meaningful.

Individual perceptions of the structural experiences of precarity, therefore, help explain why the individual effects of precarity are so varied (Lee et al. 2018: 337). Though I also recognize that whether individuals experience an objective state of precarity is shaped by material structures, my emphasis in this dissertation is on how individual thoughts about work (which are dictated by broader culture) shape individual perceptions of precarity (and ultimately its effects in their lives).

My first emphasis in this dissertation is to demonstrate that adherence to the passion paradigm is a mechanism of individual adaptation, changing the way professional adherents perceive their working lives in order to ameliorate the negative effects of unprecedented precarity, and helping individuals cope—even thrive. In their survey of the literature, Lee et al. (2018) conclude that the negative feelings associated with precarity might be because full employment is the expectation. As work changes and workers adapt, I argue that adherence to the passion paradigm alters expectations of job stability and job security. As the literature suggests, this change in perception can be of enormous consequence to the affective consequences of experiencing precarity in the new economy.

Cultural Structures of Work: Culture as Obstruction and Self-Regulation

The third central approach to studying cultural structures of work—and the one that sociologists take most often—is a critical one. This approach analyzes how cultures of work sustain inequalities by burdening and supporting individuals unequally. For example, scholars in work and gender find that the work devotion schema unequally burdens women, particularly mothers, who must also contend with a competing family devotion schema (Blair-Loy 2003), that the culturally constructed ‘career game’ inherently rewards those without external responsibilities (Halrynjo and Lyng 2009), that gender stereotypes thwart the use of flexibility programs, which

are stigmatized as gender-conforming behavior for women and gender-conflicting behavior for men (Williams et al. 2013), and that internalized gender norms shape career aspirations, which contributes to unequal stratification the labor market (Charles 2011).

In addition to looking at how cultural or ideological structures exacerbate various inequalities in work, scholars analyze how they protect the status quo and control workers both ideologically and via managerial practices.⁸ This approach could be considered a functional approach, whereby scholars analyze ideology as something that promotes social order and prevents social breakdown, or a critical approach, whereby scholars analyze ideology as something that obscures power relations and inequalities. Both approaches emphasize how ideology serves or protects the system (as opposed to the individual), to ensure that existing structures continue to function smoothly, even during transition.

The second central argument in this dissertation is that the passion paradigm, as a culture of work, is an ideological framework that obstructs professional adherents from critiquing the structural flaws of work in the new economy. Perhaps the most prominent scholar in this tradition is Karl Marx, who famously called religion the opiate of the masses, nothing but pure illusion that obstructs human emancipation from capitalism (1978: 54). Of course, Marx was not as concerned with religion as he was with critiquing a social system that required it, but he identified ideology as a primary source of obstruction. Those in the Marxist tradition believe that capitalistic work is always a site of power and domination. Any critique of work that seeks to challenge its dominance in our lives must also confront the ideas that justify its dominance in our minds.

⁸ Because I study at the individual level, using interview data that focus mostly on individual meaning making, beliefs, and behavior, in this section I will focus mostly on the passion paradigm as ideological control. It will be important for future research to investigate how tenants of the passion paradigm have been institutionalized into organizational practices, where it likely also operates as a form of control.

More recent scholars in the Marxist tradition include critical gender scholar Kathi Weeks, whose theories I use in Chapter 6. Weeks (2011) argued that an effective refusal of work must include an interrogation of the ideological work ethics that “gives work its meaning and defends its primacy” in our lives (31). She argued that the privatization of work, whereby work is reified as natural and individualized as “a province of human need,” makes mounting a critique of work as a social system extremely difficult (4). Critiquing ideology or culture as obstructive or oppressive can be particularly challenging because it becomes hard to see. The goal (and challenge), as Foucault (1978) described it, is to make an appeal against knowledge that elucidates that the rules are imposed and contingent, not inherent.

What Weeks (2011) called reification Berger and Luckmann (1967) famously called objectification: the process by which the patterns of human activity that they themselves created begin to appear as objective reality, as natural. Berger and Luckmann’s (1967) final of three stages is internalization: the process by which individuals so deeply absorb external culture that it acts upon the individual as a natural, unconscious part of the individual. As Hochschild (1997) summarized, the result is a life in which individuals are both prisoners *and* architects of the structures that constrain them.

The concept of internalization finds deep resonance with Foucault’s theories of domination. Foucault (1977) argued that the social system has evolved into a mechanism of domination, where the power is frozen in one direction. Foucault (1978) developed the idea of biopower: the regulation of life down to its smallest form; power through the mastery of living beings (143). He argued that disciplines and science are used by the state to track and regulate. The result is a pervasive system of domination that extends into all areas of life. The point for Foucault is that to merely overcome the state or ruling class will not result in freedom because the

pressure of socialization is too deeply embedded and too widely diffused. Once individuals have fully internalized social norms, they no longer need external coercion or regulation because they self-regulate. This makes social change difficult, as it requires individuals to identify beliefs that operate unconsciously within them as a source of external and arbitrary domination.

Many scholars have argued that technologies of the self—including Foucault’s concept of biopower—are central mechanisms of control and survival in the new economy. To survive in a precarious new economy, individuals must increasingly engage in self-surveillance and self-discipline. In her research on new media work, Gill (2010) argued that a management of the self has replaced older management practices for contemporary work (18). She wrote:

In this neoliberal form of governmentality new media workers are constituted as autonomous, self-regulating, responsibilised subjects...beyond the significations of play an intense self-discipline is required. However, this is not self-discipline as it is traditionally understood...but a much more thoroughgoing, wholesale management of the self, which requires the radical remaking of subjectivity. It may not even be experienced as such—indeed, it’s much more likely to be understood as simply ‘the way things are’ (19).

In his book *Governing the Soul*, Rose (1999) talked about this wholesale management of the self as learning to govern subjectivities. He argued that psychological disciplines and psychological expertise have “had a key role in constructing governable subjects” who are “capable of bearing the burdens of liberty” in a socioeconomic context that exalts liberal freedom, autonomy, and self-realization (viii). Furthermore, he argued that the new vision of work in which “efficiency, productivity and competitiveness and the humanization of work are not in conflict” has intertwined work with subjectivity, “making it a territory to be explored, understood, and regulated” (56).

In this dissertation, specifically in Chapter 7, I argue that the passion paradigm operates on adherents as a technology of the self, dictating how individuals should interpret and regulate

their subjectivities around work in a way that centers the management of the self, as opposed to systemic critique, as a moral, natural, and logical way of operating.

DO WHAT YOU LOVE AND WORK PASSION

Because ideology is critical to the justification and protection of existing structures of work, when structures of work change, so must ideology (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). The adaptation of ideology over the last century was famously outlined by Barley and Kunda's (1992) who argued that patterned expansions and contractions in the economy correspond with vacillations between rational and normative rhetorics of control. In a follow up article, Kunda and Ailon (2006) argued that the new economy broke the pattern and a new rhetoric emerged to drive worker devotion: market rationalism. Market rationalism breaks from normative rhetoric because it is stripped of normative and moral prescriptions and also breaks from rational rhetoric by replacing the "carrot" of membership and security with employability (Kunda and Ailon 2006: 211-214). The self-reliance and entrepreneurial risk taking that characterize the ideologies of "business of one" (Lane 2011), "self as business" (Gershon 2017), or "personal branding" (Vallas and Hill 2018) are consistent with the rhetoric of market rationalism. However, there is evidence that without normative prescriptions these ideologies are untenable for controlling workers and that there is therefore a new ideological surge "waiting in the wings" (Kunda and Ailon 2006: 216).

In this dissertation I analyze the popular dictum to do what you love (DWYL) and pursue work passion as the primary ideology motivating work and controlling workers in the new economy. I call this ideology the passion paradigm. The DWYL sentiment grew steadily for decades, but fully emerged amid celebration of the new tech economy (Muirhead 2004: 41). In a

widely publicized commencement speech in 2005 entitled “How to Live Before you Die,” Apple’s Steve Jobs told listeners: “The only way to do great work is to love what you do...Don’t Settle.” In the years that followed, DWYL exploded into popular culture. Self-help books flooded the market using titles such as *Use all of your Interests, Passions, and Hobbies to Create the Career of Your Dreams* and *Connecting Who You Are with What You’ll Love to Do*. In 2011, the Harvard Business Review opened an article, “It’s common wisdom these days that you should follow your passion” and Forbes follow suit in 2013 writing, “You’ve been told that, if you’re not changing the world in dramatic ways, it’s because you’re too afraid to find your passion and follow it.”

The DWYL rhetoric represents the latest surge in a normative work ethic that moralizes and prioritizes more pleasurable work. Synthesizing popular and managerial texts in which the mantra is promoted, Sandoval (2018) describes DWYL as “the epitome of...the desire for self-fulfillment and pleasure”—linking work and pleasure to the alleged benefit of work quality and individual happiness and wellbeing (115). DWYL prioritizes detaching work from material motivations. As an intrinsic motivation for work, it is assumed to be a class privilege exalted by those with postsecondary education (Johnson and Mortimer 2011). DWYL is also inextricably linked to the “deep attachment, affective bindings” and ideas of “self-expression and self-actualization” that McRobbie 2016 describes as “passionate work” (Gill and Pratt 2008: 15).

The academic study of work passion is relatively new. It began in positive psychology, which argues that happiness yields success (rather than the inverse), so individuals should pursue happiness first. This is also a central tenet of DWYL. Psychology’s etic definition of work passion is work that is significant, liked, and that one invests time in (Vallerand et al. 2003: 757). The relevant insight from psychology is that individuals can experience passion as obsessive or harmonious, with opposite effects. With this dual understanding of passion, Vallerand et al. (2003)

argue that whether passion yields individual benefits such as motivation and well-being depends on what type of passion one has. What distinguishes one from the other, however, remains unknown.

In sociology, there are only a few studies that center on work passion as the object of analysis (Chia 2019; Duffy 2017; Rao and Tobias Neely 2019; Sandoval 2019; Weeks 2017).⁹ The concept of work passion, however, has peppered literature on the cultures of work among structurally precarious professionals for the last two decades. This literature studies professionals who are unemployed (Gershon 2017; Sharone 2013), professionals in precarious industries (Ho 2009; Lane 2011; Neff 2012; McRobbie 2016; Ross 2003), or professionals in precarious roles (Barley and Kunda 2006; Pink 2001). Because the concept of work passion has been almost exclusively identified by scholars studying precarious individuals, industries, or roles, it has been assumed to be a particular characteristic of structurally precarious work (as opposed to professional work more broadly) used to help individuals justify or reframe its negative effects.

It has been identified as a “relatively stable” feature of cultural work (Gill and Pratt 2008; Gill 2010), part of a congealed set of norms in the creative economy (McRobbie 2016), and linked to a widespread narrative of self-realization in personal branding discourses among precarious professionals in general (Vallas and Hill 2018). Scholars have noted that passion energizes engagement in digital gaming (Chia 2019), undergirds expectations of enjoyable work for “No-Collar” professionals in Silicon Alley (Ross 2003), offers cultural legitimacy to downwardly socially mobile craftsmen (Ocejo 2017), justifies insecurity, low pay, long hours, and inequalities in new media labor (Ross 2000), and infuses hope and motivation into the (usually fruitless) aspirational labor of female bloggers (Duffy 2017).

⁹ Even fewer have made empirical contributions (see Chia 2019, Duffy 2017, and Sandoval 2019).

Like psychologists, sociologists also observe the complexity of work passion. Chia (2019) argued that the logical inconsistencies of passion—and subsequent labor exploitation—are due to ideological ambiguities left in the wake of the collapse of labor and leisure as separate categories. The contradictory experience of work passion has elsewhere been described as trade-offs between pleasure and pain (McRobbie 2016), a conflicted relationship of work and pleasure (Sandoval 2019), managing agony and ecstasy (Petriglieri et al. 2019), a complicated mixture of attachment and distancing (Weeks 2017), and a paradox (Rao and Tobias Neely 2019). Despite its documented nuance and relevance among precarious professionals in the new economy, sociological research centered on work passion is only just emerging.

This inchoate body of work posits that work passion is an “increasingly hegemonic...cultural script and normative ideal” within professional and managerial classes (Weeks 2017), which diffused from creative market niches into economic centers of production (Ross 2000; Chia 2019). Reviewing managerial literature, Weeks (2017) critiqued discourses of love at work as corporate ideology leveraged to propagate productivity, mystify power relations, encourage cooperation, and engage employees in a new biopolitical project of emotion management. Most recently, Rao and Tobias Neely (2019) reviewed scholarship on the role of emotions in work, with a specific interest in passion. They argue that the sense of commitment that passion connotes operates as emotional capital in a neoliberal economy of consequence to pathways to occupations, hiring in organizations, and advancement within organizations. Together, emergent research on work passion suggests that it is a prevalent source of ideological motivation and control in the new economy that is relevant to workplace stratification and inequalities, but that it is still quite poorly understood.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

In this dissertation I offer two central theoretical contributions. The first is to the growing literature on work passion and the second is to broader understandings of individual agency and ideological structures of work in a precarious new economy. First, I answer the call for research to “more explicitly examine how passion is understood, perceived, and defined in workplaces” (Rao and Tobias Neely 2019: 10), with a thorough and critical examination of who (or what) the ideology of work passion serves, and how. In addition to contributing the first in-depth analysis of how professionals perceive and use work passion as an ideological tool to understand and navigate work, this is the first empirical study of professional work passion which compares a diverse sample of more and less precarious professionals in three disparate occupations.

Second, I move beyond the literature’s focus on structural changes to work and more explicitly consider the interplay between structure, culture, and agency. I answer the call for research on the “cultural or ideological frames...used to legitimate the new forms of employment” (Vallas 2015: 464) and, by attending to how professionals use the passion paradigm to claim agency, I help “bring the worker back in” (Kalleberg 2009: 14). Because I analyze how adherence to the passion paradigm serves *both* individuals and institutions of work, I avoid what Neff (2012) calls the false dichotomy between treating individuals as either “fully formed rational actors with awareness and power over their lives or as subjects duped by capitalistic relations into a lulled state of false consciousness” (6). As such, I take seriously the notions that individuals enact agency over their lives (Neff 2012) and that meanings and ideas should be analyzed as pragmatic tools that individuals use to accomplish things in their daily lives (Illouz 2008: 5), while also recognizing that ideas constrain individual action and codify existing power relations.

More specifically, I designed this research to compare experiences and ideological perceptions of work between an occupationally diverse sample of professionals who are more structurally precarious and less structurally precarious. Based on the literatures above, I assumed both that structurally precarious professionals would experience and perceive work differently, and that precarious professionals would be more likely to adhere to an ideology of work passion to compensate for their more precarious work. However, a general finding in this dissertation is that the professionals I interviewed were much more similar than dissimilar, including their perceptions of precarity and adherence to the ideology of work passion, what I call the passion paradigm. My conclusion is that while the passion paradigm may have emerged among more precarious professionals in certain industries – and the design of this research does not allow me to access this – it has spread to all professionals either because “insecurity culture” now supersedes structure or because work passion has become a discourse that all middle class college graduates learn. I cannot investigate this further with my data. Instead, in this dissertation I focus on the relationship between this universal precarity and passion.

I have two central arguments. First, in interviewing 74 engineers, graphic designers, and nurses working in either less precarious or more precarious positions, I argue that respondents adhere to the passion paradigm because they find it empowering. The logic of the passion paradigm and its narratives fit well with an economic context in which professionals are predisposed to movement and responsible for plotting each step along their career trajectories. The passion paradigm serves individuals as an ideological structure because it grants adherents clarity and reliability. Within a context of enormous uncertainty, it enables adherents to act meaningfully and intentionally. The passion paradigm thrives in the new economy because it helps adherents replace

trepidation about the future's uncertainty with confidence in ones unceasing power to shape their lives and optimism about the unforeseen opportunities that await.

Second, I argue that the passion paradigm also thrives in the new economy because it serves the institution of work and protects the status quo of capitalistic work relations. It does this by deeply individualizing, thereby depoliticizing the experience of work for professionals, while committing adherents to work hard and work well. The irony of the perceived individual power that the pursuit of work passion grants adherents is that it comes at the cost of collective power, and therefore impetus for structural change. While individuals narrowly focus on identifying and capitalizing on areas of perceived agency in the pursuit of crafting individualized careers, growth, and lifelong happiness, they avert their gaze from the structural sources of deprived agency, both individual and collective. The passion paradigm grants adherents power over their individual lives, but it makes their perspective myopic; it stunts adherents from leveraging the power they feel to fight for better structures of work for the collective. The very cunning of the passion paradigm is convincing adherents that that which ultimately serves and preserves structures of work is of primary service to the self.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In Chapter 2 I describe my research methodology, which is critical to my theoretical contributions. Chapters 3 through 7 are empirical chapters. The consistent thread in each chapter is that professionals adhere to the passion paradigm as a coherent culture of work that functions to both motivate workers (serve the individual) and motivate good work (serve the institution of work) in the new economy. Chapter 3 is called Pervasive Precarity, Pervasive Passion. The central argument in this chapter is that individuals categorized as more precarious and individuals

categorized as less precarious experience and perceive work much more similarly than dissimilarly. The overarching purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the striking similarity between the professionals in my sample, superseding the structural variation I built in in order to find difference. Because I found that respondents expressed perceptions of precarity and adherence to the passion paradigm similarly, this chapter justifies the fact in the rest of this dissertation I cease comparison by economy type.

Chapter 4 is called The Passion Paradigm. In it I detail a four-part emic definition of work passion as attraction, enjoyment, motivation, and perseverance. Building on the characteristics of work passion that pattern the way respondents talk about it, in the second half of the chapter I detail the logical tenets of the passion paradigm, which include that happiness is a priority and that happiness is a dividend of experiencing work passion. The overarching argument in this chapter is that the concept of work passion is dynamic, and that the ideology of work passion—the passion paradigm—follows a coherent logic consistently articulated by respondents. I will use these details in later chapters to analyze how the passion paradigm “works” (Illouz 2008) for individuals and institutions. It is also important for future scholars to have a detailed understanding of how professionals conceptualize work passion and the passion paradigm in order to critique their roles in perpetuating inequalities in work.

Chapter 5 is called Passion as Power. In it I argue that the passion paradigm thrives and resonates with professionals in the new economy because adhering to the passion paradigm increases individual perceptions of control. Relying on the literature presented above, I argue that perceptions of control help insulate professionals from the precariousness of the new economy. The way the passion paradigm accomplishes this is by making work extraordinarily individualistic. The overarching argument in this chapter is that adherents perceive the pursuit of work passion as

an agentic fight for control over their lives—they perceive passion as power. For people who adhere to the passion paradigm, the pursuit of passion in work is a reliable north star which is dependent on subjectivities, not the vicissitudes of an organization or the economy.

Chapter 6 is called *Passion as Polyamorous: Gendered Passion, Emotional Cultures, and the Language of Love at Work*. This chapter is a bit of a departure from the rest of the dissertation, and as such, introduces some new literature. In it I use my gender data to analyze how the passion paradigm as an emotional cultural of work relates to a new social contract, as well as traditional sources of gender inequality in work. This chapter assesses the impact of the passion paradigm on employee commitment, their conceptions of what good employers owe them, and if these are structured by gender. I designed my research to be able to analyze gender, and although it is not the central story I have chosen to tell in this dissertation, I would still like to present some preliminary findings in service of future research on gendered passion and work in the new economy. The central arguments in this chapter are that the passion paradigm serves institutions of work by effectively binding employees to their organizations via borrowed logics of love, that men and women describe rich gendered expectations for their employers to meet their psychological and emotional needs, and finally, that men and women primarily define work passion differently, which could exacerbate material inequalities.

Chapter 7 is called *Passion as Political*. Having described the concept of work passion and the ideology of work passion and demonstrated how the passion paradigm serves professionals by increasing their perceptions of power, in this final chapter I describe how the deep individualism that allows professionals to feel control simultaneously diminishes their ability to leverage systematic critiques. The passion paradigm serves institutions of work because it depoliticizes the experience of work for professionals. The cunning of the passion paradigm is convincing adherents

that that which ultimately serves and preserves structures of work is of primary service to the self.

In Chapter 8, I conclude with a summary of findings, a discussion of future research in new arenas of inequality, and a reflection on whether adherence to the passion paradigm could ever serve collective interests and motivate adherents to fight for better structures of work.

My overarching intention in this dissertation is to contribute empirical research on worker well-being, expectations, and adaptations to work in this new economy—data which are essential for the tasks of fighting for and building more equitable and sustainable work.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

“That’s a damn good question.”

-Diego, market engineer

“This is a deep question.”

-Britt, organization graphic designer

“Oh, that's a tough question.”

-Tiffany, organization nurse

RESEARCH DESIGN OVERVIEW

To analyze the ideologies of professional work in the new economy I conducted 74 semi-structured interviews with college-educated professionals. I designed my research with three points of comparison: occupation, economy type, and gender. I built a quota sample based on these three sources of variation in order to make central contributions to the following: 1) The pervasiveness of precarity; 2) The role of individuals and culture in shaping work in the new economy; 3) How shifts in the nature of professional work are disrupting, creating, or remaking forms of gender inequality in professional work.

First, scholars of precarious work have mostly focused on precarious industries (tech, gig economy) and precarious roles (contractors, entrepreneurs). What this has given us is a rich understanding of who objectively precarious workers are, and what they experience, producing archetypes of precarious work and precarious workers in the new economy. However, studying archetypes of precarious work has created a dichotomy in the literature between precarious work and non-precarious work—alternatively referred to as standard and non-standard work. Without explicit comparisons between the two groups, scholars do not actually know how similar or different professionals working in more structurally precarious positions are from professionals

working in less structurally precarious positions. We do not know how the unprecedented precarity of the new economy effects, for example, how a nurse in a hospital or an engineer in a large bureaucratic firm thinks about or experiences their work.

To answer this question, I could have compared professions at opposite ends of the precarity spectrum, for example firefighters (less precarious) and investment bankers (more precarious). However, any differences I found could be due to differences in the occupation, rather than their place in the market or an organization—the new or old economy. The same logic applies to gender, age, and education. Comparing college educated male *market* engineers to college educated male *organization* engineers helps me to achieve a cleaner comparison, where I am comparing individuals who are similar in many ways but differ in their objective levels of precarity. To analyze the effects of structural precarity on the experience of professional work, I therefore designed this research to compare respondents in the same three occupations who have positions in either the market (more precarious) or an organization (less precarious) (Figure 2.1).

Second, much of the scholarship on the effects of the new economy on the experience of work focuses on structural changes which bear down on individuals, constraining their action. The emphasis is on structure. Much less is known, however, about how individuals perceive, negotiate, make sense of structural changes in their experiences of work. Little is known about how the new economy is shaping the ways in which individuals think about work or how individuals perceive agency over their work. In other words, little is known about individual agency and their use of ideology or cultures of work to shape their experiences of work today. Because I am interested in meaning making, process, individual perceptions, personal rhetoric, and narrative, I used qualitative methods to perform in depth interviews with 74 professionals. In addition, because I

am interested not only in objective levels of precarity but also perceptions of precarity, I surveyed individuals to measure both.

Finally, the myriad effects of the new economy on gender at work (and home) remain open empirical questions. I am interested in the ways in which these changes continue to blur the boundary between work and life, spilling over into what makes us men and women and the intimate spaces in which men and women come together and contest identities and obligations. I am also interested in ill adapted structures of work, and cultural forces that create “ideals” that may be unequally burdensome or unattainable. To study these questions, I sampled 50% self-identified females, achieving almost 50% in each cell. In the case of engineers, I oversampled women, and in the case of nursing I oversampled men. Including two heavily gendered occupations and one gender neutral occupation helps me analyze how gender is affected by the new economy because I am analyzing occupations in which scholars have found gender is particularly salient.

In summary, I designed this research to study the meanings of work for young professionals, with specific interest in the ideologies that men and women use to interpret, control, and/or insulate themselves in the ‘new economy.’ In general, I set up my methodology to find differences, according to how the literature would expect me to find them.

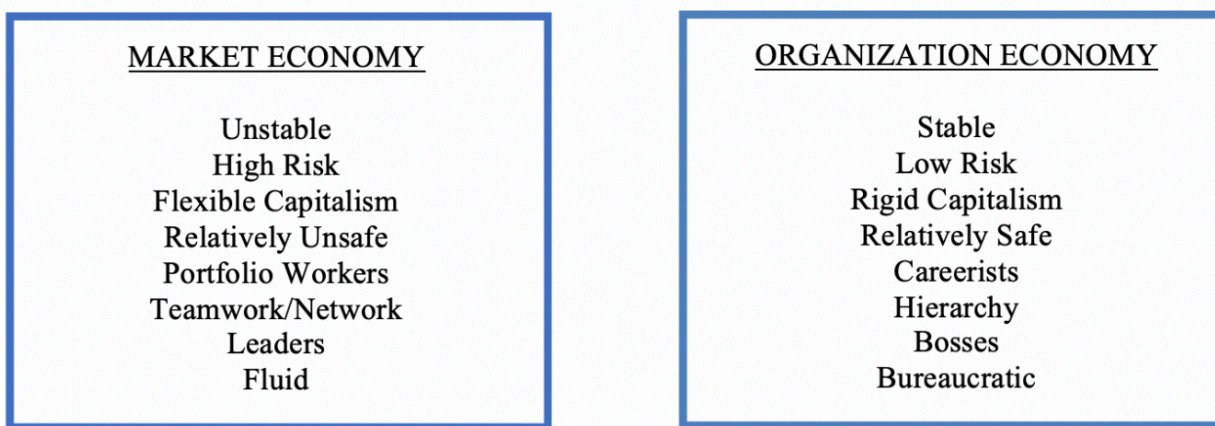


Figure 2.1: Economy Archetypes

Table 2.1: Research Design

	ENGINEER	GRAPHIC DESIGNER	NURSE	
MARKET: Contractor, small business owner, consultant	10 respondents 40% female	12 respondents 50% female	13 respondents 54% female	35
ORGANIZATION: Permanent employee in traditional, secure, bureaucracy	14 respondents 50% female	12 respondents 50% female	13 respondents 54% female	39
Total # of respondents	24	24	26	74

SAMPLE

I interviewed college educated professionals aged 30-40. The decision to interview college educated individuals was based on extensive research showing that postsecondary education is positively associated with intrinsic orientations to work. Intrinsic orientations refer to “the degree of importance individuals attach to the rewarding nature of job tasks themselves” (Johnson and Mortimer 2011: 1241). Data have long shown that socioeconomic origin is positively associated with intrinsic rewards, however scholars have also found that academic abilities have the same effect as socio economic status (Johnson 2002), perhaps because modern institutions of higher education are where values of self-expression are strengthened and reinforced (Charles 2011; Johnson and Mortimer 2011). If college is a central mechanism through which individuals expect intrinsic rewards, sampling individuals who have gone to college ensures that respondents have been exposed to intrinsic orientations, such as the notion that they should do what they love. This

exposure is also more likely given the age bracket; respondents are young enough to have been deliberating and making career choices at the turn of the century when heroes of the new economy were being popularly lauded, but old enough that they are beyond the “honeymoon-hangover” effect of new employment (Boswell et al. 2009). Additional benefits of delimiting the age of the sample is that respondents grew up within similar cultural contexts and are likely in similar life stages.

I interviewed professionals from three occupations: engineering (mechanical, civil, and structural), graphic design, and nursing. The number one requirement for occupation selection was that professionals in each field have the option to work in more or less precarious institutional contexts. Select types of engineers, graphic designers, and nurses all have the option to work in institutions which are more traditional, bureaucratic, secure, and hierarchal, or in institutions which are more non-standard, flexible, insecure, and flat. This design allowed me to analyze how structural precarity shapes conceptions of work, minimizing the effects of occupation variation.

Following the literature, I designated contractors, free-lancers, consultants, and entrepreneurs as more structurally precarious. To verify my etic classification, I collected survey data from each respondent to measure objective and subjective levels of precarity. These data confirm that those I designated as more precarious are in fact more precarious along expected indicators of precarity than their counterparts in more traditional work contexts (Appendix C). These indicators include the provision of insurance, retirement benefits, union representation, and income predictability. As two additional indicators, a lower percentage of more precarious respondents reported long term professional goals (>5 years), and of those who do identify long term goals, a higher percentage of more precarious professionals report being anxious about achieving them.

In addition to variation in precarity, I also chose these three occupations because they vary in job tasks, skill sets, conception of work (creative, lucrative, meaningful), gender representation, and institutional contexts (Table 2.2). It is important to note that I chose these occupations to achieve a diverse sampling of professional work, not because I expected to find particular differences based on existing theory. This occupationally diverse research design departs from the extant literature's singular emphasis on precarious professionals (e.g. contract engineers) or precarious industries (e.g. creatives), which is critical to an investigation of a broad work ethic in the new economy.

Despite the diversity in this sample however, its areas of homogeneity limit generalizability. Comparisons between first and non-first generation, white and non-white, and immigrant and non-immigrants in the sample show comparable adherence to the passion paradigm, however given the small n future research is necessary to analyze how race, class, and migration status affect adherence to the passion paradigm. These data also represent a point in time analysis, which means they include retrospective accounts of the past and hypothetical projections of the future. It is also unknown whether findings apply to older professionals or will still apply in later stages of life. Future research on passion would benefit from longitudinal data.

Table 2.2 Occupation Information

	Engineers		Nurses		Graphic Designers	
Approximate average Salary, in CA	\$108,000		\$96,000		\$70,000	
Racial composition	White:	81%	White:	75.8%	White:	56.3%.
	Black:	3.6%	Black:	11.5%	Black:	6.2%
	Asian:	11.3%	Asian:	9%	Asian:	2.6%
	2+ races:	1.9%	2+races:	1.7%	Hispanic:	15.9%

Table 2.2 continued

Gender composition	89% Male	11% male	60% male
Promoted as:	Emphasis on helping society. Practical, stable, well paid, in-demand employment. Making the world a better place. Interdisciplinary and collaborative. Great for jack-of-all-trades types. Math (smarts) and creativity. Specialization in area of interest. Job prestige. Future oriented, innovation, “cutting edge technologies.”	Focus on the importance of the job to society, the practicality of choosing an in-demand job, ability to specialize, relatively high wage, student loan forgiveness, flexibility (day or night, can work only 3 days a week and be full-time, etc), “adrenaline rush” excitement, community/social job.	Creative problem solving, interesting challenges, not boring/repetitive, variety, new challenges/things to learn, casual/comfortable work environment, creative/spiritual inspiration, flexibility, in-demand, fun/fulfilling.
Quick Classification	Provision	Purpose	Passion
Prestige	70.69	66.48	46.93

Data collected in 2018

Promotional data from: learnhowtobecome.org and stanford.edu, ucsd.edu, calpoly.edu ; Compositional data from: datausa.io ; Income averages from bls.gov ; Prestige levels: <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/cde/cdewp/96-01.pdf>

Finally, it is worth noting that in order to compare professionals in the same occupation I sacrificed a starker comparison between professionals in positions that are further from one another on the spectrum of precarity. In addition, I intentionally use the terms more precarious and less precarious to indicate my position that a comparison between precarious and non-precarious professionals is flawed. Following scholars who have challenged the categorical or homogenous classifications of precarity (Gill and Pratt 2008; Ocejo 2017; Glavin et al. 2019), I imagine the classification of precarity as a spectrum and the experience of precarity as nuanced and heterogenous. I recognize, for instance, that professionals who opt into more precarious roles may experience precarity differently than those who did not. These assumptions make comparative analytical claims less clean, but I argue they are more representative of the heterogeneous ways in which professionals perceive and experience precarity.

In total I conducted 74 semi-structured interviews lasting 90-120 minutes (Table 2.3). All but a few interviews were conducted in person. I created a quota sample with three central points of comparison: occupation, gender, and institutional precarity. All respondents work in urban southern California and have at least five years of experience in their profession.

Table 2.3 Sample Demographics

<i>Demographic Category</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Demographic Category</i>	<i>Percent</i>
White	65%	2-year degree	10%
Female	50%	4-year degree	62%
Immigrant (1 st or 2 nd)	18%	Advanced degree	24%
First generation college	26%	Engineer	32%
Age 30-40	100%	Graphic designer	32%
Married	41%	Nurse	34%
Kids	26%	More precarious	47%
Religious	42%	Less precarious	53%

N=74

INTERVIEW DATA

Interview Instrument

The interview instrument (Appendix A) began with a section called About Work, and included questions about job description, job selection, job history, job satisfaction, sources of motivation, and professional goals. The second section was called Work and Meaning, and included questions about definitions of a good job, changing definitions of good work, beliefs about how to make career decisions, career advising, and expectations of work. The final section was called Work and Morality, and included questions about the purpose of work, work ethics, definitions of good employers and good workers, and the relationship between work and self. The last question of the interview guide presented respondents with four quotes which each represented

a different conceptualization of work. Respondents were asked to choose the quote which they felt best represented their orientation towards work, and then describe their opinions about each of them individually.¹⁰

The interview instrument described above was the eighth iteration. I spent several weeks prior to the start of data collection doing pilot interviews with individuals both within and outside of my selected occupations to hone wording selections, question phrasing, and effective follow ups. I had two pilot interviews from the last two iterations of the interview instrument fully transcribed. Both my advisor and I closely read and annotated each transcription in order to make final adjustments to wording, phrasing, question inclusion, and question order. Careful attention was paid to avoiding leading language, being intentional with each question, varying language to give respondents an opportunity to clarify their own definitions, developing helpful probes, and cultivating a variety of questions that helped me achieve an in-depth of understanding of how respondents perceive their work without making the interview feel repetitive.

Recruitment

Recruitment materials informed respondents that the project was about “how individuals think about work, including how individuals imbue work with meaning, make decisions about work, and define the meaning of good work.” I filled my quota sample through basic snowball sampling, relying on multiple starting points in each cell via multiple recruitment strategies. I reached out to friends in each field for co-worker contacts and recruitment recommendations. I emailed contacts available online via Google Searches and Facebook groups. For example, I searched “Civil Engineering Firms in Southern California” and typed my recruitment message into

¹⁰ The 42% of my sample who identified as religious were also asked a set of questions about work and religion, but these data are not included in this analysis. On the primary questions of interest in this dissertation, I did not find variation along religious lines.

a firm's contact box or emailed a direct contact, if available. On Facebook I searched "Southern California Travel Nurses" and directly messaged members. I also reached out to faculty at universities in southern California to see if they could refer me to professionals in the field, as well as reached out to local organizations to find out who did their graphic design work. These strategies facilitated a heterogeneous sample. Although many did not provide a viable referral, every respondent was asked for a referral. The maximum number of co-workers I interviewed was two. The most successful recruitment strategy began with friend referrals in each cell. The least successful was via Facebook (no respondents were found via Facebook).

Recruitment Challenges

Recruitment was particularly difficult for market nurses, market engineers, and graphic designers, both market and organizations. Because market nurses move around, they are less plugged into a local network of nurses to refer me to. This is especially true of travel nurses, who tend to stick together rendering their close nursing friends spread around the country. Market engineers were also challenging to nail down, even when I found one, and as a field contract engineering tends to err older (with experience). It was therefore challenging to find respondents in their thirties. I had to start recruitment over with every interview, as zero respondents gave me a successful referral.

Finally, graphic designers were the most consistently challenging for me to find. I have a single theory to explain this. One of my interviewees came from an unlikely source: one Sunday I noticed an interesting logo on the back of an SUV in my church parking lot; when I looked it up, I found that it was a logo for a local marketing company. There was a "contact us" box on the website, so I entered my recruitment message (coupled with how I found their company), and a

few days later the owner emailed me for more information. He forwarded my information to a few employees he thought might participate, and after a few weeks of following up I recruited a male organization graphic designer. In the course of our interview I commented about how difficult it had been to find graphic designers to talk with and to my surprise he nodded along in understanding. He proceeded to tell me that all of the graphic designers he knows are absolute introverts and that the thought of meeting with a near stranger for an interview sounds horrible. I took this information into consideration and in future recruitment I tried my best to assuage anxieties. As a result, I believe my sample of graphic designers—perhaps more than usual—represents the more extroverted and/or outspoken variety of designers.

I also struggled to recruit individuals who were unhappy with their work. I did not set out to interview a sample of professionals who like their work, but this is essentially what I ended up with; 95% of my sample reported that most days they enjoy their work, and 88% percent that they feel fulfilled by their work. The latter approximates other data which have found similar percentages of job satisfaction. For example, a 2002 survey found that 88% percent of college graduates are completely or somewhat satisfied with work,¹¹ a 2015 study by the Society for Human Resource Management found that 88% of US employees reported overall satisfaction with their jobs¹², a 2016 PEW survey found that 80% of Americans are very or somewhat satisfied.¹³ However, 95% is quite high. There were a few instances in which individuals decided against interviewing with me because they did not feel “into” their jobs anymore, and another few respondents who asked partners or close friends to interview with me who explicitly said no because they were not enjoying their work. It makes sense that individuals who were not enjoying

¹¹ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/6871/does-higher-learning-higher-job-satisfaction.aspx>

¹² <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/Documents/2016-Employee-Job-Satisfaction-and-Engagement-Report.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/10/06/3-how-americans-view-their-jobs/>

their work would not want to spend another two hours of their day talking about it with me. As a result, I believe my sample is more representative of professionals who by and large enjoy their work. In fact, throughout the interview I usually refer to my respondents as adherents, for I believe that this dissertation most closely represents the voices of those who adhere to the passion paradigm—very few respondents did not.

SURVEY DATA

Every respondent was sent a Qualtrics survey to fill out prior to our interview.¹⁴ I looked at the survey responses prior to the interview in order to confirm that the respondent fit into my quota sample, as well to discern whether or not I should ask the respondent the set of questions on religion and work. The survey (Appendix B) was designed to do three primary things: 1) collect demographic information; 2) assess objective levels of precarity; 3) assess subjective perceptions of precarity. The survey began with demographic questions including profession, education, college major, race, gender, immigration history, whether respondent was a first-generation college graduate, parental occupations, marital status, family status, and religion.

The next three sections were titled: precarity, risk, flexibility.¹⁵ The directions for the precarity section read: the following questions will ask you to consider how secure you feel in your job. Please answer carefully and honestly. This section asked questions about experienced job loss, fear of job loss, and anticipated job change. The directions for the risk section read: the following

¹⁴ This is with exception to the first 4 respondents who filled out manual surveys in person before we started our interview. I quickly (though perhaps not quickly enough!) figured out that an electronic survey would be a more efficient method all around. However, the benefit of in person surveys was that I was able to clarify any confusion in real time, which I incorporated into future surveys for consistency.

¹⁵ I created questions for these sections from a variety of sources including the GSS, Kalleberg 2009, and the International Labor Office. One challenge I faced with replicating questions verbatim was making sure the questions were equally applicable or understandable to respondents within organizations and outside of organizations (market). As a result, as a whole the questions were created to measure descriptions of work within the unprecedented precarity of the new economy (Hollister 2011), rather than to explicitly compare with the findings of existing surveys.

questions will ask you to consider the amount of risk you carry. Please answer carefully and honestly. This section asked questions about benefits, unionization, and perceptions of loyalty. The directions for the flexibility section read the following questions will ask you to consider how flexible your work is. Please answer carefully and honestly. This section asked questions about perceptions of employability, task variation, skill maintenance, and day to day activities.

In each section I included objective indicators (for example the experience of job loss, lack of benefits, and working from home), as well as subjective indicators (for example fear of job loss, perception of financial support, and perception of job autonomy). The inclusion of both subjective and objective indicators is due to the fact that, as mentioned above and centrally argued in this dissertation, scholars cannot use an individual's objective experiences of work to predict their subjective experiences of work. Scholars of work have described work in the new economy using a list of objective attributes (see Figure 2.1), which I used to classify and confirm the classification of market workers as more precarious along expected lines. However, the subjective indicators enabled me to compare the subjective experiences of work for those who are objectively more precarious compared to those who are objectively less precarious.

ANALYTIC STRATEGIES

Interview Data

Every interview was audio recorded, professionally transcribed, and coded using N-VIVO software. Data were coded through a reciprocal and iterative process of deduction and induction. Deductive codes were driven by the interview guide and based on theoretical interests and inductive codes were based on emergent patterns. For example, the inductive characteristics of work passion began as a deductive node from the multiple-choice question in the interview guide. This node began as a meta node called "passion," where I coded all respondent references to

passion. I soon added a sub node called “definitions of passion,” which bloated into a dozen nodes before I could see four discourses which pattern how respondents talked about work passion: attraction, enjoyment, motivation, perseverance. Other sub nodes within the meta mode passion include “benefits of passion,” “passion as scarce,” “passion as abundant,” “passionate workers are better workers,” and “passionate work is better work.” These sub nodes emerged inductively as I analyzed how respondents talked about work passion.

Survey Data

Survey data were collected via Qualtrics and were analyzed using SPSS. Data were cleaned partially in STATA and partially in excel before they were uploaded into SPSS for analysis. The Nominal data were reordered 0 for no and 1 for yes, and all ordinal data were reordered low (negative) to high (positive). For example, respondents were asked “If you lost your job, how difficult would it be to replace it?” The variable was named REPLACE, therefore 1 was coded to indicate low replaceability and 4 was coded to indicate high replaceability.

Although the survey answers were written to reflect ordered progression, in some questions I decided the third option did not actually fall in the middle of the spectrum. In those cases, respondents who answered 3 were removed from analysis and the remaining answers (1,2,4,5) were recoded 1-4. For example, for the same question, “If you lost your job, how difficult would it be to replace it?” the middle answer was “Neither easy nor difficult.” In retrospect, I was not confident that the answers were ordered in a way that taking the mean would be accurate.¹⁶ I did the entirety of this cumbersome cleaning with a quantitative colleague, who carefully looked over and agreed with the logic and accuracy of my final codebook, syntax, and analysis.

¹⁶ Having ensured that ordinal questions in the survey were progressively ordered, I presented the data using means and standard deviations. In separate analyses I corroborated what the means convey using crosstabs and/or bar graphs.

The quantitative data also included nominal questions and answers (yes or no) in the qualitative data (e.g. Have you ever quit a professional job? Do you believe in a calling? Do you think people should be passionate about their work?) I increased reliability by working with a research assistant on this task, coding only when we were in agreement that the quantitative code accurately represented the qualitative data.

I created tables comparing economy types, gender, race, occupations, first generation college graduates to non-first generation, and first-or-second generation immigrants to non-immigrants (Appendix C). These tables allowed me to quickly summarize and see variation in my sample, which I could then analyze more deeply with the qualitative data. I do not have a large enough sample for statistical significance testing. Therefore, I use these tables to help visualize and describe my qualitative findings.

WEAKNESSES

The data presented in this dissertation were collected from professionals living in urban cities in California. As a result, they may not be representative of professionals in rural contexts or contexts in which employment options are drastically limited. These data were also collected during a strong economy, when unemployment was low and job opportunities were ample. Though respondents were still operating in a precarious new economy, some of their perceptions of employability may have been due to the strong job market. Future analyses would benefit from interviewing professionals about their adherence to the passion paradigm in an economic recession, like the one we are heading into now.

The data are also not representative of the racial composition of California, though they are quite close to the racial composition in each occupation. Future analyses would benefit from

interviewing a more diverse sample to see how race mediates adherence to the passion paradigm. The same goes for class and immigration history. From what I can predict from the comparative tables, the largest variations are between immigrants and non-immigrants, and white and non-white (Appendix C). Future research will need to determine the extent to which adherence to the passion paradigm is a particularly white American phenomenon and analyze the implications therein.

Finally, these findings would be greatly strengthened by data at the micro interactional level and the mezzo organizational level. Though data at the individual level are fantastic for understanding how individuals construct meaning and coherence in their own lives, they are limited in their ability to discern how the passion paradigm translates into interpersonal behavior and institutionalized sources of inequality. Future research would benefit from analyzing how adherence to the passion paradigm mediates interactions at work, and how the codification of the passion paradigm in work policies, management practices, or company cultures creates stratification or inequalities at work.

CHAPTER THREE: PERVASIVE PRECARITY, PERVASIVE PASSION

“I try to think of myself as a—like water, like malleable thing.”
-Fumihiro, market graphic designer

“Never just have one trick. Don't be a one-trick pony. You can become a dime a dozen very quickly in this life and in society nowadays.”
-Nico, organization engineer

“I mean it's a good solid job. I like people, I do like working with people. I think it has more merits than demerits, at least, in my mind.”
-Kyle, market nurse

I interviewed Farah Taylor in a local library. She is a tall, slender, blond woman. She sat in a chair with a tall wooden back, relaxed, with no make-up on and a blue and white striped shirt with a wide neck. When I asked her to state her occupation, she identified herself as a free-lance graphic designer. When I asked her how she became a freelancer she told me that she was essentially forced into it. To be fair, she said, she was already looking for another job. She did not like where she was because, after a change in management, she felt like there was no growth. More importantly, she worked for a man who routinely called her and her co-workers “his girls” and she felt she endured gendered discrimination, including rumors that her male coworkers were all paid more than she was. When she got pregnant and prepared for maternity leave, male co-workers told her “enjoy your vacation.” “I knew these comments were offensive,” she reflected, “but since it was my first baby, I didn’t know how offensive they *actually* were until I lived how hard and taxing having a newborn is.”

Before she was showing, Farah started applying to jobs and went on several interviews. She got a few offers, but said she was being picky. When she became visibly pregnant, she had several in-person interviews, however none yielded offers. She told me she felt both foolish for

not taking a position before her belly popped, and irritated that her job prospects felt limited. “It’s frustrating,” she told me, “because I consider myself a career woman and I want to work. It’s frustrating that they assume that a pregnant woman isn’t.” She lost hope that she would get a job offer while pregnant and decided to stay where she was and take her maternity leave. She never returned.

As she reflected on her experience as a freelancer, she told me that the two things she values most are the time flexibility and the ability to say no if she wants to. Particularly as a new mother, she appreciated that she could take a day or work at night. She summed up her top value like this: “The knowledge that the day is mine...I can choose what my day is going to look like.” The ebb and flow—feast or famine, as she called it—was scary at first, but she got used to it. In her downtime she would ramp up social media, work on new skills, read, or work on something for her portfolio. Experience taught her that with time, work would come again. She, like most market professionals in my sample, told me that in order to survive as a freelancer, you have to get used to this rhythm. The alternative to changing her perspective, she said, was to continually stress over it, which would “take years off her life” or “give herself cancer.”

As she reflected on what she sacrificed by staying in the market she told me that the stability is the greatest thing corporations offer. She was quick to note, however, that they do not necessarily pay more, which was true across my sample. Freelancing allows Farah to say no to undesirable clients or projects, or to charge more. A perk of the market often repeated by respondents was more control over acquiring fair compensation. If Farah had to work exceptionally hard, she was at liberty to charge for it. In a salaried position, however, there is no

pecuniary recognition for working really hard; notwithstanding fear of retribution, there is no incentive to work long hours or go over and beyond; the salary is set.

Her professional goals include trying to build a business with residual income so that she can be the sole provider for her family and her husband can stay home with the kid(s). She does not envision going back to a corporate job again but told me that she would be open to it if it was a company that she was really passionate about and it was a good company that she “could get behind” (like TOMS). She hesitated at the prospect of returning to an organization for her the duration of her career. “They would have to be like the most amazing company and challenging me for something. But I feel like I would get bored. I feel like I always end up getting bored in the end. This job doing freelancing I don’t get bored cause I kind of just dictate where I want to go with things.” She continued:

working for a company where they are like what’s your passion project right now? Okay, go do that. And then you come back and they’re like okay, what’s another passion project that’s going to make the world better? Okay, go do that. Like I feel like a company like that I can probably see myself staying at for like a long time, but the majority of companies I would say absolutely not.

I feel like at least now I am driven by passion, of what I want to be doing and less financial—I mean financial is important but I feel like when it comes down to it I’m doing more of what I want to be doing than what I feel like is required of me to make ends meet. If this all fell apart, I would go get a job where I had to get a job if I needed to.

Hence, short of a stellar organization or financial desperation, Farah was not keen on returning to stable work in an organization.

Farah has the vague long-term goal of financial self-sufficiency, but it might not be in graphic design. As she looked into her future, she acknowledged that she is good at what she does, but recognized that others are better. The discrepancy makes her question whether graphic design is what she should be doing. “Other people just look like they are really in their element,” she told

me. In the end, she hopes she can find something where she can say “yeah, I’m a Rockstar here.” This could mean an entirely different career, but Farah does not know what it would be yet. In the meantime, she continues to build her freelance career as a graphic designer.

Farah’s story, like most of the professionals I interviewed, is a nuanced mix of structural constraints, precarity, powerlessness, agency, and the pursuit of passion. She initially felt forced out of (or blocked from) secure organization work, but now opts out on her own volition. She experienced powerlessness during her failed job pursuit, but she adapted and now claims agency over her career trajectory. Farah has loose plans for her future, but remains open to future possibilities, which could include a career change. She recognizes the precarity in her life, but feels secure, nonetheless. She sets her eyes on work that will set her more afire.

As Farah helps illustrate, individuals end up working in their profession and their particular positions for a huge range of expected and unexpected reasons. How one chooses employment is not as straight forward as it used to be. Individual employment trajectories are nuanced and complex. For many people, their work trajectories wind non-linearly through changes in life stage, shifting desires and priorities, personal financial contexts, and larger economic contexts.

The literature tends to dichotomize the experience of work as precarious or secure and assume (with good reason) that precarious or non-standard work arrangements are less-desirable arrangements long-term for most people, compared to the model of secure standard postwar work. Scholars generally except an isolated group of individuals, who are set apart as advocates of the new economy and portrayed as a particular kind of people—usually economically privileged, natural risk takers, driven by ideologies of passion, and/or entrepreneurs who are restless by nature and quick to adapt. The portrayal of those who are comfortable in the market as natural risk takers or otherwise privileged professionals, coupled with an empirical skew in the literature to study

niche industries, leads one to expect to find individuals who welcome precarity clustered into professions that have been particularly associated with the normalization, even valorization, of risk and volatility, such as technology, high finance, start-ups, and the arts.

In summary, the literature on precarious work generally holds two assumptions: 1) the structural conditions of precarity both fundamentally shape the experience of work for precarious workers and render them vulnerable to the negative effects of precarious work; 2) there are particular types of people who can psychologically and/or materially withstand precarious work—these idiosyncratic professionals might even prefer nonstandard work arrangements, citing passion as a central priority in their experience of work. In general, scholars who find that the ideology of work passion is operational are scholars who study precarious professionals; these include the unemployed or job seekers (Gershon 2017; Sharone 2013), those in precarious industries (Ho 2009; Lane 2011; Neff 2012; McRobbie 2016; Ross 2003), and those in precarious roles (Barley and Kunda 2006; Pink 2001). Taken together, I designed my sample to compare professionals who are more structurally precarious to professionals who are less structurally precarious, assuming that I would find fundamental differences in their perceptions and experiences of precarity, and their conceptions of work.

Important for the integrity of my comparative design, I do find that respondents categorized as more structurally precarious are indeed more structurally precarious along predicted lines. However, the central argument in this chapter is that individuals categorized as more precarious and individuals categorized as less precarious experience and perceive work much more similarly than dissimilarly. Through a discussion of how respondents make decisions about their work, I argue that professional work in the new economy is characterized by a broad normalization of precarity, rather than either an escape from or enduring of/preference for precarious work

arrangements. The way individuals talk about job security or benefits as just a few of the many factors to consider when choosing work throws into sharp relief that, for many professionals, job security, longevity, or benefits are not necessarily top priorities or non-negotiables.

In addition, contrary to the idea that opting into precarious work is a predilection of a select group of people and that, with exception to these individuals who opt in, individuals end up in precarious situations at the hands of overbearing structural circumstances, I find that many of my respondents move at will and fluidly between more precarious and less precarious work. Rather than chasing less precarious or secure work, I find that across my sample professionals are more likely to be chasing work that they love. Assessment and deliberation of individual job prospects are complex, as are individual perceptions of precarity. Precarity is experienced slightly differently for individuals who are currently in the market (more precarious) compared to those currently in organizations (less precarious), but all respondents feel pressure to keep up or get left behind and all respondents expect movement, sometimes dramatic, over the course of their careers. I therefore argue that it is more analytically useful—and certainly more accurate—to understand precarity as a spectrum rather than a category.

This foundational chapter is called *Pervasive Precarity, Pervasive Passion*. The overarching purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the striking similarity between the professionals in my sample, superseding the structural variation I built in in order to find differences.¹⁷ There is small

¹⁷ This chapter focuses on the primary comparison built into my sample between less structurally precarious and more structurally precarious professionals. However, I also built in and anticipated occupational variance. Compared to the two primary sources of variation in my sample (gender and economy type), I found the most variation between occupations. For example, engineers across the board were more structurally secure, *but* they also perceived the most precarity along several indicators, and nurses were split between a primary conception of work as passion or a calling. Despite the fact that I found the most variation between occupations, professionals in all three occupations still shared more similar (than dissimilar) perceptions of precarity and overwhelming adherence to the passion paradigm. Although this dissertation is therefore presented as a story of similarity, I have been intentional to incorporate voices from each occupation, gender, and economy type in each section so that the reader can judge this similarity for themselves.

variation in the experience of precarity and small variation in adherence to the passion paradigm (as I demonstrate in this chapter) and in the expression of work passion (as I argue in Chapter 6), however the majority of respondents in the central axes of comparison (gender, occupation, level of precarity) talked about work in the new economy similarly and adhered to a set of beliefs about work passion similarly. Because the comparative data show overwhelming agreement, the findings of this dissertation are almost entirely organized around similarity rather than difference. I present data from all groups to help the reader see the consistency with which respondents described their definition of and beliefs about pursuing work passion in a new economy. For written simplicity, less precarious individuals are denoted ‘organization’ (they work in an organization) and more precarious professionals are denoted ‘market’ (they work in the open market).

In the first and largest section I discuss the qualitative perceptions of precarity for individuals in organizations followed by individuals in the market. I end with a discussion of shared perceptions of work in the new economy. I then briefly introduce the topic of work passion—which is the central topic for the rest of the dissertation. I present data demonstrating the overwhelming adherence to the passion paradigm among my respondents. There are two reasons why I include pervasive passion in this chapter. First, I argue that adherence to the passion paradigm is inextricably connected to how professionals interpret their experiences of precarity in the new economy and develop a coherent understanding of professional work in the new economy. Second, similar to perceptions of precarity, I found overwhelming value for the experience of work passion, superseding the structural variation built into my sample. Taken together, this chapter introduces a professional landscape of both pervasive precarity and pervasive passion, similarly articulated and experienced by the vast majority of my respondents. The rest of this dissertation

analyzes the function of work passion, in the broader structural context of pervasive professional precarity.

PERVASIVE PRECARITY

First, using qualitative and quantitative data to measure objective levels and subjective perceptions of precarity among my respondents, I confirm that the professionals that I expected to be more precarious are indeed more precarious along traditional measures of nonstandard work (Table 3.2).¹⁸ Compared to their less precarious counterparts in organizations, more market professionals report having lost a job, report short term goals (as opposed to long), report anxiety about achieving their professional goals, report that they do not consider work as part of their identity and do not want it to be, are not offered health insurance nor retirement benefits, report unpredictable income, no union representation, and more report that they are required to maintain skills. Moreover, as expected, market employees (more precarious professionals) report more employee disloyalty towards organizations, report that it is more likely that their work will disappear, work more often from home, and have to help less on different projects. These indicators demonstrate that the professionals in my sample that I analytically designated as more precarious are in fact more precarious in the ways that the literature expects them to be; they experience work in distinctly different ways.

However, though the indicators above demonstrate that market professionals in my sample have more structural precarity, many differences between the behavior and affective experiences

¹⁸ The section “Prioritize” presents the most frequent answer to a multiple choice question I presented respondents during the interview which read: I think the average college graduate should prioritize work that: a) he/she is good at; b) he/she is passionate about; c) work that is high paying. Most chose B, passion. The section “Quote” presents the quote respondents most frequently chose as best the representation of their beliefs about work. DWYL stands for Do What You Love, an indicator of the passion paradigm. The alternatives included quotes indicating a calling, work/life balance, or legacy.

of work for professionals in organizations and professionals in the market are negligible or surprising. Instead of demonstrating that professionals who are more structurally precarious experience work in unprecedented and unique ways, my data demonstrate that the differentiating effects of structural precarity are quite small---everyone feels some level of precarity. The less precarious and more precarious professionals in my sample experience and discuss work in overwhelmingly similar ways. Less precarious and more precarious respondents report almost exactly the same in several indicators, including that they have quit a job (64%, 63%), believe that college-educated professionals can pursue work that they love (86%, 89%), believe non-college educated individuals can pursue work that they love (78%, 77%), feel autonomous at work (3.1, 3.1), and fear job loss (2.08, 2). With the exception of insurance, benefits, and predictable income---structural features of work---it is difficult to predict how less precarious and more precarious respondents affectively experience work.

This unpredictability is especially apparent in the indicators that reveal surprising findings. More respondents who are in the market report that they enjoy their work, that they are fulfilled by their work, that if possible, they would stay at one company for the duration of their career, and that they consider themselves to have a career. Respondents in the market also feel their jobs are easier to replace¹⁹ and feel their skills are more transferable²⁰, suggesting that they feel more secure in their employability—which is purported as a primary source of security for professionals in the new economy. More respondents who are in an organization report that they are likely to opt to

¹⁹ 82.2% of market professionals report that it would be ‘not’ or ‘not too’ difficult to replace their job, compared to 61.3% of organization professionals.

²⁰ 65% of market professionals reported their skills as ‘very’ transferrable, compared to 46% of organization professionals.

leave their job²¹, report unmet financial needs, and report feeling that the organization who pays their bills is disloyal to them.

Table 3.1 Summary of Descriptive Statistics Comparing Economy Types

	Organization (less precarious)	Market (more precarious)	Everyone
<i>Percent</i>			
Have quit	64	63	63%
Have been let go	18	16	17%
Have lost a job	15	20	18%
Enjoy work, most days	92	97	95%
Feel fulfilled by work	86	90	88%
Could stay for life	69	74	71%
Long-term goals (>5 yr)	68	56	62%
Anxious about goals	67	71	68%
Have a “career”	76	81	78%
Should be passionate	94	90	92%
Everyone can DWYL	78	77	78%
College grads can DWYL	86	89	87%
Believe love can grow	100	97	99%
Could love something else	97	97	97%
Believe in a calling	80	83	82%
Ethical duty to do best work	90	91	91%
Work part of identity	97	91	95%
Want work as part of id.	78	73	76%
Should consider soc. needs	11	15	13%
White	56	74	65%
Female	51	49	50%
Immigrant	24	11	18%
First generation grad	28	23	26%
Married	44	37	41%
Kids	21	31	26%
Religious	46	37	42%
Offered health insurance	95	54	76%
Offered retirement benefits	92	66	79%
→Offered match 401K	100	90	96%

²¹ 36% of organization professionals reported that they are ‘almost certainly’ or ‘fairly’ likely to opt to leave their jobs, compared to 12% of market professionals.

Table 3.1 continued

Have unpredictable income	3	51	26%
Represented by union	31	20	26%
Required to maintain skills	95	100	97%
<i>Mode</i>			
Prioritize	Passion (77%)	Passion (77%)	Passion (77%)
Quote	DWYL (41%)	DWYL (49%)	DWYL (45%)
<i>Mean/SD</i>			
Importance of rel. beliefs**	4.39 (.78)	4 (1.3)	4.23 (1.02)
Religious attendance**	3.83 (1.1)	3.38 (1.3)	3.65 (1.2)
Likely to opt to leave job	2.85 (1.1)	2.26 (1.1)	2.57 (1.1)
Likely that work will disappear	1.56 (.88)	1.74 (.95)	1.65 (0.91)
Fear job loss	2.08 (1.4)	2 (1.2)	2.04 (1.3)
Unmet financial needs	2.15 (0.93)	1.91 (.97)	2.04 (0.95)
Employee feels Disloyal	1.69 (0.66)	1.85 (1.1)	1.77 (0.87)
Company feels Disloyal	2.28 (1.1)	1.88 (.95)	2.1 (1.02)
Easy to Replace Job	2.68 (0.7)	2.96 (0.58)	2.81 (0.66)
Daily tasks vary	2.77 (1.25)	3.09 (1.12)	2.92 (1.19)
Freq. working on a team	4.03 (0.90)	4 (1.02)	4.01 (0.96)
Freq. working from home	1.26 (.44)	2.14 (1.31)	1.68 (1.05)
Job autonomy	3.1 (0.75)	3.14 (1.12)	3.12 (0.94)
Help on diff. projects	2.41 (0.78)	2.23 (0.84)	2.32 (0.81)
Feels skills are transferable	3.32 (0.71)	3.65 (0.49)	3.48 (0.63)

Table 3.1 continued

Total

Persons Interviewed	39	35	74
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Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

**only includes respondents who identify as religious, N = 31.

In the sections that follow I discuss the qualitative perceptions of precarity for individuals in organizations followed by individuals in the market. These sections are intended to draw out qualitative differences between working fulltime as a permanent employee in a single organization and working fulltime for multiple or no organization in the market, while maintaining the overarching argument that individuals in both groups are contending with perceptions and/or experiences of precarity. In service of this overarching argument I end with a discussion of shared perceptions of work in the new economy.

Organization

Most respondents working in what I have called the organization economy fall into two categories: 1) individuals who feel insecure about their jobs, as well as feel broader precarity; 2) individuals do not feel insecure about their jobs but still feel broader precarity. The perceptions of individuals who do not necessarily feel job insecurity but feel a sense of general precarity were often informed by the stories of others and/or personal past experiences. Their perceptions of broader precarity were often evident by their strong desire to “remain aware;” not feeling imminent vulnerability but also avoiding the naivety that job loss would never happen to them.

Knowing someone who has been treated unfairly or let go is particularly influential when one can see themselves in the person who was fired. As Hyman (2018) quips, “you don’t need to replace everybody to make the rest insecure.” When I asked Chris, an organization engineer,

whether he feels insecure he responded that he does not. “But you know,” he expanded, “I definitely see a lot of other engineers and employees talk about it a lot.” He continued:

Especially the ones that have been there a long time and haven't had a big change in their responsibilities lately; they've been doing the same thing for a long time, there is not a lot of work for them maybe because they're on older programs. I also know that I am on the lower end of the salary bend so they don't have a huge reason to get rid of me, you know, especially seeing as my previous performance reviews went pretty good.

So I don't necessarily feel that insecure but it makes me realize that the direct labor force is not – and with the way that they have so many contract laborers sometimes they just – there have been a few instances where contract laborers have been walked out the door like same day and so it's been – even as a direct employee that makes you cringe a little bit like there should be a little bit of notice, like they are strictly speaking at will– it's possible to do that but it's just not that professional. So yeah, it kind of makes me question the company's motives a little bit.

Like others I interviewed, Chris recognizes that the ethos around job security has shifted. He has begun making a mental tally about who is likely to get cut first, assuming that his age and low salary benefit him. He has also been affected by seeing his colleagues who are in the market fired on the spot. Even as a “direct” (permanent organization) employee, the way he has seen his company treat contract (market) labor has made him question his assumptions about how the company might treat him in the future.

When I pressed for more details on this point, Chris told me that perturbing instances were not when his company fired contract engineers for wrong-doing, but when his company fired “really good contractors that I’ve worked with that have really high caliber work.” His observation that quality work does not preclude someone from being let go was unsettling, particularly since he attributes a portion of his own feelings of security to the fact that he does good work. As we continued to talk, Chris revealed what has become a major structural source of insecurity for employees: mergers. At the time of our interview, Chris’s company was acquired three years before, for the second time. “The latest company is even more focused on the bottom line than the

previous company was,” he told me, “and so I think a lot of it just comes down to that. It's what's the bare minimum legal professional courtesy that we're supposed to extend.” At the moment, Chris still feels secure. But our discussion revealed that he does not take his security for granted. That is, he recognizes that precarity lurks around him and that his trust in his organization is quite tenuous.

Rather than bearing witness to the termination of peers, others acknowledged latent insecurity stemming from personal past experiences. When I asked Britt why she feels insecure in her job, which is what I thought she was saying, she corrected me to say that she actually feels pretty secure in her current organization. Despite the fact that she feels secure, past experiences left their mark. “I think having that lay-off experience early on, and knowing how deeply that rocks my identity...as Americans we put a lot of value in what we do,” she began, “And so that’s something that I want to live in constant surrendering to, I’ve experienced what it looks like to not have a job, and it’s scary.” What Britt described is lingering psychological trauma that follows her around, even when her objective structural circumstances are quite secure.

Others who had past experiences of precarity talked less about the emotional labor required to feel secure in one’s job and more about the fact that current experiences of security are determined via comparison. How one experiences their current work is in direct reference to how one experienced previous work. Tabitha is an organization nurse. She recently made the transition from the market back to an organization but told me that since her hospital is not unionized, she does not necessarily feel any more stable in the organization. “My job isn’t protected,” she said, “I’m an at will employee so they hospital can, after a very short due process, terminate me if they wanted to.” She went on to clarify that the only stability she feels comes from that fact that she

does not have a predetermined end date like she did as a contract nurse in the market. When I asked her if she fears for her job sometimes, she replied,

No. Not right now, but I just returned to the hospital where I started as a nurse. I left and worked at several other places in between when I started and when I just came back in January because I had a very difficult manager on my old unit, and so I do know what that feeling is like to worry about whether or not you're going to lose your job every day you go in. So, I don't feel it right now, but I have in the past, and it's just kind of made me a little wary of working – me being a permanent employee anywhere, now that I know, and I've seen what can happen.

Tabitha uses comparison to establish her current feeling of stability. In comparison to the experience she just had, where she feared for her job every day, returning to a hospital where she ostensibly feels familiar and comfortable yields a feeling of security. That being said, her past experiences have jaded her ability to feel untempered security anywhere. Even as she has made the transition back to a more secure position in an organization, she hesitated to classify her permanent role as secure.

The manifestation of broader perceptions of precarity were often evident in the way respondents described latent awareness and their desires to be prepared, instead of taken by surprise. For example, an organization engineer named Tiffany described how she staves off a broader feeling of precarity by keeping her options open. When I asked her if she ever fears that she will lose her job due to its reliance on funding she told me,

I don't know if it's ever really been a fear. I'm kind of working on different projects now and it might be – it's probably an interesting time now where I'm concerned about it. It's not necessarily a fear but it's a thought, you know what I mean? I'm not like afraid of it but just something like hey, you know, be aware. But other than that, I don't think so. At least with my company and what I've been doing and the projects that I've been on it hasn't been a problem. And then some of that is probably timing wise. I think after I left some projects they started to kind of, you know, die down, but it was never really a problem while I was there. So, it's never really been something that I've been overly concerned with, just kind of something that's been, you know, I'm aware of it.

The latent precarity that Tiffany feels comes from the fact that job security in her position comes from travel flexibility. “If you’re willing to leave you’ll be perfectly fine,” she tells me. The problem is that she is increasingly not willing to leave. She calls her level of travel “exhausting” and “unsustainable.” Her recent strategy has been to get on local projects, or projects that will require minimal travel. In the near future, her strategy is to move into a new position in the company in which travel is not required at all. As she explained,

I’m looking for like, training, get maybe into development. I’m also looking to get a regular engineering position, you know, just in case that the development thing doesn’t work out but that it would keep me a little bit more here instead of doing all this traveling. So, I’m doing both.

Like other professionals I interviewed who do not classify themselves as insecure, Tiffany is still actively taking steps to avoid insecurity in the future. This category of organization professionals understands that they must be proactive and vigilant in their careers, taking the steps that are necessary to retain a sense of job security in the organization.

The second category of organization professionals are those who feel both insecure in their organizations and insecure about the broader world of work. For many, this manifests as an anxiety to retain their positions, even if that means working long hours or going above and beyond. Consider this conversation I had with Kevin, an organization engineer, about working less:

LJD: What are the barriers you think you have to working less?

Kevin: Okay there's a couple things. Okay with my company I think there's probably a negative stigma if I try to work less and obviously I don't want to sever my only source of income so I think – 'cause there are people who have taken off, unpaid leave, and just gone and traveled or whatever. And that sounds really appealing to me but at the same time a part of me – I don't know what it is. A part of me doesn't want to ask that because maybe it just seems selfish like oh I want to travel instead of devoting all my time to helping better this company.

And it just – I don't want to have that negative stigma be carried with me, especially if I – I think it all comes down to stability, right? Like I'm living a stable, comfortable life and if there's anything that's going to threaten that I probably don't want that 'cause there's bills to pay and it's my responsibility to be independent.

LJD: Do you have a reason to believe that – like is the stigma real or imagined? Have you seen this actually play out for people, do you actually fear that you'll lose your job?

Kevin: It's probably imagined, more imagined in myself, some sort of fear that was just instilled in me, who knows, but yeah 'cause I've seen people – well it's a lot of the older people who are already established and they're on the end of their career where they're about to retire. They're just like eh, I don't care, you know, I'm going to take off for so many days and if they want to fire me they fire me, who cares. I'm like well that's great, I'm just beginning my career, I'm only four years in and so I wish I could have that mentality.

Kevin wants to be careful not to do anything to jeopardize his position. Even as he sees senior engineers taking vacation with no consequence, he chalks it up to the behavior of individuals at the end of their career who have nothing to lose. In comparison, Kevin feels vulnerable and insecure. He believes that his job security is rooted in devoting all his time to help better the company and sees *not* fearing job loss as a privilege that comes with experience.

Respondents who felt insecure in their organizations and saw the economy as insecure often described job loss as a risk they were not willing to take. The general sentiment was that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. If you already have a job—particularly a good one—hang onto it. “It’s kind of a scary world,” an organization nurse named Francis told me. Our conversation continued:

Francis: If I had a great job, good paying, good benefits, secure, but it was the same job I'd been doing for 10 years versus somebody saying here, here's the Tom Hanks BIG job, you can do this for six months. Maybe it will work; maybe it won't. I would guess that in America probably 80 to 90 percent of people would stick with the job they had for security sake. And maybe that's me projecting my own feeling, but I feel like right now in, you know, the way things are going...

LJD: Why in America? Why did you make that distinction?

Francis: I feel like it's less secure here. I feel like there's, I would feel really nervous about maintaining my way of life if I lost a good position like that. So that makes me – my sense of confidence I guess of finding a job equally good – my sense of anxiety of losing a job that would be really safe would override my desire to do something that seemed more fun, like test toys.

LJD: So by security do you mean like...

Francis: Financial security, you know, more like I'm picturing being able to provide for my kids and make sure that I kept them at their school kind of thing.

LJD: But do you feel like good paying jobs are hard to come by or what makes you feel like everybody is insecure or less secure?

Francis: Well I guess I've never tried to get a job in another place. I've just been in San Diego my whole professional life and San Diego is just competitive. Everything is, you know, everything has been competitive. My spot in nursing, my job, as a new grad, my job as an NP, my spot in grad school, everything has been from the time I got here it's been more competitive. So I guess I'm just less secure. If I have something good I'd rather stick with it than, you know, take my chances with something that might be more fun.

Respondents in organizations, particularly those who did not have previous experience in the market, tended to view security as a scarce resource. Compared to the post war period where job security and longevity were safe expectations for employees to hold, the professionals I interviewed tended not to take job security for granted. They had either experienced insecurity themselves or born witness to precarity in the lives of those around them. In general, as I've detailed above, regardless of how secure they felt in their own position, organization professionals described a general awareness that work in the new economy is precarious.

Market

I found that both organization and market professionals had to contend with perceptions of precarity in the new economy, however compared to those in organizations who talked about the

anxiety they felt in keeping their position, market professionals talked much more about strategies of risk acculturation. Because individuals in the market are necessarily more estranged from organizations of work, developing a sense of security independent from any given organization was seen as imperative. For many, a primary source of this development was their survival in the market. Once in the market, respondents talked about having to acculturate to the inconsistent rhythms of market work and cultivate a sense of personal employability. Self-perceptions of employability help market professionals acculturate to the risks of precarity because they see their work opportunities as abundant, rather than scarce. In general, I found that market professionals tend to perceive organization employment as a safe “back up.” Rather than feeling more vulnerable to unemployment, market professionals tended to exude confidence in what they perceived as having expanded employment opportunities (in either the market or an organization).

For most market respondents, the primary source of risk acculturation was the lived experience that one could be okay on their own. Whether respondents were fired, let go, or quit, exiting an institution became less scary when they had done it before and landed on their feet. When I asked Diego, a market engineer, if it was difficult for him to decide to leave his job he responded, “I guess it was a little nerve wracking, just because it was my first job ever, so I didn’t know what I could find outside. But once I left it was fine, you know, it was good. It was the best decision I ever made.” Almost like exposure therapy, many market professionals described freedom in facing their fear of precarity and conquering it with success in the market. A market graphic designer named Nels told me that he thinks that happiness is something he has a right to have and every day that he is in the market he feels he has a choice in how to pursue it. “I think I could be happy in a work environment,” he told me, “but I haven’t found, or I haven’t made the choice to experiment in, in one of those, for fear of not having the freedom to leave.” Nels went

on to describe how being in the market left him feeling more control over his happiness and his success. He concluded, “I’m just trying to make the perfect life and this has been working for me, for us. Like I said it’s not, it’s not perfect, but um, it’s just a moving thing. I’m always morphing and trying to try new things.” Nels, like most of the market professionals I interviewed, has acculturated to the various risks of the market to the extent that he regards it as a preference.

As part of the acculturation process, market professionals almost unanimously talked about two things: having to get used to the sporadic rhythm of the market and learning to see themselves as employable (rather than either employed or unemployed). For the first, respondents noted that though the inconsistency can at times be aggravating, they had come to accept the ebb and flow of work as natural. A market graphic designer named Kellen told me,

My time is pretty packed right now so like I said there’s kind of natural ebbs and flows of projects that come through, but it seems like every time I kind of have those months of like well I have some time this month, maybe I should like start looking for something or going out there, then all of a sudden a flood of stuff comes in and I’m too busy to do anything. So, it’s just kind of naturally worked out honestly.

When I asked him if the ebb and flow make him nervous, he told me that a critical part of freelance life is saving for the seasons of ebb. If freelancers do not anticipate downturns in work by budgeting and saving, “you can get in trouble and have months where you don’t have enough money and live on that paycheck to paycheck.” Part of acculturating to financial risks in the market is being aware of and planning for the possibility of slowed seasons.

In addition to financial preparedness, respondents talked about anticipating the particular ebb and flow of market work as important for psychological well-being and time management. When I asked Noah, a graphic designer, whether he wished he worked less, he had a hard time answering because he described his work hours as “up and down.” He characterized his challenge acculturating to risk in the market like this:

I would say I wish that it would be more [work] even, that you can just focus on work rather than having to scramble for it when it's low, and then when it's too much, how to space that out a little better. So really the issue to me is more one of balance than anything about do I wish to work less, cause it's not necessarily stable as a consultant, so it comes in and out. And I'd say just getting it a little more even would be the way to go. When it's low tide it's pretty freaky at times unless I know that something's coming in, and then when everything just jams together it's really difficult to just find people on the fly necessarily to help with the work or you got to tackle it yourself, so you're not sleeping, so that kind of stuff.

Though market employees are more likely to have inconsistent work schedules, respondents told me that key components of acculturation are recognizing that hard seasons are just temporary—whatever they are—and learning to take full advantage of slow seasons, trusting that a high work season is just around the corner. This can be difficult. A market engineer named Urania told me that sometimes she craves the consistency of work that working in an organization would provide her—specifically a government organization. She described sources of stress in the market as, “It’s the hours, the deadlines, the like inconsistency in knowing when you’re going to be needed.” But the flexibility of market work that allows Urania to meet her current needs is worth the schedule inconsistencies inherent to market work.

The second part of acculturating to the market that many respondents talked about was learning to see themselves as employable, rather than as either employed or unemployed. When one sees themselves as employable, their self confidence is rooted in their sense of market value, as opposed to their organizational status. When I asked a market engineer named Trey whether he expected that he would be on the career path he is on now, he replied, “I guess I didn’t really realize it. I’ve always been motivated and driven, so I figured I’d be successful in my life no matter what I chose but starting out I didn’t even know what this industry was.” Like others who possess a spirit of employability, Trey’s confidence was rooted more in himself than a job or

industry. Similarly, when I asked a market engineer named Urania if she has ever gone through a period where she was unsure about being an engineer she replied,

I'm a bit of an extrovert and I feel like I would actually be good at other things too. I feel like I have a personality where – I mean I'm smart so I could do different things, and I just happen to choose engineering and I feel like I chose a path and I have to stick to it. And I really like it. I just – I think I would be good at other things too. And sometimes I think about that, you know, like what else could I have been really good at?

To have a sense of employability means individuals feel confident not only about their ability to find employment, but also confident about their ability to find employment where they would thrive. They see themselves as adaptable and multifaceted.

As a final illustration, a market nurse named Lilly told me a story about a friend of hers who was a travel nurse in Hawaii. She met an engineer while she was there, and they fell in love. When this friend left Hawaii to start a new contract, she and her boyfriend missed one another, so, as she recalled, “[the engineer] was like, ‘you know what? I am a really great handyman, I know all this stuff, I bet I can find work.’ So, everywhere he goes he's finding weird, random side jobs, contracting jobs as well, because he's really, really good, and that's how [they are] paying to do what they do.” She went on to tell me that this couple recently quit their jobs to hike the Pacific Crest Trail for five months, then visit The Dominican. They feel freedom in pursuing this time off because they both regard themselves as employable—they feel confident about their abilities to find work both outside and within an organization, should they want it.

For many of the market professionals that I interviewed, the sense of employability that they honed also translated into a sense that work in an organization was a reliable fall back plan—even for those who had not originally opted into the market on their own volition. Lizzie, a market graphic designer who ended up in the market after her agency downsized, told me at the time of our interview that she now prefers freelance (as opposed to working in an organization), but that

she is always questioning, “okay is this what really what I wanna do, or do I wanna go back to doing a full time job.” Even after being let go, Lizzie was still confident that she could find agency work if she wanted it. Diego, a market engineer, described a future desire to leave his current consulting firm and start his own. When I asked if he thinks he could sustain self-employment for the rest of his career he responded, “I don’t know. I have no clue. I have no clue, I find comfort in knowing that I could always go back to work for the company, you know what I mean?” Diego and Lizzie, like other market professionals I interviewed, felt like the skills they learned in the market made them more employable in both organizations and in the market. Their sense of security was not rooted in perceiving their particular job as secure, but in the confidence that they could always find employment.

For some, this confidence of employment included having several career options. Consider Gunnar, a market nurse who I will describe in more detail in Chapter 4. Gunnar told me that he has pursued a career in nursing only so that he has a viable plan B, should his *actual* career aspirations as the owner and operator of a small-town neighborhood brewery not pan out. As he described it, “I wanna own something, and I wanna give people beer. I wanna, I wanna make a good beer with a good sandwich, and have a good lunch special, and wave people goodbye; and see 'em after a couple days.” Gunnar expanded extensively on his plans, which include his sister (currently a bartender) and his brother (currently a chef). Each of them decided to “get shit done now” separately, while they build skills for the eventual business and safety nets in the event of failure. He described the practical reasons why each of them is where they are now but imagines their future selves as their true selves. As he explained, “My brother's a chef. He's a cook right now in a place. Well he's, like, he's a chef. My sister's bartending right now, but, you know, she's a manager in a nice restaurant. That's what we are, like, I'm a nurse right now in a hospital. But,

like, I'm a brewery owner. Like, that's what we are. Like, we're just not there yet." When I asked him about the risk of starting a business, he assured me, "I'll always have, I'll always have nursing. I can always go back to it, which is stability for me in itself." Gunnar, like many respondents I interviewed, were constructing multifaceted careers which left them feeling equipped with several options.

The construction of a sense of employability allows professionals to perceive their possibilities as open; they avoid putting all of their eggs in one basket, which ultimately helps them stave off anxiety over the possibility of job loss or career change. Don, a market engineer, explained that he chose contract engineering because "I realized I didn't want to be pigeonholed into this one industry and then get stuck in that and half-way through my career not be able to change gears because I had worked in this one industry." It is possible that the demand for increased variety in professional work (see Kalleberg 2011 Chapter 7) is less about a restless or bored generation who want more stimulation at work, and more about an anxious generation who want to build myriad transferrable skills, as opposed singular skills or narrow expertise. Professionals with myriad transferrable skills view themselves as employable.

Shared Perceptions of Professional Work in the New Economy

In the previous two sections I delineated rhetorical differences around the experiences of precarity for organization professionals and market professionals. I used this opportunity to demonstrate how professionals in less precarious organization positions still register the precarity of the new economy around them, many of them even perceiving the security they feel in their organization as illusory. For those engaging in more precarious market work, I demonstrate the necessary process of coming to terms with their work arrangements, which I call risk acculturation.

These sections described qualitative differences in how professionals talked about experiencing the cultural milieu of precarity, while emphasizing that individuals in both groups have to contend with the uncertainty of the new economy.

Though there are certainly differences between the experiences of precarity for professionals in organizations compared to professionals in the market, particularly on opposite ends of the precarity spectrum, my overarching argument is that precarity, defined as increasing career uncertainty, insecurity, job change, and risk management, supersedes structural circumstances and represents the qualitative experience of work for a broad range of professionals today. In this final section I will describe sentiments that respondents in both organizations and the market shared: the impulse to take charge of their job security by building their skills and the expectation of future movement.

When a market graphic designer named Nels was first considering leaving his organization, he began by talking with freelance designers about their experiences. He remembered a particular conversation with a freelancer in which when he asked the freelancer if he missed the stability of the advertising agency that he came from, the freelancer responded, “What stability? You can lose your job at any point in time and then what do you have?...I have dozens of jobs and dozens of bosses, so if this one fires me, I've got all these other opportunities of revenue to come in.” As Nels reflected on this conversation he told me, “I think that was a real defining moment for me.”

Over the last decade Nels has had many organization job offers, but like the freelancer he spoke to when he was a young organization designer, Nels now imagines his employment as more secure in the market. As he described,

Happiness is something that I have a right to have and every day I have a choice in how I pursue that. I think I could be happy in a work environment, but I haven't found, or I haven't made the choice to experiment in one of those, for fear of not having the freedom to leave.

I'm just trying to make the perfect life and this has been working for me, for us. Like I said it's not, it's not perfect, but um, it's just a moving thing. I'm always morphing and trying to try new things and think well okay, you know do I put more energy into growing this, working more, or do I put energy into creating something new? Um, you know a lot of people create these passive revenue streams to ... Like I could make a t-shirt website right? That just kind of maybe runs itself, kind of has a fulfillment section and I could ... That uses some of my skills to create a new revenue stream for me. So these are some of the ideas I think about, or maybe I design a book that um, you know we make profits off of.

Nels, like other professionals I interviewed, placed a high value on his freedom to expand his skill sets and potential sources of revenue. He recognized that his economic survival depends on his ability to pivot and put energy into new things that are likely to sustain his security.

The desire to build one's skills is rooted in a desire to expand one's future opportunities. When I asked Kevin, an organization engineer, what would improve his current work he responded,

I think learning different things, learning new things would be pretty cool. I've had a desire to learn 3-D modeling and which I mean I have sort of a basis on that, but I would like to do more of it, and that could be – I think I have a desire for that because there might be another incentive. Like if I learn how to 3-D model and do stress analysis then I can potentially start something else, and like depart from my company and do whatever. So I don't know. I think learning new things to make myself more efficient and more marketable would help. But that ultimately is not going to help me stay there.

Though Kevin is hoping that his current organization will invest in growing his ability to 3-D model, Kevin is explicit that his objective is not job security in *his* organization, but job security in general.

Others placed the burden of skill building more squarely on themselves. Consider Pablo, an organization nurse, who told me that though he recognizes that other people might be afraid to quit their jobs if they are unhappy, he has not been afraid because “I felt like I was good 'cause I did stuff other people didn't do.” He gave me the following example:

like when I was a bartender I took [mixology] classes, I read wine books, bartending books, I learned how to make all kinds of drinks, you know, people who were good I'd ask them, you know, what do you do. People would tell me I was a good bartender, I was fast or this or that, you know. So when you – like I said when you try to do good, you know, people will respect you just for doing your job good and, you know, and you'll respect yourself, like yeah, I do a good job and I have options.

As Pablo helps illustrate, the individual pursuit of skill growth contributes not only to practically making oneself more marketable, but also to building a self-conception of employability in which one *perceives* oneself as more marketable.

Both market and organization professionals described intentionally pushing themselves because they felt pressure to keep up or get left behind. To be employable and/or feel employable was important to the majority of the professionals in my sample to stave off the anxieties of an unprecedented precarious economy. They felt that it was their responsibility to look out for their financial and psychological success in work, and for many of them this meant actively growing their skillsets and networks in anticipation of future movement. A market graphic designer named Dahlia told me that she keeps a close eye on her finances, but

at the end of the day, what's most important for me is to love what I do, and to enjoy the clients I work with. If that shifts, then I'll know, okay, it's time to adjust a little bit...do I wanna take on a different clientele, or do I want to work into a different market? Do I want to specialize in something different? And, I'm constantly growing and evolving.

...Now that [I don't] necessarily have the creative team to work with, I have connected with outside designers and other freelancers to bounce ideas off of, and I like to go to conferences and workshops and things like that to expand my knowledge...I've had a really good couple of years, and I'd like to keep on that and just seeing where it gets me. I guess we never know what can happen, so I try to be prepared, and I try to stay up-to-date on my schooling and trends of things.

Whereas some, like Dahlia, described their continual investment in knowledge expansion as broad preparation for wherever life might take them, others described their efforts to stay on top of their

game with much more anxiety or frustration. When I asked an organization graphic designer named Kristopher to explain his compulsion to work a lot, he told me:

...that's a deep question...I've always been nervous at my job, even though I shouldn't be. I think my perfection is—or, my drive for perfection—I want things to be perfect for [my] portfolio, because that's how you get the next job. But I think it's also, always having an underlying kind of fear of, oh, ... we'll get somebody else that's good enough, and they can just take your place. So, I think, spending more time than is necessary to make sure things are good, obviously helps me in my job. That's helps me bounce around in my job and get better jobs and get paid more, but it's also made me work more and caused me more frustration.

Kristopher's strategy for staving off the anxiety of getting left behind in his field was to overwork himself to the point of frustration. He was haunted by the vague (and apparently unsubstantiated) notion that if he did not perform perfectly, he could be quickly replaced by someone else.

Another common strategy for maintaining skills in one's industry was to avoid or mitigate the trappings of management. In many industries, including nursing, engineering, and graphic design, promotions up the bureaucratic ladder means more time managing teams of people or being otherwise removed from the original work, and less time actually practicing in one's profession.

A market engineer named Trey who manages teams of engineers told me,

I...don't like the fact that I don't know how to operate that program and someone else does. I don't like the feeling of—okay, they have that one up on me. And then I feel like there could be that resentment like—okay, well, you're the manager and all but you don't know how to do that program. I'd never wanna be that—feeling like the boss person that's at the mercy of all the people that know how to work the programs and think that you're just incompetent, but you're only there because you've put in your time.

To stave off the anxiety of feeling like he is at the mercy of other people and looks incompetent Trey avoids getting “fully into the management.” When I asked him where he finds the time to both manage and practice engineering, he answered,

I guess it's just I've never really let it go. I mean, I am designing all the time, and it's more just assigning jobs to other people, but I'm always keeping my feet in it

and doing design, so I've never really lost it, I guess. It's just been a part of my day-to-day.

The biggest thing is it's hard to find the time to learn the new program, and it's not one where you can really take a class and then know it. It's that you have to work on a project and dedicate that time and struggle through it, and I feel like I don't have the time to just dedicate to that. But, I'd like to get that skill, just because that's the way things are going to and I don't wanna be left behind, and me in my mid-40's trying to figure out a program. So, in that respect—yeah, it's—I don't necessarily have the time to figure that out, and that's a frustration, I guess.

Trey is intentional to keep “his feet in it,” but remains frustrated by the fact that he cannot keep up as much as he wants to in order to feel like he can remain competent in his field. Like the majority of my respondents, Trey was fearful of complacency and atrophy.

Professionals in the new economy feel that they cannot afford to merely build singular expertise. Again, the objective of employability is not that an individual is singularly employable, but that an individual has myriad employment options. Nico, an organization engineer outlined his career advice this way:

I would say that they get into a field that you have credibility in but always diversify your portfolio. Never just have one trick. Don't be a one-trick pony. You can become a dime a dozen very quickly in this life and in society nowadays. It is too easy to blend into the populous. You need to have something. And sometimes that something isn't one strength. Sometimes it's having a lot of different things. I know people with three majors that they're working at all of them. They didn't just get three majors and only use one. You find a way to utilize all of your assets so that you can further yourself.

Nico's advice from his position in an organization strikes the same tenor as employment advice typically given to individuals who are in the new market economy to cultivate their brand (Vallas and Hill 2018) and consider themselves a business of one (a la Peters 1997). Within the new economy, the shared professional impulse towards taking charge of their job security by building their skills cannot be disentangled from the expectation of future movement. Professionals in both organizations and the market described a world of work in which frequent movement is normal.

Because professionals anticipate movement—including movement between the organization economy and the market economy—as part of a normalized conception of professional careers, they have also normalized strategies to thrive, including the continual curation and diversification of individual skills.

PERVASIVE PASSION

In the chapters that follow I will argue that adherence to the ideology of work passion is another central strategy that professionals deploy to cope with and thrive in the new economy. To justify the remainder of this dissertation's focus on the definitions and functions of work passion and the passion paradigm, in this section I present data on the overwhelming and consistent prevalence of adherence to the passion paradigm that I found in my sample.

I find that the rhetoric of work passion has tremendous resonance with professionals, superseding the structural variation built into my sample. The myriad rhetoric of work passion congeals into a consistent and coherent set of ideas about the pursuit of work passion. I refer to this ideology as the passion paradigm. Indicators of adherence to the passion paradigm (Table 3, in bold) include that most respondents believe college graduates should prioritize work passion, that the pursuit of passion best characterizes their personal orientation towards work, they believe professionals *should* be passionate about their work, and believe it is possible for *all* professionals to be passionate.

The first indicator of adherence to the passion paradigm was a multiple-choice question that I presented to respondents about mid-way through our interview (Appendix A). The question read: I think the average college graduate should prioritize work that: (A) He/she is good at, (B) He/she is passionate about, or (C) Work that is high paying. As Table 3.2 shows, 77% percent of

the professionals in my sample unequivocally answered passion, with no group falling beneath 68%. This 77% does not include those that could not choose between passion and talent (7%) nor those who chose talent or pay but added caveats like, “while you’re trying to figure out what you’re passionate about have a high paying job.” Among those who did not choose passion, 65% included this or a similar caveat indicating passion as the ultimate objective. Of those who chose talent or pay without caveat, 47% are employed in the market, 71% are male, and 88% chose talent.

The second indicator in Table 3.2 was the final question in the interview guide which asked respondents to consider four quotes and choose the one that best describes their beliefs about work (Appendix A). These quotes were selected to indicate four orientations to work—calling/meaningful, passion/fulfillment, balance/job, purpose/renown, which were teased apart as respondents discussed what they liked and disliked about each quote. Because interviewing allows the benefit of conversation, the precision of each quote was not as important as prompting respondents to reflect on various orientations to or cultures of work. This method was adapted from Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) who used paragraph descriptions in their analysis of jobs, careers, and callings. Like Wrzesniewski et al. (1997), I also found that most respondents chose their top choice easily, even while agreeing with alternative quotes in part or in full.

The most popular conception of work was passion (Figure 3.1).²²

²²**Quote 1:** “If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michaelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.’” –Martin Luther King Jr.; **Quote 2:** “You’ve got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle. As with all matters of the heart, you’ll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking. Don’t settle.” – Steve Jobs; **Quote 3:** “Work to live, don’t live to work” – Unknown; **Quote 4:** “What we have done for ourselves alone, dies with us; what we have done for others and the world, remains and is immortal.” –Albert Pike

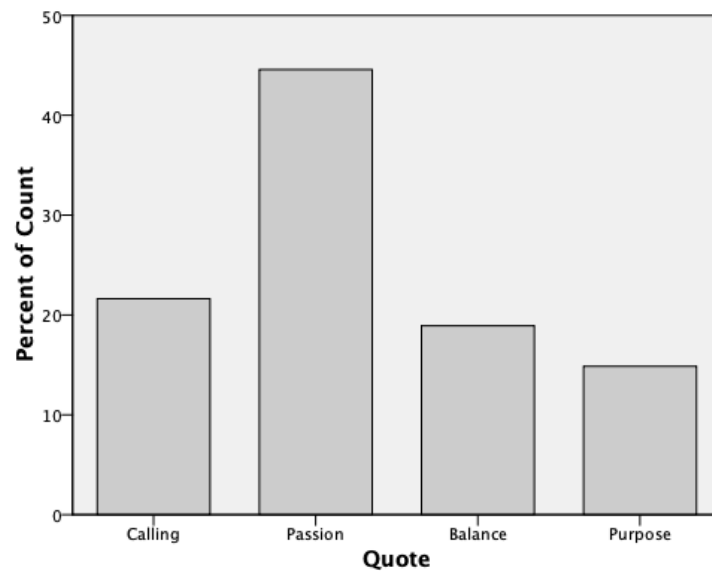


Figure 3.1: Ranking of Professional Conceptions of Work

As the second bold figure in the far-right column of Table 3.2 shows, 45% of respondents chose the famous quote by Steve Jobs, urging graduates to follow their passion. Though there is variation within the sample, passion was chosen most often in every group. Work as a calling was the second choice for the overall sample, earning 22% of the total votes. But calling was not the second choice for males or engineers, when they are isolated. Many respondents specifically identified adherence with the following section of Jobs' quote: "Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle." There are three things in this excerpt which respondents described with overwhelming consistency: purported rationality, ideal work, and agency. I argue that these are tenets of the passion paradigm, which will be expounded on in Chapters 4 and 5. However, a brief discussion of these tenets will

help explain the third and fourth indicators (that all professionals should be and that all professionals can be passionate about their work).

Respondents who adhere to the passion paradigm speak of the pursuit of passion rationally. They believe that if professionals are expected to devote so much of their lives to work, they might as well be passionate about it. A market nurse named Brooke was blunt while explaining why she chose passion in the multiple-choice question: “Because if you don’t love what you do, there’s no point.” When I asked her what she meant she replied, “Why be unhappy for the rest of your life? Even if it’s something you’re really good at and you hate it, well you shouldn’t be doing it.”

Second, in addition to believing that work passion yields happiness which ought not be forfeited during one’s working hours, adherents believe that work passion yields ideal work. Adherents to the passion paradigm believe that if they feel passionately about their work they are doing better work, and believe that if their coworkers are passionate about their work they, too, are doing better work. The dual beliefs that the pursuit of work passion is a rational pursuit of happiness and that work passion produces better work helps explain why 92% of respondents said that college educated professionals *should* be passionate about their work (third indicator, Table 3.2).

The final characteristic of the passion paradigm represented in the quote by Steve Jobs and highlighted by so many of my respondents is agency: “Don’t settle.” The vast majority (87%) of respondents believe that all college educated professionals can be passionate about their work (fourth indicator, Table 3.2).²³ Even more staggering, 78% of respondents believe that everyone can do what they love, regardless of education.²⁴ They do not believe that it is easy—to love what

²³ Additional comparisons find that 84% of first generation, 84% of non-white, and 77% of first- or second-generation immigrants believe that all college graduates can do what they love.

²⁴ There was more internal variation here: the lowest was 61% of non-white respondents, followed closely by 62% of respondents who are first- or second-generation immigrants.

you do may require a great deal of introspection, time, risk, or courage—but 87% percent of respondents believe that their peers have the power to do it. Passion as power is the argument that I make in Chapter 5 and it is a central argument that I make in this dissertation.

Table 3.2: Indicators of Adherence to the Passion Paradigm

	Male	Female	Engineer	Graphic Designer	Nurse	Less Precarious (organization)	More Precarious (market)	Sample Total
Prioritizes passion	68%	87%	75%	71%	85%	77%	77%	77%
Prioritizes talent	19%	8%	8%	21%	12%	13%	14%	14%
Prioritizes pay	5%	0%	4%	0%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Cannot prioritize	8%	5%	13%	8%	0%	8%	6%	7%
Calling	14%	30%	13%	21%	31%	23%	20%	22%
Passion as #1 conception	51%	38%	54%	50%	31%	41%	49%	45%
Balance	24%	14%	25%	8%	23%	21%	17%	19%
Purpose	11%	19%	8%	21%	15%	15%	14%	15%
Thinks professionals should be passionate	94%	90%	100%	80%	95%	94%	90%	92%
Thinks all professionals can be passionate	86%	89%	95%	83%	85%	86%	89%	87%

N=74

note: A few totals are 101% due to rounding up at .5 or above.

CONCLUSION

For professionals in the new economy, the model of postwar work is no longer expected.

The recession of secure work left an ideological vacuum for professionals looking for new ways

to conceptualize good work and imagine a social contract between employer and employee. I find that the procurement of stable, secure, and benefit laden work is no longer a top priority. Instead, I find respondents prioritize the experience of work passion as a top priority that supersedes their structural differences. Security and pay remain important to respondents who of course still have basic material needs but chasing after them has been deprioritized. In their place for many professionals is passion for work, and the fulfillment, self-improvement, and happiness work passion purports to beget. In an economic context in which security and longevity can be elusive, respondents choose a target that seems safer and more controllable: their happiness.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PASSION PARADIGM

“I should quit, because yeah, the stability is great but is my happiness, is that trade-off worth it?
I didn't feel like it was at the time.”

-Natalie Kim, organizations engineer

“I think the average college graduate should prioritize work that their passionate about. Because
if you don't love what you do, there's no point.”

-Brooke Irwin, market nurse

Gunnar Oliver is a travel nurse originally from Michigan. He got into nursing after a voice instructor in college “crushed his dreams” of pursuing music. The medical field was his second choice, but he feels “super regretful” about giving up on his dream in exchange for job security. It is the perceived job security of nursing, however, that is allowing him to pursue something else he would love: opening a Brewpub. Gunnar loves nursing. “It's great,” he said, “it's been amazing for me, it's given me money; it's given me fuel. It's showed me all these amazing places I can live. I've met some amazing people, both in the workplace and as patients. And I've learned so many different stories.” But ultimately, he wants to move on. As he told me, “It's just not what's gonna make me super happy; I don't think. It's not my happy job, it's not my, ‘Do what makes you happy. As long as you love your job. You know, everything's great.’ It's not that. Um, it's great right now, but it won't be eventually.”

Although he loves the flexibility of the 3 day/week, 12hour/day nursing schedule and the adventure that travel nursing affords him, he is willing to give them up for the prospect of ownership. He told me that he has an authority issue, and even though he loves his work, he thinks owning a business would bring him happiness he could not get working for someone else. He continued,

It's kinda that point where I'm like, "Okay," I wanna build something. I want something I own. I don't wanna work for anybody. And like, what would it be? and I think this is ... it's always been on my mind. I love beer, everywhere I go, it's my fun. I go on a hike. Or I go somewhere else and by mid-day, I'm at a brewery; and trying new beer. I'm talking to bartenders, I'm talking to brewmasters; goin to the next bar. They're telling me the places I should go, the beer I should try, what's comin' out next. And it's exciting to me, it's fun, it's colorful. To be part of that world would just be really, really awesome.

To get a brewpub going, to get clientele, to get my friends talking about my beer. Be invited to brew festivals; to be on the other side, and showing people what I love, and them loving it and buying it and just, it would just be really, really awesome. It would just be really fun.

When it comes to deciding what business to pursue, Gunnar trusts his impulse to chase what he loves: beer.

For a lot of the interview I had a hard time keeping Gunnar on the topic of his current profession. He was excited to tell me about the details of his business model and about his Cheers-like vision for a neighborhood pub (city still to be determined). When we talked about what he would be giving up to start his own business he said he would miss the flexibility, but added, “But I think I wouldn't have to seek out fun things to do if, you know, if my work is something I enjoy.” With this, Gunnar assumes that doing something that he loves for work will fill his need to do things that he loves, in general; he assumes loving his work will be satisfying enough to absorb his hobbies outside of work.

Gunnar plans to have his brewery up and running in five years. At the time of our interview he told me he was in the midst of talking to investors---which he was leaning away from—and likely to take out a business loan instead. When I asked him if he was anxious about his goals, he told me, “I mean, it brings a little stress. I think it's more exciting than anything. It's finally giving me something to do instead of just ... I mean, I've loved traveling, it's just been play for the past

two plus years... You know what, I'm done playin'. Time to settle down, and tucker down, and I wanna do something.”

Gunnar works on a neuro trauma unit, where they get a lot of car accidents and falls. The work is hard and he works hard, too. Still, he considers his current life “play” and starting his own brewery to be actually doing something. He has taken the time to build a back-up plan and save money, and he feels ready. At the end of the interview Gunnar concluded:

You need life experiences, you need to work. Because sometimes you're not able to just go for your dream job right away. You can't just do that. But...it's a large part of your life...you'd never wanna regret something in your life. And if you let opportunities go, or if you didn't work hard for the thing that you love to do; you're gonna regret it for the rest of your life. I watch people die, a lot. Number one of their regrets, every time, is they worked too much. And it's not that they worked too much, it's that they worked at a job they didn't enjoy. Because if you work at a job you enjoy and love, and it's passionate, it's not work. It's doing what you love to do.

Gunnar is an expression of the passion paradigm. He believes, like other adherents in my sample, that pursuing passion in work is a rational pursuit for individuals who are willing to fight for their life’s happiness. He believes in the power of work passion to yield a fulfilling life, and that the risks are worth it. Like other adherents, he described the pursuit of work passion as reasoned and thoughtful, not foolhardy. Though his dreams sound idyllic at times, they serve their function as a stabilizing north star in Gunnar’s life. Work passion may not come easily, and it may not come right away, but according to the passion paradigm it is a reliable and attainable goal to chase.

This chapter details the emotional experience of work passion, and the coherent set of ideas surrounding the pursuit of work passion—what I call the passion paradigm. If changes to the material structures of work have ushered us into a “new economy,” cultural scholars assume that

there must also be changes to the supporting ideological or cultural structures of work (Kunda and Ailon 2006). Extant scholarship on cultures of work among professionals who are largely considered vanguards of precarity, such as tech entrepreneurs (Ross 2003) or cultural workers in new media industries (McRobbie 2016), and emerging scholarship on the role of emotions in 21st century work (Rao and Tobias-Neely 2019) find that passion may be an important component of white-collar work in the new economy. Using data from engineers, nurses, and graphic designers who work in either less precarious contexts or more precarious contexts, I present the first emic definition of work passion as the experiences of attraction, enjoyment, motivation, and perseverance. Because I find overwhelming adherence and conceptual consistency among the professionals in my sample, I argue that the passion paradigm is an ideological work ethic or culture of work which motivates workers, while protecting structures of work in the new economy. Understanding how professionals conceptualize the experience and pursuit of work passion is a critical step both for interpreting how the culture of passion works and for analyzing its roles in structures of inequality in the labor market, for we must understand how culture works in order to effectively critique it (Illouz 2008: 4).

A culture of work which exalts and combines individual attraction, enjoyment, motivation, and perseverance produces a resilient worker who is committed to the pursuit of happiness in work via perfected self-knowledge. When individuals describe themselves as “passionate,” wearing the label as a moniker, they not only mean to signal that they are good workers and that they do good work, but also that they have tapped into the moral cache of work passion, with its alleged prized outcomes of self-realization, success, and productive contribution to society.

In Chapter 3 I demonstrated that the professionals who are in the market and professionals who are in organizations are more similar than dissimilar in how they experience work. I argued

that the structural conditions of precarity for some have yielded a culture of precarity for most, meaning that professionals experience the world of work as a precarious whether or not they are structurally precarious. The result is an ethos of uncertainty where individuals in an organization must be prepared for movement and individuals in the market must rise to the challenge of acculturating to risk. Respondents in both groups feel pressure to keep up and try to hold loosely to external loyalties. As critics of the new economy predict, professionals feel devoid of a clear one-size-fits-all model for moving through their careers, both practically and ideologically. As Sennett (1998) described, “The problem we confront is how to organize our life histories now, in a capitalism which disposes us to drift” (117). The steps are no longer made legible before them by an organization who lowers an internal ladder for them to climb, and the relationship that one is supposed to cultivate with work is made murky by a broken social contract between institutions and employers.

It is in this ideological and practical void that the passion paradigm offers a solution—a new north star. For adherents to the passion paradigm, the passion paradigm offers a legible ideology of work that is compatible with the precarious new economy. It dictates loyalty to one’s happiness as a rational, achievable, and secure pursuit. This chapter serves as a foundational introduction to the passion paradigm, which I will expand on in subsequent chapters. How the passion paradigm serves individuals will be the main argument in Chapter 5, and how the passion paradigm serves institutions of work (and effects men and women differently) will be the main arguments in Chapters 6 and 7. I begin this chapter by defining the dynamic concept work passion according to the patterned ways respondents talk about it. From there I introduce the components of the passion paradigm, together creating what I call the logic of the passion paradigm.

THE DEFINITION OF WORK PASSION

I found overwhelming similarity in the ways in which engineers, graphic designers, and nurses in both more precarious (market) and less precarious (organization) institutional contexts adhered to and talked about work passion. Again, although I do find small variation between groups as sociologists of work, gender, and organizations would expect, in this dissertation I focus on the broad agreement between groups in service of detailing the passion paradigm as an ideological work ethic which promotes the normative and rational benefits of pursuing work passion. In order to fully understand how the passion paradigm perpetuates structural inequalities future research will need to investigate nuanced variation in beliefs about and expressions of work passion. However, in order to effectively critique an ideology of work it is first necessary to understand what it is.

All respondents used four central characteristics to describe what they meant by work passion: attraction, enjoyment, motivation, and perseverance. As with other dynamic concepts, these four characteristics became apparent and were clarified in varied discussions throughout our interview, suggesting that individual facets of work passion are highlighted or become more salient in particular contexts or circumstances, and downplayed in others. While in a given context an individual might use the term ‘passion’ to convey one or more aspects, as an ideology of work passion the passion paradigm includes all four. This dynamism helps distinguish the passion paradigm from other prominent work ethics, such as a calling, in which individuals might feel attracted to their work or find it meaningful, but not enjoy it. As respondents told me, to feel attracted to one’s work does not necessarily mean that someone is happy doing it. This distinction is important—it helps explain a distaste among respondents for the concept of a calling which is associated with attraction, but less with the prized experiences of agency and enjoyment. For

example, a market nurse named Kyle told me that he does not believe in a calling “because that would mean that there's destiny and a pre-determined kind of thing, which I don't necessarily believe in. I like to think that I can chart my own course. I don't think there's some supernatural thing driving me toward anything in particular. It's, you know—I think it's all about choice.” The concept of choice is central to the passion paradigm.

Altogether, professionals’ definition of work passion illustrates how deeply individualistic the concept is, with an almost myopic emphasis on individual fit, happiness, and success. Coupled with other beliefs about work passion (encapsulated by the passion paradigm), this individualistic orientation ultimately protects structures of work in the new economy because it detracts from communal orientations and diminishes one’s ability to see mismatches, unhappiness, or failures as structural. I will expand on the depoliticizing nature of the passion paradigm in Chapter 7.

Attraction

Attraction refers to how respondents define work passion as an internal compulsion which is experienced as somewhat out of one’s control, as if orchestrated by an external force. A market nurse named Darren told me, passion is “something that you feel drawn to, something that you're connected to, something that is almost innate. I feel like passion comes from within, and it's already built into something.” This feeling of innate connection led others to discuss passion with phrases like “something in the soul” or a “deep concern” for the work.

For some, the source of their attraction was known. Respondents often traced attraction to their profession back to early exposure. Several engineers in my sample came from a line engineers in the family. An organization nurse named Kevin told me that he pursued nursing because he had a brother who passed away at age 11, when Kevin was 13. His brother was a hemophiliac and

was regularly in and out of the hospital to receive blood. He summarized, “He contracted HIV because this was back in the eighties before HIV was even heard of. [The HIV suppressed] his immune system and he contracted histoplasmosis which is a fungal infection that... affected his lungs.” He went on:

There was a girl named Suzy, she was a nurse. She would come out and give him his medication and she worked with home health, and she just made him feel like he wasn't sick, like he was just like a little kid. As I grew older, I realized how impressive that was, to take somebody who was so sick and make them forget about being sick and just make them feel like a kid. So, that was my inspiration to become a nurse.

These individuals discussed their career choices as stemming from the conditions they were born into, or experiences early in life.

For others, the source of their attraction is unknown. A market engineer named Udall talked about just feeling “drawn to something,” adding that someone might be able to identify what they are drawn to by thinking about what they have a desire to learn about. When the source of their attraction was unknown respondents would say things like, “I just always liked...” or that they always felt an “overwhelming magnetic draw.” Darren, from above, used to be a financial planner. Although the money was good, he “hated every minute of it.” He soon quit to pursue nursing, citing “I was always drawn to science, I was always drawn to medicine. I like just being able to see people get better, being part of that process.” This element of work passion is what—although it is subject to change—seems to precede the work itself.

Attraction is the element that individuals search themselves for on their quest to find work that they love. As an organization graphic designer named Nick quipped, “If it wasn’t something that you were drawn to already, how deep can you ever really love something that you weren’t naturally attracted to?” Attraction is the characteristic of work passion that brings an individual to their field of work to begin with, before they even know how much they will actually like it. It is

the ideological component that makes an individual feel bound, creating, as a market engineer named Karmen told me, “a feeling that you have to be—that you should be doing something.”

On its own, the characteristic of attraction does not mean that individuals like the work or feel that the work produces their optimal happiness, it merely means that they care about it, or feel drawn to it. Brittany, an organization graphic designer, told me that her grandma always said that Brittany got the genes of her grandma’s sister, the artist in the family. Brittany explained finding work that “feels natural” with a metaphor: “it’s like writing with your left hand if you’re right-handed. It doesn’t come naturally to you, but when you pick up the pen with your right hand it just flows.” An organization nurse named Bethany similarly asserted that she knows that she is doing the work she should be when her “whole body system just agrees with it. It’s like yes. Positive feelings, nothing negative, it’s like everything feels right, so this is what I’m supposed to be doing.” Work passion as attraction is about work that feels right, satisfying what respondents describe as their individual wiring.

Enjoyment

Enjoyment refers to how respondents define work passion as liking or even loving their work. An organization graphic designer named Lisa told me that she defines work passion as “pure enjoyment.” She went on, “It’s just like, you’re working really hard at something that you—you’re doing it because you want to.” Distinct from the almost involuntary magnetism of attraction, enjoyment describes the pleasing emotional experience of intentional engagement with work that ‘fits.’ Work passion as enjoyment means individuals look forward to going into work and feel gratified by it. As Shane, a market engineer, told me, passion means work is more than just 8am-5pm, more than a job. When one enjoys their work, they might “think about it 24/7” or “forget the

time” while working. This creates conditions in which the line between work and home is blurred. Even if an individual is physically home, a market engineer named Urania represented how this blurring occurs when she used the following questions to define passion: “Are you excited to do it? Does it keep you up at night? Do you think about it when your husband's talking to you about something you're not interested in, you know, is it something that you're thinking about all the time? Is it something that you're thinking about when you don't need to be?”

Kyle, a market nurse, defined passion as the “heart” and the “zest and the zeal.” A market graphic designer named Uriah provided this example about working on material for a music event:

I am scouring the Internet for inspiration ideas, and I started coming up with something really good. While I’m working I get excited about it, and I keep having to stand up and walk around...and I feel this surge of emotion where I’m excited, excited about working but...there’s a hesitation to continue to chip away at it...oh is it done yet, it’s not done yet? This whole interplay, this dance that you have with the media, I feel like that’s passion. I think it’s an interplay between you and the work where you are somehow affected by it emotionally and mentally and you’re affected by the ability that you have to change it. When I say I’m passionate about it that means I really enjoy working on it.

The “interplay” or “dance” between an individual and their work is what others described as being fully engaged or engrossed in their task. This is what organizational scholars call flow.

Enjoyment captures how individuals describe work passion as transforming work into something that individuals want to do because they really like it—they are “stoked to go do [it].” It means that for the most part work feels energizing, not enervating. An organization engineer named Chris described that work passion produces “a bubbly feeling...that’s uplifting.” He recalled engineers he has worked with who exuded this characteristic of work passion; “The equations would literally speak to them,” he told me, “They could look at this long math equation and see not just letters and numbers but how to design a better functioning part. I would look at that equation and I could graph it and see a curve, but they would see opportunities.” When I asked

another organization engineer named Nico to describe his professional goals he told me a story about one morning when he was walking through a project site with a passionate “buddy:” “We were right by the ocean because we were on a diesel plant and the sun was – it was picturesque. And he just– he just took in a deep breath and he was just like God, I love the smell of wet dirt in the morning. And some engineers, they just – they love the equipment, they love the smell of like construction and everything.” The aspect of passion that Nico was describing in this passionate engineer was pure enjoyment.

Chris went on to describe work for these former co-workers as “natural,” enabling them to “rise to the occasion without even trying.” This ease of work is not necessarily a reflection of talent, but an expression that someone found their “niche” or “groove,” as Lisa, an organization graphic designer, quipped. This enjoyment “niche” is distinct from attraction because, as respondents told me, to feel attracted to or to care about one’s work does not necessarily mean that someone is happy doing it. This distinction was an important component of what I found to be a fundamental distaste among respondents for the concept of a ‘calling’ which was more associated with attraction, but less with the prized experiences of enjoyment and power.

This became most apparent in the final questions of the interview when I asked respondents to consider four quotes, select which one best represents their orientation to work, and talk me through each one. The first was a quote from Martin Luther King which read: “If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michaelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.'”

Respondents resonated with the concept of a calling to the extent that people feel connected to their work and therefore feel compelled to perform good work but rejected the notions of a fixed

calling or being “stuck,” stuck in something that you do not enjoy or stuck in general. Organization engineer, Nico, rejected the MLK quote right away, citing “Definitely not 1. [it’s] pretty much saying this is who you are and just be amazing at it, but like I said before, I think you should do everything, diversify your portfolio, don’t stick to one thing.” Similarly, an organization graphic designer named Dario recommends being good at a lot of things. “I feel like more of a fulfillment would be good okay on a lot of things as opposed to like be the best at one thing, you know, like that’s a more well-rounded person I would think.” An organization nurse named Freddie responded, “I don’t really believe in a calling. I mean if you love being a street sweeper, then do it as Beethoven composed music, but if you don’t love it then do something different. It’s not necessarily like you’re [compelled] to do this.” Respondents got tripped up on the quote because there was disbelief that the street-sweeper could like their work—even if they felt called. “So Martin Luther King,” an organization graphic designer named Brittany started, “I mean this kind of goes with what we first talked about as your calling and, you know, you should do 100 percent, but does the street sweeper love doing his job?” Attraction absent of enjoyment and agentic growth is not enough. Adherents to the passion paradigm want to perceive work as something that is unfixed and unfinished—something that agentic individuals have the power to craft, enjoy, and find success in.

Motivation

Motivation refers to how respondents define work passion as being motivated to thrive in work. They describe passion’s value as its power to animate growth, equating passion with “inspiration,” “focus,” “drive,” “purpose,” “hunger,” “investment” and “curiosity.” Passion as motivation is the stick-with-it-ness component. According to my respondents, work passion is the

key ingredient of growth and longevity in any given job. As a market graphic designer named Nina described, passion makes you relentless, you'll keep going. "It's like...a child learning to walk," she told me, "they don't stop walking because they fall so many times, right?" Her metaphor conveys a pervasive sentiment among my respondents that work passion means an individual will want to learn and develop—to reach higher. An organizations engineer named Nathan stated, "If you don't have passion for it you don't really—nothing will drive you to want to do it."

Passion as motivation is the primary explanation for why adherents to the passion paradigm believe passionate workers yield better work. While explaining why he believes individuals should be passionate about their work, a market nurse named Kyle told me about ER doctors who use the internet to learn about the disease process on the spot and surgeons who rely on open textbooks while performing a procedure. According to Kyle, it is passion that motivates these professionals to learn and build their practical expertise. Passion provides the "reason to look further into it to better yourself." As an organization engineer named Olivia explained,

I just think it's very important to have the drive to get up every day and go to work and have something to look forward to. And I think you'll be more successful at your job if you do that. Um than if you did something that you didn't like for money or you were just good at it. To be passionate about your work, I would think that you want to always continue to grow and to be better.

Passion as motivation is the characteristic that propels individuals forward, not only through time but also in skill. Most respondents described passion as more sustaining and inspiring than money or talent. They described the relationship between work passion and good work linearly, whereas talent and money eventually plateau or may even become parabolic in the cases of burn out, disengagement, or quitting. A market engineer named Odella told me, "if you're passionate about [your work] then you're going to be more motivated to do well...[money] will be a factor

but it won't be the main factor of what job choice you choose." When I asked her to clarify why that is good, she replied,

Oh, because if things change, like for example the economy could go down and then pay can be adjusted or you might not get a raise every year or however often, things like that, but that won't affect your production or your contribution to what you're doing. And it won't affect how you see the work that you're doing. So, if you're passionate about it you can keep yourself motivated because you like doing what you're doing and you want to continue to do it. And I don't think that is going to be replaced by any external factors 'cause it's mostly – it's all kind of internal.

Rather than depending on external variables, which are out of one's control, the emotional experience of work passion is internal. If one's primary motivation for working hard and working well is internal, it is considered safer from the vicissitudes of the market. Even if the market remains stable, money's ability to motivate may falter. In the long run therefore, work passion encourages continued devotion to a job well done.

Perseverance

Perseverance refers to how respondents define work passion as an effective antidote to work's inevitable un-pleasantries. I found this characteristic most surprising; I assumed that those who adhere to a Do What You Love mantra and promote the passion paradigm would sound particularly optimistic or idealistic about work. Instead, most respondents described work passion less as work that one spends their days laboring joyfully in, and more as a powerful emotional advantage to better endure the various hardships of work. They talked about the power of passion to protect them from or sustain them through unfavorable and sometimes even bleak work circumstances. A market nurse named Delia told me, "having a passion for [work] just helps you kind of get through, like wake up easier and get through the shifts;" a market engineer named Don told me that without it work "would be really hard and it would be really draining and it probably

wouldn't last very long;" an organization graphic designer named Kurt told me that without work passion, "I would be in a dire place right now emotionally." The passion paradigm as an ideology of work implies that work is at times enervating, un-sustaining, and even ruinous for the human spirit.

Respondents repeatedly described passion as a remedy. Without it, "you'll get bored," or "you'll be unhappy." Some aspects of work—the long hours, the bad manager, the annoying co-workers, the below market pay—would not be worth it or tolerable if not for the existence of passion. One aspect of work which many respondents described as a draining job requirement is the expectation that employees are emotionally engaged. Nico, an organization engineer, told me that he did not even like engineering when he first started but quickly realized that he needed to develop his passion. He told me: "I think it takes a very strong-willed person to do something every day that they're not passionate about. It can lead into resentment and depression and feelings of neglect, so you have to love what you do. Nobody works those hours without feeling something. I think you have to find that passion or else it will eat you alive." He added that he believes it is the same with every job.

A market engineer named Diego shared a similar sentiment when he said passion "will get you through some tough nights." When respondents talked about passion as perseverance, they defined passion as an emotional crutch. Without it the hours, the inconsistencies, and the unsavory people would "eat [you] alive." Ulesi, an organization engineer added failure to the list. As she explained why she feels like passionate workers are better workers she said, "I think that passion drives you through failure. I mean... Everyone's got a fear of failing. But it's whether or not you just plow through it regardless of the outcome and usually that, that relates back to how passionate

you are about the goal.” As Ulesi put it, passion gives employees the strength to “plow through,” particularly when work gets hard.

The pervasive sentiment among adherents to the passion paradigm in my sample is that work is just that, work. Though 95% of respondents reported that most days they like or love their work, this does not mean that they always like their work. Respondents ventured that they like their jobs 50-70% of the day—describing a large percentage of their work as unpleasant, frustrating, boring, or unfulfilling. Kurt, an organization graphic designer, told me that at least 70% of the time he feels “great and capable;” he “enjoys” his work, and considers it “rewarding.” Nevertheless, he tells me that every job is going to have its “shit sandwich”—a phrase he borrowed from an audio book he and his wife listened to called *Big Magic*.

Passion as perseverance confronts the idealistic notion that it is possible to “do what you love and never work a day in your life”—as the motivational saying goes. Rather than describing work passion as an ideal experience in which work no longer feels like work, most respondents were realistic about work always feeling like work. Though work passion does reflect better work, as the characteristics above describe, it is important to note that the experience of work passion is not the absence of work grievances and that the passion paradigm as an ideology of work does not deny the drudgery of work. Instead, professionals in my sample perceive that passion will equip them with a higher tolerance for the inevitable things they will not like about their work. It is this aspect of work passion, perhaps, that has the greatest potential for exploitation. Not only can organizations leverage work passion to squeeze more hours out of their employees, when employees perceive that a solution to poor working conditions is to find and rely on one’s passion organizations are absolved from structural critique and structural change.

THE IDEOLOGY OF WORK PASSION: THE PASSION PARADIGM

The passion paradigm follows the logic that full-time work takes up a large portion of our working lives—at least 40 hours of every week—and that work absent of enjoyment is an egregious and unnecessary sacrifice. As a logical solution, work passion is proposed to ameliorate the drudgery of work and increase one's overall happiness. Workers are incentivized to take control of their own happiness, which the passion paradigm dictates must be individually tailored according to individual circumstances, needs, and predilections. How the passion paradigm individualizes professional work is the topic of the next chapter. In this chapter, the key is that as an ideology the passion paradigm insists that everyone has the power to pursue work in which they feel more attraction, enjoyment, motivation, and perseverance—each aspect fluctuating like a pulley system to accommodate the context. How one feels emotionally is seen as the engine which prompts or ceases movement. As an organization nurse named Fiona told me, “I feel like [passion] is my motivation. It's what keeps me at my job now, it's what will motivate me to move to other jobs or do other things, it's what made me want to do nursing in the first place.” The result is a self-regulated workforce that shoulders the risks and emotional labor of managing emotions, job crafting, perspective shifting, and changing careers as perceived routes to a more enjoyable relationship to work; an argument which I will take up in Chapter 7.

Passion as a Rational Pursuit: The Logic of the Passion Paradigm

The passion paradigm promotes the following logic: individuals want to be happy → individuals should prioritize the maximization of their personal happiness → work takes up an

incredible amount of our lives → experiencing passion in work yields individual happiness, which spills out to nourish relationships and both work and nonwork activities → therefore, individuals should prioritize the pursuit of work passion as a logical strategy in the pursuit of happiness in life. Respondents demonstrated adherence to this logic by describing happiness as their priority, work as inevitable, work passion as a viable route to individual happiness, culminating with the notion that doing what you love is a rational life pursuit.

Happiness as a Priority in Life

Over and over again respondents told me that their goal in life was to be happy. I heard this answer when I asked about their professional goals, their definitions of good work, their definitions of success, and even their definition of the American Dream. When I asked Delfina (market graphic designer), Fisher (organization nurse), and Diego (market engineer) their definitions of the American Dream they respectively replied, “I think that’s finding happiness,” “For me, to be happy,” “Freedom to do what you want. Pursue your own happiness.”

Trey is a market engineer at a small contracting firm. He told me that when he found his current job he had just finished backpacking in Europe and was more focused on getting a job than really thinking about what his passions were. He feels fortunate about where he landed but admits “I can’t say I absolutely love it.” He went on, “The goal is to wanna to go to work every day and love your job so that you’re not actually working and you’re still happy, but definitely not there, but I’m not unhappy either.” A little later, Trey reflected he does indeed like what he does, and that he takes pride in the fact that he builds things you can look at (a common source of satisfaction for engineers). He pointed to a building across the street from the Whole Foods Market we were sitting outside. “Like that restaurant right there on the corner, the winery. I did all the mechanical

engineering for that.” He proceeded to talk to me for a few minutes about various buildings around town that he has worked on, which make him feel good. “But,” he concluded, “I guess my ultimate goal is just...life happiness and just being content, which I think I’ve gotten overall. I don’t know.” Trey wrestled with whether he loved his work or not, and whether that was important for his overall goal of happiness in life.

Trey’s ambivalence is related to a common rejoinder that I heard from respondents: ultimately, as long as individuals were happy it really did not matter if an individual loved their work. The general consensus among adherents of the passion paradigm was that it is challenging *to be happy* in life if one is not happy in work, but respondents did not deny the possibility. The point was about experiencing happiness. If happiness could be achieved outside of work or despite less than ideal working situations, great.

My conversation with Ulesi, an organization engineer, helps demonstrate this. After Ulesi told me that she believes college graduates should prioritize work that they are passionate about she stated that being passionate is “definitely a plus” and produces better workers, but clarified she does not think that is true for everyone in their careers. When I asked her to clarify who the people are that she feels like do not need to be passionate about their work we had the following conversation:

Ulesi: Well, coming from experience, I mean I've had jobs growing up working in fast food, or working front office at a dental health office where I showed up every day. It was mechanical. I could care less whether or not I worked there, or at another place. So I don't really think that passion is required there if you're just kind of showing up and going through the motion just to get your paycheck, and if that's your end goal, and you don't really care about the rest, or you're not really going for a career, you're satisfied with just having a job, I don't really think that passion is a requirement.

LJD: That's interesting. So what is the threshold, or, at what point does passion become, uh, either desirable or required or, you know, necessary to do good work? Like how do you draw those lines?

Ules: I think it's very gray and I think it's very dependent upon an individual's personality. So if you've got passion for something, it's really going to drive you to want more, it's going to give you that hunger to go out and try harder, or you know, go back to school, or try and advance by getting a new job, etc., and regardless of the field, honestly. Having that passion I think makes you pursue more and, and go further. Where folks that maybe not have that passion are fine sitting where they're at, or whatever they're doing.

LJD: And when you say that it makes you go further, like gives you a hunger to kind of want more, um, do you mean like that, that these people will end up making more money, or like in more lucrative careers ultimately?

Ules: I think that would be a byproduct of becoming successful in a traditional field like engineering, but I mean, that's not to say that someone that's passionate about art and pushes themselves further, goes to school for, you know, goes to art school, then comes out of it and, and is going to be a millionaire someday. I mean, they may never sell anything, but they may be happy.

LJD: So I don't know if you were actually talking about yourself, but someone who does the paperwork for a dental office, would you look at someone like that and say, you know, like, "Don't just settle for this job that you don't care about. You should be passionate about your work, you should find something that you're passionate about?"

Ules: Uh, well, that, that was actually me. I did do that job for a number of years. (Laughs). Again, it's dependent. I don't think that there's just a line in the sand and you would say to someone working in that job, "Hey, you can do better. You should do better. I want to encourage you to do better." Um, I worked with some people in a front office environment that absolutely loved it. They worked at a private office, had the same job for 30 years or more working for the same doctor, or the same dentist, and it became family to them. So showing up to work every day in the office may not have been really financially lucrative, but it fulfilled something in them that was more based on relationships.

LJD: Hmm.

Ules: So I wouldn't tell someone like that, "Hey, you know what? You can really do better than this," because for them that, that might be their, their end goal, that might be where they want to be. For me, it just wasn't the case.

LJD: Right, so, but those people it sounds like they did have passion. They did like it. But like if there was someone sitting next to you at that desk and, you know, he or she was just kind of like, "Whatever. Like I don't really

like it here. I don't get much out of this, but like ... Such is life. So is work." You know, would you feel compelled to say, "No, you should like your job more?"

Ulesi: Yeah I mean, I might ask, "What, what's keeping you back from being happy?" Like, "What do you want, dude? If, if you're unhappy here, what do you want to do?" ... So it's kind of dependent on the person and what your goals are and what your motivations are. But, yeah, if someone came into work every day and just didn't care, or wasn't happy, I would probably ask them like, "Hey, if you're not happy here, what would make you happy?"

What respondents, like Ulesi, kept coming back to was happiness. If individuals consider their work as a means to an end but they are happy, great. If someone is happy being passionate about their work even if it does not make very much money, great. The central problem that respondents identified was unhappiness. For adherents of the passion paradigm, however—which includes the vast majority of my sample, happiness in life was perceived as connected to happiness in work, and the best route to happiness in work was the experience of feeling passionate about one's work.

Work is Inevitable

The next step in the logic of the passion paradigm are the beliefs that for most people work is inevitable and that it takes up an incredible amount of time in one's relatively brief life. This is what Weeks (2011) calls the reification of work, whereby "the fact that...one must work to earn a living is taken as part of the natural order rather than a social convention" (3). If work is reified as inevitable, if individuals want to live happy lives on the whole, and if work is a large proportion of one's life, then it is sensible to prioritize happiness in work. Respondents expressed that work is inevitable in two ways: 1) as a practical necessity; 2) as a central life activity. First, at some point when I asked respondents what work gives to them, what they think the purpose of work is or why they work, they noted pecuniary necessity. "You need to make money, you need to pay

bills, you need to support your family,” an organization nurse named Pablo told me. “[Work] gives me money obviously. That’s important. We have bills to pay,” a market graphic designer named Nels told me. After stating that she “absolutely thinks” people need to fulfill whatever they need to do to feel happy every day in their career, organization engineer Olivia noted, “But on a realistic side, you have to be able to support yourself, right? You can’t just not make money and survive.” Hence, the first and most obvious reason why work is regarded as inevitable is because most professionals have to sustain their material needs via working wages.

The second, perhaps less obvious reason that respondents regarded work as inevitable is because they view work as an activity that is central to what it means to be human. These beliefs became apparent when money was side-lined and we talked more directly about what motivates individuals to work, if it is not money. Two particularly illustrative questions in the interview guide were “Do you think work should be about more than making a living” and “If you won the lottery or otherwise did not have financial needs, do you think you’d still work”—which often followed the first question as a follow up. Some voiced that they would still work because they perceived the alternative to working as boredom; they had a hard time imagining what they could possibly do with their lives absent of work. When I asked him if he wished he worked less, Gunnar, the travel nurse soon-to-be brewpub owner introduced at the top of this chapter replied, “I’d get bored out of my mind after a couple weeks or so. I’ve taken time off work, and there’s been times where I’m like, ‘Uh, I’m ready go back to work.’ Um, to have that fulfillment, to have that, you know, you need to do something.” Laura, a market graphic designer, shared the same sentiment verbatim when she stated why she would still work if she did not have to: “I would be bored out of my mind.” A market engineer named Odella told me that the first thing work provides her is something

to do every day. Also using vacation time to imagine what life without work might be like, she went on,

I know that if I did not have a job or a career then I would be getting very bored. Like say there was an extended weekend or something where I took maybe 3, 4 or even 5 days off of work. I'd start to feel like okay, well yeah, I really want to do something other than what I'm doing now because I'm feeling like I need to get back to work kind of thing.

For some respondents the notion that life without work would be unnervingly boring is due to the fact that work provides structure; it tells workers how to spend their time. As critical feminist Kathi Weeks (2011) argued, Americans have developed a work society whereby working for wages is taken as natural order.

However, when I pressed respondents to think about whether they answered that they would still work if they did not have to because they needed some structured activity to stave off boredom or if there was something valuable about the act of work itself, many respondents expressed that being a productive member of society is connected to their value as humans. After a market nurse named Lilly told me that work provides structure, something to do, she then asked me rhetorically,

What would you do if you didn't have to go in and do something? Would you sit around all day? Would you run errands all day? Would you play music all day? Would you go to the beach all day? I feel like you take for granted your free time if you have too much of it, so having some kind of structure, I feel like, is kind of gives you a purpose, gives you something to do, like—I need structure. I don't know. I just think I would be bored without having something to feel like I have a purpose.

The structure that work provides is not just material or practical, but emotional and moral. The structure of work provides people with a sense of purpose.

Respondents also talked about work as a meritocratic act, rendering one deserving of reward. Daryle, a market nurse, told me that he would get quickly bored without work. He went

on to say that getting stuff without working for it leaves a void. “What are you doing for [that stuff]?” he asked, “I come from a very hardworking family. So, they've always told me, ‘Hey, just put the time and the work in, you'll be a happy person.’ That goes back to when I say, it gives me a sense of purpose to be working.” An organization graphic designer named Cody shared a similar sentiment that the value of work is inbred when he said,

I think that type of dedication was instilled in me from a young age, but I think that there is a certain level of like happiness in just being active and doing stuff, and if you can do stuff that actually like helps people or do stuff that like solves problems, that that is naturally rewarding so, you know, I think that if you were just born with tons of money and didn't have to work that you probably would be pretty challenge to be happy, you know.

What these professionals articulated is that they view work as inevitable not just because the economic system of capitalism requires individuals to work, but because they believe there is something deeply valuable about working. A market engineer named Eric told me that if he found a job that he was passionate about that gave him freedom he would probably work until he died. “It's not as if I'm doing this [work] only because I want to put food on my table,” he told me, “I mean it's also like an itch that I need to scratch creatively.” Farah, a market graphic designer, described working just to make money as “soul killing.” Danny, an organization graphic designer told me,

I think if I didn't work and I didn't express my passion in art I would not be living... And I don't ever want to view work as something that is mandatory for me or is a burden to me. Because then I feel I've lost the passion for it and it will just affect everything else around me. So I feel my work is my life essentially. And the passion that I have for my work shapes my life. So in a sense, I'm working to live.

For the most part, professionals imagined work as an inevitable part of their lives not just because it has to be, but because they want it to be. They viewed the activity of work as essential. The implications of this essentialized compulsion to work will be discussed in Chapter 7, as individual beliefs in the inherent value of hard work mitigate institutional burdens to motivate their

employees. For now, the important point is that professionals tend to regard work as an inevitable activity in their life.

Life is Short, Do What You Love

The syllogism in the logic of the passion paradigm culminates with a deep belief that work passion pays dividends of happiness for yourself, and those around you. The desire for happiness in general coupled with the inevitability and time commitment of work yields the logical conclusion that individuals who want to be happy should pursue happiness in their work. Happiness, or enjoyment, was a primary benefit to the pursuit of passion that respondents cited. The intimacy with which respondents described the relationship between work passion and happiness made them difficult to disentangle. While most respondents believed that it is possible that someone live their happiest life without achieving passion at work, as discussed above, the logic of the passion paradigm suggests that achieving passion in work is a logical, feasible, and effective strategy for achieving happiness in life.

Olivia, an organization engineer, described the logic of the passion paradigm this way:

To hear that people don't like their job and they just continue to do it, that's really hard for me to understand because you live this life once, and I can't imagine not living it to the fullest and being happy. [Pick something you're passionate about.] You have to do something that you enjoy and that fills the void of a job. You have to have a job to provide for yourself, so in turn you need to find something you like.

The experience of work passion is promoted as a sensible strategy to a full and happy life. In part, this is because adherents believed so deeply that being passionate about one's work produces an abundance of happiness. Diego, a market engineer, used the metaphor of a lightbulb to describe the effects of work passion. "This person works in this freaking job, [he] doesn't really shine," he began, "Imagine if you stuck that person in just the right socket and it's like boom, this is your

self-actualized freaking awesomeness, you know what I mean. It's just – it's tragic to think that that person won't ever find it. If you put the right person in the right place, I think they would just whew.” After telling me that this kind of self-actualizing work is what he wants for everyone he told me about an exemplary archeologist that he works with:

Diego: He has a total beater of a car, has a small apartment, but the guy is freaking alive when he's talking about dinosaurs. Like alive. I was excited to meet him, he's very passionate about what he does. He's been there 12 years, and he's very well-liked. He doesn't get paid a lot, but he loves it, you know. I'm very happy for him.

LJD: What's the distinction between being passionate about something versus passionate about your work?

Diego: I think that magic can happen. You spend so much time at work, I think if you can marry the two, that's just gold. That's fantastic, because work is one of the few things that have to do whether we like it or not. Now imagine if you could line that up with something that you loved, oh my God, that would be – it's gold.

Along with the dividend of happiness, respondents almost invariably cited the amount of time given to work when justifying their belief that individuals should pursue work that they are passionate about. If work is inevitable, and work takes up so much time, individuals who want to be happy should pursue work that makes them happy. To achieve this, as Diego quipped, is gold. Consider the following conversation with Odella, a market engineer:

LJD: But do you think that work should be more than just a paycheck to people?

Odella: Yeah, I believe that. I think that you should have a desire to do what you're doing and that you should – because you're going to be spending so much of your time, I mean 8 hours a day, and if you have 8 hours of sleep and you're spending another 8 hours doing something else, but that's always broken up into a bunch of different things, so if you're then spending a big chunk of your day at work then you might as well make it something that you enjoy because you don't want to stop living because you walked through the door of your office.

LJD: So, if you're just working for a paycheck you look at that as stopping living?

Odella: Not necessarily but I look at it as like a point of your day that you're not happy or that you're not enjoying, and I think that that's a problem.

Later in the interview, when Odella was explaining why she chose the quote by Steve Jobs as her number one (Appendix A), Odella told me that in the portion of her graduate school application that asked for her theme and purpose she wrote, "find something you love to do and you'll never have to work a day in your life." Odella, like other adherents to the passion paradigm, believe that pursuing passion in work is the more sensible way to live.

The benefits of work passion are also purported to serve not just individual happiness, but also the happiness of those who surround them. The vast majority of my respondents agreed with the notion that what happens at work has substantive and immaterial effects on a workers' broader life. As Don, a market engineer, stated, "I've always thought of work and life are basically inseparable unless you can, you know, avoid the work altogether. I think our whole lives should be about being better people, whatever it is that we engage in." What Don means here is that work, like other activities in life, should serve the development of one's person, which of course effects life outside of work. Work and life cannot be separated.

This has been the topic of a huge body of literature, which has largely nullified the thesis that work and home are separate spheres. Data show that toxic workplaces and stress can spillover to negatively impact home and social lives (Bunderson and Thompson 2009). Inversely, happiness in work can spillover to increase positive affect at home (Bakker and Geurts 2004; Ilies et al. 2009). Studies on work passion, specifically, find that obsessive or negative passion yields "negative emotions," "inflexible persistence," and "interferes with achieving a balanced, successful life", while harmonious or positive passion yields motivation and well-being both during and after the task (Vallerand et al 2003: 756). Studies have also shown that an emotional

culture of companionate love at work can positively impact employees, their clients, and in some cases even the clients' family (Barsade and O'Neill 2014). These data suggest that because the boundary between work and home is porous, an employee's emotional experience at work not only affects their own psychological well-being, but also the well-being of those around them. Knowing this, management scholars recommend that individuals who like their work actively integrate work and family roles, while individuals who do not like their work actively segment their work and family roles (Ilies et al. 2009:100). These strategies rely on individual awareness of spillover, as well as individual ability to craft strategies of integration and segmentation.

None of my interview questions directly asked about work family conflict or interference. Nevertheless, for the most part, the professionals in my sample agreed that the separation between work and home is tenuous, and that strong emotions at work—for better or worse—would spill over into other areas of life. According to adherents, avoiding negative spillover and gaining positive spillover were major bonuses in the pursuit of work passion. To begin, negative spillover was a criterion by which respondents assessed whether individuals should change their work situations. When I was talking with Uriah, a market graphic designer, about whether someone should quit their job if they are unhappy, he stated:

You should only quit if it really impedes upon your daily happiness when you're outside of work. So if your work life is kind of shit while you're at work but it's still something that you're good at and you're somewhat passionate about it I guess then you just kind of take it for what it is. Maybe you can find another position in another company doing that very same thing that may foster a slightly better life or a happier life for you. But I think if you are unhappy with your work life while you're not at work that's a huge red flag.

What Uriah and others talked about was an inability to compartmentalize work from life. Individuals should know that it is time to make a change when they find that how they feel about work is negatively affecting their attitudes or behavior outside of work. This was the recommended

litmus test for knowing when unhappiness with work reaches a level that can be considered too much unhappiness with work. A market nurse named Whitney demonstrated this. When trying to discern whether it was time to quit a job, she said, “I think it depends on how much they don’t like it. If it’s making them depressed, yes, definitely ‘cause that’s affecting their life outside of work.” As another example, an organizations engineer named Lynn told me that negative spillover was precisely what led her to quit her last job: “it depends on how it wears on you, like in myself that last job I had really wore on me and I was taking it home too much, and I thought that was a big problem.” Lynn failed her litmus test, which was “as long as you can go home and be cool with your family and you can deal with it, that’s fine.” If negativity at work cannot be compartmentalized, however, it is time to move on.

Many suggested that because professionals tend to be more connected to their work and spend more time doing it, compartmentalization is especially difficult and work emotions necessarily bleed over. This is corroborated by work scholars who have found that professionals, especially high-status professionals with strong commitments and emotional connections to work, are more likely to experience work and family as blurred (Blair-Loy 2003; Shieman et al. 2009). This blurring has also been noted as standard practice in new media work where the culture of informality translates into a feeling that “the entire self is a work project”—never off (Gill 2010:15). Gregg (2008) called the feeling that one is never totally away from work the ‘compulsory sociality’ of the neoliberal workplace.

Market engineer Karmen told me that during college she was in a 9-5 job that she did not love but she could “literally turn [her] brain off after [she] was done.” But with professional work, it is hard to completely turn work on and off. “I think part of it is just that if you like it so much, you’re going to worry about it so much that you’re not going to be able to leave it.” Karmen told

me that she recently took a significant pay cut to return to a job she was more satisfied with. If the old job was limited to very specific hours, she said she could have handled it, but it was not. It took up too much of her time and bled into her time to do things she liked. She concluded, “I think if it constantly is in your mind it really stresses you out and it really affects your – I guess quality of life. And some would argue that you if you hate your work so much it just affects it, period.” Karmen punctuated what was a widespread belief about professional careers: it is difficult to be unhappy in work and remain happy in life.

However, the concept of negative spillover, which justified respondents’ advice that others find new work lest their broader lives be contaminated, is mirrored by the concept of positive spillover, which justified respondents’ advice that others find work that they are more passionate about. Just as unhappiness in work was portrayed as uncontainable, respondents talked about work passion as a contagious and life nourishing emotion. “I think that passionate people, they’re contagious,” an organization nurse named Lauren told me. A market nurse named Briana started with benefits to oneself before moving on to describe the effects on others:

I just think it makes your life just so much better, like you have that purpose of waking up and liking what you do so you – I feel like you just bring something extra to that job, and it doesn't matter what it is from Subway making a sandwich to a surgeon operating on somebody. Like you can tell when somebody likes what they do or they're not completely miserable in it. It oozes. It just radiates around them...it radiates from the services you're providing to how you're tackling different issues. For me and specifically in nurses the patients you're taking care of can see those things. They can see those things so easy.

Here Briana touches on the notion that work passion serves the workplace—which is an argument I will take up in Chapter 7. More generally, Briana describes the idea that someone who feels positively about their jobs will positively affect those around them. This is true not only at work, but also at home.

Instead of working well as a point of religious ethic or working well because that is what an employee owes their organization as the other half of the social contract, adherents to the passion paradigm work hard and work well as a self-imposed practice of self-care and self-respect.

As a market engineer named Don clarified:

For me this isn't just a job. I mean I have to be here 40 hours a week; it better be more than just a job like that I'm just like lukewarm about. I definitely think that we should be – that I should be learning and improving, whether it's my technical skills or inner personal skills or experiences because I don't know, maybe it doesn't have to be but it's sure a lot of time spending doing something if all that you have to show for it is, you know, money in your pocket at the end of the day...at the end of your career you should be a better person than when you started as a, you know, 20-year old college graduate or something, right?"

The belief that work should ultimately serve the health and development of the self was also well exemplified well by Nina, a market graphic designer who, after working in organizations for 15 years, quit and started her own business following the sudden death of her husband. The biggest lesson she said she has learned in pursuing this dream is to “really take care of our health and our relationships and that balance.” This balance, she proceeded to tell me, is knowing when to let go and when to have the power, boldness, strength and energy and discipline to really pursue those things that really excite you and ignite your life because it's really going to ignite everything around you. Your joy for others, your joy that you give to your family, your kids...that thing is so contagious.” As the passion paradigm dictates, finding the strength and discipline to pursue one's passion is ultimately about fighting for a life ignited, which will nourish the individual first, before spilling over to nourish everything else. The cunning of the passion paradigm is convincing adherents that that which ultimately serves and preserves structures of work is of primary service to the self.

What's the Point? (Of All Those Hours If You're Not Happy?)

Most respondents described the pursuit of passion as realistic and rational. Adherents view it as both feasible and logical. In fact, adherents often had a hard time imagining why individuals would settle for anything less. After a market nurse named Brooke told me that the average college graduate should prioritize work that their passionate about she explained, “because if you don’t love what you do, there’s no point.” When I followed up to ask what she meant she replied, “Why be unhappy for the rest of your life. Even if it’s something you’re really good at and you hate it, well you shouldn’t be doing it.” Kurt, an organization graphic designer, explained that being passionate about one’s work means one is being true to themselves—they are making sure they have something that “feels purposeful, the reason why, you know, you get up in the morning.” He concluded by saying that not being able to live like that would be a terrible thing. Lucy, an organization graphic designer posed the rhetorical question, “I guess like if you’re not passionate about it why are you doing it?” As a final example, consider the following conversation with Travis, a market engineer:

Travis: If you're going through life just making ends meet, and maybe not making ends meet, maybe making tons of money, I don't know, for me that seems like a pretty empty way to live your life, that what you spend your time doing and probably the majority of your time doing, yeah it pays fine, but if it isn't also doing something meaningful for you in your short, brief existence on this planet then I think you're missing the point.

LJD: Of what?

Travis: Of our opportunity here as, you know, a community of 7 billion people, that we – oh gosh, I didn't think we were going this deep. Maybe you didn't either. I don't know. I don't know if I'm going to find a better way to verbalize it.

The implicit assumption in the logic of the passion paradigm is that individuals have choice. As a result, when individuals are not happy at work, adherents are critical of what they are likely to

perceive as unused agency—an argument I develop in Chapter 7. The logic of the passion paradigm relies on the notion that individuals are at liberty to choose. Therefore, individuals who “choose” not to be passionate about their work, or who “choose” not to pursue more passionate work, can strike adherents as pitiable, perplexing, or at worst, aggravating. If individuals want to be happy in this life—and the assumption is that they do—and work passion pays such great dividends in happiness, the logical choice is clear.

What adherence to the passion paradigm does is successfully reorient professionals to pursue work that they love as a service to themselves, and their individual happiness. When I asked Whitney, a market nurse, to clarify what she meant by describing work passion as a bonus she said, “It’s a personal fulfillment, a personal satisfaction. I mean at the end of the day it leaves me happy and it leaves me wanting to come back and do more.” Whitney, like others, emphasized that the central benefit of work passion is personal. The passion paradigm reframes good work as something that is individually motivated and individually gratifying, rather than externally expected, demanded, or rewarded.

The passion paradigm encourages loyalty not to an organization—as in Blair-Loy’s (2003) work devotion schema, and not even to a profession, but to one’s self. Within the unprecedented precarity of the new economy the old social contract promising security and a clear path of advancement is gone. The passion paradigm provides a new north star: work to which one is attracted, enjoys, is motivated by, and can preserve in. While the passion paradigm shares many similarities with other normative and rational work ethics and cultures of work, the particularities of the structural context demand a supporting ideology with compatible particularities. In an economy in which individuals are supposed to behave like a business of one, cultivate personal

brands, design non-linear career paths and maintain their employability, the passion paradigm provides an adapted normative ethic that is just as individualistic.

In this economic context, adherents to the passion paradigm believe they are at their best when they are introspective. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, the question of good work becomes more subjective. As an organization nurse named Fiona replied: “I don't even have the definition [of good work]. I have this idea—almost like this spiritual connectedness. I don't have words to describe; it's more like a feeling.” Adherents are driven by personal feelings—the emotions—of work passion, which appear to be in the realm of personal control. Dahlia, a market graphic designer, summarized, “You have to know how you want to feel every single day... it just boils down to understanding what your values are and what's important for you and then how to pick things that support that value system.”

Dahlia told me that her sister worked so hard that she started having seizures. In fact, she told me, both her dad and sister work too hard. When I asked her if she would ever be okay with her sister's grind she clarified, “If she was doing it for herself and not somebody else. When you grind it out for somebody else's business, somebody else's dream, you're not always rewarded at the end. You're always replaceable.” The insidious promise of the passion paradigm is the secure reward of self-satisfaction, which is deemed safe from the vicissitudes of the market.

The passion paradigm finds compatibility with the economic context with the allure of endless and better possibilities. This orientation to work is liberating, as Kurt, an organization graphic designer explained, “Because I'm constantly trying out who I am and what I enjoy and what's meaningful to me. It doesn't necessarily stay the same. I find things out along the way and I'm gauging whether something is valuable to me and that changes.” To be committed to the trial and error and evolution of achieving individual work passion fuels perpetual motivation for good

work. This deep individualism is the very reason that the passion paradigm is effective as a source of perceptions of power, which is the argument I make in Chapter 5. This individualism is also the reason why adherence to the passion paradigm thwarts systemic critique and ultimately reduces collective power. The passion paradigm elevates the maintenance of self-knowledge as a route to individualized happiness in work, rendering dissatisfaction at work matters of individual failure or individual-institution mismatch, rather than matters of institutional or structural failures to better adapt work in the new economy. This is the argument I will make in Chapter 7.

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CHAPTER FIVE: PASSION AS POWER

“I think if you don’t like what you’re doing, you need to freaking change it. It’s as simple as that. You’re not a freaking tree content with whatever sunlight you can get, freaking move, you know what I mean?”

-Diego Navarro, market engineer

“Everything happens in here [gestures to himself], it doesn't matter what's happening outside. Whatever job you're in you have complete control over the way you perceive it and handle it.”

-Nels Thorley, market graphic designer

“What you do is like – it should be in your hands, it’s not like you’re being forced into anything in particular...I think if you’ve gone to college, you’ve given yourself the appropriate tools to be able to find something that leaves you satisfied.”

-Tabitha Nemes, organization nurse

The professionals in my sample revealed an incredible amount of perceived agency. As this pattern emerged in my data interview after interview, I grew more curious about how professionals who are under enormous structural constraints in a precarious economy manage to feel so in control. How do individuals manage what could otherwise cause chronic stress (e.g. anticipation of job loss or uncertainty about the future)? I found that respondents manage precarity via perceptions of control. My interest in *perceptions* of control means that whether or not individuals are actually in control is irrelevant. Though some scholars might be skeptical about what perceptions can tell us about lived experience and actual behavior in the new economy, as I demonstrated with psychological research in my introduction, it turns out perceptions can tell us a great deal.

I chose Lilly Toscani to open this chapter because hers is a story of multiple sources of precarity, coupled with undeniable perceptions of control. I interviewed Lilly at a small bistro table outside of a funky little coffee shop in Pacific Beach—she picked the spot. Her interview made me feel like I was interviewing an old friend; I felt like she would have answered my questions all day.

Lilly is a spirited Italian who is originally from Chicago. She had been trying to get to California for years as a travel nurse and when she saw an open position at a hospital in San Diego, she contacted her recruiter immediately. She got the job, but “had zero questions answered about this facility...[and] zero knowledge of what I was about to get myself into.” Lilly entered the job blind because got it without talking to a single person. She had a single phone interview where she was given two minutes to answer interview questions posed by an automated system. She had the option to press nine to repeat the question so, as she told me, “at one point in time I wasn't quite sure of the answer, because I hadn't seen this diagnosis in—I've never actually seen this diagnosis in person. So, I pressed nine to repeat the question eight times, and [I Googled] my answer.” She assumed a human listened to her interview at some point, but when the job offer came it went straight to her recruiter who negotiated on her behalf. As a result, she accepted the job without seeing where she would be working or talking to a single human she would be working with.

Lilly got hired as a contract travel nurse for a “crisis rate”—meaning for one reason or another the hospital was short on staff and desperate. At the time of our interview she had just renewed her contract, which typically lasts 13 weeks. By structural design, travel nurses are temporary and have to keep moving. When I asked her what is next, she said, “So, I'm leaving here. I'll have to explain my tax situation later. I'm dropping my stuff off in Denver, Colorado. Flying back to Illinois. Going to a wedding that I'm in. Going to Europe for a month. Coming back from Europe. Going to another wedding that I'm in, and then, hopefully, starting another contract in Denver, which is where I came from before. So, I have no plans, and it's very unpredictable.”

The tax situation she referred to turned out to be a bewildering saga about how she discovered the rules of creating a tax home—where workers make at least a quarter of their income

and maintain residency. She had not understood the difference between a tax home and a residence and that is why she got “screwed over.” Lilly told me that learning something the hard way is a common phenomenon for travelers who have no stable institution to handle or teach them how to navigate income tax laws. The confusion forced her hand—it is why she suddenly has to return to Colorado even though she had not planned to: “I have to...switch all of my residencies to Colorado to maintain a tax home. So, I have to get a Colorado driver's license. I have to register my car in Colorado—all this other shit, and then I can continue traveling.”

When I asked Lilly if she has lost a contract prematurely, she tells me that because she is an at will employee without union protection she can be canceled at any time, for any reason. And she has been. After telling me that story she told me another very recent incident in which she felt “somebody is trying to fuck me over and throw me under the bus for their mistake.” She did not end up losing her contract, but recalled that she was “scared shitless, because I'm a traveler.” She continued, “Like, there's literally—this is something that I didn't do, and I can sit there and say I didn't do it—as many times as I want. But, this person's a permanent staff nurse. Who are they gonna believe? So, like, for like a week and a half I was petrified I was gonna lose my contract over something I didn't do.” When I asked her if the job insecurity and place uncertainty is enough to push her back into a secure organization, she told me she would much rather be in the market.

Lilly *does* plan to transition to a permanent organization nurse soon, however, and the reason is yet another source of precarity in Lilly's life. Lilly has a serious heart condition that will require heart surgery, but she does not know when. If she did not have a heart condition, she told me she would travel forever. However, because she wants access to specialists in California when the time comes and cannot risk a situation in which she has to move because of the particularities of travel nursing regulation, she will have to transition into an organization position. In preparation,

because she knows it is difficult to get to California as a nurse, she currently *also* works as a per diem nurse in the system, which requires her to work at least once every six months. Even as she moves around the country as a travel nurse, she maintains her per diem contract in California that she is hoping will help secure her a permanent position when doctors start telling her the time for surgery is nearing.

Lilly's plan for after her surgery, is no plan. She recognizes that "travel nursing doesn't create a pathway for a ladder for your career." Until she "settles down" she feels like she cannot focus on long term career goals. On the other hand, she told me, "I like the idea of a nomadic lifestyle. In an ideal world, I'd be a travel blogger and a food writer, and I'd work from home and I'd do what I want. But, that's a millennial dream." Unable to focus on long-term goals, and unable to predict whether or where she will meet someone or find a position that she is too in love with to leave, Lilly manages what she knows for certain is in her future (surgery), then fixes her eyes on the present. At present she says, "For me, the idea of me being tied down in one permanent place is terrifying, and I don't want that. Because I just want to see the world. I just want to travel and experience it. So, my priorities are...meeting strangers and going to different places and experiencing...that is my priority." Lilly makes career decisions based on her present priorities. She knows they are likely to change, but she finds security in identifying what she needs and wants in the moment, considering her constraints and priorities, and making that happen.

Lilly's case is an illustrative one because though she is precarious along many lines and severely constrained structurally due to medical needs, she perceives agency over her life and talks about her future with open optimism. She told me that she agrees with the sentiment that if someone can quit their job to do something that they love they should, but added the following:

I need to analyze the rest of your situation. I would love to tell somebody, if you're unhappy and you know how to change it, change it. But, again, me personally, I

have this heart surgery to worry about. Someone might have a wife or kids or their student loans, and they are in a lot of debt.

I'd love to tell people to do that, but you can tell someone to do that and [that] they can do it, but they need to have the same drive and dedication to make it happen. You don't—you can't just expect shit to be handed to you if you do that, like hope for the best, hope the universe will provide—you have to work the shit.

Lilly does not love the position she took to get to California or that she had to renew it, and she is operating under enormous levels of vulnerability and uncertainty both in her job and her health. But she has analyzed her situation and feels like she is in control. She is committed to pursuing her priorities, despite her constraints, and she is dedicated to making it happen. She looks to the future with strategic optimism, unsure about what she will be doing or where she will be, but confident that she will figure it out along the way. This is what I found adherents of the passion paradigm to sound like, precarious but powerful.

In the last chapter I argued that work passion is characterized by the emotional experiences of attraction, enjoyment, motivation, and perseverance and that the ideology of work passion, the passion paradigm, is a coherent set of ideas premised on the logical syllogism that pursuing work passion is a logical strategy to achieving happiness in life. Having conceptualized work passion and the passion paradigm, in this chapter I am more squarely focused on understanding the relationship between the passion paradigm as a cultural framework and the economic context of unprecedented professional precarity.

Eva Illouz (2007) argued that it is tempting for sociologists to stop their analyses short of pragmatics, in favor of our “conventional paradigm...of domination,” but that more satisfying analyses would include explanations of “why certain meanings ‘work’ (67).” As she writes, “A discourse will keep functioning and circulating if it ‘accomplishes’ certain things that ‘work’ in people’s everyday life” (67). Similarly, Thoits (1994) found that individuals often act deliberately

(and successfully) to resolve role-related stressors in work and love and argued that instead of deemphasizing the degree to which people are active agents in their own lives, as sociologists tend to do, it can be “theoretically and empirically fruitful to view individuals as agents making and shaping their lives, rather than primarily as passive subjects overwhelmed by situational stress” (143). In this chapter I address the question of what adherence to the passion paradigm does, not for those that use it to dominate others, but for individual adherents themselves, in their personal and agentic pursuits of well-being. In doing so, I explain why adherence to the passion paradigm exists; or as Illouz (2008) says, why actors with critical capacities are “deeply engaged by and engrossed with meanings” (4).

I argue that what adherence to the passion paradigm does for individuals is increase their perceptions of control, thereby increasing their well-being and empowering them to cope and persist in a precarious new economy. Adherence allows individuals to claim agency over their lives and provides an ideological framework for interpreting and weathering the inconsistencies and contradictions of professional life in precarious times. Though there are good reasons to assume that the passion paradigm is a privileged posture that individuals adopt in good economic times, the tack that I make in this dissertation is to argue that the passion paradigm is particularly resonant *because of* precarity, not despite precarity. The allure of the passion paradigm within the uncertain and fragmented context of the new economy is that it offers adherents conceptual clarity and perceptions of power.

This chapter begins with the individualization of work and ends with the empowering narratives of the passion paradigm. The overarching point is that the passion paradigm grants adherents perceptions of power because it encourages them to look internally for measures of their satisfaction, success, and security (as opposed to externally), provides them an empowering lens

to look at the elements of precarity in their lives, and functions as a reliable north star for them to set eyes on in the short term and long.

THE PASSION PARADIGM AND THE INDIVIDUALIZATION OF WORK

The primary way that the passion paradigm increases perceptions of power is via individualization. The passion paradigm, and its insistence that adherents focus intently on following their personal values and achieving their personal definitions of success and happiness draw individuals further into themselves as a source of protection within institutional uncertainty. My data reveal this turn inward in the ways that respondents conceive of good work as subjective fulfillment and detach their sense of and plans for personal success from their institutions.

Good Work as Subjective and the Prioritization of the Immaterial over the Material

In his sweeping assessment of post-modern work Arne Kalleberg (2011) defines a good job as one that pays well, provides opportunities for advancement, has fringe benefits like providing feelings of accomplishment, and gives workers some control over their schedule. Some iteration of these characteristics has been used to measure job quality and changes in job satisfaction since the 1970s. Because the majority of these variables are institutional, research on job satisfaction tends to emphasize mutable workplace conditions. This body of work suggests that “job attitudes are relatively malleable and can be changed by reconfiguring the immediate external environment,” which has led to a robust exploration of how jobs can be designed to optimize satisfaction (Bianchi 2013: 589). Even as Kalleberg (2011) argues that job security is less reliable as a measurement of job quality because professionals in otherwise good jobs are still subject to precarity, he remains focused on the structural sources of precarity and structural solutions.

When I asked respondents to define good work, however, they did not emphasize objective measures like benefits, pay, or even security. Instead, I found that professionals were more likely to define a good job according to subjective criteria centered on individual emotions. As an engineer named Odella put it, “I think a good job would be something that you enjoy and that you want to do on a day-to-day basis and that makes you feel that you’re living, like you’re not just kind of going through day-by-day waiting for the clock to strike 5:00 and then you can leave.” This definition of a good job is highly subjective. As opposed to criteria like pay or benefits which are easy to measure or even criteria like flexible work hours or employee recognition which institutions can control, a criterion like it “makes you feel like you’re living” is deeply personal. A nurse named Tiffany who transitioned from being a travel market nurse to a permanent organization nurse between the time we scheduled and had the interview told me, “I think a good job is something that you truly enjoy, you're happy, you don't wake up in the morning like ugh, I have to go back to work.” When I asked Urania, a market engineer, what she means when she tells someone they have a good job, she replied,

I'm thinking that the work is interesting. I mean when someone tells you about a good job that they have you feel like it's a good job because that person is passionate about it and they seem really excited about it. So that's really like at the surface all you have to judge that on. You know are they happy about what they're doing, do they want to share about what they're working on?

Many respondents used subjective criteria like those above: enjoyment, happiness, interest, excitement, or passion. If someone feels these things about their work, they have a good job.

Other respondents used subjective criteria to explain their definitions of a good job, but their definitions were less abstract in that they attached immaterial satisfaction to particular aspects of work. For example, an organization engineer named Chris answered, “I think once you're actually in place and you start to develop the relationship with your supervisor, if it's a person that

can clearly communicate what is the expectation and it's a person that is open and willing to listen to ideas, I think that to me would be a great job because for me it's just knowing what is expected of me and then being able to share my experience and share my knowledge.” A market graphic designer named Laura answered, “A good job I think has a lot to do with the people you work with or for. So whether it’s like – I don’t know, I just remember like being in an office and like having someone who like cared about my personal well-being.” A market nurse named Briana answered,

Briana: Good job. Happy work environment, good people you work with like your team, good management.

LJD: What are these words?

Briana: Okay, so like your team is supportive and helps you and everybody – there's no cattiness in the workplace, there's no bullying in the workplace. Management is involved but not – like they support their staff. They make sure your numbers are appropriate. They make sure that everybody is getting what they need.

Developing good relationships with management, enjoying the people one works with, considering that one’s team or management supports one’s needs, feeling cared for...these, too, are subjective criteria, but they are more specific about *who* meets emotional needs in a good job and more specific about *how*.

Respondents used similarly obscure benchmarks when we discussed how they determine when a job is bad enough to warrant quitting. The market graphic designer from just above told me that someone has a bad job if they get the “Sunday Scaries.” This pithy expression refers to the anxiety, blues, or dread that an individual who does not like their job feels on a Sunday as they anticipate returning to work the following day. What gives one individual the Sunday Scaries, however, could make another individual feel like they are “living.”

These criteria, along with the more general expectations of passion and happiness, are highly contingent on individual personality and preference. If an individual relies on the experience of particular emotions to assess whether they have a good job, it means that why they choose and remain in a particular job is subjective. For individuals for whom passion and happiness is a priority, whether their job is good is a psychological question. Adherents cannot ascertain their job satisfaction with economic or structural questions like whether their job affords them the lifestyle they desire or if the management feels accessible. Instead, most respondents described a personal process that questions whether their job contributes to their growth as a person, whether they feel fulfilled, excited, motivated, challenged; whether their work makes them personally happy. What most professionals in my sample conveyed is an understanding of good work centered on having their emotional and psychological needs met.

Despite their emphasis on the psychological rewards of work, it is at this point worth noting that respondents do not ignore or deny the importance of money. Individuals have multidimensional ideas of rewarding work which include both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic orientations refer to “the degree of importance individuals attach to the rewarding nature of job tasks themselves” and extrinsic orientations refer to the importance “attached to features of jobs that are means to other ends” (Johnson and Mortimer 2011: 1241). An intrinsic orientation is one in which work holds inherent value via opportunities to learn, build skills, connect with people, and help others, while an extrinsic orientation is one in which work primarily holds material or external value via pay, financial security, vacation time, and opportunities for advancement. Socio-economic status and intrinsic orientations are positively associated and socio-economic status and extrinsic orientations are negatively associated (Mortimer et al. 1996; Johnson 2002).²⁵ Johnson

²⁵ This project studies individuals who have attained a bachelor’s degree or higher as a proxy for SES. Johnson (2002) found that education has the same effect as socio economic status on work orientations, which suggests that even if

and Mortimer (2011) speculate that the negative relationship between SES and extrinsic orientations suggests that privileged individuals take extrinsic rewards for granted, making financial rewards a less central concern.

However, though respondents voiced concerns for both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in their work, extrinsic rewards were generally minimized in comparison to the intrinsic reward of happiness, if not taken for granted or ignored all together. Those who did include money in their definition of a good job included it as a brief aside or afterthought. For example, a market graphic designer named Lizzie defined a good job as the following: “I think it's different for everyone. For me, I think it's something that should fulfill you and make you really happy. And then, also, you know, provides what you need to live.” Others implied that money (or sometimes another extrinsic reward) is equally important to passion, like an organization nurse named Fisher who answered, “money definitely comes into it. A good job makes you happy, for sure. You should feel fulfilled when you go into work.” These types of answers did not imply a particular hierarchy of needs and instead suggested that a good job is both well paid and intrinsically satisfying.

Most however, implicitly or explicitly expressed that happiness—which is a central dividend of work passion—is the most important component of a good job. A market graphic designer named Delfina answered,

How do I define a good job? Let me think. If it makes you happy. That's how I define a good job. And if it clearly fulfills your financial needs. So for example, if my girlfriend is working at this big company and getting paid all this money and she likes what she's doing, that's a good job. If I have a girlfriend who is working down the street and she's getting paid minimum wage and she's decorating cake and she's happy, that's a good job.

my respondents are first generation or came from low socio-economic backgrounds, they are still be likely have an intrinsic orientation towards work.

Respondents did not minimize the constraints of financial responsibilities or suggest that being passionate about work is worth being in a state of financial turmoil but they did consider it generally worth it to take a pay cut in exchange for more happiness. As Natalie, an organization engineer told me,

What would a good job look like for me? I think that would be something that's fulfilling and your passion, and then getting paid for it. So like my friend is a photographer and she was a teacher; she didn't like teaching. She wanted something where she could be her own boss and have her own time schedule. So I feel like for her that's the perfect job for her.

The professionals I spoke with told me stories about themselves or people in their life who quit their jobs in pursuit of more passion. These stories revealed a general assumption that professionals can find work that they are passionate about without risking financial adversity. For the most part, they did not discuss passion and money as zero sum. This is not to say that they minimize how difficult or scary it can be to quit a job or change careers, but that they assumed that they would be able to find work that would pay sufficiently well. It is important to note that the ways in which professionals deprioritize or understate money does not necessarily reflect that they care about money less than anyone else, but reflects a privileged ability to take financial security for granted.

Contrary to the assumption that this intrinsic orientation is the product of a middle-class upbringing or an education, however, I find that the centrality of passion and happiness is a matured definition of good work. Most individuals reported that their definition of a good job has changed over time, from prioritizing extrinsic rewards to prioritizing intrinsic rewards. Some respondents explicitly stated that intrinsic rewards became a priority after achieving extrinsic rewards. When I asked an organization engineer named Nico if his definition of a good job has changed over time he told me that his original thought process was that a good job is getting paid. Speaking as his former self he said “I just – I don't care what I do. I'll shovel, whatever puts food

on my family's table.” “So yeah,” he continued, “I guess it has changed now that I make enough for now.” Nico described his evolving definition of good work almost like a hierarchy of needs. Since he has met his financial needs he is now focused on his social needs. The next step, he told me, is the “passion that most have.”

Others described their earlier fixation on money like a childish or naïve perspective on work. While we sat on his vintage couch surrounded by succulents in his hip downtown apartment, a market graphic designer named Kellen told me,

You know as a kid I can remember being like I want to be a dentist one day cause dentists make a lot of money, and just was like that’s a good job. Oh a doctor, a dentist, a lawyer, these things that you’re told as a kid like those are the people who are out there making money and you can, you know—I don’t know why I thought that was going to be a cool thing to do when I was younger, but [laughs]. Then it [became] more finding something that you really love.

Answers like these emphasized that pay may be part of the definition of good work, but an underdeveloped and impoverished one. Other potentially more valuable aspects of work grew apparent over time. As a market engineer named Travis explained, “I don't think I knew. Like going in I don't think I knew what was out there or the range of things that would make up a good job to a bad job.” Tiffany, an organization engineer, explained her transition from fixating more on money to fixating less on money like this:

Just realizing, you know, you can get paid a lot of money but if you don’t like where you go to work it doesn’t really matter, you know. Like I said when I was on a bad team I was still getting paid well. But you know, I hated coming in. I hated the other people. I hated the project, you know, even though the project was actually cool, just because of my team I didn’t really like them or we didn’t get along very well; it just made the days really crappy, so it didn’t really matter what I got paid, you know, I did not consider that a good job.

Respondents often described that while money and benefits were straightforward goals to chase after to begin with, life experience taught them that more intangible aspects of work can end up

being more important. These intangibles were things their younger or inexperienced selves could not yet discern.

Alternatively, rather than learning that other job aspects were determinants of their happiness, many individuals expressed that money turned out to be less satisfying than they thought it would be. They had chased and captured a high income, only to realize that more money did not give them whatever it was they hoped it would. An organization engineer named Kevin told me that he always thought a good job would just be getting paid high amounts of money but that his views changed. He now defines a good job as “...something that you actually like doing and you could put your best foot forward and make progress and feel fulfilled at the end of the day, you know. I guess a good job would be doing something that you don't mind being paid less for because you actually like want to be there and you want to contribute and do things.”

When I asked him to explain what changed his definition of a good job he stated, “I think I have a pretty decent pay right now but, you know, spending eight hours a day for five days a week just doing something that's not as fulfilling kind of threw me for a loop. I'm getting paid good money but I'm spending the bulk of my day, the bulk of my life just doing something that I'm not completely thrilled about.” Later, when I asked Kevin if he could think of anything that would make him want to stay in his current job he responded, tentatively, “Hmm. Compensation, if they pay me more, but that can only go so far because ultimately, I don't think money can buy you complete happiness. It's only a temporary Band-Aid. I don't know. That's a good question.” Kevin was still discerning what might actually bring him happiness in his work, but he had already discerned that it was not more money.

Eric, a market graphic designer, was further along in discerning what he needed out of work. At the time of our interview Eric was a freelancer, but the story he told me about how his

definition of a good job changed over the years was set several years ago when he worked in an organization. He told me that he made \$96,000, but he was unhappy. When he tried to quit his manager asked him how much it would cost to keep him. Eric tried to explain that it was not a money issue, and that he had another job where he thought he would be happier, but the manager kept pushing for a number. Exasperated, he gave him what he called a “ridiculous number:”

I said, oh they’re paying me 160. He left, came back... I’ll pay you \$160,000 to stay. So, I made this windfall raise in one day. And it wasn’t a money thing but it [was like, if that’s what you’re now paying me] than whatever. But within three weeks I was unhappy again. That basically gave me an ego lift, but making 70,000 something more dollars a year, almost doubling my income, it didn’t do anything for me. And that lesson to me made me realize that a good job is not about the money, I mean you need money to survive, I’m not saying I would do it for free, but it’s more about your working relationship with the place that employs you.

For these individuals, the transition from prioritizing extrinsic to intrinsic rewards was not merely the product of time or learning that the benefits of work are multiple and dynamic, but of experiencing money as an insufficient source of fulfillment. This realization is what motivated Delfina from the opening anecdote in the introduction to quit her “dream” job and start her own business. Growing up Delfina wanted for nothing. She told me that she had everything she needed and also the things she wanted. When she graduated college, she had dreams of “making all the money and working with all the people and doing all the things and having all the things.” But when she got there was no psychological payoff—she found herself anxious and depressed. She realized that material things do not bring her happiness. “That’s been my personal experience,” she tells me, “I’ve had the things. The things don’t make me happy... Like it used to be like wanting all these things...but now it’s morphed into just being happy.”

Using the emotional barometer of happiness to gauge whether they had a good job, respondents perceived the definition of good work as personal and subjective. They did not assert a generalized baseline of objective measures such as insurance, retirement, and livable wages in

their definition of a good job. Neither were they likely to assert that happiness is a generalized objective of good work (though by aggregating individual responses I argue that it in fact is). They demonstrated their adherence to the individualization of good work first by starting their responses with statements like “to me...” or “it’s different for everyone,” and asserting that they can only speak for themselves. As Delfina put it: “we all have different pasts and different purposes and different journeys, so I feel like to each [their own].”

Ultimately, more important than their resistance to speak for others or impose their views on others, respondents demonstrated the subjectivity of good work by promoting the logic of the passion paradigm. To the extent that adherents evaluate the quality of their jobs based on how they feel about them, the conclusion that one is employed in a good job is subjective. A good job therefore depends less on the organization and its ability to offer stable or well-paid employment and more on a personal evaluation of happiness. Their new definition of good work requires them to turn inward.

Mutability: Primary Identification with One’s Psychological and Emotional State

I have so far detailed the subjectivity with which respondents talked about their conceptions of good work and their prioritization of immaterial rewards over material rewards. The second way adherents of the passion paradigm revealed individualization was in turning inward for definitions of identity and success, detaching their sense of self and goals from their institutions.

One striking way I saw institutional detachment was in adherents’ stunted desire to make concrete long-term career goals. I asked respondents to describe their professional goals and if their response included concrete goals that exceeded approximately 5 years then I coded the

respondent has having long-term goals. For example, I coded the following answer from an organization engineer named Olivia as a long-term goal:

I always have wanted to go into leadership at a large company. I think as I mature and gain more experience, I would even be willing to leave [large public company] if it meant that I could move up in leadership roles. I'd love to stay with [large public company], but I'm just really passionate about leading groups of people, and affecting, building a brand and building strategic planning of new projects or either safety projects or engineering projects. It doesn't ... At this point in my career, I don't know that I know or I even care a lot of the topic, but I just know that I want to lead big groups of people. I'd like to at least become a director level, and then above that you go into you know vice presidents of different segments.

In contrast, I coded the following answer from an organization nurse named Fiona as a short-term goal (< 5 years): “I don't have any future goals right now. I really just like what I'm doing.” I found that only 62% of my sample articulated long term goals. Among those with long term goals, 68% reported feeling anxious about achieving them.

Here there was a bit of variation in my sample (Table 5.1). Individuals who are in the market, graphic designers, nurses, non-first-generation college graduates, non-immigrants, women and white individuals have somewhat lower percentages of long-term goals.

Table 5.1 Descriptive Variation in Long-Term Goals

	Has Long Term Career Goals (>5 years)	If yes, % Who Are Anxious About Achieving Their Long-Term Goals
Male	63%	58%
Female	61%	77%
Market	56%	71%
Organization	68%	67%
Engineer	86%	73%
Graphic Designer	50%	83%
Nurse	52%	50%

Table 5.1 continued

First Generation College Graduate	63%	75%
Non-FIRST-GENERATION College Graduate	61%	66%
White	55%	58%
Non-White	75%	87%
1-2 Generation Immigrant	69%	91%
Non-Immigrant	60%	60%
Total	62%	68%

These findings make sense to the extent that these groups are more prone to movement, comfortable with risk, and/or more acclimated to flexibility. The occupational variation also makes sense considering that engineers are organized the most bureaucratically and graphic designers tend to work in smaller, flatter organizations. Whereas bureaucratic organizations still provide a theoretical career ladder, even if individuals have to jump organizations to achieve mobility, flatter organizations have fewer rungs on the ladder and less clear steps. Nursing is an interesting field because there are lots of opportunities for lateral movement, but movement up requires more education or credentialing creating barriers to entry. In addition, bedside nursing is famous for burnout, so nurses are often unsure of their future steps except that they will either mentally or physically burn out in their current role. Individuals who described short term goals cited things like passing an exam or getting a promotion in the next year or two. For example, a nurse named Christopher told me that a certification for the NICU is “the only thing that I have specifically right now that I've thought of in my professional career.”

Regardless, whether respondents had long term or short-term career goals, I found that most respondents articulated detachment from their organizations and even their professions,

either by explicitly imagining themselves in alternative roles or careers, or implicitly by articulating their goals as general material, psychological or emotional benchmarks. For example, an organization engineer named Cole answered, “Really, my professional goals align probably with my private goals of I want to be able to supply a good life for my family, and be comfortable, and not worry about where money is gonna come from at the end of the week, or where rent might have to come from. I don’t wanna have to worry about that. I wanna have them taken care of medically and I wanna be able to be in retirement and be comfortable.” These professional goals are detached from his current organization, as well as detached from his profession as an engineer. They have become more abstract, and thereby more secure.

Similarly, when I asked an organization engineer named Kevin to describe his professional goals he surprised me with a one word answer: “inexistent.” He told me that he just wants to be able to fund his hobbies so that he knows for certain that he will be doing things he enjoys; he is not as concerned about where the funds come from. He went on to describe his lack of goals as a coping mechanism, one that he was not entirely comfortable with:

I'd say every once in a while, I kind of stop and reflect on where I'm at and be like, well I don't have the set outline to attaining a professional goal. But I think if I had a plan and I wasn't on track I'd feel a lot more anxious, but I guess because there's nothing to track it against I'm not as anxious. It's just the idea like oh man, I could be doing other things or like be progressing myself right now and setting myself up to where I don't have to work with the company for the next 35 years.

Sometimes that brings, you know, anxious feelings, but most of the time you just kind of get in this zombie mode and just work and don't even realize what's going on. It sucks. I think it's attainable but the reality, I don't know if what I think versus what will actually happen is like attainable, I guess. I don't know.

When individuals cannot envision secure steps into the future, long term concrete goals are replaced by achievable short-term goals or abstract goals that can be met a number of ways. At

times Kevin feels anxious about his lack of concrete planning but is more anxious about setting goals that he is uncertain can actually happen.

A graphic designer named Kristopher told me he's been thinking about his professional goals a lot lately. He rambled through several things he *does not* want, but ultimately stated, "I don't know what they are any more." He went on to say, "I think the goal, if I stay in this career, would be to have something of my own...something that can fulfill my creative desires and pay my bills and pay for my future."

As an alternative to plotting long term goals, respondents often described commitment to a present orientation, where if one's eyes remained fixed on attaining one's present values one can take life one step at a time. When I asked Kellen, a market graphic designer, what his professional goals are he stated,

TBD I guess. I'm in a good place right now. I'm happy with where I'm at. I'm not sure exactly if I'm going to do [start my own agency] or if I'm going to kind of remain freelancing for awhile. They have their pros and cons, both of them.

So, I don't know. Financial goals are a little murky still, but there's different directions. I'm kind of just letting them flow. I might look for a partner. Basically a partnership would be a nice thing to kind of forge ahead with. Someone had a little bit different skillset than I do that could bring in a different, you know, expand the business outside of just web development, whether that be a more traditional print designer or videography or photography or someone who's just sales and new business growth, things like that. So it's more just looking for networking opportunities and not really rushing into anything right now.

A market engineer named Trey told me that his professional goals are just his general life goals: "never accept the status quo" and "achieve as much as I can." An organization graphic designer named Lucy (who also runs her own business on the side) says that ultimately, she "just wants to do something creative." These examples illustrate that individuals in my sample were less likely to create long-term goals about specific positions, companies, or even careers. Instead, long term professional goals mapped onto personal goals for growth, happiness, and financial comfort.

Primary identification with one's psychological or emotional state as a form of present evaluation and future goal making is akin to what Zurcher (1977) called the mutable self. Zurcher argued that in the 1970s individual self-conceptualizations shifted from self-identification with the physical (I am a man) or self-identification with the social (I am a nurse, I am a father), towards self-identification with what he called the reflective self (I am a compassionate person). Zurcher argued that self-identification modes vary due to sociocultural circumstances, theorizing that during the rapid social change in the 60s and 70s individuals were forced to, or in many cases opted to, revoke institutional sources of identification.

The argument that employment narratives and forms of identification shift with structural changes is one that has been made many times. For example, Barley and Kunda (2006) argued that 20th century professional firms fostered professional identification and codification, while 21st century corporations which include a variety of occupations fostered identification with one's institution and its institutional goals. Today, with the decline of the corporation (Davis 2016), there are theories that professionals will again swing back to identifying more with their profession rather than their organization—an extreme example being Pink's (2001) proclamation of a coming free agent nation where individuals find freedom in working for themselves. In many cases, scholars recognize even more drastic cognitive shifts to identifying not with an institution, not with a profession, but to identifying with one's self. This hyper individualistic career orientation is famously encapsulated by the career concepts of the boundaryless career (Arthur and Rousseau 1996) and the protean career (Briscoe and Hall 2006; Lifton 1993), which emphasize the individual opportunities of limitless movement and the individual impetus to use their values to self-direct their careers, respectively.

According to Zurcher (1977), these cognitive shifts—the skill of mutability—are coping mechanisms which allow individuals to maintain a secure sense of self. As Orrange (2003b) summarizes, “A mutable self-concept integrates and facilitates the functioning of multiple self-conceptualizations at various levels of abstraction and eases the task of coping with institutional uncertainties and instability” (6). Orrange (2003b) argues that Zurcher’s framework is a useful starting point for understanding how individuals cope with the discontinuities in work. He writes, “with growing institutional change and uncertainty, individuals must be open to greater uncertainty with respect to the definition of the situation and their own personal futures. Individuals must define the future amid institutional uncertainty, which has bearing upon how they define themselves in the imagine future” (2).

Though many scholars over the last several decades have worried about the long-term negative effects of Zurcher’s (1977) self-reflective mode or Bellah et al.’s (1985) expressive individualism on group morality, institutional commitments, social cohesion, and even individual well-being (Lasch 1978; Bellah et al. 1985; Sennett 1998), mutability in general is recognized as an effective individual strategy for coping with a highly complex socioeconomic world. In the realm of work, shifting from an organizational or occupational model to an individual model like boundaryless or protean finds its power in individualism. As Briscoe and Hall (2006) write, these metaphors, which they summarize as the metacompetencies of adaptability and identity, “speaks to agency, individualism, and opportunity which are as much cultural values as they are objective possibilities (16).”

Hence, having redefined their conceptions of good work as work that is subjectively fulfilling and transitioned to a reliance on their psychological or emotional state as guidelines and barometers for success and secure identity, adherents of the passion paradigm demonstrate

extraordinary individualization. Having fixed their eyes on themselves, in the next section I argue that as an ideology of work, the passion paradigm acts as an empowering and reliable north star that adherents can use to navigate the stormy seas of a precarious career trajectory.

THE PASSION PARADIGM AS A RELIABLE NORTH STAR

When I first started analyzing my data, I was interested in determining whether respondents were more likely to believe that everyone can find work passion (it is an abundant phenomenon) or the opposite (it is a scarce phenomenon), and if there was variance. As I analyzed my data, I came to realize that respondents did not consider these beliefs to be mutually exclusive; most respondents believed both. In Chapter 4 I reported that 87% of respondents believe that college graduates have the power to do what they love. Taking into consideration the various privileges connected to a college education, fewer respondents believe that everyone can do what they love, but the number remained staggeringly high at 78%. Because the vast majority of respondents believe that passionate work is available to everyone, regardless of education, they perceive passion as abundant. However, respondents also generally believe that the pursuit of work passion is difficult and requires time, introspection, and often risk. In this way, they also perceive work passion as scarce. Therefore, adherents of the passion paradigm believe that achieving and maintaining work passion is available to everyone, but only those who are willing to fight for it.

In this section I argue that these contradictory narratives of the passion paradigm are part of what allow adherents to perceive power over their lives, for believing that passion is abundant means adherents can trust that it will always be there—guiding them like a north star, while believing that passion is scarce helps adherents justify their struggles, while still trusting the guide.

The passion paradigm, like other ideologies, is not without contradiction, for without contradiction it could not adequately serve as an ideological explanation for real life. As such, the passion paradigm offers both an explanation for the turbulence and uncertainty of one's career trajectory, as well as reliable route through. In this section I will describe passion as a reliable guide through unsettled self-discovery and passion as a reliable aim where adherents can fix their eyes in the movement.

Passion as a Reliable Guide Through Unsettled Self-Discovery

Adherents described the process for individuals to figure out what they love and what makes them happy as difficult and evasive. Though work passion itself pays many positive dividends (attraction, enjoyment, motivation, perseverance), its pursuit can be described as perpetual unsettled self-discovery. In Chapter 4 I wrote that out of a choice of four quotes that each summarized a philosophy of work,²⁶ the professionals I interviewed identified most with passion, represented by the words of Silicon Valley's Steve Jobs. As a reminder, in a 2005 graduation speech entitled, "How To live before you Die" he advised Stanford students,

You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking. Don't settle.

Respondents were instructed to tell me which quote best represents their beliefs about work and then we discussed each of them one by one. When they got to the quote above they were

²⁶ As a reminder, the remaining three quotes represented a calling, work/life balance, and legacy.

particularly attracted to the phrase “don’t settle,” often identifying it as the primary reason why they agree with Jobs’s sentiment.

For example, after reading the quote Lilly, the gregarious travel nurse featured in the opening anecdote blurted out, “I don't think that you should ever settle in anything. If you're unhappy, and you know how to change it, change it. That's what I appreciate about this [quote].” She went onto say, “It may take me a while to find it, but I'm sure it's out there, and I may have to do a bunch of other things to get there, but, like I said, I don't ever want anyone to settle in anything. I want them to be happy with whatever it is they're doing.” An organization engineer named Elena similarly proclaimed,

I really relate to [this quote]. I don't like that he uses the "L" word a lot. But I do believe in this, in don't settle. If you have the luxury to not settle, definitely don't settle. There is more. I think that you should always strive to be happy. I'm not religious but I think it helps the soul to be happy and positive vibes, you know, always be positive.

A final example, a market graphic designer named Noah answered,

Yeah, I agree [with this quote], don’t settle. I mean I certainly did that in the beginning because I felt that’s what I should do but it takes a little bit of waking up to see what you’re really interested in. I think you can get stuck in things because they’re comfortable and to move on, if you realize it’s not working for you—it's hard sometimes because it’s – there’s a scariness to leaving something that’s comfortable, but you shouldn’t settle.

To adhere to a life philosophy of not settling is to adhere to a perpetual state of unsettlement. This is part of Beck’s (1992) risk society and why Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) describe individualism in reflexive modernity as indeterminate, full of risk, and precarious. The idea is that an individual never arrives to a stable state of happiness. Personal happiness must be chased, discovered, fought for, grown, maintained. As Elena bluntly stated, “there is more;” the process never ends.

Noah mentions that engaging in this process takes a bit of waking up and also that it can be hard. The waking up bit refers to the process of self-reflection and discovery. Because good work is subjective, every individual is responsible for figuring out what they are uniquely passionate about and to pursue work that will make them happy. Nobody else can tell you. This often emerged in conversations about how respondents would advise a friend who was unhappy at work. Some spoke hypothetically and some recalled real stories, but all emphasized that decisions about work are personal. A market graphic designer named Dahlia started her own branding agency after winding her way through an unhappy and nonlinear work history. She told me stories about three of her friends who navigated unhappiness at work in very different ways. When she finished she stated, “So, again, like I said a couple of times I think, it just boils down to understanding what your values are and what's important for you and then how to, how to pick things that support that value system.”

Respondents throughout my interviews echoed this pairing of happiness and self-awareness, as well as understanding that the process of self-discovery can be challenging and time consuming. In fact, most speculated that the *only* reason college might make it more likely for graduates to find work that they love is because of the time it provides. Individuals described college as a safe incubator for students to discover who they are, but that one is only more likely to find work they love if they use the provided time wisely, in intentional self-reflection.

Many respondents articulated uncertainly about what they want. A market engineer named Shane told me that he feels conflicted about this uncertainty. “Part of me wants to just go and make as much money as I can,” he begins, “and then part of me would be happy getting rid of all the stress, you know going back and doing something I really love every day.” When I asked him if he thinks there is something out there that he would like more he replied,

Shane: Yes, I think so.

LJD: Do you know what that would be? Is it a different profession?

Shane: No, I don't know. I don't know specifically - I don't have a specific idea of what that would be. I think there probably is something out there, like that.

Like others I spoke with, Shane feels happy where he is but conflicted about what his values are, burdened by the feeling that there may be more satisfying work for him, but uncertain about what it is. An organization engineer named Daniel also likes his work, but he dreams about being able to work with his hands, potentially as a contractor. When I asked him if he has ever seriously considered making a career change, he tells me no. One reason is because he just bought a house.

He says the biggest reason, however, is the following:

Uncertainty. Not knowing what that passion is, and if I were to make a career change, if that would be sustainable and if that's what I would want to do for the rest of my life. I don't know if I'll be bored with it in the next five years. Right now I'm still enjoying what I'm doing, I still like it. It's not that like I'm dreading to go into work every day. So I guess I could see myself saying like the grass isn't always greener. Maybe I'm just thinking that it could be but as of now it's like hey, I'm doing pretty well, I like what I'm doing for the most part. There's some sucky days and there's some sucky weeks but it's like yeah.

Daniel told me that although the position is not his dream job, when he started he was still “gung ho about it.” He does not see himself doing it for the rest of his life, but since he is “still kind of figuring all that out” he considers it good enough for now.

Daniel and Shane are examples of professionals who like their jobs. Respondents told me stories about their professional friends who do not like their work and want to do something else, but do not know what that something is, as well as stories narrating how they themselves eventually figured out their next step and quit their jobs. For those who do not like their work it is not entirely surprising to find that they do not want to settle (though some might argue that a good paycheck could be enough). However, individuals who have already found happiness in their work are especially illustrative of unsettlement because they are on a quest for even *more*—they will either

not settle or they imagine their happiness as nonpermanent. The hardest challenge, as a market graphic designer named Kellen told me, is not even finding work that one loves—it is maintaining the love. When I ask Kellen whether it is hard to stay in love because of the way work is structured he clarified,

And the human condition. [laughs] I mean we're just – that's just how it is. We're always on the move, like our evolutionary biology behind us is just – it's hard to maintain happiness because if you're always happy it means nothing after awhile. That's just your normal state, you're always looking for the next thing. So you have to be able to not be happy in order to appreciate happiness. So I just think it's impossible to maintain consistent happiness through anything.

Wherever individuals are on the spectrum of love for their work, the passion paradigm offers the allure of attaining self-realization and the utmost satisfaction in work, while also tempering individual expectations to expect turbulent waters as they struggle to get there. In addition, because the notion of good work is intimately connected with subjective understandings of the self, and the self undergoes change throughout one's life, what one experiences as fulfilling work is subject to lifelong evolution.

To frame the passion paradigm as a life-long pursuit of work passion requiring continuous attention and modification is to engage individuals in a never-ending cycle. As Illouz (2007) writes on the related topics of the ethos of self-help and emotional intelligence, “Self-realization becomes a cultural category which produces a Sisyphean play of Derridean differences” (48). The dual and contradictory feelings of abundance and scarcity, like experiences of success and suffering more generally, are conceived of as part of a healthy pursuit of work passion. Just as one never arrives to permanent psychological health or happiness—and does not expect to based on the narrative of self-help—adherents to the passion paradigm conceive of work passion as something that is both attainable and evasive. Pushing the rock up the hill becomes an expectation and struggle itself is reframed as a necessary component for achieving true self-realization in work. Hence, the

narratives of the passion paradigm empower adherents by framing perpetual movement and struggle as the new normal, and framing the emotion of passion as their reliable guide.

Passion as a Reliable Aim: Keep Your Eyes Fixed on Passion

Though achieving happiness in work may be a struggle, adherents to the passion paradigm believe they can fix their eyes on passion as a reliable north star. When professionals prioritize the emotional experience of work passion, and the happiness that it produces, they anchor their evaluations of work and their decisions about work internally. The subjectivity of emotion grants individual power, since individual emotions are considered to be within the realm of individual control, and the cultural framework of the passion paradigm offers clarity, since it attempts to justify, reconcile, or explain the contradictory and bewildering experience of work itself, while offering a reliable place to fix one's eyes.

What it means to fix one's eyes on passion as a source of security and clarity is that, assuming physical needs are met, adherents to the passion paradigm make judgements about their current work and their future work in terms of how they feel. As an illustration of this, when I asked respondents if they could imagine staying at the same company for the duration of their career, 71% of respondents said yes. However, whether individuals expected to stay at their current jobs or anticipated future movement was contingent on how they feel about them. They expected their jobs to meet their material needs, but they fixated on their psychological and emotional needs. Eric from above, whose boss tried (but failed) to keep him with an extravagant raise, told me,

I don't have a time limit on like, 'I've been here too long, like I'm out of here.' If I continue to do what I – if it's fulfilling me like creatively and emotionally, I guess you could say, to some degree, and I mean not totally fulfilling, I wouldn't ever look for another job.

Farah, a market graphic designer, told me that people value all kinds of things. When it comes down to making decisions about work, she concluded, “I just feel like– it’s just kind of like what you are – what you value in that moment. I don’t know. I mean I feel like that can change. It can change at any time, like.” Odella, a market engineer, stumped at the prospect that someone would not be doing work that they love stated, “It is [a hard concept for me] yeah, ‘cause I’ve always – I’ve grown up and I’ve always had the mindset that whatever it is that I’m going to do I’m going to do it because I want to do it, not because of the hours and not because of what I get paid or what I don’t get paid. And at whatever point of it I no longer like what I’m doing is when I’ll start exploring options to change it.” When I asked Fiona, an organization nurse, why she chose passion as the number one thing college graduates should pursue and why she thinks it is important she responded, “I feel like that is my motivation. It's what keeps me at my job now, it's what will motivate me to move to other jobs or do other things, it's what made me want to do nursing in the first place.”

As Eric, Farah, Odella, and Fiona help illustrate, respondents used their emotional experience as a gauge to make decisions about their work, both in terms of what work to pursue and how long to stay. Because the human life course shifts values and human emotion is fickle, respondents anticipated that how they feel about their work would change but planned to keep their eye on their emotions to lead the way. Later in the interview Odella expressed the reliability of passion as the reason why she thinks college graduates should prioritize work that their passionate about. Consider this excerpt:

Odella: So, if you’re passionate about [your work] then you’re going to be more motivated to do well and you won’t really care too much about how much you get paid for it. Of course, it will be a factor but it won’t be the main factor of what job choice you choose.

LJD: And why is that good?

Odella: Which part?

LJD: That you will be motivated to do well and won't be driven by money.

Odella: Oh, because then it's as if things change, like for example the economy could go down and then pay can be adjusted or you might not get a raise every year or however often, things like that, but that won't affect your production or your contribution to what you're doing. And it won't affect how you see the work that you're doing. So, if you're passionate about it you can keep yourself motivated because you like doing what you're doing and you want to continue to do it. And I don't think that is going to be replaced by any external factors 'cause it's mostly – it's all kind of internal or between that person, and their co-workers maybe.

For most respondents, the securest way to maintain motivation to work is by securing work that you feel good about. According to adherents, the experience of work passion is a reliable insulation from the vicissitudes in the market or otherwise equips them to persevere through the hard times.

For individuals who are unhappy at work, they can use their passion as a reliable north star and trust that they will end up somewhere better in the end. A particularly memorable story was an organizational graphic designer, named Kurt, who at the time of our interview worked for one of the largest branding agencies in Los Angeles. Kurt grew up in a small town in the UK, where he had “no pressures to move any higher or move out of that.” Though he described the expectations his parents put on him as “non-existent,” Kurt remembered that he did have “a sort of a drive in myself, you know, I knew there was more than that for me.” His dad was a town carpenter who worked as a joiner. His dad really enjoyed his job and promoted “find something you love and it's not work,” but Kurt described that his dad's experience was also to get a lifelong trade. As he explained,

Kurt: ..there used to be this thing called...a job for life. And my dad really had a true job for life. And so I sort of had an expectation in my head [as a teenager] and to be honest scared the shit out of me to have this idea, you know, this context in my head of one job for life and how am I ever going to be able to settle into one job or even one career.

LJD: Why? Why is that so jarring for you?

Kurt: Because I'm constantly trying out who I am and what I enjoy and what's meaningful to me. It doesn't necessarily stay the same, you know. I find things out along the way and I'm gauging whether something is valuable to me and that changes, you know.

In college Kurt studied 3D model making and after college he went to work as a model maker. "I found it a little depressing," he told me, "I was constantly in a workshop. I was in a very similar line as my dad. There's a lot of noise, there's a lot of [dust], different materials being used, and I just wasn't happy."

While he was unhappy and working as a model maker, he had been considering his love for graphic design. He told me about a book called *A Smile of the Mind*, which he said "was something that really shifted in that direction for me." He explained,

that book really did it for me. The cover had a – I think the D at the word mind, the D is rotated. And this wasn't cliché at the time. It was actually – wow, that's fresh. The D was rotated 90 degrees clockwise, so you actually saw this little mouth smiling. I was like oh shit, that's amazing.

I just had a few instances of interaction with something visual and seeing the – just having absolute fascination with the beauty of it in terms of an idea or the way it's conveyed, like what it's actually doing to me and me realizing that oh, that person intended for me to have that feeling.

You know that person intended – there's a whole, you know, like they're thinking behind it and it's condensed and distilled into this beautiful thing.

When I asked him what the impetus was for him to pursue graphic design, he told me that he and his girlfriend broke up and he was "pretty down in the dumps." His girlfriend happened to be an illustrator. She was Swedish and hopping around from place to place taking jobs when she decided to take a job in Chicago. Their breakup was "the straw that broke the camel's back." Kurt said, "I can't do this anymore. I'm not happy." So, he decided to quit cold.

The only thing he did before he quit was call his parents to ask if they could cover his rent for a month. After that he joined a band, worked in a restaurant as a barman and a Japanese retail store, and started taking a production course. When I asked him how he got to graphic design he summarized, “basically dropping everything, hanging out, meeting people.” Then he told me this story:

Kurt: I was at a party and I met somebody whilst I was tearing up napkin tissues, sticking it on the tile in the kitchen. I was writing a happy birthday, you know, by tearing tissue basically, red tissue on this wall because the host, she had...fallen asleep. And I had got there after work pretty late.

This guy walks in the kitchen and he said to me oh, hey, how are you doing? I kind of recognized your face. And he's like what do you do? And I said ah, a few things...and he's like oh, what do you want to do? I have no idea why he asked these questions. And I said oh, I want to be a graphic designer. And he said oh, and he looked at me kind of funny, tilted his head and nodded, and he said oh, me and two other friends have a really small graphic design agency. I was like oh.

LJD: No way.

Kurt: He said I'm moving to Norway to be with my girlfriend. We need somebody who can kind of take the workload and sort of basically move in and be a part of the team. and so whilst I was on this production co-op...I basically got a job and they oversaw that with me and helped me out. And after about a year and a half or so they employed me.

LJD: Wow. That is such a fascinating story.

Kurt: It's crazy. Yeah, it's a crazy sort of turn of events that led me, you know, ultimately to where I'm at now which is kind of crazy but I come from a really small town and now I'm working at one of the largest or kind of the largest branding agency.

Kurt worked for that man he met late one night in the kitchen for over two years until he met his American wife (whilst on tour with his band in Spain) and decided to move to Los Angeles to be with her. His story from arriving jobless in Los Angeles to working in the largest branding agency was a no less winding and serendipitous as how he got from a modeling factory into graphic design.

Kurt's story is not unlike many of my interviewees. His story, like so many that I heard, represented nonlinear career trajectories with both previous job movement and anticipated future movement. For the most part, though not always successfully, they were stories about individuals in pursuit of more passion. The empowering narratives of the passion paradigm assure adherents that they are never locked in and encourage them to use their agency to step out and take risks, for they are chasing something that is reliable.

THE PURSUIT OF PASSION AS POWER: NARRATIVES OF FREEDOM

In this last section I want to put a point on the arguments I have made in this chapter, while explicitly emphasizing how the passion paradigm is empowering in relation to an economic context that expects instability. As professionals in my sample narrated their work histories and speculated about their work futures there were many instances of structural constraints and deterministic exogenous forces. As described in Chapter 2, I heard stories about being laid off after company downsizing, being fired due to client complaints, being downgraded to a contract employee so a company could avoid paying for benefits, and even strategically moving to a position that had health insurance most amenable to treat a specific health problem—which is Lilly's story opening this chapter. My data do not suggest that sociologists have incorrectly identified structural experiences of precarity, but they do suggest that individuals have used a particularly salient paradigm in order to cope: the pursuit of passion. Most of the professionals in my sample described their past work and talked about their future work as a story about the pursuit of passion. Some even took pay cuts, sacrificed stable salaries, lost benefits, risked unemployment, moved their families, or left work they already liked. Their stories are stories of precarity, yet reframed as agentic, empowering, and brave.

The empowered narratives I heard from respondents centered on idea that there is freedom in conceptualizing careers as fluid and freedom in movement. The award-winning organization StoryCorps began in 2003 with a story booth located in Grand Central Station in New York City. Its core principle is an “uncompromising commitment” to “the collecting, sharing, and preserving of people’s stories.” Since 2003, the 501-C3 organization has enjoyed tremendous growth, gathering the largest collection of African American stories in 2008, launching an initiative to collect the stories of LGBT individuals in 2014, and using prize money to collect the wisdom of humanity in 2015. In 2017, the founder of StoryCorps, Dave Isay, published StoryCorps’ fifth book called *Callings: The Purpose and Passion of Work*. The data for this book began as stories from sixty-five thousand individuals doing what they love. The editorial team culled sixty-five thousand down to a couple thousand, and then to a couple hundred. In the end, one hundred and fifty were fully transcribed, lasting an average of forty minutes each. When a member of the editorial team, Cailey Cron, was asked what she learned from working on this book she concluded:

if there’s one thing that I’ve learned from all the stories in this book, it’s that there’s no one right way to find meaning in work. And that’s really reassuring. I might not find my dream job right away. I might stumble across something, a passion of mine years from now. That’s a wonderful thing, to feel like you don’t reach a point in life where you’ve missed the boat. And so, it makes me excited for the rest of my life.²⁷

These sentiments—that it is never too late to find work that you love and that opportunities are never ending—are empowering, and they are sentiments thoroughly promoted by narratives of the passion paradigm. The narratives of the passion paradigm, which encourage individuals to imagine enjoyable career trajectories as nonlinear and unpredictable, compliment a precarious economy in which multiple job or career changes are likely.

²⁷ <https://storycorps.org/podcast/storycorps-466-callings/>

The fluid conception of work passion (as opposed to fixed) renders it compatible with the economic context in a way that other concepts of meaningful work cannot, for example a calling.²⁸ Research on contemporary career callings define a calling as an occupation that an individual feels drawn to pursue, expects to be intrinsically enjoyable and meaningful, and sees as a central part of his or her identity (Berg et al. 2010). Today, a calling refers less to work that was essentially determined for you (as when Weber wrote about it), and more to a particular type of work that you've been destined for but must find.

Berg et al. (2010) argue that over the last few years, the virtues of having a calling, which include increased life, health, and job satisfaction, have been extolled not only by organizational scholars, but also by the popular press and the media (974). The notion that there is a perfect job for you, just waiting to be discovered, acts as a source of motivation, but it also glosses over the effects on those who have failed to find it. Berg et al. (2010) document several empirical studies that find that feeling unable to pursue a calling undermines psychological well-being and produces high degrees of frustration, disappointment, and regret (973). The psychologically tormenting feeling that one has 'missed their calling' is in large part due to conceptualizing a calling as fixed. The dominant view of a calling imagines it as stable and unchanging (Bunderson and Thompson 2009). It is typically described as something individuals search for and find (Duffy and Sedlacek 2007), miss or do not answer (Berg et al. 2010). To reduce the negative effects of this fixed conception, more recent scholarship finds emerging conceptualizations of a calling as something that can change over time or be developed (Dobrow 2012). This conception is more fluid, which finds more resonance in a fluid labor market.

²⁸ In addition to a calling traditionally being considered fixed, another fundamental difference between a calling and work passion is that the traditional definition of a calling depends on *social* fit (Muirhead 2004), while work passion is singularly focused on *individual* fit. Where social fit emphasizes meaningful work that contributes to the collective, individual fit emphasizes meaningful work as individual fulfillment and enjoyment.

As an ideology of work the passion paradigm is wonderfully fluid. Its fluidity allows adherents to remain optimistic about future opportunities waiting in the wings, even if one's current work circumstances are less than ideal. As the editor at StoryCorps stated, "I might stumble across something, a passion of mine years from now. That's a wonderful thing." Because individuals are always changing, and the economy allows movement, adherents are discouraged from ever imagining themselves as stuck. Adherents believe that they are never without agency, they are never stuck on whatever track they are on, and they are never doomed to continue living a life that they do not want to be living. These narratives both empower adherents to imagine that they are in control of their lives, as well as free adherents up to take risks and try things out, for nothing has to be permanent.

Optimism about the future is enabled by the normalization of trial and error, which normalizes both trial (movement) and error (failures, poor fits, low seasons) as part of the unpredictable lifelong pursuit of work passion. When I asked Nels, a market graphic designer, how he advises recent college graduates, he stated:

I talk a lot about hard work and passion and not feeling like you have to figure it all out right now. Because like I said I had eight jobs one year in my 20s you know. A lot of parents really want their kids ... They're paying for them to go to college, get a degree and then get a job. And I just ... That's not how it works for me and I don't think it has to work that way for people. Everyone is different and I'm so thankful it didn't.

The experiences I had in my 20s were incredible. I learned a lot about myself and the world. So, I like to advise kids to you know, try something unique. Try something that's interesting to them and don't feel like that's ... Don't be afraid to do something that's maybe not your first choice of career, but you know that you're going to learn something at every job and make relationships...

The idea is that individuals should feel comfortable trying things, knowing that no decision is final, and that for most people movement is inevitable. Allowing time to engage in the process of "trial

and error” is also the explanation that many respondents gave me when I asked them why they believe college graduates are more likely to find work that they love.

This practice is recommended not only for college students, but for professionals in the new economy. Career choices can feel particularly daunting when individuals imagine that they are choosing a career for life. However, narratives in the passion paradigm remind adherents that that is no longer the case. As organizational psychologist Adam Grant argued, in a stable world it makes sense to pick a career and make a long-term plan, but in an insecure world that strategy does not work; instead individuals should actively experiment on their careers.²⁹ Instead of a strategy of plan and implement, scholars recommend a strategy of test and learn: “a logical process of testing, discovering, and adapting that can be learned by almost anyone seeking professional renewal” (Ibarra 2002). In a test and learn strategy, action comes first. One recent study found that “career catapults” were not the result of planning, but the result of being open and available for opportunities (Botelho et al. 2018). To be open and available means that one cannot plan too far in advance (or at least must hold loosely to those plans) and must be willing to move.

Narratives of the passion paradigm maintain that new exciting opportunities can come to anyone, as long as individuals do two things: keep moving forward and remain open to change. Openness to the future and embracing change were standard narratives among respondents, even those that loved their current work. A market designer named Dahlia told me, “at the end of the day, what's most important for me is to love what I do;” and currently, she does love her work. When I asked her if she could imagine doing the same work for the rest of her life, she told me that she guesses she could, but added that what she designs has already shifted quite a bit over the

²⁹ WorkLife with Adam Grant. Podcast episode: The perils of following your career passion. https://www.ted.com/talks/worklife_with_adam_grant_the_perils_of_following_your_career_passion/transcript?language=en#t-2030912

last few years, from desktop publishing, to advertising on billboards, magazines and invitations, and now she does website brand design. She concluded, “And now, my current thing is what I'm doing now, so, I'm always open to—I'm flexible, and I'm curious. So, how I work and I show up in the world might shift in the next couple years, depending on what happens, so—and, I have a lot of other interests and things that I'm involved with, too, so who knows? [laughs].” Even though Dahlia loves her current work, she expresses an openness to the future, embracing any changes that await her. I have already described some of these narratives in Chapter 3 as a shared strategy to “stay adaptable.”

It is only when individuals are open to the future and take steps forward that they make themselves available for new opportunities, sometimes even surprising ones. The StoryCorp editor expressed this seemingly serendipitous opportunity when she quipped, “I might stumble across something.” In their report called “Passion at Work: Cultivating Worker Passion as a Cornerstone of Talent Development,” the research team at the consulting giant Deloitte similarly found that passion can surprise a person. They write, “All of our subjects over the age of 30 told stories of starting down one path that they believed they were very interested in and then discovering—through serendipity, mentorship, and work opportunities—what they were really passionate about” (2014: 8). Many of the passion stories I heard from respondents were also framed as unpredictable surprises. Respondents described their own nonlinear and bumpy journeys to work that they love or recalled stories from those in their lives. For example, Lilly from the opening vignette told me that a friend of hers named Anthony was fruitlessly pursuing work in film. Solely because he could not find work in film—and needed a form of income on the side—he started a clothing company, which is now thriving. As she exclaimed, “He's had all these designs and he's getting investors and things like that, because [he hadn't] found that work that he's wanted.” The sentiment is that one

never knows where they are going to end up, but with passion as a north star it might be even better than one imagined.

Respondents did not imply that work passion is easy to achieve, but they overwhelmingly believe that individuals have the power to fight for it if they fix their eyes on it and use it as a guide through the turbulence. Even Lilly, the market nurse with a heart condition from the opening of this chapter believes, “You can't just expect shit to be handed to you, hope for the best, hope the universe will provide—you have to work” Or Diego, the market engineer whose quote is featured at the top of this chapter, who stated, “I think if...you don't like what you're doing, you need to freaking change it. It's as simple as that...my dad he would say you know you're not a freaking tree content with whatever sunlight you can get, freaking move, you know what I mean?” Diego fundamentally believes that people are never stuck. He justified his belief saying,

“I do [believe that], because I wasn't good at math. I wasn't good at math and I can freaking do differential equations like the freaking back of my – anything can be learned, I strongly believe this. It's funny my dad, we talk about this all the freaking time. He always talks about concept of the genius, I hate that idea. It's lazy, and it takes away all this hard work. It almost implies that person is just freaking boring, and just freaking does calculus. That's the end of it. I hate that idea.

I love the idea that you can actually get what you want if you work towards it. I believe that so much that if you want to learn freaking I don't know thermodynamics, just sit the heck down, especially now, like education is basically free, you go on the freaking [internet] and learn whatever the hell you want. We have access to so much information it's just a matter of you sitting down and doing it.

He believes he fought hard to love his job, and that others can too. The can-do attitude of the passion paradigm taps into the deep well of myths about opportunity and meritocracy in America. The prospect of reinvention and of a better life is empowering, however vague. “That optimistic sense...to not be forced into a certain lifestyle,” Cody an organization graphic designer told me,

“it’s not necessarily that life is going to be better but it’s just that like you have that freedom to try.”

In this section I have explained how narratives of the passion paradigm empower individuals in a precarious economy to imagine their career trajectories as fluid, enabling individuals to feel optimistically about their futures by normalizing the sometimes slow or painful process of trial and error, while offering the lifelong possibility of exciting new opportunities.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I addressed the question of what the passion paradigm does for those who adhere to it, thereby offering an explanation of its positive function and consequently its existence and resonance for professionals in the new economy. I presented data showing how the passion paradigm individualizes work by emphasizing good work as subjective, prioritizing immaterial concerns over material concerns, and encouraging mutability whereby adherents pursue psychological benchmarks of success, rather than objective or institutional goals. I then described how the pursuit of passion is framed as a north star for adherents, with the passion paradigm providing a dynamic—sometimes contradictory—ideological framework for interpreting and weathering the inconsistencies and contradictions of professional life in precarious times. I ended this chapter with a description of narratives that surround the passion paradigm, which I argue allow individuals to claim agency over their lives by providing motivation, as well as discursive and ideological explanations for their work experiences. In total, in this chapter I argue that what adherence to the passion paradigm does for individuals is increase their perceptions of control, thereby increasing their well-being and empowering them to cope and persist in a precarious new economy.

Economic sociologists investigate how actors make decisions in conditions when they do not know what is best to do. They focus on the structures that individuals rely on for the reduction of uncertainty, which include tradition, habit, norms, institutions, organizations, path dependency, and power. This literature assumes that intentionally rational actors live in a socially structured world that helps them act meaningfully despite uncertainty (Beckert 1996: 820). Within the new economy, individuals experience the world of work as uncertain. Risks are expected, but wage outcomes are unpredictable, occupational mobility is illegible, and past experiences can serve as no guide (Sennett 1998: 86-97). In this chapter I argue that the passion paradigm serves individuals as an ideological structure which enables adherents to act meaningfully and intentionally, despite uncertainty.

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CHAPTER SIX: PASSION AS POLYAMOROUS
Gendered Passion, Emotional Cultures, and the Language of Love at Work

“I submerge myself into it. I surround myself with it, and I like to live and breathe it.”
-Danny Ingram, organization graphic designer

“Love is receiving and giving. Passion is giving and going.”
Britt Kristensen, organization graphic designer

“That type of integrity, honesty, trustworthiness and it’s a relationship, I mean the employer/employee.”
Bethany Ingersleben, organization nurse

At the end of the last chapter I introduced an organization graphic designer named Kurt who, in a risky act of agency, cold quit his job working as a model maker in the UK to find something that would make him happier. Talking with me via phone years later when he was working at a major branding agency in Los Angeles, he described two sources of support as lifechanging for him: the person in the kitchen who asked him “what do you *want* to do?,” and his parents who, though struggling financially, agreed to cover his rent for one month when he quit his job and bought him a Mac computer (with funds he still does not know where from). When he reflected on his parents he said, “I think sometimes I interpret that they think that I’m a bit weird or I’m not making the right decisions, but they always support me...They’re just sort of supporting some of my mad decisions. I think that’s extremely important to where I’ve come, to the point I’ve come to.”

The “extremely important” support that Kurt experienced from his parents reemerged in our interview when I asked Kurt to describe what he thinks good employers provide to their employees. Without a beat he answered,

I think they – just like my parents they probably provide support, support to be fulfilled by the work, to be pushed by the work, do good work, – I think to give you a little bit of freedom, to bring something of your own to the environment, but then also a lot of guidance and encouragement to be able to, you know, push

yourself, you know, in their eyes and what they need from you, so that's sort of a push and pull happening that that has to stay balanced— I mean it's like a marriage, you know, it's like things have to work from both sides and things have to be played with a little bit to find that balance.

So I think that has to be available or the employer has to be willing to have that dialog and to have that experience alongside—you can't just be cracking the whip, 'these are the expectations get it done.' There has to be some level of, you know, understanding that it's going to fulfill from the other side, from the employer's side as to what – they have to understand what's going to be fulfilling for the employee.

Not all respondents described their employers as doting parents who will support the goals of their employees, however mad they may be. But like Kurt, they did describe high expectations for employers to be attuned to the psychological and emotional needs of their employees, cultivating an environment conducive to feeling known and experiencing personal growth. As part of their subversion of materiality and prioritization of immateriality in their definitions of a good job, respondents centered their definitions of good employers on the emotional cultures they create for their employees. But just as gender scholars would expect, they did so in gendered ways.

In Chapters 4 and 5 I detailed an emic concept of work passion and analyzed the ideology of work passion: the passion paradigm. Readers should now have a full understanding of how professionals perceive work passion, but a still incomplete understanding of what the experience of work passion and adherence to the passion paradigm does. In Chapter 5 I answered what adherence to the passion paradigm does for individuals as a way to explain why the passion paradigm thrives within this era of unprecedented precarity. I argued that individuals adhere to the paradigm because it reorients their attention towards that which they perceive more control over, thereby allowing them to claim agency over their work lives. In the last two empirical chapters I attend to analyzing what adherence to the passion paradigm does for existing systems of inequality and power relations in institutions of work, and the labor market of capitalism more generally.

There are many opportunities for future researchers to analyze how individual and institutional adherence to the passion paradigm reproduces inequalities in the labor market; in this chapter I focus specifically on gender.³⁰ So far in this dissertation I have analyzed the passion paradigm as an ideology of work that adherents use to adapt to the structural changes of work in the new economy. A remaining empirical question is the emergent social contract between employers and their employees. From the employee perspective, the social contract describes the expectations that professionals have for their employers to meet their needs, including their conceptions of what good employers should provide to their employees. Within the social contract of the postwar model, employers and employees were bonded by the emotion of loyalty, and employees expected separate leisure time, secure wages, and benefits in exchange for labor that was reliable, long-term, and good. Within the new economy, this social contract no longer works.

In this chapter, I explore the relationships between gender, the passion paradigm, and the new social contract. As an ideology of work which is centered on emotion, I explicitly analyze the passion paradigm as an “emotional culture” that relies on logics of love, which dictates affectual and relational expectations at work. Data show that emotional cultures can help bind employees in the new economy, and that emotional cultures in work are typically gendered. As a result, in this

³⁰ Data from this chapter come mostly from the five following interview questions: 1) What do you value most about your job? 2) Imagine that you know someone who does not really like their job, how would you advise them? 3) How do you define passion at work? 4) What do you think a good employer provides to their employee? 5) How would you describe a good company culture? All answers were coded according to gender, for instance the parent node “Value most about job” had two sub-nodes titled “female values” and “male values.” Any data that came from outside of these discussions were statements in which respondents conveyed romantic or familial metaphors to discuss their work, which were mostly clustered into the advice-giving section, but not entirely. These were coded by gender under a parent node named: “Work as relationship.”

In order to discern patterns, I then pulled all responses to each question into a separate word document, organizing responses by gender, by occupations, and finally by economy type. For example, I clustered the work values for all of the female market nurse responses together, followed by the female organization nurses. I reduced the document size by writing summary statements for each response, often pulling a direct quote and key words used. I then read carefully through each category of answers and wrote down the themes. To find gendered patterns across occupations and economy types, I then looked for consistencies between each female category. The process was tedious and nuanced, but in the end, I could see clear gendered patterns in the data (summarized in Table 6.1).

chapter I access the gendered impact of the passion paradigm, as an emotional culture, on the new social contract: on commitments to work, conceptions of what employers owe to employees, and on affective expressions at work.

First, I find that as an emotional culture of work, the passion paradigm effectively binds men and women to their organizations using logics of passion and love, even if lifelong commitment is no longer a priority for either party. Emotional cultures are not experienced equally, but they can nevertheless cultivate an environment where employees feel connected and committed to their employers. I therefore argue that the emotional culture of passion can replace loyalty as a binding emotion in today's economy.

Second, rather than holding emotionally minimal expectations for their employers, as some scholars suggest, I find that men and women describe rich expectations for their employers to meet their psychological and emotional needs, but in gendered ways. While women want to experience trust, respect, positivity, and support, men want to experience a relationship in which their employer acknowledges their whole humanity. In the context of trying to forge mutually beneficial and committed relationships with their work, I find that men and women are alienated in different ways based on gendered needs.

Lastly, as an emotional culture, work passion has been theorized to be a new form of emotional labor which may include unequal expectations and/or rewards on affective expressions at work (Rao and Tobias Neely 2019). Through a careful analysis of how men and women primarily define the experience of work passion, I find that women were more likely to express work passion as enjoyment, while men were more likely to express work passion as motivation. This small difference could have serious material consequences. Men's prototypically masculine perception of passion as motivation may bolster self-perceptions of confidence, competence, and

hard work which may ultimately translate into more opportunity, particularly if managers share this perception of male passion. Meanwhile, women's prototypically feminine perception of passion as enjoyment may bolster self-perceptions of satisfaction, which may ultimately thwart opportunity. If women double down on communicating that by being passionate, they mean they enjoy their work (perhaps due to both socialization and pressure to appear as a likeable coworker), their passion may be perceived as enough reward for their work. This fits into a vast feminist literature on how love and happiness is supposed to be enough fuel and remuneration for women's work.

The findings in this chapter are summarized in Table 6.1, displayed further down. I imagine the findings in this chapter to be a starting place for future research about the relationship between work passion and gender in the new economy. Before I present my findings, I review literature on the new social contract, emotional cultures, and the relationship between emotional cultures and gender inequalities.

NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT: A TEAM, NOT A FAMILY

In 2009 Netflix created a slide deck summarizing its culture of work; it was called the Netflix Culture Deck. Among the over 100 slides was one which read, "We're a team, not a family. We hire, develop, and cut smartly so we have stars in every position." I was recently listening to a podcast interview with the creator, former CTO of Netflix Patty McCord. She said that the contents of the culture deck were motivated by an idea: "Wouldn't it be cool if we were a great company to be from?" Embedded in her vision for building a great company was the assumption that employees were temporary—they would be fired, or they would quit. The social contract that

McCord wanted to build for Netflix was new. It broke from postwar recipes in which loyal good work was rewarded with loyal long-term job security and predictable remuneration.

The now infamous Netflix Culture Deck is a representation of declining structural loyalty in the new economy, in which professionals cannot rely on institutions for longevity or security. The consequence is a form of work that is “constantly repotted, like a growing plant, with the worker as the gardener” (Sennett 1998). In this landscape, professionals are encouraged to regard themselves as a “business of one” and invest in the maintenance of their personal brand (Lane 2011; Gershon 2017; Vallas and Hill 2018). Rather than expecting long-term employment, professionals are told to expect employability (Boltanski et al. 2005; Neff 2012). Hence, the new relationship between employer and employee has been described as transactional (Kalleberg 2009), trading familial loyalty and longevity for short term team efficiency. Like being a member of a pro-sports team, employers expect employees to perform well and within a few years—and for various reasons—move on.

Of course, as discussed in the introduction and Chapter 5, at the same time that institutions were revoking long-term commitments to their employees, employees were also undergoing a “shifting nature of the self” in which they revoked their commitment to institutions as the primary authors of their identities. These changes spawned a literature concerned with how and from where individuals find meaning and form commitments, if not through long term relationships with institutions (Yankelovich 1981; Bellah et al. 1985; Cancian 1987; Putnam 2000).

Similarly, today’s erosion of a social contract which engendered commitment via loyalty and a relationship which exchanged stable wages for good work opens up new empirical questions about how contemporary professionals build stable identities around work, and commitments to their organizations. As the relationship between employer and employee fundamentally changes,

what do professionals expect from their employers in exchange for their good work? And, what are the consequences for social norms and the distributions of power at work?

One answer is that work becomes an emotionally barren transaction maintained only by mutual self-interest. In a business-business model, fickle commitment is driven by how each entity benefits the growth of the other. Research on the new social contract between employers and their employees, however, find that institutions of work are flush with emotion. It is true that one effect of unprecedented professional precarity is that individuals shift personal identification away from their institution and towards their occupation (Barley and Kunda 2006), towards a mutable sense of self (Zurher 1977), or towards other more stable source of identity such as family (Orange 2003), but this does not mean that individuals do not want to identify with their institutions.

Given the context of institutional uncertainty, we might expect that individuals would turn to sources outside of work to grant them meaning and coherence. However, decades of data show that middle class individuals desire for their work to be meaningfully connected to their identity (Kanter 1990; Wuthnow 1996; Wrzesniewski 2003; Muirhead 2004). This desire reflects a compulsion to unite work life with personal and social meaning. Individuals want more from their work than money (Rousseau et al. 2006). Berg et al. (2010) summarize that individuals want work to fulfill core personal values (Judge and Bretz 1992), allow self-expression (Kahn 1990), and provide opportunities to help others (Grant 2007). And while the most common-sense answer to why we work is “to make money,” compared to other advanced industrial nations, Americans are the most likely to say that people work to find self-fulfillment (Wuthnow 1996).

In part, this may be because changes in the social organization of work (declining job security, increasing workplace diversity, and the spread of communication technology) are so significant that they are eroding the boundary between work and non-work identities making it

impossible for individuals to separate their sense of self from their work (Ramarajan and Reid 2013). This has elsewhere been described as ‘the myth of separate spheres’ (Zelizer 2011). Scholars have found that work-life interference (what management scholars call integration) is positively associated with high status and education (Shieman et al. 2009) and flexibility (Blair-Loy 2009)—both associated with professional work.

Ramarajan and Reid (2013) argue that the overt collapse of the boundary between work and home means that individuals must actively manage the compatibility between their work and non-work identities (Ramarajan and Reid 2013). If this is true, in order to understand any relationship between employees and their organizations of work in the new economy, scholars must consider how individuals negotiate compatibility between personal identity and organizational identity. Ramarajan and Reid (2013) find that some professionals prefer to include their non-work identities at work, and are satisfied with work when their preference for inclusion is matched by their organization’s pressures. Many professionals want to feel morally and emotionally invested in the goals of the organization, even if their tenure is temporary (Blair-Loy 2003).

The organizational and individual benefits of alignment between individual nonwork and work identities can also be found in research on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In their article assessing CSR as a new spirit of capitalism (à la Boltanski and Chiapello 2005), Kamzi et al. (2015) find that organizations also have to negotiate pressures from their consumers, employees, and stakeholders to behave in alignment with their nonwork values. They argue that a primary challenge to the survival of corporate capitalism is that it has been dis-embedded from cultural, moral and social benefits. The promise of CSR is that it offers “a richer, more diverse work experience, where several forms of value—besides financial profits—are considered

important. The value-management made possible with CSR is a way to reinforce the sense of community at work and to consolidate organizational identity and culture (Kazmi et al. 2016: 10). The argument therein is that even as mutual institutional and individual loyalties decline, individuals may still demand “greater consistency between how they are supposed to behave within society and how they are supposed to behave at work” (16). What this means is that employee demands of an institution are not limited to instrumentality, even in the short term.

Emotional Cultures

In addition to being concerned with how organizational mission and identity align with their own, scholars have also found that employee satisfaction and productivity depend on organizational emotional cultures. In her famous book, *The Time Bind*, Arlie Hochschild (1997) revealed that some professionals experience or perceive work as spaces of more emotional nourishment and reprieve (compared to home), countering the prevalent portrayal of family as a haven in a heartless world. She defines emotional culture as, “a set of rituals, beliefs about feelings and rules governing feelings which induce emotional focus, and even a sense of the ‘sacred.’” Hochschild argues that at the same time work has sped up, requiring professionals to give up peripheral time with family, friends, and community, work has also increased efforts to ritualize the workplace and build emotional cultures. For some, strong emotional cultures at work function as a magnet “drawing on the human need for a center, a ritual core” (Hochschild 1997: 459). She continues, “For all its aggravation and tensions, the workplace is where quite a few workers feel appreciated, honored, and where they have real friends. By contrast, at home there are fewer “award ceremonies” and little helpful feedback about mistakes” (463).

Professionals who work in organizations with strong emotional cultures aligned with their own values can therefore feel nurtured, despite the fact that emotional cultures are manufactured. Especially in industries where employees have to engage in high levels of emotional labor (Hochschild 1983), employees are lured by what Hochschild (1997) calls an “atmosphere of engineered cheer, appreciation, and harmony at work” (464). The emotional culture helps bind employees to their organization, thus being an effective strategy for organizations to pursue.

Management scholars Barsade and O’Neill (2014), for example, argue that organizational leaders ought to recognize that basic human emotions play important roles in organizations, as opposed to assuming that emotions are “left at the organizational door.” In particular, rather focusing on improving staffing and resources in order to motivate good work from their employees, they recommend that organizations build a culture of companionate love: a culture rich with feelings of affection, compassion, caring, and tenderness for others. Their research suggests that a culture of love has to come from the top down, not just circulate among coworkers. As such, emotional cultures are context specific, based on the emotional needs of an organization and its employees. Cultivating the proper emotional culture at work can effectively bind employees to their organization, much like the mutual emotion of loyalty did in the era of postwar work.

Emotional Cultures and Gender

Sociologists of gender have long known that the boundary between work and home is porous. They have contributed decades of meaningful insights into how individuals—particularly women—reconcile ideological contradictions at work and home (see Gerson 1985; Hays 1996; Blair-Loy 2003; Halryjo and Lyng 2009). This large body of research is based on the premise that the institution of work, like all structures, is gendered (Acker 1990; Ridgeway 2011). Gender is a

social structure which both constrains and enables the actions of individuals (Risman 2004), who in their daily lives are always “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987). At the institutional level, gender organizes, sorts, and evaluates social relations (Ridgeway 2011), leading to sex segregation between occupations, between jobs within occupations, and across occupational contexts (Reskin 2002).

There is an extensive literature covering the problems with gender, love, and work. Scholars have long critiqued emotional cultures of work for sustaining gender inequalities across the labor market and within organizations. Beginning with Hochschild’s (1983) famous book *The Managed Heart*, scholars have found that workers must manage their emotions to align with organizational expectations, and that emotional labor (and its negative effects) falls disproportionately on women, service workers, and people of color (Hochschild 2003; Kang 2010; Leidner 1991; Macdonald et al. 2008; Wingfield 2010).

An example of work that is high on emotional labor, disproportionately female, and disproportionately underpaid (if paid at all) is informal and formal care work (England 2005). England (2005) presents five theoretical frameworks developed to conceptualize and explain why care work is underpaid. One of them (devaluation) is based on pure discrimination against women and minorities, and three of them are based on the problematic intersection of love and gender. Two in particular are relevant to work passion: ‘prisoner of love’ and ‘love and money.’ ‘Prisoner of love’ refers to a phenomenon whereby individuals are vulnerable to exploitation via poor wages or overwork because they are prisoners of their own love for the work. ‘Love and money’ refers to a cultural belief whereby love and money are perceived as hostile or antithetical, such that to highly compensate labor in which love is required is believed to somehow corrupt the genuine love. The consequence of underpaid work for these phenomena is not limited to women, but

women are more likely to bear an unequal burden because they tend to be clustered into organizations or occupations in which care, nurturing, or love is central.

Feminists have also waged the critique that ideologies of love are particularly damaging for women (Firestone 1970). In her article, “Down with Love: Feminist Critique and the New Ideologies of Work Author,” Weeks (2017) uses longstanding feminist critiques of love to criticize the “mandate to love our work and be happy with it” (40). She argues that like romantic love, the normative idea to Do What You Love transforms saying no to love at work into a perceived tragedy and individual defect. Weeks (2017) also argues that just as love in the home has justified the conceptualization of unpaid housework and childcare as labors of love, so does Do What You Love “[confound] the purely instrumental rationale of the economic exchange of labor” (45). As both the ‘prisoner of love’ and ‘love and money’ theories suggest, the involvement of love seems to justify the reduction of remuneration. Finally, she argues that just as one’s ability to chase romantic love is tied to economic security; following the advice to follow your passion is an economic privilege that is less likely to be afforded to women. As she writes, “there is often too much at stake for women to leave it to fate or fortune” (51). What Weeks (2017) suggests is that the passion paradigm will exacerbate existing gender inequalities in the labor market precisely because the institution of love (or marriage) is already a source of gender inequality. From the feminist perspective, therefore, combining love and work, will only hurt women more.

Whether the infusion of love into work via adherence to the passion paradigm exacerbates gender inequalities in the new economy remains an open empirical question, and one that I look forward to pursuing in future research. In this chapter, I begin assessing the relationships between gender, the passion paradigm, and the new social contract by comparing how men and women who adhere to the passion paradigm describe their relationships to work. In the first section I assess

whether the logics of love inherent to the passion paradigm's insistence that professionals do what they love and pursue passion in their work help bind adherents to their work. I then assess professional perceptions of a new social contract by comparing what men and women say they value most in their work, how they describe what good employers provide to their employees and what good company cultures look like. Finally, based on literature which expects emotions and emotional cultures at work to be gendered, I compare how men and women primarily define work passion. I conclude with a summary of findings, and a discussion of their implications for gender inequalities in work. My findings are summarized in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Summary of Gender Differences

	MEN	WOMEN	BOTH
Primary Logic of Commitment	PASSION	LOVE	Use rhetoric to convey loyalty
Value Most About Work	INTELLECTUAL OR PRACTICAL SUPPORT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Working together towards a goal • Productive relationships • The challenge of management 	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual respect and support • Reliability • Not alone • Feeling needed • Helping others • Being trusted 	RELATIONSHIPS WITH CO-WORKERS
Secondary Value	FREEDOM/AUTONOMY	FLEXIBILITY	FAMILY FEEL/TEAMWORK

Table 6.1 continued			
Good Employer and Company Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees full humanity • Recognizes that there is life outside of work • Avoids “cog in the wheel” culture • Avoids making employees feel replaceable • Fosters camaraderie • Offers guidance and encouragement • Nurtures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers trust and respect • Shows appreciation • Provides good feedback • Fosters positivity • Management has an open-door policy • Management are good relationally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pays fair, market value • Expectations are clear
Primary Definition of Work Passion	MOTIVATION	ENJOYMENT	
Primary Attitude Towards Others’ Un-Used Agency	CRITICAL	SYMPATHETIC	Believe individuals have agency to wield
Percentage Who Chose PASSION As #1 Priority for College Graduates	68%	87%	Passion as top choice
Percentage Who Chose Steve Jobs’ DWYL Quote As #1	51%	38%	Do What You Love as top choice
Percentage Who Believe in A Calling	74%	88%	Believe callings are unfixed (can change)

RHETORICS OF LOVE AND COMMITMENT IN A GOOD RELATIONSHIP

In 2017 anthropologist Ilana Gershon argued that passion is replacing loyalty as the primary emotion binding employees to their work. One reason is that work passion yields happy workers. Research has shown that the experience of harmonious work passion contributes to employee satisfaction, which is positively correlated with commitment (Burke and Fiksenbaum 2009; Forest et al. 2010). I also find this. Data presented in earlier chapters demonstrate that professionals do perceive work passion as a viable route to more happiness in work (Chapters 4 and 5). However, in this chapter I find that people who adhere to the passion paradigm also stay committed because the passion paradigm, with its reliance on rhetoric of love and passion, invokes logics of commitment from romantic or familial love. These findings suggest another reason why the emotion of passion may effectively replace loyalty. It is not just that passionate employees are more satisfied, but that the ideology of work passion—the passion paradigm—borrows cultural logics of love which impose schemas of workplace commitment. Like Kurt in the opening vignette who described the push and pull and negotiation of needs between employer and employee like a marriage, I found that respondents often relied on metaphors of romantic or familial love to explain their relationships to work. These metaphors were mostly used at insecure junctures, when we talked about past job movement, current dissatisfaction, or how they would (or have) advised friends who are unhappy at work.

The rhetoric of the passion paradigm relies on the dual concepts of passion and love. In the context of work, love and passion may be hard to distinguish. But in the context of romance or family, the distinction becomes clearer, as does the necessary role that both passion and love play in the context of relationship building. The passion paradigm as an expression of passion

emphasizes natural, deep, guttural attraction. In seasons of passion, adherents of the passion paradigm are committed because of their feelings for their work. This is most akin to the initial infatuation stage in a romantic relationship. Individuals are drawn together by their feelings. Nico, an organization engineer, compares the gut feeling required of finding a good company worthy of your commitment to finding his wife. “I mean I got married at 22. Most people wait a lot longer and so it’s like it’s not when you know or it’s not at what age you know or what time in your career. It’s when it’s in front of you.” Using the metaphor of finding his wife, what Nico conveys is that finding a good company is like finding a partner—both come down to an undeniable gut feeling of passion.

Passion as a source of commitment (as opposed to love) depends on fire for the work that is either there or not. Nick, an organization graphic designer, told me about a girl he went to school with that landed a great job at a huge, old west coast agency, but it killed her passion. She quit one year later to become, of all things, a day trader. As we talked Nick emphasized that passion is something inherent. Talent can be learned—like his creative friend who learned to day trade. But passion cannot be taught, and it cannot be developed without it already being there. As Nick explained,

I definitely think there’s some people that I know that have probably [grown their love for their work]. I just wonder how deep that love actually runs. If it wasn’t something that you were drawn to already, how deep can you ever really love something that you—that you weren’t naturally attracted to? I would think the same would be true for people. It’s sort of like arranged marriages. You can come to love somebody, but would it ever be as strong as something that was natural? I don’t know. Probably not.

When men evoked metaphors of romantic or familial love they were more likely than women to portray work passion as passion. They used metaphors to describe commitment to work as one

driven by the initial or intermittent magic that is crucial for a healthy long-term relationship; or inversely, justify a broken commitment to work via certainty that the required fire is gone.

The passion paradigm as an expression of love, on the other hand, emphasizes worthwhile effort, growth, ups and downs, and the beauty of commitment through the good and the bad. This is most akin to the long-term or legal commitment stage in a romantic relationship. Individuals are drawn together by their commitment to one another. Britt, an organizations graphic designer, used to co-own her own stationary company, which she loved. As she told me about her decision to let it go, she drew distinctions between love and passion, saying that after months of wrestling she just couldn't be married to that company anymore. When I asked her to clarify how one can have both passion and love at once she explained,

Well you can have that in your marriage, right. You have seasons where you're passionate about like who you're married to, and then you have seasons where you're like can you pick up your socks? Like I just am not passionate about you right now, or whatever that looks like. So that same thing could you do that with your job, where you're super passionate about it in the beginning, like I love this, I'm doing what I want to do, but then like two years in, when you're like I'm exhausted all the time, then I'm not really operating out of a passion place. I'm operating out of like a love commitment space, where it's like I'm doing this, because I know I love this, but I'm not passionate about it at this moment.

When women evoked metaphors of romantic or familial love, they were more likely than men to portray work passion as love. They used metaphors to describe commitment to work as one driven by the understanding that all relationships have ups and downs and that any good relationship is worth fighting for; or inversely, justify a broken commitment to work via certainty that they faithfully rode the ups and downs and held up their end of the bargain by trying to improve the relationship before giving up.

Though adherents to the passion paradigm were not willing to settle for work in which they were unhappy, neither were they fickle in their existing commitments to work. Respondents were

most likely to evoke a metaphor of romantic or familial love while we were talking about how they have dealt with or advised others to deal with discontentment at work. Although the bottom line for most respondents was that if all else fails, quit, it was almost never described as a flippant decision. Even as respondents advocated for individuals to put their happiness first, most of them did so with quitting as a last resort. Much like ending a romantic relationship, the passion paradigm borrows logics of love to impose gravity on the decision to break a commitment. Aside from the obvious material and practical barriers to changing jobs, these data reveal that adherence to the passion paradigm is one way that professionals in a precarious economy maintain emotional connections to their work.

The effectiveness of the passion paradigm to bind adherents to their employers is the dynamism of the concept of work passion. As described in Chapter 4, the concept of work passion rhetorically equips adherents to deal with a range of emotional experiences of work with passion. Their understanding of what work passion is covers their attraction to the work when it is easy, as well as their perseverance in the work when it is hard. Similarly, the passion paradigm, with its borrowed rhetoric of love and passion, ideologically equips adherents to expect that all good work—just like good relationships—is not good all the time or good in every way. The passion paradigm therefore leverages how individuals think about romantic and familial love and commitment to create expectations of work. The expectations that employees have for their employers, far from being void of emotion, are replete with emotions. Just like any good relationship would be.

A GOOD RELATIONSHIP: NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT

In an effort to understand how men and women envision the social contract between themselves and their employers I asked them to tell me what they value most about their work, what they think a good employer provides to their employees, and what a good company culture is. I argue that these data help tell us the emotional needs that men and women have at work, and when these needs are unmet how each are alienated at work.

As detailed in Chapter 5, for adherents of the passion paradigm good jobs are those in which professionals feel personal emotional and psychological satisfaction. Likewise, I find that most respondents conceive of good employers as not just providing material fulfillment or security in the form of present or future employability), but emotional fulfillment and security. Respondents equate good employers with good stewards of emotional culture and facilitators of personal growth for their employees.

MEN

What Men Value Most

When I asked men what they valued most about work they were likely to talk about collaborating with coworkers, working together towards achieving a shared goal, sharpening relationships in which growth occurred, and facing the various challenges of management. I summarize these as valuing intellectual or practical support. I have collapsed data on intellectual support into two categories: good people and managing people. As a secondary value, men were likely to use the rhetoric of freedom or autonomy.

Intellectual Support via Good People

Though men were more likely to talk about the actual work itself compared to women, both men and women centered their responses relationally. For men, the intellectual support meant they were surrounded by people who helped them do their job better and from whom they could learn or be otherwise grown.

When I asked Diego, a market engineer to clarify what characteristics of his job he values the very most he replied,

I like pulling together the experts for sure, I love that. Like I love having a room – of calling a meeting where everyone is in a room, where I know that I can get a great answer from this one person who is an expert on this. I know that in the same room, I can say hey, what do you think of what she said about this? And we'll talk about it. I love the brainstorming sessions of some upcoming thing, some issue that comes up. I get the biggest kick out of that.

Here Diego talks about the intellectual stimulation he gets from being surrounded with other smart individuals. An organization nurse named Kevin described it like this: “the people help you to grow [as a nurse] because you learn from them. People see things differently in a situation that you wouldn't have considered before, a different way of doing something. I'm not good at everything. Everybody has their little specialty that they help to contribute to the team.” Like Diego, Kevin discusses how he values the people around him because they help him improve as a nurse. Finally, when I asked Dario, an organization graphic designer, what characteristics of his job he values most he told me “I think the relationships that I've created over the years working in my profession.” When I followed up asking “relationships with who?” he clarified,

With friends and colleagues and just like one of the things that I loved about like going to the Art Institute was just like kind of like everybody was just like, really liked and wanted to be in that environment of like creatives and just like throwing ideas around and stuff and then kind of like understanding that there's other people out there that are like you with the same aspirations. Having that like common ground.

What the male professionals in my sample described was a deep appreciation for being surrounded by good people who are interested in the same things. Through these relationships professional men felt a sort of intellectual or practical support which they found to be among their highest value.

Intellectual Support via Managing People

The second way I have classified the male appreciation for intellectual support via relationships is the satisfaction they got from figuring out how to organize people in order to accomplish good work. A market graphic designer named Uriah told me,

I think I get the most out of working with the designers that I work with and this is going to sound really dumb but I really – I'm learning that I really like the managerial role. I really, really like directing. So, when I'm working with these other designers and they're kind of like stuck in a certain thing or they're working on something and I can see how something could be improved, I really like helping those people out and helping produce something a little bit better. So that's what I think I value the most out of the current position that I'm in.

The value here is for figuring out how to leverage personal expertise or insights to help others perform their job well or accomplish a given task. Others talked more directly about valuing the role of management for the intellectual challenges of managing people. Consider my conversation with Kevin, an organization engineer:

LJD: What characteristics of your job do you value most?

Kevin: I think – so my title is a manufacturing engineer, but I guess I'm more of like a project manager and I have to interface with a lot of different departments and people and I really value like working with people and talking and forming relationships and I think that's probably what's kept me there for so long.

LJD: What in particular do you think about interfacing with people do you like?

Kevin: I think people are fascinating.

LJD: I agree.

Kevin: Yes. I don't know. Just like – just hearing their stories and like understanding – I don't know. People at work are so interesting. Like there's so many different personalities and to get them there's like some sort of challenge to like get them all to work together or like to get them to do things in general. It's a challenge in itself. And so you like kind of figure out different ways to – I don't want to say manipulate but like relate to them and then, you know, it becomes a challenge like oh this guy is having a bad day and I know I need work from him – I need to get things done, so like I'll maybe go and talk to him a little bit about like what's going on and then maybe he'll feel enough to where he'll do my work for me and then – well not my work, but do the work that needs to be done, then there's something about that. It's just like kind of cool.

Though many described this value as managing or negotiating relationships internal to the organization, some also described valuing this type of relationship with clients or patients. A market nurse named Daryle, for example, told me that what he values most is “the fact that I'm able to help people understand things.” He went on,

'Cause as a nurse you're also their advocate in the hospital. 'Cause they don't ... sometimes, people have no clue what's going on. Being that person that explains, kind of like, being, I don't want to say middle-man, but being that person to sit down and explain to somebody. "Hey, this is what's happening." And to kind of just put it into terms that they can understand. And having them thank you, um, after their surgery, after whatever they went through during their hospital stay.

Although Daryle is not managing several people or getting his co-workers to collaborate well on a given project, he expresses a deep value for being able to leverage his expertise to recognize the needs of a person and execute to fill that need. He expresses satisfaction in being able to autonomously communicate intellectual information in a way that improves the patient experience.

Freedom and Autonomy

The second most valued characteristic of work for professional men in my sample was freedom or autonomy. Men valued work contexts in which they felt freedom from micromanagement and the autonomy to perform work tasks and solve problems. Some described

meeting this need in simple ways, for example a market nurse named Gunnar represented his ability to work autonomously with a story about making “a really fatty milkshake” for a calorie deficient patient who had a really low appetite and was having a hard time with solids, but could consume liquids. Others described their value for autonomy much more broadly. Kellen is a married market graphic designer with no kids. When I asked him to clarify what he values most about his job he talked about the freedom that characterizes the majority of his season of life. He began,

I think it would be like I said, just the freedom, the lifestyle freedom that comes with this job. So it's not the work I do, it's not the clients I work with, it's the ability to kind of curate who I work with, what I work on, how much I have to work, where I can work from. If I don't want to have to be at work at 9 a.m. and I want to stay out and surf a little bit longer there's no one telling me – giving me a hard time about that. It's just the lifestyle behind the freelance, the freelance lifestyle really.

He called his season in life “the sweet spot...the ultimate freedom because I don't have kids, I don't have responsibility really to anyone except for my small, little group of friends and loved ones who I interact with. And it just is kind of a liberating job I suppose.” Kellen attributes much of the freedom in his work to the fact that he is a freelancer. This was an especially popular sentiment among individuals—both men and women—in the market, because narratives around the perks of market work in the new economy is increased freedom from bureaucracy and more autonomous work.

However, though the structural circumstances of organization professionals limited their ability to actually free themselves of external expectations and constraints, men in organizations also expressed a high value for experiencing freedom or autonomy in their work. An organization engineer named Nathan bluntly answered that the characteristic of his job that he values most is “the freedom and not really being micromanaged, taking your task and get it done and just that's pretty much it. As long as I don't have someone down my back all the time then I'm okay.” Many

shared Nathan's distastes for micromanagement in the sense that micromanagement constrains one's actions or conveys a limiting sense of distrust in the professional.

A high value for autonomy or freedom at work was also expressed by professionals who felt like its absence hindered their ability to do good work. Nick, an organization graphic designer, said that his top value is "doing good work. Something that you're proud of the finished piece. That it was a good creative idea that you got to finish with a great execution, that wasn't watered down, that didn't miss the mark, that wasn't mired to where the creative didn't—that the end product didn't suffer." Nick was amused as I pressed for clarification, citing that for people in design the concept of being "watered down" is well known. Everybody knows that if work is referred to as not watered down it means it was great work. He continued,

[Watered down means] what your vision was, what it's potential was, not being reached because of—we call it design-by-committee. The old saying of, too many cooks in the kitchen. That's watered down. Again, it happens a lot because you've got—people hire you as a creative, but then they'll—they will then come back and say—either, (A) my wife, my nephew, somebody else in the company thinks that X, Y and Z is better; or you'll often get—although we're supposed to do deep dives and learn everything we need to know—well, you just don't understand our market then. That's always—that one's harder—that one's really hard to combat.

Hence, when there are "too many cooks in the kitchen," professionals lose a valued sense of freedom to perform undiluted good. They feel hamstrung by too many opinions, particularly when their opinion is out powered by a superior or client. Nick went on to tell me a story about a client in the insurance space who rejected Nick's recommendation to re-brand in purple because the client did not like purple. A few months later a competitor launched a new branding campaign—all purple, and Nick said that his former client called and said he should have listened to him. This story reminded me of another graphic designer who told me that she once had a CEO who had a list of colors she did not like and forbade her designers to use them. This type of micromanagement

striped professionals of the autonomy needed to perform work and solve problems in the ways they felt best.

Others described their value for freedom or autonomy in less obvious ways. For example, an organization nurse named Freddie identified his top value as freedom from “golden handcuffs.” He concluded, “I think most anyone that's forced to work likes it less. You know if you're forced to do something you're going to like it less.” Freddie explained what he meant like this:

Freddie: I value that because I don't think life is all about work. I think life is about work... You should work. [But] work should be a tool to improve your lifestyle in a sense. I mean I think people that are unhappy with their work are people that have to work, you know, that are forced to work because they've, you know, financially they have a mortgage, car – you know stuff that they can't afford that they have to keep working.

LJD: And I mean, isn't that why most of us work? I mean isn't that why you work, isn't that why I work, because we have to have a paycheck?

Freddie: Yes, but there's different levels of that I think. You know what I mean? I think like people buy the most expensive house and the most expensive car and the most expensive this and they spend a bunch of money on like clothes and stuff. I think they leverage themselves to work paycheck to paycheck, you know, and I think usually those are the people who feel less happy because they feel controlled and forced to work. Anytime you don't have a decision in something you like it less, you know, any time you are forced into something. So you know for me I enjoy my work because I choose to be there.

Here, freedom refers to a relationship with work in which the employee feels like work serves them, not that they are a slave to work because they have to pay the bills. Many respondents shared a similar sentiment when justifying the pursuit of passion (or even talent) over money; respondents eschewed the idea of being beholden to money, prisoner to a paycheck. As Freddie intimates, if one can conceive of work as fulfilling primarily immaterial needs, then one can perceive more control over work as something that they choose to rather than have to do.

How Men Conceive of Good Employers and Good Company Culture

Finally, and surprisingly, when I asked the men in my sample what they believe good employers provide to their employees and what they believe a good company culture looks like, their answers largely diverged from what they valued most about their work. The new social contract that male professionals in my sample described is one in which employers see the full humanity in their employees, recognize that they have lives outside of work, prevent a culture where employees feel replaceable or like indecipherable parts of a machine, and foster a culture of camaraderie, guidance, and encouragement. In general, they described the importance of emotional intelligence for good management.

When I asked men what they valued most about their work they tended to focus on aspects of work that allowed them to grow as experts, perform their work well, and perform their work in the ways they wanted. When I asked men how they envisioned a good employer and good company culture, however, they shifted to focus on having their emotional and psychological needs met. The best way I can describe the majority male sentiment in these conversations is to say that men described an emotional work culture in which their whole humanity is taken into consideration.

Daniel, an organization engineer, told me that good employers provide

[a] sense of relationship that they care for you as a person more so than just the work itself. I would say like personal development, making sure that you're okay like outside of a professional sense, you know, that you're in the right mental state at home, like in general like you should – like an employer should care more about the person, maybe a little bit more about the person than like the work itself. I feel like as that like for me personally, I would be more loyal, respect more an employer that cares more about the person than just the work.

Recognizing the individuality of each employee was important, for according to respondents' employees have varied dispositions and come to work with varied needs. When I asked Kevin, an organization engineer, he started his answer “Ooh, that's going to be a different answer for each

person, I guess. For me I think a good employer would make sure that my needs are met as well as – yeah, I guess my needs are met.” When I asked him what his needs are he replied,

Work/life balance needs. A good employer would make sure that their employees are efficient, like they're producing the most amount of work, but at the same time they're not hating life. They're happy, they're well taken care of. And for me that would be probably – so it's more –an internal thing I guess. Like I'd have to be happy with what I do, but to ensure that I am happy I think making sure that I'm not like stressed or anything so like having a boss that is cognitive of my personality and will know that, you know, if there's way too much work for myself then they'll either distribute it to other co-workers or just like, you know, take the load off me.

I think the biggest thing is probably just like the work/life balance. They understand that there is life outside of work and that they'll respect like if I need to go home and like, you know, visit family or whatever, not need to but want to and they'll allow me to do that. I think that would be cool.

Kevin described a desire for employers to both respect employee needs for work life balance, as well as to be aware of what that looks like for each individual employee. Similarly, a market engineer named Travis told me that good employers provide a positive community. After I asked for clarification he continued,

A positive community that boosts morale, seeks to alleviate stress and make sure employees feel like they are spending their time meaningfully. I mean a good employer is one that supports, as long as you're doing what you're supposed to be doing at work, supports you professionally and also personally.

The company fosters a positive community at work and that's like building a sense of community among the people that work there where everyone feels invested in their own wellbeing, as well as those around them at work. I mean it's people that you spend 9 plus hours a day with every day for 52 weeks a year sans holidays.

Both explained their conception of a social contract between employer and employee as one in which as long as employees get their jobs done as expected, employers will go beyond professional support and see to it that employees feel personally supported by their community at work.

According to the men in my sample, the bottom line is that good employers will not hold men to impossible working standards, disregarding that they have lives outside of work, as well as

emotional and psychological needs that need to be met. Greg, an organization nurse, told me that companies can try to provide the best service they can, but they should not do it at the expense of their employees by working them to the bone. Don, a market engineer, told me that employers need to be very clear about what they want from the employee and what they plan on doing back for the employee (aside from compensation). Kyle, a market nurse, told me that good employers avoid “bullshit statements of support” and actually do things to prevent burnout—a prevalent and notorious phenomenon in the field of nursing. Nico, an organization engineer, succinctly covered a range of needs when he replied that with good employers “you can make a decision at work and that they have your back, they learn about your family. You have team bonding and dinners and you feel a part of the company. You go to the big company meetings and you talk about the future.”

According to respondents, recognizing the full humanity of employees is a wise decision for employers. In the quote above, Kevin began his answer with a rational justification that attending to work/life balance needs yield happier employees and happier employees are more efficient. Also consider Greg, an organization nurse who answered,

I think a good employer would provide a well-rounded package for employees, well rounded meaning they recognize that they have their own motivations, family, single, partying, social. They recognize that they need to get paid for their work and they need their own space and the limitations on how much work should occupy that person's job. I mean if they're demanding a lot more some people would stay, but it wouldn't be as healthy as...the standard is that would keep the person for a long time.

What Greg is saying at the end of this quote is that if employers do not pay attention to making sure employees are enjoying a “well-rounded” experience based on their personal motivations, they are likely to lose the employee. And finally Cody, an organization graphic designer, who answered that his good employer is hospitable to the employees in the same way he is hospitable

to their clients: “he’s sort of like welcoming us and like making us feel comfortable so that we’re encouraged to work for him and kick ass for him, you know. I think it’s strategic. I think that that’s kind of who he is, but I think it’s also strategic to build a team that’s like closely knit and that is collaborative and that feels comfortable with each other.”

What many professional men described in their answers were deep desires to be seen, know, and respected for being more than a worker bee or replaceable cog in the company wheel. Many respondents used this language verbatim. Pablo, an organization nurse, succinctly answered that good employers provide their employees “a feeling of, you know, somewhat caring, you know, not making the person feel replaceable. Kellen, a market graphic designer, answered, “just common decency is kind of nice, you know, keep things decent and remember that people are more than just worker bees.” When I asked what his answer meant, he elaborated, “just that, you know, while someone might just be a replaceable cog in the pure business side of things, that this is a collection of human beings and everyone has unique experiences that they come from and trying to empathize with people.” Daryle, a market nurse, expressed the sentiment with a bit more depth. Consider our exchange:

Daryle: They genuinely want to know how you're doing with work. They provide you with opportunities to "Hey, do you want to grab a cup of coffee, tell me about how, how it's been going"...

LJD: Why do you think that a good employer should provide those things? You know, why do you feel like it's the employer's role to, like, check in with you and ...

Daryle: I think it's because, it's shows them that they actually value your experience, value your, your time as an employee. It shows them that, "Hey, you're working for us. We appreciate what you're doing, the experience that you're bringing on." Um, versus like, "Hey, you're just another body. Just go do this."

To desire management that “genuinely wants to know how you’re doing with work” and actively checks in to ensure employees feel valued and appreciated is to desire management that is nurturing. As Travis, the market engineer quoted above, described,

[Good employers] remind you why you're there. Appreciate your help. [They create] a workplace environment that gives you a sense of belonging, that again kind of reminds you in a supportive way why you're there, you know, not only to make a living and earn a paycheck but that the work you're doing is important and that you're valued as a member of the team that's making that happen, making those things happen.

So that goes in all forms, not only direct feedback from superiors but kind of morale boosting things that, you know, everybody – like I said before everybody has bad days and work can be mundane. There can be stress. There is stress. But you know, a good employer and a good workplace environment seeks to alleviate those things or mitigate them as much as possible so that at the end of the day, the week, the month, you still feel like your time spent there was meaningful and valuable and hopefully, you know, worthwhile.

The men in my sample expressed a desire to feel like they were not solely responsible for their mood, motivation, and success in a company. They wanted to be treated as more than working robots. Kurt, the organization graphic designer from the opening vignette, told me that the best boss he has ever had used to walk with him to work, buy him a coffee and croissant, and offer him daily encouragement and knowledge. Kurt described a toxic corporate culture as one in which knowledge is withheld.

Instead, respondents articulated that good employers should generously help their employees thrive. Kellen, a market graphic designer, told me that one of his first employers brought in a financial expert to teach employees about money management and his current employer offers all kinds of educational opportunities. He summarized that a big part of a good employer/employee relationship is “helping their employee kind of navigate through life.” Pablo, an organization nurse, similarly answered that good employers “work with the employee to advance if they want to. So they grow to love their job or to at least try and foster that, you know.”

He continued, “I think those things kind of contribute to a good company culture, you know, like trying to develop in-house talent, trying to encourage people to grow, helping them feel like they have a place, you know. It's not professional sports, you know what I mean?” The majority of men in my sample described a social contract between employers and employees in which employers recognize and help nurture the health and development of the whole human.

In closing, consider the following conversation with Noah, a market graphic designer. Our conversation is particularly illustrative of the expressed male expectation that good employers cultivate a warm and nurturing environment that ultimately attends to the emotional and psychological health of employees at work.

Noah: [Good employers provide] the opportunity to shine, so given the opportunity to do your best work is not just a thing that you should have to push or fight for. The employer just needs to leave room for your growth, so the best ones are really interested in their employee's growth, not just in like profit and stuff like that or looking good for the big boss...that looks better on the overall rather than just managing it from a standpoint of cogs and thing. If you look at each person's skill set and growth and can really foster that, that is huge.

Employers can respect the time of their employees, realize that they're people, not just --it's kind of the machine thing I'm going back to... you do need the time off...So maybe an hour or two per day you can work on a personal project, not being so restrictive as to say, okay, while you're here it's our time, give up your phone, give up your internet, don't do anything but work. Well, that's not realistic because, for a 40-hour work week you're not going to have work every single day every single minute unless you have amazing stream and manager. So allowing for the humanity of your employees.

LJD: Can you give me an example of what you mean or what it looks like to give your employees the opportunity to do their best work or to be invested in their growth?

Noah: Yeah. So you know, not relegating them to a particular set of projects. If you can try to expand skills in different areas that's beneficial so that you don't become a stock character who only, for instance, is the workhorse for the logos or only does production work. It's about listening really, ultimately, for me. The employer would listen to what the employees want

and not just try to fit them into a role that they see. So it's collaborative, that the hierarchy is a little more flat and not as dictatorial.

LJD: I mean this idea that companies should foster their employees' growth and so on and so forth, why do you think that that should be a company's role?

Noah: Well I think it's on the whole more of a beneficial thing...rather than just kind of burn people out, to really look at them as individuals. It's beneficial on the larger scale. If companies keep their employees happy, they're going to be better workers. They're going to do better work. You've given them a sense of purpose, a sense that they're actually moving forward with their lives and not necessarily stagnant. That's when things are more interesting, when you have opportunities and things that you can still do well but are things that you're interested in doing, not just a bunch of stuff that you're forced into doing. I don't think anyone really wants to be forced to do a particular job that they're not comfortable with.

So it's a responsibility of leaders to really be leaders, and it goes beyond just simply owning a company. The vision really should be broader than what was done externally. It should translate back to the employees because that's really where it starts. You know you can't really execute on a vision when you're not being true to it. And that's a personal experience I've had and so to stay true to that to me is treating your employees extremely well and that's listening to what they want, to try to foster that.

Noah's words aptly summarize the sentiment of so many of my male respondents whole told me that what good (and smart) employers provide to their employees include acknowledgement of their individual humanity, respect for the health of their lives outside of work, an environment in which they feel seen, known, and valued as more than just a laborer, and a support system to help employees not just survive, but thrive.

WOMEN

What Women Value Most

When I asked women what they valued most about work they were likely to talk about feelings of mutual respect, support, and trust, a sense of togetherness, being needed, and helping others. I summarize these as emotional support. I have collapsed data on emotional support into a

category called belonging. As a secondary value, women were likely to use the rhetoric of flexibility.

Emotional Support via Belonging

I have summarized the myriad ways that women in my sample talked about valuing emotional support as an overarching value for a sense of belonging. When someone feels as if they belong in a space, they feel like there is a respected role for them to play, people who value them, and a need they can fulfill.

Consider the following conversation with Finley, an organization nurse, about what characteristic of her job she valued most:

Finley: Probably like the teamwork with my co-workers, like feeling we're part of a team even when it's like a really bad day. It's like so and so and so and so are in the room with me doing this and I'm going to be okay 'cause they were there, you know.

LJD: What else about teamwork do you like?

Finley: Just that – yeah, well the fact that I'm not alone, that I have other people on the floor to help me not just like with, not physically help me but like they have lots of knowledge that I don't have. But I think also the opportunity that I can help my co-workers and feel like valued is a big thing. I think, I really think if I started on the floor and I didn't feel like I belonged or wasn't part of the team or whatever I would have left a long time ago. I think that's the biggest reason why I've stayed.

Like the male respondents, Finley noted a value for being surrounded by colleagues with lots of knowledge, but the emphasis was less on intellectual support and more on the emotional support that comes from knowing one is “not alone” and is “part of a team.” The value for emotional support is furthermore highlighted by her appreciation for mutuality, where female respondents feel a need for their co-workers and co-workers also feel a need for them.

Odella is an engineer in the market. When we first started the interview she told me that she specifically pursued a consulting firm that did bridge work because “There was a lot of quality and a lot of challenging work that they had done and I wanted to be part of the team that did that.” She went on to explain that she sees herself as very artistic and in private consulting “there’s a lot more freedom to be more artistic with what you’re working on” and break away from the “cookie cutter” type of bridge. Odella loves the mystery of bridge design, and—because she works in a private consulting firm—the ability to use both sides of her brain. Throughout our interview, like most of my female respondents, Odella talked a lot about her passion for the work itself. However, when I asked her what characteristic of her job she values the very most we had this conversation:

Odella: I think the ability to be able to work on different projects and to stay busy on a lot of things, thinking particularly of like the company that I work for – we’re a big company, we’re an international company but we were able to keep the team and family feel. So, and in southern California we have three offices and I’ve been to two of the three and for both of them I’ll be able to go there and feel like I’m part of the family.

LJD: What does that mean?

Odella: So if I go to a different office sometimes if you’re going to – regardless of the same company or a different company, you kind of feel different– you don’t know the people, they don’t know you. It may be a little bit harder to be involved, things are more professional and maybe not as flexible. But working with – working in the company that I’m working at now, from the first day that I went to one of our satellite offices I felt like I was part of the office and I had been working here for a year or two years.

LJD: What specifically – like can you think of any examples of what specifically did they do that made you feel like you’re a part of a family?

Odella: So, yeah, so they made me feel welcome. They introduced us. Everybody introduced themselves to me. They asked me if I needed anything. They invited me out to lunch that day. They checked in on me every once in awhile just to make sure that I wasn’t feeling like I was on my own or anything.

LJD: Huh. Okay, so it sounds like they just were nice to you and caring.

Odella: And the attitude too. Like being that we were all the same company they kind of had this pre – this already established attitude that we were kind of all-together if that makes sense.

LJD: All together in terms of what?

Odella: In terms of like teammates.

It is not that women in my sample did not talk about valuing the intellectual stimulation of their work, but that when they were asked to identify the part of their job that they perhaps could not live without (which is often how I phrased a follow up for respondents who needed more clarification), they were more likely than men to discuss the importance of emotional support at work. As Odella states, despite the busy and complicated work that she does, what she values most is being able to maintain a family feel—an “attitude that we were kind of all-together.” She most valued the sense of belonging that she had from being a part of the broad company, even among people she did not know.

In more general terms, female respondents focused on human connection as their highest value. As a market graphic designer named Laura described it, “I think it’s the connections with other people. I think it goes back to that like if I didn’t have to work, I would want to be helping people.— yeah, the connection with people, and helping others, whether it’s growing their business, collaborating on a project, I value that probably the most. Which is more like the collaboration side, rather than like the workhorse side.” Olivia, an organization engineer, answered,

I really value helping others to succeed. Um, so like I said, as a project engineer, you usually have a team of people that do a lot of the technical work. So you know I'll have a lot of engineers on a project that are doing the coding or the design, and so I really value seeing them succeed, because if they succeed, I succeed, and we all succeed, and we're all happy, so I really like to see the work of my team, be successful and recognize they're successful and seeing their goals achieved. I think that's probably one of the biggest things I value.

Well suited for these values, Olivia aspires to achieve an executive leadership role one day. But her sentiment was broadly shared by female respondents in my sample. Though both men and women described their highest value at work as their relationships with their co-workers, female professionals were more likely to describe a deep value for the emotional satisfaction that comes from relying on, contributing, and belonging to others.

Flexibility

The second most valued characteristic of work for professional women in my sample was flexibility. Although the substance of what many women described it quite similar to the freedom or autonomy that men described, I found that women relied on the explicit language of flexibility more than men did, and conveyed an understanding of flexibility as freedom to meet both their needs and the needs of others. That is, while flexibility often begets freedom in one's schedule, this gendered term is often associated with an increased freedom for working professionals to meet the demands of their family.

For example, a market engineer named Urania answered, "I love the flexibility. I value the flexibility. And I value that they don't judge me or want to fire me because I leave at 3:00 p.m. and they know that I'll get it done later after I feed my kids and put them to bed. And I value that they know and respect that, that they respect my personal life because I get my job done regardless of what time of day it is." Lizzie, a market graphic designer, told me "I think, for me, the biggest thing is I have two kids, and I love to be able to have the flexibility to, if I wanna, you know, stay up late one night and get some stuff done so that I can go do something, you know, with my kids in the morning, I can do that. You know, there's no one telling me I can't." For these women, the flexibility that their work allows frees them to work non-traditional hours so that they can allocate more time in the traditional workday for their children.

For women without a family, the concept of flexibility was still less associated with the freedom to work autonomously (as it was for men) and more associated with more freedom to craft one's activities *outside* of work. Consider Bethany, an organization nurse:

LJD: Of all the characteristics of your current job, what do you value most?

Bethany: It might be flexibility. So maybe I'm a person of non-commitment.

LJD: What do you do with that flexibility? Why do you like that?

Bethany: Because I'm sitting here thinking, like if you took my job and then put me in a clinic setting or a nine to five, I could still work as a nurse, and do the nine to five, structured. I don't think I would enjoy that as much. Flexibility I feel like gives me freedom to control and manage my life, so I mean yes, still have to go to work three days a week, I get to kind of build my schedule and either the manager approves it or not, sometimes they switch a day that you wouldn't have had, and then that's fine. But then if I see my schedule and I don't like it, I have the option and opportunity to switch it with somebody and most of the time it's – I'd say 90 percent of the time you're able to. If not, then you're required to go to that shift.

But I don't know I just – with the change of you know your social life and then just weather, just anything, I like to have that ability to opt out, or change it, or switch it, rather than be like – my philosophy is a lot of like work/life balance. It's like that whole – other people thought like work really hard while you're young, and then you know retire, and I just don't agree with that, especially working in the hospital, and seeing you know life changes like boom. Maybe I die tomorrow and maybe I'm paralyzed tomorrow, maybe this happens. So I thought when I decided to be a nurse, I liked to have the option to like live while I'm working.

Women's value for flexibility hence revolved around the freedom to fit work into their lives in ways that worked best for them. It was less about how they performed the work, and more about when they performed the work.

How Women Conceive of Good Employers and Good Company Culture

Finally, as opposed to the men, when I asked the women in my sample what they believe good employers provide to their employees and what they believe a good company culture looks like, their answers largely mirrored what they valued most about their work. The new social contract that female professionals in my sample described is one in which employers offer their employees trust and respect, show appreciation, provide good feedback, foster positivity, and maintain an open-door policy wherein employees feel that management is accessible and available. In general, they too described the importance of emotional intelligence for good management.

They described their desires for high emotional intelligence among management as a flattened hierarchy—at least in sentiment—where good employers express value for their employees in myriad ways. Britt, an organization graphic designer, summarized that good employers understand that work is relationship. She described a good company culture as cultivating “a place to have good communication, a place that understands that relationship is also part of the job, so relating to co-workers, relating to your boss, that kind of stuff.” She went on to say that good employers “want to invest in who you are, and helping you grow,” using the examples of a conference or membership in a creative community. When I asked her to be more specific about how she sees the connection between work as relationship and good communication she responded,

So company culture would be promoting healthy communication which would be me knowing I can communicate if there is problems or ideas or different ways to do that and that would be received, and also the same thing back. Like if you communicate to me that like I’m not doing my job well that it’s like - so think less office politics and more like healthy relationships. And also in that, like knowing that my co-workers who have healthy relationships with each other, are more likely to stay and help you build your company better.

Centering emotional intelligence is the core of establishing a good management style, one that eschews office politics and embraces healthy relationships. Without healthy two-way

communication, just like in nonwork relationships, “we’re never going to be able to succeed.” According to respondents, establishing both strong vertical and horizontal relationships in the company is the core responsibility of superiors who must be explicit about company culture, carefully hire employees in alignment with company culture, and consistently promote and model company culture.

Good employers can show employees that they value their employees by offering positive feedback, allowing opportunities to hear their opinions, taking the time to humanize them, and making yourself accessible. Consider my conversation with Lindsey, an organization engineer:

LJD: What kind of things do you think that good employers provide to their employees?

Lindsey: The ability to get feedback, like for the employee to be able to say what they’re, you know, thinking, feeling, want change on. I think they should – a good employer offers them opportunities to try new things.

LJD: Hmm. What about a good company culture?

Lindsey: I guess it’s open, similar to like an open-door policy and stuff.

LJD: What do you mean?

Lindsey: I would say probably in our grandparents’ age it was all about the hierarchy, and things are kind of changing now. Not that the hierarchy doesn’t exist or it’s not important but it’s not – you are encouraged to a certain level to challenge certain situations and not just shut up and do it ‘cause your manager told you.

LJD: Do you really feel that that’s true in your company [and] why is that important to you?

Lindsey: Because it means that my opinion matters. I think it’s true.

Like most respondents, Lindsey expresses that in the new social contract employees do not just want to be told what to do or told about changes in the company, they want to be involved in the decision making. As she alluded to, this is not your grandparent’s company. Good leadership takes

the time to know something about their employees' personal lives and values their opinions about how to best achieve collective work goals. Consider my conversation with Lacey, an organization graphic designer who described a good company as trusting, humble, collaborative, and connected:

LJD: What do you think a good employer provides to their employees?

Lacey: I guess this company, the leadership, you can see that they value you and they show they value you and they give you space to learn and grow. There's not a lot of micromanaging. It's very like do your work, just get it done, you know, if that means you come in a 10:00 and leave at 4:00, fine. Just make sure you get your work done and do it well. It's very collaborative, how people come together and be open about it, not being as egotistical, just kind of working together to solve the problem.

The CEO isn't in the office a ton but when he is he makes sure he says hi to everybody. He asks people how their weekends are. He does reviews like once or twice a year and really makes you feel like you're heard and you can talk to him about anything. Everybody who works there has been there for, except for a couple people, has been there for like five years or longer. Like it's a very – like they like to retain their employees and just build like a good culture.

At the moment since we've all been there for like I've known everybody there for at least two years, it feels more like your work friends kind of with most people, with basically everybody. Like you all know enough about each other's personal lives as well as work lives. I don't know, it's a friendly environment to work in.

LJD: Would you say that's important for a good company culture?

Lacey: I would say so, if you're going to work together with people you shouldn't feel like nervous about talking to them or it makes you feel like more open, you already have a connection so you can connect on something else like work related.

LJD: Do you have example of how you feel valued by your company?

Lacey: Well since our company is so small, our leader CEO he sits down and has lunch with everybody individually like once throughout the year. He like makes time for everybody. That's a way I feel very valued, and he makes sure to ask how you're doing and all that.

Let's see, valued. I think everyone is just generally respectful and values your time and your opinion, and I feel like people want to know your

opinion. They ask you. They ask also to different people about different things. Like we'll show a design project to the production person if we need another eye because we're disagreeing about something, you know.

A leader who checks in with their employees and a company culture in which individuals seek one another's opinions up and down the hierarchy makes individual employees feel valued by their coworkers and their superiors.

The final aspect of listening to their employees and successfully demonstrating that they respect and appreciate their employees is to actually meet their stated needs. When leaders make themselves more accessible to their employees in an effort to minimize hierarchy and build human connection in their company, they also have to follow through on reasonable demands. For example, Brooke is a market nurse who told me that good bosses help and understand you. They "stay neutral and kind of find something that [they] like about each person--being able to see people's weaknesses and their strengths and working them - working with that accordingly. I think as a boss you really need to be able to have some emotional intelligence about your workers and try." Brooke told me that she knows that she needs positive feedback as an employee, so given the opportunity she always tells her management what she needs. Once told about a reasonable need that an employee has in order to do their best work, good employers should try their best to meet them. As Brooke phrased it, good management "actually feel like they're trying to do good by you, trying to do right by you, that's all I care about, is that they're actually trying to look out for you."

Feeling like their superiors are *for them*-there to support them as workers, was a primary concern for women in my sample. In the hierarchy of things Brooke states, "I don't even care if they're not that personable, you know, as long as they're fighting for things that you need, you're able to go to them and say this really isn't working well. Is there somewhere - is there some way

that you can - can get this?" Some demands are small, and some are large. Brooke's request for positive feedback is relatively small, but she also shared a large and important need.

In her field of nursing she said that there are some instances where it is critical that management treats nurses as number one. "You know you get that the patient is number one," she tells me, "but you need to have rights for yourself as well." When I asked her for an example, she told me the following:

Brooke: So you know there's a lot of times where you don't feel like you have rights as a nurse, because you know a patient can grab your breasts or say something really rude to you, and what can you do? Not a whole lot. You can't like - you can say that was really inappropriate. I don't want you to do it again. Whether they do it again or not, there's not a whole lot of reprimand.

I find different places in the country will do more reprimand for things like that than other places. Some places are very lenient about it, about like the sexual abuse nurses go through.

LJD: So, a good company culture for you is one in which you feel like you have some rights?

Brooke: Right, that I can say to a patient that was really inappropriate. If you do it again, I'm going to call the doctor, and have you discharged. Whereas there's places that won't follow through on things like that. And nurses shouldn't have to be going through that.

LJD: No.

Brooke: If you're going to do that stuff there really needs to be laws, and there aren't. Nurses, if you get hit or pushed, or punched, you can't call the police and put up an assault charge. Now some things a mental illness, but that still doesn't make it okay.

LJD: I never really thought about that. So you have no - can you ask to change patients, or...

Brooke: You can, but then you're putting another nurse in that position.

LJD: So there's no recourse if your patient gets angry and pushes you.

Brooke: Not a whole lot, no, not a whole lot of recourse no.

LJD: Has this happened to you before?

Brooke: Oh my God there is not an area of my body that has not been touched, not one area.

Throughout my conversations with nurses I heard a lot about the physicality of nursing, both in terms of a lack of physical boundaries and the strenuous physical demands of moving or restraining patients. In engineering, particularly for engineers in the field, I heard about how important it is that engineers feel that their physical safety is prioritized and that the work is done ethically, with human lives and proper protocol put above the bottom line. Graphic designers told me that in their field clients can be horribly verbally abusive, as well as make unreasonable demands on their time. Graphic designers also told me of instances when management asked them to work with a client whose product or product messaging they found morally reprehensible. In all of these scenarios, the professionals in my sample voiced a deep need to feel like they were able to communicate their concerns to management, and that management would prioritize the needs of their employees over profits, even if it meant losing the hospital loyalty of a patient, hiring more support staff, losing a job bid, straining a relationship in the market, or offending or even losing a design client. Even if tenure is brief, the professionals in my sample still want to feel as if their employers understand their needs and will fight to protect them.

When I asked Brooke, the market nurse from above, if her understanding of a good employer has changed over the years she used the metaphor of romantic dating to illustrate that just as various experiences in dating have changed who she wants to date, so too have different work relationships helped refine what she know she needs in good relationship with work.

Both the men and women in my sample primarily described a social contract with employers in the new economy as emotional cultures. Professionals expect their employers to pay

a fair market value and to meet their material needs, but they did not dwell on expectations for longevity, security, or benefits. Instead, they described expectations that good employers cultivate high emotional intelligence and foster cultures in which employees feel emotionally known, safe, and nurtured. In many cases, their expectations for their employers sounded similar to what I would expect them to want from their significant others. This, of course makes sense, particularly for adherents to the passion paradigm, who have borrowed the rhetoric and logics of love to understand their relationships to work. The relationship between an employee and an employer might not last a lifetime, but if it is a good relationship then while it lasts it is emotionally and psychologically gratifying.

GENDERED PASSION

Throughout our conversations both men and women conveyed the four components of work passion: attraction, enjoyment, motivation, perseverance. By way of a quick summary: attraction gets one to the work, enjoyment keeps one happy in the work, motivation grows one in the work, and perseverance commits one to the work. However, when I was curious about whether I could find gendered patterns in the primary expression of work passion I looked specifically at how men and women defined passion. I generally asked respondents to clarify their understanding of work passion following the multiple choice question which read: I think the average college graduate should prioritize work that: (A) He/she is good at (talent), (B) He/she is passionate about (passion), or (C) Work that is high paying (pay). Because most respondents chose (B) passion as their top answer, I would often ask for this clarification as they explained to me why they chose passion. I found that self-identified males in my sample were more likely to primarily define passion as motivation, while self-identified females in my sample were more likely to primarily

define passion as enjoyment. Chapter 4 extensively describes work as motivation and work as enjoyment, but I will briefly provide the reader with examples for each below.

Men

Motivation refers to how respondents define work passion as being motivated to thrive in work. Individuals who describe passion as motivation describe its power to animate growth. It is the stick-with-it-ness component. Passion as motivation is the primary explanation for why adherents to the passion paradigm believe passionate workers yield better work.

To provide some examples, Chris, an organization engineer, defines passion as “an incentive...for people to become good at something...otherwise you’ll end up with a bunch of people who are really grumpy about doing whatever they do because they’re good at it.” He went on to justify his answer saying, “You can't just get into a medical school because you're smart. A lot of the really good medical schools interview you to ask why do you want to become a doctor and if the answer is because it pays well they're not going to accept you.” The implication is that passionate workers have the right incentive to perform sustained good work. Adherents believe that passion powers professionals to perform good work.

Dario, an organization graphic designer, defines passion as the following: “I would think passion is important to do good work or like to be able to kind of like satisfy your aspirations. To me passion, it’s like –beyond like loving something or like to be like extra I guess – how do I define it? I just feel like passion is –there’s a forced element into the words, just like being passionate like I’m going to –like forcing you – forcing yourself to kind of like do good is – could definitely help you.” As Dario expressed here, understanding passion as motivation is to understand passion as a force that moves you forward; it keeps you pushing forward even when

you do not feel like it. Finally, Kyle, a market nurse, defines passion is the “zest and the zeal.” Without this zest and zeal, he tells me, it “could be easier to get burnt out, and then you might want to take a different career path and whatnot.” He went on, “But, if you're passionate about it, you should want to be good at it. I feel like that's kinda the main thing. Just like, like a deep concern or caring for something. Like the want, you know, like kind of the, I guess kind of the drive. I feel like passion also helps you—you should want to learn more, and it should end up helping you become a better nurse in the end because if you have passion you wanna learn more.”

Passion as motivation is therefore the aspect of passion that self-fuels individuals to lean in and keep improving, even when work gets hard. It commits adherents to performing good work and to striving for better work.

Women

Enjoyment refers to how respondents define work passion as liking or even loving their work. It describes the pleasing emotional experience of intentional engagement with work that ‘fits.’ Work passion as enjoyment means individuals look forward to going into work and feel gratified by it. They are generally happy in and excited by their work.

To provide some examples, when I asked a market engineer named Urania what passion means she replied, “Are you excited to do it? Does it keep you up at night? Do you think about it when your husband's talking to you about something you're not interested in, you know, is it something that you're thinking about all the time? Is it something that you're thinking about when you don't need to be?” Passion as enjoyment conveys that workers get satisfaction from thinking about it or performing it. What she is talking about here is a deep pleasure for the work that keeps passionate professionals engaged in the work, even off hours.

An organization graphic designer named Lucy and I had been talking about passion for quite a while before I interjected and asked her to clarify how she defines it. When I did, she responded,

I guess I would define passion as like wanting to do it when no one's asked you to. Like getting home from work and still thinking about it or like actively – like being proactive about – like wanting to be proactive about the work you're doing. I think generally people are passionate about things they like. I'm trying to think of an analogy. I feel like generally passion and enjoying the thing you're doing go hand in hand.

Like Urania, Lucy describes work passion as the thing that connects professionals to their work in a way that they want to do it on their free time. It is the aspect of work passion most akin to work as play, where engaging in work one is passionate about is like engaging in a nonwork activity that is also pleasurable.

The final example I will provide is from Lilly, the market nurse whose precarious, yet empowered story opened the last chapter. Lilly told me that some people get stuck in work that they are really good at, but without work passion they will not be happy. Being passionate about work, she said, helps improve overall satisfaction in life. When I asked her how she was defining passion she responded, "I think it's something that you really love, or something you're really interested in, and it can be both." She then went on to tell me that she would advise a recent college grad, "Something you're passionate about, just because I value people's happiness, and I don't want somebody to be miserable." What passion as enjoyment centers on is individual happiness in work. The focus is less about how individuals perform the work, and more about how individuals feel about the work. When professionals talk about passion as enjoyment, they talk about the joy that the work gives to the worker, such that the worker is deeply fulfilled by doing it.

CONCLUSION: FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter I compared how self-identified male and female adherents of the passion paradigm describe their relationships with work, as an investigation of how the passion paradigm is related to new social contracts of work and gendered emotional cultures of work. I find that the passion paradigm serves institutions of work by binding adherents to their work, and serves existing power relations in work by perpetuating gendered conceptions of good work and expressions of emotion in work.

First, I argue that because the passion paradigm uses rhetoric of love and passion, it borrows logics of commitment from romantic and familial love. As a result, I find that adherence to the passion paradigm attaches professionals to their work because they are more satisfied, but also because adherents are likely to invoke logics of love and passion to conceive of their relationship with their work. The finding that men were slightly more likely to use passion to explain their attachment, while women were slightly more likely to use love to explain their attachment is consistent with other research finding that the concept of passion—associated with intense feelings and physiological arousal—is gendered male and the concept of love—associated with deep long-term bonds based on trust and respect—is gendered female (Fehr and Broughton 2001). The passion paradigm is able to use logics of love from the personal arenas of romantic and familial love as a form of gender-based identity control, capitalizing on how individuals conceptualize their role identities and perceive appropriate behavior for individuals in loving relationships (Stets and Burke 2000).

Second, I found that both men and women express gendered tropes in the ways they describe their perceptions of the social contract between employers and employees, but also that each describe gendered needs based on the ways in which the institution of work uniquely alienates and disadvantages men and women. When I asked men and women what they value most about

their work, I found that men reported intellectual support, freedom, and autonomy, while women reported emotional support, belonging, and flexibility. In this case, the passion paradigm could exacerbate male tropes that men are expected to be in control and put work first and exacerbate female tropes that women have high emotional intelligence and connection to their work.

It is therefore possible that adherence to the passion paradigm translates into higher affective labor for men and women to embody their respective gendered tropes.³¹ Women may feel more pressure to express work passion as emotion regulation making them happy, positive, invested, friendly, and helpful. Men may feel more pressure to express passion as igniting fuel to make them bigger, better, stronger, smarter, more capable. Men may feel the weight of the passion paradigm to show their masculinity via high intensity provision (while enjoying it) and women may feel the weight of the passion paradigm to show their femininity via high feeling connection (while doing good work). In sum, though the men and women in my sample both adhere to the passion paradigm, their adherence may translate into different forms of affective labor based on their respective gendered norms.

I argue that alienation due to their respective gender norms is visible in the comparison of how men and women conceive of good employers and a good company culture. I found that women in my sample long for respect, value, a voice, and good feedback, while men in my sample long for employers to see their full humanity and to acknowledge that they have lives outside of work. The fact that men want their employers to see their whole humanity fits into what has been called new masculinity—an area of research demonstrating that work/family conflict and work/life

³¹ Professionals must not only mold their labor to what their organization expects, but their affect as well. Hochschild (1983) argued that one has to perform emotional labor when there is dissonance between how an individual actually feels, and what their organization expects them to emote. As a result, it is possible that individuals pursue work passion as a strategy to reduce the phenomenon of emotional labor. If professionals are increasingly expected to appear passionate about their work, one way to avoid the enormous weight of performing work passion is to find work in which you actually do feel passion.

balance are men's issues too (Berdahl et al. 2018; Cooper 2000; O'Neill and Rothbard 2017; Reid et al. 2018). These men voice that they want their other passions to be allowed across the threshold of work and feel alienated by a perception that work is their number one priority in life. Similarly, the fact that women want their employers to see them as valuable contributors whose futures they are willing to invest in fits into a large interdisciplinary literature citing that professional women remain disadvantaged in leadership roles, suffer from low quality feedback, and struggle to feel heard in professional spaces (see Babcock et al. 2017; Cooper 2013; Padavic et al. 2020).

Third, when I compared how men and women primarily defined work passion, I found that men were more likely to describe passion as motivation and that women were more likely to describe passion as enjoyment. The difference may seem like a trivial, particularly considering the fact that both men and women talked about work passion using all four of its characteristics: attraction, enjoyment, motivation, and perseverance. However, the consequences of this difference in conceptualization could be quite dramatic.

One potential consequence is that men's prototypically masculine perception of passion as motivation may bolster their self-perceptions of confidence, competence, and hard work which may ultimately translate into more opportunity, particularly if managers share this perception of male passion. Meanwhile, women's prototypically feminine perception of passion as enjoyment may bolster their self-perceptions of satisfaction, which may ultimately thwart opportunity. When women double down on communicating that by being passionate about their work they mean that they enjoy their work (perhaps due to both socialization and pressure to appear as a likeable coworker), professional women and/or their superiors may perceive their passion—their enjoyment—as a form of reward for their work. This fits squarely into the vast feminist literature on how love and happiness are supposed to be enough fuel and remuneration for women's work,

thereby justifying reduced wages. This is akin to the phenomenon England (2005) described as ‘love and money,’ which exacerbates the gender wage gap. Traditionally, ‘love and money’ exacerbates gender inequality because women are more likely to be stratified into labor in which love and care are central components. However, as love via the passion paradigm becomes a more normative component across industries, occupations, and roles, as my data suggest, the theory of ‘love and money,’ coupled with gendered expressions of passion, could help explain persistent wage gaps between men and women who are in the same role.

This finding also has implications for research that has found that rhetoric of identity based career choices contribute to gender stratification in the economy. Most recently, Cech (forthcoming) found that that college students gender essentialize out of STEM fields in the name of passion. That is, they cite that they are more passionate about occupations in which women are equally or more represented, instead of occupations in which women are underrepresented. It is possible that women are more susceptible to self-stratifying if they primarily understand work passion as enjoyment. When passion as enjoyment is prioritized, individuals are likely to choose spaces and occupations where they feel most comfortable and happy. If classrooms or industries make women feel out of place, unfit, less welcome or competent because they have been built for and primarily occupied by men, women may be less likely to feel passionately about the work. The lack of passion, however, can be attributed to the structure of stratified occupations which make participation for women less enjoyable, not essential differences between men and women. Furthermore, it is possible that when women “opt out” of their demanding careers (Halrynjo and Lyng 2009), the passion paradigm both bolsters the illusion of free choice and further justifies a material downgrade in the name of an immaterial upgrade. That is, women feel more comfortable

relying on the rhetoric of happiness as their primary expression of passion, which bolsters their departure in the name of following their passion.

In part, this is because the normative framework of the passion paradigm valorizes individuals for the pursuit and maintenance of love. On the flipside, the ideology of love promotes the perception that it is a tragedy and/or individual defect if an individual lacks love (Weeks 2017). In the context of work, I find this to be true among respondents who tend to believe that all individuals should be passionate about their work as the most rational and fulfilling way to live (Chapter 4) and that unused agency is primarily to blame for a lack of love (Chapter 7). However, it remains unclear whether women are stigmatized more for eschewing or failing to achieve love compared to men, as feminist theories of love maintain. In addition, respondents in my sample were careful to claim that pursuing work passion is an individual decision, even as most believe individuals *should* be passionate about their work for their own sakes. However, when passionate workers are esteemed as ideal workers, as I argue in Chapter 7, it becomes less plausible to imagine that work passion would not bear down on individuals as a normative standard in work.

Finally, when considering the theories of ‘love and money’ and ‘prisoners of love’ as they relate to the passion paradigm and gender inequalities, several open questions remain. First, in my interview data I do indeed find a logic of ‘love and money’ whereby respondents suggest that individuals may have to choose between a high paying job and a job that they love, as if the two are mutually exclusive or antithetical. On the other hand, there is other evidence—as well as theories of inequality (Rao and Tobias Neely 2019)—which suggest that organizations that adopt the framework of the passion paradigm may financially reward passionate workers *more* than less passionate workers. If that is the case, as many of my respondents hope that it is, a key to financial

success in work is the deployment of work passion. Whether or not work passion translates into unequal compensation is an empirical question for future research.

Second, in my interview data I do indeed find a logic of ‘prisoners of love’ whereby respondents suggest that being too attached to one’s work can be a problematic source of overwork or underpay. However, I do not find that men and women vary in their levels of work passion within occupations, and subsequently do not find that adhering to the passion paradigm makes men or women more likely to become a prisoner of their love.³² However, it is certainly possible that the passion paradigm, coupled with female expectations of agreeableness, results in women being asked to take on or volunteering to take on extra work for the job that they love.

Future research is needed to investigate these and many more open empirical questions at the intersections of work passion, the new social contract, and gender inequalities in the labor market.

³² However, I do find occupational differences in this phenomenon. I found graphic designers to be the most vulnerable to exploitation via becoming a ‘prisoner of love.’ This is perhaps due to the fact that artistic careers are the most prototypically passionate, meaning that graphic design not only attracts passionate workers, but that it is also more likely to institutionalize work passion as normative.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PASSION AS POLITICAL
The Making of Good Workers in the New Economy

“We all have our own free will to pick and choose what we like, what we want to do... I mean you're more than capable of finding something that you enjoy.”

-Danny Ingram, organization graphic designer

“The more you love what you do, the more you'll do it at a higher standard.”

-Darren Hernandez, market nurse

For the majority of this dissertation I have described the experience of work passion and adherence to the passion paradigm as an ideological work ethic centered on the pursuit and exaltation of work passion, which I found supersede structural variation in my sample. In this final empirical chapter, I rely on the analyses in the preceding chapters to crystallize the second central argument in my dissertation which is that the passion paradigm also serves the institution of work. I have shown that the passion paradigm effectively motivates professional workers in the new economy because it individualizes work to the extent that adherents feel more control over their lives, and therefore more satisfaction (even if it the power is only perception). Consequently, the first way the passion paradigm serves existing structures of work is because it motivates good work. I have argued that the passion paradigm effectively motivates professionals to stay invested in their organizations (Chapter 6) and to work well in primary service to themselves (Chapters 4 and 5). In this chapter I will add data that demonstrate that the passion paradigm also motivates good work because it promotes passionate workers as ideal workers who both work hard and self-regulate.

The second way that the passion paradigm serves existing structures of work is because it emphasizes the experiences of work as an individual construct and de-emphasizes how the experience of work is structurally determined; the passion paradigm is depoliticizing. As a result,

to the extent that individuals desire a change in their experiences of work (psychological, social, economic), they look to themselves as the locus of change, not institutional reform as the locus of change.

After a brief review of the literature, I weave these central arguments through three empirical sections. In the first section, *Individuals at Fault: The Critique of Un-used Agency*, I demonstrate how adherents to the passion paradigm critique unhappy professionals for what they perceive to be unused agency, which they attribute to five individual faults: lack of self-knowledge, lack of planning, cowardice or fear, complacency, or bad attitude. In the second section, *Passion and the Protection of Capitalism*, I demonstrate how the internalization of the passion paradigm convinces adherents that passionate workers are better workers who produce better work and leads to self-regulated passionate workers who are vulnerable to overwork. In the last section, *Exit (Movement) Over Voice as the Natural Order*, I demonstrate how the passion paradigm normalizes movement in the new economy and explore how a preference for exit (over voice) may thwart organizational change.

THE CRITIQUE OF IDEOLOGY

In the introduction of this dissertation I detailed scholarship that is critical of ideology for protecting institutions of work and/or controlling workers. Scholars in this vein explain how ideologies or cultures of work obscure power relations enough to motivate productive work, even in exploitative circumstances (Blair-Loy 2003; Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). This Marxist approach presumes that coercion lives at the center the employment relationship and that ideologies of work make workers complicit in exploitation and inequality, and ultimately the perpetuation of capitalistic relations (Burawoy 1979; Endrissat et al .2015; Weeks 2011). Scholars

have found that culture has the power to overcome or mask negative working conditions in “bad” jobs that are still considered “cool” (Neff et al. 2005; Ocejo 2017), hide the costs of bottomless work, risk, and no ownership with the promise of more invigorating work (Ross 2003), and subsume demands for pay, better hours, and social security under pleasure or other immaterial benefits (Chia 2019; Gill 2010; Sandoval 2018). The critical approach therefore demonstrates how ideologies of work serve as a lubricant for smooth capitalism.

Rather than approaching culture as a tool that individuals can use to bolster their perceptions of control and increase their well-being, in this chapter I approach the passion paradigm as an ideology that helps dominate workers, not empower them. There is little sociological scholarship on the specific ideology of passion, but what exists takes this critical approach. In their study of the fashion industry in Milan, Arvidsson et al. (2010) find that the immense immaterial value of the “ideology of creativity” surrounding the passionate labor compensates for low pay and precarity. Gill (2010) argues that passion—defined as profound affective ties—is a consistent feature of new media work, and that it obscures the intense self-discipline discussed above with a “superficial bohemian chic” (19) and lures workers into a life of more risk with the promise of more pleasure (5). In her work on female bloggers, Duffy (2016) argues that the passionate rhetoric of aspirational labor has successfully “romanticized work in a moment when its conditions and affordances are even more precarious, unstable, flexible – and *unromantic*” (454). Hence, the romantic promises of getting paid to do what you love obscure the fact that most aspirational laborers are not getting paid to do what they love (Duffy 2017).

In her review of management discourse today, Weeks (2017) argues that the familiar tropes of love and happiness in the passion paradigm “are posed as a ways to tap into what is imagined as a vast reservoir of will and energy and as the handle that employers can use to leverage that

energy into productive activity” (41). The ultimate rationale is to benefit employers and squeeze more work out of employees. Love’s power to depoliticize is centered in obstructing power relations, privatizing the experience of work, and convincing individuals that failure to comply is an individual defect. Most recently, Rao and Tobias Neely (2019) argue that “the passion schema” has emerged as integral to work in the new economy, and that it plays an important role in sorting individuals, hiring and promotion, and assigning value to labor. They suggest that the passion schema can be broken into two cultural ideals: work-specific passion and generalized passion, both of which “demonstrate the expectation for workers to convey an intense commitment to their work” (4) and stratify along race, gender, and class lines. Finally, in her forthcoming work on the career aspirations of college students, Cech finds that the passion principle is avowed by students across gender, class, race, ethnicity, and school, but that it obscures the class privilege required to pursue passions. Furthermore, because the passion principle frames passion as individual, it perpetuates the notion that gender and class stratification in labor market is the result of innate preferences.

Like the scholars above, in this chapter of the dissertation I also turn to analyzing the passion paradigm as a depoliticizing force in the lives of those who adhere to it. Because I use data from professionals in disparate fields and varying structural positions, I am able to help elucidate the detailed ways that professionals attribute unhappiness in work to individual failures, as well as demonstrate how adherence to the passion paradigm contributes to the making of an ideal worker who works hard, works well, and self-regulates. These data help reveal the actual processes through which the ideology of work passion obscures systemic causes of work strife and keeps individuals fixated on their own life biographies as they move through a precarious new labor market. Having detailed understandings of the discourses and rationales that undergird the passion

paradigm will be necessary in waging effective critiques, as well as for cultivating *new* opposing cultures of work which have a chance of supporting the construction of better, more equitable and sustainable structures of work.

INDIVIDUALS AT FAULT: THE CRITIQUE OF UNUSED AGENCY

I find that when faced with the dilemma of dissatisfaction at work, respondents almost always argued that individuals have agency to deploy in order to improve their situation. In Chapter 5 I argued that this perceived agency is central mechanism through which individuals feel power over their lives. However, in this chapter I emphasize that the individualistic power promoted by the passion paradigm ultimately hinders adherents from engaging in systemic critique. When the strength of an ideology depends on convincing individuals that they have the power to change their lives, it must also blame individuals for a lack of change in their lives. Put another way, if the individual is the problem, then the individual also has the agency to fix it.

The agency that respondents expressed was a dual notion of agency: agency to stay or agency to leave. Agency to stay refers to the power individuals have within their current roles and organizations to improve their work.³³ Agency to leave refers to the power individuals have to find more enjoyable work outside of current roles and organizations.³⁴ To say that individuals emphasized agency is not to say that individuals do not acknowledge or are unable to see structural constraints as barriers to happiness in work, but that they choose to focus their energy on what they feel they can change—which turned out to be quite a bit.

Respondents' dual understanding of agency maps onto dual theories of achieving the experience of work passion: fit and develop. Mirroring psychologist Carol Dweck's (1999)

³³ Akin to Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) job crafting technique.

³⁴ Akin to Hirschman's (1970) claim that individuals can exert power by exiting.

renowned theories on fixed and growth mindsets, Chen et al. (2015) find that individuals can either primarily believe that passion is about finding the right fit, primarily believe that passion can be cultivated over time, or believe both simultaneously, with virtually the same long term effects on whether individuals feel passionate about their work.³⁵ “The good news” they tell worried readers, “is that we can choose to change our beliefs or strategies to cultivate passion gradually or seek compatibility from the outset, and be just as effective in the long run at achieving this coveted experience” (1423). The ideological flexibility in being able to imagine passion as either fixed or fluid serves adherents well, since imagining passion as fixed helps one claim agency while quitting a job in search of more passionate work, and imagining passion as fluid helps one claim agency while cultivating work passion in their existing role, or otherwise changing their attitude. I can see the dynamic beliefs in agency by the way respondents critiqued people for their unused agency.

In practice, a dual conception of passion means that adherents can claim power over their lived experiences of work, whether or not they can change their structural position. This pliability of concept makes applying the logic of the passion paradigm more diffuse and useable, just like the multifaceted concept of work passion. Adherents to the passion paradigm feel strongly that individuals have agency at their disposal, so their general response to dissatisfaction at work is to advise themselves or other individuals to act with agency over their own lives. Because they feel so strongly that individuals have the power to do *something*, when confronted with someone who is unhappy with work respondents tended to critique the individual for unused agency.

The critiques waged on individuals who are unhappy with their work were at times harsh.³⁶

³⁵ O’Keefe et al. 2018 found different results; they found that individuals who believe in fixed passion were closed off to outside interests, did not anticipate difficulties, and interest flagged when difficulties were met.

³⁶ The men in my sample were particularly harsh. I found that while women tended to be more sympathetic to unused agency, men tended to be more critical.

For example, when we were talking about someone being unhappy with work, an organization graphic designer named Nick immediately responded, “A lot of times, I think people sorta create their own unhappiness in some of the things that they do. It’s like, maybe if you had tried approaching people a little differently.” As another example, an organization nurse named Greg answered, “If you don’t like your job and you can’t find a job, yes. That’s not my problem. It’s not the job’s problem that you don’t like it. That same job might be perfect for someone else. It’s just not for you. That’s your problem that you have that job.”

I found that some respondents were particularly contemptuous of unused agency when they had clawed themselves out of work that they did not like, thereby believing that everyone else could too. A market nurse named Knute told me that he loves his work now, but that he hated it when he first started. Apparently, nurses eat their young, or so I heard repeatedly from nurse respondents. Knute chose to move from the toxic unit working with “fresh heart” patients who just had open heart surgery to a cardiovascular ICU where he still struggled, to the medical ICU. Once there, he decided to “prove myself” and “build myself up” and by the time he left he felt “really good about it.” It is perhaps because Knute felt he acted with agency over his own life when he was unhappy that when I asked him about someone else who is unhappy, he said the following:

If that’s what you’re gonna do for a certain period of time, it should be something that you feel like is a purpose compared to just being unhappy with what you’re, what you’re dealt with, you know? If you’re unhappy and you have the ability to change your situation, which most people, like, they do, they just don’t have the will power to go there, then I just, I don’t pity them, you know? You know go back to school because you’re never too old to make a change. People have done great things in their later years in life, and the same should be able to apply to anybody.

A lack of pity was something I heard from many respondents.

The “no pity” sentiment was especially present in cases where respondents had to hear individuals complain about their work situations. Trey, a market engineer, told me that he generally

does not think it is his business to tell people they should be doing something they are more passionate about (which is his *personal* opinion). However, “if they were Negative Nancy coming around all the time, and when we hung out they were just miserable, I might be like well, why don’t you find something!” Suddenly he exclaimed, “Actually, this is a perfect example. My brother—he’s a plumber, repair service plumber—he has been miserable for years it seems like.”

He went on:

I don’t wanna step over my boundary too much, but with my brother, I would say—well, if you hate it you should get out of it and do what you want. I would give my opinion. He’d always be like, I’m stuck here in Reno with these cold winters, and He’s single, doesn’t have family. Nothing’s holding him back. I’d be like—you can go wherever you want. You can do plumbing work anywhere. You can move to California, you know you like it here. Well, if it’s so great, do it. You have nothing holding you back. He’ll say he needs to be there for mom and dad, but they’re fine now. He can go.

I think it just, it gives him a reason to complain and to—what’s the word? People like to say that something’s out of their control—external focus, or externalizing their problems—something like that. He’s blaming it on where he is. I think he wants to have a reason to complain.

The strong belief that individuals have agency over their lives made respondents less capable of sympathizing with unhappy individuals, *especially* if those individuals complained excessively about their situation.

As a final example, a market nurse named Briana told me that she is guilty of telling friends to quit their jobs if they do not like it. “I can understand why they might be in the job they’re in and I totally get it and that’s them,” she told me, “but I can’t stand when they complain about it. Quit and do something else. Because I’ve done everything I’ve loved, so like I take charge of my life in that way. But I know not everybody will do that, but I’ve definitely been known to say that to friends.” The fact that listening to individuals complain about their work was irritating to most respondents is not just about a human proclivity towards keeping positive company. The

irritation is based on the premise that individuals are capable of changing their situations—a central premise of the passion paradigm—and are choosing not to do so.

I have classified the critiques of unused agency into five critiques. For most respondents, the problem of unused agency was diagnosed using one of the following: lack of self-knowledge, lack of planning, cowardice/fear, complacency, or bad attitude.

Unused Agency Due to a Lack of Self-Knowledge

The critique of a lack of self-knowledge is centered on diagnosing individuals as not knowing enough about themselves to know how to use their agency to improve their work life. According to the passion paradigm, adherents must master self-knowledge if they want to experience passion in their work. When I asked Odella, a market engineer, whether she thinks it is more of an individual problem or more of a societal problem if someone cannot find work that they love she answered,

I'm not sure actually. I think – I want to say it might be an individual problem, just that maybe the person doesn't know what they like or doesn't like or maybe they've got a whole bunch of things that they do like and they're trying to focus themselves on one thing when they don't really need to maybe. But I can't really answer that question with confidence 'cause I'm not sure what it could be that would keep people from doing something that they love.

She struggled with the question but ventured a guess that the individual does not love their work because they still do not know exactly what it is that they would love. This critique is rooted in the duality of passion (Chapter 5) as achievable but abstruse, which hinges on the hard work that individuals have to do to continually know themselves.

When posed with a situation where an individual wants to find work that they love, but cannot, an organization graphic designer diagnosed, “Maybe they're not being honest with themselves or they don't know themselves well enough or they haven't had the support to be

themselves.” An organization graphic designer named Lisa answered, “I mean it’s possible like they just – they don’t know what it is that they want. Or they haven’t explored enough, like have they opened themselves up to like new experiences.”

A market graphic designer named Fumihiro quipped, “I would say they should really pay attention to their self more. You know, it's there, you know...look harder.” When he acknowledged that for some people it is a struggle to find work that they love I asked him why. He answered,

I don't know. That's the kind of question I have for those people. Why is it so hard to find. Are they even looking? You know. I think the first question is, are you looking? Are you aware? Are you aware of little things that get you excited?

I think that one of the privilege being designer... [is that] my five senses, or more senses—whatever I have—are always trying to pick up some little things. And, I think that's kind of a practice I built upon doing this, in the work, that even little things is inspiration.

So, it's in that mode, if you could reach to that mode, I'm pretty sure everyone can find it, you know. So, it's really, you know, how much you are pay attention to your surroundings. What you see every day? There got to be something, you know. There should be, there should be a constant thing that comes to your attention. And, if it comes like a thread, you follow that thread. And then, if you are finding those thing fun, you know—maybe not as passionate—but, if you can find some excitement in there, that means there is something in there. So, I'm kind of believing everyone has one. It's just matter of your focus, like, how much you're aware of it.

The belief is that for most people work passion is not automatic or easy. It is the result of the fine-grained work of learning about one’s self. This critique is fundamentally rooted in the belief that attaining good work is a personal and subjective endeavor—an endeavor that everyone is in control of making. The origins of this critique have been more thoroughly described in Chapter 5.

Unused Agency Due to a Lack of Planning

The critique of a lack of planning is centered on diagnosing individuals with not taking the steps necessary to get to where they want to be. As detailed in Chapters 4 and 5, adherents perceive the passion paradigm as a rational ideology which enables them to clarify what they want and fight

for it—sometimes one small step at a time. For many professionals, especially professionals who are constrained by family or financial obligations, respondents recognized that brash decisions or immediate fixes are unfeasible or unrealistic. Quitting a job without a backup plan or quitting at all may not be possible for someone supporting their family, but that does not mean they cannot make a plan and take steps towards finding or creating more enjoyable work.

Consider Gunnar's response, the market nurse who himself is taking steps towards his dreams of opening his own brewpub. He said,

If [this is not what they want to be doing for the rest of their life], I would ask them what they're doing in their spare time to change that. "You trying to go to school? Are you gonna make a business plan?"

You know, if you want, if somebody's like, "I wanna be a personal trainer." "Cool, what are you doing?" And it's like, "Well, thinking about being a personal trainer." Like, that's not gonna do anything for you. I would advise you to start going to the gym. (laughs). And if you don't like it, I wouldn't be a personal trainer.

Um, but yeah, I'd motivate them to do something about it. And if they don't have the time, or if they don't want to [change careers]. Like, then, change your work, change what you're doing at work, I guess. Just look for other opportunities, you know. It doesn't have to happen right away. But just always keep an open mind.

The core of this critique is the belief that oftentimes there is no easy or quick solution, and that getting to where one wants to be will require foresight, forward movement, and patience. According to my most critical respondents, if an individual is not willing to plan and take the steps necessary to achieve work that they are more passionate about, that is on them.

An organization engineer named Tiffany told me that when her friends are unhappy at work she starts by asking them, "what are the things that catch your attention in the headlines and the news or just of the world? What are the things that you're ready to go like march down Washington for?" After someone figures out what they are passionate about, she said that the next step is not to quit, but to plan. As she described,

let's make a plan on how to get into that area, you know, like do you need to go back to school? Is that something you need to do, like if your passion is the law and you're working in, I don't know, food prep, yeah, you probably need to go back to school. You can't go quitting, you know. But then like if you need to go back to school can you be a full-time student? Those are the types of things...you know, at least make a plan of where do you want to go.

When I asked her if she actually knows anyone who has done this, she told me a story about her mom's friend. She has had several careers, but decided she wants to be a therapist. She went back to school at night, and after she finished school, she had to quit her job and find a more flexible one so she could work on getting her hours of clinical practice. At the time of our interview, her mom's friend was building her clinical hours whenever she could, while working a side gig to sustain her family. The point of this story is that enacting agency to improve one's situation sometimes takes time and sacrifice, and according to respondents some people just do not want to do it. As Kellen, a market graphic designer, critiqued,

If your goal is to have a job you love I would recommend to this hypothetical person, that they set themselves up. If they have a current job, they need to plan out a path to success and not just hope that these things happen to them and set themselves up so that they have a higher likelihood of succeeding in their goal. Because if you're just saying things over and over is not going to make anything happen.

Hence, the second way I have classified how professionals in my sample blamed individuals for their unhappiness via a lack of unused agency is their critique of individuals who merely hope and wish, rather than plan and sacrifice.

Unused Agency Due to Fear

The critique of fear is centered on diagnosing individuals as lacking courage. As adherents of the passion paradigm believe, achieving work passion is usually not easy. Most respondents recognized that for many people quitting their job or making a career change in order to pursue more passion is daunting. As Travis, a market engineer noted, "it's scary...it's daunting, because

you're giving up – you're willfully giving up employment...even not guaranteed to find something that's better, that you like better.” Despite this acknowledgement, however, Travis maintained, “I would gravitate most towards like yeah, find something that's really compelling to you and make a change. Life is short like we don't get an infinite amount of time on this planet... And if you can't help yourself then you probably aren't helping others if you're in a job that you don't like.” Respondents recognized that the challenge of fear is real, but they did not recommend that individuals capitulate.

Speaking for himself, an organization graphic designer named Kurt told me that he often thinks about going freelance, but that he is paralyzed by his anxiety and insecurities. He told me,

I'm afraid of the insecurity, monetarily. I'm afraid that I won't be able to have the willpower to get up and have the drive and do what I need to do every single day to build something myself. And you know, I'm a bit of a – I don't know if I have ADD or it's just the way that my mind works, but I just have a very fast-paced head, and it's very hard for me to sit down and focus and work through. [So] slowing my brain down and doing the thing that is would take to run my own business and constantly interact with people, my wife jokes and says I'm a misanthrope....

But yeah, the insecurity is, can I do the things that need to be done? can I – do I have the drive? You know I'm going to be working from home. I have a room that we use as an office. I have a desk here. I could basically do it tomorrow, but am I going to be distracted by sweeping the floor? walking to the frig? petting the dog?

Kurt critiques himself for being unable to overcome his fears and insecurities. Like many respondents, when he thinks about what prevents him from achieving the relationship with work that he desires, he identifies himself as the primary problem. Thus, adherents normalize confronting individual fear as part of the pursuit of more passionate work.

The normative obstacle that individuals must overcome their fears in order to pursue more passion produces complimentary discourses that valorize bravery and risk taking. Consider the following conversation with Brittany, an organizations graphic designer:

LJD: Some people say that if we don't like what we're doing we should quit and find something that we do like. Do you agree with that sentiment?

Brittany: Yeah, I agree. I mean like I said, I'm doing [this] now because I need to make money, but I don't see myself doing this for forever. I know that it's temporary for me.

LJD: Do you think that people DO quit their jobs to pursue something they like better?

Brittany: Uh-huh (affirmative). I think people that acknowledge the risk and are willing to take it definitely do, and I think those people will see more success because they're so willing to take risks.

LJD: Huh, why?

Brittany: I mean I guess just cause there's just such a stigma on being complacent and being comfortable where you are and how you should always strive to be better. I don't know. I just always – it's like engrained.

LJD: So when you say, you know, they'll get some benefit from taking risks, do you mean culturally or like...

Brittany: Both, it could be both, you never know. I mean they could get benefits that will open up doors that they, you know, never thought that would be possible because they took that one little step in the first place.

Ultimately, perceiving the pursuit of passion as something that requires courage bolsters its moral and cultural currency. Like Brittany, respondents were vague about what exactly one gains by taking risks in their organization or the market, but clear on the high cultural regard for the pursuit of self-progression with which risk taking is often associated.

As an ideology, the passion paradigm bolsters individuals who pursue their passion by labeling them with positive attributes, like brave, courageous, admirable, audacious, enterprising, or entrepreneurial. The perhaps unintended consequence is that individuals who do not or cannot pursue more work passion may suffer from opposite labels. To praise someone who follows their passion as brave is to deem another who is not following their passion as less brave, or even

cowardly. This is particularly true when individuals perceive that unused individual agency is the result of fear.

Unused Agency Due to Complacency

The critique of complacency is centered on diagnosing individuals as too lazy, too lulled by comfort, too trapped by money, or too adjusted to the status quo to exert the energy needed to get to a better place. Because the passion paradigm—and the precarious context in which it operates—normalizes movement, promotes individual agency, and glorifies individual growth, complacency strikes adherents as antithetical to sustaining lifelong work passion. When I was talking to Delfina, the market graphic designer from the opening illustration in this dissertation, she told me that she lost lots of friends during the stage after she quit her job and worked at Starbucks and as a nanny while she figured out her passions. When I asked her why she thought that happened she responded,

I think, and this is like still true for me like to this day, but the more that you evolve like past your comfort zone and the more you do and the more you like change it's like being the caterpillar that turns into a butterfly. It's like if people aren't doing that for themselves, like if people aren't pushing their limits and looking for more and searching for more and they're just like content with what they're doing, they kind of feel uncomfortable when you start doing different things. And they can't really like relate to you anymore.

From her perspective, she had broken the spell of complacency and pushed herself to develop, but not everyone does that, and it was too hard for some of her friends to face.

Delfina believed that her pursuit of passion made the more complacent people in her life uncomfortable with themselves, but she was not explicitly critical. Others were. Consider my conversation with Diego, a market engineer:

LJD: Do you think people do [quit their job if they don't like it]?

Diego: No, of course not. I think that they can, I think people get lazy, I think they just get complacent, I think they just become like a drone of sorts, no, I don't think they do. I think they just stay.

LJD: Why?

Diego: I have no clue. I have no clue. I have no clue, I wouldn't –when I was working with [coworker 1], it was great, we were working with some problem [with] this tank size, so very excitedly we worked for days on different drawings and got different ideas of how we could solve this problem.

The minute he left and I was given this other guy, it was just oh, God, it was terrible. It was quiet, it was awkward, we didn't want to work together, and instantaneously I was in a place where I would just get the work done, move on, get the work done and move on.

I did that for a couple of weeks and I was out, like I had to get out.

LJD: Um-hmm.

Diego: Right now, I love where I work. Yesterday, I spent 30 minutes just playing with fonts for some letter that I sent out for the status reports, I loved it. Like it's important, you know what I mean, I want them to get a nice looking thing. Completely irrelevant but I think it's a sign, like I love where I work.

And I think it shows, I think the minute you're not doing that, I think you need to get out. I mean you need to find whatever the heck turns you on. Life's too freaking short for sure.

With a harsh critique of what he perceived to be unused individual agency, Diego called individuals who opt to stay in routinized and easy, but passion starved work, complacent lazy drones. Respondents felt that individuals intuitively know when they have either lost passion that was previously there (like in the case above) or when their work is less passionate than it could be, *especially* if they have had previous experience with a job they loved. What Diego incites individuals to do is self-regulate—recognize when they are just going through the motions and do something to fix it. This is a topic which I will cover in more detail in the final section of this chapter.

In the example above Diego had a hard time identifying why individuals would opt into being “lazy drones.” In other interviews, individuals who waged the critique of un-used agency due to complacency went into more detail about the counterweights holding people back. Some discussed the sheer energy it takes to change jobs and guessed that individuals are unwilling to opt into a season of disruption unknown. As an organization nurse named Pablo quipped, “you know there's that saying...better to deal with the devil you know than the one that you don't know. You know you've already – you're comfortable enough to where the unknown is too uncomfortable.” He followed up, “Yeah. But for me I always quit.” As opposed to criticizing paralysis due to fear as discussed in the last section, this critique is more centered on being lulled by the comfort of the known, even if that known is not an ideal situation.

Finally, others identified money as a common shackle to less than enjoyable work. This critique of unused agency due to complacency does not include individuals for whom changing jobs or positions would be to the detriment of family or essential financial obligations, but it *is* a general critique of individuals who have made themselves dependent on a high salary, held by what respondents refer to as “golden handcuffs.” An organization nurse named Fisher told me that he “absolutely” thinks lovable work exists and that people should quit their jobs if they are unhappy to find it, but that they “definitely” do not. When I asked him why not he responded, “Because usually financial commitments overtake—because they don't prioritize correctly. They let money come in the way of them getting fulfilled at work.” Respondents described that for some people the (perhaps illusory) security of money is too intoxicating to overcome. “Once you’ve taken a bite of that apple,” an organization engineer told me, “you don’t want to make less.” Note that this critique is for individuals that respondents imagine can theoretically afford to make a change, but

who respondents perceive as too attached to the comfort of their salaries, or the comfort of the known, or the comfort of the easy, or the comfort of their routine.

The critique of complacency casts the unhappy individual as lacking the wisdom to have prioritized their values better, as too weak to cast off the financial shackles that they themselves put on, or as too lazy to shake up their life in pursuit of something better. To the extent that the passion paradigm moralizes a lifelong pursuit of work passion as ethical and upstanding, the critique of complacency also casts the unhappy individual as morally deficient, for they are not strong enough to fight for their own psychological well-being.

Unused Agency Due to Bad Attitude

The critique of a bad attitude centered on diagnosing individuals as having a fundamentally negative disposition. Their disposition, their bad attitude, almost destine them to be perpetually unhappy with work, for they are naturally prone to fixate on the negatives. This would prevent individuals from achieving work passion, for this is contingent on an individual's ability to identify and feel passion in the first place. When I was talking to an organization nurse named Freddie about why he thinks some people like their work and other people do not like their work he explained, "I think it generally boils down to like are you a positive or a negative person. People that are negative people find the negativity in things, you know. And people that are positive can find the positive. Work is work. Like no one wants to do it if they didn't have to, but you can enjoy in what you do and the rewards that it gives you. You know what I mean? Or you can focus on the [negative]." Freddie went on to acknowledge that environment definitely matters, but doubled down on his primary assessment concluding, "But I also think it has to – 'cause I mean I have people in my career, same job, that aren't happy, you know, what I mean? But I think that's

just 'cause they're a negative person, you know, they're going to find something to complain about one way or the other.”³⁷ Dahlia, a market graphic designer, deployed the same logic when she told me this story:

I know someone else who was really miserable at their job and really burnt out and got to frustrated and then just was—I can't take it anymore, nothing's changing, I'm gonna quit, and then got another job [and now is] in the exact same scenario as they were in before. And, so, then at that point, I think—okay, well, what, what is it? Is it the job? Is it how you're approaching—is [it] your mindset how you're approaching the job?

Rather than wondering whether perpetual dissatisfaction signals that something is systemically wrong, the dispositional critique concludes that something must be wrong with the individual. According to respondents, individuals with a bad attitude hold themselves captive. As market nurse Lily blunted answered, “I don't think [work passion] exists for everybody because I think it depends on the person. There's just generally despicable, unhappy people that are gonna be unhappy and complain about what they do.”

On the flipside, a positive attitude can pay rich dividends. As a market nurse named Delia stated, “I think there are the people that just probably would love every job they did, you know, like they're just happy, positive people I guess.” An organization graphic designer named Zara also explained the difference between a positive attitude and a negative attitude. She stated, “I think attitude is a big part of [growing to love your work]. If you go to work every day thinking like oh I hate everything, of course you're going to hate your job, but if you go into your work and be like – well I mean some things are very annoying and some things I don't like to do but here are some things I do enjoy doing and I'm going to try to like mold my job to be something I do

³⁷ In fact, this exact rationale has been used as evidence for the fact that satisfaction at work is a subjective evaluation, primarily determined by individual perceptions, rather than structural conditions (see Bianchi 2013).

enjoy doing.” Nels, a market graphic designer, maintained, “you can make most situations into something palatable...just look for the good.”

Cody is an organization graphic designer whose fiancé is unhappy at work because her bosses are terribly disorganized. He told me that he advises her in several ways, but began with the following: “you could totally own this and like make it yours and decide that you’re going to like it, even if it’s not something that like naturally is likeable, but like but you could make this something that could be like really beneficial to you.” When I asked him to clarify the core of his advice to her, he responded,

The way that I would try to like wrap up my advice to her would be – it’s not necessarily like yeah, just deal with it, you know, but it’s like well maybe you need to like get into it and like geek out on the details. Like you know, if these people are disorganized like try and find interest in helping them to become organized, you know, like try to apply passion even if it’s not something that’s necessarily like personally fulfilling because you might end up getting yourself into a position that they do sort of – you like it more than you think, you know.

Because I think a lot of times people sort of miss the forest for the trees, you know, that like or vice-versa, like they’re stuck thinking about like where they want to be eventually and not realizing that like if they kick ass where they are right now that will help them get to that place eventually...It’s like well try to enjoy it and try to like invest yourself and be passionate about it because that might make it easier to do.

His core advice to “get into it” and “try to apply passion” is a call for her to change her individual thinking or approach to her work. His critique is that people focus on the wrong things and get stuck. The core problem and the core solution are therefore individual.

Respondents argued that when something is wrong at work, one must always start and end with themselves. When all else fails, individuals are still in charge of their own minds. The critique of unused agency due to bad attitude represents the belief that individuals are in charge of their attitudes, and if they want to ever love their work, they have to get control of their attitudes about work.

In summary, I have described five critiques of unused agency: lack of self-knowledge, lack of planning, cowardice/fear, complacency, or bad attitude. These critiques have their roots in the logic of the passion paradigm, which helps convince adherents that individuals are ultimately in control of their experiences of work. Respondents at times recognized structural conditions or flaws as sources of workplace strife or inequity, but none of my respondents acknowledged structure without also arguing that individuals still have agency to enact to improve their lives.³⁸

In detailing five distinct discourses that respondents used to fault individuals who are unhappy in their work circumstances, I have demonstrated the breadth of individual explanations that professionals have at their disposal. While adherents to the passion paradigm may be focusing on areas of unused individual agency as a strategy to increase their perceptions of power by emphasizing that there *is* agency available, as I argue in this dissertation, the consequence is that adherents center fault on themselves and their peers. The practice of focusing on individual agency, fostered by the passion paradigm, appears to debilitate one's ability to identify collective complaints based on structural faults. This serves organizations of work and the structures of capitalism because it reduces pressure on institutions and therefore institutional burdens to improve the well-being of their employees.

PASSION AND THE PROTECTION OF CAPITALISM

The Making of An Ideal Worker

In addition to primarily faulting individuals for mediocre working conditions, thereby mitigating institutional critique, I argue that the passion paradigm serves organizations and the system of capitalism by providing professional workers with renewed ideological motivations for

³⁸ This is also a moral discourse that extends beyond work.

working hard and working well. The passion paradigm encourages adherents to perform committed and excellent work for their organizations, regardless of job security, longevity, or benefits. It can do this because it roots emotional connection with one's work and the performance of excellent work not in a social contract with employers, but in service to individual well-being. The passion paradigm represents a shift in a professional's relationship to work in which the relationship is not primarily defined by talent, remuneration, or relations, but by individual emotion.³⁹

When respondents talked about how they perceive the function of work passion in their lives, and their perception of how work passion functions in their workplace, they described a new framework for evaluating the quality of work (Chapters 4 and 5), and quality of the worker. The use of work passion as a barometer for employees who do good work results in a new form of the ideal worker, one that is attracted to, enjoys, is motivated by, and can persevere through work. The passion paradigm dictates that good workers are passionate workers, and that passionate workers produce better work. Adherence to the passion paradigm leads to self-evaluation of passion, as well as the evaluation of others. Professionals police their coworkers' passion because they want their workplaces to be "positive," but also because the passion paradigm espouses that passionate employees do better work. This means that the passion paradigm not only puts more pressure on individuals to appear positive and engaged so that coworkers (and superiors) will evaluate them as pleasant company, but also so that they will evaluate them as reliable, careful, and hard-working employees who produce exceptional work.

This section demonstrates how adherents use work passion as an evaluative measure to assess not only work quality, but worker quality, which is in ultimate service to the institution of

³⁹ For literature on emotional cultures of work see England 2005, Hochschild 1983, Illouz 2006, Kang 2010, Morini 2007, Rao and Tobias Neely 2019.

work. Compared to individuals with less passion, respondents described passionate workers as more invested, more inspired, more devoted, more likely to work longer, more capable of pushing through, more dedicated to progress, and happier. A market engineer named Urania explained that when she said “if you’re passionate about [work] you’re better at it” she meant that she thinks passion begets a “better work ethic.” Without passion, she told me, “you might let deadlines slip, you might not bring you’re ‘A’ game to the task at hand.” It is the attraction of work passion that makes someone “want to give [their] best self.”

When I asked him to explain why he believes work passion is important, a market engineer named Travis told me that if individuals are going to prioritize anything in life it should be something that makes them “feel good at the end of the day.” He went on to say, “if you have passion for what you’re doing you’re going to hopefully take it a little more personally. You’re going to have some personal responsibility for what you’re doing and it will either come easily and you’re going to do a good job or because you’re extra motivated, you’re stoked about it, you’re going to do a good job.” Travis evokes multiple characteristics of work passion, suggesting that whether an individual is attracted, motivated, or enjoys the work that work passion is likely to yield better work.

Others emphasized one characteristic in particular. Most often, respondents explained that work passion produces better work because passionate workers are motivated to exceed. The passion paradigm dictates that passionate workers will not only get the job done and do the job well, but that they will perfect and they will over-achieve. From the perspective of the employer, they help move the company forward. From the perspective of co-workers, they help alleviate the workload. Farah, a market graphic designer, explained that work passion “drives you...to try to go beyond what you’re currently at, exceed [company] expectations or exceed your own

expectations.” The desire to exceed was routinely contrasted with the disparaged objective to “just get the job done.” As a market nurse named Brooke told me, “If you don’t have passion for something you’re not willing to do more, you’re not willing to take time. You clock in this time, and you clock out exactly on this time, and if you’re a minute over you’re done.” Meanwhile, the passionate counterpart is “really actually trying to help people do better and trying to strive to do better [themselves].”

Urania, the engineer who argued that work passion produces a better work ethic, explained that work passion “makes [her] want to keep coming back” which results in a “huge difference in the quality of work when you’re passionate about something versus something you just need to get done.” For her, work passion animates the type of motivation that cannot be taught, the kind that compels an individual “to want to get back in there to try to get it right.” On this topic in particular respondents drew sharp and sometimes harsh comparisons between workers who are passionate and workers who are not. To be clear, the majority of respondents did not believe that work passion is a pre-requisite for good work, but that when compared to an individual who is not passionate or less passionate about their work, a more passionate worker will be a better worker and produce better work. As an organization engineer named Olivia cited, “I do believe if you’re passionate in general you’re gonna do better work than a counterpart who’s not.” Passionate workers are “probably paying closer attention,” they are “going to go over something a few more times,” producing “a better-quality product” and “more refined work,” “at a higher standard.”

An organization graphic designer named Cody told me that people should be passionate about their work because “if you’re not then you’re not going to be as good as the next person.” He went on,

Like I’m sure there’s historical instances, where you know, you’re really great at something maybe you don’t have to be that passionate, but to me the passion equals

the excellence. Like if you don't have the passion, if you're not insanely passionate about what you do, what you do is you're not going to be competitive.

...for the most part I think people that are successful are the ones that dive in, they're the ones that take interest, you know, they're the ones that try and learn about the effects of – all the effects, like the residual effects and think about like the bigger picture. And that actually like makes a better worker, whatever they're doing, you know, especially a designer, you know, cause if you can like put yourself in somebody's else's shoes and like understand the problem that they're having or the problem they're trying to solve and become passionate about that same problem, then it's more likely that you're going to find a solution to that problem.

For client facing industries, Cody describes passion as something that helps professionals convey to their clients that they care about the work they are doing for them. Lucy, another organization graphic designer, phrased the phenomenon like this: “if you're passionate about something I think you're more likely to care about it and if you actually care about it and internalize it then it's likely to be better.” The emotional connection binds professionals to the work in a way that produces better work.

According to the majority of respondents, this has less to do with talent and more to do with the motivation to do good work. As a market nurse named Kathy explained, “in the field that I'm in if you're passionate about what you do you'll want to be in your patients' room doing some of the smaller things that no one is going to notice or going around helping other nurses versus if you're really not happy with what you're doing you're going to sit behind the nurses' desk and be on the Internet and say oh I gave my meds, I did my dressing change, my job is done.” An organization nurse named Fiona explained, “[passion] drives you to get better and better and better.” The propensity to go over and beyond and do better work may also be the result of perseverance. Many respondents noted that in the short term it is possible that passionate and less passionate workers could produce the same quality work. In fact, some even noted that if a less passionate individual has more initial talent they are likely to do better work. However, the passion

paradigm proposes that over time talent and money, absent of passion, cannot sustain motivation for good work. For the most part, respondents describe the relationship between work passion and good work linearly, whereas talent and money eventually plateau or may even become parabolic in the cases of burn out, disengagement, or quitting.

An organization graphic designer named Britt acknowledged that someone with less passion, but more experience, could do better work than her right now. In the long run, however, the individual who has passion is going to end up going farther because they are motivated to “try harder...learn more, to get better at their craft.” Work passion purportedly gives individuals the motivation to push harder and the stamina to withstand various obstacles. When I asked Britt why she believes she will eventually surpass her colleagues she stated, “because I think they’re going to stop caring. They’re going to be like this is stupid, I don’t want to do it, and they’re not going to try as hard.” The professionals I spoke with described work passion as the tool that equips an individual to go from good to great and from great to extraordinary; it is the weapon that enables them to push past the challenges, drawbacks, and annoyances over the long run. As a market engineer named Don concluded,

I think that at the very basic level I could probably hate everything about my job and still maintain that honest working relationship, but it would be really hard and it would be really draining and it probably wouldn’t last very long. And you know, I just don’t think I’d be a better person because it. I think by liking your job it’s more likely that you will apply yourself, you’ll grow through it and you will put in your honest days work.

For professionals who adhere to the passion paradigm, work passion is used as an evaluative measure to assess not only work quality, but worker quality. When individuals describe themselves as “passionate,” wearing the label as a moniker, they mean to signal that they are good workers and that they do good work. They may also mean to signal that they are (or would be) better workers than less passionate employees or candidates.

The establishment of work passion as an evaluative measure in the labor market has several problematic implications or eventualities. At the organizational level, this has the potential to exacerbate existing inequalities in work, particularly in occupations or organizations in which emoting passion has more cultural clout. Normalizing work passion may also increase the emotional labor required at work, especially for individuals who would not otherwise identify or emote as passionate about their job. As Rao and Tobias Neely (2019) point out, if hiring managers also adhere to the notion that passionate workers are better workers, then the passion paradigm could have material consequences for hiring and promotion. Future research is necessary to examine these and more open questions at the mezzo and macro levels.

At the individual level where I study, I argue that a primary consequence of adherence to the passion paradigm is that professionals create and self-impose standards of a new ideal worker—one that appears to serve individual happiness first, but is of no less service to organizations of work. For the most part, passionate workers are coded as “healthy,” having achieved the promoted ideal relationship with work. Yet they have trapped themselves in a new standard of work defined by high engagement, high emotional connection, high commitment, over achievement, and excellent work. In addition, adherents are less critical of the institutions they serve and more critical of themselves and the individuals around them. Because the critique of the self is shrouded beneath mantras of self-care and the pursuit of a more full and enjoyable life, it is more palatable to adherents; it is more obstructive as an ideology. In the following section I will discuss the critique of self and the pursuit of passion as exercises of bio-power and self-regulation.

Bio-Power and Self-Regulation

Once internalized, the passion paradigm operates on adherents as a technology of the self

(Foucault 1978; Rose 1999), dictating how individuals should interpret and regulate their subjectivities around work in a way that centers the management of the self, as opposed to systemic critique, as a natural and logical way of operating. The passion paradigm emphasizes individual agency, individual emotion, and individual fulfillment, which casts individuals as responsible for their circumstances, as well as responsible for how they perceive and respond to their circumstances. As an individualizing ideology of work, the passion paradigm encourages adherents to keep their eyes fixed on themselves as the engine of individual change. The passion paradigm provides ample discourses about an individual's ability to enact agency over their own life and discourses about unused agency which account for unhappiness in work, but zero discourses about an individual's ability to enact agency over flawed structures of work, discourses about a lack of individual agency, or discourses to recognize patterns of collective unhappiness.

The Self-Regulation of Passion

In Chapters 4 and 5 I demonstrated how the passion paradigm further individualizes work by transforming the individual conception of work into something that is deeply subjective. The pursuit of passionate work comes down to individual values, which each individual is responsible for determining (for who else knows what you truly want and need more than you?). In the first section of this chapter I demonstrated how when posed with the question of why an individual who wants to like their work more cannot, most respondents faulted the individual, as opposed to structure. The benefits of attaining work passion are not just personal happiness and life fulfillment (Chapter 4), but as I described in the section above, include a moralized ideal worker status, at least as far as the individual perceives it.

As an emotion, passion is something that individuals perceive that they are to manage. To assess whether or not they have good work or feel they are doing the best work they can, adherents of the passion paradigm check in with *themselves*; they assess the extents to which they feel attraction, enjoyment, motivation, and perseverance in their daily work. If passion is lacking, adherents are likely to focus on unused individual agency in order to change their individual circumstances. This process is largely (but not entirely) internal, personal, and subjective. When individuals internalize the tenants of the passion paradigm, as so many of my respondents appear to have done, seeking individual solutions to work based problems appears as natural. Opting for the management of self is the regulation of self.

I found self-regulation in my data in respondent suggestions that individuals who lack passion should consider quitting their jobs or otherwise determine how to increase their passion, in the ways in which individuals discussed the management of passion as a perpetual individual task, and in their insistences that they can only speak for themselves.

In several places in this dissertation I have demonstrated that adherents to the passion paradigm believe that if they are not passionate about their job, or feel that their passion is waning, they need to do something about it. The emphasis thus far has been on an individual motivation to live their best life, however individuals are also motivated to regulate their passion in order to serve their institutions. The passion paradigm redefines organizational loyalty to something in which loyal workers bring their best work, their most passionate work. Rather than longevity or mere commitment to finish the work, the passion paradigm orients adherents to perceive that their core responsibility to their organization is to self-regulate their passion.

As such, to continue working when one is not passionate can be a disservice to one's organization for, as explained in the section above, less passionate workers are not just less

personally happy, they are also less than excellent coworkers producing less than excellent work. Consider this long conversation I had with Kevin, an organization engineer. He just finished telling me about a chart that his company disseminated about generational differences which noted that a “65-year-old guy would rather have pay versus this Millennial who would rather get, you know, commended for the hard work they’re doing.”

LJD: So when you read that did you agree with it? Were you like yeah, it sounds like me actually?

Kevin: As much as I didn't want to I think yeah. I think Millennials – there were some extreme things on there and I was like, I don't necessarily believe all of that. That might be like the generations that are slightly below, like the younger people, and I think my parents kind of raised me more along the lines of how they were raised so I think there's still some aspect of loyalty even though I am looking around at different jobs right now. And really serious guilt. It's like I feel guilty but I don't feel happy and I don't know.

LJD: So you said something about like your parents had to work and you feel like you have more options. And you recognize this cultural change. Any ideas of like where this came from or why or who is perpetuating these new like ideals about work?

Kevin: I don't know who's doing it. I think it originates from a lot of co-workers I've talked to. So like in Florida, for instance, I worked there for a year and a half and then I talked to some people that I got close to over that year and a half and I tell them that I kind of want to move on and they'd be co-workers that have been there for 10 years and then they would question me like why would you want to move on? Like you could retire from here. I'm like I don't know.

So I guess it starts from there like questioning whether it's wrong to leave a company after a year and a half and then I'd question that, like ask my parents and be like hey, is it wrong for me to leave after a year and a half and they'd be like well. Like when I first told them I wanted to move out here they were kind of against it. They were like you should just keep working there, it's like a great job, it's steady, it's close to home. And I don't know if they had ulterior motives or whatever, like keep close to home. But yeah, like they just couldn't – I think the thought of leaving the company after so many years is just – it's not appealing to them.

LJD: What do you mean by wrong?

Kevin: So I guess it comes down to like a loyalty thing or maybe not wrong, but just frowned upon, like if you look at someone's resume and you see that they've been hopping companies for like a year and a half, two years, three years, whatever, then as like an employer you probably want to question like okay, this person is either ADD with like their interests or they potentially have done something wrong if they got laid off or, you know, it could be various reasons.

But then as an employee you'd probably ask yourself should I employ this person because they're showing a track record of like going into a company, maybe – I don't know, doing whatever they want to do and then leaving. And I think it all comes down to like a loyalty issue like if I employ this person are they going to, you know, stick with me for a long time and ideally like help grow the company, whatever. It's probably just the loyalty thing that got me thinking like right or wrong, whatever.

LJD: And like do you agree with that or do you think – did that hold you back, for instance, from moving on?

Kevin: I think it used to, but I've come to – I guess I've come to a conclusion like okay, I'd rather not be as "loyal" if I'm not like doing my best and putting my best work in. If [my company] could find someone else that could do that...like in lieu of me and just get rid of me and I can move on then that would be better. Like I wouldn't want – it's basically – I don't know, it goes back to that right or wrong, you know, if you're at a company and you're not working your hardest then you better move on because you're probably doing that company more harm than anything.

In this exchange Kevin told me that he wrestled with guilt, both practical guilt and moral guilt, about whether quitting a job where he was unhappy would signal a lack of company loyalty or otherwise hurt his future chances in the labor market. He recognized this as a hold-over from his parents' generation, which remains the tenor of the advice that he gets from them. However, over time he has come to reconceptualize the issue differently.

Like most adherents to the passion paradigm, Kevin now believes that the best loyalty that an employee can give to their company is to police their own engagement. As Kevin concluded, if “you’re not working your hardest then you better move on because you’re probably doing that company more harm than anything.” This redefinition of company loyalty is akin to Jeff Bezos’s

version of Zappo's pay to quit program at Amazon⁴⁰; "The Offer," as it is called, is an annual memo that offers employees between \$2,000 and \$5,000 to quit, depending on how many years they have been there. As Bezos explains in his shareholder letter, "the goal is to encourage folks to take a moment and think about what they really want. In the long-run, an employee staying somewhere they don't want to be isn't healthy for the employee or the company."⁴¹ This redefinition of good work and loyal employees allows adherents to the passion paradigm to retain a sense of loyalty and moral superiority when they pursue change in the name of passion, for there is a perception that employee work passion is an emotion that both organizations and individuals desire and benefit from.

In order to remain loyal to both self and organization, therefore, individuals must engage in perpetual self-check in. An organization graphic designer named Cody described this exercise as "taking your temperature." As he explained,

take your own temperature, like to make sure that it still feels right, you know. Like is this something that's just okay and kind of annoying or is this something that's like toxic and is like hurting your health and making you miserable or, you know what I mean? So trying to figure that out...cause I think that it goes back and forth; there's some days that are good and some days that are bad. And so...try and like...figure out if like how it actually is, you know, if it is generally positive or generally negative, and then to make moves based on that.

As I describe in the following section about exit as the natural order, adherents believe that as a best practice they should always be self-assessing how they feel about their work, and if there is a problem, determining what they can do about it to improve their overall happiness in work. This is seen as a personal process and individual responsibility.

⁴⁰ Amazon acquired Zappos in 2009.

⁴¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2014/04/14/why-more-companies-should-pay-employees-to-quit/?utm_term=.63aba88bcbec

The perceived individuality of this task was emphasized by my respondent's consistent disclaimers and proclamations that they can only speak for themselves. Though there was overwhelming agreement and consistency in how respondents talked about what they want out of work, respondents were careful to speak for themselves, sometimes even resistant to talk on behalf of other people, even hypothetical. Lisa, an organization graphic designer, loves her job. When I asked her if she thinks everyone could find work that they love she said probably not:

Lisa: People's personalities are different. I mean some people just don't like authority or being told what to do so if you are thinking about a career in that traditional sense – yeah.

LJD: Hmm. But if somebody wants to find work that they love and they can't find it, what's the problem?

Lisa: I don't know. I can't speak for other people. [laughs]

Lisa is an extreme example for being resistant to venture beyond statements about herself, but not an outlier. Respondents routinely clung to individualized narratives of work, such that they imagined individual biographies as so personal and idiosyncratic that respondents wanted to make sure I knew that their views and experiences were their own and might not be generalizable.

As Laura, a market graphic designer, explained why she thinks people take pride in their work to do their best she said, "I think it goes back to.... I guess I can only speak for myself, just seeking to have a purpose, and maybe putting that purpose in our work is where we find fulfillment each day, but like doing better, and being better." When I asked her whether that could come through another avenue she responded, "oh yes, but we all have to pay bills." Meaning, if someone is forced into the daily activity of work anyways, might as well find fulfillment in it.

When I asked Kathy, a market nurse, what she meant when she said that she thinks everyone has a calling but that it depends on if they have the desire to do more in their life than just work to pay the bills she replied, "I don't know. I'm not very eloquent with that kind of stuff

plus it's so subjective." When I asked Tiffany, an organization nurse, what it means to her to have a good job she replied, "To me? I think everyone has a different opinion of a good job. I just think a good job is something that you really enjoy that makes you happy."

When adherents focus on claiming agency over their personal biographies, they conceptualize a working world in which every person is in charge of their own trajectory, both because it is viewed as an individual responsibility and because the passion paradigm conceptualizes ideal work trajectories as deeply unique constructs. Adherence to the passion paradigm may grant power to individuals, however, it is ultimately at the cost of collective power.

Exploitative Vulnerabilities to Overwork: Hard Work as Moral and Emotional Investment

In the section above I argued that one way the internalization of the passion paradigm serves organizations and protects systems of capitalism is because adherents believe that it is an individual responsibility to self-regulate individual work passion. In this section I describe two ways that the self-regulation of work passion can contribute to exploitative overwork: Organizations of work or clients can capitalize on adherents' internalization of the moral economy of hard work or capitalize on adherents' emotional investment in their work. In both cases, adherents to the passion paradigm are made vulnerable to exploitative overwork.

First, the passion paradigm is only one ideology in a long line of ideologies of work that have promoted individual hard work as an ethical and morally upstanding activity. Weeks (2011) calls a fundamental inability to imagine nonwork the reification of work. One way we know that "the gospel of work and its central teaching, the work ethic, have so colonized our lives is that it is difficult to conceive a life not centered on and subordinated to work" (Weeks 2013: n.p.) In Chapter 4, I presented data that respondents largely consider work an inevitability. In fact, it is this perceived inevitability of work that helps justify the pursuit of work passion as rational. Data in

Chapter 4 demonstrated that professionals not only perceive work as a material necessity, but also as an activity that is central to how they participate, contribute, and function in life. When asked the proverbial question about winning the lottery or otherwise not having a financial necessity to work, most respondents noted that without work they would be both too bored and ethically dubious. In that chapter I found that most respondents felt content with the number of hours they worked.

This section adds to the findings that professionals reify work by demonstrating how some respondents in my sample attributed their long work hours to themselves, as opposed to exogenous institutional pressures. I found examples of this phenomenon in all three occupations, but risk for this phenomenon was especially apparent in engineering. Similar to scholars who have found that professionals express their long hours as a badge of commitment (Gill 2010) or as evidence of membership in an elite corps (Blair-Loy 2003), I found that some adherents described long work hours as an essential part of their moral character. As an organization engineer named Natalie explained,

We don't really work overtime so I don't feel like I'm working too hard. I feel like I wouldn't work less because I wouldn't feel productive if I worked less. So with that achiever mentality, if I worked less in a sense I didn't get the three things done out of the five things I said I would. At the end of the day I don't think I'd go home as fulfilled because I know I didn't get everything done that I could have in the expected 8 or 9 hour workday.

Natalie, like most respondents, have internalized the American 40-hour work week as normal, such that working more is classified as overwork and working less is classified as underwork.⁴² Though the normative number of work hours is socially constructed and arbitrary, individuals can

⁴² An organization engineer named Chris even told me that he has to work with engineers in France and that it sometimes bothers him how short their work week is, adding with a scoff that they basically get the entire month of August off as a given. He went on to say that God designed humans as needing to work a certain amount to be fulfilled; after all God himself worked six days before he rested. To give in to the lazy part of him that wants to sit around and do nothing would be to fight his own nature.

internalize them to the extent that their personal sense of productivity, achievement, and fulfillment is threatened when normative full-time work hours are not met.

As another example, consider a conversation I had with Olivia, an organization engineer. When the excerpt begins Olivia is commenting on where to put blame for the fact that leaving at five o'clock or taking vacations feel stigmatized.

Olivia: Yeah, I guess, I guess on just the way the culture is. Of course, I've never been told I couldn't, right?

LJD: Right.

Olivia: You know, and maybe it's just me on a personal level, that I put in a lot to my work and you know my manager's even told me that I can slow down and I need a better work-life balance, so maybe it's just me and the way I hold myself to certain expectations.

LJD: Huh.

Olivia: But yeah, it is hard. I find it personally hard to take vacation at certain times, and sometimes I find it hard to take a long vacation. Not for any particular reason, but just being gone for a long time is challenging on a business at certain-

LJD: If your management is recognizing how hard you're working and saying things like, "You need to take a break." Why doesn't that give you the freedom to do it?

Olivia: Um ... I- I don't know. I just did, actually. Well I took Friday and Monday off.

LJD: Woo.

Olivia: Um, so you know I, again, I think my personality, I put like 1000% into my work, and I am trying to work on being, getting a better balance, but I don't know. Just my personal kind of way that I, um, you know achieve goals or set goals, I've always been a person to you know, like my highest focus...it's probably more personal than what the job actually expects.

LJD: Interesting.

Olivia: Yeah, I probably put a lot of pressure on myself to do, put in you know a high level of work, but I could probably put in less and it would be just fine.

LJD: So that was my next question. I mean do you feel like you have to work that hard in order to reach your goals? Or do you really just kind of feel like this is a you issue...

Olivia: Well yeah, I mean I think I have to probably agree a little bit, but I also am on a personal level just a little bit of a perfectionist.

LJD: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Olivia: And so I do see where I probably go beyond what is even expected of me or needed from me, but just my perfectionist nature, right? I take it upon myself to you know do probably more work than is needed or spend more time on something than I need to.

In Olivia's case we can see how adherents can perceive long hours as self-inflicted, in service of self-set expectations to achieve high goals and fulfill one's perfectionist nature.

The first way adherence to the passion paradigm can produce overwork is therefore because adherents to the passion paradigm can internalize beliefs that individuals who are passionate about their work—who are therefore doing the best work they can—are motivated to work hard in order to work well. Organizations want to hire workers who have internalized that good workers go over and beyond, of course, because when employees self-regulate work ideologies that they have internalized, organizations have to apply less explicit pressure. In some cases, like Olivia's above, overworking professionals might even dismiss their organization from blame, instead perceiving their slavish commitment to work as an almost entirely personal compulsion.

The second way I will demonstrate that the self-regulation of work passion can contribute to exploitative overwork is because organizations or clients can capitalize on adherents' emotional investment in their work. I found examples of this phenomenon in all three occupations, but risk for this phenomenon was especially apparent in graphic design. Passionate professionals can be held—almost against their will—by their emotional attachment to the work or a client, have difficulty keeping boundaries, or make work harder for themselves because they are too invested.

Despite the agency that the passion paradigm promotes, being passionate about one's work can also trap individuals in organizations that they might otherwise leave. For example, an organization graphic designer named Brittany told me that she "can't put myself in your shoes" if you are unhappy in your organization but have not quit. "Like I can't – like why are you still working there then? Why don't you leave?," she asked rhetorically. A few seconds later, however, she thought of an explanation. She continued,

On the flip side, for example, my boyfriend, he works for a company that he does not like for bosses that he doesn't like; he's been there for five years. But I think that is because he's passionate about the work that he does or his career field being a graphic designer and being a creator and just a designer in general. So I just think it just depends on the person. I think you – I mean my boyfriend's just in general a very passionate person about everything. He's very opinionated so I think that does have another thing to do with it, just being kind of like a Type A personality.

In this case, rather than enabling individuals to free themselves from poor working conditions, the emotional attachment of work passion can almost fetter professionals to their work. Though they have no organizational or managerial loyalty, their passion motivates them to continue doing great work, in some cases trapping them in exploitative circumstances.

Graphic designers are particularly vulnerable to the exploitation of their passion because artists often see their work as expressions of themselves. One of the major occupational challenges I heard from graphic designers is learning to detach themselves from their work enough to be able to produce art for someone else—sometimes art that they did not personally like very much. It is for this reason that Zara felt conflicted over the question of whether passionate workers produce better work.

Zara: It depends. Like for us since we're a marketing agency and we work with a lot of different clients, sometimes it's not super good to be super passionate about like the actual work you're producing cause then get emotionally tied to it and then sometimes clients just like dash all your hopes and dreams, you know, which is something I've had to learn too. So...

LJD: Like... “that’s so ugly.”

Zara: Yeah! It’s like no, I love this! You know? [laughter] Yeah.

LJD: That’s interesting. So in your line of work passion can be detrimental sometimes.

Zara: Uh-huh. Yeah, if you get too tied to what you’re creating, yeah. Since we’re creating things for other people, not for yourself.

As a result, Zara told me that really passionate artists can have a harder time. As professionals, graphic designers have to understand that the art they produce is not their own, and might therefore not feel like their best work, which is what passionate professionals want to produce.

Their passion, coupled with their commitment to produce work that they identify with and are proud of, produce circumstances in which organizations know that passionate professionals will keep working long hours, even if they are not being paid for it. In the case of graphic design, respondents frequently told me that they were frustrated by management who would take on too many clients or agree to a job where clients were only willing to pay for minimal hours. In both cases, respondents felt like their passion for the work was being taken advantage of, for in both cases respondents would report working overtime—either late into the night or beyond what the clients were paying for, because they were committed to attaching their name with good work.

An organization graphic designer named Nick told me that being happy in the work ties many graphic designers to the organization, but explained that there is a lot of churn in the industry because “it’s literally sweatshop conditions, for the most part.” He went on, “Maybe you got free beer every Friday and all this stuff. But, in general, you’re surrendering a lot more of your life than you’re getting out of it, particularly if...you’re doing a lot of the work, but then the higher-ups are taking the credit. That’s just the way that the industry works, too.” For many years, Nick found himself working until 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning after having dinner with his family and

putting his children to sleep. He complained that clients would want to pay less and ask for the work in the same amount of time, or less, and that management would expect that there is always somebody willing to work it (and there was). This frustration led Nick to go freelance. At the time of our interview he had only recently returned to an organization in a management role.

A market graphic designer named Farah similarly complained about the exploitation that comes from clients not wanting to pay, but passionate artists being unwilling to put “stuff into the world that’s just going to make it uglier.” She described that her first goal as a professional is her client being happy, but her second goal is herself being happy—and the latter is what pushes her to contribute more hours than she is being paid for. “I will not charge for certain things,” she told me, but “I will spend an extra two hours on something just because I feel like I want to make it look better.”

It is worth noting that in graphic design the pressure to produce better work than you have been given either the time or money for is compounded by the fact that graphic designers get future work through their portfolios. Designers do not have to include all of their work in their portfolios, of course, but the point is that they have both an artistic and practical commitment to creating work that they feel represents their identity as an artist. Although she *does* push out work that she does not love, Farah told me about a particularly cheap client she worked with where she just could not stand leaving the work as it was. When I asked her what typically drives her to keep working beyond payment, she cited her passion: “I feel like it’s usually something I’m like really excited about.” She provided the following example:

I did a brochure where I just like I loved it and it was just great and then they wanted to add these like funny little elements on it that really like compacted the type, like the copy was just like out of control, but they didn’t want to pay for an extra – so when you’re doing a brochure it has to be divisible by four so when they’re printing, and they didn’t want to pay for like an extra sheet of paper basically to be added in, and doing that would just like make it free of that much more.

So, for the digital version I did create an extra spread because I knew they wouldn't have to pay for it, and I did that on my own time because I was going to do it anyway for my portfolio. So, I did deliver them that piece with an extra set and then I gave them a printable version that was condensed because I figured it's out there, you know, it's going out, like being downloaded by people and are shown in presentations or whatever.

And if somebody is like I really like this brochure, it looks so good they could refer me and, you know, that's business so that's why I decided like oh it goes in my portfolio, I might get a little bit out of this too, like from them having this extra version.

Farah's emotional attachment to the work drove her to go over and beyond for her client, which she helped justify to herself by hoping that her good work might yield future work. In many cases, the easy exploitation of passionate professionals is due to what England (2005) theorized as 'prisoners of love.' In these cases, the extra hours or extra effort are motivated by work passion, not material or organizational incentives which fairly value or reward passionate professionals for doing excellent work.

In this section I have detailed two ways that the internalization of the passion paradigm can contribute to the exploitative circumstances of over work: When organizations hire passionate employees, they can rely on their moral internalization that good workers work hard and their emotional attachment to the work to motivate long hours and excellent work.

EXIT (MOVEMENT) OVER VOICE AS THE NATURAL ORDER

In this final section I need to briefly summarize Albert Hirschman's (1970) classic book *Exit, Voice, Loyalty*. His concepts and language have been helpful to me in thinking through how adherence to the passion paradigm within the context of a precarious economy that favors movement might thwart or encourage organizational change. Hirschman argues that consumers of a product or employees in an organization have two strategies to signal their dissatisfaction and

enact organizational change: exit or voice.⁴³ In the work context, exit refers to an individual's ability to leave an organization or role, while voice refers to an individual's ability to vocalize their dissatisfaction, needs, or opinions about how the organization can improve. Hirschman argues that the traditional economic position that free market capitalism works most efficiently when individuals can exit, does not always work. Speaking up, or voice, he argues, is a powerful and necessary agent of organizational change that becomes less likely when the option to leave becomes easier.⁴⁴

Hirschman therefore argues that voice can be a powerful and important option that may need more encouragement. He then introduces loyalty as mediating an individual's decision, with loyalty and exit having an inverse relationship. Loyalty can "neutralize within certain limits the tendency of the most quality-conscious...members to be the first to exit" (79). He continues, "loyalty, far from being irrational, can serve the socially useful purpose of preventing deterioration from becoming cumulative, as it so often does when there is no barrier to exit" (79). In total, Hirschman's famous text suggests that the market roles of loyalty and voice should not always be snuffed by rational economists in favor of exit.

In that famous graduation speech Steve Jobs told listeners that in pursuit of work that they love "Keep looking. Don't settle." Though some might find his advice unnerving or unrealistic, one thing that the passion paradigm does is help normalize and justify career movement. In this

⁴³ It appears that whether Hirschman meant loyalty as a third choice or a mediator remains up for debate. As Hoffmann (2006) notes, "Some scholars read Hirschman as offering 'loyalty' as a third option, while others see loyalty as a contingency that shapes whether people will exit or voice" (2313). I take the position that loyalty is both an option and a mediator.

⁴⁴ For example, Hirschman argues that the failing of the public-school system could be interpreted as the result of the most vocal and "alert" parents opting to leave and pay for private education, rather than staying to help build better education for all. He writes, "Hence the rapid exit of the highly quality-conscious customers—a situation which paralyzes voice by depriving it of its principal agents, is tied to availability of better-quality substitutes at higher prices" (51). The idea is that an organizational decline due to exit may not just be because of the loss of bodies, but because of the loss of voice which would help the organization right the ship. In some cases, the decline of less efficient organizations is not in the best interest of the collective.

final section I pivot towards analyzing how the passion paradigm empowers and normalizes movement both as a response to dissatisfaction and as a strategy of self-growth. I suggest that, in the long-term, normalizing exit may not serve the interests of professionals *or* organizations of work, because it undermines incentives for important employees to use their voices to improve their organization prior to leaving (or, in lieu of leaving). The remainder of this section will describe the normalization of movement in the new economy as a specifically cultural phenomenon.

When I asked respondents to identify what they liked or disliked about Jobs' quote, I found that they were particularly attracted to the phrase "don't settle," often identifying it as the primary reason why they agreed most with Jobs's sentiment. For example, a market nurse named Lilly blurted out "I don't think that you should ever settle in anything. If you're unhappy, and you know how to change it, change it. That's what I appreciate about this [quote]." She went onto say, "It may take me a while to find it, but I'm sure it's out there, and I may have to do a bunch of other things to get there, but, like I said, I don't ever want anyone to settle in anything. I want them to be happy with whatever it is they're doing." An organization engineer named Elena similarly proclaimed, "I really relate to [this quote]. I don't like that he uses the "L" word a lot. But I do believe in this, in don't settle. If you have the luxury to not settle, definitely don't settle. There is more. I think that you should always strive to be happy. I'm not religious but I think it helps the soul to be happy and positive vibes, you know, always be positive." As a final example, a graphic designer named Noah answered, "Yeah, I agree [with this quote], don't settle...it takes a little bit of waking up to see...but you shouldn't settle."

To adhere to a life philosophy of not settling is to be in a perpetual state of unsettlement. This is part of Beck's (1992) risk society and why Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) describe

individualism in reflexive modernity as indeterminate, full of risk, and precarious. The idea is that an individual never arrives to a stable state of happiness. Personal happiness must be chased, discovered, fought for, grown, maintained. As Elena bluntly stated, “there is more;” the process never ends.

As I argued in Chapter 6, narratives in the passion paradigm are re-writing the scripts around what job movement says about an individual, bolstering it with moral currency and cultural clout. An approach to work in which individual happiness is prioritized and movement to find it is welcomed and praised is a new one. It flies in the face of the previous generation who—even if they desired meaningful or enjoyable work—prioritized and valued material benefits first. In large part, this is because previous generations had stronger incentives to remain in lifelong employment, including job security, clear paths of career advancement, and pensions. Within the unprecedented precarity of the new economy, today’s professionals are unlikely to work in an organization where a lifelong career is either feasible or wanted. The structures of work have changed, and so have the cultures.

The cultural shift was perhaps most apparent when respondents compared their perceptions of work to their parents. Though some respondents voiced uneasiness about how employers would perceive frequent movement, most felt empowered by new narratives that those who embrace movement and chase their passions will be rewarded. This was in sharp contrast to how many described their parents’ experiences with work.

When Kevin, an organization engineer, and I discussed how he would describe his parents’ experiences and expectations of work compared to his, he told me that his parents just “powered through.” In a recent conversation he said his dad “straight shot” with him, saying “you know, son no one likes work, everyone hates work, no one wants to do the work, but you just have to do what

you have to do to pay the bills and all that.” Kevin recalled his response as, “I’m like hmm, I guess that’s true. But it would be a lot easier if you liked what you did to pay the bills versus having to just do a job that pays you so you can, you know, get security and comfortability.” He went on to tell me, “I think I have a different perspective from my parents... I definitely admire their work ethic, but... I don’t think I want to spend the rest of my life doing that...I don’t think the whole purpose of my life is to work like that just to get more money and whatever, just to be stable.” When I asked him why he thinks he diverged from his parents, he described it as a generational difference. He said,

I think my parents are probably part of that generation where like – or maybe it was just a runoff from their previous generation where they had to work and they just powered through whatever they had to do.

Like they find a job, they power through to get the money and like they can have kids and their kids can live comfortable lives, but I think our generation right now, they’re just like we have options, we don’t have to stay with a company for the rest of our lives and we don’t have to be loyal to the company; we can do what we want and all that.

In one of my favorite descriptions, an organization engineer named Cole told me that he thinks that there is lovable work out there. “I think,” he told me “if you want it, go for it. Go chase it down.” When I asked him where he thinks this expectation came from he said,

I don’t know what the shift was. I always feel like our generation was so much more “in touch with our feelings”—and I put it in quotes, because if you talk to a guy like my dad, his dad didn’t tell him he loved him until he was like, 65 years old. And we grew up in—maybe not everybody, but most people now are more touchy-feely, how are you today, let’s talk about your feelings, express yourself, be an individual. Where I think 50 years ago, it’s like, put your rain jacket on and go to work. Very militant.

In both these cases, respondent parents represented an older generation who lived and continue to see the function of work differently. They came from a different time, and their children can palpably feel the difference.

For other respondents, their parents may not have lived a life of enjoyable work, but they want one for their children. An organization nurse named Bethany told me that her mom hates her job as an Amtrak sales agent; she is good at it, but she hates it. She said that her mom will say, “I wish I had gone to school, and I wish I had found...something she could have been interested in.” Bethany said that her parents did teach her to make sure she enjoys what she does. As she explained, “I think it was almost like they learned it and passed it on, versus, like they believed in that when they were 20.” Similarly, an organization graphic designer named Lacey told me that even though her parents support her, neither of her parents liked their job very much. “I think that in general like people did what they did but they weren’t as satisfied, and I don’t think they were expecting to get all of their satisfaction like from their jobs.” She went on,

And I think as like being young and growing up and going to college and all the people around you, you want to love your job and I think that’s kind of a different – I don’t know if that’s a different concept or like different expectation, but it feels like a different expectation than my parents had. I don’t think my dad went into the Social Security Administration expecting to love his work. I think he was just like this is a job, it’s a good paying job, it’s a government job, I’ll get paid, I’ll get benefits and it will be good for my family kind of thing. And that’s not necessarily like a bad view...

Like Bethany, most respondents understood where their parents were coming from, and most reported that their parents also understood and supported their decisions to prioritize happiness in their work. Respondents merely described the disjunction as a generational divide, as a conception of work that made more sense then, but less sense now.

These are discourses which frame movement in the new economy as normal, positive, wise, and strong. When I asked Nico, an organization engineer, whether he could describe a company that would make him want to stay for life he responded, “I think life is a very long time and so no matter what you’re looking for – hopefully anyway – no matter what you’re looking for it can change. Times changes everything.” He went on, “I feel like every morning you should say well

I'm going to get a divorce and I'm going to lose my job and I'm going to lose my house, what can I do to change that? Like I'm never content with anything. I'm successful and I'm doing well for myself but I have this drive, this work ethic that doesn't allow me to stop. I can say all these things and do all these things because I feel like I've earned them.” Consider also my conversation with a market engineer named Travis:

LJD: Most days do you like what you do?

Travis: I do, and maybe I'm the weird one because... I'm four years into it and I haven't moved yet which I think – I don't know, I've read enough of like Millennials in the workplace things where I think we jump jobs on average like once every two years or something, pretty quickly, so I'm already twice that.

LJD: Do you feel like you have a desire, not necessarily with the company you're at right now, but would you want to stay at one company for the duration of your career?

Travis: I don't think so. And nothing against the company that I work for and the great things that they offer, but I don't see myself being personally fulfilled committing a lifetime, you know, 40 years of work, to one company.

LJD: Why not?

Travis: Knowing myself, knowing kind of how I work best and do good work, I think at some point I'll hit a point of stagnation and I'll want something different and I'll need a change in order to still be effective at what I'm doing.

In these examples, Nico and Travis liken expecting change in one's work to expecting change in one's self over a lifetime, normalize the perception that change infuses energy and productivity into ones career, and encourages individuals to view the pursuit of work passion as bold and challenging, with great and worthwhile rewards.

It is worthwhile to note that stories of past movement or expectations of future movement came from respondents who liked their previous work and also like their current work. Many respondents also reflected on their own stories of dissatisfaction at work and told me stories about

professional friends who quit their jobs for more enjoyable work. For those who do not like their work it is not surprising to find that they do not want to settle (though some might argue that a good paycheck could be enough). However, individuals who have already found happiness in their work are especially illustrative of unsettlement because they are on a quest for even *more*—they will not settle. They have internalized personal and professional value for career movement, supported both by a precarious new economy in which there are fewer opportunities for organizational longevity and a new ideology of work which pairs the lifelong evolution of self with a lifelong evolution of work.

An orientation to work in which many professionals see their employment as temporary disincentivizes professionals from wanting to invest in long-term organizational success. Adherents of the passion paradigm are likely to do good work for their organizations and remain loyal to them while they are there, but they may be less likely to put in the extraneous work of developing constructive feedback or strategies for organizations that are struggling to meet the needs of their employees, clients, investors, or bottom lines.

In this section, I focused on how the confluence of precarity and adherence to the passion paradigm encourages exit. I argued that the socioeconomic context of precarity coupled with the ideological framework of the passion paradigm normalizes movement. Fitting within the larger argument that adherence to the passion paradigm so deeply individualizes the experience of professional work that it depoliticizes individual adherents, I argue that normalizing exit as the natural order may ultimately thwart systemic organizational change.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that as an ideology of work the passion paradigm also

disempowers professional adherents. It thereby simultaneously serves both the institution of work and the individual adherent (as argued in Chapter 5). I argue that the hyper individualism of the passion paradigm serves the institution of work (organizations of work and capitalism broadly) in several ways. First, its hyper individualism criticizes individuals for their un-used agency in lieu of criticizing structure; Second, it convinces adherents that they are working hard and working well in primary service to their individual happiness (as opposed to their organizations who then become happy benefactors); Third, the internalization of the passion paradigm transforms professionals into self-regulating entities, delivering organizations from having to exert explicit coercive and manipulative pressure on their employees, thereby further obscuring their roles in exploitative working conditions; Finally, the hyper individualism of the passion paradigm normalizes career movement and the individualized life course to the extent that it undermines collective consciousness and disincentivizes professionals from engaging in work that is necessary to demand and build structural changes to both organizations of work and systems of capitalism more broadly.

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CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Onward

LJD: Any last comments?

Travis: I don't know. Now I'm questioning my entire life.

- Travis Mason, market engineer

The crux of the passion paradigm is that all individuals have power—at least some power—to determine what their life will look like, depending on their individual values. If individuals are unhappy or can imagine circumstances in which they might be happier, they are encouraged to pursue change. The passion paradigm orients adherents to imagine that there is freedom in movement within the new economy—that this single life each of us gets is for us to develop, sometimes in unexpected or surprising directions. I found that the vast majority of the 74 professionals I interviewed, across occupation, economy type, and gender, believed in these tenets. The final illustration I will use to conclude my dissertation is Nels Thorley, a 40-year-old market graphic designer.

I interviewed Nels in the living room of his two story 1990s tract house. It was in the corner of a cul-de-sac, on the side of a canyon. Through the side gate I could see a hammock hanging in the back yard. When he opened the door he was barefoot, and I could see his wife—who also works remotely—bustling around in the kitchen. The house was clean, but untidy; evidence of children was strewn about. When we sat on the couch to begin our interview Nels sat crossed legged and offered me a bowl of pistachios that was sitting on the coffee table. He was laid back and kind eyed. He carried himself with the self-assurance of someone who feels confident and happy about the way he is living his life.

Nels originally wanted to be in wildlife management but “bailed” in college when he realized that “a huge science background is required.” As more of “an art type of mind” he decided to major in broadcast production. When no one would hire him straight out of college he went back to where his heart was, “spending my twenties doing outdoor type education, jobs like backpacking, rock climbing with high school kids and things like that.” He was living in Boulder, Colorado selling backpacks and tents when the company asked him if he would do some local newspaper ads. When he moved back to San Diego, now married, he got an internship with an advertising agency. Over the next six years he worked his way up to the position of creative director.

He told me that in 2001 he made the decision to leave his company and start freelancing. He said he did not quite have the confidence yet, but that the late nights, long weekends, client demands, and internal hunger to do his best and climb the ladder “was putting a little bit of strain on our relationship.” Then September 11th happened. As he described it, “Before that I’m like, ‘I got get out of this job. I can't do this anymore. It's too stressful.’ And then all of sudden the whole world changed. And nobody even really knew what was going on you know. Were we even going to have a world tomorrow.” Nels ended up staying for two more years to build his portfolio and his confidence, and to learn more about the freelance process. After his first daughter was born, he decided, “Okay it's time now. I'm definitely ready.” He has been freelancing ever since.

When I asked him if he always knew that he wanted to pursue his own thing one day he replied, “No, no way...my father was a career Marine. So I always thought I had to like pick one thing and do it forever, you know that’s just the environment I grew up in and that’s kind of what the world was telling people back then. And being an artist wasn’t a career that was encouraged.” Nels told me that he grew up thinking that he was going to be a Marine, but when it came time to

make the decision, he realized that he was not willing to give up all of his freedom. When he started to pursue art via film he said, “I still didn't really understand where I was going to end up, or I didn't really have a plan, I just had the desire.”

When I asked him to clarify why he decided to go out on his own rather than find another company to work in, he answered, “freedom.” The decision was gradual. As he explained, “seeing other people do it and meeting with people over and over and realizing like this is something that I can do with my skills. It kind of ignited something inside me, giving me control over my life finally you know. So that was the motivation.” Now working as a freelancer, he told me that the benefits are in the freedom. “I can take a job, or not take a job any time I want...I can go on vacation any time I want for the most part... I can kind of you know shift things slightly here and there.” When I asked Nels if he actually uses that freedom he said yes. He told me that if he would rather go to the beach with his son he will clarify with a client that a day later is okay and do it; if he wants to practice yoga or walk his dog or meet his kids for lunch at school in the middle of the day, he does it.

Most extravagant of all, Nels and his wife recently pulled their three kids out of school and toured Europe on the cheap for six months, while continuing to homeschool. They worked remotely for a few months, and then decided that they did not want to work. He explained, “We felt like work would have taken away from the trip and what we could expose our kids to. We were like, you know the amount of money it's going to cost us to do this trip we can make up eventually. We can always work.” In retrospect, Nels tells me that sometimes he cannot believe they did it.

The freedom that Nels got from moving to freelance allows him and his wife to pursue the balanced life they want, being present with their children while also working hard. He told me

“One of my kids had made a comment to my wife at one point that she doesn't work. And...she thought that was the coolest thing ever, because she works her butt off. The fact that they don't know that she works, means she's got, she's pulled the wool over their eyes, that she's that involved in their lives that they don't realize that she's actually working when they don't see her.” These are their values. The Europe trip was not without sacrifice, but it was a decision he and his wife made based on the things that are most important to them. He disclosed that they do not make a lot of money, adding, “I know this is like a nice house and stuff, but you know we're paying a very high rent. And so we don't have a lot of saving. We put a lot of saving into our trip.” As he explained it, rather than have a huge retirement fund set up or college funds, “I just would rather gamble, you know live now, because I don't know what's going to happen today, or tomorrow.”

When I asked him if he has ever questioned what he is doing he continued,

No...I try to live in the present. I try to be happy with whatever I'm doing... But I'm always thinking about maybe doing something else so...You know once I achieve a goal, I don't need to do that anymore. I want to try something different and achieve that...You know the free-lancing thing was kind of a new challenge, a different direction. Um, but I've never questioned really those paths. What I do now, what I've been doing comes very natural to me.

Nels does not have any professional goals. “I don't know what's next. I could end up in another completely different industry and have new goals in that one so. I don't know, you know.” A bit later on in the interview he concluded, “Whatever I end up in next, if there's a next, it's going to be with the same passion and same interest in inspiring people in their own world to try new things.” Nels considers passion the most important thing in his career. His passion, he told me, is why he has gotten this far. When I ask him why he thinks people should be passionate about their work he responded, “It's just a human thing... People ... We just seem to use our heart...It's a part of us that you can't see or measure, but it's one of our strongest traits as human beings.”

I will end with how Nels described how he came to his perspectives on work. He attributed his work passions to his parents (his mom was a creative and his dad was a DIY guy), but not his perspective. Instead, he attributed his perspective to individuals throughout his youth saying, “follow your passion.” He went on, “And I don't know why a lot of people don't. I know everyone says it, we all want it, but a lot of people feel trapped. And I just for some reason felt, I never felt trapped like I had been to do something.” He concluded,

That takes me back to that conversation with our kids... I mean my daughter said my wife didn't work and I was saying you know we work the same. We just use our free time differently. I was saying this [to] my sixth grader and second grader, or whatever, like ... You can choose that life right now if you want it. You know you don't have to work in an office every day. You don't have to go into an office and be there all day every day if you don't want to. You have the freedom to make that choice.

You know I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that, that's just ... It's ... You have to follow your heart and know that you can do whatever you want in life. I remember my parents telling me that, like be anything you want, but it didn't really make sense. I thought it meant I can pick any job and be in any job when they say, but it's ... I'm trying to convince my kids that you don't have to pick a job. You can create a life you know.

Nels is a fantastic illustration of the empowering narratives of the passion paradigm. Within the passion paradigm, individuals are encouraged to imagine their futures in the new economy as open and unconstrained. The passion paradigm encourages individuals to feel free to move, and to find freedom in the knowledge that they can create their lives. Nels lives his life and encourages his children to live their lives ways that imagine work as a malleable activity that can be manipulated to accommodate and support the life one most desires to live. He hugs to work passion—his heart—as the guide through his career, focusing most of his energy on the fact that in this present moment he is happy. He will follow his heart if and when it changes, but the route is ambiguous, and that is okay. Nels strives to feel free in his life—and he is largely confident that he *is* free. These are the empowering narratives of the passion paradigm.

CONCLUSION

In the conclusion of their recent article reviewing the relationships between what they deem ‘the passion schema’ and inequality in white collar work, Rao and Tobias Neely (2019) leave the reader with an open empirical puzzle:

Today, employers remain emotionally detached from workers, yet workers must convey a sense of passion and commitment to their jobs, even when workers may be downsized or restructured at a moment’s notice. More research is needed to explore this paradox, or what Pugh (2015) terms the ‘the one-way honor system,’ to understand why the passion schema appears to have become more salient during an era of employment insecurity.

The question they present asks why professionals would adhere to an ideology of work which asks so much of them, in an economic context in which institutions of work give less and less in return. Using the rhetoric of love, which is so deeply embedded in the passion paradigm, the open empirical puzzle is why professionals would want to continue pouring their hearts into a relationship in which their partners—the institution of work—are inadequate, selfish, noncommittal, unreliable, and unstable. In the scope of this dissertation, I have answered this question, and I have asked new ones.

Although there are good reasons to assume that the passion paradigm is a privileged posture that individuals would be more likely to adopt in good economic times, I argue that the passion paradigm is particularly resonant *because* of precarity, not despite precarity. Rather than perceiving work passion and precarity as contradictory—thereby rendering their coexistence confusing—I argue that they are quite compatible. In interviewing 74 engineers, graphic designers, and nurses working in either less precarious or more precarious positions, I found that respondents adhere to the passion paradigm because they find it empowering. The passion paradigm thrives in an insecure era of professional work because it makes adherents feel agentic. The logic of the

passion paradigm and its narratives fit well with an economic context in which professionals are predisposed to movement and responsible for plotting each step along their career trajectories. From their perspective, work passion is not in primary service to their organizations or work, it is in primary service to themselves (and their loved ones). The passion paradigm serves individuals as an ideological structure because it grants adherents clarity and reliability. Within a context of enormous uncertainty, it enables adherents to act meaningfully and intentionally. The passion paradigm helps adherents replace trepidation about the future's uncertainty with confidence in ones unceasing power to shape their lives and optimism about the unforeseen opportunities that await.

Of course, like other hegemonic ideologies of work, the passion paradigm also thrives in the new economy because it serves the institution of work. This is the second central argument that I make in this dissertation. I argue that the passion paradigm serves institutions of work and protects the status quo of capitalistic work relations in the new economy because it depoliticizes the experience of work for professionals, while committing adherents to work hard and work well. The irony of the perceived individual power that the pursuit of work passion grants adherents is that it comes at the cost of collective power, and therefore impetus for structural change. While individuals narrowly focus on identifying and capitalizing on areas of perceived agency in the pursuit of crafting individualized careers, growth, and lifelong happiness, they avert their gaze from the structural sources of deprived agency, both individual and collective. The passion paradigm grants adherents power over their individual lives, but it makes their perspective myopic; it stunts adherents from leveraging the power they feel to fight for better structures of work for the collective. The very cunning of the passion paradigm is convincing adherents that that which ultimately serves and preserves structures of work is of primary service to the self.

Arenas of Stratification and Inequality: Gender and Psychological Mobility

Empirical and theoretical scholarly concern over how work passion might exacerbate existing systems of stratification and inequality or create new ones has been ample. Scholars are concerned that the passion paradigm could deepen stratification in the labor market along gender and class lines (Cech forthcoming), burden professionals with a new form of emotional labor (Gershon 2017), adjudicate career opportunities and career trajectories (Rivera 2015; Vallas and Cummins 2015), exacerbate exploitative, sexist, or racist working conditions (Duffy 2017; Kim et al. 2020⁴⁵; Reid 2015; Wingfield et al. 2017), obscure power relations between organizations and employees (Ramarajan and Reid 2013), justify low pay and long hours (Gill 2010), and lead to organizations ruthlessly extracting value from affective labor (Gill and Pratt 2008). These concerns are valid, and they have opened up a broad arena for future empirical research. In fact, at the time of this authorship I can hardly keep up with new passion-oriented publications across journalism, economics, psychology, organizational psychology, management studies, and sociology.

In Chapter 6 of this dissertation I leverage my comparative data to analyze how work passion is related to gender inequalities in work. I empirically explore the relationships between emotional cultures at work, gender, and adherence to the passion paradigm. Like Gershon (2017) and Rao and Tobias Neely (2019) I find that work passion effectively replaces loyalty or devotion, respectively, as the emotion binding employees to their work. However, unlike Rao and Tobias Neely (2019) and other scholars who wonder if organizations are going to get away with providing so little to their employees (Sennett 1998), I find that both men and women describe high expectations for their employers to meet their personal developmental, psychological, and emotional needs. Professionals in a new precarious economy may no longer expect their

⁴⁵ Aaron Kay, the lead researcher on this project, calls exploitation due to being passionate about one's work the "passion tax."

employers to provide them the model of postwar work with long term job security and fringe benefits, but they are not without expectations for what good employers provide to their employees. When describing what they expect from their employers, I find that both men and women still express emotional gendered tropes, but also that both are pushing the bounds of gender stereotypes and inequalities in work by verbalizing needs in their respective areas of alienation.

A discouraging finding, however, was that men were more likely to define work passion as motivation, while women were more likely to define work passion as enjoyment. These definitions fit within longstanding gendered tropes and are connected to longstanding sources of labor stratification and pay disparities. Future research investigating how individual adherence to the passion paradigm, as well as the institutionalization of the passion paradigm within organizational hiring, placement, reward, and promotion practices, should pay special attention to the role of gendered conceptualizations and primary expressions of work passion.

Based on my findings I would also like to encourage research in an additional arena of stratification and inequality in the labor market. I have argued that one reason that the passion paradigm is thriving in the precarious new economy is because adherence is an effective coping mechanism. Adherence to the passion paradigm not only serves individuals by increasing their perceptions of control, but by equipping adherents with a coherent and compatible framework for understanding their experiences of work in the new economy and providing a basic roadmap for how to survive its volatility. If one accepts that the dissolution of the postwar model of work and professional precarity are permanent fixtures in the American economy, at least for the foreseeable future, then labor scholars should turn their attention from who can *avoid* precarity towards who can flourish in precarity, and how. Who can persist and/or thrive within a precarious labor context

is not just a matter of material privilege—which is the low hanging fruit—it is a matter of psychological privilege.

New systems of stratification and inequalities will emerge between those who are capable of and who know how to fashion career adaptability and those who do not. In this dissertation I argue that the passion paradigm helps adherents understand and adapt to work in the new economy. Those who are more likely to thrive in the new economy are going to be those who have proactive career behaviors and actively build their internal self-perception and external promotion of their employability (Hollister 2011). These are psychological and behavioral skills that must be learned and acquired just like other forms of capital. If individuals are indeed responsible for their cultivating and crafting their careers, they have to learn how to do this, just like other career skills that professionals are taught. Professionals have to be taught how to play the new game. If the new career contract means “less loyalty, greater mobility, and less certainty,” individuals must grow their ability to adapt and react to instability and uncertainty (Briscoe and Hall 2006: 5).

Management scholars call this psychological skill ‘psychological mobility.’ Psychological mobility refers to the extent to which people can envision a variety of career options as viable opportunities for them (Forret et al. 2010) and the self-perception that one has the capacity to move around in their career (Sullivan and Arthur 2006). Eva Illouz (2007) argues that psychological skills such as these can no longer be ignored by sociologists as mechanisms of stratification and inequality. In her book *Cold Intimacies*, she traces the rise of injunctions to pursue our most complete or self-realized selves and argues that self-realization was eventually codified via objects, interactions, and institutions as a cultural category of individual health. The ability to self-help (as this psychological literature is called) is a part of what she calls emotional competence. In the American context, “emotional competence is most formalized in the workplace” (64). That is,

success in work does not just depend on learning and performing the feeling rules (Hochschild 1983) in a given context and enacting the emotional disposition that is normatively accepted for your gender or racial identity (Rao and Tobias Neely 2019), it also depends on your ability to attend to your psychological health and to control your perceptions and behavior in ways that allow you to thrive psychologically (not just materially, socially, or relationally).

What I am suggesting is that another reason that the tenets of the passion paradigm are culturally resonate is because they tap into longstanding social constructions of how psychologically healthy individuals are supposed to function. In particular, the passion paradigm outlines new guidelines for emotional competence in work. As Illouz (2007) explains, “Like cultural competence, emotional competence is translatable into a social benefit, as professional advancement or social capital (63).” The idea here is that the passion paradigm is a psychological resource whose adherents may have a leg up on the conceptual and psychological strategies that are necessary to coping in a precarious economy.

Scholars who promote studying the arena of psychological mobility as a source of stratification and inequality in the new economy underscore “the need to promote and develop new and more egalitarian forms of education and socialization” (Tomás et al 2019: 9). Or as Davis (2016) quipped, “Understand our transition. Be of service” (189). Adherence to the passion paradigm might not be the most effective or equitable strategy to recommend, however as I argue in this dissertation, it is used by professionals as a cogent psychological resource, nonetheless.

Can the Passion Paradigm Ever Serve Collective Interests?

There are many scholars cited in this dissertation and journalists who accuse the Do What You Love mantra of being terrible and destructive advice that society should do away with as soon

as possible. As Davis (2016) wrote in his chapter “Navigating a Post Corporate Economy,” “Do not follow your passion. That’s for narcissists” (187). In one of the first viral critiques of the passion paradigm, Tokumitsu (2014) unequivocally argued that the Do What You Love mantra is a perfect tool of capitalism which fools adherents into accepting myriad forms of exploitation in exchange for the lie that it is possible to escape the dark sides of work, while *also* leading to the erasure of less than lovable labor. The tenor of this scathing critique is often repeated in sociological literature (like those cited above), which largely focuses on how the passion paradigm will reproduce the same power relations and work inequities that have proven extraordinarily durable in American society. Feminist Marxist scholars, such as Kathi Weeks, argue that there is no viable way to reconstruct institutions of work—they have to be entirely reconceptualized and overturned. Hence, an ideology like the passion paradigm is just one ideology in a long line of ideologies used to distract and delude oppressed workers.

However, there are also those who write optimistically about work passion, one notable example being Daniel Pink’s (2001) *Free Agent Nation: The Future of Working for Yourself*. Most recently, the creator of NPR’s Planet Money and staff writer at The New Yorker Adam Davidson (2020) published *The Passion Economy: The New Rules for Thriving in The Twenty-First Century*. In it, he argues that “the twenty-first-century economic paradigm offers new ways of making money, fresh paths toward professional fulfillment, and unprecedented opportunities for curious, ambitious individuals to combine the things they love with their careers (n.p).⁴⁶” His optimistic take is that our economic context provides unique opportunities for individuals to capitalize on their passions and make a livelihood; learn the rules of the passion economy and thrive.

⁴⁶Quoted from: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/239718/the-passion-economy-by-adam-davidson/>

I, too, have found reason to be partially optimistic about how adhering to the passion paradigm can positively serve professionals in the new economy. I join a cluster of scholars who write about the ideology of work passion and the pursuit of passion with mixed nuance. With the longest history of studying the effects of work passion, psychologists find that in some cases work passion is harmonious, yielding positive effects for individuals and organizations, and in other cases work passion is obsessive, yielding negative effects for individuals and organizations (Chen et al. 2015; Forest et al. 2011; Vallerand et al. 2003). In sociology, scholars of cultural work and immaterial labor have also written about the dual possibilities of work passion. Gill and Pratt (2008) call the inherent tension of passion's exploitation and potential for transformation the 'double face of immaterial labor.' McRobbie (2016) argues that passionate work is part of a congealed set of norms in the creative economy that yields experiences of both pleasure and pain—she calls this the pleasure-pain axis. In her research on work passion in digital gaming, Chia (2019) describes the contradictions as promise and precariousness, future potential and present obligations, or public celebration and private contritions (768). In my own research, I argue that adherence to the passion paradigm yields both power and powerlessness, as adherence works to empower the individual at the same time as it works to disempower individuals to fight for collective change.

What I and other scholars citing the mixed dividends and potentials of pursuing and venerating work passion wrestle with is whether the passion paradigm could ever serve collective interests by motivating adherents to fight for better structures of work. As McRobbie (2016) reflects, the problem with work passion is not that individuals want to be passionate about their work, it is the deeply individualized logic of passionate work. The questionⁿ is whether the passion paradigm could ever become a force for broad political action.

There are some scholars who approach this question by studying extraordinary work cultures or contexts in which an organization or industry attempts to do work differently. For example, in his book *No Collar*, Ross (2003) argued that creating a new form of work was precisely what passionate workers in New York's Silicon Alley tried to do, but he found that their efforts were ultimately swallowed up by the "hidden costs of membership in the new economy" (18-19). Though the world they built largely crumbled around them, Ross argued that there is still evidence that no collar work attitudes spread beyond the tech niche and continue to color professional visions of better work. More recently, in 2018 a UK sociologist of cultural studies named Marisol Sandoval published an article in which she too finds that the work ethic of do what you love "limits the prospects of lovable work" because it "transfers the battleground from society onto the self (114,116)." However, she goes on to argue that a potential route towards the politicization of the passion paradigm is to pointedly critique its individualism. Studying cultural co-ops, Sandoval finds that it is possible to transform individual passion into what she calls collective compassion.

Another avenue for future research, therefore, would be to continue down this path pursuing how or in what contexts the ideology of work passion motivates organizational or structural change. Reconstructing the passion paradigm to emphasize collective interests certainly faces an uphill battle since the passion paradigm roots its logics in the deeply valued American notions of individual choice and individual freedom, but it is not impossible. Afterall, ideologies of work are social constructions, and with intentionality individuals can decide what parts of the passion paradigm they want to keep, and what they want to reconstruct, in the service of building structures of work in the new economy that work better for more people.

A CALL TO INSTITUTIONS TO CATCH UP

Now is a ripe time for decision making. Professionals might still have jobs in the old economy, notes historian Louis Hyman (2018), but we all work in the flexible economy. He went on,

The end of the postwar prosperity in the 1970s may have been tragic, but handwringing over today's jobs is a farce. We are all afraid that the coming of Uber means the end of security, but we shouldn't fear that: it is already gone. We already live in that world. We should not mourn the passing of a regime, moreover, that compelled us all to be afraid...

For decades, in ever more insidious ways, employers have found means to make workers disposable. For decades, this flexibility has benefitted the employer, but for the first time, we are in a digital world where the flexibility might finally benefit the worker, who might, in the end, not need an employer after all.

Hyman's (2018) larger point is that the way work is organized is not inevitable and it is not natural, it is the product of invested actors. Now is the time for invested actors to figure out what kind of work we want in the new economy and to fight for it, recognizing that the answers are not always easy. If workers are to succeed in this version of capitalism, they must learn how to demand their fair share via social and political struggle, just like they did in the early 20th century (Davis 2016; Hyman 2018).

But note that the old way of organizing work and distributing social welfare will not work. Too many of us do not live in that world anymore (and for too many others, that model never worked anyways). The postwar model where social welfare and social reform were funneled through corporations is evaporating, and replacements have been too slow to crop up. This is only coming into sharper relief now, during the Covid-19 worldwide health pandemic. Individuals who lose their jobs are almost instantaneously vulnerable along multiple axes of well-being: economically, physically, and psychologically. In the postwar world it may have made sense to tie access to auxiliary institutions of social welfare to sustained membership in a large organization,

but it certainly does not make sense in a precarious economy and culture in which job change is all but inevitable and organizational membership is just one of many options for work.

There are some alternatives. Flexicurity, for example, is a Dutch coined strategy which refers to a system in which employers retain the flexibility they require in a flexible global economy, while employees retain a system of social security including a generous safety net for the unemployed (Kalleberg 2011: 184). Flexicurity has attracted a great deal of attention among EU labor reformers, many of whom who have adapted the concept for application in their own country. Hyman (2018) suggests a universal basic income where all citizens own a share of a holding company whose profits flow from the collective success of American capitalism. Davis (2016) suggests a dystopian future of “ubiquitous Uberization” where professionals perform specific tasks on demand, as needed, and a more utopian future where there is a revival of local economies that support one another (165-176). Barley and Kunda (2006) make several suggestions about how to support the professional itinerant. Among them include establishing portable pension and health care plans, and changing employment law to allow affinity groups, professional associations, or occupational associations to provide group rates and continual insurance coverage.⁴⁷ This allowance would remove the staffing and temporary agencies current legal advantage, which enables them to offer contracted employees (like travel nurses) limited benefits, while taking a significant portion of their earned income.

Whatever the proposed solutions may be for securing workers in a precarious new economy, they will necessarily emerge from the imaginations of their architects. Conceptualizations of work are central to understanding or interpreting how work is organized, how organizations are managed, how law is written, and how society evaluates working conditions

⁴⁷ They also suggest that professional associations and affinity group be allowed to serve as employers-of-record.

(Budd 2011: 183). My ultimate inspiration for this research, and my work in the future, is an interest in contributing to the construction of better and more equitable work. In service of that broad goal, I have presented findings describing how engineers, graphic designers, and nurses aged 30-40, working in both organizations and the market, conceive of work and their relationships to it. The passion paradigm may in many ways reflect an ideal relationship with work, but it may be one that workers are willing to fight for.

APPENDIX A

Interview Guide**[About work]**

1. Briefly state your occupation for me.
2. How did you arrive in this job?
3. Why did you choose the type of work you are in?
 - a. Did you intentionally pursue market or org./have you considered pursuing the opposite?
4. Did you ever go through a period where you were unsure what you wanted to or should do for work?
5. Have you ever quit a job?
6. Have you ever been let go from a job?
7. In general, do you think that most professionals that you know like their work?
8. Most days do you like what you do?
 - a. Do you feel fulfilled by your work?
9. What would improve your current work?
10. What kind of work motivates you to work your hardest?
11. Compared to other wealthy democratic nations, Americans work more days, longer hours, and take the least amount of vacation. Do you wish you worked less?
12. If you could do it all again, do you think you would pursue the same kind of work?
13. If you could, would you want to stay at one company/hospital for the duration of your career?
14. How would you describe your professional goals?
 - a. Do you ever feel anxious about attaining them?

[Work and Meaning]

15. How do you define a “good” job?
 - a. Has your definition of good job changed over the years?
16. What characteristics of your current job do you value most?
17. Think for a second about how you’d describe your parents’ experience of and opinions about work. Would you say that you have the same expectations about work that your parents did at your age? How the same? How different?
18. Would you say that you think the same way about the *purpose of* work as your parents did?
19. Other than your parents, what or who do you think has influenced and shaped the way you think about what you want from work or the purpose of work in your life?
20. How would you define a job versus a career?
21. Answer the following: I think the average college graduate should prioritize work that:
 - a. he/she is good at
 - b. he/she is passionate about
 - c. work that is high paying
22. Do you think individuals *should* be passionate about their work? Why or why not?

23. Imagine you are counseling a recent college graduate about what work to pursue, how would you advise them?
24. How would you describe the expectations about work that you think college graduates have today?
25. Do you think your expectations about work have been met in your workplace?
26. Overall, how much do you think a college-educated individual like yourself should expect to (eventually) like what they do/find work that they like?
27. Some say that we should pursue work that we love. First of all, do you think lovable work exists? For everyone? If one can't find work that one loves, is it an individual problem, or a job problem?
28. Some people would argue that if you don't like your work, and you can, you should quit and pursue something you like. Do you agree with this sentiment?
 - a. For ex. If you had a friend who was unhappy at work, do you think you would be likely to advise them to quit, try harder, or tell them they aren't supposed to like work?
29. Do you think that an individual can grow to love his or her work?
 - a. Should one try?
30. Have you found work that you love?
31. How would you describe the definition of a "calling"?
 - a. Do you believe there is such a thing?
 - b. Do you think it stays the same or can change?

[Work and Morality]

32. What does work do for you? What does it provide you?
33. Do you think work should be about *more* than making a living?
34. If you didn't have to work financially, would you still want to?
35. Do all individuals have an ethical duty to do the best work they can? Why?
36. What kinds of things do you think good employers should provide to their employees?
 - a. What about a "good company culture"...what makes a good company culture?
37. Think for a moment about someone in your workplace who you consider to be a "good worker." What are his/her qualities?
38. How would you describe someone who is a "bad" worker?
39. What do you think one can surmise about a person based on knowing their profession?
40. Do you think your work is connected to your identity/part of who you are?
 - a. Do you *want* your work to be part of your identity?
 - b. If someone asked you "who are you," would you include your occupation in an identity statement?
41. Do you think people should consider society's needs when picking a profession, instead of only their own?
42. What is your definition of the American Dream?
 - a. How does your definition of the American Dream relate to one's work?
43. How important is work to your idea of what it means to be successful?

In this next section I am going to let you read several different quotes. Which quote best describes your beliefs towards work? After each quote I would like you to tell me how you agree or disagree.

44. Quote 1:

“If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michaelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.'” –Martin Luther King Jr.

45. Quote 2:

“You’ve got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle. As with all matters of the heart, you’ll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking. Don’t settle.” – Steve Jobs

46. Quote 3:

“Work to live, don’t live to work” – Unknown

47. Quote 4:

“What we have done for ourselves alone, dies with us; what we have done for others and the world, remains and is immortal.” –Albert Pike

[Work and Religion] *if respondent identified as religious in survey

48. Would you say that your religion teaches about work? If yes, what does it teach?

49. How often do you hear about/talk about work in religious settings?

50. How would you describe the relationship between your religious beliefs and your beliefs about work? / Do you think they have any influence on one another?

a. What is the effect of interpreting your work through your religion, or filtering your work through a religious lens?

51. Does your religion influence your day-to-day work? How? Why?

52. Did God or your religion play any role in your original career choice?

a. If you were going to move jobs now, would God be a part of your decision?

APPENDIX B

Qualtrics Survey

1 What is your profession?

- ☐ Contract/Consultant Engineer (1)
- ☐ Permanent/Staff Engineer (2)
- ☐ Travel/Contract/Per Diem Nurse (3)
- ☐ Permanent/Staff Nurse (4)
- ☐ Contract/Freelance Graphic Designer (5)
- ☐ Permanent/Staff Graphic Designer (6)

2 What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Some college (1)
- ☐ 2 year degree (2)
- ☐ 4 year degree (3)
- ☐ Professional degree (4)
- ☐ Doctorate (5)

If “some college” above is selected:

Q39 Why did you opt not to complete your degree?

- ☐ too expensive (1)
- ☐ couldn't afford it (2)
- ☐ I plan to go back (3)
- ☐ I found a degree unnecessary for my field (4)
- ☐ Other: (5) _____

3 What did you study? (major or speciality)

4 What ethnicity do you identify as?

- ☐ White (1)
- ☐ Black or African American (2)
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- ☐ Asian (4)
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- ☐ Hispanic (7)
- ☐ Other (please enter): (6) _____

Q40 What gender do you identify as?

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)
- ☐ Transgender Female (3)
- ☐ Transgender Male (4)
- ☐ Non-Conforming (5)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer (6)

5 Are you a recent immigrant?

- ☐ Yes, first generation (1)
- ☐ Yes, 1.5 generation (2)
- ☐ Yes, second generation (3)
- ☐ No (4)

6 Were you a first generation college graduate?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

7 What are or were your primary caregivers' occupations?

8 What is your marital status?

- ☐ Married (1)
- ☐ Widowed (2)
- ☐ Divorced (3)
- ☐ Separated (4)
- ☐ Never married (5)

9 How many kids do you have?

- ☐ 0 (1)
- ☐ 1 (2)
- ☐ 2 (3)
- ☐ 3 (4)
- ☐ 4+ (5)

10 Do you consider yourself religious?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Answer if “yes” is selected above

11 What religion do you practice?

Answer if “yes” is selected above

12 How would you describe the importance of your religious beliefs to your life?

- ☐ Extremely important (1)
- ☐ Very important (2)
- ☐ Moderately important (3)
- ☐ Slightly important (4)
- ☐ Not at all important (5)

Answer if “yes” is selected above

13 How often do you attend a religious service/gathering/event?

- ☐ More than once a week (1)
- ☐ Once a week (2)
- ☐ Once a month (3)
- ☐ A few times a year (4)
- ☐ Less than a few times a year (5)

PRECARITY: the following questions will ask you to consider how secure you feel in your job. Please answer carefully and honestly.

14A For CONTRACT employees only: have you ever lost a contract prematurely while working in your current occupation?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
- ☐ Not Applicable (3)

14B For PERMANENT employees: Have you ever lost your job while working in your current occupation?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
- ☐ Not Applicable (3)

15 How likely is it that you will opt to leave your current job?

- ☐ Not likely at all (1)
- ☐ Unlikely (2)
- ☐ Hard to tell (3)
- ☐ Fairly likely (4)
- ☐ Almost certainly (5)

16 How likely is it that the work you are doing will disappear at some point in the relevant future?

- ☐ Not likely at all (1)
- ☐ Unlikely (2)
- ☐ Hard to tell (3)
- ☐ Fairly likely (4)
- ☐ Almost certainly (5)

17 Do you fear that you will lose your job due to changes in the market/economy?

- ☐ I don't know (3)
- ☐ Not at all, my job feels secure (1)
- ☐ Not really (2)
- ☐ Sometimes (4)
- ☐ Yes, it is a possibility (5)

18 If it is possible that you will lose your job due to changes in the market, what do you MOST attribute this to?

- ☐ Replaced by technology (1)
- ☐ Replaced by workers overseas (2)
- ☐ Company restructuring (3)
- ☐ Company downsizing/budget cuts (4)
- ☐ Product or work becomes obsolete (5)
- ☐ Can't keep up with required skills (6)
- ☐ Other: (7) _____
- ☐ N/A (8)

RISK: the following questions will ask you to consider the amount of risk you carry. Please answer carefully and honestly.

19 Are you provided health insurance through your company?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

20 Does your company offer a retirement plan, such as a 401K?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
- ☐ I don't know (3)

Answer if “yes” is selected above

21 Will your company match at least a portion of your contribution to your retirement plan?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
- ☐ I don't know (3)

22 Is your income unpredictable?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

23 Are you represented by a union or some sort of collective representation?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

24 I feel like my company (where I work day-to-day) supports my financial needs.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (4)
- ☐ Strongly disagree (5)

25 I feel loyal to my company (where I work day-to-day).

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (4)
- ☐ Strongly disagree (5)

26 I feel like my company (where I work day-to-day) is loyal to me.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (4)
- ☐ Strongly disagree (5)

FLEXIBILITY: the following questions will ask you to consider how flexible your work is.
Please answer carefully and honestly.

27 If you lost your job, how difficult would it be to replace it?

- ☐ Extremely difficult (1)
- ☐ Somewhat difficult (2)
- ☐ Neither easy nor difficult (3)
- ☐ Not too difficult (4)
- ☐ Not difficult (5)

28 How often do the tasks of your job vary (versus being rigidly defined)?

- ☐ A little (or less) of the time (1)
- ☐ Some of the time (2)
- ☐ About half the time (3)
- ☐ Most of the time (4)
- ☐ All of the time (5)

29 Does your job require you to obtain and maintain particular skills?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

30 How often do you work with a team?

- ☐ Rarely (1)
- ☐ Sometimes (2)
- ☐ About half the time (3)
- ☐ Most of the time (4)
- ☐ Always (5)

31 I work from home:

- ☐ Rarely or Never (1)
- ☐ Sometimes (2)
- ☐ About half the time (3)
- ☐ Most of the time (4)
- ☐ Always (5)

32 How would you describe your job autonomy?

- ☐ My job has fairly rigid means and objectives (1)
- ☐ My job allows only a little bit of freedom in my work (2)
- ☐ My job allows me an equal balance of autonomy and following procedure (3)
- ☐ My job allows me a lot of freedom in my work (4)
- ☐ For the most part, I can choose what I want to work on and what I don't (5)

33 How often are you asked to pitch into different projects?

- ☐ Rarely or Never (1)
- ☐ Sometimes (2)
- ☐ Quite a bit (3)
- ☐ Always (4)

34 How transferable (movable) do you consider your skills?

- ☐ I don't know (5)
- ☐ Not at all (1)
- ☐ A little (2)
- ☐ Fairly (3)
- ☐ Very (4)

APPENDIX C

Comparative Tables

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Table 1: Summary Statistics Comparing Economy Types

	Organization (less precarious)	Market (more precarious)	Everyone
<i>Percent</i>			
Have quit	64	63	63%
Have been let go	18	16	17%
Have lost a job	15	20	18%
Enjoy work, most days	92	97	95%
Feel fulfilled by work	86	90	88%
Could stay for life	69	74	71%
Long-term goals (>5 yr)	68	56	62%
Anxious about goals	67	71	68%
Have a “career”	76	81	78%
Should be passionate	94	90	92%
Everyone can DWYL	78	77	78%
College grads can DWYL	86	89	87%
Believe love can grow	100	97	99%
Could love something else	97	97	97%
Believe in a calling	80	83	82%
Ethical duty to do best work	90	91	91%
Work part of identity	97	91	95%
Want work as part of id.	78	73	76%
Should consider soc. needs	11	15	13%
White	56	74	65%
Female	51	49	50%
Immigrant	24	11	18%
First generation grad	28	23	26%
Married	44	37	41%
Kids	21	31	26%
Religious	46	37	42%
Offered health insurance	95	54	76%
Offered retirement benefits	92	66	79%
→Offered match 401K	100	90	96%
Have unpredictable income	3	51	26%
Represented by union	31	20	26%
Required to maintain skills	95	100	97%
<i>Mode</i>			
Prioritize	Passion (77%)	Passion (77%)	Passion (77%)
Quote	DWYL (41%)	DWYL (49%)	DWYL (45%)

Mean/SD

Importance of rel. beliefs**	4.39 (.78)	4 (1.3)	4.23 (1.02)
Religious attendance**	3.83 (1.1)	3.38 (1.3)	3.65 (1.2)
Likely to opt to leave job	2.85 (1.1)	2.26 (1.1)	2.57 (1.1)
Likely that work will disappear	1.56 (.88)	1.74 (.95)	1.65 (0.91)
Fear job loss	2.08 (1.4)	2 (1.2)	2.04 (1.3)
Unmet financial needs	2.15 (0.93)	1.91 (.97)	2.04 (0.95)
Employee feels Disloyal	1.69 (0.66)	1.85 (1.1)	1.77 (0.87)
Company feels Disloyal	2.28 (1.1)	1.88 (.95)	2.1 (1.02)
Easy to Replace Job	2.68 (0.7)	2.96 (0.58)	2.81 (0.66)
Daily tasks vary	2.77 (1.25)	3.09 (1.12)	2.92 (1.19)
Freq. working on a team	4.03 (0.90)	4 (1.02)	4.01 (0.96)
Freq. working from home	1.26 (.44)	2.14 (1.31)	1.68 (1.05)
Job autonomy	3.1 (0.75)	3.14 (1.12)	3.12 (0.94)
Help on diff. projects	2.41 (0.78)	2.23 (0.84)	2.32 (0.81)
Feels skills are transferable	3.32 (0.71)	3.65 (0.49)	3.48 (0.63)

Total

Persons Interviewed	39	35	74
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Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

**only includes respondents who identify as religious, N = 31.

Table 2: Summary Statistics Comparing Men and Women

	Men	Women	Everyone
<i>Percent</i>			
Have quit	66	61	63%
Have been let go	14	20	17%
Have lost a job	19	16	18%
Enjoy work, most days	97	92	95%
Feel fulfilled by work	85	91	88%
Could stay for life	68	75	71%
Long-term goals (>5 yr)	63	61	62%
Anxious about goals	58	77	68%
Have a “career”	71	84	78%
Should be passionate	94	90	92%
Everyone can DWYL	70	85	78%
College grads can DWYL	86	89	87%
Believe love can grow	100	97	99%
Could love something else	94	100	97%
Believe in a calling	74	88	82%
Ethical duty to do best work	84	97	91%
Work part of identity	97	92	95%
Want work as part of id.	79	73	76%
Should consider soc. needs	13	12	13%
White	57	73	65%
Immigrant	22	14	18%
First generation grad	22	30	26%
Married	41	41	41%
Kids	24	27	26%
Religious	35	49	42%
Offered health insurance	81	70	76%
Offered retirement benefits	84	75	79%
→Offered match 401K	97	96	96%
Have unpredictable income	24	27	26%
Represented by union	22	30	26%
Required to maintain skills	95	100	97%
<i>Mode</i>			
Prioritize	Passion (68%)*	Passion (87%)	Passion (77%)
Quote	DWYL (51%)	DWYL (38%)	DWYL (44.6%)
<i>Mean/SD</i>			
Importance of rel. beliefs**	4	4.39	4.23

	(1.2)	(.92)	(1.02)
Religious attendance**	3.38	3.83	3.65
	(1.3)	(1.1)	(1.2)
Likely to opt to leave job	2.62	2.51	2.57
	(1.1)	(1.2)	(1.1)
Likely that work will disappear	1.76	1.54	1.65
	(1.0)	(.80)	(0.91)
Fear job loss	2.03	2.05	2.04
	(1.4)	(1.18)	(1.3)
Unmet financial needs	1.81	2.28	2.04
	(0.7)	(1.1)	(0.95)
Employee feels Disloyal	1.68	1.86	1.77
	(0.75)	(0.99)	(0.87)
Company feels Disloyal	1.81	2.39	2.1
	(.81)	(1.13)	(1.02)
Easy to Replace Job	2.9	2.71	2.81
	(0.6)	(0.71)	(0.66)
Daily tasks vary	3	2.84	2.92
	(1.25)	(1.14)	(1.19)
Freq. working on a team	4.08	3.95	4.01
	(0.92)	(1.00)	(0.96)
Freq. working from home	1.59	1.76	1.68
	(1.06)	(1.06)	(1.05)
Job autonomy	3.11	3.14	3.12
	(0.94)	(0.95)	(0.94)
Help on diff. projects	2.35	2.3	2.32
	(0.86)	(0.77)	(0.81)
Feels skills are transferable	3.49	3.47	3.48
	(0.66)	(0.61)	(0.63)

Total

Persons Interviewed	37	37	74
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Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

*Talent was next highest choice for men (19%), compared to 8% of women.

**only includes respondents who identify as religious, N = 31.

Table 3: Summary Statistics Comparing Occupations

Professions	Engineers	Graphic Designers	Nurses	Everyone
<i>Percent</i>				
Have quit	37	87	67	63%
Have been let go	4	32	17	17%
Have lost a job	4	46	4	18%
Enjoy work, most days	92	100	92	95%
Feel fulfilled by work	86	85	92	88%
Could stay for life	87	55	71	71%
Long-term goals (>5 yr)	86	50	52	62%
Anxious about goals	73	83	50	68%
Have a “career”	68	87	79	78%
Should be passionate	100	80	95	92%
Everyone can DWYL	79	83	71	78%
College grads can DWYL	95	83	85	87%
Believe love can grow	100	95	100	99%
Could love something else	96	100	96	97%
Believe in a calling	77	84	83	82%
Ethical duty to do best work	96	87	88	91%
Work part of identity	87	100	96	95%
Want work as part of id.	63	79	87	76%
Should consider soc. needs	4	19	15	13%
White	46	83	65	65%
Female	46	50	54	50%
Immigrant	30	13	12	18%
First generation grad	21	21	35	26%
Married	38	50	35	41%
Kids	33	25	19	26%
Religious	42	29	54	42%
Offered health insurance	100	46	81	76%
Offered retirement benefits	100	43	92	79%
→Offered match 401K	100	90	95	96%
Have unpredictable income	0	46	31	26%
Represented by union	8	0	65	26%
Required to maintain skills	92	100	100	97%
<i>Mode</i>				
Prioritize	Passion (75%)	Passion (71%)	Passion (85%)	Passion (77%)

Quote	DWYL (54%)	DWYL (50%)	DWYL/CALLING (31%)/(31%)	DWYL/CALLING (45%) / (22%)
<i>Mean/SD</i>				
Importance of rel. beliefs*	4.5 (.71)	4.29 (1.1)	4 (1.2)	4.23 (1.02)
Religious attendance*	4.2 (1.0)	3.57 (1.3)	3.29 (1.2)	3.65 (1.2)
Likely to opt to leave job	2.38 (1.1)	2.38 (1.1)	2.92 (1.2)	2.57 (1.1)
Likely that work will disappear	1.83 (1.0)	1.96 (1.0)	1.19 (0.6)	1.65 (0.91)
Fear job loss	2.13 (1.2)	2.71 (1.5)	1.35 (.75)	2.04 (1.3)
Unmet financial needs	1.87 (0.8)	2.13 (1.0)	2.12 (1.0)	2.04 (0.95)
Employee feels Disloyal	1.67 (.92)	1.52 (0.73)	2.08 (0.9)	1.77 (0.87)
Company feels Disloyal	1.96 (.95)	1.87 (.87)	2.42 (1.14)	2.1 (1.02)
Easy to Replace Job	2.67 (0.67)	2.55 (0.51)	(3.19) (.60)	2.81 (0.66)
Daily tasks vary	3.00 (1.14)	2.92 (1.02)	2.85 (1.41)	2.92 (1.19)
Freq. working on a team	4.04 (.75)	3.58 (1.1)	4.38 (0.85)	4.01 (0.96)
Freq. working from home	1.5 (.51)	2.54 (1.38)	1.04 (.2)	1.68 (1.05)
Job autonomy	3.08 (.78)	3.71 (0.91)	2.62 (.80)	3.12 (0.94)
Help on diff. projects	2.5 (0.83)	2.67 (0.70)	1.85 (0.68)	2.32 (0.81)
Feels skills are transferable	3.39 (0.66)	3.61 (0.58)	3.44 (0.65)	3.48 (0.63)
Persons Interviewed		24	24	26 <i>Total: 74</i>

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

Table 4: Summary Statistics Comparing First Generation Grads to Non-First Gen

	Yes, First Gen	No	Everyone
<i>Percent</i>			
Have quit	68	62	63%
Have been let go	11	19	17%
Have lost a job	21	16	18%
Enjoy work, most days	100	93	95%
Feel fulfilled by work	94	85	88%
Could stay for life	79	69	71%
Long-term goals (>5 yr)	63	61	62%
Anxious about goals	75	66	68%
Have a “career”	87	74	78%
Should be passionate	94	91	92%
Everyone can DWYL	78	78	78%
College grads can DWYL	84	89	87%
Believe love can grow	100	98	99%
Could love something else	100	96	97%
Believe in a calling	78	83	82%
Ethical duty to do best work	84	93	91%
Work part of identity	89	96	95%
Want work as part of id.	72	78	76%
Should consider soc. needs	0	16	13%
White	74	62	65%
Immigrant	21	17	18%
Married	37	42	41%
Kids	32	24	26%
Religious	32	45	42%
Offered health insurance	84	73	76%
Offered retirement benefits	84	73	79%
→Offered match 401K	93	97	96%
Have unpredictable income	11	31	26%
Represented by union	37	22	26%
Required to maintain skills	100	96	97%
More Precarious	42	49	47%
<i>Mode</i>			
Prioritize*	Passion (74%)	Passion (78%)	Passion (77%)
Quote**	DWYL (47%)	DWYL (44%)	DWYL (44.6%)

Mean/SD

Importance of rel. beliefs***	4.17 (0.75)	4.24 (1.09)	4.23 (1.02)
Religious attendance***	3 (1.27)	3.8 (1.16)	3.65 (1.2)
Likely to opt to leave job	2.47 (1.02)	2.6 (1.18)	2.57 (1.1)
Likely that work will disappear	1.32 (0.67)	1.76 (0.96)	1.65 (0.91)
Fear job loss	1.95 (1.35)	2.07 (1.27)	2.04 (1.3)
Unmet financial needs	2.16 (0.96)	2 (0.95)	2.04 (0.95)
Employee feels Disloyal	1.63 (0.60)	1.81 (0.95)	1.77 (0.87)
Company feels Disloyal	1.74 (0.81)	2.22 (1.06)	2.1 (1.02)
Easy to Replace Job	2.87 (0.83)	2.8 (0.59)	2.81 (0.66)
Daily tasks vary	2.74 (1.05)	2.98 (1.24)	2.92 (1.19)
Freq. working on a team	4.42 (0.69)	3.87 (1.00)	4.01 (0.96)
Freq. working from home	1.53 (0.77)	1.73 (1.13)	1.68 (1.05)
Job autonomy	3.11 (0.74)	3.13 (1.00)	3.12 (0.94)
Help on diff. projects	2.42 (0.77)	2.29 (0.83)	2.32 (0.81)
Feels skills are transferable	3.47 (0.70)	3.48 (0.61)	3.48 (0.63)

Total

Persons Interviewed	19	55	74
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Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

*next highest: 16% First Gen chose “talent,” 13% Non-First Gen chose “talent.”

**First Gen: passion, calling, purpose, balance; Non-First Gen rank: passion, balance, calling, purpose

***only includes respondents who identify as religious, N = 31.

Table 5: Summary Statistics Comparing 1st / 2nd Gen Immigrants to Non-Immigrants

	Immigrant	Non-Immigrant	Everyone
<i>Percent</i>			
Have quit	69	63	64%
Have been let go	8	20	17%
Have lost a job	23	17	18%
Enjoy work, most days	100	93	95%
Feel fulfilled by work	92	87	88%
Could stay for life	92	66	71%
Long-term goals (>5 yr)	69	60	62%
Anxious about goals	91	60	68%
Have a “career”	88	76	78%
Should be passionate	82	94	92%
Everyone can DWYL	62	81	78%
College grads can DWYL	77	90	87%
Believe love can grow	100	98	98%
Could love something else	100	96	97%
Believe in a calling	75	82	81%
Ethical duty to do best work	69	95	90%
Work part of identity	100	93	94%
Want work as part of id.	92	72	76%
Should consider soc. needs	0	16	13%
White	15	77	66%
Female	38	52	49%
Immigrant	100	0	18%
Married	38	42	41%
Kids	8	30	26%
Religious	31	43	41%
Offered health insurance	100	70	75%
Offered retirement benefits	100	75	79%
→Offered match 401K	100	95	96%
Have unpredictable income	8	30	26%
Represented by union	31	25	26%
Required to maintain skills	100	97	97%
More Precarious	31	52	48%
<i>Mode</i>			
Prioritize*	Passion (69%)	Passion (78%)	Passion (77%)
Quote**	DWYL (54%)	DWYL (43%)	DWYL (45%)

Mean/SD

Importance of rel. beliefs***	4.5 (0.58)	4.15 (1.08)	4.23 (1.03)
Religious attendance***	4.5 (.58)	3.46 (1.21)	3.65 (1.2)
Likely to opt to leave job	2.08 (0.76)	2.68 (1.19)	2.58 (1.1)
Likely that work will disappear	1.46 (0.78)	1.68 (0.95)	1.64 (0.92)
Fear job loss	2.15 (1.35)	2.02 (1.30)	2.04 (1.3)
Unmet financial needs	1.85 (0.80)	2.08 (0.99)	2.04 (0.96)
Employee feels Disloyal	1.77 (1.09)	1.76 (0.84)	1.76 (0.88)
Company feels Disloyal	1.85 (0.90)	2.15 (1.05)	2.1 (1.02)
Easy to Replace Job	2.88 (0.64)	2.8 (0.67)	2.81 (0.66)
Daily tasks vary	2.62 (1.19)	3 (1.19)	2.93 (1.19)
Freq. working on a team	3.92 (0.86)	4.03 (1.00)	4.01 (0.96)
Freq. working from home	1.38 (0.51)	1.75 (1.13)	1.68 (1.05)
Job autonomy	2.92 (0.76)	3.15 (0.97)	3.11 (0.94)
Help on diff. projects	2.38 (0.87)	2.32 (0.81)	2.33 (0.82)
Feels skills are transferable	3.31 (0.86)	3.52 (0.57)	3.48 (0.63)

Total

Persons Interviewed	19	55	74
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Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

*next highest: 31% Immigrants chose "talent," 10% non-Immigrants chose "talent."

**Immigrant rank: passion, balance, calling/purpose; Non-Immigrant: passion, calling, balance, purpose

***only includes respondents who identify as religious, N = 30.

Table 6: Summary Statistics Comparing White to Non-White

	White	Non-White	Everyone
<i>Percent</i>			
Have quit	61	68	63%
Have been let go	24	4	17%
Have lost a job	19	15	18%
Enjoy work, most days	98	88	95%
Feel fulfilled by work	90	83	88%
Could stay for life	59	92	71%
Long-term goals (>5 yr)	55	75	62%
Anxious about goals	58	87	68%
Have a “career”	79	75	78%
Should be passionate	95	88	92%
Everyone can DWYL	86	61	78%
College grads can DWYL	89	84	87%
Believe love can grow	98	100	99%
Could love something else	98	96	97%
Believe in a calling	80	86	82%
Ethical duty to do best work	94	85	91%
Work part of identity	94	96	95%
Want work as part of id.	74	80	76%
Should consider soc. needs	20	0	13%
White	100	0	65%
Female	56	38	50%
Immigrant	4	44	18%
Married	46	31	41%
Kids	31	15	26%
Religious	44	38	42%
Offered health insurance	67	92	76%
Offered retirement benefits	71	96	79%
→Offered match 401K	94	100	96%
Have unpredictable income	31	15	26%
Represented by union	27	23	26%
Required to maintain skills	98	96	97%
More Precarious	54	35	47%
<i>Mode</i>			
Prioritize*	Passion (81%)	Passion (69%)	Passion (77%)
Quote**	DWYL (44%)	DWYL (46%)	DWYL (45%)

Mean/SD

Importance of rel. beliefs***	4.29 (0.96)	4.1 (1.20)	4.23 (1.02)
Religious attendance***	3.67 (1.11)	3.6 (1.43)	3.65 (1.2)
Likely to opt to leave job	2.56 (1.17)	2.58 (1.10)	2.57 (1.14)
Likely that work will disappear	1.6 (0.82)	1.73 (1.08)	1.65 (0.91)
Fear job loss	2.1 (1.31)	1.92 (1.26)	2.04 (1.3)
Unmet financial needs	2.06 (1.01)	2 (0.85)	2.04 (0.95)
Employee feels Disloyal	1.77 (0.87)	1.77 (0.91)	1.77 (0.8)
Company feels Disloyal	2.04 (1.04)	2.19 (0.98)	2.1 (1.02)
Easy to Replace Job	2.83 (0.64)	2.79 (0.71)	2.81 (0.66)
Daily tasks vary	2.96 (1.13)	2.85 (1.32)	2.92 (1.19)
Freq. working on a team	4.06 (0.95)	3.92 (0.98)	4.01 (0.96)
Freq. working from home	1.81 (1.12)	1.42 (0.86)	1.68 (1.05)
Job autonomy	3.19 (0.84)	3 (1.10)	3.12 (0.94)
Help on diff. projects	2.33 (0.69)	2.31 (1.01)	2.32 (0.81)
Feels skills are transferable	3.51 (0.55)	3.42 (0.78)	3.48 (0.63)

Total

Persons Interviewed	48	26	74
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Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

*next highest: 8.3% Whites chose talent/purpose (tie); 23.1% non-white chose talent.

**White rank: passion, calling, balance, purpose; Non-White: passion, balance, purpose, calling.

***only includes respondents who identify as religious, N = 31.

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