

A Place to Stay: Cultural Entrepreneurship in the U.S. Hotel Industry, 1790-2015

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**A PLACE TO STAY:
CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE U.S. HOTEL INDUSTRY, 1790-2015**

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August 22, 2016

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management and Organization

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank those that provided me with invaluable guidance, encouragement, and support in writing this dissertation and throughout the entire doctoral process. To start, I express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Mary Ann Glynn, whose patience and “tough love” have been instrumental in my growth from a naïve but eager young doctoral student to a confident Ph.D. To say that Mary Ann changed my life for the better would be a considerable understatement; working with her has been an immense privilege from a professional and a personal perspective, and one that I will carry with me throughout my career. I also wish to thank Simona Giorgi and Paul Hirsch, my committee members. Simona’s willingness to take me under her wing, even as a junior faculty member, was central to my success as a doctoral student; I have been very lucky to call her a wonderful colleague but also a friend. It was humbling and heartening to have Paul on my committee and to receive his thoughtful and thorough feedback on my drafts. This dissertation would not have been possible without the foundation that Mary Ann’s and Paul’s work laid and the advice and encouragement that my committee provided.

I also wish to thank the Boston College community, and particularly the Management and Organization department, as well as the broader community of scholars from whom my research has benefitted substantially. In addition, I must express my gratitude to all those members of the hotel industry that took an interest in my work and aided in its development, especially members of the faculty and alumni of the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration. I am lucky to have had the chance to work beside and to learn from them.

On a personal note, I express my deepest gratitude to my family, Karen, Bob, Julie and Bobby Lockwood. Their willingness to entertain my ideas, talk through my difficulties, and offer unlimited encouragement and love was vital in pushing me forward. Without them, and particularly my mother, I may not have had the courage or tenacity to pursue and ultimately

accomplish this endeavor. Similarly, the support I received from the Domanico family and from my friends near and far is something for which I will always be grateful. Finally, I wish to thank Peter, my husband, for his listening ear, endless encouragement, honest opinions, and relentless positivity on my behalf. I am deeply humbled by the trust and confidence Peter placed in me as I chased this dream and the support he provided to enable me to realize it.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the organizational appropriation and deployment of cultural resources and, in particular, cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), i.e., “high status cultural signals used in cultural and social selection” (Lamont & Lareau, 1988: 164), in manners that account for broader social status dynamics and institutional pressures. I conduct three interrelated empirical studies, all situated in the context of the U.S. hotel industry, and particularly, the luxury market segment. Building from archival, interview, and observational data collected from multiple sources, the first study focuses on the industry level, examining sweeping changes in hotels over time (from 1790–2015) and linking them with shifts in broader socio-cultural sentiments; the second study examines how the luxury segment of the industry sought to maintain its high status by appealing to elite guests in the face of such changes; and the third study highlights the organizational level, examining how luxury hotels managed cultural resources to transform the meaning of luxury for guests and signal status in an age of egalitarianism. Taken together, the three studies offer insights on the cultural embeddedness of industries and especially, how macro-level processes (at the industry level) yield dominant cultural codes and, in turn, how micro-level processes (at the organizational level) deploy and contribute to legitimating those codes. My studies strengthen the theoretical connection between research on culture, status and market adaptation by integrating and extending applicable ideas from cultural sociology (DiMaggio, 1987; Hirsch, 1972; Swidler, 1986, 2001) and by illuminating these with empirical evidence to explain when, why, and how processes of cultural entrepreneurship are undertaken to enable change and adaptation to the market and to society.

Keywords: cultural entrepreneurship, culture, status, elites, organizational adaptability

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Culture, the set of symbolic resources by which shared modes of behavior and outlook develop (Swidler, 2001; Tavory & Swidler, 2009), is widely considered important to organizational and market processes (Giorgi et al., 2015; Weber & Dacin, 2011). Although management scholars have long emphasized culture's role within companies (Glynn, Giorgi, & Lockwood, 2012) and industries (e.g., Hirsch, 1972; Scott, 2014), market actors are also implicated in – and harness – processes aimed toward constructing cultural meanings for valued audiences or publics. This general process, termed “cultural entrepreneurship” (DiMaggio, 1982; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001), spans levels of analysis and has wide-ranging market and social implications, including organizational wealth creation (Martens et al., 2007), collective identity legitimization (Wry, Lounsbury, & Glynn, 2011), and the production of cultural and social systems of classification and stratification (DiMaggio, 1982).

DiMaggio's (1982) foundational work offers an apt illustration of cultural entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston. More specifically, in a setting where “fine art was interspersed among such curiosities as bearded women and mutant animals” (DiMaggio, 1982: 34), cultural entrepreneurship focused on constructing meaning around high culture, as actors “groped their way to a workable distinction” (DiMaggio, 1982: 33) from popular (or “low”) culture. In other words, cultural entrepreneurship was concerned with the creation of cultural capital, i.e., “widely shared, legitimate culture made up of high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, behaviors, and goods) used in direct or indirect social and cultural exclusion” (Lamont & Lareau, 1988: 164). Central to this process was the creation of distinctly high-cultural organizations – and their lower-status counterparts – that embodied these more public cultural ideals. Elite organizations, beginning with the Museum of Fine Arts and the

Boston Symphony Orchestra, centralized intended “high culture” pursuits and goods in manners that segregated them from popular forms, such that Shakespeare and circus clowns no longer intermingled as they once had (DiMaggio, 1982). This process not only distinguished “high culture” and popular culture, but also gave meaning to the nascent organizations and social groups that claimed such cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). This and subsequent research (Glynn, Bhattacharya, & Rao, 1996) showed how such cultural organizations could impart the “knowledge and familiarity with styles and genres that are socially valued and that confer prestige upon those who have mastered them” (DiMaggio, 1982: 35). As such, they played a central role in drawing and upholding cultural distinctions between social groups, since “high culture” signaled membership in an elite “high class” (Glynn et al., 1996)

Over time, the social distinctions that DiMaggio (1982) examined, especially those related to class, have eroded as socio-cultural values have come to emphasize democracy and egalitarianism (Khan, 2011; Lamont, 2000; Zald & Lounsbury, 2010). Mirroring this shift, the tastes and habits considered characteristic of “high culture” and used by social elites have grown more heterogeneous and disperse; social elites are now widely viewed as cultural “omnivores” (e.g., Erickson, 1996; Peterson & Kern, 1996), rather than consumers of high culture alone. As a result, “very notion of ‘elite’ seems to be in flux” (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010: 970) in society. And still, the effects of the efforts of the early cultural entrepreneurs DiMaggio (1982) studied have endured. The elite organizations formed in nineteenth-century Boston have been “redefined with time” (DiMaggio, 1982: 39) to adjust to changing tastes such that early cultural distinctions were updated and changed, and related organizations endure even to this day.

It is clear that the efforts of cultural entrepreneurs to monopolize cultural capital and appeal to social elites have enduring effects, as DiMaggio’s (1982) work illustrates. What is less

clear, however, is how organizational systems that give flesh to cultural distinctions may be updated and redefined to continue to resonate with elite tastes and maintain symbolic boundaries that legitimate exclusivity. This durability and adaptation is especially puzzling given DiMaggio's subsequent observation that "to fulfill their ritual [cultural] functions, status cultures must be relatively consistent and slow to change" (DiMaggio, 1991a: 127). Further, it seems at odds with the observation that traditional, class-based distinctions have eroded (e.g., Zald & Lounsbury, 2010), giving way to an ethic of egalitarianism that devalues the very entitlement and elitism (Lamont, 2000; Sayer, 2005a, 2005b) that were core to such efforts.

Especially with growing attention from management scholars to issues of both culture (see, for instance, Giorgi et al., 2015; Weber & Dacin, 2011) and status (see, for instance, Chen, Peterson, Phillips, Podolny, & Ridgeway, 2012; George, Dahlander, Graffin, & Sim, 2016 for overviews of recent special issues on status), and recognition of the importance of both to commercial success, this puzzle calls for attention not just from sociologists, but from organizational researchers, as well. As the research on cultural entrepreneurship has developed in the management literature, however, scholars have largely focused on organizational founding and profitability (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2013). In adopting this focus, research on cultural entrepreneurship has become decidedly "un-cultural" in some respects; the embeddedness of cultural entrepreneurship in broader socio-cultural dynamics, as well as the utility of such processes for *transforming* existing meanings, has been all but lost in the management research. Moreover, management research on cultural entrepreneurship has almost entirely overlooked how organizations may use and maintain cultural distinctiveness in efforts to resonate with desired audiences, leaving issues of status largely unaccounted for. As a result, scholars lack a well-developed understanding of how cultural entrepreneurship relates to

broader societal and industry-level processes, and, in particular, whether or how already existing organizations can strategically use culture to transform meanings and update status distinctions as time wears on.

In this dissertation, I extend research in these directions. I ask: *When, how, and why do market actors use cultural resources to adapt to changing cultural tastes and values, especially those related to elite social status?* I explore the long-term link between socio-cultural changes, industry evolution, and organizations' use of cultural resources and, especially, cultural distinctiveness. I establish the utility of cultural entrepreneurship for organizational incumbents, i.e., "already existing firms" (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001: 561), particularly with regard to managing status and appealing to social elites, and I show how cultural resources are deployed to change the meanings but maintain the status ascribed to market segments and organizations.

Empirically, my approach spans multiple historical periods and levels of analysis, allowing me to synthesize foundational sociological perspectives that underline the societal embeddedness of such cultural processes (DiMaggio, 1982, 1987; Swidler, 1986) with more recent work that emphasizes specific market actors' agentic roles therein (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007; Wry et al., 2011). I situate my dissertation in the context of the U.S. hotel industry, developing an empirical understanding of the cultural processes that, I find, contributed to the evolution of what some have called "the most distinctively American of all our institutions" (Williamson, 1930: 5).

Established over two centuries ago as a "new way of organizing people" that "supplied new spaces for social display and stabilized status hierarchies" among social groups (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007: 43), the hotel industry is deeply embedded in broader cultural and social dynamics (King, 1957; Sandoval-Strausz, 2007; Vermillion & Cimini, 2009; Williamson, 1930). As one

expert quipped, “you’ll have trouble convincing me that anything [new] comes from within the industry” (E3.03.14). He noted that customer tastes and expectations tended to hold existing meanings and practices in place even as organizations tirelessly looked for new ways to distinguish themselves from competitors. And, at the same time, major changes that did occur tended to originate with customers as well, as their changes in their tastes and lifestyles rendered irrelevant existing cultural approaches taken by market actors. Still, industries are not simply passive reflections of consumer tastes (DiMaggio, 1987). As commercial actors, hoteliers and other market actors are also actively engaged in shaping their industry to maximize its expansion and efficiency (Expert interviews, see also DiMaggio, 1987) and to attain legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Such social and market dynamics have been portrayed as alternately complementary (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001) and contradictory (DiMaggio, 1987) in culturally-mediated processes. Situated as such, the hotel industry is well-suited for unpacking cultural entrepreneurship as a process that unfolds across levels of analysis and at the intersection of multiple systems of classification and meaning. I make progress in this direction with empirical research situated in the U.S. hotel industry.

Overview of Empirical Studies and Focused Research Questions

This dissertation is comprised of three interrelated studies conducted in the U.S. hotel industry. In each, I draw from extensive archival, interview and observational data situated at a distinct level of analysis: the industry, the market segment, or the organization. Together, they offer a comprehensive view of cultural distinction and industry “redefinition” to adapt to changing social status dynamics, including the macro-level factors contributing to change and the micro-level processes and mechanism by which these changes take root.

The first study in this dissertation focuses on shifting socio-cultural dynamics, particularly with relation to cultural tastes and social status, and their link with long-term industry evolution and cultural “redefinition” (DiMaggio, 1982). I ask: *What endogenous and exogenous factors (i.e., institutional, cultural, socioeconomic), if any, influence cultural ‘redefinition’ in an existing industry?* This inductive study seeks to establish that, as DiMaggio (1982) suggested, organizational systems constructed to appeal to and express elite status and tastes can be redefined with time, in terms of cultural meanings and practices, to uphold status distinctions that legitimate ongoing exclusivity. Empirically, I focus at the industry level and examine the U.S. hotel industry’s history from its emergence in the 1790s until 2015. I develop an historical narrative of the U.S. hotel industry that reveals its emergence through cultural entrepreneurship (e.g., DiMaggio, 1982) and examines the ongoing influence of elite status and cultural capital on the industry, and especially its high-status luxury segment.

This historical analysis underlines key inflection points that demarcate three relatively discrete periods or eras that punctuated the industry’s evolution, suggestive of a model of institutional “periodicity” (Glynn & Abzug, 2002). My analyses reveal correspondence between socio-cultural shifts, particularly those related to elite social status, and industry changes to adapt and redefine status distinctions – and the cultural meanings and practices that upheld them – in the industry. My findings suggest that processes of cultural entrepreneurship occur not just at industry or organizational emergence, as management research has tended to emphasize, but also over the long term, contributing to periodic change that ensures continued cultural support. My findings in Chapter IV thereby offer new insights on how societal and industry cultures are related, and they hint at cultural entrepreneurship as a mechanism for influencing long-term industry periodicity and legitimacy. Chapter IV also lays the groundwork for the two subsequent

empirical chapters that more fully investigate the cultural mechanisms underpinning meaning transformation and status maintenance among members of the luxury segment of the industry.

In study two, I shift from examining the industry's evolution to focus on how members of the industry's high-status luxury segment convey meaningful cultural distinctions even as the notion of 'elite' has changed in society (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010). I ask: *How does a high-status market segment maintain its status as socio-cultural distinctions erode?* In this study, I take a mechanisms-based approach (Davis & Marquis, 2005; Hedström & Swedberg, 1998; Weber, 2006), using both qualitative and quantitative analyses to explain more fully how market actors collectively adapt to shifting cultural tastes and values, particularly those related to elite social status. Focusing on the period from 1985-2015, I present evidence to show that although, in many cases, the market declassifies culture, eroding taste-based distinctions in the interest of expansion and profitability (DiMaggio, 1982, 1987; Weber, 1978), "cultural reclassification" led by market actors, which sharpens and updates taste-based distinctions in the interest of exclusivity and high status, is observable. I conceptualize such efforts as a form of minimally coordinated cultural entrepreneurship (Wry et al., 2011) intended to convey and enact elite status – in this case, around "luxury" – within and through markets (DiMaggio, 1982).

I identify three mechanisms by which this is accomplished by collective market actors: *sacralization* of luxury products by development and monopolization of cultural expertise; *emotional recasting* of elite tastes and preferences with affective and normative framing; and *preservation* of longstanding credentials to signal high quality. My findings reveal that, in the face of commercial pressures that had "de-classified" the cultural distinctiveness of luxury, cultural entrepreneurship underpinned efforts at "reclassifying" culture to convey both economic and social value or elite status. They suggest that overlapping systems of classification – in this

case, related to industry and societal cultures (e.g., Bourdieu, 1977; Weber, 1978) – may actually be productive for market actors, providing the raw material for transforming meanings and maintaining status distinctions in the face of broader socio-cultural change.

Finally, I situate study three at the organizational level of analysis, building from studies one and two. Recognizing that cultural distinction is expressed through organizations (Glynn et al., 1996), and manifest in language but also knowledge, behaviors, goods and preferences of elites (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Lamont & Lareau, 1988), I examine how various cultural resources are used “on the ground” to update luxury and convey elite status to audiences. I ask: *How, if at all, do incumbent organizations operating in a high-status market segment engage in cultural entrepreneurship in order to remain culturally distinctive as elite tastes and status change?* I use a multiple case study of six hotels in the luxury segment to reveal how the hotels adapted as class-based social distinctions eroded and elite tastes became more disperse and omnivorous.

Surprisingly, rather than conveying a singularly cohesive or uniformly robust set of meanings, especially related to “high” culture, to remain culturally distinctive, the hotels created cultural variety, drawing from a range of cultural repertoires. They used resources from them as an interpretive touchstone composed of rhetorical language and physical materiality, which I metaphorically term “cultural scaffolding,” educating guests and prompting them to put their own expertise on display. Using this cultural scaffolding, the hotels not only relayed the meanings they sought to claim, but also allowed their guests to use these as a baseline to determine and convey what luxury and elite status meant, in the context of their hotel experience. In doing so, the hotels served as a site for not for displaying high-cultural tastes, but rather for the exercise of expertise and expression of lifestyle, in line with contemporary ideas about elite status (Khan, 2011; e.g., Zald & Lounsbury, 2010). My findings show that although the content

of cultural capital has changed since the time of DiMaggio's cultural entrepreneurs, cultural entrepreneurship remains successful when it focuses not on concretizing or centralizing elite cultural tastes, but rather on enabling their expression by consumers. They more broadly underline the utility of cultural entrepreneurship for incumbent organizations and suggest that, in transforming the meanings associated with them to appeal to and express elite tastes, organizations may counter-intuitively be most successful when they hold culture lightly.

Overview of Contributions

Together, the empirical insights I generate in this dissertation elaborate scholarly understanding of how culture and status work at multiple levels of analysis and make inroads toward revealing how they correspond with and inform one another. I elaborate the concept of cultural entrepreneurship (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001) by suggesting its importance as an ongoing process centrally concerned with cultural tastes and social status, as well as profitability. I develop new insights that speak to how social and organizational systems are linked via culture and status, not just at emergence (DiMaggio, 1982; Johnson, 2007), but also over the long term. I add nuance to existing work that views commercial and cultural processes as at odds, revealing how market actors collectively engage in cultural "reclassification" efforts that maintain their industry and social standing, and I further show how this unfolds at the micro-level, in organizations. Finally, I contribute to the growing body of work on cultural toolkits at the organizational level, offering evidence to suggest that *how*, rather than *which*, cultural repertoires are used may be of central importance for organizational incumbents aiming to transform the meanings ascribed to them to adapt to social and market changes. Taken together, my dissertation extends understanding of "the role of symbolic or cultural resources in explaining social change within institutional settings" (Hirsch, 1986) by examining when, why, and how

processes of cultural entrepreneurship are undertaken to enable change and adaptation to the market and to society.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation proceeds as follows. In Chapter II, I introduce theory that grounds the dissertation and informs the three empirical studies that comprise it. Then, in Chapter III, I turn to the research methods for this dissertation; I provide a brief overview of the industry's history, describe the empirical setting at each level of analysis I examine, and detail the data sources and methods for analysis. In Chapters IV, V, and VI, I report on each of the three empirical studies comprising this dissertation, including focused research questions and framing, a summary of data and methods, and detailed findings and contributions. In Chapter VII, I link the studies and discuss the dissertation's broader contributions to management scholarship and practice.

CHAPTER II. THEORETICAL GROUNDING

I focus on understanding how market actors adapt to shifting cultural tastes and values, especially those related to elite social status. My theorization examines the conditions, mechanisms, and complementary processes that market actors use to respond and adapt to, socio-cultural shifts and status dynamics in society. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the literature related to cultural entrepreneurship, as conceptualized by organizational sociologists (DiMaggio, 1982) as well as management scholars (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001), and highlight complementary insights developed in the broader bodies of research on cultural toolkits and status that inform my perspective on cultural “redefinition” and status maintenance by organizations. This chapter takes a somewhat broad-brush approach, laying the theoretical groundwork for the dissertation as a whole; in each empirical study, I provide a more specific review of the literature on industry evolution, market classification and status, and organizational cultural toolkits, respectively, as they relate to social status and cultural change.

Culture and Cultural Entrepreneurship

Management scholars have long taken an interest in culture (for reviews, see Giorgi et al., 2015; Glynn et al., 2012; Weber & Dacin, 2011), i.e., the set of symbolic resources that underpin social processes and by which shared modes of behavior and outlook develop (Swidler, 2001a; Tavory & Swidler, 2009). Shifting away from a view of culture as a stable and largely cognitive constraint (Geertz, 1973; Parsons, 1951; see, for instance, Pettigrew, 1979; Schein, 1985) researchers now view culture as a flexible “toolkit” or repertoire (Swidler, 1986, 2001a; Weber, 2005) and emphasize the use of cultural resources. Cultural resources are “bits and pieces of culture” (Weber & Dacin, 2011), including “symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views” (Swidler, 1986: 273) that can be used in various combinations to construct meaning and address the

challenges of everyday living (e.g., Giorgi & Weber, 2014; Lockwood & Glynn, 2016a; McPherson & Sauder, 2013). The toolkit perspective on culture has enriched scholarly research by explaining not only *what* culture is, but also *how* it works in practice (Swidler, 2001a). For instance, Tavory and Swidler (2009) revealed that even in private interactions, the knowledge of how one's actions might be interpreted by others played a central role in how culture was brought to bear in practice, and Weber and co-authors (Weber, Heinze, & DeSoucey, 2008) showed how market actors could mobilize existing cultural codes to create new markets. In this sense, the toolkit perspective on culture centrally emphasizes the public and agentic nature of cultural processes (e.g., Alexander, 2004; Hirsch, 1986; Rao & Giorgi, 2006; Swidler, 2001a; Westphal & Zajac, 1998).

In recent years, management scholars have focused more squarely on these public aspects of cultural processes, especially with work that examines “cultural entrepreneurship,” wherein cultural tools or resources are deployed to guide audience assessments of new organizations (Martens et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2013; Zott & Huy, 2007). Research on cultural entrepreneurship originated with DiMaggio's (1982) work on the creation of “high culture” and elite status in Boston. Broadly speaking, DiMaggio (1982) conceptualized cultural entrepreneurship as the process by which collective meaning and status are constructed and conveyed through cultural processes mediated by organizations, the definition I use in this paper. DiMaggio (1982) showed how Boston's social elites established organizations including the Museum of Fine Arts and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and he emphasized the role of such organizations in cultural entrepreneurship, as a broader process of creating distinctions between previously undifferentiated “popular” culture and high-cultural pursuits and interests.

Cultural entrepreneurship, as DiMaggio (1982) conceptualized it, gave meaning to existing cultural resources as comprising “high culture” or popular culture, and it ascribed meaning to particular organizations and the cultural resources they put to use as it “draped [them] around the ongoing life of the group that governed [and] patronized” them (DiMaggio, 1982). The more public cultural distinctions made between high culture and popular (or “low”) culture were tightly connected with the “organizational systems that give that classification meaning” by providing an outlet “through which the ideal of high culture could be” realized and objectified (DiMaggio, 1982: 48).

Importantly, noting the productive dynamism of cultural tastes and social hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1984; Weber & Glynn, 2006) that contribute to their maintenance and keep them from stagnating, DiMaggio’s early work on cultural entrepreneurship underlined that the organizational system he studied pursued objectives “diffuse and ambiguous enough to accommodate a range of conflicting purposes and changing ends...*redefined with time*” (1982: 38–39 italics added). Redefinition of elite status in the industry to align organizations and industries with broader status distinctions and cultural tastes was central to maintaining broad legitimacy not just for the industry, but also for the social status distinctions it embodied. Further, it was also important to keeping high culture from stagnating, allowing it to “evolve in response to the interests of its audiences” (Swidler, 2010: 288), in both an expressive and instrumental sense. DiMaggio’s work underlines the possibility that for mature organizations and industries, challenges to legitimacy and shifts in institutional demands may reflect broader socio-cultural ideologies, tastes, and processes of status conferral. However, his work speaks mostly to how cultural distinctions were constructed, and little to how they have been maintained through efforts at redefinition undertaken through organizational systems.

Recognizing that “very notion of ‘elite’ seems to be in flux” (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010: 970) in society, understanding how such links among organizations, status, and culture might be maintained should be seen as a pressing scholarly concern with implications not just for organizations but also for society at large. When, why, and how such efforts unfold, however, remains unaddressed, as management scholars have turned their attention toward cultural entrepreneurship as it unfolds primarily at organizational founding in pursuit of commercial gains.

Cultural Entrepreneurship and Organizational Founding

In subsequent research in management, scholars have unpacked cultural entrepreneurship at the organizational level and explained how it might benefit companies in competitive market settings. Such work tends to conceptualize cultural entrepreneurship more narrowly than DiMaggio (1982) did, as “the process of storytelling that mediates between extant stocks of entrepreneurial resources and subsequent capital acquisition and wealth creation” (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001: 545) for organizations. Using the cultural resource of language, and especially stories, cultural entrepreneurship aims to shape the meanings associated with a new organization in ways that lead to favorable audience interpretations (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Zott & Huy, 2007).

Contemporary research on cultural entrepreneurship speaks little to issues of elite social status, reflecting a broader preference among management scholars to “downplay or altogether bracket these issues” (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010: 969). Rather, management scholars have emphasized that a key challenge for cultural entrepreneurs is to appropriately embed their endeavors within existing institutional and social systems by conveying legitimate distinctiveness (Navis & Glynn, 2010, 2011). Distinctiveness generally relates to an

organization's or market segment's unique characteristics relative to competitors in a setting (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Navis & Glynn, 2011). This is different from cultural distinction, which relates to social status or prestige (Glynn et al., 1996) and which is generally not considered in management research on cultural entrepreneurship. Legitimacy is a cross-level construct that refers to the generalized "cultural support" (Meyer and Scott, 1983: 201) for an organization or industry, lending it "social acceptability and credibility" (Scott, Ruef, Mendel, & Caronna, 2000: 237; see also Suchman, 1995).

In general, gaining legitimacy is considered especially challenging for new organizations because they lack credentials and an established track record to convey how they fit with industry norms (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Navis & Glynn, 2011). Recognizing this, researchers have devoted considerable effort to understanding how legitimacy is attained by nascent organizations through cultural entrepreneurship, largely turning their attention away from social status. In general, researchers underline the embeddedness of single companies in established industry systems. Research suggests that for new companies, legitimation is accomplished primarily through signaling similarity with other industry members, i.e., through attention to proximal institutional pressures (e.g., Martens et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2013), and through appropriating legitimacy or cultural capital from already legitimated entities, like established organizations or categories (Navis & Glynn, 2010, 2011). However, organizations and their industries are also embedded in broader cultural systems that may influence what is seen as normative or preferred (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer & Scott, 1983; Scott, 2014). Therefore, cultural entrepreneurs must also assess and account for more distal institutional pressures, which

influence “what the broader institutional environment establishes as appropriate or credible” (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001: 559) not just for organizations, but also for industries.

Empirical research has indicated the potency of cultural entrepreneurship – and in particular, entrepreneurial storytelling – in consistently guiding audience interpretation to gain legitimacy and generate wealth in market settings. Martens, Jennings and Jennings (2007) showed the utility of stories for organizations issuing IPO prospectuses, for instance. They found that companies using language to collate disperse information into an unambiguous, coherent whole were most successful in obtaining resources. Similarly, Zhao, Ishihara and Lounsbury (2013) underlined the power of naming, another language-based tool. They showed that feature films using a name that conveyed a known reputation (for instance, naming a sequel film consistent with its successful predecessor) engaged in cultural entrepreneurship that conveyed clear meanings about new films to audiences, resulting in positive performance. Taken together, research on cultural entrepreneurship has more generally underlined the utility of language as a cultural resource for new organizations that mitigates the liability of newness (Stinchcombe, 1965) and risks associated with other ambiguous organizational meanings (e.g., Zuckerman, 1999) to enable wealth generation.

“Since entrepreneurship, like any other social action, is always at least partly a cultural process” (Johnson, 2007: 103), recent research on cultural entrepreneurship in management has enriched understanding of entrepreneurs’ skills (e.g., Überbacher, Jacobs, & Cornelissen, 2015) and underlined the power of language in enabling entrepreneurial wealth creation. However, research on cultural entrepreneurship has focused almost exclusively linguistic cultural resources and their use by new organizations, mostly at founding (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2013; Zott & Huy, 2007). In doing so, current management research

leaves relatively unexamined most of the *cultural* dimensions of cultural entrepreneurship.

Existing work speaks little to other cultural resources, in addition to stories or language, that may come into play in constructing meaning, and it leaves unconsidered how such resources may enable potential transformation or redefinition of meaning (DiMaggio, 1982), despite related work that suggests their utility in doing so (e.g., Rao & Giorgi, 2006; Rindova, Dalpiaz, & Ravasi, 2011; Weber, 2005). Further, although Lounsbury and Glynn (2001: 555) pointed out the utility of “cultivat[ing] relationships with high-status elites” as a form of credentialing for new organizations, management research has almost completely ignored the role of status in processes of cultural entrepreneurship, as well.

Overlooking these aspects of cultural entrepreneurship, the management research on cultural entrepreneurship examines just a narrow piece of what DiMaggio (1982) argued was a much broader and wider-reaching process with not only commercial implications, but also social ones. A return to accounting for status is timely, especially as ideas about elite status have more broadly shifted (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010), bringing into question the assumptions about status distinctions and high culture on which foundational research was based. Still, despite growing interest in status among management scholars and “despite its prevalence and importance in individual, organizational, and market dynamics...the notion of status has not achieved its deserved “status” and attention in management journals” (Chen et al., 2012: 299). It is this gap I seek to address. I do so by complementing existing research on cultural entrepreneurship by examining how it relates to – and might be advanced by – research focused on cultural toolkits and status.

Cultural Toolkits

Research on cultural entrepreneurship is predicated on a view of culture as a toolkit (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001) or repertoire, terms I use interchangeably in this dissertation, following other scholars (Giorgi et al., 2015; Weber, 2005). Cultural toolkits or repertoires encompass a variety of symbolic materials, including not only stories, but also other symbols and practices that take shape as frames, rituals, materials, and more (e.g., Giorgi et al., 2015; Swidler, 1986, 2001a; Weber & Dacin, 2011; Weber, 2005). As such, they provide the cultural materials or competences “with which [actors] construct lines of action” (Swidler, 1986: 277) and around which both values and actions are organized. Despite this, the management research tends to strongly emphasize language, including stories (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007) and names (Zhao et al., 2013) to construct meaning and convey distinctiveness.

Admittedly, with a focus on nascent organizations, researching language has generally been fitting, as firms rely primarily on linguistic tools to articulate “proposed possible future states of existence” (Gartner, Bird, & Starr, 1992; see also Navis & Glynn, 2011). However, language may be inconsequential unless it is translated into the practices, skills, habits and styles that actors deploy (Giorgi et al., 2015; see, for instance, Swidler, 1986, 2001a, 2001b; Tavory & Swidler, 2009), which are most central to explaining culture’s enduring and differentiating effects (Swidler, 1986). In other words, it seems likely that cultural entrepreneurship involves multiple manifestations of culture, with stories potentially linking “ideational commitments at a firm’s founding with subsequent resource commitments to enable enterprise development” (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). DiMaggio also implied this link with his emphasis on materials and practices that “that embodied and elaborated the high-cultural ideal” (1982: 35), rather than just stories or names.

At the same time, although much research in management has viewed toolkits or repertoires as related to flexibility (e.g., Canato, Ravasi, & Phillips, 2013; McPherson & Sauder, 2013; Rindova et al., 2011; see Weber & Dacin, 2011 for a review) research on cultural entrepreneurship broadly and importantly underlines that cultural resources are not typically “mixed and matched” in processes of bricolage or improvisation (e.g., Harrison & Corley, 2011). Rather, they are deployed in manners informed by organizations’ “knowledge of *what their actions would mean to others*” (Swidler, 2001a: 162 italics in original), especially with respect to being seen as legitimate or otherwise socially appropriate. This echoes the recognition in recent work that varied cultural tools may engender clear ideational or resource commitments from actors and may be anchored or disciplined by other manifestations of culture (Giorgi et al., 2015; see also Swidler, 2001b). Such research points in particular to cultural toolkits or repertoires as one form of culture that may function in this capacity (Giorgi et al., 2015).

Although whether and how cultural toolkits or repertoires serve as cultural “anchors” remains an open empirical question (Giorgi et al., 2015), extant research hints at some of the manners in which cultural toolkits may act as such. Specifically, scholars have argued that cultural toolkits may be “bound” or defined in terms of content by industry setting (McPherson & Sauder, 2013; Weber, 2005) or organizational context (e.g., Canato et al., 2013; Leonardi, 2011; Rindova et al., 2011). For instance, Weber (2005: 239) argued that organizations’ toolkits “can fundamentally be seen as subsets or selections from the cultural elements available in the larger field,” illustrating the correspondence between organizational- and industry-level cultural resources for German pharmaceutical firms. Along similar lines, Canato, Ravasi and Phillips (2013) studied the adoption of new practices at the company 3M and showed how they both shaped and were shaped by existing elements of the organizational toolkit. Such work underlines

the flexibility of cultural toolkits but also their relative permanence, anchoring or guiding the use of particular ‘tools’ in manners that are appropriate and consistently understood in a given business context.

Moreover, “culture is embedded in other institutional and social contexts that inform cultural content and structure” (Giorgi et al., 2015: 22). Research accounting for “broader cultural forces outside a single system” like an organization or industry (Giorgi et al., 2015: 22) remains limited, especially in work that views culture as a toolkit (but for a notable exception see McPherson & Sauder, 2013). Research in sociology that widely recognizes that cultural repertoires or toolkits are related to social status (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1984; DiMaggio, 1982; Swidler, 1986) provides a promising starting point for making such links. Such research has focused centrally on how cultural resources, including habits, practices, and tastes, comprise a repertoire linked with the social standing of status groups (Lamont & Fournier, 1992; e.g., Lamont & Lareau, 1988). In particular, researchers have emphasized repertoires that are rich in cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979; Bourdieu, 1984), i.e., “widely shared, legitimate culture made up of high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, behaviors, and goods) used in direct or indirect social and cultural exclusion” (Lamont & Lareau, 1988: 164). Elite actors tend to possess knowledge of these “high-culture” resources, or cultural capital; they use them to signal their status and, in doing so, reproduce their high standing (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Research also suggests that such dynamics operate in market settings, as well. For instance, Hirsch (1972: 641–642) detailed the characteristics of cultural industries, which produce “‘nonmaterial’ goods directed at a public of consumers, for whom they generally serve an esthetic or expressive, rather than a clearly utilitarian function.” These cultural organizations

and products are divided up or classified in manners that reflect “the taste structure of a population” (DiMaggio, 1987: 441), such that the repertoires available to market actors are linked with the social status and cultural capital of their consumers. Such relationships are not limited to strictly “cultural” industries, like motion pictures or music production, importantly; in fact, “every consumer industry is engaged to some extent in the production of cultural goods, and any consumer good can thus be placed along the implied continuum between cultural and utilitarian products” (Hirsch, 1972: 642).

In spite of this important and longstanding recognition, the manner in which cultural capital operates in market settings and informs or influences other manifestations of culture in some way remains largely unconsidered among management scholars. In fact, although Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) explicitly accounted for multiple forms of ‘capital,’ including institutional, social, and financial capital in their conceptualization of cultural entrepreneurship, they excluded cultural capital from their model. This is surprising, especially in light of research on cultural entrepreneurship that has long been explicitly linked with cultural capital and the designation of elite social standing (DiMaggio, 1982). Recent research considering the role of cultural capital in commercial settings also underlines the need for work that more explicitly considers its role in anchoring or otherwise influencing cultural processes. For instance, Rivera (2012: 1017) focused at a more micro level but showed how similarity in cultural repertoires among actors may, in fact, be considered “a form of capital that has economic conversion value” (c.f., Bourdieu, 1986), making it highly relevant to the for-profit organizations on which management research focuses.

A view of cultural capital as guiding or informing other manifestations of culture – and the implications of this proposed link – also warrants investigation given the changes in elite

social status and cultural capital that scholars have widely noted (e.g., Peterson & Kern, 1996; Zald & Lounsbury, 2010). More specifically, whereas in the past, scholars emphasized social class-based distinctions and the exclusivity of “high” or elite cultural habits and tastes (Bourdieu, 1984), it is now well-recognized that contemporary elites are cultural “omnivores” (Peterson & Kern, 1996), such that the boundaries around their cultural tastes are rather ill-defined and porous. For instance, Peterson and Kern (1996) showed how high-status social groups are marked by heterogeneity in the kinds of high-brow arts and products they consume; as Erickson (1996: 219) similarly pointed out, “There is no one kind of taste profile that advantaged people share... they indulge more in many sorts of culture, not just the most elite forms.” This observation has been widely echoed in related research (Lamont, 1992; Small, Harding, & Lamont, 2010; Swidler, 1986, 2001a, 2010).

Such findings underline the “ambiguity about traditional class based arguments” related to status and culture, as Zald and Lounsbury (2010: 968) recently pointed out. While in the past, elites were “entitled” and homogenous in their tastes and habits, new elites actively “develop privilege...a mode of interaction that advantages them” (Khan, 2011: 43) while working to avoid seeming elitist. Such observations underline the need for research that accounts for cultural capital and examines how it may anchor or provide consistency to the content or structure of other forms of culture, including those used in market settings. They also point out the importance of returning to early assumptions and arguments about cultural capital in cultural entrepreneurship (DiMaggio, 1982) to update them in light of recognized social changes and erosion of class-based distinctions (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010). Doing so also necessitates accounting for extant management research on status, which I review briefly next.

Status in Management Research

In recent years, the topic of status has received increasing attention in management and organization theory, with multiple special issues (Chen et al., 2012; George et al., 2016) and numerous scholarly articles devoted to the topic¹. However, different from DiMaggio's research that underlined social status and its link with cultural capital, management researchers have tended to view status as related to quality and competitiveness, a perspective that is reflected in recent management research on cultural entrepreneurship. Broadly speaking, in the management literature, status is defined as "a socially constructed, intersubjectively agreed-upon and accepted ordering or ranking' of social actors" (Washington & Zajac, 2005: 284). Ordering is determined with consideration for the esteem conferred on each actor "by virtue of the actor's membership in a group or groups with distinctive practices, values, traits, capacities or inherent worth" (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008, citing Benjamin & Podolny, 1999; Weber, 1946).

In general, management scholars view status most commonly as centering on an organization's ranking within a market category, a "socially legitimated grouping of perceived similar organizations" (Sharkey, 2014: 1381). High status is generally associated with superior quality relative to other market category members (Benjamin & Podolny, 1999; Podolny, 1993; Sauder, Lynn, & Podolny, 2012). More specifically, status serves as a signal of the quality of an organization's products, with the assumption that current status has been determined by an organization's past actions; the two may be more or less tightly coupled in various market settings (Podolny, 1993). Importantly, distinguishing it from reputation, status is also influenced by the status of those with whom a market actor engages in exchanges, such that status is transferred in interactions among market actors (Podolny & Phillips, 1996). As such, high-status

organizations typically have exchange relationships with high-status affiliates, and vice-versa (Podolny & Phillips, 1996; Washington & Zajac, 2005)

High-status organizations gain privileged access to needed resources as a result of their perceived superior quality (Podolny, 1993), and they are often widely emulated by lower-status others (Labianca, Fairbank, Thomas, Gioia, & Umphress, 2001), perpetuating their favorable status ranking by cementing their place in the social hierarchy that structures a market category. High-status organizations gain market advantages relative to similar others by virtue of their high status: it generates “social esteem and special, unearned (i.e., non-merit-based) benefits known as privileges, which are granted to and enjoyed by high-status actors in a social system” (Washington & Zajac, 2005: 284). Status is generally seen as self-perpetuating, with researchers underlining the “Matthew Effect” (e.g., Merton, 1968; Podolny, 1993), wherein high-status actors are more richly rewarded for producing goods or services that are less costly for them to produce, all by virtue of having high status. In other words, the benefits of high status are well-recognized and include lower costs, the ability to charge higher prices and increased growth (Benjamin & Podolny, 1999; Podolny & Phillips, 1996; Podolny, 1993; Sauder et al., 2012). Consistent with this view of status, research on cultural entrepreneurship has underlined the potency of market-specific signals like endorsements and credentialing in indicating a new firms’ high-status place in an existing industry structure (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001), relative to competitors.

Recently, however, researchers have hinted at the importance of accounting for perspectives on status more closely linked with work by DiMaggio (1982) and other sociologists

¹In this dissertation, I examine status at the collective level, as it relates to organizations, market segments, or social groups. Therefore, I consider research on status and power at the individual or interpersonal level (e.g., Ravlin & Thomas, 2005) to be less relevant to the focus of this work and do not review it.

reviewed above. Specifically, although most management research has focused on organization-level status relative to direct competitors, scholars have also pointed out that “organizations may possess a type of status apart from that which denotes quality relative to a firm’s peers in the same category” (Sharkey, 2014). In these instances, status relates less to comparisons drawn between similar organizations or products and is more closely tied to public perceptions of the overall esteem or social worth of the market collective. This view of status underlines that although status can be viewed as market-based, it is also *socio-cultural*, re-emphasizing organizations’ embeddedness in broader systems of meaning and classification (DiMaggio, 1982, 1987) that contribute to determining the meaning (Glynn & Navis, 2013; Wry et al., 2011) as well as the esteem or status of a market collective.

Extending this recognition, scholars have examined the status of market categories or genres as related to cultural use of various products, returning to arguments made by DiMaggio (1987). This work is limited but is not entirely new: for instance, Glynn, Bhattacharya, and Rao (1996) examined art museum membership and revealed how product use related to its perception as a source of high prestige or cultural distinction, situated among other highbrow cues. More recently, Delmestri and Greenwood (2016) underlined organizations’ agentic roles in developing status via cultural capital, evoking arguments made by DiMaggio (1982) in his work on cultural entrepreneurship. They found that for market actors, status is attained – and can be purposefully changed – by associating a market category’s products with certain social practices. Doing so can signal taste in ways that align with “a specific position with the hierarchical structure of a field” (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016, citing Bourdieu, 1984). Such findings depart considerably from existing management research on status, and they suggest the need for research that considers both bases of status in concert, especially since market and cultural processes are often

at odds with one another (DiMaggio, 1987; Weber, 1978). I develop empirical insights in this direction in this dissertation.

In the subsequent empirical chapters, I account for each of these theoretical lenses as I examine when, how, and why market actors use cultural resources to account for changing cultural tastes and values, especially those related to elite social status. I provide evidence to show how such processes unfold and consider their implications for industries, market segments, and organizations.

CHAPTER III. RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA

This dissertation is situated in the context of the U.S. hotel industry, which emerged over two centuries ago to supply the space for displaying and stabilizing status distinctions (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007: 43). As such, it has been deeply embedded in the socio-cultural and market dynamics of theoretical interest since its early days, making it a fitting empirical context for the three studies I conducted. The hotel industry is, in many respects, a cultural one, providing "nonmaterial" goods that serve an expressive function for customers (Hirsch, 1972, 2000) or "guests" to display status and express cultural tastes (King, 1957; Sandoval-Strausz, 2007; Sherman, 2007). Resonating with public cultural meanings is thus highly important for hotels, seen by some as "the thermometer and barometer of our national civilization" (Williamson, 1930: 4–5). At the same time, the utilitarian function of hotels – to provide travelers with a comfortable and safe place to rest – underlines the importance of their commercial and material aspects. So vital were such aspects that early "guests insisted on seeing all the rooms and 'bouncing on the beds' before registering" (Ingram, 1996a: 87).

The hotel industry was an ideal empirical context for my dissertation for practical reasons, as well as theoretical. The industry has a long history, emerging in the United States around the year 1790 (King, 1957; Sandoval-Strausz, 2007), and data is available, in various forms, for its entirety. This allowed me to look over a period of 225 years, from 1790 – 2015, to develop longitudinal insights that speak to shifting cultural tastes and social status distinctions important to the theoretical topics of interest. In addition, data is available from multiple sources and at multiple levels of analysis, consistent with my cross-level focus and emphasis on a strategy of triangulation (Creswell, 2003). Finally, I began this research with extensive industry knowledge, from my undergraduate education and subsequent work experience, which helped

me establish rapport with informants, identify reliable data sources, and contextualize my findings.

In management and organization theory, several scholars have examined the hotel industry (Baum & Ingram, 1998; Ingram & Baum, 1997a; Ingram & Roberts, 2000; Ingram, 1996a), and I used their work to inform my perspective. In general, although the extant research has unpacked some of the normative and regulatory forces underpinning isomorphism in the industry around hotel chains, little research has examined the hotel industry from a cultural perspective or considered status dynamics operating within and around it. Especially in light of hotels' longstanding cultural and social significance (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007) and their focus delivering aesthetic experiences (Hirsch, 1972, 2000) for guests, this oversight is surprising. It also suggests that in focusing on sameness in the industry, the research has overlooked processes of distinction and change that unfold various levels of analysis (Davis & Marquis, 2005) and, in particular, the cultural mechanisms that may underpin them.

Research Methods: Overview of Approach and Data Sources

In each of the three studies comprising this dissertation, I used a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Locke, 2001; Suddaby, 2006) focused on theoretical elaboration (Eisenhardt, 1989; Vaughan, 1992). I used a strategy of concurrent triangulation (Creswell, 2003), using multiple methods, data sources, and units of analysis to assess theorized relationships in each study (Navis & Glynn, 2010). In all three empirical chapters, I focused primarily on the actions and efforts of luxury hotel chains (e.g., Ritz-Carlton) as well as a small number of large luxury hotels with national reach (e.g., The New York Plaza Hotel). In general, I used diverse data sources, including interviews, observations and archival data; I describe these data sources at a high level in this chapter next and subsequently, in each of the empirical

chapters, add details as needed. Since I engaged directly with informants, I received required approval for this dissertation research from the Boston College Institutional Review Board (IRB). All data sources used in this dissertation are detailed in Table 3.1, which includes their use in particular chapters.

Interviews. In total, I conducted about 70 semi-structured interviews, in person and over the telephone, which lasted, on average, about 45 minutes. With informants' permission, I recorded interviews, and they were transcribed for analysis. I also took detailed notes during interviews and completed contact summary sheets following each interview. I tailored interview questions based on informants' roles and to examine emergent themes (Spradley, 1979), but to ensure comparability, I maintained a common set of questions across interviews that informed each empirical study. I provide interview protocols for each study in Appendix A. Some interviews covered topics of interest to more than one of my three empirical studies, in which case I drew from multiple protocols. For instance, some experts I spoke with offered their insights on both high-level industry evolution and recent developments in the luxury segment of the industry, so I used the protocols for both the industry-level and luxury segment studies to guide our conversation.

First-Hand Observations. Overall, I conducted about 320 hours of first-hand observations at industry conferences and in luxury hotels. Specifically, I conducted about 120 hours of first-hand observations at the American Hotel and Lodging Association's 2013, 2014 and 2015 *International Hotel, Motel, and Restaurant Show* and associated events. The conference is North America's largest annual hospitality industry gathering, with about 900 exhibitors and 18,000 industry professionals in attendance each year. At the conferences, I attended a total of about 20 panel presentations on the state of the industry and the luxury

segment and their evolution over time, browsed the exhibits, observed interactions among exhibitors and company representatives, and spoke with other attendees. I recorded nightly field notes in which I noted relevant insights from discussion of industry history, important current characteristics of the industry and the luxury segment, and sources of change and evolution over time.

I also conducted about 200 hours of observations in luxury hotels included in Chapter VI along with several other luxury hotels belonging to the chains included in Chapter V. These observations entailed spending time in the hotel lobby, restaurants and lounges, and discreetly studying interactions between employees and guests. I toured four of the six hotels included in Chapter VI with employees, viewing conference rooms, public spaces, and guest rooms. In three cases, I stayed at the hotel overnight as a guest and dined at the hotel's restaurants; I paid for all stays and meals. While conducting observations, I paid close attention to a variety of cultural resources, including décor and furnishings, language and stories. I documented my observations with extensive field notes and photographs.

Archival Data. Finally, I hand-collected archival data from a variety of historical and contemporary sources, including industry reports and periodicals, newspaper articles, books and commentaries on the industry, luxury hotel advertisements, websites and books published by luxury hotels, guest reviews, and critic reviews. The archival data used for each study is distinct, so I describe it in more depth in each section below, which details the specific data sources and analyses I used for each study. Accordingly, in each empirical chapter, I provide only a brief review of methods.

Study 1: Data Sources and Analysis

In the first empirical study (Chapter VI), I asked: *What endogenous and exogenous factors (i.e., institutional, cultural, socio-economic) influence cultural ‘redefinition’ in an existing industry?* I took an industry-level perspective and collected data that spanned the U.S. hotel industry’s entire history of 225 years, from 1790-2015, to account for shifting socio-cultural dynamics and for industry-level changes, and to examine correspondence between them.

Data Sources. I relied on extensive archival, historical data to develop longitudinal insights. I collected data from historical books and periodicals, as well as scholarly publications, business cases, and recent scholarly books on the U.S. hotel industry (e.g., Sandoval-Strausz, 2007; Sherman, 2007), as detailed in Table 3.1. I also collected historical newspaper articles from the *New York Times* (1857-present) using the ProQuest Historical Newspapers databases for 1857-1922 and 1923-present. I initially searched for all articles with the word “hotel” in the title, which returned about 50,000 articles, many of which were not relevant to the topics of interest. Therefore, I subsequently searched for articles with the words “hotel industry” in the title (from 1923 - present) or text (from 1857 – 1922²). This resulted in a sample of about 200 articles, which offered a helpful and relevant first-hand perspective on the industry’s evolution and concurrent societal changes. In total, archival sources accounted for over 9,000 single-spaced pages of text.

I also conducted about 20 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with industry experts as well as current industry financiers, executives, and employees. In addition, I conducted about 50 short (approximately 10-15 minutes), informal informational interviews with attendees at conferences I attended, including exhibitors, panelists, company representatives and others.

² I searched full text for these years because searching article titles yielded no results.

Finally, I conducted about 120 hours of first-hand observations at the 2013, 2014 and 2015 *International Hotel, Motel, and Restaurant Show* to inform this study.

Data Analysis. I began my analysis by reading all archival materials and reviewing contact summary sheets and transcripts from initial interviews and field notes from conferences. In doing so, I took extensive analytic notes, compiling outstanding questions and noting items of interest. I developed a thematic coding scheme that I used to organize key information into tables, lists and a chronological timeline, and I identified key events, changes and turning points therein. I also used this initial analysis to construct a tentative analytical narrative of the industry's history. In doing so, I captured information on industry composition and growth, and I identified widely agreed-upon cultural and institutional characteristics of the industry and changes over time. However, the archival data spoke relatively less to how socio-cultural and institutional factors influenced industry evolution, leading me to collect and analyze additional interview- and observation-based data in order to better understand these aspects of the industry's history.

Building from my initial analysis, I used subsequent interviews and attendance at industry conferences to test and, when needed, revise my initial findings and to deepen my understanding of socio-cultural and institutional dynamics at work in the industry. In interviews, I affirmed the initial industry timeline I constructed with informants and focused largely on times of stability and change in the industry, discussing the influence of broader societal meanings and practices on the hotel industry and on particular industry segments (e.g., luxury hotels, economy hotels). Using the coding scheme (included in Appendix B) I developed and used to analyze the archival data, I also coded the interview and observation data. It situated and contextualized my understanding of the industry's history and spoke to the role of socio-cultural and institutional dynamics in its evolution. I stopped collecting new data when I had reached theoretical

saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), in which additional data revealed no new relevant insights. Combining archival, interview and observational data, I triangulated across sources and data types to identify themes and ideas that were reflected consistently and over time, validating my findings with industry experts. Finally, I conducted a conceptual reduction (Locke, 2001), focusing on the theoretical constructs and relationships of greatest interest, to develop theoretically generalizable insights.

Study 2: Data Sources and Analysis

In the second empirical study (Chapter V), I focused on the luxury segment of the U.S. hotel industry, with the goal of developing deeper insights that extended my findings focused at the industry level in Chapter IV. I asked, *How does a high-status market segment maintain its status as socio-cultural distinctions erode?* To address this question empirically, I used data from multiple sources and both qualitative and quantitative analyses. I used the year 1985 as the starting point for this study because it marked the start of a time of significant industry change, which I detail in Chapter IV. I used the year 2015 as the ending point because, by this time, it was widely agreed that the hotel industry and its audience members had settled on a “new luxury” that preserved the status of the market segment in the industry and among audience members.

Data Sources.

Luxury Hotel Advertisements. The primary source of data for Chapter V consisted of advertisements for luxury hotels from *Travel + Leisure Magazine (T+L)*. *T+L* is a travel magazine that has been in circulation since the 1930s. In 2015, its annual circulation reached about six million readers. They had a median household income of about \$100,000 and were relatively evenly divided among age ranges, consistent with the overall profile of luxury hotel

guests (Yesawich, 2012). I considered advertisements to be “minimal narratives” (Czarniawska, 1997: 17) which “appear on promotional materials such as company brochures, Web sites, and product packages” (Martens et al., 2007: 1109). They were well-suited for the aims of the study because they allowed me to assess how a variety of members of the luxury segment conveyed status signals and meanings to audiences over time, aggregating to develop insights that spoke to collective-level processes (House, Rousseau, & Thomas-Hunt, 1995).

I scanned a total of 428 luxury hotel advertisements by hand from 84 issues of *T+L*, collecting all advertisements for members of the luxury hotel segment in all issues from the years 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015. I focused on this 30-year period because it was a time of notable change in the luxury segment of the industry, as I discuss in my findings in Chapter VI. I collected data for every fifth year because advertisement campaigns tended not to be substantively updated more frequently; therefore, collecting at shorter intervals would have resulted in numerous duplicates. I gathered data primarily from large hotel companies (i.e., Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons). These companies accounted for about 80% of the hotels in the industry overall (Vermillion & Cimini, 2009) during the time period of interest and therefore provided a reasonably representative view of how luxury was conveyed at the market segment level. I used chain affiliation (i.e., Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons) and industry credentials (i.e., Five-Diamond Award) displayed in advertisements to discern members of the luxury market segment from others. When needed, I referred to Smith Travel Research’s *US Chain Scale*, widely considered to be the industry standard, for guidance on segment membership at the time the advertisement appeared. I removed all duplicate advertisements that appeared in multiple issues in the same year. Appendix C includes details on advertisements collected by year. Overall, the advertisements I collected were diverse in length (ranging from a quarter-page to four pages

long, and from one word to hundreds), imagery (featuring photographs and drawings of hotel lobbies, guests, beds, etc.) and chain affiliation.

Interviews. I collected a total of 26 semi-structured interviews with industry leaders and experts, luxury hotel chain executives, and luxury hotel managers from 2013 through 2016. I used relevant information from a subset of these interviews (n=16) to inform at least one of the other two empirical chapters, as well.

Newspaper Articles. I used the search engine Factiva to search the *New York Times* for articles from January 1, 1985 – December 31, 2015 with the industry tag “Leisure, Arts and Hospitality” and containing the word “luxury.” The initial search returned 1,069 articles; I downloaded all articles and narrowed them manually to those that explicitly mentioned “hotel” or “travel” in their title or text. This resulted in a final sample of 542 articles; those eliminated generally discussed sports, theater and movies, which I considered less relevant to the focus of this study. I also collected articles from Hotel News Now (HNN), an industry news source that numerous informants identified as their ‘go-to’ hotel industry information source. I used the search function on HNN’s website to gather all articles with the key word “luxury,” which returned about 50 articles from 2008 (first available) - 2015.

Supplemental Data. I also used supplemental data, including first-hand observations at industry conferences and in hotels, industry books, and additional archival data including industry reports and historical AAA Diamond Rating scales (used for identifying and certifying luxury hotels), to inform this study and contextualize my findings.

Analysis. My analysis for Chapter V unfolded in four broad steps. First, following existing research (Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Navis & Glynn, 2010), I began by drawing from secondary sources and industry press coverage to construct a narrative of key events related to

luxury hotels. For comparison, I also developed analytical narratives and timelines for the midscale and economy market segments (found in Appendix D) to identify what was unique about hotel luxury over time. These narratives were informed by but distinct from the industry-level analysis detailed in Chapter IV. The market segment narratives contextualized my understanding of changes to luxury in the hotel industry and informed a timeline on luxury hotels (found in Figure 4.1) that I developed to guide subsequent data collection and coding, and to contextualize my findings.

Next, I closely hand-coded primary data sources, including advertisements, newspaper articles, and interviews, using detailed, qualitative content analysis to examine them. I built from existing literature and the analytic narrative to generate coding conventions for each data source. The coding conventions I used for advertisements, newspaper coverage, and interviews can be found in Appendix E. Following well-established precedent for qualitative research, coding followed an iterative approach, developing themes and then elaborating them in subsequent analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Although I maintained a consistent codebook throughout my analysis to discipline my coding, I adjusted my coding scheme to capture prevalent themes and ideas, collapsing some codes and creating new ones as necessary (Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Across all sources, my analysis moved from open coding, in which I identified themes, to axial coding, in which I assessed relationships among component parts (e.g., Gioia & Thomas, 1996). While I report primarily on findings from coding of *T+L* advertisements, coding of newspaper articles was instrumental in informing my understanding of broader socio-cultural conceptions of luxury in general.

Then, to assess the significance of changes in codes over time and the trends they suggested, I conducted supplemental statistical analyses. I used the statistical software SPSS to

conduct analyses of variance (ANOVA) tests to analyze changes in the occurrence of codes in the luxury hotel advertisements over time. For models reporting significant results, I conducted Tukey HSD post hoc analyses to find differences among the sample means. This allowed me to assess how luxury and status were conveyed over time and whether the shifts I observed qualitatively were statistically significant. Finally, I conducted a conceptual reduction (Locke, 2001), stepping back from fine-grained coding and statistical analysis. Doing so, I developed a more generalized understanding of how aspects of the emerging empirical findings related to one another and spoke to the processes of interest in Chapter V.

Study 3: Data Sources and Analysis

In Study 3 (Chapter VI), I asked, *How, if at all, do incumbent organizations operating in a high-status market segment engage in cultural entrepreneurship in order to remain culturally distinctive as elite tastes and status change?* I conducted an in-depth, qualitative study of culture-in-use in six hotels in The Opulent Collection (a pseudonym). The Opulent Collection (“OC”) is a high-end hotel brand founded in 1906 and acquired by the large hotel company Starwood in 1994. It includes hotels ranging from decades-old grand dames, to opulent resorts from the late 20th century, to hotels more recently converted to lodging from some other historic use. The brand explicitly emphasizes, both internally and to external audiences, efforts at “reimagining” their stories and physical assets so as to remain relevant and luxurious.

I included data from the OC brand and six U.S. based hotels in OC, which I selected using theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This allowed me to vary hotel-level cultural language and materials, while ensuring consistency in brand- and industry-level factors to control extraneous variation (Eisenhardt, 1989), since the hotels target a comparable customer audience (Martens et al., 2007), and must maintain levels of service and quality consistent with

other OC hotels. I selected cases using geographic location and history to maximize variation in hotels' cultural resources, as research suggests the importance of these factors in cultural efforts by organizations (Johnson, 2007; Weber, 2005). The resulting hotel cases include: The Freedom Hotel (Boston, MA), The Speakeasy Hotel (New York, NY), The Clementine Hotel & Lodge (Charlotte, NC), The Solstice Resort & Spa (Manchester, VT), The Diplomat Hotel (Washington, DC), and The Babylon (Scottsdale, AZ). All hotel names are pseudonyms.

Data Sources. I used semi-structured interviews and observations, as described above, as the primary data source for this study. I conducted a total of 45 semi-structured interviews with OC brand executives, hotel managers and employees, from 2013 through 2016. I also conducted about 200 hours of observations in the hotels included in this study.

I also relied on archival data from multiple sources. I hand-collected all available web-based and printed documents generated by each of the six hotels individually and by the OC brand between the years 2000 and 2015. I used current websites and the web archive Wayback Machine to do so, and obtained printed materials when I visited hotels and from informants.

To understand how guests viewed the hotels, I also hand-collected 600 guest ratings (assessed on a 1-5 scale) and corresponding text-based, free-form guest reviews. The reviews were posted between 2011 and 2015 on the online hotel review website TripAdvisor (see Orlikowski & Scott, 2013) for the six hotels. Since thousands of reviews were available for each hotel, I used a strategy of systematic sampling whereby I included every fifth or tenth review in my dataset, depending on the size of the full corpus of reviews for each hotel. This ensured the reviews were representative of a range of opinions and drawn from time periods comparable across hotels.³ Recognizing that online reviews might exhibit retrospective bias, I conducted

³ Reviews for some of the hotels were not available prior to 2011. Therefore, I used only reviews posted after that time to ensure comparability across the hotels.

informational interviews with a small sample (n=8) of current guests at the hotels; opinions in interviews were generally consistent with those expressed in online reviews.

Finally, I collected about 1,000 pages of press coverage on the hotels individually to contextualize my analysis of guest reviews and hotel-generated data and deepen my overall understanding of the hotels. In total, archival data for this study totaled about 3,600 pages.

Data Analysis. Data analysis for Chapter VI proceeded in three broad phases. I started by developing a holistic understanding of The Opulent Collection, observable changes in the hotels in the recent past, and their potential links with broader socio-cultural and industry changes detailed in Chapters IV and V. I also looked across archival data collected from the OC brand, interview transcripts and fields notes. In this first step, I took detailed analytic notes to identify themes and link them with industry and market segment dynamics.

Then, I moved to more fine-grained analysis of the primary data sources, using qualitative content analysis to examine them closely. I built from existing literature and the analytic narrative to generate an initial coding scheme. Coding followed an iterative approach, developing themes and then elaborating them in subsequent analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Although I maintained a consistent codebook throughout my analysis to discipline my coding, I adjusted my coding scheme to capture prevalent themes and ideas, collapsing some codes and creating new ones as necessary (Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The coding conventions I used for archival data, interviews, and field notes can be found in Appendix G.

I hand-coded primary data sources using the software NVivo 10 to manage codes and files. The coding unit varied to suit the document source and included the sentence, thought unit, or paragraph. A research assistant blind to the goals of the project coded the full archival, brand-

level data set to check reliability. In initial rounds of coding, inter-rater reliability was 80%; we reconciled disagreements with discussion and reached 100% agreement. My analysis moved from open coding, in which I identified themes, to axial coding, in which I assessed relationships among component parts (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). As a third and final step, I conducted a conceptual reduction (Locke, 2001). This allowed me to link analytical observations with justifications generated by informants and to unpack the cultural and status-related processes of interest most fully.

In sum, through use of a variety of primary and secondary data sources and both qualitative and quantitative analyses in this dissertation, I offer empirical insights around when, how, and why market actors use cultural resources to account for changing cultural tastes and values, especially those related to elite social status. My methodological approach goes broad, looking at the industry level and taking a longitudinal perspective that spans 225 years. It also dives deep, examining more closely the cultural dynamics that unfolded over more focused timespans within the luxury segment and within and across six luxury hotels. Taken together, the extensive data and multi-method analyses I used provided multiple avenues to examine the factors and processes of interest. They allowed me to understand more fully cultural entrepreneurship as it relates to status and cultural resources, and as it unfolds over the medium- and long-term.

Table 3.1: Data Sources

Description of Data	Quantity	Dissertation Chapter
Semi-Structured Interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CEOs, senior executives including brand leaders, industry experts, industry analysts, real estate managers, hotel managers, hotel employees, hotel guests, journalists. 	69 semi-structured interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 Industry/Luxury Experts 10 Luxury-specific Experts 45 Opulent Collection informants <p>Approximately 50 additional informal, informational interviews with conference exhibitors, conference panelists, company representatives, industry experts and hotel guests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter IV Chapter V Chapter VI
Participant Observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended the 2013, 2014 and 2015 <i>International Hotel, Motel and Restaurant Show</i>, North America's largest annual hospitality industry gathering, with 900 exhibitors and 18,000 industry professionals Observations and tours in 6 luxury hotels 	<p>~120 hours participant observation at conferences</p> <p>7 hotel tours (4 Opulent Collection Hotels, 2 additional leading luxury hotels)</p> <p>~200 hours of participant observation in hotels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter IV Chapter V Chapter VI
Historical Archival: Books <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>One Hundred Years of American Commerce</i> (1895) <i>A History of Travel in America</i> (1915) <i>The American Hotel: An Anecdotal History</i> (1930) <i>The Rise of Hotel Chains in the United States, 1896-1980</i> (1996) <i>Hotel: An American History</i> (2007) <i>Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels</i> (2007) <i>Deluxe: How Luxury Lost its Luster</i> (2008) <i>A Century of Hospitality: 1910-2010</i> (2010) 	8 books (2,679 pages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter IV Chapter V (supplemental)

Description of Data	Quantity	Dissertation Chapter
Historical Archival: Industry Magazines, Periodicals and Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Hotel Monthly</i> (1915- 1920 issues) - <i>Trends in the Hotel-Motel Business</i> – annually from 1951-present - <i>Hospitality Directions US</i> (PWC, 2014) - <i>Brand Survey</i> (Hotel Management Magazine, 2011-2014) - <i>Hotel News Now</i> articles pertaining to segment differences, luxury (2008-2013) - <i>AAA Diamond Guidelines</i> (1985-2013) 	~4,800 pages in total 72 Issues, <i>Hotel Monthly</i> (~3,000 pages) 64 <i>Trends</i> Reports (~1,500 pages) 1 <i>Hospitality Directions</i> Report (17 pages) 4 <i>Brand Survey</i> Reports (28 pages) 51 <i>Hotel News Now</i> articles 7 <i>AAA Diamond Guidelines</i> (about 150 pages total. Not released every year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chapter IV - Chapter V
Historical Archival: Newspaper Articles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>New York Times</i> articles (search term “hotel industry” in title/text) from 1857-present - <i>New York Times</i> articles (search term “luxury” in leisure/arts/hospitality-related articles) from 1985-2013 - Supplementary articles from <i>New York Times</i>, TIME, The Economist, Conde Nast Traveler that detail industry history, luxury segment 	197 articles 542 articles ~450 pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chapter IV - Chapter V
Archival: Academic Case Studies and Research Articles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Note on the Global Hotel Industry</i> (2008, Ivey School of Business) - <i>The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company</i> (2005, HBS) - <i>Four Seasons Goes to Paris</i> (2003, HBS) - Academic articles specific to the hotel industry (Baum & Ingram, 1998; Ingram & Baum, 1997a, 1997b; Ingram & Inman, 1996; Ingram, 1996a; King, 1957) - Selected <i>Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly</i> articles 	~300 pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chapter IV - Chapter V

Description of Data	Quantity	Dissertation Chapter
Print Advertisements – U.S. Luxury Hotel Brands - All print advertisements from luxury hotel brands every fifth year from 1985-2015	428 Advertisements (521 pages)	- Chapter V
Opulent Collection Brand Website Data (2013 – 2015) - Destination Guides - Cultural Calendar - Journeys Descriptions - Concierge - Development Brochure & Fact Sheet - All additional webpages - Brand-generated testimonials regarding the purpose of travel - Brand overview videos - Short film	~330 pages 52 minutes of video	- Chapter VI
Archival Opulent Collection Brand Website Data (2000) - All webpages (through Wayback Internet Archive)	~20 pages	- Chapter VI
Archival Opulent Collection Brand Print Data - Annual Reports 2002- present (all available) - Hotel Tales Book	~1500 pages 150 pages	- Chapter VI
Opulent Collection Hotel Website Data All webpages from current websites, including online brochures and magazines, of six Opulent Collection hotels	~ 600 pages	- Chapter VI
General and Industry Press Coverage – Opulent Collection Hotels All available coverage for six hotels in <i>The New York Times</i> , a local newspaper, <i>Conde Nast</i> , and <i>Travel & Leisure</i>	~1,000 pages	- Chapter VI

Description of Data	Quantity	Dissertation Chapter
TripAdvisor Review Data – Opulent Collection Hotels Random stratified sample of 100 reviews per hotel, collected from TripAdvisor (beginning with recent reviews, moving backward to get a representative sample from all available reviews). Fields include username, “status,” number of reviews, star rating (1-5), review text.	600 Reviews	- Chapter VI

CHAPTER IV. A PLACE TO STAY: CULTURE, STATUS AND REDEFINITION

ABSTRACT

In this study, I introduce the empirical setting and context for my dissertation – the U.S. hotel industry – and, observing wide-reaching industry changes that have unfolded over time, I ask, *What endogenous and exogenous factors (i.e., institutional, cultural, socioeconomic), if any, influence cultural ‘redefinition’ in an existing industry?* The notion of “redefinition” builds from the recognition that “social hierarchies and status orders are often kept in place by symbolic distinctions and patterns of cultural consumption *that are dynamic rather than static*” (Weber & Glynn, 2006: 1653 italics added), necessitating adjustment by the institutional systems that give shape to them (DiMaggio, 1982; Swidler, 2010). Moreover, these social hierarchies themselves have changed (e.g., Peterson & Kern, 1996; Zald & Lounsbury, 2010), leading to the dissolution of status orders that existed in the past and yielding new ideas about elite status and culture. Still, especially in commercial industries, adaptation can be difficult and costly (Johnson, 2007), and little is known about the conditions under which it may become necessary or desirable to shift to align with changing patterns of cultural consumption or ideas about elite status. Therefore, in this study, I examine the factors contributing to cultural redefinition, in which existing industries adapt to shifting social-status dynamics through cultural means.

In doing so, I pursue two main objectives. First, my data and analysis offer evidence suggesting that cultural redefinition, particularly of status distinctions, periodically occurs even in mature industries that tend to be seen as stable and relatively unchanging. It allows for accommodation of a range of evolving “purposes and changing ends” (DiMaggio, 1982: 39) at the industry level that align with broader societal values and status distinctions. Second, this study extends existing research that links cultural processes at the industry level with broader

socio-cultural dynamics (e.g., DiMaggio, 1982; Hirsch, 1986), showing how cultural redefinition in an existing industry corresponds with shifts in social status more broadly. My findings offer novel insights on how societal and industry cultures are related and remain linked over time (e.g., Hirsch, 1986). In particular, they suggest that cultural entrepreneurship may serve as a mechanism for long-term industry periodicity and legitimacy, whereas most management researchers have viewed cultural entrepreneurship as related primarily to organizational emergence (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007; Überbacher et al., 2015). Findings from this chapter also lay the groundwork for the two subsequent empirical chapters that more fully investigate the cultural mechanisms underpinning meaning transformation and status maintenance among members of the luxury segment of the industry.

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. hotel industry has long held an important place in American commerce and society. Constructed to appeal to and legitimate elite status and tastes, it emerged in 1790 and quickly took its place as “the most distinctively American of all our institutions” (Williamson, 1930: 5). And yet, to retain its market standing and social relevance, this mature and seemingly stable industry has changed considerably over time. As was noted in a recent industry history book, “the U.S. hotel industry is a restless one” (Vermillion & Cimini, 2009: 99), marked by organizations’ ongoing efforts to not only keep up with one another but also with the changing lifestyles and attitudes of the guests that patronize them. In other words, the U.S. hotel industry’s culture, including prominent meanings and practices and the status distinctions operative through them, have been “redefined with time” (DiMaggio, 1982: 39) in manners large and small over the course of its long history.

In this study, I examine the possibility of cultural “redefinition,” focusing in particular on the long-term influence of early processes of cultural entrepreneurship that embedded the industry in social and cultural systems of the time. While most scholars have emphasized long-term industry stability (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001) or even cultural constraint (Johnson, 2007) that results from cultural entrepreneurship at founding, I consider the alternative, revealing the manners in which it may also lay the groundwork for and contribute to industry change and adaptability. I ask, *What endogenous and exogenous factors (i.e., institutional, cultural, socio-economic), if any, influence cultural ‘redefinition’ in a existing industry?* In addressing this research question, I inductively explore the prospect that, as DiMaggio (1982) suggested, organizational systems constructed to appeal to and legitimate elite status and tastes can change

to legitimate ongoing exclusivity and uphold or revise status distinctions, and I consider the influence of such redefinition on the industry's history more broadly.

Empirically, I focus at the industry level and examine the U.S. hotel industry's history from its emergence in the 1790s until today. I develop an historical, analytic narrative of the U.S. hotel industry that reveals its emergence through cultural entrepreneurship (e.g., DiMaggio, 1982) and examines the ongoing influence of elite status and cultural capital on the industry, and especially its high-status luxury segment. I reveal three key inflection points that demarcate relatively discrete periods or eras in the industry's evolution, and I show how efforts to 'redefine' status distinctions in the industry through cultural means contributed to shifts between the eras. My analyses also reveal correspondence between broader socio-cultural shifts, particularly those related to elite social status, and efforts at cultural redefinition. My findings suggest that processes of cultural entrepreneurship occur not just at industry or organizational emergence, as management research has tended to emphasize, but also over the long term, contributing to periodic change that ensures continued cultural support for the industry (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001).

This study has several objectives. First, focusing on broad industry trends over the course of 225 years, I aim to show how cultural entrepreneurship may shape organizational and industry dynamics not just at founding, but also over the long term. My findings show how cultural entrepreneurship – in this case, focused on redefinition of status distinctions – is important for “new as well as already existing firms” (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001: 561) as it ensures continued cultural support for the industry and the organizations that comprise it. I show how changing socio-cultural dynamics, particularly related to social status, contributed to these efforts to redefine the status distinctions within the industry, and I reveal how institutional isomorphic

pressures came into play in such processes, as well. However, different from existing research that views institutional pressures as a force for stability, I find that they also contributed to industry redefinition over the long term. Specifically, I show that isomorphism created bandwagon pressures that created widespread sameness in the industry and blurred status-related distinctions; it contributed to shifts between eras as redefinition focused on developing a counterpoint to overly common cultural meanings and practices. More generally, I offer new insights on the links between industry and societal cultures, revealing cultural entrepreneurship as a process that contributes to both stable links and periodic redefinition of the meanings and practices that gain legitimacy and signal status. This study also lays the groundwork for the two subsequent empirical chapters that more fully investigate the cultural mechanisms underpinning meaning transformation and status maintenance in the industry.

I begin with an overview of the literature related to cultural entrepreneurship, institutional legitimacy and social status. Next, I summarize, at a high level, the data sources and methods I used. Then, I present my findings, identifying three industry periods and revealing how stability within them and shifts between them were related to processes of cultural entrepreneurship that unfolded past industry founding. I close with a discussion of the theoretical implications of my work.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is widely acknowledged among management scholars that organizations and industries are embedded in broader social systems that contribute to determining what is appropriate and desirable in markets (e.g., Scott, 2014; Stinchcombe, 1965). As such, market actors must cultivate “cultures in ways that resonate with broader societal beliefs or risk problems associated with the lack of legitimacy” (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001: 546 citing Dacin, Ventresca & Beal,

1999). One manner in which organizations and industries do so is through cultural entrepreneurship, as reviewed in Chapter II. Specifically, scholars have underlined gaining legitimacy in the broader socio-cultural milieu as a key concern for cultural entrepreneurs creating new industries, market categories, and organizations (e.g., Navis & Glynn, 2010; Weber et al., 2008).

For instance, Weber and co-authors (2008) revealed how actors accounted for and mobilized existing socio-cultural systems of meaning to create a new market for grass-fed beef, pointing to their efforts to align the new industry with existing, valued socio-cultural beliefs and practices. Similarly, Navis and Glynn (2010) examined the emergence of the satellite radio market category and revealed a process by which legitimacy was attained for the collective through the efforts of organizational cultural entrepreneurs. Such efforts tend to be “aimed at both building up demand for the industry’s products and services while also cultivating a broader base of support and acceptance,” (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001: 558) for the industry, such that the industry and the companies embedded therein are seen as appropriate and credible within the broader socio-cultural milieu. As DiMaggio (1982) revealed in prior work, resonating with broader societal beliefs also implicates social status, in that it necessitates careful decisions about which particular socially-embedded sets of meanings, practices and habits to appeal to and embody. In this sense, cultural entrepreneurship also entails forging an “alliance between class and culture” (DiMaggio, 1982: 48) that is mediated – and legitimated – by organizations and industries.

In general, management researchers have suggested that, over time, the need for sustained legitimacy or “cultural support” (Meyer & Scott, 1983: 201) produces pressures within the industry for isomorphism, or conformity among similarly-situated organizations (DiMaggio

& Powell, 1983; see also Meyer & Rowan, 1977), also as detailed in Chapter II. This research, in general, emphasizes that once a field or industry is established, efforts to manage uncertainty and constraint lead to “homogeneity in structure, culture, and output” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983: 148) among organizations constituting it. Such insights are reflected in research on cultural entrepreneurship, as well, in which scholars have tended to emphasize organizational cultural entrepreneurs’ efforts to gain legitimacy in an established industry system through isomorphism with existing norms (e.g., Martens et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2013). This emphasis fits with existing research that indicates industry legitimacy is related to industry maturity; since more mature, older industries tend to be seen as legitimate, organizations entering existing industries – which likely account for the large majority of cultural entrepreneurs (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001) – have little reason to exert effort to build cultural support for the industry in cultural entrepreneurship. Rather, at such stages, aligning with industry norms is considered sufficient for organizations to be seen as legitimate within the industry and in society, as empirical research has suggested (Martens et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2013).

These insights underline the relative stability and overarching homogeneity of organizations in an industry past its initial founding, and they largely position cultural entrepreneurship as a mechanism for maintaining stability and contributing to industry sameness. Importantly, they also suggest that, over time, the link between class and culture that DiMaggio (1982) underlined as central to cultural entrepreneurship at founding may be attenuated or overlooked completely as institutional pressures take hold. It suggests that efforts to align with audience tastes and status may, more generally, unfold primarily at founding, but speaks little to how this link might be maintained, updated, or, potentially, lost.

At the same time, however, researchers also recognize that industries change over time, despite institutional pressures for stability and conformity among existing and new organizations. Scholars have pointed to a variety of processes by which change may unfold, including organizational selection (e.g., Carroll & Hannan, 1989; Hannan & Freeman, 1977) and gradual industry evolution that occurs slowly and deliberately through micro-level efforts of actors (e.g., Oliver, 1992; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). However, scholars emphasizing the embeddedness of industries in broader socio-cultural systems have noted, in particular, that the waxing and waning of institutional pressures over the long term (Dacin, Goodstein, & Scott, 2002; Dacin, 1997; Glynn & Abzug, 2002) may also contribute to observed changes, often in manners distinct from those emphasized by other researchers. This perspective underlines the well-recognized importance of historical periods in processes of institutionalization (Abzug & Mezas, 1993), in which organizations converge around particular meanings and practices with patterned regularity (Glynn & Abzug, 2002). Such work reveals processes of institutionalization around these widespread norms within institutional ‘periods’ but also underlines processes of rapid redefinition or change between periods; it highlights that challenges to legitimacy and changes in culture are possible – and empirically observable – even in mature industries. However, such work speaks little to the factors that contribute to such shifts, observing the potential importance of institutional pressures and socio-cultural systems, but leaving their specific influence unexamined.

Research on cultural entrepreneurship has similarly explicitly underlined processes of periodic adaptation or redefinition, as noted in prior chapters. For instance, Lounsbury and Glynn theorized that cultural entrepreneurship may involve not just initial efforts at industry- or organization-building, but also subsequent efforts to “save the industry” (2001: 556), adapting

over time to provide the “necessary foundation for the conversion of inventions into profit-making opportunities and wealth creation” (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001: 556). Similarly, DiMaggio’s early work on cultural entrepreneurship underlined that organizations were “diffuse and ambiguous enough to accommodate a range of conflicting purposes and changing ends...*redefined with time*” (1982: 38–39) in ways that garnered broad legitimacy not just for the industry, but also for the elite status distinctions it embodied. His work underlines the possibility that for mature organizations and industries, challenges to legitimacy and shifts in institutional demands may reflect broader socio-cultural ideologies, tastes, and processes of status conferral. It points to the need for deeper understanding of cultural entrepreneurship as it accounts not only for how organizations appeal to customers or investors, but also how organizations and industries fit into broader systems and processes of legitimation and status conferral over the long term. At present, however existing research stops short of empirically examining such factors. As such, scholars’ understanding of how industries remain culturally relevant through alignment with audience tastes, especially those that express social status, remains limited.

In this study, I aim to examine the possibility of cultural “redefinition” of existing status distinctions through the efforts of actors within an existing industry. I ask: *What endogenous and exogenous factors (i.e., institutional, cultural, socio-economic), if any, influence cultural ‘redefinition’ in an existing industry?* In doing so, I address recent calls for research that “examine[s] how actors might change or update existing cultural commitments” (Giorgi et al., 2015: 22), particularly related to status distinctions important to audiences, and the cultural meanings and practices that accomplish and legitimate them. I also make inroads toward reconciling competing views of cultural entrepreneurship as a mechanism for institutional stability and for cultural change, especially related to social status, and I work to identify the

longer-term institutional and socio-cultural factors that enable or prompt it to function as such. Next, I briefly summarize the methods I used to address these puzzles empirically, and then I present my findings.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODS

As detailed in Chapter III, I collected extensive archival data, including historical texts, newspaper articles, industry periodicals and reports, scholarly publications and more. I used these data sources to examine the U.S. hotel industry's cultural and institutional characteristics over those 225 years and to identify the historical events, economic trends, and innovations that led to changes over time. I also conducted semi-structured interviews and first-hand observations at industry conferences to more deeply understand the reasons for observed shifts, from the perspective of seasoned industry experts. Table 3.1 provides further details on the data used for this study.

In general, analyses entailed organizing key information into tables, lists and a chronological timeline, and identifying key events, changes and turning points therein. Then, I thematically coded archival data, interviews, and field notes to more closely track prevalent industry meanings and practices and to uncover reasons for changes. As my analyses proceeded, I tested emergent findings in interviews with industry experts to validate their accuracy or to update them as needed. I triangulated across sources and data types to identify themes and ideas that were reflected consistently and over time. My analysis yielded insights that spoke to the interplay of socio-cultural and institutional pressures within and between industry eras, and that suggest the role of cultural entrepreneurship in balancing the two over time to enable cultural 'redefinition' in the industry and maintain broad cultural support. I discuss my findings in detail next.

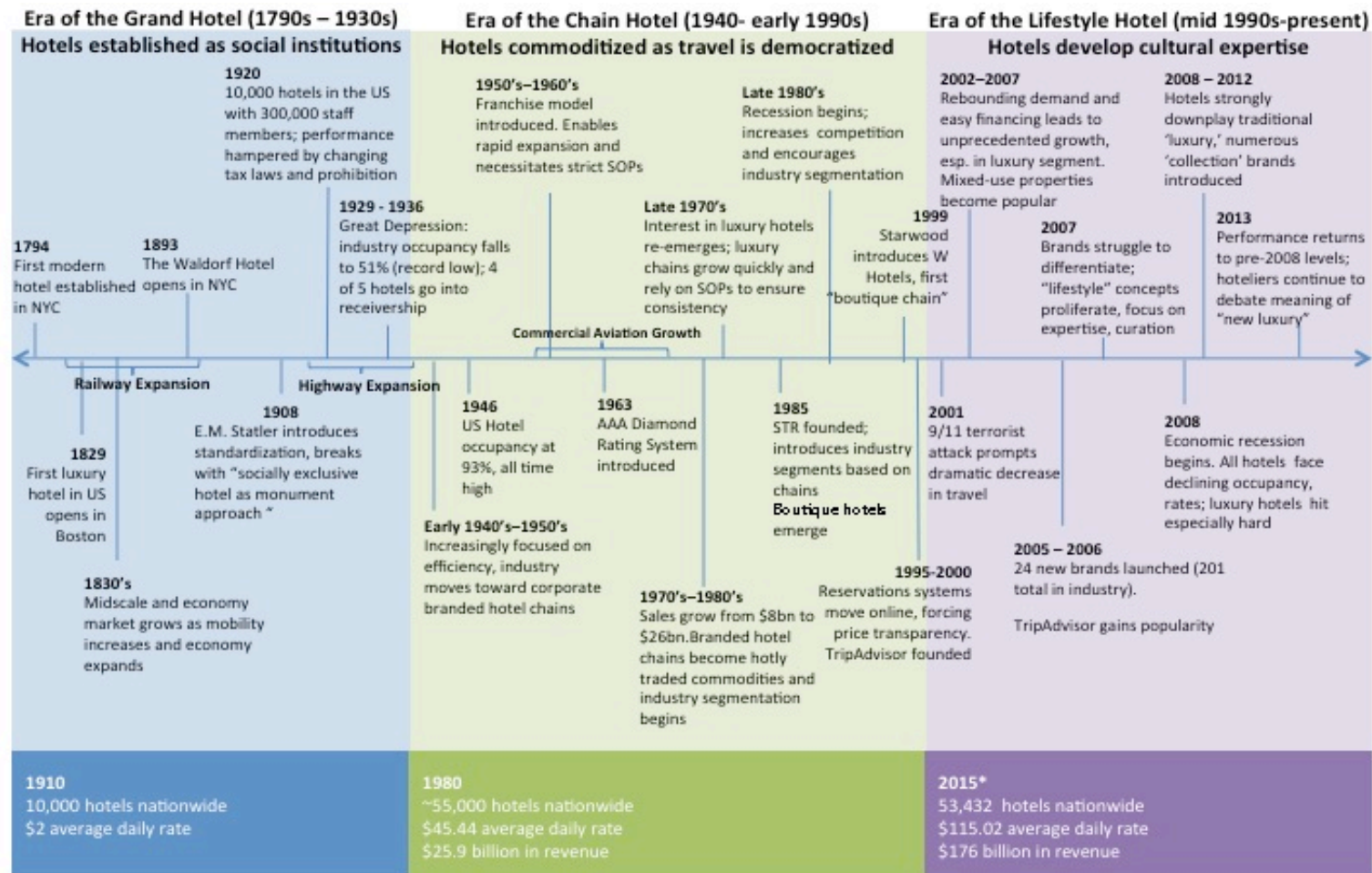
FINDINGS

Suggestive of a pattern of institutional periodicity (e.g., Glynn & Abzug, 2002), my analyses revealed that the U.S. hotel industry was marked by three major eras over the past 225 years, each characterized by distinct meanings and practices that legitimated hotels and status distinctions in the industry. These are the Grand Hotel Era (1790 – 1930s), the Chain Hotel Era (1940s – mid-1990s), and the Lifestyle Hotel Era (mid-1990s – present). These periods and labels are based on my own original analyses, and I confirmed that they are appropriately labeled and are reflective of the industry’s history in interviews with industry experts. A full timeline delineating these industry eras and key events is presented in Figure 4.1. Next, I detail each of these three eras, detailing dynamics operative within the industry and those at play externally in society, and showing how they related to long-term industry periodicity and efforts at cultural redefinition.

The Grand Hotel Era (1790 – 1930s)

The U.S. hotel industry emerged around the start of the 19th century. “In 1790 the word ‘hotel’ could hardly be found in a city directory. The great majority of public houses in the United States were listed under the word ‘tavern’”(King, 1957: 174). An industry observer commented on the simplicity of prior hotels in a 1895 book on the changing industry, remarking: “the taverns [a century earlier] were small; one containing twenty rooms was regarded as a commodious house... the furniture plain and strong; carpets were rarely found” (Hitchcock, 1895: 149). By the end of the 18th century, however, social and political elites began to realize that to position American cities for commercial success and renown, there was a need for public spaces that enabled social, economic and political exchange and that signaled prosperity and sophistication to visitors. In the early 1800s, “A good hotel meant a prosperous town, and a public-spirited town would have a good hotel” (Hitchcock, 1895: 150). The first establishment to achieve these

Figure 4.1: Timeline of U.S. Hotel Industry, 1790 – 2015



*2015 figures reflect end of year 2014, latest data available.

ends was the City Hotel, which opened in 1794 in New York City and is widely seen to be the first modern hotel in the U.S., dedicated solely to hotel operations. Shortly thereafter, similar establishments opened in Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia and other cities.

Grand Hotels and Social Elites. Although the earliest hotels were seen to signal a town's civic spirit, the industry quickly became dominated by wealthy social elites that advocated for hotel construction, owned early hotels, and also patronized them. One expert I spoke with pointed out, "if you look at the chunk of time prior to the 1900s, and even into the earlier 1900s span, it would be wealthy people who traveled. [The industry] was created at a time when the Vanderbilts, the Morgans...that was who traveled" (E7.01.14). The "public" that early hotels welcomed, in other words, were primarily high-status social and political elites for whom the high cost of comfortable travel was not restrictive and that desired a vehicle for expressing emerging class-based status distinctions.

Accordingly, hotels adopted practices and materials that facilitated expression and use of developing cultural capital of the time (DiMaggio, 1982), including stylistic elements like aloofness or "snobbery" (Peterson & Kern, 1996) and a preference for cultural symbols that made class distinctions clear. As such, lobby spaces were relatively large in new establishments (Williamson, 1930), making visible elite social and professional ties; in many cases, a city's grand hotel "was the one place in which to meet distinguished people" (Hitchcock, 1895: 150). Further, hotels came to rely on a dedicated, professional service staff, underlining the social distance between caretakers and guests, and levied high fees for a night's stay, keeping all but the wealthy from patronizing them. Many wealthy businessmen and elite families constructed or invested in "distinctively ostentatious" (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007: 125) luxury hotels to signal their place in society. Similar to the cultural entrepreneurship that established the Museum of

Fine Arts and the Symphony Orchestra in Boston (DiMaggio, 1982), in other words, early hotels materialized elite status by “allowing for differences in taste” (Williamson, 1930: 39) to be made clear. They represented “a new way of organizing people” that “symbolized the desire for a nation that was urban and commercial; supplied new spaces for social display and stabilized status hierarchies; and...restructure[ed] the political space” (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007: 43), legitimating both the new grand hotel organizations and the social distinctions and elite tastes they embodied.

With grand hotels developing as such and growing in number in the industry, as indicated by Census data (see Sandoval-Strausz, 2007), “the little tavern, or inn, [was] destined at last to develop into a palace beneath whose room the exacting demands of a thousand guests are supplied by an army of servants” (Dunbar, 1915: 207). A *New York Times* article further remarked that “each succeeding year adds largely to the class of luxury-loving money spenders. Such people are at one seized with a desire to travel...they have been used to luxuries, and they want them in whatever hotels they may patronize” (“Still Not Enough Hotels: A Dozen More at Least will Soon be Built in New-York,” 1890). Admired not just by patrons, but also by the broader public, grand hotels captured the public imagination: “American were duly impressed...the thing that fascinated them was the elegance” (Williamson, 1930: 38).

In allying themselves with elite patrons and “high-culture” tastes, grand hotels also forged connections with other industries and institutions with high cultural capital. For instance, as transportation improved and commerce expanded through the early 1800s, allowing elites to travel more extensively, hotels increased in number and establishments grew in size:

And if you think about some of the first luxury hotels that were built, they were built as railroads linked cities and resort destinations. And, of course, at that time, train travel was a luxury, most of the travelers were travelling for leisure and business, you know,

were in first class coaches, and you know...and so they wanted the same kind of luxury accommodations at their destinations. (E9.01.14)

Development of grand hotels was also increasingly backed by respected and powerful businessmen and stock companies; by the mid 1800s, hotels came to be considered a viable economic investment, fueling construction and cementing the move away from the guest houses from years prior. Enmeshed in systems of elite taste and habits, grand hotels took hold in the industry and gained legitimacy through alignment with the tastes and values of the “dominant class” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Grand Hotels and Institutional Pressures. Although grand hotels predominated in the industry, by the late 1800s, there were “hotels for all conditions and nationalities of men, and at all prices” (Hitchcock, 1895: 154). However, grand hotels held the highest status in the industry and, consistent with findings from existing research, were widely emulated and seen as offering the highest quality (Podolny & Phillips, 1996; e.g., Podolny, 1993; Washington & Zajac, 2005). By contrast, modest “economy” or budget hotels were sometimes crowded, dirty, and frequented by unsavory guests (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007). Thus, industry norms centered on the meanings and practices associated with grand hotel and were used to signal legitimacy within the industry. As the industry expanded, organizations tended to proximal pressures for isomorphism, and mimicry of existing grand hotels was often immediate and widespread. Periodicals like *Hotel Monthly*, first published in 1893, facilitated such efforts, making widespread sharing of information possible and detailing industry trends, novel products, and even floorplans for new hotels, propagating clear industry norms and expectations.

Predominated by a continued “sense that you were born into wealth” (B9.01.14) as a guest, the industry persisted in its high status appeal (“Good Times to Last, Hotel Men Assert,” 1925) because “the grandest of grand hotels were in style” (Vermillion & Cimini, 2009: 32).

Still, grand hotels themselves became increasingly similar as they protected their own prestige in the industry and sought to avoid “contamination” from mimicry by lower-status hotels. For instance, one early industry observer noted that “every innovation that had distinguished the Tremont [an early grand hotel] was adopted at the Astor” (Williamson, 1930: 32). Among grand hotels, “standards of elegance mounted higher with the opening of each new hotel” (Williamson, 1930: 39) and innovations diffused with great speed as hoteliers looked to keep up with one another. For example, upon introducing uniforms for staff, hotelier James Breslin remarked, “The idea is a good one and ought to be generally adopted” (Williamson, 1930: 39); within a few months, uniforms were indeed widespread. Such inventions were quickly absorbed and became taken-for-granted within the industry. In other words, by the late 1800s, the U.S. hotel industry had all the hallmarks of institutionalization. The organizations comprising it, including grand hotels, had come to tend closely to strong the isomorphic pressures they faced.

Societal Shifts and Erosion of Elite Distinctions. By the 1910s and 1920s, the Gilded Age in American history was nearing its end; the opulence of many elite Americans was met with growing distaste, and public institutions reflected growing support for greater practicality and egalitarianism, especially in the wake of World War I. Changing legislation suggested the erosion of public support for the entitlement and perceived excess of high-end hotels and, by association, their patrons. Among the ten largest industries in the United States by 1919, the hotel industry became the focus of new tax laws passed to allay national debt, slashing hotels’ profits. Further, championed by advocates of relatively ascetic social practices and values, the Volstead Act passed in 1920, making the U.S. a dry nation, and it rendered unprofitable the great public spaces that characterized grand hotels, threatening their overall viability (“Bowman Sees Ruin Facing Hotel Men,” 1919: 23).

Grand hotels hesitated to adapt and risk losing their high industry status and appeal among elite guests. Rather, they sought repeal of Prohibition as “the only way to put the hotel and restaurant business back on a prosperous basis” (“Boycott is Urged in Dry Law Fight,” 1932), and the industry continued to accommodate for new grand hotels even as the economy slowed. The Great Depression, which commenced at the end of the 1920s, halted this expansion, putting four of every five U.S. hotels went into receivership (“American Hotel and Lodging Association - Information Center,” 2015). It also gave way to a rising middle class for whom “the grand old resort hotels with their pampered lifestyle were of little interest” (Vermillion & Cimini, 2009: 50). As hoteliers noted the change, cultural “re-definition” commenced in the industry, marking the start of the new Chain Hotel Era.

The Chain Hotel Era (1940s – mid-1990s)

With the end of the Great Depression in the late 1930s, Americans saw the start of a new era of greater income equality as the wealth that had been concentrated in the upper echelons earlier became more widely dispersed. The hotel industry began to respond with a new form: the Chain Hotel. Hotel chains are “collections of service organizations, doing substantially the same thing (often the only differentiation is in physical space), that are linked together into a larger organization” (Ingram & Baum, 1997a: 68). The chain hotel had been introduced decades earlier, in 1908, by hotelier E. M. Statler. He focused on standardization and cost-cutting to offer reliable, reasonably-priced rooms to non-elite guests, an approach that stood at odds with the grand hotels that dominated in the early 1900s. Over the ensuing years, he built a small portfolio or “chain” of hotels, using consistent materials, services and floor plans across properties to cut costs and ensure consistent quality. Statler’s hotels aimed to appeal primarily not to wealthy, elite guests, but rather to the mass market that had slowly begun to expand in the early 1900s.

However, with the industry focused on grand hotels and class-based tastes and practices at the time, especially those associated with social elites, Statler's model had only been modestly successful.

The Chain Hotel and a Growing Middle Class. By the early 1940s, members of the hotel industry recognized that the values of social elites had lost some of their broader legitimacy and took note of a rising middle class with its own distinct tastes, preferences, and values. The desire and ability to travel became “democratized” for the growing American middle class, and:

...You had these grand hotels in urban areas, they were the center of the social world...where all the big events happened, big hotels...But what [hotel chains] brought along was this idea of democratized travel and consistency and we are not going to rip you off (E6.02.14).

The chain hotel was central in redefining status distinctions in the industry in the face of socio-cultural changes; it “broke with the socially exclusive hotel-as-monument approach that had predominated among leading hotel builders since the 1790s” (Sandoval-Strausz, 2007: 132) in manners that appealed to values of democracy and egalitarianism. Well-suited for changing economics and positioned to resonate with middle-class values, the rise of chain hotels marked a tide change in the industry, as an expert I spoke with elaborated:

...World War II, that is where the defining line would be...the US in particular went through a growth spurt...And people started traveling... And although you had the Plazas and the Waldorfs, it wasn't really high end stuff [available to the mass market]. It just started to grow from there in the 60's and 70's. I would say that prior to the 50's it was very mom and pop small hotels... there were always [those] hotels. But they were spotty and they were individual [and the Chain Hotel changed that] (E7.01.14)

Appealing to the mass market, chain hotels adopted a new focus on consistency and reliability, distinct from grand hotels that continued to hold the highest status in the industry.

Recognizing not only changing socio-cultural values, but also the opportunity for commercial expansion with a burgeoning middle market, hoteliers undertook efforts to bring

chain hotels to the fore in the industry. “Recognized hotel leaders... united in the formation of the Hotel Reconstruction Corporation” which served the industry as a whole (“New Company to Aid the Hotel Industry,” 1932). The group advocated for wider adoption of uniform practices and standardization in the industry, complementing the efforts of new hotel schools that professionalized the industry with similar measures (Ingram, 1996b). Such efforts aimed to “enable the hotel industry to take its place in the forefront of American business” (“Hotel Men Open Sales Campaign,” 1941), with hotels not longer solely cultural institutions, but also market commodities. With efforts at professionalization and increasing mimicry of Statler’s existing chain hotels that would serve as sources of legitimation, institutionalization of the new organizational form, the chain hotel, had begun.

Chain Hotels and Institutional Pressures. Numerous hotel chains, including Hilton, Sheraton, Marriott, Howard Johnson, and Holiday Inn, among others, were established or expanded considerably in the 1940s and 1950s (Vermillion & Cimini, 2009). This growth was representative of industry expansion more broadly. In 1939, there were 1.6 million guest rooms available in the industry, but by 1954, that number had ballooned to 2.6 million guest rooms, an increase of about 60%, mostly in the industry’s mid-scale segment (Harris, Kerr, 1955). With continued travel by the middle class and resulting growth in demand, franchising also became prominent, allowing for quick industry expansion. “Not surprisingly, the rise of motels [and chain hotels] began to shake apart the old model of hotel profitability” (Vermillion & Cimini, 2009) built around grand hotels.

With the rise of the chain hotel, industry-wide appeals to distinctive elite tastes that had resonated in the past era were, for the most part, “replaced by assurances of (consistency) by hosts ‘from coast to coast’” (Vermillion & Cimini, 2009: 61). For instance, an early Holiday Inn

advertisement read, “When you travel or recommend Holiday Inns, you are assured of a warm greeting, a good meal, and a good night’s rest” (Ad, Holiday Inns, 1964). Appealing to the mass market, chain hotels developed and focused strongly on highly-detailed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). SOPs functioned as part of a binding “management contract or a franchise agreement [to which hotels were required to commit]. Along with those typically come standards and those standards tend to be complied with in order to stay in the system [hotel chain]. That is legal[ly binding]” (E6.01.14). In other words, although SOPs helped to create economies of scale and ensure efficiency, their most important role was in ensuring consistency and reliable value, cementing their appeal to non-elite travelers:

the standardization of the brand, you know, you knew what you were getting, most Americans hadn’t traveled very much, and so they didn’t know if they were getting...something they could trust. And so...the brands stepped in and gave the customer what they were going to get everywhere they went. And that took a lot of the fear out of it. And people understood what they could expect (E9.01.14).

By the 1960s, there were about 63,000 hotels and motels and 170 hotel chains operating in the United States, (Vermillion & Cimini, 2009), as compared with 10,000 hotels and three hotel chains fifty years before (Ingram, 1996b). Growth continued through the 1970s and 1980s, especially with expansion in air travel, and isomorphic pressures increased as the industry became increasingly professionalized (Ingram, 1996b), organizations mimicked one another (Brener, 1970), and guests came to expect reliable and well-appointed accommodations. Many hotel chains came to look incredibly similar:

The thing about our industry is when you come up with an idea, you only [have the advantage] until the day you tell your customer. And the day you tell your customer, now it goes to your competitor. And two days later your competitor comes out with something, with a little bit different in it...You know, so we are not dealing with rocket science here. As soon as we do something, it is out there in the general public [and is copied by other hotels] (E8.01.14)

Hoteliers focused intently on one another: “there is a tremendous amount of groupthink” in the industry; “it’s that ‘me, too!’ thing” (E3.01.13). In other words, having adapted to changing socio-cultural tastes – and particularly those of non-elite travelers – members of the hotel industry, and especially new entrants, attended to institutional pressures for legitimacy. In doing so, they aimed to “fit in” with existing industry norms that, in this era, linked tightly with the chain hotel.

Market Shifts and the Erosion of Status Distinctions. While chain hotels had expanded, grand hotels had mostly persisted in the industry. As the province of wealthy social elites, they remained culturally distinct from chains, focusing for instance on highly attentive service and signaling status with high-end material cues (Sherman, 2007). They retained their place in the American cultural imagination, furnishing the setting for popular books and movies, like *Weekend at the Waldorf* (1945) and *Some Like it Hot* (1959), that spoke to the appeal and glamour of elite status even in a largely democratized society. However, by the 1980s, the seemingly stark distinction between elite hotels and their mass-market, chain hotel counterparts began to erode. As income inequality increased and finance capitalism enabled quick increases in wealth (Davis, 2009), demand for luxury goods, including hotels, expanded as well (Thomas, 2007). Luxury chains, like Four Seasons and Ritz-Carlton, were established and expanded through the 1970s and 1980s and, different from earlier grand hotels, they used SOPs to do so, equating status with consistent high quality, but attenuating its link with cultural capital. In other words, new luxury hotel chains began to succumb to commercial pressures for expansion and efficiency that had marked the rest of the industry for decades.

By the mid-1990s, “the old trade of feeding and watering people was industrialised” (“A short history of hotels: Be my guest,” 2013). Economic shifts prompted massive industry

consolidation, with 37 mergers and acquisitions completed between 1993 and 1996 (Vermillion & Cimini, 2009). As the industry became more consolidated, chain hotels relied heavily on SOPs, which were the mechanism for distinguishing chains from one another, especially as hotel companies acquired multiple hotel chains at similar price points. The effect was to foster immense sameness across the industry from which even luxury hotels were not immune. As the Chain Hotel Era approached what would become its final chapter, chain hotels could barely be distinguished from each another, as “now everything is homogenized” (E7.01.14). As members of the hotel industry had become focused on the utilitarian or commercial aspects of the industry and worked to keep up with one another, socio-cultural dynamics had shifted to value the cultural or aesthetic value of hotels. An informant pointed out:

I’ve sat through panels and I’ve been through lots of industry analyses and people used to say, “you know people come and they want a comfortable bed, they want a bathroom with hot water, they want it clean...” and the truth is the world is changing (E11.01.14).

Once again, it seemed the industry would need to redefine the status distinctions operating within in to address both shifting societal values and commercial pressures that had eroded previously meaningful differences between high-status luxury and mass-market hotels.

The Lifestyle Hotel Era: late-1990s – present

In the midst of the growing income disparities, corporatism and conspicuous consumption that had marked the 1980s and early 1990s (Davis, 2009; Thomas, 2007), cultural capital had changed. Social elites had begun to distinguish themselves not by signaling snobbery or opulence, but with omnivorous tastes (Peterson & Kern, 1996) and development and displays of expertise (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010). These shifts ushered in a growing distaste for commoditized luxury – and for commoditization in general – as hotel industry members noted in retrospect that they were catering to:

a much more sophisticated traveling public, at every level...you don't want your father's Buick... and so we're dealing with...customers now, who have been traveling since they were four, we're dealing with customers who are used to many, many different types of experiences, versus the customers put in 30 years ago. So, I think what's happening is, as a country we've become much more sophisticated... and now [it] is more fundamentally the experience at the hotel which is driving the demand for the hotel, than it has been in the past (E9.01.14).

Delivering the highest quality goods and service to hotel guests was no longer seen as the pinnacle of high-status hospitality in the industry; blunt, industry-specific status signals were misaligned with the nuanced tastes that marked the consumer audience:

You can't just say, "We're Four Seasons" anymore. That's not going to work. Prior to social media and people's ability to get information, historically, price was a proxy for quality. If it costs more, it must be better, but that's no longer the case. (E3.01.13)

Where standardization and market status was once lauded, it had lost its luster. "We can definitely say that we've evolved to the extent that consistency is now significantly overrated in terms of the design and delivery of the designed product" (C2.01.14).

The Lifestyle Hotel and the New Elite. As the nature of status changed in society and in the industry, "the [hotels] had to reinvent themselves...[and] what the hotel experience looked like" (E9.01.14). Similar to the seemingly delayed adoption of the chain hotel model, the industry aimed to redefine status distinctions by drawing on the concept of the boutique hotel, introduced decades before. Boutiques had been conceived of as the antithesis of chain hotels, touting their uniqueness and small size:

Everything was different. Even going to the bathroom was different... While hotel chains promised consistency—a Hilton in one city might look identical to a Hilton in any other—if anyone ever walked into a [boutique] hotel and said it felt familiar, [it was] considered...a failure." (Goldman, 2015)

The boutique or "lifestyle hotel" became a focus for industry leaders in the early 2000s, including those of large companies like Hilton and Marriott; I observed the topic being widely discussed at conference sessions and in industry press coverage. Industry members, including

informants, noted that it enabled a move away from commercial pressures and democratic values that led to widespread sameness:

[In the Era of the Chain Hotel, the industry] became highly commoditized...more industrialized. We got good at processing the people through hotels, the hotels were big and the larger chains were creating big hotels in the mid 80's.... now it is much more defined specifically for that individual, from a recognition standpoint to a personalization stand point, and of course, design...to try to mimic people's lifestyles (E10.01.14)

More specifically, boutique or “lifestyle” hotels displayed idiosyncratic art and played independent music in guest rooms and public spaces that facilitated social exchange, consistent with the characteristics of rising elite cultural omnivore (DiMaggio, 1987; Peterson & Kern, 1996). The industry aimed to re-align with cultural tastes, in other words, that resonated with the lifestyles of their guests, consistent with efforts that had contributed to the industry’s emergence and those that had contributed to the shift to the Chain Hotel Era decades before.

Industry experts I interviewed agreed that “W” Hotels, introduced in 1999, were instrumental in enabling new lifestyle hotels to take hold. W Hotels were focused centrally on cultural appeal and social interaction, as early grand hotels had been, but they attracted a new elite:

[The hotels were] where models went, hip-hop stars. And I think that was the start of the lifestyle brand, a place to be as opposed to just the room...It was all about the public space. Lifestyle brands became about public space, about the happenings, not just having a bigger room (E7.01.14).

W Hotels were a stunning success, especially given the perceived importance of consistency and quality in the industry. A former brand executive remarked, “I would tell you that that brand rung the bell almost by mistake” (B8.01.14), commanding room rates higher than existing luxury hotels and attracting high-status guests almost immediately. W Hotels ushered in lifestyle hotels en masse as they caught the attention of guest audiences and profit-minded investors alike:

It is one thing for people on my team and my competitors' design teams to be thinking of these wonderful ideas but if there is no capital to invest in bringing those ideas to life, then they don't go very far. We are seeing a lot of really good and clever innovative thinking around design that is happening across teams globally. It is a pretty exciting time, that is the punctuation mark (E6.01.15).

Changing cultural capital had not only shifted ideas about elite status in society, in other words; it had also changed ideas about status within in the hotel industry, as well.

Lifestyle Hotels and Institutional Pressures. Similar to the start of the Chain Hotel Era, the Lifestyle Hotel Era has commenced in earnest with rapid industry shifts: as one expert remarked, “We are in a transformational time in the history of the lodging business” (E14.01.14). In the mid-2000s alone, over twenty new “lifestyle” brands were introduced in the industry. Moreover, other existing hotel and hotel chains have mimicked the lifestyle hotels. For instance, the high-end Luxury Collection hotels have strengthened their emphasis on local experiences to appeal to well-traveled elite guests (B6.01.14). Even the economy Days Inn hotels now offer health-conscious options in their complementary breakfast spreads for guests as they seek to remain “relevant to travelers” (Ricca, 2011: 82) by aligning with valued aspects of their lifestyle. One informant elaborated:

“Lifestyle” to me, it simply means...whatever you consume is a reflection of who you are and therefore a reflection of your lifestyle. So, a Holiday Inn customer, by choosing to stay at a Holiday Inn, is actually reflective of certain values and characteristics of that consumer (E6.01.14).

Building from efforts to appeal to cultural tastes, processes of institutionalization have, in other words, again commenced in the industry as new meanings and practices take root. These processes continue to unfold as the current industry era presses on.

In sum, my findings reveal the emergence of the U.S. hotel industry around elite status distinction and the cultural capital that constructed and upheld them. Importantly, they also

underline the persistent influence of such factors over time, contributing to cultural redefinition. This unfolded first among chain hotels, in contrast to values and practices seen as elitist and, later, among lifestyle hotels, in efforts to redefine status distinctions and the cultural meanings and practices that upheld them in the industry, as elite distinctions eroded in society and in the industry. Thus, the waxing and waning of institutional pressures that underpin periodicity may relate not just to shifting dynamics within an industry (e.g., Glynn & Abzug, 2002) but also – and perhaps more importantly – to changing social distinctions and cultural tastes operating outside it and that, over time, appear to become a part of it.

DISCUSSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

In this study, I asked: *What endogenous and exogenous factors (i.e., institutional, cultural, socioeconomic), if any, influence cultural ‘redefinition’ in an existing industry?* To date, researchers have raised the possibility of cultural redefinition in existing industries as audience tastes change or cultural support for the industry wanes (DiMaggio, 1982; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001) and have offered empirical evidence of industry periods or eras that appear to result from such redefinition (Glynn & Abzug, 2002). However, most research does little to understand the factors that contribute to or enable such changes. Instead, research has primarily positioned such cultural processes as unfolding at industry emergence, giving way to isomorphic pressures (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007) that create long-term industry sameness and stability characteristic of mature markets. With this chapter, I aimed to elaborate research that underlines both institutional pressures (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001) and social status and cultural capital (DiMaggio, 1982) in processes of meaning construction and legitimation, examining whether and how they may also influence efforts to redefine the cultural meanings and practices that convey status in the industry.

Based on an inductive historical analysis of U.S. hotel industry from 1790 – 2015, I revealed how the hotel industry emerged through a process of cultural entrepreneurship (DiMaggio, 1982). Specifically, social elites, i.e., high-status urbanites including politicians, businessmen, and members of wealthy families, spurred and sponsored the emergence of grand hotels, which, along with other institutions and industries, centralized cultural capital and contributed to drawing status distinctions that operated more broadly. Cultural entrepreneurship in the hotel industry entailed efforts to distinguish these new lodging establishments from taverns or inns, with the construction of vast public spaces, for instance, to make elite social distinctions visible in new grand hotels. Looking over the course of the industry's history, I tracked whether and how these initial efforts at cultural entrepreneurship extended and were redefined over time. In doing so, I aimed to identify the factors that contributed to cultural redefinition as the tastes and values central to industry founding have changed, newly highlighting how concerns with status evolve and unfold time.

My findings underline two broad factors that contribute to cultural redefinition, in which status distinctions operative in the industry were updated through cultural means so as to resonate with changing audience values and tastes. First, and most importantly, they point to the persistent influence of social status and, in particular, elite social status on industry periods and cultural redefinition. Social status influenced cultural redefinition in two main ways. First, cultural redefinition accounted for changes to collective opinions about social status hierarchies in general. This was most visible in the shift from the Grand Hotel Era to the Chain Hotel Era, as the values of egalitarianism and democracy that characterized the growing middle class rose to prominence. This facilitated the rise of the chain hotel, which aligned with such values and reflected the cultural tastes and habits that characterized this status group. It also preserved the

high status of luxury or ‘grand’ hotels by decoupling market quality and cultural capital; it furnished a mass-market alternative focused on the former while maintaining high-status exclusivity through use of the latter.

The second manner in which social status influenced cultural redefinition was by prompting industry adjustment as the nature of cultural capital associated with elite status changed. In particular, cultural redefinition commenced as it became apparent that social elites were no longer “snobs” but rather cultural omnivores (Peterson & Kern, 1996), with well-honed expertise and deep knowledge that spoke to earned privilege rather than landed status (Khan, 2011). This most visible in the shift from the Chain Hotel Era to the Lifestyle Hotel Era, as conspicuous consumption and cultural homogeneity seen as signaling status in the industry had become misaligned with the cultural capital of elite guests. This enabled the rise of the lifestyle hotel, which, in reflecting updated aspects of elite culture, redefined the industry’s focus– from consistency and quality to personalization – and attended to cultural distinctions related to class and taste therein.

My findings also point to the additional influence of institutional pressures as a second major factor in cultural redefinition. As the practices and meanings that emerged to embody status distinctions had become commonplace in the industry due to institutional pressures, their symbolic potency was diluted. In other words, although institutional prevalence legitimated meanings and practices at the start of industry periods, it also eventually contributed to industry change by making them overly common, such that they no longer evoked the socio-cultural tastes they were initially aligned with. While this finding is similar to observations by DiMaggio (1987) and others that market pressures for expansion and efficiency dilute cultural distinctions, it adds additional nuance, since isomorphic pressures do not necessarily reflect efficiency (e.g.,

DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) or enable organizational expansion. Instead, it points to the iteration of institutional and socio-cultural systems in extended processes of legitimation. Thus, taken together, my findings indicate that factors external to the industry (i.e., changing societal tastes and status distinctions) as well as internal to the industry (i.e., institutional isomorphic pressures and norms) together prompted cultural redefinition.

More generally speaking, recognizing that both changing social distinctions and processes of legitimation through isomorphism factor into cultural redefinition, I believe it may be best viewed as a general and extended process of cultural entrepreneurship (DiMaggio, 1982; Lockwood & Glynn, 2016a) that contributes to ongoing industry relevance. Like processes of cultural entrepreneurship studied in past management research, cultural redefinition underlines the need for legitimacy and distinctiveness, but I show that it attends to the interplay of the two at the level of the industry and society, and not only at the organizational level (Navis & Glynn, 2011). Further, my findings suggest that such efforts contribute to institutional periodicity by overcoming pressures for sameness but also offering new tools for distinction appropriated from status groups to whom industry members seek to appeal. In other words, I show that the waxing and waning of institutional pressures contributes to industry change, as scholars have observed, but my findings suggest that this occurs somewhat *indirectly*, though the agentic efforts of industry actors in processes of cultural entrepreneurship focused on redefinition. My findings make several important contributions to research on status, classification, and cultural entrepreneurship, as I discuss next.

First, this study establishes empirically that cultural redefinition occurs to update industry and organizational ends and uphold status distinctions, as scholars have suggested (DiMaggio, 1982; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001) but left empirically unexamined. Further, I reveal some of the

factors that contribute to cultural redefinition of status distinctions in an existing industry, highlighting the interplay of social status dynamics and processes of institutionalization occurring within the industry. In doing so, I show how cultural entrepreneurship may shape organizational and industry dynamics not just at founding, but also over the long term. I provide empirical evidence in support of the view that cultural entrepreneurship – in this case, focused on redefinition – may be important for “new as well as already existing firms” (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001: 561).

Second, my findings also offer an integrative view of cultural entrepreneurship by drawing new connections with industry periodicity (e.g., Glynn & Abzug, 2002), revealing how cultural efforts guide the meanings and practices that constitute industry eras and also influence shifts between them. In doing, I make inroads toward explaining some of “the sources of institutional patterns [and] their subsequent elaboration and potency” (Powell, 1991: 188) by speaking to the nature of institutional persistence and change over the long term and showing how agentic efforts at cultural entrepreneurship can both respond to and direct such shifts. Specifically, although cultural redefinition underlines agency, my findings also highlight the sometimes-constraining nature of cultural entrepreneurship, as it contributes to industry stability through organizational efforts to avoid illegitimacy, as existing research has similarly emphasized (e.g., Zhao et al., 2013). At the same time, my findings suggest that such processes may prompt strategic changes that “save the industry” (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001) by keeping it relevant within the broader socio-cultural milieu and initiating quick change. Redefinition through cultural entrepreneurship, in other words, may best be compared to a swinging pendulum (see also Giorgi et al., 2015), shifting between enabling and constraining industry actors, rather than exerting a single, unchanging influence for change or stability.

Finally, and most broadly, the findings from this study extend research on the socio-cultural embeddedness of industries, drawing clearer links between cultural meanings and practices that exist across levels of analysis. My findings elaborate and add nuance to DiMaggio's (1987) theoretical observation that industries and organizations do not simply "passively reflect social change or public tastes" (DiMaggio, 1987) as some research has suggested. They affirm that, as Hirsch (1986) found, they are carefully constructed to resonate with the broader cultural code at play through cultural entrepreneurship, and I show how this broader resonance is accomplished not just at a single point in time, but over the very long term. In moving from one era to the next, it appears that industries appeal "to the broader values of society" (Hirsch, 1986) to legitimate their existence through cultural redefinition of industry distinctions that accounts for both social status-based distinctions and institutional pressures for sameness.

Perhaps more surprisingly, my findings underline that cultural redefinition that contributes to periodicity unfolded not just when new technologies were developed, or when products came under fire, or because the industry was marked by too much sameness. Rather, it suggests that shifts were fundamentally related to negotiating social status and legitimately distinguishing high-cultural organizations and elite social groups from their low-brow counterparts, a factor that gone almost completely overlooked in management research on institutional periodicity and cultural entrepreneurship (but see DiMaggio, 1982 for a sociological perspective). In particular, this study suggests that cultural redefinition maintains status distinctions by adapting the manners in which exclusivity is broadly legitimated, extending arguments by DiMaggio (1982) that focused on this tension at industry emergence. As such, my findings highlight the interplay of the values, meanings and practices of multiple status groups in

shaping the industry over time, rather than the more straightforward dominance of elite status and culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Further, it introduces the possibility the market might function to uphold, rather than diminish, cultural status distinctions, a provocative idea that appears to conflict with existing theory (DiMaggio, 1987; Hirsch, 1972) – and one that I explore in depth in the next empirical chapter

CHAPTER V. “NEW LUXURY”: EXAMINING THE MAINTENANCE OF ELITE STATUS

ABSTRACT

I extend the findings from Chapter IV to focus more squarely on elite status, examining how members of the U.S. hotel industry’s high-status luxury segment conveyed meaningful cultural distinctions even as “very notion of ‘elite’ seems to be in flux” (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010: 970) in society. I ask, *How does a high-status market segment maintain its status as socio-cultural distinctions erode?* I focus on the period from 1985-2015 and draw from extensive archival data, interviews and observations as my data (see Chapter III). I present evidence to show that although, in many cases, the market declassifies culture by eroding social distinctions and diluting the tastes mediated by organizations (DiMaggio, 1982, 1987; Weber, 1978), “cultural reclassification” led by market actors, which aims to sharpen distinctions and maintain status, is observable. I identify three mechanisms by which this is accomplished by collective market actors: *sacralization* of luxury products by development and monopolization of cultural expertise; *emotional recasting* of elite tastes and preferences with affective and normative framing; and *preservation* of commercial appeal through retention of longstanding credentials to signal market quality. I conceptualize such efforts as a form of minimally coordinated cultural entrepreneurship (Wry et al., 2011) that accomplished cultural reclassification to maintain the segment’s status the face of commercial pressures that had “de-classified” the cultural distinctiveness of luxury. More specifically, in the luxury hotel market segment, cultural reclassification signaled a shift from “old” luxury, which had become highly homogenized and commercial, to “new” luxury, which spoke more directly to the cultural tastes of social elites. My findings reveal that, for market actors, high status not self-perpetuating, as some research suggests (Chen et al., 2012), but rather is actively and carefully maintained. They show how such

efforts entail both updating the meanings at the organizational level and guiding status conferral at the market segment level, and they affirm the importance of cultural entrepreneurship past organizational founding.

INTRODUCTION

In this study, I take a mechanisms-based approach (Davis & Marquis, 2005; Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010; Weber, 2006) to understanding whether and how market actors collectively manage elite status to adapt to changing high-brow cultural tastes and evolving commercial pressures. I focus on the luxury segment of the U.S. hotel industry, which is the segment most closely associated with social elites and which has endured as the most prestigious industry segment since the time of the Grand Hotel. Noting widespread agreement among industry actors that over the past here decades, “luxury has changed. It’s not what it used to be” (Walsh, 2009), I focus on the transition from the Chain Hotel Era to the Lifestyle Hotel Era, from 1985 – 2015 to understand what changed about luxury, how it changed, and to what end. I examine how members of the luxury hotel segment collectively updated the symbolic meaning of luxury and insulated it from market pressures for expansion while simultaneously accounting for the fact that “to fulfill their ritual [cultural] functions, status cultures must be relatively consistent and slow to change” (DiMaggio, 1991a: 127).

Consistent with existing research that emphasizes the relative permanence of high status, I show that, by and large, the elite luxury segment of the market maintained its favorable standing, and that the members of the segment remained largely consistent over time. That the high status of the segment persisted is somewhat unsurprising, as scholars have widely emphasized the persistence of status hierarchies (Chen et al., 2012) and elite privilege (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont & Small, 2008). What was unexpected, however, was that, in spite of widespread scholarly recognition that that commercial processes tend to “declassify” culture and erode status distinctions (DiMaggio, 1987; Hirsch, 1972; Weber, 1978), efforts to “reclassify” culture were evident. Specifically, members of the luxury segment undertook – and

accomplished – what I term “cultural reclassification,” sharpening status distinctions that corresponded with changing cultural tastes and practices associated with elite social status, and maintaining market appeal

This study has several objectives. First, it extends my findings from Chapter IV, by showing how market actors collectively maintain elite status over time and thus drive the observed shifts between industry periods. In Chapter IV, I focused on broad trends as they unfolded over the long term. In this study, I focus more squarely on the luxury segment and how these hotels helped to shift the meaning of elite status to emphasize expertise, rather than social class. I show how members of the luxury segment engaged in an extended process of cultural entrepreneurship that unfolded at the collective level and attended to both cultural adaptation and commercial persistence. In doing so, I extend research that views elite status as relatively stable and answer the recent call for work that looks beyond research on professions to offer a different, “more detailed and updated understanding of expertise as a foundation” for stratification (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010: 971), not just in society, but also in and through commercial markets.

Second, I identify the specific mechanisms by which cultural “reclassification” was accomplished. I show how the three mechanisms of sacralization, emotional recasting, and preservation allowed the luxury segment to hold pressures for commercial and cultural classification in productive tension. Such efforts enabled needed interpretive flexibility to update the meaning of luxury at the organizational level (as I examine in Chapter VI) and to guide status conferral segment level, accomplishing “reclassification” and redrawing market-based and cultural distinctions that maintained the high status of the luxury segment.

Finally, I extend research on cultural entrepreneurship beyond profit maximization and wealth generation (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2013) for new

market entrants, to the legitimation and maintenance of elite social status. In doing so, I adopt a more centrally “cultural” approach to understanding cultural entrepreneurship and reveal new manners in which market actors cultivate “cultures in ways that resonate with broader societal beliefs” (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001: 546); namely, though attention to status and cultural capital.

I begin with an overview of existing literature related to status, culture, and classification in market settings. Next, I present research that uses both qualitative and quantitative analyses of archival data, interviews, and observations to reveal process and mechanisms underpinning efforts to manage status through cultural “reclassification.” I close with a discussion of the theoretical implications of my work.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Although the importance of status is well-recognized among management scholars (see Chapter II), those interested in further understanding the dynamics of status are faced with an intriguing paradox. On the one hand, researchers have widely agreed that status orders are very difficult to change (Dacin, Munir, & Tracey, 2010; Lounsbury & Rao, 2004; Washington & Zajac, 2005), with much of the extant research in management pointing to the relative permanence of status. Especially for elite actors that reap the benefits of their high status, maintenance of status is a central concern in organizations and markets (e.g., Malter, 2014). However, for the most part, reproduction of elite status has been viewed as mostly automatic, with some elite organizations, like educational institutions (Dacin et al., 2010; Di Domenico & Phillips, 2009), winemakers (Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014), and arts institutions (DiMaggio, 1982; Glynn & Lounsbury, 2005) having maintained their prestige for centuries, with seemingly minimal effort aimed at status maintenance.

On the other hand, recent research has begun to bring the apparent permanence of status into question. In particular, Delmestri and Greenwood (2016) recently revealed how the status of a market category could change, and radically so, through the purposeful efforts of market actors. Their findings underline that, although high status may appear to be largely fixed, it is also possible for low-status actors to renegotiate it by harnessing processes of broader cultural classification over market-specific rankings. Similarly pointing to the mutability of status, DiMaggio (1987: 452) has eloquently argued that “much of the Western world has entered a period of cultural declassification” wherein existing cultural classifications that produced elite goods and experiences are swiftly eroded in the face of commercial pressures that emphasize profit maximization (see also Swidler, 2010; Weber, 1978) and dilute cultural tastes. This seems to underline the growing opportunity for low-status organizations and market collectives to upset existing status rankings, as Delmestri and Greenwood revealed (2016), such that elite status may be less permanent than management scholars have come to assume.

With research that alternatively emphasizes the apparent permanence of elite status and the considerable challenges that non-elite market actors may present, especially at the collective level, it seems that, to more fully understand status dynamics, management scholars must develop a more nuanced view of whether and how high status is actively maintained. Such efforts are likely to be especially interesting and important in market settings where, as DiMaggio’s (1987) arguments on commercial and cultural classification implied and management research has begun to suggest, status can be determined in two very different ways. Specifically, extending existing management research, it seems logical that *quality* is one important consideration in determining the status of market collectives, like segments or categories, as much as it contributes to determining the status of single organizations. For

instance, although sports cars may generally be seen as having higher status than minivans because of their social cachet (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016), the sports car market segment might lose its more elite status if such cars began consistently breaking down. However, since the metrics for assessing relative quality are more or less incommensurable across distinct market categories, it is unclear whether or how product quality might be used as a signal of status by members of a market segment or assessed by audiences.

At the same time, as scholars have also begun to emphasize (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016; Sharkey, 2014), the status of market segments or genres is also *socio-cultural*, re-emphasizing early research that underlined their embeddedness in broader systems of meaning and classification (DiMaggio, 1982, 1987) that contribute to determining the meaning (Glynn & Navis, 2013; Wry et al., 2011) as well as the esteem or status of a market collective. More specifically, meaning and status may be related not only to quality, but also to cultural use: by associating products with certain social practices to signal taste in ways that align with “a specific position with the hierarchical structure of a field” (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016, citing Bourdieu, 1984). However, scholars have widely noted that the basis of elite social status has evolved considerably over the past decades (e.g., Peterson & Kern, 1996; Zald & Lounsbury, 2010), as I review in Chapter II and allude to in Chapter IV. More specifically, whereas in the past, scholars emphasized social class-based distinctions and the exclusivity of “high” or elite cultural habits and tastes (Bourdieu, 1984), it is now well-recognized that contemporary elites are cultural “omnivores” (Peterson & Kern, 1996), such that the boundaries around their cultural tastes are rather ill-defined and porous.

The implications of changing tastes and practices associated with elite status are unclear for market actors, as research has “tended to downplay or altogether bracket these issues” (Zald

& Lounsbury, 2010: 969) and has, to my knowledge, largely overlooked their interplay with commercial standards for quality that may also relate to status. Based on the limited insights from existing research, however, it seems likely that for low-status market segments seeking to raise their status (e.g., Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016), such shifts are mostly unproblematic, since the segment is unassociated with elite tastes to begin with. In fact, it seems likely that changing ideas and practices associated with elite status may provide a window of opportunity for raising collective status by newly aligning with updated elite cultural tastes and social practices, as Delmestri and Greenwood suggested (2016). Moreover, although growing heterogeneity in cultural tastes may complicate determination of what “types of cultural signals serve as currency in corporate settings” (Rivera, 2012: 1017), low-status market segments have little to lose should their efforts be misdirected; although status gains may be hindered, loss of existing status is of little concern.

For incumbent high-status market segments, however, changing elite tastes and practices are likely to be more problematic. They likely necessitate efforts by the market segment to adapt to changing cultural tastes and habits to maintain their elite esteem, while simultaneously disassociating themselves with outdated – but perhaps ongoing – social practices that may no longer be seen as high-status (DiMaggio, 1982). Such efforts are complex because, as DiMaggio pointed out, high-status groups “cannot innovate too rapidly” (DiMaggio, 1991a: 124). Further, for high-status segments, much is at stake in efforts to remain elite: missteps are highly visible (Washington & Zajac, 2005), and although high-status segments are buffered from negative perceptions (Podolny, 1993; Sharkey, 2014), they stand to gain little but lose much in terms of status as they adapt to changing tastes. And, considering commercial pressures, efforts to change may be problematic in and of themselves: specifically, if perceptions of quality are maintained

largely through inaction (Podolny & Phillips, 1996; Podolny, 1993), it seems possible that action may in turn threaten perceptions of continued quality, upsetting high status in the market, as well. In other words, especially in light of growing evidence of changing cultural tastes and practices associated with elites (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010) and recognition of the tensions between cultural and commercial processes of classification (e.g., DiMaggio, 1987; Wry et al., 2011), status maintenance seems unlikely to simply be ‘automatic,’ but may also be highly difficult to accomplish.

In spite of widespread acknowledgement of the importance of status and increasing recognition that it may be actively managed and even changed, we “know little about how status dynamics occur” (Piazza and Castellucci, 2014: 309) and how elite status is maintained. In this study, I set out to address this shortcoming by asking: *How do high-status market segments maintain their status in the face of changing ideas about elite social status more broadly?* More specifically, extending my findings from Chapter IV, in this study I focused on the luxury segment of the hotel industry and I asked: *How did members of the luxury segment of the hotel industry shift from “old” luxury to “new” luxury to maintain the status of the segment in both the market, relative to other market segments, and in society, as mechanism for the expression of elite cultural tastes?* To address this puzzle, extending existing theory and addressing the discontinuities detailed above (Locke, 2001), I conducted an inductive study of the luxury segment of the U.S. hotel industry to understand how it maintained its high status through times of industry change.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, I focused on the luxury segment of the U.S. hotel industry from 1985 - 2015. Extending the findings from the last chapter, I used the year 1985 as the starting point

because it marked the start of the industry transition to the Lifestyle Hotel Era, providing me with a baseline understanding of how status was conveyed and conferred prior to industry shifts. I used the year 2015 as the ending point because, by this time, it was widely agreed – in industry and popular press and among industry experts – that the hotel industry and its audience members had settled on a “new luxury” that preserved the status of the market segment in the industry and among audience members. I drew my data primarily from large luxury hotel companies (rather than small, independently-owned and operated hotels). Large hotel companies are most involved in constructing and transforming meanings operative in the industry. In the time period of interest, about 80% of the hotels in the industry were affiliated with large chains or other major collections (E4.01.13). Focusing primarily on major luxury hotel companies was also a practical choice: smaller hotels are fragmented and often do not advertise in major travel publications, making it difficult to collect reliable longitudinal data on that speaks to their efforts at conveying and retaining market and cultural status.

As detailed in Chapter III, I followed a strategy of concurrent triangulation, using multiple data sources and multiple units of analysis (Creswell, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989). My primary data consisted of 428 archival advertisements for luxury hotels in *Travel + Leisure* magazine that span from 1985 – 2015; 592 newspaper and industry articles focused on luxury travel and hotels in the *New York Times* from 1985 – 2015; and 26 semi-structured interviews I conducted with hotel industry experts on luxury, along with supplemental data described in Chapter III and detailed in Table 3.1. My analysis for this study unfolded in four broad steps. First, I constructed a narrative of key events related to luxury and the meanings and practices that constituted it in the hotel industry over its entire history. Second, I hand-coded primary data sources, including advertisements, newspaper articles, and interviews, using detailed, qualitative

content analysis to examine them, following the process detailed in Chapter III. Third, I used SPSS to conduct analyses of variance (ANOVA) tests with Tukey HSD post hoc analyses to assess changes in the occurrence of codes in the luxury hotel advertisements over time. Finally, I conducted a conceptual reduction (Locke, 2001), stepping back from fine-grained coding and statistical analyses to develop a more generalized understanding of shifts in meanings and status ascribed to “luxury” in the industry and to identify the mechanisms by which members of the luxury market segment guided this process.

In the pages that follow, I present my findings. First, I offer a brief, high-level analytic narrative of this time period as it unfolded in the luxury segment. Built from my analysis of archival sources, including newspaper articles and industry press, and confirmed through interviews and observations, it speaks to shifts in status and luxury over the time period of interest. Then, I present the findings from analysis of luxury hotel advertisements and interviews with luxury experts, revealing the changing manners in luxury was conveyed by industry members and pointing to the mechanisms that underpinned cultural “reclassification” from “old” luxury to “new” luxury to preserve the elite status of the luxury hotel segment in the industry and in society. I detail results from qualitative coding and then show results from supplementary quantitative analyses that affirm my findings.

FINDINGS

Analytic Narrative: Toward a “New Luxury”

Through much of the Chain Hotel Era (1940s – 1990s), luxury hotels had remained socially exclusive and removed from the push toward mass-market hospitality that swept the industry, as detailed in Chapter IV. By the early 1980s, however, with the rise of finance capitalism (Davis, 2009), changing tax laws that favored hotel investments (Vermillion &

Cimini, 2009), and growing demand for luxury goods of all types (Thomas, 2007), including high-end hotels, members of the industry moved to take advantage of emerging market opportunities for luxury hotels. Recognizing the need for quick expansion but consistent high quality, luxury hotels adopted the chain-based model through the 1980s, seeking to address a central industry tension many informants I spoke with noted:

“that is what so fascinating about our industry... maybe the general outsider doesn’t understand that it has a very complicated business because you have very sophisticated financing models out there for hotels, but still you have to run a hotel” (E12.01.15)

To assure reliability and efficiency to investors and financiers, who held the industry’s purse strings, while maintaining consistent, valued services and amenities for guests, luxury hotels adopted chain-based standard operating procedures (SOPs) and codified elements of luxury that had previously been seen as matters of taste.

Standards and efficiency measures proliferated with incredible speed among luxury hotels. One manager “says she follows 2,300 rules, including the phrases used to greet guests” (“A short history of hotels: Be my guest,” 2013), and the experts I spoke with widely agreed that although their precise number varied, luxury hotels became deeply reliant on SOPs through the 1990s. Service scripts and standardized amenities that were continuously scrutinized and updated became the hallmark of luxury hotels in the 1990s (Sherman, 2007): “It’s our opinion that if you can’t define it, you can’t control it, you can’t measure it, and you can’t improve it” (Robison, 2008 quoting John Timmerman, former VP Operations, Ritz-Carlton).

As the 21st century commenced, the hotel industry saw “unprecedented growth. Demand for hotels...far outstripped supply, generating a tremendous amount of hotel construction” by the early 2000s (Diener, 2009). With “Americans...spending more exuberantly than ever” (Green, 1999: ST2), more than half the hotel chains introduced in the mid-2000s portrayed themselves as

“luxury” (Vermillion & Cimini, 2009). Middle-market and economy hotels increasingly emulated members of the luxury segment, offering additional amenities, increasing the quality of accommodations, and explicitly pointing out their luxury amenities in ways that began to blur perceived status distinctions in the industry. As one industry article noted, “Certain words get used so much they lose their original meaning, or at least their credibility. Such is the situation with “luxury” in the hotel industry.” (2009).

Attempting to overcome growing industry sameness, high-end hotels seemingly took a page from the days of Grand Hotels, drawing heavily on overt displays of opulence and wealth, like using solid gold silverware or installing extra helipads for guests (Lee, 2009), to signal their high status. These efforts rang hollow, however, and laid bare the ever-widening rift that had surfaced between luxury in the industry and elite status based on class-based social distinctions that had eroded in society. The experts I spoke with agreed: “I think the issue is that luxury is so overused...the word is so overused, so misrepresented” (E9.01.15) that, hoteliers came to realize, it had begun to simply “telegraph extravagance [and] waste” (Forrest, 2009).

Recognizing that shifting societal dynamics and mass production had “changed the metrics with which status and traditional luxury are defined” (Pedro, 2012), the members of the luxury segment responded. By 2009, the industry press noted the shift that had been developing in the industry (e.g., Freed, 2013; Mayock, 2012; Walsh, 2009), and informants I spoke with between 2014 and 2016 unanimously agreed that, over the prior decade, luxury in the industry had changed; in fact, they explicitly referred to “old luxury” and “new luxury.” Published accounts from Deloitte (Jennings, Giorgio, Murali, & Goggin, 2014), Boston Consulting Group (Bellaiche, 2013), and Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts (Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, 2012) similarly noted the shift. The organizations comprising the luxury hotel segment remained

largely consistent; however, they had focused on culturally reclassifying luxury. As one industry expert I spoke with noted, this had entailed fundamentally rethinking how luxury and elite status were constructed, newly accounting for updated cultural tastes and preferences, rather than just focusing internally:

They [members of the luxury segment] can say this is who and what we are, but guests...are helping to define that...So they really need to figure out how to make sure that that happens for them. (E3.01.13)

To more closely examine how members of the luxury segment managed this process to construct “new” luxury and retain its elite status, I turned to industry advertisements and interviews with industry experts deeply familiar with luxury shifts. These sources offered a lens to how luxury was culturally “reclassified” through the agentic efforts of segment members.

Advertisements and Interviews: Maintaining Elite Status

Efforts to adapt to shifting ideas about elite status were clear in luxury hotel advertisements in *Travel + Leisure* magazine and were explicitly acknowledged by informants. My analysis suggested three distinct mechanisms by which the luxury hotel segment guided processes of cultural classification to give new meaning to luxury: sacralization, emotional recasting, and preservation. I discuss each in turn.

Sacralization

The first approach informants alluded to and that was observable in industry data was one of sacralization (DiMaggio, 1982; Durkheim, 1915). Although some scholars use the term sacralization to refer to aspects of religiosity, here, “it does not necessarily have a connection to the supernatural or to formal religions” (Bartunek & Do, 2011: 796). Rather, it refers to a process

of drawing distinctions to separate the socially-important or significant from the mundane or everyday (see, for instance, Bartunek & Do, 2011; DiMaggio, 1982), as my findings elaborate.

At the start of the time period covered in this study (1985 – 2015), opulence and overt trappings of wealth were put on display by luxury hotels. Luxury hotels explicitly emphasized material manifestations of social standing and overt displays of wealth, seemingly referencing longstanding social distinctions related to class. For instance, the Hyatt Regency Grand Hyatt urged audiences to “discover the difference grandeur makes,” in a 1985 advertisement that featured images of the hotel’s imposing façade and decorative water features. Similarly, a 1985 ad for the Helmsely Palace in New York pointed to its “grand stairway, aglow in gold and crystal [and]...the marble of the promenade polished to a mirror sheen,” and depicted the gleaming staircase and hotel lobby. A focus on grandeur and superior hotel quality was very common in efforts to give meaning to “luxury” and convey status at the start of the time period in this study: in the years 1985, 1990 and 1995 (which I view at the end of the Chain Hotel Era, based on findings from Chapter IV), on average, about 75% of advertisements from the luxury segment emphasized these extensive, high-cost hotel features and amenities.

Industry experts I spoke with affirmed the strict, well-defined ideas about luxury that members of the industry segment had used to maintain a sense of exclusivity during this time, even as class-based social distinctions eroded in society and the demand for luxury goods grew immensely. More specifically, at the time, members of the luxury segment consistently emphasized:

“luxury which had to be marble and brass, it had to be structured in certain ways, and it had to be white glove, the plate had to be served from the left not from the right” (B9.01.14).

Ideas about elite status that had taken hold in the industry decades ago had endured, in other

words, and, in the face of competition for commercial expansion and continued social exclusivity, they informed the industry's efforts to manage its status and signal quality.

Noting these efforts, the informants I spoke with also widely noted their inefficiency in retrospect. For instance, the leader of one major luxury hotel chain noted:

There is what I would refer as an old world luxury, which is more formal, more contrived, and it's stiffer, and obliges you to follow certain codes of behavior and engagement in order to enjoy what that definition of luxury is. I think sometimes luxury gets...luxury products or services get outdated... you kind of lose... the real truth around what luxury is, and people get into this world of pretending. (L3.01.16)

Put differently, the luxury hotel segment deployed overt status signals long after the social distinctions that had created them were eroded and, by the 1980s and 1990s, “tended to the extravagant, rather than to the sacred” in an effort to manage status alongside commercial expansion, as DiMaggio (1982: 37) similarly noted about Boston's early arts scene.

By the early 2000s (the start of the Lifestyle Hotel Era), however, members of the luxury segment had begun to take a new approach, decreasing their emphasis on overt extravagance and class-based “habitus” to give meaning to hotels as luxury and convey elite status. They worked to distance hotel luxury from what had come to be seen as common or everyday; members of the segment newly adopted a view of the luxury hotel stay as akin to the experience of art or a treasured tradition. This was seen as a clear break from the existing approach to luxury that had become commoditized and unoriginal, as one informant elaborated:

I think some of these brands, because of the commoditization of these standards, [lost] the art of hospitality. We are all focusing now in the science of service but the art of hospitality cannot be forgotten. (L4.01.16)

By 2005, this change was reflected in advertisements by segment members. Luxury hotels took to portraying the experiences they offered guests as similar to the experience of an exquisite symphony or enriching time spent in a museum.

For instance, in a 2005 advertisement, Park Hyatt Hotels referred to themselves as experts in “the fine art of hospitality,” calling out their ability to deliver not opulence or marble and brass, but rather “a truly unforgettable experience.” Along similar lines, the Langham Hotel in Boston, a member of the Leading Hotels of the World line, featured a simple image of the hotel’s façade in a 2005 advertisement and elaborated:

“Boston’s Federal Reserve building in the heart of the city built in 1922 is now one of the world’s leading hotels. Instead of simply paying Boston’s fascinating sites a visit, stay in one. A world-renowned landmark in luxury that forms the cornerstone of Boston’s city center. A location just minutes from [local attractions]. A grand hotel that not only brings you the best of Boston, but lets you live it firsthand.”

In 2010, St. Regis Hotels ran a similarly themed advertisement, noting the hotel’s history and deeming it “iconic,” suggesting its representativeness of a broader, esteemed and important past. Likening hotels to a cherished artwork or a piece of history – but one that, even more compellingly, could be lived in and experienced – recast hotels not as items to be used and disposed of, as commoditized luxury had been seen, but rather as valued artifacts and repositories of collective memories and experiences.

Enlarging the notion of hotels beyond just a place to stay is, in some senses, similar to “category sublimation” discussed recently by Delmestri and Greenwood (2016), which invoked broad cultural material to frame a category’s status. However, in their attempts to maintain their industry status and regain their broader social cachet, efforts to set the luxury segment apart were not abstract or obtuse (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016). Rather, they were strikingly concrete and instructive. More specifically, acknowledging that elite status had increasingly come to be associated not just with social class, but rather lifestyle choices and deliberative development of expertise (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010), as well, members of the luxury hotel segment aimed to ensure audiences were, in the words of one informant I spoke with, “a little bit more educated

about, ‘what is luxury?’” (E4.01.14). These efforts deepened and elaborated strategies that likened luxury hotels to pieces of art or museums and were core to efforts at sacralization.

More specifically, some members of the luxury segment took to running multi-page promotional articles in *T+L*, and advertisements were normative and instructional in their focus, seemingly equipping audiences to preserve and interpret luxury hotels’ significance as rare and uncommon. A 2000 advertisement for the Dorchester Collection, a luxury hotel group, for instance, focused on “The bar at the Dorchester. For over 70 sparkling years, a procession of the glamorous, the gorgeous, and the great have spun through the revolving doors on Park Lane.” Pictured in the advertisement were selected “Guests of The Dorchester 1937 to present” including Elizabeth Taylor and Andy Warhol. Similarly, a 2010 advertisement for hotels in The Luxury Collection noted:

“The world’s well-travelled people must always traverse the corridors of the uncommon...Architecture is but a countenance that mirrors our past and culture...We welcome you to discover an eternal story of life written in the text of stone, glass and colour. We welcome you to luxury living with history.”

Offering little-known details and specific interpretations to elaborate audience understanding of the social significance of the hotel, luxury segment advertisements disassociated luxury with empty, market-based opulence and linked it with earned, historical renown. An approach of underlining the cultural expertise and deep significance of luxury hotels – and efforts to equip guests to interpret it as such – was widely adopted among members of the segment by the mid-2000s (the continuation of the Lifestyle Hotel Era). While it was observable in an average of only one in ten advertisements from 1985, 1990 and 1995, an average of 85% of luxury hotel advertisements from 2010 and 2015 spoke to cultural expertise and societal significance of the hotels in the segment.

Creating a virtual repository that preserved and taught an elite cultural repertoire, members of the luxury segment enriched advertising efforts with extensive supporting materials, especially online; one industry expert I spoke with in 2014 marveled at the widespread approach of “featuring pictures and descriptions and guides to the local area” (E4.01.14), rather than just details on the hotels themselves. For instance, by 2013, Four Season and Ritz Carlton (along with numerous other luxury hotel brands) began producing seasonal magazines available online; The Luxury Collection published a series of *Hotel Tales* and *Destination Guides* books available both online and in hard copy; and InterContinental has developed a cookbook created by various Executive Chefs from their hotels around the world. These resources imparted, in striking detail, expert knowledge on topics ranging from “Where to Shop in Marrakech” (Four Seasons Magazine, 2014) to local concierge advice on “Indigenous Treasures And Unexplored Gems” (The Luxury Collection, 2015) around the world. An informant, noting this approach, echoed numerous experts and management I spoke with when he remarked on the recognized importance of preserving and imparting knowledge about the hotels, saying:

I view myself as the keeper of the [Luxury] brand because I have the historical perspective (...) [we impart] a story about the hotel: where it sits, how it fits into the neighborhood... and so as you might go visit the [luxury hotel], the design is trying to be reflective of its location, on [Main] Street, the building as you may know was the former headquarters of the [City] Police Department (E12.01.15)

Preserving and imparting rich details and in-depth historical knowledge aimed to deepen the sense of significance associated with luxury hotels and the opportunity to stay at them, distinguishing them from less socially-embedded, lower-tier competitors, and signaling a break from the luxury segment’s own prior emphasis on empty extravagance.

In sum, sacralization entailed bracketing and enriching the meaning of luxury in the industry and, in doing so, raising the status of the segment more broadly. To do so, the luxury

segment's members newly articulated and preserved the history of the segment by contextualizing it within broader collective memories and traditions, providing a "rich reservoir of potential associations" (Swidler, 2010: 291) to deepen the meaning of luxury. Information was carefully culled and analyzed, positioning luxury as worthy of serious attention and appreciation. Removed from the mundane through efforts at sacralization, one expert noted, "Our hotels, we don't feel they are hotels. We feel they are institutions" (L4.01.16), removed from market pressures through symbolic means and positioned to be preserved.

Emotional Recasting

The second approach members of the luxury segment used was one of emotional recasting, which involved efforts to draw distinctions based on judgments of social worthiness or positive emotionality (Lamont & Fournier, 1992; Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Lamont, 1992, 2000). In the luxury hotel segment, these efforts focused on associating luxury and elite tastes with relatively universal, socially-valued emotions and opportunities for self-expression and social connection, and, in doing so, disassociating it with greed, self-indulgence and unjust stratification.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the luxury segment of the industry was, by and large, overtly and unselfconsciously focused on high status and industry prowess. Advertisements often used concrete language and forceful evaluative statements that suggested the value of luxury rested in its quality and commercial esteem. For instance, a Four Seasons Hotels advertisement from 1985 read:

"Of the 6 best hotels in America, 4 have one striking thing in common. They are all Four Seasons Hotels. As rated by international bankers in Institutional Investor's annual survey of hotels around the world. Reported September, 1983."

In other cases, members of the luxury segment underlined entitlement and escape. For instance, a 1990 advertisement for The Babylon, a luxury hotel and then a member of The Leading Hotels of the World, urged guests to “Settle for more. The promise is simple. The best. And nothing less.” Similarly, a 1995 advertisement for Princess Hotels read, “The Princess. A very fitting name, I think (...) Though we may not be descended from royalty, I’m glad that a few weeks a year we can feel like we are.” In the early years covered in this study, in other words, members of luxury hotel segment largely imposed own ready-made, primarily cognitive assessments of the worth of luxury and elite status. By and large, they celebrated differences in social standing, noting the importance of bankers, royalty and other elites, and they associated luxury with fulfillment of a sense of indulgence and entitlement to the best, if just for the sake of having it.

By the early 2000s, members of the luxury segment noted increasing distaste for the class-based distinctions that luxury signaled to many (Sherman, 2007). While before, material luxury in the hotel industry had been cast as inherently valuable and worthy, similar to the landed social distinctions it had evoked, luxury lost some of its appeal as societal values had shifted (Mayock, 2012; Thomas, 2007) and prior class-based social distinctions had eroded. Prior cognitive signals used to convey status attenuated the perceived moral integrity of hotels and their guests into question (Forrest, 2009; White, 2011), since it clashed with the ethic of egalitarianism that was prominent in society, even among social elites (Khan, 2011; Rivera, 2012). In response, members of the luxury hotel segment attended to casting luxury in new ways and sought to deliberately distance it from socially devalued modes of classification and status signaling used through the 1990s. In particular, efforts to emotionally recast and change the social valence of luxury – and the social distinctions it referenced – became less cognitive and

highly emotionally- and behaviorally focused, casting luxury as a feeling or experience, rather than a commoditized good.

The experts I spoke with saw this shift as central to culturally “reclassifying” luxury hotels as desirable and elite, a “new” luxury, by changing the meanings and evaluations associated with them and focusing on the feeling of luxury, rather than the particular attributes of luxury itself. One noted that shifting the emotionality of luxury enabled a change in assessments of its moral integrity or social value, at least in the minds of industry members and guests, and helped to change the meaning of luxury in the industry:

I think where the change is...it connects [guests] in a way that is more emotional (...) I think perhaps...that's the change of what luxury really can be defined as. I think many people [in the industry] sort of look at it as “luxury is perfection: this is the way it's supposed to be done.”... [but] I think there's something to be said about how luxury is different for each person (...) How does it make you feel when you feel luxurious, and what are the emotions that you're trying to illicit from that? And I think [now] it's where people tend to feel most comfortable, where they feel most taken care of, most secure. (L1.01.13)

In managing status, in other words, members of the luxury segment counter-intuitively moved away from exclusivity and toward emphasizing universal positive emotions and valued experiences. In this sense, they conveyed luxury as associated not with elitism or exclusion, but with greater access to – and honed appreciation of – aesthetic pleasure (Swidler, 2010).

In advertisements, the members of luxury segment attended carefully to casting luxury in such a light by the mid-2000s. For instance, in 2010, Ritz-Carlton advertisements spoke little to amenities or services, but instead described luxury as: “where joy has no expiration date. There is no end to the unique experiences you will enjoy and the memories you will create at The Ritz-Carlton.” The advertisement featured an image of two young girls playing on the beach, a status-neutral representation of a long-enduring memory made, with no Ritz-Carlton specific beach

chairs or umbrellas in sight. Similarly, a 2015 advertisement for The Leading Hotels of the World focused on enrichment and inspiration. Featuring a beautiful but somewhat generic image of a porch and a sunset, it urged audiences:

“See the world from a different perspective. Seek the remarkably uncommon. For curious travelers, seeing the world differently means beginning from an unexpected vantage point...elevate the senses through immersive experiences and story-worthy moments...”

Such emotionally-rich advertisements grew immensely in prevalence over the period in this study; while only about 17% of advertisements from members of the luxury segment made emotional appeals in 1985, 1990 and 1995, by 2010 and 2015, almost 70% did.

More broadly speaking, efforts to emotionally recast luxury and draw status distinctions centered on shifting toward expressing and maintaining elite status based not on strict exclusion, but rather through enabling wide sharing and sociable interaction (DiMaggio, 1987; Erickson, 1996; Peterson & Kern, 1996) that was seen as broadly legitimate. To that end, advertisements focused on the positive emotionality of luxury for their employees, as well, painting it in a highly positive light. For instance, in 2005, Ritz-Carlton adopted the tagline “It’s our Pleasure” and used it in a variety of ads featuring guests enjoying aspects of their travels. The campaign clearly conveyed that luxury – and the experience of status differences therein – was charged with positive emotion for guests as well as employees. Similarly, a *T+L* advertisement from Shangri-La hotels in 2015 characterized luxury as “Brought to you from the heart” and noted “it brings a genuine sense of warmth...let hospitality from the heart light up every moment of your stay.” Using emotion to strike a new balance between “exclusivity and legitimation” (DiMaggio, 1982: 48), members of the luxury segment moved away from a view of luxury as shutting lower-status groups out (e.g., Sherman, 2007) and toward a view luxury as something that connected people through common emotional bonds– a socially-valued end, indeed.

By the mid-2000s, advertisements had also shifted to strongly emphasize how the luxury segment was classified as elite in part because of the guests who constituted and patronized it; interestingly, language conveyed elite status not by articulating particular cultural tastes or practices, but rather by focusing on guests themselves. For instance, a 2005 advertisement for Conrad Hotels noted its “contemporary style as unique as you are,” featuring an image of a sophisticated-looking guest as well as hotel spaces and continuing:

“There’s no one else in the world like you. You are one of a kind. At Conrad, that’s a fact we embrace, and draw inspiration from. The notion of being yourself is the heart and soul of our brand (...) Discover the World of Conrad...and discover the luxury of being yourself.”

Similarly, a 2010 advertisement for a Kempinski Hotel focused on the important role of its guests, noting: “[The hotel] It’s your palace. We’re merely looking after it...the last thing we want to do is make you feel like a guest. Because the truth is, we’re guests in your life...” A 2015 advertisement for Park Hyatt referenced not the hotel’s amenities, but rather guests’ honed, omnivorous cultural tastes: “Suite 9: Guided Tour of Catacombs, Personal Stylist, Peanut Butter and Banana Sandwich, White Peonies, Cinnamon Jellybeans.” This emphasis on guests as enacting elite status – rather than hotels and their patrons simply ‘having’ high status – grew consistently over time, appearing in an average of 12% of advertisements in 1985, 1990 and 1995 to an average of about 58% in 2010 and 2015.

Members of the luxury segment came to convey that what was most valued was not a comfortable bed or a gold-plated shower head, but rather, a sense of fit with a socially-legitimate elite lifestyle. One expert I spoke with noted the potency of this approach, saying:

It’s not about the money when you’re in the luxury market, it’s not about \$12,000 on a suite, but it’s who can they connect to, what were the people that they could connect to, and what is the local experience that they can connect to (...) People see things like that, they see what they’re committed to in their own personal life, and that’s those little things

that kind of connect people to the destination, because then they feel a part of it. They feel like they're part of a community. (L1.01.13)

In other words, such efforts counter-intuitively contributed to maintaining elite status by underlining a sense of ‘organic’ connectedness, and not elitist exclusion, around valued sensibilities high-status guests shared, and emphasizing that such guests, rather than the organizations themselves, were central to creating and continuously upholding taste-based distinctions.

In sum, efforts to update luxury entailed shifting away from an approach to managing status that relied primarily on language that used cold cognition to describe the segment itself and toward an approach that evoked desired emotions and underlined interaction and connection by guests. In this sense, efforts to emotionally recast luxury went hand in hand with efforts to sacralize it; preserving and cataloguing the significance of luxury equipped guests with the expertise that they used to conveyed status and that helped others to see it as legitimate. With such efforts, the luxury hotel segment worked toward reclassifying luxury by drawing distinctions that were related not to exclusion, but rather to connection, a more justifiable and socially-valued lens on status and luxury, and one consistent with a view of elite status as enabling wide interaction and connection (DiMaggio, 1987; Erickson, 1996). Such efforts cultivated emotional investment to compel enactment of ritualized distinctions at the micro-level, in hotels, (Voronov & Vince, 2012; Voronov & Weber, 2016) and enabled flexibility to appeal to the wide range of tastes and preferences that marked the omnivorous social elite.

Preservation

Finally, although members of the luxury hotel segment focused primarily on cultural “reclassification” through efforts focused on sacralization and emotional recasting, they also aimed to preserve the segment’s high status within the industry. This entailed use of a third

approach, which emphasized preservation of longstanding quality signals and market-based cues. Especially with the recognition that hotels served a utilitarian function, providing a place to sleep, shower and eat, as well as a cultural function (Hirsch, 1972), preservation addressed the need for status and legitimacy in both commercial and cultural spheres.

Across interviews, I asked all informants about the elements, if any, that had persisted as the luxury had changed in the industry. Informants unanimously pointed to market-based signals of quality, noting that luxury and the segment's elite status were related to intangible cultural attributes but also tangible quality compared with lower-status market segments. One informant put it especially colorfully, comparing luxury hotels with cars:

Have you ever driven in a German car? They are different. It feels different than a Japanese car. So there are real differences, there are tangible differences when you see it...there are things, luxurious, that you can tell the difference of. I can tell the difference when I get into 180 count sheets vs 300 count sheets. One is scratchy, the other is not. The same thing when driving a car. So there are those real tangible differences [that make something "luxury"]. (E7.01.14)

Informants generally saw cultural and commercial aspects of elite status as distinct but complementary and noted that efforts at cultural classification were necessary but not sufficient to maintain the elite status of the luxury segment. Experts underlined the importance of quality, as well, remarking:

So it is a rare piece [to culturally convey elite status] and then it is the quality: quality people, quality decisions, quality design, quality in execution, quality.... All of that has to be, whatever you, do you have to be at the top of the game [compared with other hotels] and do it better than anybody else (L3.01.16)

Some informants keenly noted that this was especially important with the advent of boutique hotels and high-end listings on home rental websites like AirBnB that focused on guiding cultural classification in manners similar to those deployed by members of the luxury hotel segment, but tended to be seen as lower-quality.

As noted in prior sections, in the 1980s and 1990s, members of the luxury segment had focused centrally on such market-based signals of quality to indicate luxury's high status. Advertisements prominently featured and sometimes centered around industry-specific credentials and honors, like Mobile Five Star and AAA Five Diamond awards; members of the luxury segment also pointed to their similarity to with one another. For instance, a 1985 advertisement for Leading Hotels of the World pointed to its "195 truly deluxe hotels, recognized the world over as *the* places to stay" and Regent Hotels highlighted its New York and Chicago hotels, remarking that "Both cater to the traveller in search of perfection." Drawing out commonalities among industry members with references to quality, in other words, members of the segment focused on drawing market-based distinctions – and highlighting commonalities – to classify luxury. Such strategies are highly consistent with the status cues that management scholars have emphasized in existing research, even that which underlines cultural aspects of status conferral (Benjamin & Podolny, 1999; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Podolny, 1993), serving as a signal of credibility and industry connectedness.

Interestingly, while extant research might predict that these commercially-focused efforts would decrease with growing emphasis on cultural classification (DiMaggio, 1987), in this setting, the prevalence of efforts to signal market quality remained largely the same over the time. Specifically, an average of 26% of advertisements from the years 1985, 1990, and 1995 displayed market connections or credentials, increasing slightly to an average of 34% of advertisements in 2010 and 2015. In other words, although members of the luxury segment increased their emphasis on sacralizing and emotionally recasting luxury, they also preserved market-based signals of status, and in particular, those that articulated existing social connections in the industry (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). Advertisements did so by including subtle images of

industry credentials, like Star and Diamond awards, and explicitly underlining relationships among hotels in the industry segment and with related high-status market actors, like renowned chefs or hoteliers.

As much as members of the luxury segment sought cultural “reclassification” to retain their high status, in other words, shifting the elite tastes and practices with which they were associated, they also kept an eye to maintaining market status through continued high quality of the goods and services that had long constituted a luxury hotel stay. This approach allowed members of the luxury segment to redraw culturally-based status distinctions and associate new meanings with luxury without putting institutional (market) legitimacy and status at risk (Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Deephouse, 1999). In efforts to reclaim and maintain elite status, in other words, commercial forces did not erode cultural classifications (DiMaggio, 1987; Weber, 1978); rather, as market actors considered them in concert, and referenced market-based status cues alongside cultural ones, they reinforced one another to create a “new luxury” that leads the industry today. My analyses of newspaper articles affirmed that this mirrored broader shifts in ideas about luxury and elite status more generally.

Statistical Analysis: Comparing Advertisements over Time

To assess the significance of changes over time discussed above, I statistically examined changes in the patterns of codes for hotel advertisements appearing in *Travel + Leisure* magazine, contrasting those with a commercial or market emphasis versus those with a cultural or status-oriented emphasis, as described more fully in Chapter III. To assess a commercial emphasis, I focused on three codes: 1) added attributes, which noted extra amenities or services that signaled luxury; 2) signals of inherent high quality; and 3) market relationships or credentials. To assess a cultural emphasis, I focused on three codes: 1) signals of cultural

expertise, in which advertisements offered expert insights on recommended pursuits, hotel features, history, etc.; 2) affective language, which emphasized the positive emotional experience of luxury and 3) audience enactment, which positioned audience members as contributing to hotel's luxury focus or status. I compared the occurrence of these codes over three discrete time periods 1985, 1990 and 1995 (the end of the Chain Hotel Era); 2000 and 2005 (the beginning of the Lifestyle Hotel Era); and 2010 and 2015 (the continuance of the Lifestyle Hotel Era).

Overall, statistical results mirrored the patterns over time reported above; Table 5.1 summarizes the results. In general, efforts to manage status in commercial terms decreased significantly over time, while efforts to manage status in more cultural terms increased significantly over time. More specifically, I found significant decreases in mentions of added attributes of luxury hotels [$F(2, 425)=13.76, p<.001$] and signals of inherent product quality [$F(2, 425)=37.33, p<.001$] in advertisements over time. Post-hoc analyses indicated that mentions of added attributes decreased significantly ($p<.01$) from the end of the Chain Hotel Era (1985, 1990, and 1995) to the start of the Luxury Hotel Era (2000 and 2005). However, they indicated no further significant decrease by 2010 and 2015, suggesting that efforts to “dial back” signals of opulence leveled off by the mid-2000s. Signals of inherent quality, however, decreased significantly across all time periods, consistent with scholarly arguments that commercial signals are at odds with cultural ones.

As efforts at managing status de-emphasized these market-based cues over time, I found significant increases in displays of cultural expertise [$F(2, 425)=105.32, p<.001$], which increased especially sharply over time, as well as use of affective language [$F(2, 425)=49.91, p<.001$], and audience involvement in enacting elite status [$F(2, 425)=42.99, p<.001$], also consistent with the discussion above. Post-hoc analyses indicated that changes in all three

indicators of cultural classification were statistically significant ($p < .01$) between and across all time periods. Interestingly, displays of market relationships remained relatively consistent over time [$F(2, 425) = 1.38$, NS], appearing in about a third of ads across all time periods. This is consistent with the observation made among informants that, although the role of quality in the luxury classification had declined relative to broader signals of status, it remained important in signaling continued market expertise and high ranking. Figure 5.1 includes a graphical representation of shifts in the emphasis of advertisements over time.

Taken together, my findings reveal how and under what circumstances the luxury segment of the hotel industry engaged in collective efforts to reclaim and maintain its elite status through what I call cultural reclassification that maintained high status by sharpening the elite distinctiveness of luxury. I show how the elite status of the segment was threatened as broad, class-based social distinctions eroded and members of the luxury segment yielded to commercial pressures, leading many to note that luxury had lost its meaning – and, by association, its status. My analyses indicate that members of the luxury segment engaged efforts to “reclassify” themselves, shifting from “old” luxury to “new” luxury to maintain their high status. In general, this entailed striking a balance between cultural classification, by way of efforts at sacralization and emotional recasting, and commercial classification, with efforts at market-status preservation.

I view these efforts as constitutive of an extended process of cultural entrepreneurship (Lockwood & Glynn, 2016a), in which members of the luxury market segment manipulated and updated meanings and cultural practices. Cultural entrepreneurship enabled meaning-making and adjustment at the organizational level while maintaining elite status at the market segment level by allowing members of the evolving “social elite [to] control and govern” (DiMaggio, 1982: 35)

cultural distinctions in manners that were broadly considered legitimate. Acting as cultural entrepreneurs (DiMaggio, 1982; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001), high-status organizations collectively updated the symbolic meaning of luxury and insulated it from market pressures through efforts at sacralization and emotional recasting, and maintained the market-based meaning of luxury through efforts at preservation of perceived quality. In this way, the high status of the segment was maintained through conveying “not simply from the technical or aesthetic qualities of goods, *per se*, but also from the capacity of goods to locate the self and others in the social world” (DiMaggio, 1991a: 124) with efforts at cultural entrepreneurship that spoke to both. These efforts punctuated an important turning point for the segment, enabling a shift from “old” luxury to “new luxury,” as an informant remarked: “what we stumbled onto, if you will, [was an approach] that made us say “hey there is something here” and we can be in this category without having to build it the same way [more traditional luxury hotel companies had done]” (E9.01.15)

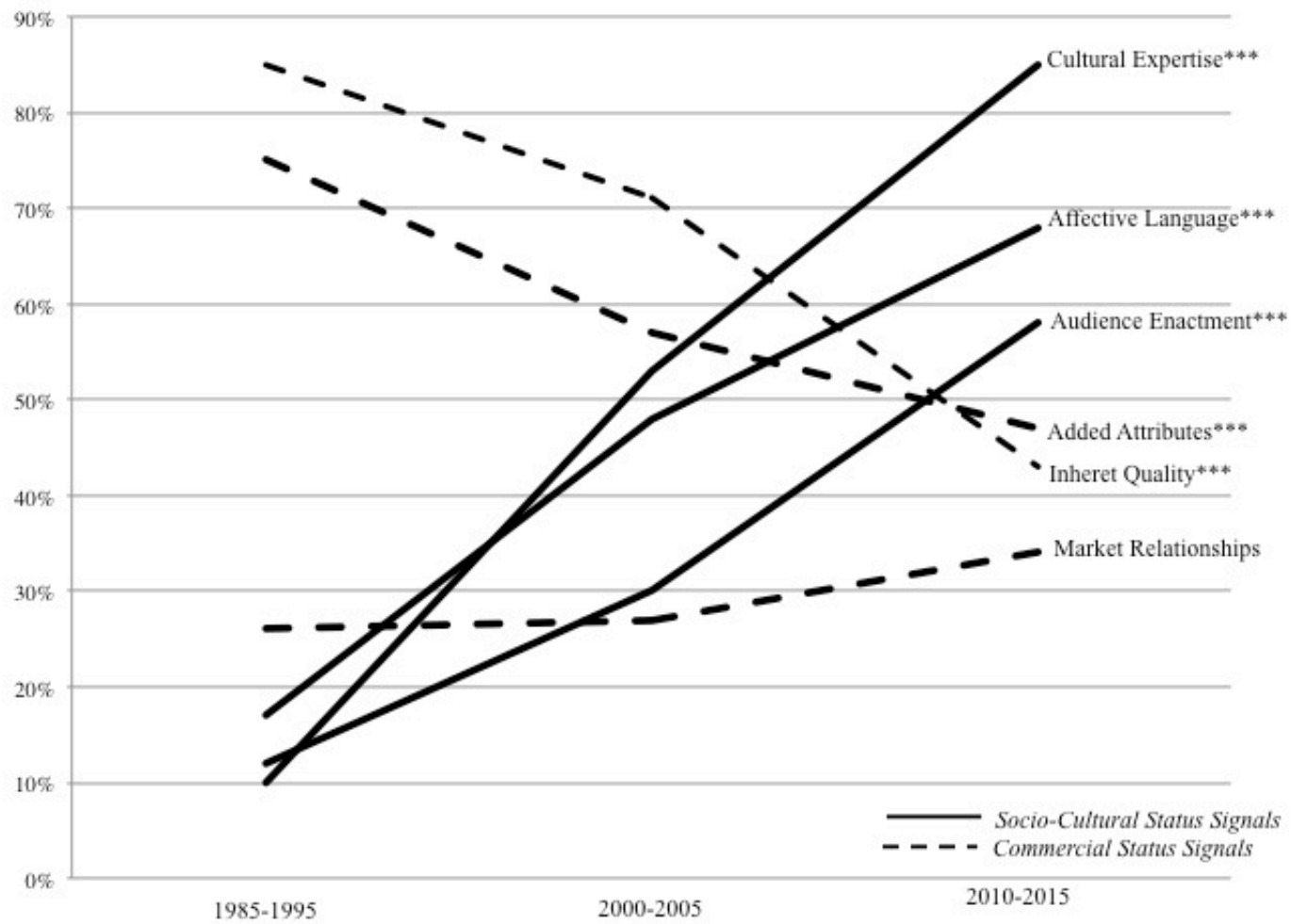
Table 5.1: Comparison of Code Frequencies by Time Period

Codes		Time Period			F-test	Post-Hoc Analysis		
		1985-1995 n=155	2000 & 2005 n=122	2010 & 2015 n=151		00&05 vs. 85-95	10&15 vs. 00&05	10&15 vs. 85-95
Commercial Classification								
Added Attributes	Mean	0.75	0.57	0.47	13.28***	0.01**	0.18	0.00***
	SD	0.44	0.50	0.50				
Inherent Quality		0.85	0.71	0.43	37.39***	0.01*	0.00***	0.00***
		0.35	0.46	0.50				
Market Relationships		0.26	0.27	0.34	1.38 (NS)			
		0.44	0.48	0.45				
Cultural Classification								
Cultural Expertise	Mean	0.10	0.53	0.85	150.32***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***
	SD	0.29	0.48	0.36				
Affective Language		0.17	0.48	0.68	49.91***	0.00***	0.00**	0.00***
		0.37	0.50	0.47				
Audience Enactment		0.12	0.30	0.58	42.98***	0.00**	0.00***	0.00***
		0.33	0.46	0.50				

* p < .05; ** p < .01; ***p < .001

Comparisons of mean instances of codes in tweets across time periods. Analyses based on one-way analysis of variance. Post-hoc analyses based on Tukey HSD tests.

Figure 5.1: Change in Code Prevalence in Advertisements over Time



DISCUSSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

In this chapter, I set out to examine how organizations operating in the luxury hotel segment collectively construct and enact meaningful status distinctions even as “very notion of ‘elite’ seems to be in flux” (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010: 970) in society. More specifically, I asked: *How do high-status market segments maintain their status in the face of changing ideas about elite social status more broadly?* I focused in particular on how members of the luxury hotel market segment shifted from “old” to “new” luxury in order to maintain their high status in the industry and their prestige in society. Research until now has primarily viewed status as largely static, unchanging once hierarchies are established, and conferred on organizations, rather than actively constructed or managed. With this paper, I aimed to elaborate research that speaks to the less-considered possibility that status may actually be actively maintained and renegotiated over time, even by those in favored, elite positions. In these instances, organizations must collectively preserve and protect their market standing, especially with regard to quality, while at the same time shifting to appeal to social elites that themselves have become increasingly disperse, no longer associated with a particular social class or standing.

Based on an inductive qualitative analysis of the luxury segment of the hotel industry from 1985 – 2015, along with supplemental, quantitative analysis, I showed how organizations collectively managed seemingly conflicting systems of commercial and cultural classification by engaging in an extended, collective process of cultural entrepreneurship (DiMaggio, 1982; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Wry et al., 2011). These efforts at cultural entrepreneurship simultaneously attended to both commercial meanings, as management scholars have emphasized (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007; Wry et al., 2011), and to processes

of cultural or “ritual” classification related to social status, with which organizational systems correspond and manifest, as sociologists have emphasized (DiMaggio, 1982).

More specifically, faced with commercial pressures that had “de-classified” the cultural distinctiveness of luxury, and recognizing status distinctions related to class that had eroded in society more generally, members of the luxury segment focused on cultural “reclassification” to “new” luxury and sustained high status, through sacralizing, emotionally recasting and preserving aspects of luxury. Sacralization sought to maintain the high status of the segment by likening it to art and developing a shared vocabulary and sense of reverence around it. Members of the luxury segment both underlined the need for “esoteric skills or knowledge...as prerequisites to enjoyment” (DiMaggio, 1991a) and also catalogued and articulated such knowledge for guests to access and deploy, such that as social distinctions related to class eroded, those related to expertise (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010) could be erected in their place.

Efforts to emotionally re-cast luxury used affectively-charged appeals to raise the esteem of the segment and re-cast elite status as a tool for enabling “sociable interaction” by guests (DiMaggio, 1987). It aimed to shed the accumulated stigma of luxury as an expression of exclusionary status hierarchy through reference to non class-associated cultural resources (Erickson, 1996), particularly those related to emotion. It also evidenced a shift toward a view that guests, rather than hotels, might contribute to the maintenance of status distinctions through connectedness with others that enriched their own cultural repertoires. Members of the luxury segment thereby cultivated emotional investment to ensure resonance and reproduction of elite practices and tastes at the micro level (Voronov & Vince, 2012), in hotels, and link them to continued membership in new “legitimated and distinct membership groups” (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001: 552), in this case related to status and defined not by class, but by expertise and

lifestyle. Finally, preservation used market-based status signals to convey the continued quality and credibility of the luxury segment; it aimed to protect the collective as the industry leader. These three mechanisms helped the luxury segment to hold pressures for commercial and cultural classification in productive tension, accomplishing “reclassification” and redrawing market-based and cultural distinctions that maintained the high status of the luxury segment. My findings make several important contributions to research on status, classification, and cultural entrepreneurship, as I discuss next.

First, most broadly, my findings add depth and nuance to the empirical observations in Chapter IV, and they address the seeming paradox in existing research on status that views it as alternately self-sustaining (e.g., Chen et al., 2012) and challenged and re-ordered through the active efforts of low-status actors (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016) as well as more general market pressures for expansion and efficiency (DiMaggio, 1987; Hirsch, 1972). My findings reveal how high-status market segments maintain their standing, showing how elite status is not automatically reproduced, but rather carefully managed through extensive and widespread collective efforts at cultural entrepreneurship. I show how such efforts entail attending to both quality- and socio-cultural aspects of status, and I confirm that both likely operate across market segments, rather than primarily among the organizations within them (Podolny & Phillips, 1996; Podolny, 1993).

My findings also add nuance to recent work that views status as actively managed through cultural means (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016) by considering how such processes unfold for other distinct status groups, in this case, those of highest industry standing. My findings underline new ways in which collective market actors cultivate distinctions: by educating audiences on practices and tastes associated with elite status and equipping audiences

to engage in “sociable interaction” (DiMaggio, 1987) with a range of partners, in this case with efforts at sacralization and emotional recasting of luxury. Members of the luxury segment maintained their status by underlining that members of the social elite to themselves control and govern distinctions. In other words, my findings reveal how market actors can take advantage of the fact that genres or market segments “are partially constituted by the audiences that support them” (DiMaggio, 1987: 441), and not just the organizations that comprise them.

My findings also newly shed light on how incumbent market segments actively manage status as social distinctions erode. I show how, as notions about elite status changed, and especially as they came to emphasize expertise (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010) and earned privilege, rather than landed class (Khan, 2011), market actors shifted, in turn, shedding antiquated notions of elite status by espousing updated ones. My findings also extend recent work that speaks to the quasi-covert nature of such efforts and, I believe, make tentative connections between such observations and the changing nature of status more broadly. Specifically, consistent with observations in recent empirical work (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016), members of the luxury segment seemed to carefully avoid articulating issues of status directly. While Delmestri and Greenwood theorized that use of allusion may be a strategy used by low-status segments to avoid conflict with high-status segments, my findings suggest that such efforts may actually reflect broader efforts to legitimate distinctions that effectively exclude the masses, with explicit issues of status avoided to prevent conflict with broader American values of egalitarianism and fairness espoused across all status groups (e.g., Khan, 2011; Lamont, 2000) not just those of high status.

At the same time, although my findings lend support to the observation that status reaches beyond organizational quality (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016; Sharkey, 2014), they also indicate that such aspects of status remain important. Specifically, my findings reveal that, at

least in commercial settings, high quality is likely a necessary but insufficient condition for a market segment to be seen as elite, particularly over the long-term. In fact, for luxury hotels, it seems likely that high quality may have served as a buffer in the face of culturally-generated threats to status, such that members of the luxury segment could gradually respond through increasing efforts at sacralizing and emotionally luxury. This adds nuance to recent research that has underlined the socio-cultural mechanisms for attaining high status, and it serves as a needed reminder for market segments attending to status challenges through cultural means to retain an emphasis on objective quality, as well. It also tempers longstanding views of commercial and cultural pressures as primarily in conflict (DiMaggio, 1987; Weber, 1978) by revealing how they may actually be used in concert and held in productive tension to maintain high status. In this sense, my findings reveal how high status is maintained not just through cultural means, but also through signals of continued market-based quality, as well.

Finally, the findings from this research advance work on cultural entrepreneurship in new directions. Following recent research (Lockwood & Glynn, 2016a), I offer empirical evidence that cultural entrepreneurship unfolds at the collective level as an ongoing process to protect incumbents' market position, rather than just at founding. In linking cultural entrepreneurship with not only profit maximization and wealth generation (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2013) but also the broader legitimation and maintenance of elite social status, my findings bridge research in management with prior work in sociology (DiMaggio, 1982) that underlines cultural entrepreneurship as important not just for entrepreneurs, but for societies more broadly. It reveals how, counter to prevailing beliefs, although the market can “declassify” culture, cultural entrepreneurship can contribute to “reclassification” that enables

flexible re-interpretation, upholds status and enables novel approaches to using culture at the organizational level, as I examine in Chapter VI.

CHAPER VI. THE CULTURAL SCAFFOLDING OF U.S. LUXURY HOTELS: “LET US BE YOUR GUIDE”

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, I extend my findings from Chapter V to examine how the cultural “reclassification” I found for the luxury market segment was manifest at the organizational level, for individual luxury hotels. I use a multiple case study design, consisting of six hotels in the luxury sector, and examine how they engaged in efforts to align with changing ideas about elite status, cultural distinction, and “new” luxury. I reveal how the hotels acted as cultural entrepreneurs in transforming the meaning of luxury in an age of democracy and claimed equality. Surprisingly, rather than conveying a singularly cohesive or uniformly robust set of meanings to convey cultural distinctiveness, the hotels used culture as an interpretive touchstone of language and physical materiality as a kind of “cultural scaffolding.” Using this cultural scaffolding, the luxury hotels relayed the meanings they sought to claim. More importantly, however, they also acted as curators of luxury, equipping their guests with meanings and skills to express status and maintain cultural distinctions. My findings advance scholarly understanding of the utility and use of cultural distinctiveness in the face of changing elite status, and more broadly suggest that, in transforming meanings associated with them, organizations may counter-intuitively be most successful when they hold culture lightly.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I return to examining cultural entrepreneurship at the organizational level, as it was originally conceived (DiMaggio, 1982) and studied by management scholars (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2013). I extend the findings I presented in Chapter V, which highlighted the manners in which the members of the luxury segment used language to recast cultural distinction and elite social standing to maintain their own high-status position in the industry. This study builds on the recognition that organizations embody and legitimate cultural distinctions operative more broadly (DiMaggio, 1982) and addresses the puzzle of how the organizations that give shape to and stabilize elite tastes shift to remain culturally distinctive over time, especially as industries and market segments change.

More specifically, research has shown that cultural distinction that reflects elite status is conveyed not through articulated, explicit differences that justify exclusivity, but mainly symbolically and implicitly (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Lamont & Lareau, 1988), through the use of culture on the ground, so to speak (DiMaggio, 1982). For instance, Glynn and co-authors (Glynn et al., 1996) showed how art museum membership and, in particular, attendance at art functions and exhibits was seen as securing cultural distinction for patrons. Similarly, in more recent empirical work, Rivera (2012: 999) found that the “leisure pursuits, experiences and self-presentation styles” of job candidates at played a role in hiring processes by conveying cultural distinction that appealed to elite firms’ decision makers. In DiMaggio’s (1982) early research on cultural entrepreneurship, organizational practices and materials crystalized around the tastes of a class-based social elite. However, it is unclear whether and how such cultural resources play a role in more contemporary processes of cultural entrepreneurship undertaken by market actors, in which explicit stories and names are central (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). Further, how

they may productively be put to use by incumbent organizations to adapt to shifting elite tastes and remain culturally distinctive also remains unclear.

Building from the findings in the two preceding empirical studies (Chapters IV and V), I address this puzzle by examining six luxury hotels, in the same brand, across the United States. I show how these organizations engaged in cultural entrepreneurship to remain culturally distinctive as elite status and tastes changed more broadly. They did so using both linguistic cultural resources, as research in management has stressed (e.g., Martens et al., 2007; Wry et al., 2011; Zhao et al., 2013), as well as material and practice-based cultural resources, as prior work on cultural distinction has noted (DiMaggio, 1982; Glynn et al., 1996). Surprisingly, the organizations did not use cultural resources to stably convey elite tastes or assert organizational status, but rather to heighten equivocality and allow for multiple interpretations by audiences. To adjust to changing elite tastes and remain culturally distinctive, in other words, the organizations used culture as an interpretive touchstone, which I metaphorically term “cultural scaffolding,” equipping their patrons to make sense of changing elite tastes and use cultural resources that were more broadly “salient as status markers” (Lamont & Lareau, 1988: 156). My analyses uncover the surprising utility of using culture lightly or flexibly in maintaining cultural distinctiveness, offering a counterpoint to research that has tended to emphasize cultural stability or robustness as advantageous for organizations (Giorgi et al., 2015), particularly in guiding public meanings and status ascribed to them (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006).

This chapter has several objectives. First, it extends my findings from Chapters IV and V, by showing how elite status and cultural distinction are revised and maintained through the micro-level efforts of organizations and their patrons. In the two prior studies, I focused on

trends over the long- and medium-term. In this study, I take a “deep dive” into the daily strategies and struggles through which cultural distinctiveness is negotiated and maintained. I show how organizational processes of cultural entrepreneurship correspond with efforts to “re-classify” luxury at the market segment level, and reveal how they animate and give force to new status signals. In doing so, I extend research on social status and stratification, showing how elite tastes and social status are made manifest and objectified through organizational means.

Second, I extend research on cultural entrepreneurship, showing that it is concerned with not only competitive or legitimate distinctiveness (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Navis & Glynn, 2011), but also cultural distinctiveness (DiMaggio, 1982; Glynn et al., 1996). I consider how cultural distinction is maintained in the current age of declared democracy and egalitarianism, in which signaling status overtly is seen as taboo (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010) and in which elite tastes have become increasingly diverse (Peterson & Kern, 1996) and poorly-defined.

Finally, I introduce the notion of cultural “scaffolding” as I show how organizations may direct this process. Surprisingly, I reveal that, to remain culturally distinctive, organizations are best advised to create cultural variety, rather than emphasizing only high-brow tastes (e.g., Glynn et al., 1996). Further, I show that rather than pursuing cultural cohesion or stability (Barney, 1986; Schein, 1985), in maintaining cultural distinctiveness, organizations are most successful when they hold resources lightly.

This chapter proceeds as follows. I begin with a brief review of the literature on cultural toolkits and cultural distinction as they relate to this study, along with a summary of the research methods I used. Then, I present my findings and, finally, discuss implications for work on cultural entrepreneurship and for research considering how culture is productively brought to bear in multiple phases of organizational life.

THEORETICAL FRAMING

As noted in Chapter II, social distinctions which delineate elite status groups from non-elites are upheld and reproduced culturally, and in particular, through the development and use of cultural capital that underpins cultural distinctions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; see also DiMaggio, 1982; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Organizations give shape to the cultural distinctions that mark elites, playing a role in their initial construction (DiMaggio, 1982) and well as the persistence of cultural distinctions over time (Glynn et al., 1996). Cultural distinctiveness is important for patrons or customers and organizations alike. For patrons, affiliation with organizations selling products or experiences that make manifest elite tastes can help to secure their own “social status or cultural distinction” in society (Glynn et al., 1996: 263). For organizations, cultural distinction may compel customers to purchase its products for purposes other than just utilitarian ones (DiMaggio, 1991a; Glynn et al., 1996), potentially contributing to its overall market value and status (e.g., Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016). Recognizing these links, it seems likely that shifting social status hierarchies and changing elite tastes (e.g., Peterson & Kern, 1996; Zald & Lounsbury, 2010) present new opportunities and challenges for organizations, as much as they do for market segments and industries (Chapters IV and VI).

At the organizational level, culture is generally agreed to operate as a toolkit (Rindova et al., 2011; Swidler, 1986; Weber, 2005) that engenders tangible “resource” commitments (Giorgi et al., 2015), which reflect or concretize “ideational” commitments related to broader values or ideals (DiMaggio, 1982; Friedland, 2013). In some senses, this may equip organizations favorably in efforts to adapt to changing cultural tastes and maintain cultural distinctiveness. Specifically, while linguistic resources may be suitable for re-casting status in a general sense (as I showed in Chapter V) and for other market-focused processes of cultural entrepreneurship undertaken at founding (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007), legitimization of

cultural distinctions is largely predicated on avoiding explicit discussion of them (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; DiMaggio, 1982). This has become even more central to efforts to legitimate elite status and cultural distinctions as emphasis has shifted toward status as related to expertise (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010), rather than landed class, such that avoidance of articulated ‘elitism’ is likely critical in contemporary settings. As such, use of relatively concrete, non-linguistic resources, which comprise an organization’s cultural toolkit alongside stories, frames, and other language-based resources (Giorgi et al., 2015; Weber & Dacin, 2011; Weber, 2005), may be productive in maintaining cultural distinction because it avoids direct discussion of status.

However, incumbent organizations may face several challenges when it comes to maintaining cultural distinction, as well, especially with relation to *how* cultural resource commitments that express elite tastes may be updated and conveyed at the organizational level. To begin, some research suggests organizational agency may be limited in updating existing “cultural commitments” (Giorgi et al., 2015) at all, such that organizations that embodied prior cultural distinctions may struggle to adapt as they change. Specifically, as elite tastes change and high-status organizations seek to make them manifest, “they cannot innovate too rapidly” (DiMaggio, 1991a: 124), since it is “the institutionalized or shared quality of [cultural] signals that make them salient as status markers” (Lamont & Lareau, 1988: 157), especially in and through organizations (DiMaggio, 1982). Further, changing existing resource commitments to give shape to evolving elite tastes may especially be risky for incumbent commercial organizations, as it may attenuate an established track record that signals quality and credibility and that underpins high market status and distinctiveness relative to competitors (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Podolny, 1993; Washington & Zajac, 2005). As such, while organizations may collectively accomplish cultural reclassification through use of linguistic resources, as I showed

in Chapter V, they may nonetheless struggle to remain culturally distinctive with use of more concrete or material cultural resources at the organizational level.

Moreover, even if cultural commitments can be readily updated, as some research suggests may be the case (e.g., Canato et al., 2013; Rindova et al., 2011; Weber, 2005) little is known about how organizations account for which kinds of cultural resources are appropriate and potent in conveying elite status, especially since they are seldom explicitly articulated. Even in settings where class-based distinctions are clear, actors must take care to recognize the “cut-off point between signals that are too commonly used to be effective in exclusion, or not used enough for people to recognize them as status signals” (Lamont & Lareau, 1988: 157). With greater use of formerly “low-brow” resources to signal elite status (Peterson & Kern, 1996) in contemporary settings, doing so may be more difficult than extant research focused on status signals through more homogenous “high culture” has indicated (DiMaggio, 1982; Glynn et al., 1996). Thus, decisions about the kinds of cultural repertoires to draw from and the resources to use to uphold cultural distinctiveness are likely complex and challenging for organizations. And, since organizations’ resource commitments that take shape as materials and practices may fully concretize shifting values and ideas (Jones & Massa, 2013), missteps may be especially blatant and costly.

For commercial organizations, these challenges are likely even greater than for non-profit or privately-funded organizations, like art museums or symphony orchestras, which scholars have tended to focus on in past work exploring processes of drawing and maintaining cultural distinction (DiMaggio, 1982; Glynn et al., 1996; see also Glynn & Lounsbury, 2005). Privately-funded arts organizations are shielded from commercial pressures, such that cultural distinctiveness that conveys high exclusivity has relatively few immediate monetary drawbacks

and can be adjusted with some trial and error over time (DiMaggio, 1982, 1987; Swidler, 2010). However, commercial organizations must signal exclusivity that effectively prompts some potential customers to patronize other establishments (Lamont & Lareau, 1988) while still attracting a large enough customer base to be profitable; cultural and commercial interests stand at relative odds and must be carefully managed. Subject to intense and sometimes volatile market pressures, these incumbent commercial organizations must quickly strike the right balance between broad market appeal and elite social exclusivity to remain competitive and culturally distinctive, or risk commercial failure.

Recognizing the complexity of organizational efforts to remain culturally distinctive – and the lack of research on the topic – I aimed to extend my findings from Chapter V to consider empirically whether and how incumbent organizations in the luxury market segment conveyed “new luxury” and expressed the status of changing social elites. Conceptualizing culture as a “code of many colors” (Jelinek, Smircich, & Hirsch, 1983), I asked: *How, if at all, do incumbent organizations operating in the luxury sector engage in cultural entrepreneurship in order to remain culturally distinctive as elite tastes and status change?* More specifically, extending my findings from Chapter V, in this study I focused on six luxury hotels and examined how, when, and which cultural resources they used to remain culturally distinctive in the face of broader socio-cultural and industry changes (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010; see also Chapter IV).

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODS

As detailed in Chapter III, I used a multiple case study research design (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003) with data from the Opulent Collection (“OC”) brand, six U.S. based hotels in OC, and their guests, since cultural genres or groupings are constituted, in part, by their audiences (DiMaggio, 1987). The data consisted of: 45 semi-structured interviews with brand executives,

hotel managers and employees; 200 hours of observations in the hotels; archival data from all available web-based and printed documents generated by the six hotels and the OC brand from 2000 – 2015; 600 guest reviews posted between 2011 and 2015 on the online hotel review website TripAdvisor; and about 1,000 pages of press coverage on the hotels. Data analysis proceeded in three broad phases, which I described fully in Chapter III. First, I looked across archival data collected from the OC brand, interview transcripts and fields notes, and took detailed analytic notes to identify themes and link them with industry dynamics; second, using this data, I conducted detailed content analysis; and finally, I linked analytical observations with justifications generated by informants to develop a more complete conceptual understanding of the topics of interest.

FINDINGS

As the idea of “new luxury” rose in prominence through the late 1990s and early 2000s, OC hotels noted the need to also change; it was “only going to become more pronounced. To be honest, I see very few reasons why people would go back to wanting the box [standardized, chain-based model], you know?” (B3.01.13). Accordingly, beginning in the early 2000s, OC hotels made efforts to display luxury in new ways, “shifting [away] from sort of, “I go to a hotel, I stay in a bed, I check in, I check out, I go home”” (B3.01.13). However, even as the language used in advertisements for the luxury market segment changed (Chapter V), hotels could not simply re-cast luxury superficially, with a new story or a fresh coat of paint. Rather, sweeping updates were needed to maintain cultural distinctiveness in line with what OC hoteliers viewed as relatively large shifts in patrons’ tastes and lifestyles. An informant noted: “I think one of the fundamental changes is the, to the customer end. The changes in our consumers have been radical...[Past] business was highly conservative in its, very specific, in its needs and

expectations” (B9.01.15), while contemporary elite guests had become more heterogeneous in their demands and omnivorous in their tastes.

Interestingly, adapting to appeal to changing elite tastes did not entail disavowing existing cultural commitments associated with “old” luxury; in fact, quality-focused “foundational elements” (B5.01.13), which centered on a high level of personalized service, prime location, and high-end materials (like sheets) and amenities (like shampoos), were carefully and consistently retained across all hotels. These resources, which took shape mostly as materials and practices, provided a consistent “couple of anchor points” (B9.01.14) familiar to audiences because they were “associated with a certain level of luxury, right? If your hotel doesn’t have [them], you don’t have credibility” (B1.02.14) with guests.

Accordingly, it was important that these resources be deployed in OC hotels “regardless of where you are in the world” (B4.01.13). They constituted “what we call the gold thread... across that diverse portfolio” (B3.01.13), helping to maintain OC’s legitimate place in the luxury segment and distinguish it from lower-status industry members. In other words, just as institutional forces had come into play at the industry level (Chapter IV) and market-based status cues has been preserved the market segment level (Chapter V), individual hotel organizations also found it important to establish continuing with longstanding elements of luxury. Although the presence of taken-for-granted cultural elements alone would not assure the hotels would be seen as luxurious or culturally distinctive, their absence would ensure the hotels were not. When they were missing, guests noted it and discounted any other cultural efforts; for instance, in an online review of one hotel that left OC in 2015, guests commented, “It doesn't have the service and amenities of a luxury hotel, but I wouldn't say that it was trying to be one” (Review of the Diplomat Hotel, funfetti1987, 03/04/15).

At the same time, however, OC made sweeping efforts to loosen many of the prescriptive and relatively inflexible rules or standards that had guided use of these luxury-specific cultural resources by the hotels in the past:

The first thing we were able to do is take away a lot of standards, strip away a lot of things that said you would do this and you would do that, and the standards were much more experiential...we said what we are not going to do is ask you to give a list of “the gym will look like this, the restaurants will look like this, the amenity will look like this,” because that is not going to help us (B9.01.15)

In other words, while existing cultural resources, especially related to the high quality of luxury hotels, largely remained, they were delivered in new and more varied manners as the hotels aimed to remain culturally distinctive. As an informant noted, this reflected shifting tastes: “[With luxury] it’s really all about attentiveness and really high levels of service, and high quality goods, and things like that. But I think the type of high quality goods and the type of high quality service that people are expecting these days in luxury is more diverse” (B2.01.13).

Simply becoming less prescriptive was only a first step in remaining culturally distinctive, however. Implying both the difficulty of maintaining cultural distinctiveness in the face of increasingly heterogeneous customer tastes, but also the competitive advantage it could create for those that did, one informant put it simply: “I mean, not everyone can do this” (B1.01.13). Recognizing that cultural distinctiveness “is something which we can’t gain, it has to be given to us” (B8.01.15), the hotels in OC looked to their customers as they devised manners to adapt. In particular, as they aimed to align with changing elite tastes, they looked toward “these particular strands of consumers that we will build our programming around. So The Opulent Collection became [focused on] “explorers” and “collectors.” People who are hungry to explore new things, they collect experiences, they collect the books, the wine” (B9.01.15). OC hotels, in other words, aimed to give shape to the cultural expertise that had come to mark social elites.

Rather than straightforwardly appropriating these tastes and preferences as their own, however, OC hotels sought to engage audiences in maintaining cultural distinctions through expressions of expertise. In other words, they worked to equip and encourage their guests to make status distinctions clear, and they did so using the cultural resources of language and materiality. However, rather than constructing a coherent story (e.g., Martens et al., 2007) or furnishing a concrete exemplar (Jones & Massa, 2013) that embodied cultural tastes, the hotels worked to build an interpretive touchstone that equipped and prompted patrons to distinguish elite cultural resources from non-elite for themselves. I detail these efforts more fully next, showing how OC hotels used language to curate elite cultural tastes and materials to make such tastes manifest through the efforts of guests.

Language to Educate and Equip Audiences

Although OC was almost a century old, informants noted that, surprisingly, “we’re still in the process of educating guests about The Opulent Collection” (B2.01.13). Books, destination guides, short films, and other linguistically-based mediums were used widely in such efforts, and employees were explicitly and consistently reminded that “your role is...telling the story” to guests (*Concierge Webpage*). Importantly, efforts at “education” through such means focused very minimally on specifics about OC hotels themselves. Instead, language more generally supported “an ethos of connoisseurship” (DiMaggio, 1991a: 126), in which OC hotels and their employees acted as curators and guides. Language was used to equip potential patrons with an awareness of the omnivorous tastes of social elites and with knowledge of the manners in which they might best be interpreted and expressed in the context of the hotel experience. Perhaps more importantly, however, it was used to engage guests in maintaining cultural distinctiveness:

It helps to spread the word, tells these stories, and gets our guests engaged in the idea that this is...there to help you create and write your own story in a way around those

destinations and that's sort of a part of our DNA, if you like, of what we're there for.
(B3.01.13)

More specifically, different from well-plotted stories (Giorgi et al., 2015; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001), language was wide-ranging and heterogeneous in content and emphasis, drawing from a variety of cultural repertoires, not just from “high” culture. For instance, in OC’s *Hotel Tales* book, which guests found in their hotel rooms, the text indicated that traveling provided “insight into human nature, constant lessons in humility, beauty in unexpected places,” (2013: 28), but also offered a reminder “to drink plenty of water and sleep whenever you can” (2013: 84). Even in describing specific OC hotels, details were diverse. For instance, when I mentioned a particular feature of the Babylon Hotel in an interview, one informant elaborated by noting both popular and high-cultural referents:

“actually, that building was featured in the 1987 movie Raising Arizona, that was the home of the Arizona family. And then with the art collection too, because we have things going on back even to the 15th century...that were pieces that were here from the very start, and so we absolutely embrace that” (P8.01.15)

Language to introduce the Freedom Hotel in Boston was similarly wide-ranging, referencing not only high-culture pursuits like the orchestra, but also common historical knowledge:

Atlantic winds sweep past a radiant regatta. They whip the lines of boats at dock, jangling hooks and clips against masts like an orchestra conductor...A multi-faceted city brimming with character, Boston is irrevocably tied to its extraordinary role in American history. The city's unwavering spirit manifests itself through a thriving arts scene, exceptional restaurants and an unfettered devotion to discovery. (Boston Destination Guide)

As Weber and Glynn pointed out, “as formerly ‘high culture’ becomes ‘low culture’... much sensemaking is required to remedy surprises from new patterns of cultural consumption and to tell different actors and symbols apart” (2006: 1653). The diverse language used by OC hotels signaled a shift away from old, ‘elitist’ expressions of cultural distinction and aimed to initiate this process of sensemaking for guests. It took advantage of the symbolic potency of “emphasizing clusters of tastes rather than consumption of single items” (DiMaggio, 1991a: 121)

in raising status, and it provided the some of the “raw material” (e.g., Weber & Glynn, 2006; Weick, 1995) both substantive and stylistic, that guests might use to interpret what they would experience during their stays.

Curating cultural resources and educating guests on how to adroitly use cultural “raw material,” linguistic resources were, indeed, highly stylized; they equipped guests with a model of how to integrate the heterogeneous tastes characteristic of elite cultural omnivores. A brand executive noted, “[In the past, language] was very practical, very overt, versus [now] more experiential, existential: ‘that’s why I love to travel. I love going to Italy, I love the open road, I love traveling for food.’” (B3.01.13). Aligning with changing ideas about elite lifestyle, language echoed efforts at sacralization and emotional recasting that had been undertaken at the level of the market segment (see Chapter V) and that could serve to integrate seemingly complex and heterogeneous tastes in manners that signaled elite status.

To convey these stylistic elements, OC hotels collaborated with influential “tastemakers,” including fashion designers, indie film directors, models, and musicians. Deemed “the world’s foremost cultural voices” (“Global Explorers,” 2013) they offered trip guidance, authored sections of OC’s *Hotel Tales* books and contributed to the company’s *Destination Guides*, and were featured in short films available on the OC website. Their stories, tales and pieces of advice put heterogeneous cultural resources to use and modeled the manners in cultural expertise and elite sensibilities might be displayed. For instance, one such tastemaker noted the things he might bring on a trip, like his passport, a bathing suit, and a camera, and remarked, “travel for me is about...seeing the world in a different way...so you don’t end up missing the world around you” (Travel Stories, 2012). Stylistically positioned as such, omnivorous tastes evoked affective aspects of “new luxury” (Chapter V) but were positioned as reflective of “individual decisions

independent of structural conditions...equated with merit and worthiness” (Sauder, 2005: 286) rather than those advocated for by a self-interested, high-status organization. An informant remarked on the effectiveness of this approach, saying:

...by speaking with these personalities and having them weigh in on our website, that clearly shows that they're educated and have a passion for our product without overly endorsing a specific hotel... that can really convey the luxury message (B3.01.13).

These efforts extended to specific hotels, as well, where staff members and especially concierges were viewed as local guides that could curate undifferentiated cultural resources in manners that resonated with and appropriately equipped guests. Specifically, these curators furnished guests with both the needed variety of cultural resources to engage with others and the knowledge they might need to use them in manners that signaled elite status, especially related to expertise and lifestyle. Explicitly positioned as a “certified destination authority...eager to reveal the exquisite and authentic experiences of the city, region, or island that they call home” (Concierge webpage), for instance, OC concierges:

[Have] sort of status within most communities in that they are somewhat of an expert, somewhat of a local — yeah, expert — that really understands where to find things. That's why we place so much emphasis on that role around them helping drive that culture and drive those experiences” for guests (B4.01.13).

The brand executive continued, “their knowledge — their ability to gain knowledge is critical” in educating and equipping guests with cultural resources and knowledge reflective of elite tastes. Hotels and their concierges tended to highlight a variety of pursuits seen as favored by sophisticated guests, and they explicitly disavowed a sense of elitism in doing so:

film festivals, fashion shows, art gallery exhibits, museum exhibits, food festivals, things...really honing on those passions of our guests versus [other pursuits]. Not that there's anything wrong with them [other pursuits], it's not just who our consumer is. So it's finding those activities, and festivals, and events to really showcase (B3.01.13).

More generally speaking, by displaying a “fluency in world culture” (OC “Global Explorers” website), OC hotels reflected not a “hierarchy of tastes” that underpinned cultural

distinctiveness, but rather a “hierarchy of knowledge” (Erickson, 1996: 219) that did so, equipping guests to put cultural expertise on display and make sense of luxury in desired new directions. As one manager remarked, with the help of such efforts, it increasingly became the case that “if somebody was staying as a guest but they had a meeting in Boston, people would say, ‘Where are you staying?’ and they say, ‘the Freedom’ and all of a sudden that meant something” (P3.01.13).

In sum, linguistics resources were used in OC hotels’ efforts to remain culturally distinctive, but in manners that differed markedly from storytelling that has been the emphasis of most scholarly work on cultural entrepreneurship (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007). Rather than focusing on stably guiding interpretation (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Wry et al., 2011) and articulating clear ideological commitments (Giorgi et al., 2015), language reflected broad ideas about “new luxury” at the market segment level (Chapter V) and mirrored the omnivorous cultural tastes that had come to mark social elites. Language positioned OC hotels not as culturally distinctive because of the cultural resources they ‘possessed,’ but by virtue of their role as catalysts and guides that drew from and curated expert knowledge of diverse tastemakers. They educated and equipped guests with the needed “raw material” (Weber & Glynn, 2006; Weick, 1995) and knowledge of elite habits and styles that they may or may not have possessed themselves (Bourdieu, 1984; Erickson, 1996). In doing so, they enabled them to distinguish between low- and high-brow pursuits and to help to give shape to culturally distinctive ‘new’ luxury in the hotels - without ever mentioning status at all.

Materials Prompt and Enable Expression of Expertise

Although language was potent, it was nonetheless “kind of theoretical” (P2.01.13) and limited in its ability to maintain and convey cultural distinctiveness. Thus, OC hotels made

concentrated efforts toward “getting things like that to translate” more tangibly (P2.01.13) to link linguistic “raw materials” about cultural distinctiveness to more tangible resources that made them visible and “real.” As one informant noted, ideally:

you know, we have photographers and artists and actors who’ve helped to travel and tell stories of local destinations so there’s sort of a connection between a destination and a purpose of being there, and then it’s connected to something really tangible (B3.01.13).

As important as translation from language to materials was, however, it was purposefully strikingly loose, allowing for variety, surprise, and interpretive latitude among guests. It focused on bending or breaching established but increasingly outdated conventions related to luxury to prompt sensemaking among guests, and put the “raw materials” with which OC hotels had equipped them to use. As such, materials were not intended to translate language literally, but evoked broader ideas about luxury and cultural distinctiveness in ways intended to trigger sensemaking (Weber & Glynn, 2006) in desired directions. With use of material resources like décor, menu items or guest activities, the hotels aimed to “kind of paint a picture, an *idea* of the history [or other details] of the hotel so it helps guest feel in tune with coming up here, and that is part of the experience” (P14.01.15), pulling through “heterogeneous bits of culture” (Weber & Dacin, 2011: 289) reflective of the stories, tales, and tastes expressed linguistically. Noting that “we don’t want to get too prescriptive over what you can and can’t do” (B5.02.13), across the hotels, informants agreed that “the little touches” (P6.01.13), serving as minimal cues rather than overt guideposts, were, surprisingly, most potent in conveying “new luxury.”

For instance, at Vermont’s Solstice Hotel, materials were placed suggestively and deployed lightly to speak to the hotel’s long history and place in the community. An antique scale was used in the spa, which was otherwise modern and airy, for example, referencing the leisure guests of the 1800s who weighed themselves for gains before leaving as a measure of vacation success (personal observations, 05/08/15). Similarly, in guest rooms outfitted with a

variety of sophisticated comforts with a contemporary design, a leaf motif on rugs referenced the New England locale (personal observations, 05/08/15). The Solstice could have used more overt material cues: for instance, old-fashioned bathtubs in the spa in place of showers, or rooms outfitted with antiques and four-post beds. Conversely, recent renovations could certainly have led to replacement of almost all the material resources in the hotel give it a wholly contemporary feel. Instead, the Solstice “left pieces...we still left it, little pieces of the history” (P15.01.15), allowing guests to acknowledge status hierarchies and elite tastes of the past in order to create new ones, importantly bringing “their own life histories, social interactions, and psychological predispositions to the process of constructing meaning” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 2) and cultural distinctiveness. Cultural distinctiveness, in other words, was about the expertise and interpretations of guests, not the hotels, and OC used materials loosely in recognition of this fact.

In another case, at Boston’s Freedom Hotel, materials that referenced the hotel’s history grew less literal and lighter over time. A manager remarked,

When I first came here it was a little kitschy. It was little over the top in the way we presented the jail piece. For example, in Clink, one of my restaurants, the waiters were wearing like inmate outfits and had numbers... I changed that like my first day of work. And things like that are too over the top, right? And we have to be a little bit more subtle about the fact that this used to be a jail and playful and not so sort of rigid about it, and so we have been able to overcome that (P3.01.13).

Consistent with her remarks, my observations at the Freedom Hotel revealed how material resources were used as minimal cues. The impressive hotel lobby retained features of the original jail, including its immense domed windows and original catwalks formerly traversed by prison guards; still, it was clearly no longer a jail, with chandelier lighting, bold art adorning the walls and the sound of jazz music playing softly throughout. Similar to the Solstice, the Freedom Hotel used minimal, suggestive cues: “I mean it is not...in your face. I think it is really subtle” (P3.01.13). At the Freedom Hotel – and across successful OC hotels – material cues were dialed

back not because new meanings about luxury in the context of each hotel became clear or stable. Rather, it was in recognition of the necessity of engaging guests in interpreting and using cultural resources to display cultural distinction— and make it exclusively theirs – to position the hotels as “new” luxury and culturally distinctive, as well. In reviews, patrons referenced and interpreted these minimal cues to display their cultural acumen. For instance, they noted that the Freedom Hotel was especially enjoyable because of the “unique atmosphere of a beautiful building which used to be a jail” (*Sebastien A*, 8/22/14), and at the Solstice Hotel, “This historic hotel has been updated, preserving the grace and charm suitable to its original stature.”

Subtlety and variety in cultural resources was also productive because it allowed the hotels leeway in appealing to a variety of evolving and diverse guest tastes, important for the hotels to remain profitable. For instance, at the Speakeasy Hotel in New York, the rooms evoked the hotel’s history, designed in art-deco style, with faux rotary telephones and side tables that were fashioned after steamer trunks. Guest rooms also boasted cutting-edge technological amenities, like a television embedded in the bathroom mirror and remote control lights and curtains. An employee at The Speakeasy in New York described it: “it doesn’t hit you over the head...you’re living in some history, but yet you’re amongst a new beautiful property” (P6.01.13). As such, the hotels appealed to a variety of customer tastes, while allowing guests equipped with the needed cultural acumen to put it to use in interpreting surprising and varied material cues.

Similarly, the Babylon Hotel in Scottsdale, AZ, paired local desert elements, including an extensive cactus garden and Native American art, with exotic tropical elements like palm trees and a large Caribbean-inspired swimming area. Noting the juxtaposition, an employee described it:

Being at the base of Camelback Mountain we are surrounded by a desert landscape so you would see a lot of cacti, a lot of other desert plants, you would see what we call our 'local residents': a kind of a lizard, and cottontail rabbits, and quail. But while we are surrounded by that, within our resort itself you are going to find very tropical areas: palm trees, green gardens, water features. And actually the original owner and builder of the Babylon brought workers from the island of Conga to create the tropical feel, so it is a combination of the two, where in one minute you can be walking through the Cactus Garden and in five minutes you could be at the Orchid Lawn, where you are surrounded by large shaded trees, green lawn, waterfalls, lots of bright flowers, so it is a nice combination of the two and they complement each other. (P8.01.15)

Holding loosely to heterogeneous cultural resources, the hotels avoided overtly championing particular expressions of elite status that might be seen as elitist or distasteful. Indeed, “some culture gets used precisely because it is not correlated with class” (Erickson, 1996: 221), and using subtle material cues accommodated for requisite variety that was also reflected in OC’s language.

In sum, moving from linguistic to material cultural resources, OC hotels used an approach of loose translation into subtle, heterogeneous material cues. Rather than concretizing and stabilizing ideas (Jones & Massa, 2013) about cultural tastes and distinctiveness, these materials and practices kept them in flux, enabling ongoing adaptability for the hotels as they worked to adapt to societal and industry shifts (see Chapters IV and V). More importantly, however, multi-vocal material resources aimed to create surprise and prompt sensemaking among guests as they worked their way to new distinctions between elite and non-elite cultural cues (e.g., DiMaggio, 1982; Weber & Glynn, 2006). Equipped with knowledge of elite tastes and styles conveyed linguistically, guests were positioned to put their cultural expertise on display in doing so, signaling their own cultural distinctiveness and simultaneously ascribing it back to the hotel.

Reinforcement and Revision for Ongoing Adjustment

Maintaining cultural distinction was an iterative and ongoing process. Elite status was an continuous and ever-changing accomplishment (Bourdieu, 1984; Weber & Glynn, 2006) and “new” luxury remained closely tied to the evolving tastes and interests of guests over the course of this study. As such, OC hotels aimed to hone guest interpretation and enactment that signaled cultural distinctiveness through continued use of linguistic and material cultural resources, priming and prompting sensemaking (Weber & Glynn, 2006) to deepen meaning, and enabling the expression of elite expertise. For instance, one informant noted that often upon observing historical pieces of décor, guests were interested to know, “‘Who’s been in here? ...who’s died here, who’s lived here, who created it?’ A lot of people want to know about that stuff so you’ve got to learn it. And I love [it]” (P6.01.13). As much as materials prompted interpretation, in other words, they also generated new interest such that the hotels might continue to equip patrons with bits of knowledge and style associated with cultural distinctiveness.

A manager at the Freedom Hotel noted the dynamic relationship that unfolded between materials and language over time, as well, as the hotels worked to enable and prompt guests to maintain cultural distinctiveness. She pointed to the impressive lobby that tended to pique guests’ interest in the Freedom:

Maybe somebody [is] staying here and they want to understand what the structure [observable in the lobby] used to be and they want some stories surrounding that. So certainly we can tell some stories and we can talk about some iconic figures that have stayed in the hotel and try to make the connection with the guest if that is where they are interested in (P3.01.13).

As a brand executive remarked, material cues not only made manifest elite knowledge and styles, but also prompted continued use of linguistic resources to continue equipping guests. This was about:

sort of being able to give a spark to that guest experience and...opening up things that aren't necessarily obvious to the guest in local destinations...being that guide once you're on the ground...obviously putting it together...(B3.01.13)

Elaborating on this point, a hotel manager underlined that in some cases, guests overlooked pieces of local art or historical artifacts on display at the hotel not because they were uninterested, but because they lacked an awareness of their relevance. He remarked that material cues created the chance to revise these “non-interpretations”:

One of the things I think is neat [about] having these little kind of talking points, these little pieces of history around the hotel, is...if they [employees] find somebody looking at them, they'll start talking about it: "Did you know this about the pond? Or did you know that there is a stream?"... little pictures around the hotel that strike conversation, and that really is great. It is a little bit more of an easier way to create a conversation. (P13.01.15)

He noted that, consistent with efforts to educate guests before they arrived, equipping them to construct their own meanings – rather than offering heavy-handed opinions or straightforward facts – was centrally important in negotiating cultural distinctions and meanings for “new” luxury:

[You'd] say "you know, you may want to try thinking about it this way vs that way, because of X, Y, and Z". And some people go "you are right" and some are like "I don't care I still want it my way." And then you just go with the flow... it is a work in progress, and it is always that you give him a lot of options and you learn how to communicate better and better. Because you know you can't just say "do this," it never works (P14.01.15).

Continuously equipping patrons to interpret cultural cues, in other words, entailed leading them to their own understanding of luxury and status. Ultimately, revising the meanings ascribed to the hotel as “new” luxury and maintaining cultural distinctiveness was, as one manager said:

about customizing the experience so that it is going to make sense for the guests. Look, all day long I could be say I am great we have great property, this is what we are doing. But if does not resonate with the guest, then we have not done anything right (P3.01.13).

OC hotels gave flesh to elite tastes and status distinctions using cultural entrepreneurship that focused not on stably guiding interpretation and concretizing “high” culture, but rather that centered on providing the cultural tools for patrons to develop needed cultural acumen, ascribe

their own meanings to luxury, and put their own cultural expertise on display to signal and give shape to distinctiveness.

Although the commonalities across the six hotel cases are compelling, their differences are also telling, as detailed in Table 6.1. While each hotel used various and relatively unique types of cultural resources – with some drawing heavily from the local “toolkit,” others referencing their own past most often, and still others integrating bits of popular culture, like references to movies or sports pursuits – consistent across them were efforts to create cultural variety and hold resources relatively lightly and loosely. However, one hotel presented an exception: the Diplomat, an historic hotel in Washington, DC, was considerably more homogenous in its approach and held relatively tightly to high-brow cultural resources.

Employee informants I spoke with from the Diplomat seldom strayed from straightforwardly discussing the hotel’s elite political guests or its long history in the upscale neighborhood it was situated in. Material resources were similarly focused: for example, the lobby walls were paneled in wood, as were the restaurant and lounge, evoking past eras of sophistication; rooms were outfitted with Victorian furniture and marble, with heavy drapes and carved headboards on the beds; and the hotel offered little programming like jazz concerts or sports features that guests noted enjoying at the other OC hotels. In fact, one guest I spoke with noted the need for greater variety in cultural resources, remarking that “they should have, like, an ivory deer head or something” (C1.01.13) in the lounge that might surprise and engage guests; as the hotel stood, it left little room for interpretation or updates. An employee I spoke with similarly mentioned that, although the hotel had recently been renovated, it was growing a bit tired, a remark that no informants at other hotels made. Focusing on mostly “high-cultural” cues and holding to them tightly, the Diplomat eventually left the OC group in 2015 and was

repositioned as an “upscale” hotel, which tends to signal high quality but lower status than “luxury.” Looking across all six hotels (as summarized in Table 6.1), it appears that success tended to be associated not with which particular cultural toolkit resources were drawn from, but rather with use of a variety of cultural resources and efforts to hold them lightly and loosely.

Table 6.1: Comparison of Hotel Cases

Hotel Name	Location	History	"Foundational" Elements	Language	Materials and Practices	Stayed in Collection?
Clementine	Charlotte, NC	Established in the late 1990s, a "traditional" luxury hotel with spa, golf, etc.	Present	Extensive and Varied. <i>Online brochures, prepared itineraries available online, extensive information on locale and sustainability. Informants discussed high and low-brow interests including art and cuisine but also Nascar and whiskey</i>	Varied and light. <i>Featured art pieces in restaurant, selected local honey-based products in spa, luxury bath amenities and marble features, whiskey tastings and "Southern hospitality" approach to greeting guests</i>	Yes
Speakeasy	New York, NY	Formerly a jazz club, a small luxury hotel that opened in mid-2000s	Present	Extensive and Varied. <i>Online brochures and itineraries, extensive information on restaurant, theaters, shopping. Informants discussed high and low-brow interests including Broadway shows and hotel history but also television and tourist attractions</i>	Varied and light to moderate. <i>Featured art deco décor, photos depicting hotel past, extensive but well-integrated in-room technology, steamer trunks in a nod to past, luxury amenities and high cuisine, jazz nights.</i>	Yes
Solstice	Manchester Village, VT	An historic Grand Hotel from the late 1700s that remains in operation today	Mostly present (Sleep quality 4/5)	Extensive and Varied. <i>Solstice magazine, online history and guest stories, extensive information on locale and history. Informants discussed high and low-brow interests including equestrian and illustrious past guests but also snowmobiling and skeet shooting</i>	Varied and light to moderate. <i>Featured photos depicting hotel past, artifacts from centuries before, high-end furnishings in rooms, local cuisine on menus, and a more casual, neighborly approach to service characteristic of Vermont.</i>	Yes

Hotel Name	Location	History	"Foundational" Elements	Language	Materials and Practices	Stayed in Collection?
Diplomat	Washington, DC	An historic Grand Hotel from the early 1900s that remains in operation today	Present	Moderate and Homogenous. <i>Online brochures and itineraries, some information available in hotel on history. Informants discussed almost exclusively the hotel's storied past and its current elite guests.</i>	Homogenous. <i>Retained extensive décor from past, including wood paneling and Victorian furniture; featured sailing and equestrian in lounges; luxury bath amenities and marble features</i>	No - left OC in late 2015 and is now positioned as an "upscale" hotel (a step below luxury)
Freedom	Boston, MA	Formerly a penitentiary, a luxury hotel that opened in the mid-2000s	Mostly present (Sleep quality 4/5)	Extensive and Varied. <i>Online brochures, flyers, itineraries; extensive information on hotel history. Informants discussed high and low-brow interests including gallery night and jazz quartet but also past prisoners and pets</i>	Varied and light. <i>Retained pieces of jail architecture like cat walk and some bars; hosted fashion shows, local musicians, "Yappier Hour" for pets; provided champagne at check-in; featured local cuisine in restaurants</i>	Yes
Babylon	Scottsdale, AZ	Established in the mid-1980s, a "traditional" luxury hotel with spa, golf, etc.	Present	Extensive and Varied. <i>Wide-ranging website and blog, Babylon History Book, extensive information on locale and hotel features. Informants discussed high and low-brow interests including million-dollar art collection and spa but also hiking, cacti, and movies</i>	Varied and light. <i>Featured extensive art, both traditional and Native American; local and global cuisine; landscaping native to the area; million-dollar pool and cabanas; lessons on cocktail making and cooking</i>	Yes

Together, when linguistic and material resources were held lightly by the hotels and linked loosely with one another, they formed a sort of “scaffolding” that guided interpretation and enabled guests to distinguish elite and non-elite symbols for themselves. Cultural distinctiveness was maintained by the hotels, in other words, by engaging guests. It was subject to revision and updating, rather than straightforwardly and statically asserted. The metaphor of scaffolding captures the provision of a minimal, temporary framework erected to provide sufficient support for, and aid in construction, thereby allowing for updates or changes to an existing structure. Similarly, the “cultural scaffolding” I observed worked as a minimal, malleable framework for audiences, providing support for, and aiding in, the maintenance of cultural distinctiveness ascribed to incumbent organizations by guests. Different from existing research that suggests the utility of carefully and unambiguously conveying meanings (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007), I found that when cultural resources were used too heavily or overtly, they tended to be ineffective.

Specifically, language served not to articulate status distinctions, but to equip patrons with the raw material needed for sensemaking in desired directions. Similarly, materials were important, but not because they concretized or comprehensively symbolized elite status, as in the case of a sports car or a chandelier. Rather, they broke with the shared conventions (Swidler, 2010) expected in luxury and prompted sensemaking, enabling the resources and styles conveyed linguistically to be put to use. Cultural distinctiveness, in other words, was maintained by guests, through use of the linguistic and material resources that the organizations made available, and it was a work in progress. Cultural scaffolding enabled dynamism and personalization that reflected an elite lifestyle comprised of cultivated individual tastes, not wealth or landed class, consistent with changing ideas about elite status more broadly.

Further, the notion of scaffolding denotes a process of transformation, but not demolition. As I observed in the hotels, longstanding “foundational” or institutionalized cultural resources that characterized luxury hotels, like comfortable beds and high-end amenities, were retained and served as anchors or foundations around which cultural scaffolding was erected. In other words, consistent with efforts to preserve market status at the segment level (Chapter V) OC hotels kept hold of the quality that signaled elite market status but, with cultural scaffolding, adapted to changing tastes such that the cultural distinctiveness of luxury might also be maintained. Building cultural scaffolding, OC hotels acted as cultural entrepreneurs, or what OC called “catalysts, curators, and guides,” maintaining cultural distinctiveness by engaging guests in interpretation and development of expertise.

Of course, constructing “cultural scaffolding” rather than displaying clear signals of status created what some saw as a potential pitfall: as an informant quipped, “maybe we just don’t notice it. We think it looks, like, standard, but maybe they have done subtle things that we just haven’t noticed” (B6.01.13). However, this was precisely the point in using cultural resources lightly: as important as it was that elite guests take note of such cues, it was also vital that they were not obvious to all audience members. This enabled maintenance of broad market appeal, as some guests – especially business travelers – did not visit hotels to gain prestige, but simply used it as a place to stay. Perhaps more importantly, it required use of “symbolic goods that require esoteric skills or knowledge or huge time investments as prerequisites to enjoyment,” (DiMaggio, 1991: 127) so as to subtly and legitimately exclude those unable or ill-equipped to develop such cultural acumen (Lamont & Lareau, 1988), reproducing societal distinctions at the organizational level. Using cultural materials and practices lightly, in other words, enabled OC hotels to balance market reach and legitimacy with cultural distinctiveness and exclusivity by

allowing guests the opportunity to recognize, interpret and give meaning to cultural cues and display elite expertise. Rather than straightforwardly maintaining cultural distinctiveness, they invited guests to “let us be your guide” (Tagline on Opulent Collection website, accessed 7/18/14) in distinguishing high and low-brow tastes, discerning old and new luxury, and positioning themselves favorably in a shifting social and cultural landscape. Thus, my findings show that, although the content of cultural capital has changed since the time of DiMaggio’s (1982) cultural entrepreneurs, cultural entrepreneurship remains successful when it objectifies or “makes real” broader status distinctions, not with language and materials that concretize cultural distinctiveness, but with cultural scaffolding that enables patrons to do so.

DISCUSSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

In this study, I set out to examine how organizational incumbents use cultural resources “on the ground,” as they adapt to shifting ideas about status and changing elite tastes, in order to remain culturally distinctive. More specifically, I asked: *How do incumbent organizations operating in the luxury sector engage in cultural entrepreneurship in order to remain culturally distinctive as elite tastes and status change?* I used a multiple case study of six hotels in the luxury segment and build from analyses of interviews, observations, and archival data to reveal how the hotels adapted as class-based social distinctions eroded, elite tastes became more disperse and omnivorous, and ideas about ‘new’ luxury emerged in the industry.

My analysis revealed that, surprisingly, rather than conveying a singularly cohesive or uniformly robust set of meanings (e.g., Martens et al., 2007), especially related to “high” culture (DiMaggio, 1982), the hotels drew from and educated guests on a range of cultural repertoires that evoked both high-brow and popular cultural tastes, habits and knowledge. Manifest in language and materials, these resources served as an interpretive touchstone for guests, which I

metaphorically term “cultural scaffolding.” Using this cultural scaffolding, the hotels preserved longstanding elements of hotel luxury but simultaneously equipped and prompted their guests to reinterpret what luxury and elite status meant in the context of their hotel experience. In doing so, the hotels served as a site for not for displaying or concretizing homogenous high-cultural tastes, but rather for the exercise of expertise and expression of lifestyle, in line with contemporary ideas about elite status (Khan, 2011; e.g., Zald & Lounsbury, 2010) and omnivorous tastes (Peterson & Kern, 1996). Cultural scaffolding was thus centrally important in hotels’ efforts to remain culturally distinctive because it allowed *guests* to make elite status manifest through the organizations, expressed through the exercise of expertise. My findings thereby suggest that, surprisingly, in maintaining cultural distinctiveness in processes of cultural entrepreneurship, organizations may be most successful when they hold culture lightly.

The findings from this chapter extend those from Chapters IV and V to show how shifting socio-cultural ideas about elite status distinctions and efforts at “re-classifying” the cultural distinctiveness of luxury in the industry took root at the organizational level. More specifically, I show that efforts at preservation that occurred at the market segment level (Chapter V) also extended to the organizational level, as hotels retained market-specific signals of quality that ensured their credibility and high status relative to competitors. Consistent with findings from Chapter V that revealed efforts to “scale back” on signals of market status, in this chapter, I showed how organizations also stripped away much of what was associated with “old” luxury, rather than holding tightly to all existing institutionalized resources. Flexibly retaining cultural materials and practices, the hotels put them to use in new and more resonant ways. These findings echo recent work (Glynn, Lockwood, & Raffaelli, 2015; Lockwood & Glynn, 2016a)

that suggest allowing for minor changes in institutionalized cultural practices at the micro-level is central to ensuring their persistence more broadly.

Further extending my findings from Chapter V, in this study, I reveal some of the manners in which efforts at emotionally recasting and sacralizing luxury took shape within organizations in the luxury segment. I show how, rather than being translated literally, ideational commitments made at the collective level were reflected stylistically in the resource commitments the organizational level. In particular, the organizations I examined emotionally recast and sacralized luxury not by repeating the language used at the market segment level, but rather by subtly educating and encouraging audiences to reinterpret luxury to transform “old” into “new” and contribute to cultural distinctiveness. In this manner, efforts to cultivate audience investment in upholding status distinctions that began at the segment level appear to have taken root through cultural entrepreneurship at the organizational level.

This study also extends scholarly research in additional new directions. First, most broadly, I highlight the importance of cultural distinctiveness to incumbent organizations and show how it is maintained in spite of shifting ideas about elite status (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010) and changing tastes that mark high-status social groups (Peterson & Kern, 1996). I reveal how organizations engage in cultural entrepreneurship to do so, showing how such efforts are agentic and guided by organizations, as management scholars have underlined (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007), but not fully determined by them. More specifically, I show the importance of cultural variety in such processes, underlining how maintaining a degree of ambiguity and interpretive latitude can be productive in, rather than hindering, organizational efforts to maintain cultural distinctiveness.

Interestingly, the high-status luxury organizations I examined did not focus narrowly on “high culture” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; DiMaggio, 1982; Lamont & Lareau, 1988), but rather drew from a variety of cultural repertoires associated with both elite and low-brow tastes. While this echoed the profile of a contemporary cultural “omnivore” (Peterson & Kern, 1996) cultural variety was not used to merely reflect elite guests’ tastes. Cultural variety facilitated ongoing “sensemaking... to remedy surprises from new patterns of cultural consumption and to tell different actors and symbols apart”(Weber & Glynn, 2006: 1653), such that luxury and elite status might be reinterpreted in the context of the hotel experience. Further, it also supported commercial goals, enabling the hotels to maintain their relatively broad appeal by facilitating “sociable interaction” (DiMaggio, 1987) rather than signaling snobbery and overt exclusivity. As such, my findings echo and add nuance to research highlights the importance of an expansive cultural toolkit (e.g., Erickson, 1996; Rivera, 2012; Swidler, 1986, 2001a), showing how it comes into play in maintaining cultural distinctiveness for organizations.

At the same time, while highlighting cultural variety and apparent “egalitarianism” I also reveal how organizations actively cultivate and maintain cultural distinctions that legitimate exclusivity, adding nuance to research that has tended to observe their existence *ex post* (DiMaggio, 1982; Glynn et al., 1996). My findings suggest that, in the current climate of espoused democracy and elite status as carefully-developed expertise, equipping guests to uphold and express cultural distinctions was central to the organizations’ efforts. Importantly, this was not accomplished simply by associating the organizations or their guests with high-status others, as management research might suggest (Podolny & Phillips, 1996; Podolny, 1993); in fact, those who equipped and educated guests were often low-status hotel employees. Rather, organizations cultivated cultural distinctiveness by acting as “curators” or guides. With cultural resources in

the form of language, material and practices, and with ongoing reinforcement, they equipped guests with a “little working knowledge of a lot of cultural genres combined with a good understanding of which culture to use” (Erickson, 1996: 224) to enable them to personalize and convey cultural distinctions. In the current age of egalitarianism, such displays of cultural expertise were effective for organizations and patrons because they could be seen as “individual decisions independent of structural conditions” and thus conveyed the cultural distinctiveness of patrons as well as the organizations without seeming elitist, as “the advantages gained by way of these [individual] elite tastes are viewed as just” (Sauder, 2005).

This finding echoes the longstanding recognition that elite distinctions are upheld through habits, knowledge, behaviors and materials (e.g. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Lamont & Lareau, 1988), but only minimally through explicit language. Further, it shows how this “habitus” is reflected through organizational means, with the construction of what I call “cultural scaffolding” that equipped and enabled guests to exercise expertise. In this way, my findings providing empirical support for Swidler’s (2010: 292) recent observation that cultural vitality and distinctiveness “derive from the structural features of systems of cultural production and distribution, rather than from the supposed qualities of elite versus less-elite culture consumers.” In other words, my findings suggest that cultural distinctiveness is upheld through organizations and by patrons; however, it is attributable not to guests’ existing elite tastes, but to organizations’ efforts to guide and structure the expression of expertise that signals elite status.

More generally speaking, this study reveals how cultural entrepreneurship unfolds at the organizational level past founding. Introducing the notion of “cultural scaffolding,” I underline the benefits of using culture lightly, as a minimal, malleable framework for audiences. My findings thereby offer a useful and somewhat novel counterpoint to existing research that

emphasizes cultural stability or cohesion (e.g., Ravasi & Schultz, 2006) or construction of a singular, coherent story (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007) as most potent in influencing audiences' meaning-making and assessments. Further, I underline both language and materiality as sources of flexibility and equivocality, rather than constraint, in these processes, revealing how they serve as flexible resources that take on meaning through use by patrons, rather than by organizations' efforts to straightforwardly articulate or concretize ideas or values. As such, consistent with Swidler's (1986, 2001) view of the potency of cultural toolkits, this research suggests that using culture to cultivate desired meanings among audiences depends less on the particular cultural resources deployed and much more on *how* language, materials and practices are actually used.

Finally, I reveal that, although elite tastes and status distinctions have changed dramatically since the time of DiMaggio's cultural entrepreneurs, cultural entrepreneurship remains successful when it focuses on "creating a base through which the ideal of [elite] culture can be given...flesh" (DiMaggio, 1982: 48), not through concrete symbols or language, but through enabling and guiding sensemaking by consumers. My findings indicate that in doing so, organizations may productively harness the fact that, especially in terms of status, they "are partially constituted by the audiences that support them" (DiMaggio, 1987: 441), such that they might enable patrons to "grope their way to" workable cultural distinctions (DiMaggio, 1982: 33) with the desired meanings, styles and practices the organizations make available. Thus, in working to remain culturally distinctive, organizations may counter-intuitively be most successful when they hold culture lightly.

CHAPTER VII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation set out to explore how organizational systems that give substance to cultural distinctions may be updated and redefined to continue to resonate with elite tastes and maintain symbolic boundaries that legitimate exclusivity. I asked: *When, how, and why do market actors use cultural resources to adapt to changing cultural tastes and values, especially those related to elite social status?* Situating my research in the empirical context of the U.S. hotel industry, and looking over its entire 225-year history, I explored the long-term link between socio-cultural changes in status, industry evolution, and luxury organizations' use of cultural resources and, especially, cultural capital.

My empirical investigation consisted of three discrete but interconnected studies that used data from a variety of sources and both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Chapter IV considered whether and under what conditions the initial status distinctions reflected in the hotel industry – and the meanings and practices that uphold them – might be ‘redefined’ with time to account for changing socio-cultural tastes and values. I examined the factors influencing these efforts. Chapter V examined one segment of the hotel industry – the luxury market segment – and revealed how its members culturally ‘reclassified’ luxury from “old” to “new” and from homogenized to distinctive and elite. Chapter VI drilled down to the organizational level to uncover the process by which organizational incumbents used cultural resources to transform the meaning of luxury in the context of hotel experiences and appeal to changing elite tastes.

In this final chapter of the dissertation, I recap the findings and contributions of each chapter and draw out, more explicitly, the links among them. I discuss limitations and boundary

conditions of this dissertation, consider the broad theoretical and managerial implications of my work, and identify avenues for future research.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The first empirical study in this dissertation, presented in Chapter IV, introduced the setting and context of my dissertation, the U.S. hotel industry, and examined its 225-year history from its emergence in the 1790s until today. I noted growing scholarly recognition of shifting socio-cultural tastes and social status distinctions (e.g., Erickson, 1996; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Sayer, 2005a; Zald & Lounsbury, 2010), and examined their potential links with long-term industry evolution and cultural redefinition (DiMaggio, 1982), wherein status distinctions in an industry may be redrawn with cultural means. I asked, *What endogenous and exogenous factors (i.e., institutional, cultural, socioeconomic), if any, influence cultural ‘redefinition’ in an existing industry?* Building from research in management on cultural entrepreneurship, which underlines initial efforts to link societal and industry cultures, I considered how they may remain connected, especially in light of work that emphasizes relative stasis and high isomorphic pressures that may hinder adaptability in mature markets (e.g., DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Johnson, 2007; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Martens et al., 2007).

Draw from extensive archival, interview and observational data, I developed an inductive, historical narrative of the U.S. hotel industry. I revealed the industry’s emergence through cultural entrepreneurship (e.g., DiMaggio, 1982) and identified three relatively discrete periods or eras that marked the industry’s evolution, suggestive of a model of institutional “periodicity” (Glynn & Abzug, 2002) facilitated by cultural redefinition. These eras were: the Grand Hotel Era (1790-1930s), the Chain Hotel Era (1940s – mid-1990s), and the Lifestyle Hotel Era (mid-1990s – 2015). Focusing on the factors that prompted, hindered, or otherwise

influenced redefinition, my findings revealed correspondence between shifts in elite social status, and industry changes to adapt and ‘redefine’ status distinctions – and the cultural meanings and practices that upheld them – in the industry. I also revealed that institutional pressures within the industry contributed to redefinition, minimizing short-term industry adaptability and influencing redefinition to “save the industry” over the longer term (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). More broadly speaking, my findings indicated that processes of cultural entrepreneurship occur over the long term and serve as a factor that contributes considerably to periodic industry change (Glynn & Abzug, 2002) that ensures continued cultural support. This chapter demonstrated how societal and industry cultures are related, and I showed that as socio-cultural and institutional pressures wax and wane, they create the opportunity for cultural entrepreneurship focused on redefinition. I also laid the groundwork for the two subsequent empirical chapters, which focused more centrally on the dynamics of status maintenance and meaning transformation among organizations.

In Chapter V, I shifted from examining the industry’s evolution to focus on how members of the industry’s high-status luxury segment contributed to the status-focused ‘redefinition’ I observed in Chapter IV. Specifically, I examined how they conveyed meaningful cultural distinctions at a time when “very notion of ‘elite’ seems to be in flux” (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010: 970) in society, over the past 30 years. I asked, *How does a high-status market segment maintain its status as socio-cultural distinctions erode?*

To address this question, I took a mechanisms-based approach (Davis & Marquis, 2005; Hedström & Swedberg, 1998; Weber, 2006), using both qualitative and quantitative analyses of extensive archival data, interviews and observations, and focusing on the period from 1985-2015. My findings revealed that “cultural reclassification” led by market actors to sharpen taste-

based distinctions and convey exclusivity countered commercial pressures that had “declassified” (DiMaggio, 1987; Weber, 1978) the cultural distinctiveness of luxury through pressures for expansion and increasing homogeneity. I identified three mechanisms by which this was accomplished by organizations in the luxury segment: *sacralization* of luxury products by development and monopolization of cultural expertise; *emotional recasting* of elite tastes and preferences with affective and normative framing; and *preservation* of commercial appeal through retention of longstanding credentials to signal market quality.

Conceptualizing these efforts as a form of minimally coordinated cultural entrepreneurship (Wry et al., 2011), I showed how “re-classification” conveyed and enacted elite status – in this case, around “luxury” – within and through markets (DiMaggio, 1982), even as social distinctions eroded and cultural tastes changed. My findings revealed that, for market actors, high status is not necessarily self-perpetuating, as some research implies (Chen et al., 2012), but rather is actively and carefully maintained. They motivated the third study in my dissertation, Chapter VI, which examined how such meanings and status distinctions take root within organizations and among audiences.

Finally, building from Chapters IV and V, in Chapter VI, I focused at the organizational level of analysis. I examined how various cultural resources – including language, but also knowledge, behaviors, and goods (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Lamont & Lareau, 1988) – were used by organizations to remain culturally distinctive in the face of changing elite tastes and industry meanings. I asked, *How, if at all, do incumbent organizations operating in the luxury sector engage in cultural entrepreneurship in order to remain culturally distinctive as elite tastes and status change?* To address this question, I used a multiple case study of six hotels in the luxury segment, with analyses of interviews, observations, and archival data, focusing on how the hotels

adapted as class-based social distinctions eroded and elite tastes became more disperse and omnivorous.

My findings revealed that rather than conveying a singularly cohesive or uniformly robust set of meanings in an effort remain culturally distinctive, the hotels educated guests on a range of cultural repertoires traditionally associated with both elite and low-brow tastes. The hotels used cultural resources, especially language and physical materiality, as an interpretive touchstone, which I metaphorically termed “cultural scaffolding.” Using this cultural scaffolding, the hotels relayed a menu of meanings and styles they sought to claim and with which they equipped their patrons. They engaged their guests in using these as a baseline to create their own meanings about cultural distinctiveness and luxury in the context of their hotel experience. In doing so, the hotels served as a site not for displaying high-cultural tastes, but rather, for the exercise of expertise and expression of lifestyle, in line with contemporary ideas about elite status (Khan, 2011; e.g., Zald & Lounsbury, 2010).

My findings from Chapter VI showed that although the content of cultural capital has changed since the time of DiMaggio’s cultural entrepreneurs, the process of cultural entrepreneurship remains successful when it focuses on “creating a base” (DiMaggio, 1982: 48) through which the ideals of elite cultural tastes and social distinctions were put on display and upheld by consumers. More broadly, with my findings from Chapter VI, I underline utility of cultural entrepreneurship for incumbent organizations. I suggest that, in maintaining cultural distinctiveness, organizations may counter-intuitively be most effective when they hold culture lightly.

TOWARD AN INTEGRATIVE VIEW

In this dissertation, I aimed broadly to understand when, how and why market actors use cultural resources to account for changing cultural tastes and values, especially those related to elite social status. My interest grew from the recognition that, within the management literature, little attention has been devoted to issues at the intersection of culture and status. As others have noted, researchers “tended to downplay or altogether bracket...issues” of elite status and stratification (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010: 969), despite their overlap with issues of culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1984) as well as organizations (DiMaggio, 1982). Taken together, the three studies show how changes at the macro level, revealed in Chapter IV, necessitated wide-scale collective adjustment (Chapter V) and concerted efforts to adapt in individual organizations (Chapter VI). In this sense, my findings speak centrally to processes of social change in institutional settings (Hirsch, 1986) and across level of analysis, linking micro- and meso-level shifts with broad societal changes that deeply implicate customers, not only in terms of their wallets, but also their own personal tastes, habits and lifestyles.

Looking across findings from each of the three studies, I also believe my dissertation demonstrates the interdependence of actors and cultural resources at multiple levels of analysis, as scholars have widely noted (e.g., DiMaggio, 1991b; Scott, 2014; Weber & Glynn, 2006; Weber, 2005). In particular, my findings newly show how processes of cultural entrepreneurship focused on redefining status distinctions operative in society are manifest in industries and embodied in organizations. They suggest that efforts undertaken at one level of analysis to put culture to use and legitimate status distinctions require adequate support at other levels. For instance, my findings in Chapter VI underline the manners in which organizations provide the cultural “scaffolding” for constructing and objectifying status distinctions, allowing broad social changes to take root and be made manifest in the knowledge, habits, and goods (Lamont &

Lareau, 1988) claimed by evolving social groups. At the same time, my findings emphasize how macro-level changes create the opportunities for such cultural entrepreneurship at the micro-level. For instance, the lifestyle or boutique hotel, which, broadly speaking, encompasses “new” luxury hotels, was introduced in the industry in the mid-1980s. However, it did not begin to take hold in the hotel industry until about fifteen years later, after status distinctions and societal values that legitimated them had shifted more broadly, speaking to the nested nature of otherwise agentic cultural processes.

More generally speaking, I believe that the findings from this dissertation shed new light on links between recognized cultural processes and manifestations that, until now, have remained disconnected empirically and theoretically. Giorgi and co-authors (Giorgi et al., 2015) recently discussed shifting views of the influence of culture on social processes, as they operate within and across levels of analysis. They noted that early work emphasized culture’s role in shaping values, goals, or ends, and more recent work viewing culture set a set of means or “capacities” valuable in their pursuit (e.g., Swidler, 1986, 2001a). The cultural emphasis on either ends or means engenders a different type of cultural ‘commitment’ – ideological or resource-based, respectively – that contributes to its staying power in a setting (Giorgi et al., 2015). Both, I believe, are observable in my findings: ideological commitments are clearest in Chapter V, as members of the luxury segment theorized (e.g., Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002; Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001) “new” luxury, while resource commitments are clearest in Chapter VI, as luxury hotels put elite cultural tastes on display with a variety of cultural resources.

Giorgi et al. (2015) also underlined the need for research that considers how such ideological and resource commitments are linked and the conditions and mechanisms that may contribute to updating them, so as to consider what may anchor and guide such efforts more

broadly. Integrating the findings from the three studies comprising this dissertation, I make inroads toward this end. I also reveal the importance of cultural capital in market processes, as a cultural toolkit or repertoire that also encompasses internalized values, preferences, and beliefs that reproduce social structures and distinctions. Akin to arguments from DiMaggio's (1982) early work, my findings suggest that cultural capital serves as an "anchor" for, as well as a product of, the cultural processes operating in commercial industries. I show that cultural capital guides assessments of what is valued or worthy and also informs the manners in which such preferences are made manifest by patrons and in organizations; moreover, as cultural capital shifts, it contributes to efforts to update cultural commitments in industries correspondingly. As such, in an age of democracy, the ideational and resource commitments that management scholars have seen as the provenance of commercial actors may nonetheless still be both born from and reflective of the cultural capital or cultural distinction of their patrons.

More specifically, in Chapter IV, I shed light on some of the factors that may prompt and enable updates to ideological and resource commitments. I revealed how changing social distinctions may contribute to redefinition in an industry; empirically, I showed how shifting values that informed ideas about status, as class-based, earned, or related to lifestyle, prompted cultural entrepreneurship past organizational founding or industry emergence. This entailed updating the cultural commitments that marked the field to "resonate with broader societal beliefs" (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001: 546). Changing societal dynamics, in other words, may be seen as having created "unsettled times" (Swidler, 1986, 2001a) conducive to industry change between the periods that marked the industry's history and revised and renewed its links with societal culture.

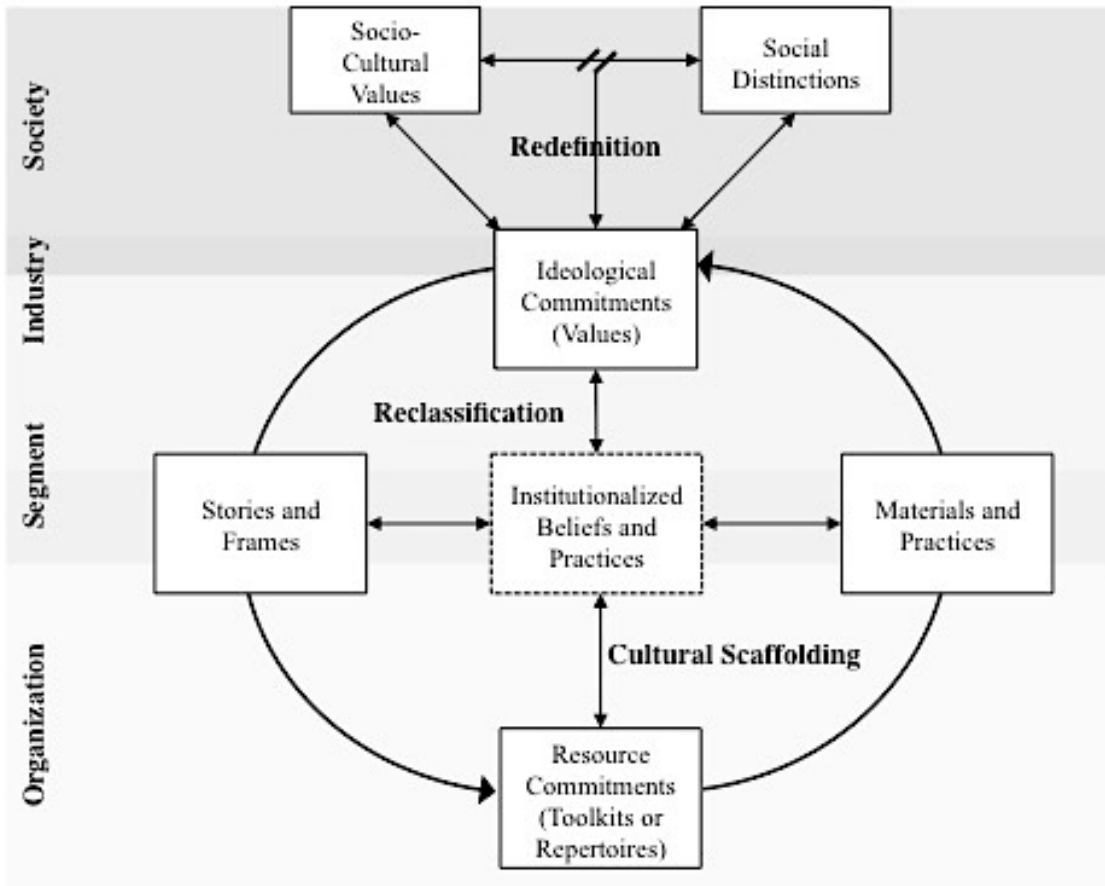
In Chapter V, I revealed how updates to cultural commitments prompted by societal change began to take root in the industry, and particularly at the collective market segment level (e.g., Wry et al., 2011). More specifically, I showed how ideological commitments – in this case, related to the meaning and social worth of elite social status and luxury in the industry – were reflected in the process of cultural reclassification that maintained the high status of the luxury segment. The primary vehicles or manifestations of culture for doing so were linguistically-based stories and frames. These were deployed as the collective effectively “theorized” (e.g., Greenwood et al., 2002) or articulated updated ideological commitments, keeping an eye toward institutionalized meanings and practices particular to the industry and the segment. Shifts in societal values, in other words, seem to have prompted, enabled and informed efforts at reclassification that aimed toward updating ideological commitments in the industry, especially those related to elite status, as members of the luxury segment shed ideas about “old” luxury and moved toward “new” luxury.

Finally, in Chapter VI, I developed insights that speak to how broad ideological commitments are translated to and take shape as more concrete resource commitments at the organizational level. In particular, I showed how cultural resources were deployed, in ongoing storytelling and framing but also with materials and practices, to align with and support the shifting ideological commitments that, in part, constituted “new” luxury. I found that the organizations created cultural variety, equipped guests with the “(equally cultural) understanding of the rules of relevance” (Erickson, 1996) to exhibit expertise, and allowed them extensive interpretive latitude. Those that did so consistently were most successful in updating existing resource commitments to align with an ideology of “new” luxury and elite status as expertise. In other words, for updated cultural commitments to take hold it was, counter-intuitively, essential

for organizations to hold culture lightly. Doing made manifest status distinctions, reproducing and reinforcing them in the industry and, theory suggests, in society, as well (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; DiMaggio, 1982).

In sum, in making explicit the interconnections I see across findings, I advanced an integrative view of cultural entrepreneurship, status, and cultural toolkits as they connect over time and across distinct levels at analysis. In forging these links, I believe my dissertation makes progress not just with the theoretical contributions discussed in each chapter, but also toward addressing the broader puzzle “how and why...cultural commitments relate to one another and...how actors might change or update existing cultural commitments” (Giorgi et al., 2015: 22). I believe my research underlines cultural capital as one important but largely overlooked macro-level cultural repertoire that links cultural manifestations and commitments across levels of analysis and over time. Incorporating elements from work by Giorgi et al. (2015: 20), I present a stylized integrative model that speaks to these ends in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: An Integrative Model of Cultural Entrepreneurship Past Founding



LIMITATIONS

As with any study, this dissertation is subject to some limitations, which I discuss briefly here. First, my dissertation focused on a single industry, the U.S. Hotel industry, and attended most closely to the luxury market segment. While this allowed me to develop a comprehensive historical view of the industry and to dive deeply into understanding mechanisms operative at more micro levels of analysis, using a single case study to build theory also limits the generalizability of my findings. Comparative studies of multiple industries would be productive in more fully understanding the interplay of societal and institutional processes in industry

evolution and ‘redefinition,’ and in identifying the boundary conditions that may limit or otherwise influence such efforts.

Second, I focused primarily on elite tastes and luxury products and services in this dissertation, with little consideration for how status dynamics might play out in other industry sectors or in manners that reflect non-elite tastes. In recent work, Swidler (2010) theorized how the processes by which elite tastes are expressed may be similarly manifest in other segments of the cultural industries, contributing to the production of “aesthetic pleasure.” While this suggests that my findings may be theoretically generalizable beyond elite tastes and high-status organizations and market segments, future research is needed to examine this possibility and to understand how it may play out in a variety of commercial settings.

Finally, although the studies I conducted referenced patrons’ changing tastes and noted their importance in organizations’ individual and collective efforts to maintain elite status, my data was limited in its ability to directly access those tastes and efforts. I drew from newspaper articles that detailed broad socio-cultural tastes and beliefs, accounted for guest reviews, and spoke with some guests directly to develop an empirically-grounded understanding of patrons’ roles and their opinions. However, I focused primarily on the efforts of market actors in my dissertation. Therefore, future research is needed to more fully understand the manners in which patrons and other audience members contribute to and guide the processes I revealed here.

SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Theoretical Contributions

Taken together, the three empirical studies in my dissertation make several broad contributions. First, they extend research on cultural entrepreneurship considerably, bridging early perspectives that focused squarely on culture, status and exclusivity (DiMaggio, 1982) with

more recent research by management scholars that has focused on institutional pressures, organizational agency, and profitability (e.g., Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). My studies reveal that cultural entrepreneurship unfolds not just at founding, but as a recurrent, redefining process that contributes to industry structuration and status production. As such, they underline the utility of cultural entrepreneurship for organizational incumbents as well as new organizations, answering recent calls (Lockwood & Glynn, 2016a) for work in this direction. The findings from these studies also urge a renewed scholarly focus on how cultural entrepreneurship plays a role in markets, but also in society.

This dissertation also contributes to research on status by adopting a cultural perspective on how status is conferred and maintained. Rather than viewing status as relating primarily to perceived market quality (Podolny & Phillips, 1996; Podolny, 1993) and largely self-perpetuating over time (Chen et al., 2012; Washington & Zajac, 2005), I offer evidence that, even in commercial settings, status is deeply cultural, extending emerging scholarly understanding of these dynamics (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016). Further, with my findings I reveal that even elite status is not static, but show that, rather, it is periodically and agentically redefined, maintained and enacted through and by organizations as well as their patrons. In doing so, I break with the approach popular among management scholars to bracket and ignore issues of social status and stratification (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010). Addressing them head-on, I reveal their central importance in seemingly objective market processes.

Finally, I advance research on cultural toolkits by developing insights on how “public” cultural resources and ideologies become available to and productive for market actors. Rather than emphasizing de-contextualized cultural “mixing and matching,” I develop a multi-level view on when and how cultural resources convey and transform meaning, uphold status

distinctions, and, ultimately, may be converted into social or economic resources (Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Rivera, 2012). My findings emphasize the embeddedness of these processes in broader social and market dynamics that fundamentally implicate industries, market segments, organizations, and, perhaps most interestingly, the audiences that patronize and give meaning – and status – to them.

Methodological Contributions

I also make multiple methodological contributions in drawing from non-traditional data sources as I developed empirical insights in this dissertation. First, extending a small body of recent management research that has used social media data (e.g., Lockwood & Glynn, 2016b; Orlikowski & Scott, 2013; Toubiana & Zietsma, 2016; Vasi, Walker, Johnson, & Tan, 2015), in Chapter VI, I drew from 600 TripAdvisor reviews generated by guests. This social media data lent unique insight to the manners in which “luxury” was assessed by guests, and it allowed me to compare and contrasts guests’ opinions with both text-based reviews and numerical ratings across the six hotels I studied, laying the groundwork for future work that draws from this novel data source. Further, different from most existing studies in which researchers have analyzed quantitatively social media data, including TripAdvisor reviews (e.g., Wang, Wezel, & Forgues, 2016), to assess broad trends at a high level, in my work, I took a more focused approach. Specifically, I content analyzed review text with hand-coding, and I used quantitative analyses to examine the links between the content of reviews with numerical “star” ratings. Although my analyses are not reported in depth because I report primarily on the organizations’ role in cultural entrepreneurship, they represent a methodological innovation that is ripe for further development in these studies and in future research. More generally, with detailed content analysis of social

media data, I introduce a novel scholarly approach to understanding how meanings are constructed, products are assessed and status is articulated and interpreted online.

A second methodological contribution relates to my use of non-textual data, including photographs, field notes detailing artifacts and interactions, observations of mannerisms and styles, and more. In collecting and analyzing non-textual or “aesthetic” data (Giorgi & Glynn, 2014), I broke from more traditional scholarly approaches of studying cultural entrepreneurship and other organizational processes by focusing on stories or rhetoric (e.g., Martens et al., 2007; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005; Zhao et al., 2013) and, I believe, revealed some of the advantages of doing so. Specifically, focusing on non-textual data, I developed insights that speak to the habitual, enacted and materialized aspects of culture (Giorgi et al., 2015) that are central to status reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and to cultural toolkits more broadly (Swidler, 1986, 2001a), but which have largely gone overlooked in management literature. In doing so, I advance a small but growing body of research that both methodologically (Giorgi & Glynn, 2014) and theoretically (Hargadon & Douglas, 2001; Jones, Boxenbaum, & Anthony, 2013; Jones & Massa, 2013) underlines the important of materiality and other non-textual manifestations of culture in organizational and social processes.

Managerial Implications

The findings from this dissertation also have several managerial implications. First, my findings reveal the centrality of status in market processes and, in particular, serve as a reminder that even market actors with elite status must attend to its maintenance. Extending recent research that highlights the importance of attending to low-status actors that may radically reclassify themselves to gain status (Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016), my findings underline the criticality of attending to broad socio-cultural shifts that may enable changes to status ordering in

industries in particular. My research also points to some potential strategies for maintaining elite status. For instance, I showed how using emotional language could help to avoid negative assessments of high-status goods as “elitist” in Chapter V, and I revealed how efforts to educate guests with ideas about elite status and evolving cultural tastes could be productive for organizations in Chapter VI. My findings also reinforce the continued importance of market-based status signals, especially related to quality: I show that while having high status can lead to sustained perceptions of high quality, especially in times of status redefinition, delivering low-quality can irreparably damage perceptions of high status.

While my findings speak to the importance of quality, they also more generally underline importance of the cultural or aesthetic value of even seemingly utilitarian products. Drawing insights from the empirical context I used in this dissertation, hotels, at their core, fulfill a very basic human need by providing a place to sleep. However, as was clear in all three empirical studies, hotels’ cultural attributes were centrally important in securing their place in American society, enabling them to compete with one another and, ultimately, in securing their appeal to guests. Even in an industry that had long been seen as a cultural institution, the informants I spoke with routinely referenced the utilitarian functions of hotels as those that they attended most closely to. While these aspects are important for hoteliers and members of other industries alike, my research serves as a reminder to them and all managers to attend to the cultural aspects of organizations and markets, as well.

Finally, my findings add nuance to views predominant among managers (and many scholars, as well) that emphasize culture as highly stable and constraining, held within the organization, and resting primarily on assumptions and deep-seated organizational beliefs. Offering the metaphor of cultural scaffolding, I show how materiality and cultural “lightness” are

also operative in organizational settings, and speak to the manners in which they might be harnessed by organizations. My findings suggest that holding culture lightly can be highly effective in engaging audiences in processes of meaning construction and may be especially useful for organizations seeking to be seen as high-status in an age of egalitarianism.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

In addition to advancing existing scholarly work in new directions, this dissertation also lays the groundwork for innovative new research, as well. While there are multiple directions for future research generated by my findings, I highlight a few that I see most promising here. By adopting a central focus on social status dynamics and revealing their important influence on market processes, I open up new opportunities for research that also considers social status more directly. At present, research that accounts for socio-cultural signals of status and social practices is limited in the management research (but see Delmestri & Greenwood, 2016), and scholars have tended to bracket or fully ignore issues of status and elite standing in examining market processes (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010). By bringing status “back in” and unpacking its link with culture operative in society as well as in industries, this dissertation encourages continued research in this direction.

This dissertation also sets the stage for a variety of new scholarly projects to examine cultural entrepreneurship (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). Specifically, while most research in management has tended to examine cultural entrepreneurship’s impact at organizational founding (Martens et al., 2007; Überbacher et al., 2015), the findings I developed in this dissertation suggest that cultural entrepreneurship is also important for incumbent organizations, enabling them to adapt to shifting societal and market demands. I therefore point to cultural entrepreneurship as a process that extends well beyond founding (see also Lockwood & Glynn,

2016a) and that produces value that is far more expansive than current scholarly research accounts for. My findings also lend empirical support to a view of cultural entrepreneurship that unfolds not just at the organizational level, but also at the level of the market segment (see Wry et al., 2011 for a compelling theoretical perspective), and points to its impact on industry evolution over the long term. As such, it highlights opportunities for future research further develops a multi-level perspective on cultural entrepreneurship. Finally, while most research on cultural entrepreneurship – and, in fact, many cultural processes – has tended to emphasize the potency of storytelling and other linguistic resources, my findings reveal the importance of other kinds of resources, like materials, practices and styles, echoing related work on culture as a toolkit (Swidler, 1986, 2001a). They suggest the need for ongoing research that accounts for culture in all its form and examines why and how which such resources might together amplify or attenuate one another in pursuit of desired goals.

CONCLUSION

The story of the U.S. hotel industry and its elite luxury segment is as much one of high status and fierce competition as it is one of earned privilege; one of hoteliers' persistence and passion, keen observation, and willingness to rely on the good taste and expert opinions of others. I have found similar threads in my own research process, which, I hope has produced a dissertation that will similarly be viewed as high-quality, well-considered, and relevant. With careful management of cultural resources and cultivation of expertise, the luxury hotels I studied created for themselves – and for their guests – a place to stay in the industry. It is my hope that, moving forward and using this dissertation as a springboard, I might similarly develop and deepen my own expert knowledge to create my own place to stay and thrive in academia.

APPENDICES

General Interview Protocols

Note: Protocols served as general guides for interviews. Questions were tailored depending on informant's role and experience, and were sometimes drawn from across protocols.

INDUSTRY EXPERTS – FOR CHAPTER IV

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: *To begin, I would like to ask you a few questions about your work and the organization you work for.*

1. Please briefly describe your current position and the roles and responsibilities you have had related to the hotel industry during your career.
2. How familiar are you with the hotel industry and, in particular, the luxury hotel segment and its evolution over time? With the approach [your company] has taken?

HISTORICAL AND CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION [as appropriate]: *I'm tracking the evolution of the US hotel industry broadly speaking. The next few questions are regarding your opinion on how the industry has evolved over time.*

3. Looking back over the course of the industry's history, can you please discuss some of the major changes that have unfolded?
 - What do you think brought each of these changes about?
 - Can you give an example of how it played out for hotel brands?
 - How does it manifest in the industry today, if at all?
4. Can you identify one or two key turning points for the industry, in terms of timing?
 - Can you speculate about why the industry changed at that point?
 - How, if at all, did these changes relate to dynamics within the industry?
 - How, if at all, did these changes relate to broader social and cultural dynamics outside the industry?
 - How, if at all, are industry and social/cultural dynamics linked, in your opinion?
5. I think I'm seeing a lot of changes taking place in around the 1930 and 1940s. Does that resonate with your experience/knowledge?
 - Can you speak to the nature of these changes?
 - How are they reflected in the industry today, if at all?
6. I think I'm seeing a lot of changes taking place in around the 1980s and 1990s. Does that resonate with your experience/knowledge?
 - Can you speak to the nature of these changes?
 - How are they reflected in the industry today, if at all?
7. Where do you see the industry going over the next 5-10 years? What's next?

LUXURY EXPERTS – FOR CHAPTER V

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: *To begin, I would like to ask you a few questions about your work and the organization you work for.*

1. Please briefly describe your current position and the roles and responsibilities you have had related to the hotel industry during your career.
2. How familiar are you with the hotel industry and, in particular, the luxury hotel segment and its evolution over time? With the approach [your company] has taken?

HISTORICAL AND CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION [as appropriate]: *I'm tracking the evolution of the US hotel industry broadly speaking. The next few questions are regarding your opinion on how the industry has evolved over time.*

3. In your opinion, what have been the most significant changes to occur in the US hotel industry since 1985?
 - What do you think brought these changes about? Can you give an example of how it played out for the luxury hotel segment? How it's reflected in the industry today?
4. One of the major changes I've observed is the change from an emphasis on standardization to one on lifestyle and experience, especially among upscale and luxury brands. When and why would you say that shift took place?
 - To what extent are the two foci (standardization vs. lifestyle) compatible/incompatible? Is one more important than the other? Why?
 - How are they manifest at the brand level? In individual hotels?
 - What strategies or approaches does [your company] take with regard to the lifestyle movement?

SEGMENT INFORMATION: *Now, I'd like to focus in particular on the luxury segment of the hotel industry.*

5. Please think about the luxury hotel segment, from your point of view, and describe it with a few adjectives or phrases.
6. In your opinion, what are the “must-haves” that are consistent across luxury hotels? How, if at all, have these changed over the past 30 years?
7. Please describe more generally how the luxury hotel segment has changed in the last 30 years, if at all.
 - Can you point to a specific **event** that prompted these changes?
 - Can you point to a specific **innovation** that prompted these changes?
 - What are the benefits and drawbacks of these changes for luxury hotels?
 - How do you see the luxury segment changing in the next 5-10 years, if at all?
 - Why might this be so?

8. Please tell me what you think distinguishes the luxury hotel segment from other segments of the hotel industry (for example, midscale or economy hotels).
 - Has this/have these always been the distinguishing factor(s)?

LUXURY BRANDS: *Now, I'd like to focus in even more narrowly, on your experiences with and insights on [luxury hotel company].*

9. Looking at how luxury hotels talk about themselves and the luxury hotel stay, it appears there is a shift from an emphasis on some of the concrete basics (like, for instance, extensive amenities, good service), to more abstract aspects (like, for instance, history, experiences).
 - Does this resonate with what you've observed? How so/not?
 - Can you help me to understand the basis of that shift?
10. From what I can discern, luxury seems to have something to do with quality, but luxury also relates to what it says about customers – in other words, staying at a luxury hotel conveys something about you, as a guest, to others. Does that resonate with your experience?
 - Is it something that [company] has considered?
 - How, if at all, has this come into play in the luxury segment over the past 30 years?
 - What other factors, if any, have influenced the thinking of leaders around these ideas?
11. Who do you consider your primary competitors?
 - How do you make decisions about how to effectively distinguish yourself from competitors?
12. Does [company] look different today than it did 25 years ago? If so, how?
 - Can you point to a specific event or innovation that prompted these changes?
 - Are these changes well-received by guests? How do you know?
13. What steps do luxury hotel brands take to differentiate themselves from more general lifestyle brands? What do you see as being the differences between the two?

OPULENT COLLECTION EXPERTS AND EMPLOYEES – FOR CHAPTER VI

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: *To begin, I would like to ask you a few questions about your work and the organization you work for.*

1. Please briefly describe your current position and the roles and responsibilities you have had related to the hotel industry during your career.
2. How familiar are you with the hotel industry and, in particular, the luxury hotel segment and its evolution over time? With the approach [your company] has taken?

SEGMENT INFORMATION: *Now, I'd like to focus in particular on the luxury segment of the hotel industry.*

3. Please think about the luxury hotel segment, from your point of view, and describe it with a few adjectives or phrases.
4. In your opinion, what are the “must-haves” that are consistent across luxury hotels? How, if at all, have these changed over the past 30 years?
5. Please tell me what you think distinguishes the luxury hotel segment from other segments of the hotel industry (for example, midscale or economy hotels).
 - Has this/have these always been the distinguishing factor(s)?

HOTEL INFORMATION: *(Instruction to the interviewee) Now, I would like to talk more about the company you work for. When you consider your answer to these questions, please think about the particular hotel that you work for.*

6. Please think about [hotel], from your point of view, and describe it with a few adjectives or phrases.
7. In your opinion, what do guests find most/least appealing about the hotel you work for?
 - Why do you think this is so?
 - Has this always been the case?
 - Is this something the hotel actively promotes?/What, if anything, does the hotel do to overcome this challenge?
8. I've noticed a lot of discussion in industry press about the shift away from luxury as related to strict operating procedures and standards and toward more personalization and an emphasis on experience. Is this consistent with your experience?
 - Can you give an example of how this shift has been manifest in your hotel, if at all?
 - How, in general, do guests respond to these changes?

9. One of the things that caught my interest about The Opulent Collection in particular is that the brand emphasizes the uniqueness of each hotel in the collection, rather than focusing on consistency as many other brands have done. Does this resonate with your experience?
 - How, if at all, does this play out at the brand level?
 - How, if at all, does this play out at the hotel level?
 - What challenges does this kind of approach create, if any? Benefits?
10. I also noticed that The Opulent Collection talks a lot about offering indigenous and hyper-local experiences to guests.
 - What does indigenous mean to you and others at your hotel?
 - Can you give an example of what these experiences look like at your hotel?
 - Are there challenges associated with this? Benefits?
11. I've noticed that employees, and especially the concierge, are often talked about as a curator or guide. Can you describe in your own words what that means?
 - How, if at all, does storytelling play a role in this?
 - Can you give me an example of a story you would tell me if I were a guest?
 - What is the ultimate aim of curating guest experiences?
12. *(If conducted over the phone):* Can you please describe the décor or “look and feel” of the hotel?
 - How, if at all, does this speak to “luxury”?
 - How, if at all, does this speak to the indigenous or local culture?
 - How do you strike a balance between the two in the materials you use throughout the hotel?
13. *(If conducted over the phone):* Can you please describe service at the hotel?
 - How, if at all, does this speak to “luxury”?
 - How, if at all, does this speak to the indigenous or local culture?
 - How do you strike a balance between the two in the service you deliver throughout the hotel?

USED ACROSS ALL INTERVIEWS: (Instruction to the interviewee) Those are all the questions that I have. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about anything we've just discussed ... or anything else?

Do you have any questions for me? Can I follow up if I have any questions? Thanks a lot for your time and participation in my study. I really appreciate it.

Appendix B: Thematic Coding Scheme, Chapter IV

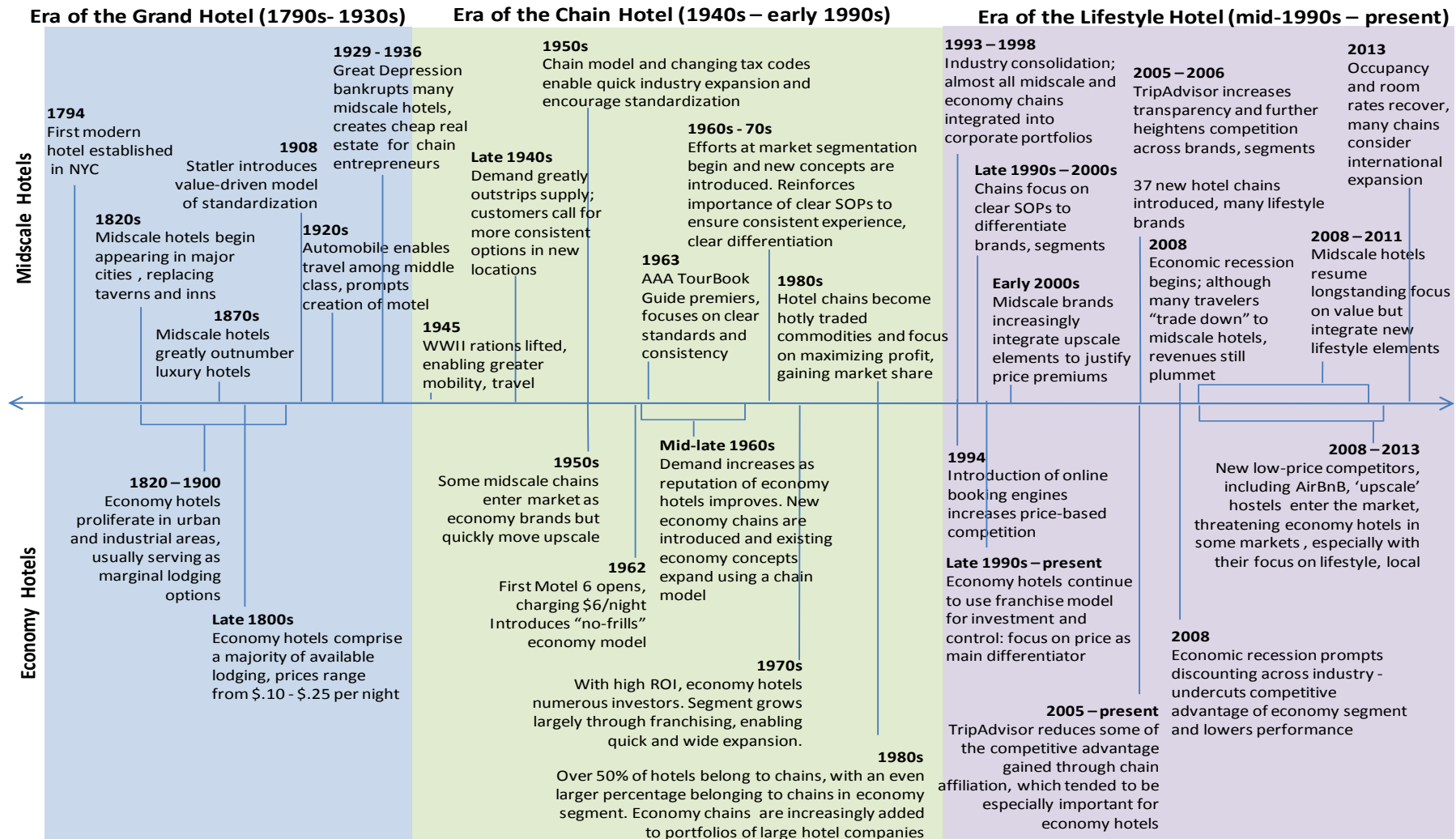
Code	Definition
Basis of Elite Status	
Social class	Conceptualization or discussion of status as related to landed status, established social standing
Democratic/Meritocratic	Conceptualization or discussion of merit, respectability, value
Expertise	Conceptualization or discussion of status as related to expertise, lifestyle, know-how
Preeminent Hotel Form	
Grand Hotel	Hotels as social centers, places for cultural and political exchange, tailored to the demands of high-status, elite customers
Chain Hotel	Hotels as vehicles for efficiency, standardization, reproducibility, offering customers reliability and professionalism
Lifestyle Hotel	Hotels as centers of expertise on particular guest interests or pursuits, offering customers a tailored, "insider" stay
Mechanisms for Legitimacy	
Socio-cultural isomorphism	Instances in which organizations become increasingly similar to their environment through adoption of dominant meanings and practices
Mimetic isomorphism	Instances in which organizations become increasingly similar to each other in order to be seen as legitimate

Code		Definition
Turning points		
Lack of socio-cultural legitimacy		Instances in which the taken-for-granted meanings or practices in the industry are misaligned with the socio-cultural code
Lack of institutional legitimacy		Instances in which meanings or practices are misaligned with the taken-for-granted institutional "template"
Excessive sameness		Instances in which institutional pressures for isomorphism hinder distinctiveness and competition
Confounding Factors or Processes		
Exogenous shock		Impetus for change produced by factors external to industry (e.g., technological change, economic depression)
Selection		Death of existing organizations and emergence of new organizations to replace them

Appendix C: Descriptive Information on *Travel + Leisure* Advertisements

Year	Number of Advertisements	Number of Non- Chain Ads	Number of Pages
1985	50	7	61
1990	47	5	51
1995	58	4	66
2000	65	3	69
2005	57	1	72
2010	81	4	104
2015	70	5	98
Total	428	29	521

APPENDIX D: Segment-Specific Timeline – Mid-Scale and Economy



Appendix E: Coding Schemes, Chapter V

Coding Scheme for Luxury Hotel Advertisements

Code	Definition
Source of Commercial Distinction	<i>Advertisements that emphasize...</i>
Core Attributes	Prototypical attributes of high-end hotels, like comfortable bed or welcoming staff
Added Attributes	Additional amenities that distinguish high-end hotels from lower-tier counterparts, like marble and brass features
Extended Experience	Expanded experiential elements of travel, like local food, tours, or personalized services
Source of Social Status	
Social Class	Status as associated primarily with social class and "high culture"
Inherent Quality	Status as associated primarily with the quality of the organization, critic ratings
Cultural Expertise	Status as associated primarily with cultural expertise, including insider knowledge and omnivorous taste
Relationships Emphasized	
Market Relationships	Links among luxury hotels and other high-end industry members
Community Relationships	Links with local producers and non-industry members
Audience References	
Who you are (Claims)	The hotel as elite based on who guests are
What you do (Enactment)	The hotel as elite based on what guests do
Manner of Signaling Status	

Ritualized	Luxury and status distinctions as upheld by the actions of guests
Cognitive	Luxury and status distinctions as related to industry prototypicality
Affective	Luxury and status distinctions as related to experience and emotion
Construal/Focus	
Hospitality	The meaning of hospitality, broadly speaking
Market Category (Luxury)	The meaning of "luxury"
Organization	A particular organization

Coding Scheme for Newspaper Articles

Code	Description
<i>Social Embeddedness of Hotels</i>	<i>Articles that focus on discussion of...</i>
Standardization	hotel chains, including benefits and drawbacks for travelers, investors; statistics on growth and prevalence
Social Role	social, institutional events taking place in hotels; links hotels share with broader current events
Collective Memory, Imagination	the hotels of the past and their role in social and cultural milieu
Institutional Interlocks	the intersection and overlap of hotels with other industries and institutions
Individuation	unique or novel hotel approaches
<i>Expressions of Status</i>	
Social Eliteness	status as related to class, landed social standing
Expertise	status as related to expertise, lifestyle

Opulence/Materials	status as related to conspicuous consumption, opulence
<i>Function of Article</i>	
Specific travel tips	details about a particular location, itinerary, hotel, hotel chain
Travel Trends	general travel trends

Appendix F: Coding Scheme, Chapter VI

CULTURAL COMPONENTS			
Code	Sub-Code	Description	Example(s)
Universal Culture		Direct references to use of 'universal' or a broad set of cultural resources; Use of well-known traditions, legends, fables, stories or other ideas that are not explicitly linked to the location or the hotel	Enjoy a full program of musical performances featuring classical, pop, jazz, and rock played on open- air stages and concert halls.
Local Culture		Use of information or ideas that are specific to the location in which a hotel is located. Includes, for example, discussion of traditional cuisine, attractions, traditions, experiences of local people including employees. This code is used for anything that captures use of local culture that does not fit with the subcodes below	Uncover the essence of India, where rich amalgamations of cultures live in a land revered for its classical heritage and colorful, modern pulse. New York's visual and performing arts, dining, shopping and parks are unparalleled in the world.
	<i>Sights and landmarks</i>	Discussion of important sights or monuments that are characteristic of the locale	At Larco Mar, a cliffside park with open-air shopping, enjoy the opportunity to shop for national specialties, including Peruvian alpaca textiles and extraordinary handicrafts.
	<i>Cuisine</i>	Discussion of food or drink that is characteristic of the locale	Outdoor cafes surrounding the square provide a comfortable seat from which to watch the action and enjoy a coffee, beer, or cloudberry liqueur along with a traditional Finnish meat pie known as a lihapiirakka.
	<i>Traditions</i>	Discussion of traditions unique to or characteristic of the locale	Each Sunday at 11:00 a.m., you can view the ceremony with its accompanying military band. Experience this year's batch of outstanding wines, along with fine locally produced pisco, brandy distilled from white grapes, at the Harvest Festival.
	<i>Community History</i>	Discussion of the history of the surrounding community, locale.	Centuries ago, Burmese insurgents were slowly wearing down Thai forces as they fought intense battles for territorial control. Considered one of the seven necessities of Chinese life, tea has long been an essential part of the nation's culture.

CULTURAL COMPONENTS			
Code	Sub-Code	Description	Example(s)
Hotel History		References to the history of a particular hotel or of the brand	<p>Brigitte Bardot arrived barefoot at the restaurant for dinner...</p> <p>The Astor Hotel, which opened in 1863 on the shores of the Haihe River, was the first hotel in the north of China to open to foreigners.</p>
High Culture		Direct or indirect references to aspects of high culture	<p>Fine vintners pour tastes of premium wines, while artisans showcase unique samples of gourmet foods at the annual Wine & Food Festival, a three-day event of food pairings and wine education.</p> <p>An enraptured audience watches as noble Lipizzaner stallions gracefully pirouette and dance to classical music.</p>
	<i>Exclusive or elite</i>	Discussion (direct or indirect) of materials, events, etc. as the very best or the elite; exclusive or rare	Now in its 23rd year, this revered art fair offers an unparalleled showcase of contemporary works from across Latin America and Spain
	<i>Celebrity</i>	Direct or indirect references to well-known public figures including heads of state (past or present)	<p>As His Royal Highness, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, appoints the Lord of the Festival, the celebration of the start of the rice-planting season officially begins.</p> <p>Whether he's acting in films such as Wes Anderson's <i>The Darjeeling Limited</i>, designing couture jewelry for The House of Waris, or collaborating with artists, his diverse interests have set him apart as a gentleman of considered taste.</p>
Popular Culture		References to "massified" or ordinary items, experiences	Marching bands keep the pace as crowds line the sidewalks for a glimpse of the saints to whom they appeal for peace, love, and prosperity.
CULTURAL DEVICES			
Code		Description	Example(s)
Art		Use of language evocative of art or music	<p>Imaginative and pampering touches reach a crescendo in the treatment menu.</p> <p>Whether revealing notes of blackcurrant, oak, butterscotch or pepper, each wine showcases the vintners' highest art and complements the seasonal cuisine to compose a true symphony of flavors.</p>

CULTURAL DEVICES		
Code	Description	Example(s)
Metaphors	Describing something by asserting that it is, on some point of comparison, the same as another otherwise unrelated object.	Steel blue waters ripple in the afternoon breeze as sea birds soar above a swaying forest of tall white masts.
Paradox	Combining two elements that are often or typically at odds with one another (e.g., old and new)	From new-build properties to adaptive reuse projects, The Opulent Collection gracefully incorporates historical elements into fresh design, transforming what was old to new again.
Rich description	Discussion of a particular incident with specific details to illustrate or imply some broader point	Then as local dancers perform spirited renditions of traditional "Caballo de Paso" and "Marinera," lunch on the festive terrace of Wayra Restaurant located in the Sacred Valley.
Religious or Spiritual References	Use of language typically used to describe religious or spiritual occurrences or experiences (e.g., iconic, homage, sacred, rebirth, mystery, secret)	Feast on the creations of London's renowned kitchens amid one of the city's most iconic outdoor locales The holiday of Enkutatash symbolizes the rebirth of the land, as three months of heavy rains abate and fields of Meskal daisies burst into flower.
Materials as cues or prompts	Use of materials elements of the hotel: design, décor, architecture, art, food	Jordan's rich culture is reflected in the traditional architecture, sumptuous décor, and magnificent surroundings of this seaside escape. At the Freedom Hotel, remnants of the building's past remain: in one restaurant, guests sip on high-end martinis while sitting inside what was once a jail cell (bars in place to prove it).
Practices as cues or prompts	Practices used in the hotel, including delivery of information, service standards, and interaction norms	At the Solstice Hotel in Vermont, service is decidedly- and explicitly- more relaxed than it is in a more cosmopolitan hotel. Concierges recommend neighbors and friends, in some cases, over larger commercial services for guests.

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