

**WHEN THE UNIQUENESS BRINGS US TOGETHER: HOW
INITIAL CUES OF UNIQUENESS INFLUENCE CREATIVE
COLLABORATIONS**

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The Academic Faculty

by

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INITIAL CUES OF UNIQUENESS INFLUENCE CREATIVE
COLLABORATIONS**

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Hui Liu, father, Sheng Gong, and late grandmother, Jiqiong Hu.

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SUMMARY

While diverse perspectives benefit collaborations in generating creative outcomes, people generally tend to favor and connect based on similarities. To unpack this seeming dilemma, this research examines *whether*, *how*, and *when* initial cues demonstrating individuals' uniqueness, meaning rare and distinct features in a social environment, influence perceivers' intention to collaborate with them on creative projects. Drawing from the associative-propositional evaluation (APE) theory and the signaling perspective, I propose that people are likely to gravitate towards collaborators who display cues of uniqueness in initial interactions. When seeking collaborators for creative endeavors based on limited information in early interactions, initial cues of uniqueness may trigger positive associations and thus liking for the displayer and signal creative potential, leading to perceivers' greater creative collaboration intention. Furthermore, the perceiver's need for uniqueness, the displayer's competence-based status, and cultural tightness in the social environment can influence the effectiveness of cues of uniqueness. This research leverages experimental methodology to test the psychological mechanisms and examines the phenomenon using large-scale archival data of scientists' publication and collaboration records. The experimental studies generally support the hypotheses except for the moderating effect of cultural tightness. Analyses based on the archival data yield mixed findings regarding the relationship between an initial cue of uniqueness (i.e., name uniqueness) and scientists' likelihood of building creative collaborations. Theoretical implications on the interpersonal outcomes of uniqueness and creative collaborations and practical implications for leveraging cues of uniqueness are discussed.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the prevalent admiration towards lone geniuses with extraordinary creativity like Vincent van Gogh, organizational studies have increasingly recognized that the process of generating novel and useful ideas (Amabile, 1983; Shalley et al., 2004) as a social process that can be significantly influenced by interpersonal interactions and collaborations (Li et al., 2018; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Rouse, 2020). Creative collaborations, which refers to the joint effort by two or more individuals in generating, elaborating, and evaluating ideas or solutions with the goal of creating novel and useful outcomes (Chua et al., 2012; Rouse, 2020), has many advantages. For example, collaborations expose individuals to different perspectives, information, and knowledge, promoting divergent thinking and identifying opportunities that would otherwise be overlooked by an individual (Chua & Jin, 2020; Hoever et al., 2012). Further, as collaborators bring different experience and expertise, collaborations can also have an edge in integrating ideas for a greater breakthrough, uncovering potential issues that may lead to poor outcomes, and identifying ideas with the most creative potential (Singh & Fleming, 2010).

Although research has revealed the significance of collaborations in creative processes, factors that influence how creative collaborations emerge remain largely underexplored (Leahey, 2016; Levine & Moreland, 2004). Extant studies have mainly examined the social processes of creativity in an established social configuration such as teams (Gong et al., 2013; Hoever et al., 2018) and social networks (e.g., Li et al., 2018; Perry-Smith, 2006) and focused on how these configurations enable the exchange of ideas and knowledge for creativity. However, it is also essential to investigate the

development of discretionary creative collaborations among individuals as it determines the actual dynamics of the collaborative development of creative outcomes within and even beyond an established social structure (R. Chua & Jin, 2020; Li et al., 2018; M.-H. Tsai et al., 2020). Extending the literature on the social side of creativity, this research focuses on the onset of discretionary creative collaborations and investigates whether initial informational cues of uniqueness—cues that demonstrate the extent to which one is different from other people in a social context (Lynn & Snyder, 2002; Netemeyer et al., 2004; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980)—may influence individuals' choice of creative collaborators.

The willingness to engage in further social interactions and build social connections is typically influenced by the initial interactions (Swider et al., 2022). In initial interactions, certain perceivable information (i.e., cues) is exchanged and used to make inferences regarding the other party and navigate people's future interactions and relationships (Nestler et al., 2012; Swider et al., 2022). When seeking creative collaborations, individuals are inevitably influenced by informational cues in initial social interactions, from which they make inferences about others and assess with whom they tend to collaborate on creative endeavors (Baten et al., 2021; Elsbach & Kramer, 2003). However, an intriguing tension emerges from the literature regarding what kinds of cues may facilitate the formation of creative collaborations. On the one hand, research on the social side of creativity highlights that the core value of creative collaborations is exposing individuals to and incorporating a wide range of perspectives and knowledge across domains, which underscores the importance of differences among collaborators (Chua & Jin, 2020; Skilton & Dooley, 2010). For example, diverse cultural or

educational backgrounds (Chua et al., 2012; Leung & Wang, 2015; Shin & Zhou, 2007), different specialized knowledge or perspectives (Han et al., 2014; Hoever et al., 2012), and heterogeneous outside social connections (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2014) can significantly facilitate the effectiveness of creative collaborations in teams. Further, conflicts resulting from different opinions or minority dissent arising from unique perspectives can drive the group to reconsider decisions, think outside the box, and engage in collaborative problem solving, which gives rise to creativity (De Dreu, 2006; De Dreu & West, 2001; Jetten & Hornsey, 2014). In this way, cues of uniqueness may be seen as desirable, as such cues illustrate one's distinctiveness from others, signaling potentially unique resources or perspectives that are valuable for creative collaborations (Brennecke, 2020; Mueller & Kamdar, 2011).

On the other hand, research has also demonstrated that when developing social relationships, individuals had the tendency to be attracted to, favor, and build connections with someone who seemed familiar, held similar opinions, or demonstrated similar characteristics as themselves (Condon & Crano, 1988; McPherson et al., 2001; Montoya et al., 2008; Reis et al., 2011). Specifically, individuals typically evaluate others who are similar to themselves regarding attitudes or demographics as more likable (C. B. Goldberg, 2005; Roth et al., 2020). They also tend to interpret someone who mimics their behaviors or discloses similar attitudes as having greater affiliation motivation (Ashton-James & Chartrand, 2009; Condon & Crano, 1988). Likewise, the homophily principle in social network research suggests that individuals prefer connecting and interacting with peers similar to themselves (Baten et al., 2021; McPherson et al., 2001; Zhou et al., 2009). Preferences based on similarity and familiarity imply disapproval of mavericks.

Under situations where collective norms have been established, being different from anyone else is likely to risk someone being rejected, alienated, or even punished (Griskevicius et al., 2006; Jetten & Hornsey, 2014). Therefore, while differences and uniqueness are needed and beneficial for creative collaboration, research has suggested that people generally prefer interacting with similar others (AlShebli et al., 2018). Thus, an intriguing question emerges: Will individuals' cues signaling uniqueness increase or decrease other people's likelihood of engaging in creative collaborations with them?

In this dissertation, I set out to explore *whether*, *how*, and *when* initial cues of uniqueness influence perceivers' likelihood to build creative collaborations with them. As an initial attempt to explore the relationship between cues of uniqueness and the formation of creative collaborations, this dissertation examines cues that are prevalently exchanged during initial interactions (e.g., names, appearance style, and knowledge domain). I construct the theoretical model based on both the associative-propositional evaluation (APE) model (Gawronski et al., 2005; Kruglanski & Gigerenzer, 2011) and signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973; Spence, 2002). Specifically, initial cues of uniqueness can give rise to a favorable affective gut reaction and lead to the inferences of the individual as having great creative potential, leading to a stronger inclination to collaborate with them on a creative project. I also theorize that such a relationship is contingent on the characteristics of the perceiver, displayer, and social context. Therefore, the perceiver's need for uniqueness, the displayer's status, and cultural tightness-looseness in the social context are examined as moderators.

This research seeks to make the following theoretical contributions. First, it draws attention to the onset of creative collaborations and contributes to the literature on the

social aspect of creativity (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Rouse, 2020). The current literature has revealed the impact of collaborations on an individual's or a collective's creativity. Through collaborations, more information, knowledge, perspectives, and approaches can be integrated to generate creative outcomes that go beyond the boundary of an individual's mind (Singh & Fleming, 2010; Wuchty et al., 2007). Nevertheless, who develops creative collaborations with whom directly influences what kinds of knowledge and thoughts are likely to be considered and integrated into new ideas. Essentially, if people only collaborate with others based on commonalities, the information and knowledge in the collaborations are likely redundant, and similar thoughts may be reinforced, thwarting the potential for breaking new ground (Perry-Smith, 2006; Rouse, 2020). However, if collaborations are built among individuals who can bring unique and diverse perspectives to the table, new opportunities and creative sparks are more likely to emerge (Burt, 2004; Chua & Jin, 2020; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2014). Rather than assuming the natural occurrence of collaborations within a collective (e.g., a team), this research focuses on factors that may influence the emergence of discretionary creative collaborations. Specifically, it examines how an individual's initial cues of uniqueness may affect other people's intention to collaborate, which explores an antecedent that affects how creative collaborations arise. Furthermore, by investigating how cues of uniqueness may influence one's chance to build creative collaborations, this research can also yield implications for the interpersonal outcomes of uniqueness, unveiling whether individuals with unique attributes are likely to be engaged in collaborative creative processes and have the chance to contribute their unique outlooks.

Second, this research investigates the specific type of workplace relationship—creative collaboration—and aims to reveal how cues of uniqueness may be associated with creative potential in this context. It can thus contribute to the workplace relationship literature by revealing whether the motivation or goal of developing creative outcomes shapes how individuals process informational cues in social interactions. Indeed, workplace professional relationships are usually task-oriented and developed based on the need for resources to achieve certain goals, and similarity-attraction may not always be potent (Brennecke, 2020; Kuwabara et al., 2022; Umphress et al., 2003). For example, to solve work-related problems, employees may intentionally approach colleagues they do not enjoy working with for unique resources and dissenting opinions (Brennecke, 2020). In the same vein, when seeking creative collaborations, the need for diverse and nonredundant viewpoints and the beliefs regarding creativity may influence individuals' reactions toward and inferences of cues of uniqueness and their intention to build creative collaborations. It thus illuminates a new avenue to explore whether certain unique attributes that are typically undesirable in general social interactions may be perceived differently in creative collaborations. Further, this research examines the moderating effects of the perceiver's need for uniqueness and the displayer's competence-based status, unveiling nuances in whether uniqueness will be perceived differently depending on perceivers' and displayers' characteristics.

Third, by investigating how the cultural tightness-looseness shapes individuals' perceptions of those who demonstrate cues of uniqueness and intentions to collaborate with them, this research proposes a novel perspective to understand how social contexts influence creativity. The extant research examining the contextual influence on creativity

mainly focuses on how contextual factors such as leadership (Boies et al., 2015), supportive environment for creativity (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008; Gong et al., 2013), or affective climate (Parke et al., 2022; W.-C. Tsai et al., 2012) influence the generation of novel and useful ideas by individuals or teams. However, this research focuses on how a social context may facilitate or discourage the formation of discretionary creative collaborations based on uniqueness. It unveils that cultural tightness-looseness, which describes the culture of tolerance for deviations from norms, may influence creativity by shaping whether people are willing to appreciate the uniqueness of others and develop creative collaborations from disparities.

Across four studies, I leverage different methodological approaches to investigate the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and creative collaboration intention. First, I take a micro, perceiver-focused approach and probe the psychological processes through which initial cues of uniqueness (specifically, unique name, appearance style, and knowledge domain) influence perceivers' intention to collaborate with an individual displaying cues of uniqueness for creativity. Specifically, I first use a within-subject design (Study 1) to test the influence of cues of uniqueness on perceivers' collaboration intention in a creative task versus a non-creative task to establish the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and *creative* collaboration intention. Then I further examine the psychological mechanisms through which cues of uniqueness influence perceivers' creative collaboration, as well as contextual factors that influence these processes in vignette-based experiments (Study 2 and Study 3).

Second, this dissertation explores how unique names, the first piece of information exchanged in almost all professional social interactions, may influence

creative collaborations in the real world. Using a large-scale archival dataset of the world's most cited scientists (Study 4) in the U.S., I examine the relationship between scientists' name uniqueness and their likelihood to build creative collaborations in scientific research. I also investigate how a scientist's status in the field and societal cultural tightness during their careers may shape the relationship.

CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The Social Side of Creativity and Creative Collaborations

Creativity as a social process has garnered increasing scholarly interest as collaborations gain prominence in generating novel and useful ideas and products across many fields (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Rouse, 2020; Wuchty et al., 2007). As the old saying goes: “Two heads are better than one.” Research revealed that collaborations are beneficial in trimming poor ideas and expanding the scope of consideration to uncover and combine opportunities (Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017; Singh & Fleming, 2010). Collaborative efforts are thus found to outperform individual endeavors in creating breakthrough inventions (Chan et al., 2021; Singh & Fleming, 2010; Wuchty et al., 2007).

While the format and extent of collaborations can vary (Abra, 1994), based on prior conceptualizations of creative collaborations, I define creative collaborations as *the joint effort by two or more individuals in generating, elaborating, and evaluating ideas or solutions with the goal of creating novel and useful outcomes* (Chua & Jin, 2020; Elsbach & Flynn, 2013; Rouse, 2020). It includes formal collaborations such as working on an assigned creative project as well as more informal collaborations such as sharing data and ideas, or helping colleagues solve a novel problem, which turns out to be a collaborative endeavor that results in creative outcomes (Leahey, 2016). Creative collaborations involve a variety of behaviors such as soliciting ideas, offering ideas, and helping with creative problem solving (Elsbach & Flynn, 2013; J. S. Mueller & Kamdar, 2011). It also defines the interpersonal relationship in which individuals work collaboratively to generate creative ideas, solutions, or products (Rouse, 2020). It should

be noted that collaborators do not have to engage extensively in every stage of the creative process, but they need to be involved in the creative process and make substantial contributions to the creative outcome. In other words, a collaborative relationship for creativity is meaningful when the outcome would not otherwise be developed individually (Chua & Jin, 2020). For example, a collaborator may not engage in initial idea generation but use a novel technique to solve problems in a research project, but a friendly reviewer of the project should not be considered as a collaborator. In this study, I focus on creative collaborations as an interpersonal relationship and examine the influence of initial cues of uniqueness on perceivers' intention to build collaborative relationships for creativity with the focal individual. My research is inspired by three distinct yet cross-illuminating streams of research examining the social side of creativity and the implications of collaborations in creative processes.

The first stream of research views social relationships as important sources of information, knowledge, and perspectives that influence individuals' or groups' creativity (Hirst et al., 2015; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003, 2014; Uzzi & Spiro, 2005). This perspective is most evident in creativity studies that take a social network approach. The seminal theoretical work of Perry-Smith and Shalley (2003) elucidated that characteristics of social connections and an individual's position in a social network can impact individual creativity, and individual creativity further influences one's position in the social network. Since then, the burgeoning studies in this regard have examined the impacts of various network characteristics on creativity (for a review, see Baer et al., 2015). While research generally shows that well-connected individuals can likely benefit from the amount of information they gain from their network and thus have an advantage

in identifying opportunities and obtaining resources needed to be creative (Baer et al., 2015), having too many connections may actually stifle creativity (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003). Since individuals only have limited time and cognitive resources, dealing with too much information from the network and maintaining the position may result in information overload and stress that can impair creativity or take away the time that could be used to develop new ideas (Perry-Smith, 2006; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003). Research thus suggests that there is an optimal number of ties or level of centrality to facilitate creativity (Baer, 2010; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Zhou et al., 2009).

Beyond the amount of information transmitted by a large number of ties, research also underscores that what kind of information is likely accessed through the ties is critical for creativity. Essentially, if network ties expose individuals to diverse and nonredundant information or perspectives, they can facilitate divergent thinking and provide a wide range of information and knowledge for individuals to recombine and form novel solutions (Hirst et al., 2015; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Zhou et al., 2009). Accordingly, studies found that weak ties (e.g., Perry-Smith, 2006; Zhou et al., 2009), brokerage (e.g., Burt, 2004; Li et al., 2018), and network diversity (e.g., Baer, 2010; Chua, 2018) enhanced the emergence of creative ideas. Further, individuals with access to heterogeneous perspectives through outside networks develop cognitive schemas that involve wide-ranging and flexible considerations, enhancing their teams' creativity (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2014).

Differentiating from the social network perspective that regards social relationships as sources of creativity-enabling inputs, the second stream of research focuses on social interactions in team processes that generate collective creative

outcomes. Building on the input-process-output (IPO) model of team performance, studies suggested that team composition or characteristics such as team tenure (Zeng et al., 2021), interdependence (Van der Vegt & Janssen, 2003), and diversity (e.g., Wang et al., 2019) could influence a team's creative outcomes as they indicated the inputs for team creativity (Hülsheger et al., 2009). However, research further revealed that social interactions within teams, manifested in team collaboration processes, played a significant role in unlocking the potential of resources team members brought to the table and fostering team creativity (Harvey, 2014; Hülsheger et al., 2009). For example, while diversity in perspectives or information can potentially enhance team creativity, studies have demonstrated that it is essential for team members to take others' perspectives, and discuss to integrate different information and views through information elaboration to optimize the wide-ranging inputs to facilitate creativity (Hoever et al., 2012, 2018; van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Research also revealed that appropriate levels of dissonances in team interactions, such as task conflict and minority dissent, are beneficial for team creativity (De Dreu, 2006; De Dreu & West, 2001; Miron-spektor et al., 2011; Nemeth & Goncalo, 2011).

These streams of research on the social side of creativity highlight that collaborating with others is crucial in creative processes as it: a) enables access to a wide range of resources (e.g., information, knowledge) that sparks creativity; b) integrates different ideas to generate novel and useful outcomes; and c) provides evaluations and feedback for selecting and developing ideas. Together, they provide significant insights and a theoretical foundation that gives rise to this research.

First, there is a striking need to investigate the onset of creative collaborations and factors that influence people's choice of collaborators, which dictates the configurations of groups or social networks and the dynamics of collaborative interactions within them. While previous studies generated plentiful insights regarding the value of collaborative interactions for creativity in established social structures such as networks and teams, individuals are agentic actors in these structures and have choices and various levels of willingness regarding whom to approach for creative inspiration. Social network research suggested that individuals only had limited resources to build and maintain ties (Podolny & Baron, 1997; Stiller & Dunbar, 2007). Beyond an optimal level, an excessive number of ties can pull individuals into too many irreconcilable directions, consuming time and cognitive resources that were supposed to be invested in creating, resulting in stress and confusion, and ultimately thwarting creativity (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Zhou et al., 2009). Hence, individuals are selective in forming creative collaborative links (Baten et al., 2021). It is thus valuable to understand factors that may drive the selection of creative collaborators, which directly influences what kinds of information or perspectives are likely to be integrated for creativity.

Furthermore, as creativity emphasizes taking an approach that is different from the established procedures, creative processes are less standardized than mundane work processes and can arise from serendipities (Burt, 2004; Gilson et al., 2005). When working in organizational structures, individuals can have some discretions in choosing creative collaborators, and creative collaborations are more spontaneous than those specified work interactions such as workflow collaborations (Gaggioli et al., 2020; Li et al., 2018; Mueller & Kamdar, 2011). Likewise, in lieu of viewing groups as a “black

box” of producing creative outcomes, recent studies underline the need to investigate the discretionary creative collaborations between individuals to unpack how creativity emerges from social interactions (e.g., Chua & Jin, 2020; Gaggioli et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; Rouse, 2020). Therefore, in this research, I concentrate on micro-level creative collaborations and examine factors that may influence an individual’s intention to develop creative collaborations with others.

Second, the social side of creativity literature generally suggests that effective creative collaborations are characterized by exposure to different ideas and optimizing, reconciling, and integrating diverse perspectives (Hoever et al., 2012; Rouse, 2020; Skilton & Dooley, 2010). I further theorize that the need for different perspectives will thus direct individuals’ creative collaboration seeking. Specifically, studies elucidated that weak ties, characterized by low levels of intimacy, emotional intensity, time of interactions, and reciprocity, are more likely to benefit creativity than strong ties (Granovetter, 1973; Perry-Smith, 2006; Zhou et al., 2009). This is because weak ties likely connect different social circles and can provide access to diverse and nonredundant information and perspectives that are different from the focal individual’s own (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003; Zhou et al., 2009). It indicated that in creative collaborations, the significance of different perspectives might prevail the sense of affiliation and emotional intimacy, and people may not necessarily be dominated by similarity-attraction (Abra, 1994).

Similarly, creativity research also suggested the “value in diversity”, especially job-relevant diversity or deep-level differences reflected in divergent cognitive approaches in team-based creative collaborations (Hülshager et al., 2009; Shalley &

Gilson, 2004, p. 43). For example, studies found that heterogeneity in educational specialization (Shin & Zhou, 2007), cognitive styles (Aggarwal & Woolley, 2019; Miron-spektor et al., 2011), perspectives (Hoever et al., 2012), and deep-level cultural differences (Wang et al., 2019) facilitated creativity under proper contexts. Furthermore, the different and unique perspectives result in minority dissent, disagreements, or task conflicts, which can stimulate divergent thinking, constructive discussions, and synthesis of different views, engendering opportunities for novel breakthroughs (De Dreu & West, 2001; Harvey, 2014; Skilton & Dooley, 2010). Therefore, when seeking creative collaborators, instead of being attracted by similarity as characterized in general interpersonal interactions (Condon & Crano, 1988; McPherson et al., 2001), individuals may pay attention to and approach someone different or unique for divergent perspectives enabling creativity (Abra, 1994). “Being different” may be associated with attributes that people favor for a creative collaborator (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003; Proudfoot & Fath, 2021).

2.2 Heuristic Evaluations of Creativity and Choosing Creative Collaborators

When seeking collaborators to generate novel and useful ideas, it is essential for individuals to look for someone who can contribute creative perspectives. However, as creativity features original ideas that are different from norms, established schemas may not be available to guide such judgments, and evaluations of creativity essentially involve subjectivity and may take a heuristic form (Montag et al., 2012; Zhou et al., 2019). Studies corroborated the subjective component of creativity perceptions by revealing that creativity recognition is related to factors such as perceivers’ construal level (Mueller et al., 2014), regulatory focus states (Zhou et al., 2017), or the economic mindset induced

by a decision-maker role (Mueller et al., 2018). Research suggests that subjective judgments about an individual's creativity are usually based on the alignment between an individual's behaviors and characteristics and the perceiver's implicit beliefs and prototypes about creativity (Katz & Thompson, 1993; Sternberg, 1985), even when the behaviors or characteristics may not necessarily reflect one's actual creative abilities. For example, people tend to ascribe greater creativity to men (Luksyte et al., 2018; Proudfoot et al., 2015) and to entrepreneurs who do not have a nonnative English accent (L. Huang et al., 2013), who are narcissistic (Goncalo et al., 2010), or seem passionate (Davis et al., 2017).

Uniqueness or distinctiveness from the norm is an essential aspect of generally conceived prototypes and implicit theories about creativity (Kasof, 1995; Ramos & Puccio, 2014). Indeed, uniqueness is regarded as a "key criterion for creativity" (Vincent & Kouchaki, 2016, p. 1452). Uniqueness is believed to conceptually overlap with creativity such that creative employees also tend to believe their contributions as more unique (Vincent & Kouchaki, 2016), and facilitating employees' feelings of uniqueness is considered beneficial to promoting their creativity (Randel & Jaussi, 2017). Prototypes of creative individuals also usually involve being unusual or unique (Ramos & Puccio, 2014; Runco & Bahleda, 1986; Sternberg, 1985). For example, in Hollywood pitch meetings, experts consider screenwriters' unconventional behaviors or quirky attributes as cues of the most creative prototype (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003). Outside of a professional creativity evaluation situation, laypeople tend to perceive a person who demonstrate independence and distinctiveness from others on a daily basis as not being influenced by others' thoughts and having the creative potential (Proudfoot & Fath, 2021;

Proudfoot et al., 2015). Such lay beliefs or prototypes about uniqueness, even though not necessarily reflecting individual creativity accurately, may to some extent be valid.

Research shows that individuals' motives to be seen as unique or their feelings of being different from others associate positively with their creative performance (Dollinger, 2003; Kim et al., 2013; Randel & Jaussi, 2017; Zitek & Vincent, 2015). Therefore, cues that demonstrate one's uniqueness may influence judgments of one's creative potential and play a role in choosing creative collaborators.

2.3 Interpersonal Perceptions of Uniqueness and Initial Cues of Uniqueness

Uniqueness refers to uncommon attributes that distinguish one from other people in a social environment (Lynn & Snyder, 2002). Research establishes that individuals have the general need for uniqueness, or the need to be distinct from others (Fromkin & Snyder, 1980; Lynn & Snyder, 2002). People tend to fulfill the need for uniqueness and express their sense of distinctiveness through displaying certain cues in social interactions, such as displaying the possession of unusual products (e.g., clothes, accessories) or different domains of knowledge (Holt, 1995; Ruvio, 2008; Tian et al., 2001). Just as cues (e.g., brand name, packaging) that communicate a product's uniqueness that is considered essential brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993; Netemeyer et al., 2004), individuals' cues of uniqueness (e.g., name, appearance style) may also be naturally picked up and have implications for social interactions.

The interpersonal ramifications of cues of uniqueness were rarely discussed in the literature. A classic view in social psychology focuses on the pervasive and powerful pressure for unanimity and suggests that unique individuals risk ridicule and sanctions (Asch, 1951; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). So driven by the desire for affiliation and

social approval, people tend to make themselves not stand out, even by displaying inauthentic cues of conformity (Baumeister, 1982; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Hewlin, 2003, 2009). However, a growing stream of literature suggests that distinctiveness from others may not necessarily lead to negative aftermath but can be seen as normal and respectable, depending on the specific context (for a review, see Hutchison et al., 2011; Jetten & Hornsey, 2014), and showing cues of uniqueness may bring benefits in social interactions. For example, observers tend to confer greater competence and status to individuals dressed in a unique way that violates dressing norms in professional or unprofessional settings (i.e., the red sneakers effect; Bellezza et al., 2013). However, more scholarly investigations on the interpersonal outcomes of cues of uniqueness in various situations are warranted.

In this study, I investigate that during early interactions in which information about the interacting party is limited, how initial cues of uniqueness may influence perceivers' willingness to collaborate with an individual on creative endeavors. Initial cues of uniqueness refer to the perceivable information of an individual's uncommon and distinctive attributes observed during initial interactions that can be used for inferences (Fiske, 1993; Swider et al., 2022). As the possible cues that demonstrate one's uniqueness can be endless, I specifically focus on cues that are, first, constructed by individuals or their social environment as such artificial cues are informative about one's attitudes and motives rather than biological cues such as unusual body features (Desmichel et al., 2020; Holtz, 2013). Second, I focus on relative neutral cues rather than uniqueness due to overwhelmingly desirable or undesirable attributes such as being unusually attractive or unattractive. In particular, as an initial exploration, this research

examines cues of uniqueness regarding one's name, appearance style, and knowledge domain as these cues are widely exchanged in initial professional interactions and are considered salient and representative cues in making inferences about individuals (Jonah Berger & Heath, 2007; Burroughs & Drews, 1991; Twenge & Manis, 1998).

Information regarding one's knowledge domains, such as one's diplomas and credentials, are competence-related cues that are used by perceivers to make inferences in early social interactions (Holtz, 2013). Specialized knowledge is also symbolic of one's identity (Holt, 1995). People thus tend to present cues of special knowledge domains to distinguish themselves from others and establish their uniqueness (Berger & Heath, 2007; Tian et al., 2001). Furthermore, generating novel and useful ideas requires extensive knowledge and skills (Amabile, 1988; Amabile & Pratt, 2016; Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003). So cues regarding one's unusual knowledge domains can demonstrate one's uniqueness and are also essential information that is likely to be picked up when seeking collaborators for creativity.

An individual's name and appearance style, while not relevant to one's competence, are cues first picked up in nearly all professional social interactions. They can provide a direct and salient label or visual image demonstrating one's uniqueness (Richardson et al., 1994). Appearance cues, here I mainly focus on individuals' choice of appearance styles, such as clothing, hairstyles, and accessories, are an important way to express individuals' sense of distinctiveness and provide a direct visual image of an individual's uniqueness (Berger & Heath, 2007; Tian et al., 2001). Appearance styles are considered indicators of individuals' underlying attributes and can create stimuli activating associations between an individual and certain characteristics (Rafaeli & Pratt,

1993; Reh et al., 2017). For example, as the color red can be associated with anger, men wearing red shirts are perceived as more aggressive and dominant (Wiedemann et al., 2015). Perceivers also tend to see those wearing glasses and beards with intelligence and goodness and associate these individuals with occupations such as professors and physicians (Hellström & Tekle, 1994). But wearing glasses is also associated with introversion and thus less charisma in leaders (Tskhay et al., 2017). Therefore, appearance styles can serve as cues of uniqueness in initial interactions and likely trigger perceivers' inferences.

Even though names may not necessarily reflect one's own volition, they are labels of individuals and incorporate identity meanings (Christopher, 1998; Kalist & Lee, 2009; Twenge & Manis, 1998; Watzlawik et al., 2016). When individuals are addressed by their names, other people are likely to attach the attributes elicited by the name to define the name bearer and treat them accordingly (Kalist & Lee, 2009; Twenge & Manis, 1998; Watzlawik et al., 2016). Research shows that the perceptions and inferences based on an individual's name can influence other's evaluation of the individual ranging from teachers' evaluation of students' performance (Bonefeld & Dickhäuser, 2018) to recruiters' appraisal of a candidate's employability (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Cotton et al., 2008). These evaluations and attitudes elicited by names profoundly impact people's social interactions. For example, studies suggested that through social interactions, social attitudes evoked by one's name can in turn shape the individual's self-concept and be related to the individual's self-esteem (Gebauer et al., 2012), the likelihood of juvenile delinquency (Kalist & Lee, 2009), choice of occupations (Bao et

al., n.d.; Silberzahn & Uhlmann, 2013), and even physical appearance (Zwebner et al., 2017).

Seeing the implications of names for social interactions, I also investigate name uniqueness as an initial cue of uniqueness. Name uniqueness describes the low frequency of a name being used in a population (Y. Kang et al., 2021; Kulig, 2013). It reflects the extent to which one's name is different from most people and thus unfamiliar to them. Studies suggested that unique names are usually seen as bizarre, unpopular, undesirable, and can lead to others' unfavorable reactions (Christopher, 1998; Gebauer et al., 2012; Twenge & Manis, 1998). However, research also suggested that unique names do not necessarily have undesirable ramifications. For example, as others may perceive people with a unique name as unusual, unique name bearers are likely to establish an identity of being different from peers (Kang et al., 2021). As a result, individuals with a unique name were found to likely choose a non-conforming career and pursue unconventional strategies when they are CEOs of companies (Bao et al., n.d.; Y. Kang et al., 2021; Zweigenhaft, 1983). Moreover, unique names may not always be perceived unfavorably (Zweigenhaft, 1983). For example, Kulig (2013) found that people tend to appraise their own names as more unique than others' estimates, and how much individuals liked their own names was positively related to the actual uniqueness of their names in the population. The preference for unique names is even more evident when creativity is involved. For example, Lebuda and Karwowski (2013) found that an artist's unique name led others to assess greater creativity in the artist's work. Likewise, Bao and colleagues (2020) showed that people tended to associate unique name bearers with unique jobs that they believed required more creativity. They also investigated data of artists who had

ever changed their names and found that the artists' names were changed to be more uncommon (Bao et al., 2020).

In summary, prior research suggests that observable cues can be displayed to demonstrate individuals' uniqueness in interpersonal interactions. Studies also reveal that uniqueness can be desirable in the pursuit of creativity. It is thus possible that when choosing collaborators for creativity, instead of seeking similarities, individuals might gravitate toward those who demonstrate cues of uniqueness. Drawing from both the associative-propositional evaluation (APE) model (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2007) and signaling theory (Spence, 1973, 2002), in the next section, I theorize how and when initial cues of uniqueness can influence one's creative collaboration intention via eliciting positive affective reactions and inferences of creative potential. The overall theoretical model is illustrated in Figure 1.

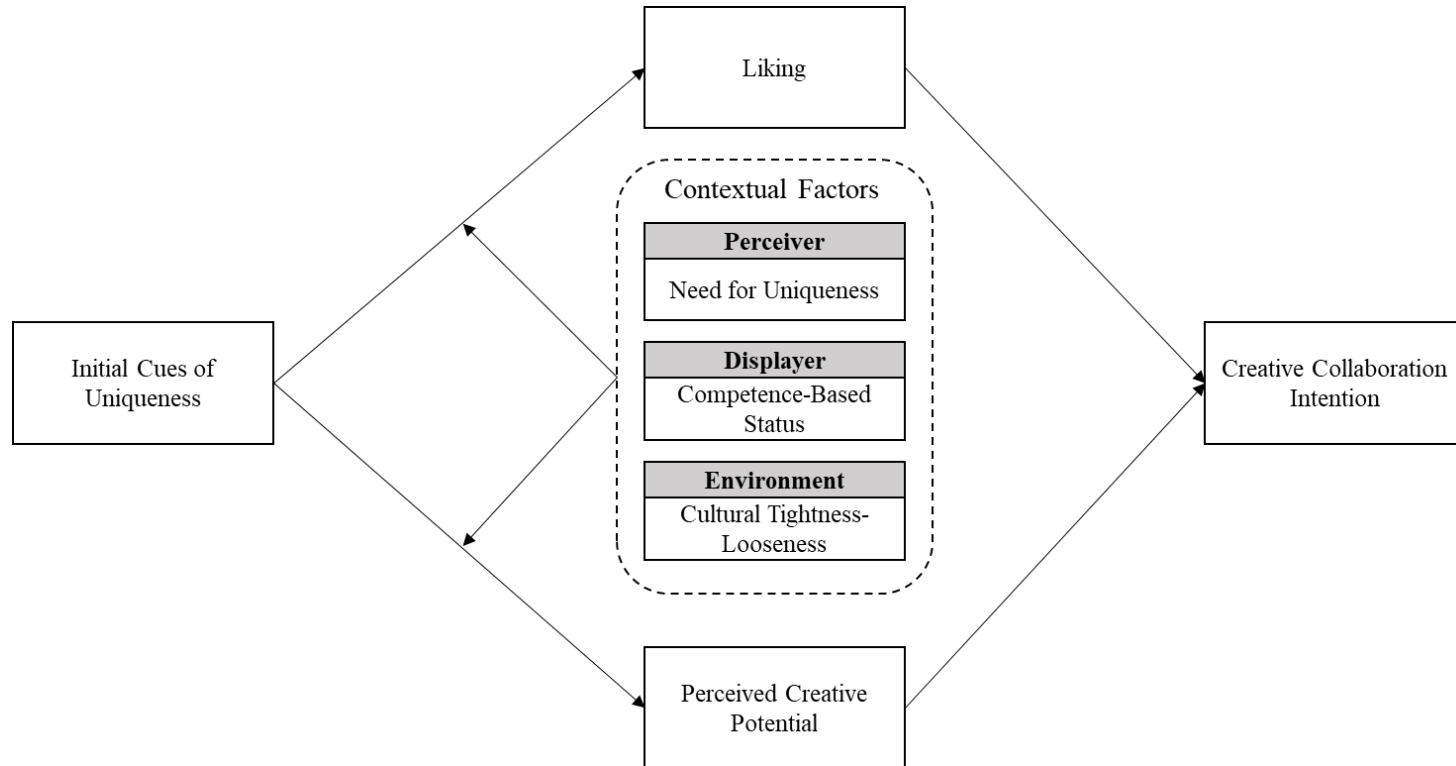


Figure 1. Theoretical Model

CHAPTER 3 HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Initial Cues of Uniqueness and Creative Collaboration Intention

Like many other social interactions in the workplace, creative collaboration has specific purposes (i.e., collaboratively generating novel and feasible ideas) that influence how informational cues exchanged in initial interactions are interpreted, shaping the development and dynamics of further interactions (Swider et al., 2022). When considering whom to approach for creative inspiration and collaborations, people tend to draw from available informational cues to infer those not readily observable characteristics that are desirable for the potential creative collaborations (Baten et al., 2021; Elsbach & Kramer, 2003). In making judgments about their interacting partner, people engage in two interacting systems—one is deliberate and systematic, and the other is heuristic and automatic—to process information and decide their attitudes and behaviors in social interactions (Chaiken & Ledgerwood, 2012; Strack & Deutsch, 2004). In the same vein, initial cues of uniqueness are likely to be processed through both heuristic and systematic processes when choosing collaborators for creative endeavors.

According to the dual-process social cognition perspective, while the deliberated and heuristic systems of processing operate in parallel, the heuristic system is more primary as it requires little cognitive resources and can occur even when individuals are not fully aware of the process or not motivated to take the information into consideration (Chaiken & Ledgerwood, 2012; Cunningham et al., 2003; Strack & Deutsch, 2004). Drawing from the associative-propositional evaluation (APE) model (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2007, 2011), I theorize that cues of uniqueness can first give rise to perceivers' positive affective gut reactions (i.e., liking) towards the target individual,

leading to greater intention to collaborate with the individual for creative outcomes. Indeed, research shows that people are predisposed to form affective judgments (e.g., like or dislike) early and quickly during social interactions with minimal inferential effort (Barrick et al., 2010; Ferguson & Bargh, 2004; Zajonc, 1980). The APE model demonstrates that such affective judgments of a target individual are based on associative processes. In associative evaluation processes, a stimulus (e.g., a cue of uniqueness) activates mental associations with concepts that share similarities in people's memory and triggers favorable or unfavorable affective attitudes (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2007). If the activated associations are of positive valence, perceivers will form positive affective reactions towards the target. Such associative thinking is independent of whether the target actually possesses the associated attributes, which means individuals make such associations and form affective responses without necessarily considering them valid. In other words, informational cues do not have to be considered a valid diagnostic factor to trigger attitudes as long as they share feature similarities with available memory representations (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2011).

Specifically, individuals' initial cues of uniqueness, such as a unique name or appearance style, can influence perceivers' judgments regardless of whether the perceiver is intended to consider the cues (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2011). While initial cues of uniqueness may not specifically be considered or interpreted, they can give rise to a general impression that the target individual has something distinctive from other people, which gives rise to a general affective response towards the individual. As creative collaborations underscore the importance of divergent perspectives and generating outcomes that are different from the norm, the desirable attributes of a potential creative

collaborator share similarities with a unique individual as both demonstrate differences from others and norms. Furthermore, a unique individual is also likely to align with general implicit theories of creative prototypes, such that creative individuals are rare and unconventional (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003; Kasof, 1995; Khazan, 2020). In this way, initial cues of uniqueness serve as stimuli that can activate associations with concepts such as “novel,” “original,” and “creative,” as uniqueness shares similarities with these attributes. These concepts are desirable, and the associations are of positive valence, so perceivers tend to form a favorable affective reaction (i.e., liking) towards the individual who displays cues of uniqueness. Since liking underlies judgments and decisions regarding collaborations, affiliations, and development of future interactions and relationships in interpersonal processes (e.g., Allen & Rush, 1998; Roth et al., 2022; Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Williams, 2007), perceivers are inclined to individuals displaying cues of uniqueness for creative collaborations, even though they may not have specific reasons for the choice.

It is true that cues of uniqueness are not necessarily considered desirable across all situations and may even elicit negative reactions as they demonstrate features that are different from and unfamiliar to most people. But the goal to pursue creativity would likely drive the immediate affective judgments of an individual who displays goal-relevant cues of uniqueness to a positive valence (Ferguson & Bargh, 2004). The APE model suggests that while a stimulus can be associated with multiple concepts, what particular associations will be activated depends on how the set of input stimuli fit with the associative mental patterns that existed for a specific context (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2007; Gawronski & Creighton, 2013; Olson & Fazio, 2006). For example,

for the stimulus “alcohol,” the associative patterns triggered by “virus” and “alcohol” may include concepts like “hygiene,” which is a desirable concept and can lead to favorable attitudes. However, the stimuli “stress” and “alcohol” may be associated with “mental illness” and elicit negative attitudes. Similarly, while cues of uniqueness can be associated with negative concepts such as “weird,” “bizarre,” or “unfamiliar,” they are likely to trigger associations with a favorable tone in a context related to creativity (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003; Lebuda & Karwowski, 2013; Loewenstein & Mueller, 2016). In the context of creative collaborations, people are guided by the goal of seeking different perspectives and generating unconventional ideas. This set of input stimuli (i.e., cues of uniqueness and goals for creativity) are more likely to activate associations between cues of uniqueness and concepts such as “novelty” and “unconventionality” as they are relevant and proximal to the creative collaboration context and ready to be activated (Ferguson & Bargh, 2004). Since these concepts are related to creativity and thus considered desirable for creative collaborations, cues of uniqueness can elicit liking for the displayer and increase creative collaboration intention in perceivers. Therefore, I propose:

Hypothesis 1: Initial cues of uniqueness are positively related to perceivers’ creative collaboration intention.

Hypothesis 2: The positive relationship between cues of uniqueness and perceivers’ creative collaboration intention is mediated by perceivers’ liking for the displayer.

Furthermore, the implicit attitudes derived from associative thinking serve as the basis of more deliberate information processing (Chaiken & Ledgerwood, 2012;

Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2007; Ingold et al., 2018). Indeed, to assess the extent to which they want to collaborate with an individual for a creative endeavor, people are motivated to draw from the limited informational cues available and make judgments on the interacting partner's creative potential, which is the expectation about whether the individual can think creatively to benefit the potential collaboration (Baten et al., 2021; Elsbach & Kramer, 2003; Proudfoot et al., 2021). The signaling perspective describes that observable cues can be signals of underlying attributes. When facing uncertainty with incomplete information, such as in early interactions, perceivers will gather and interpret signals to fill informational voids to serve their goals of social interactions (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973, 2002). Therefore, initial cues of uniqueness might be picked up as signals of one's creative potential and thus influence perceivers' judgments and creative collaboration intention.

Implicit theories and prototypes about creativity associate creativity with non-entrenchment and divergent thinking (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003; Loewenstein & Mueller, 2016). However, as the ability to think differently is not directly observable, people tend to draw from readily observable cues to infer an individual's creative potential (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003; Proudfoot et al., 2015). For example, behavioral cues of nonconformity and unique aesthetic taste are considered typical for creative individuals (Katz & Thompson, 1993; Sternberg, 1985). Elsbach and Kramer (2003) found that in line with the general lay theory that creative people were quirky, Hollywood producers tended to see greater creative potential in screenwriters with unconventional or unpolished appearances. Proudfoot and colleagues (2021) revealed that lay observers tend to perceive people who are socially independent of others (e.g., those who stay alone) as

having greater creative potential as they are less likely to be influenced by others' thoughts. In the same vein, initial cues of uniqueness might be interpreted as signals of one's potential to think differently.

Essentially, initial cues of uniqueness demonstrate certain unusual and distinctive features to others in early social interactions. They can signal the displayer's unique identity, the motives to express and be seen as unique, and unusual past experiences that can be informative for the inference of creative potential (Jonah Berger & Heath, 2007; Randel & Jaussi, 2017). For example, an individual's knowledge domains reflect what one knows and how one thinks. A study using a college student sample shows that academic courses are considered the most representative cues to infer one's personality among other types of cues such as one's hobbies or favorite books (Burroughs & Drews, 1991). Cues of unique knowledge domains such as a unique major suggest an individual's unusual interests in certain domains and signal unique academic training or learning experiences they have. Cues of uniqueness regarding one's knowledge domains thus may be interpreted as a signal of one's different ways of problem-solving and the ability to retrieve information from unusual fields, which can be beneficial to generating creative ideas.

Appearance styles such as clothing and hairstyle are used as an important approach to communicating people's individuality and a sense of distinctive self-concept (Berger & Heath, 2007; Lynn & Snyder, 2002). When observing cues of an individual's unique appearance style, perceivers tend to see them as signals of one's strong motivation to be seen as unusual and an expression of one's sense of uniqueness. Having the desire for uniqueness as well as the feelings of being different from others in a social context are

found to be positively related to individuals' creativity as generating novel and useful ideas can be a manifestation of seeking uniqueness (Goncalo & Staw, 2006; Randel & Jaussi, 2017). For example, when people have a feeling of being different from others after experiencing social rejection or a sense of entitlement, they are more willing to challenge the norms and explore unusual approaches and thus demonstrate better creative performance (Kim et al., 2013; Zitek & Vincent, 2015). Therefore, cues of unique appearance style can be understood as signals of one's motives to be different from convention, indicating the potential for engaging in out-of-the-box thinking and generating unconventional ideas.

Finally, while unique names are usually decided by parents and unlikely chosen by individuals as an expression of their uniqueness, they carry salient identity meanings and can be viewed as a signal of one's creative potential. For example, people tend to assign individuals with unique names to positions that require more creativity in an experimental setting (Bao et al., 2020). Paintings, poems, and musical pieces composed by individuals whose names are unique are assessed as more creative (Lebuda & Karwowski, 2013). Indeed, unique names can signal to perceivers that the individual may develop a unique self-concept. As unique names are rarely encountered in the population and names are the fundamental identifier of people used in social interactions on a regular basis, people with unique names are likely to be seen by others as different (Gebauer et al., 2012; Twenge & Manis, 1998). Growing up with a unique identity label, people with unique names tend to internalize others' perceptions of them and develop a sense of being different from peers (Kalist & Lee, 2009; Y. Kang et al., 2021; Simonsohn, 2011; Zwebner et al., 2017). Such a self-concept of distinctiveness may motivate people to

explore unusual approaches and think in an unconventional way (Goncalo & Krause, 2010; Y. Kang et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2013). Furthermore, a unique name may indicate an individual's unusual social or cultural background (Bonefeld & Dickhäuser, 2018; Twenge & Manis, 1998), which can signal the individual's different perspectives and the potential to recruit ideas from different social contexts (Maddux & Galinsky, 2009).

Perceptions of an individual's creative potential will then increase a perceiver's creative collaboration intention with the individual. Essentially, a rational decision about whether to collaborate with another individual depends on the expected outcomes of this mutual collaboration (Baten et al., 2021; Tsai et al., 2020). When perceiving a high level of creative potential of an individual, perceivers would expect the individual to think differently and provide novel ideas and perspectives, which can benefit their mutual effort in generating novel and useful outcomes. Therefore, initial cues of uniqueness may enhance perceivers' creative collaboration intention as they provide signals that lead to inferences of greater creative potential. Formally, I propose:

Hypothesis 3: The positive relationship between cues of uniqueness and perceivers' creative collaboration intention is mediated by perceived creative potential (of the displayer).

Thus far, I have hypothesized that initial cues of uniqueness can enhance perceivers' creative collaboration intention as cues of uniqueness can serve as signals of creative potential and trigger associations with creativity-relevant concepts and thus give rise to positive affective reactions (i.e., liking). However, the effects of cues of uniqueness may depend on certain contextual factors. According to the APE model, the activation of particular associations is determined by the associative structures in which

the stimuli are embedded (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2011). In other words, whether cues of uniqueness can activate positive associations with attributes desirable for creative collaborations depends on how these associations are constructed and accessible in people's minds. Further, based on the signaling perspective, not all informational cues are considered signals, and the effectiveness of signals may depend on the visibility and credibility of the informational cues (Connelly et al., 2011). Essentially, the perceiver, the displayer, and the social environment all play significant roles in shaping the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and creative collaboration intention. Perceivers' interpretation of uniqueness, displayers' competence and status to legitimize their uniqueness, and the extent to which uniqueness is encouraged or inhibited in the social environment can shape pre-existing associative structures and strength of signals (Bellezza et al., 2013; Dunton & Fazio, 1997; Greenwald et al., 1998; Zhou et al., 2017). Therefore, I further investigate the contextual factors of displayers, perceivers, and the environment that influence the structure of associative links as well as the effectiveness of the signaling effect of initial cues of uniqueness.

3.2 The Moderating Role of Perceivers' Need for Uniqueness

Research has suggested that people generally have a need for uniqueness—a desire to see themselves as distinct from others (Fromkin & Snyder, 1980; Lynn & Snyder, 2002). However, the strength of this need varies among individuals, and the need for uniqueness has been considered an individual difference (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Such individual differences in the need for uniqueness may influence associative structures regarding unique stimuli in perceivers' minds and their attention to and interpretation of cues of uniqueness as signals (Ames & Iyengar, 2005; Bellezza et al.,

2013). It may thus moderate the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceivers' creative collaboration intention.

People with a high need for uniqueness tend to place significant values on uniqueness and are motivated to seek and embrace the uniqueness, novelty, and unusualness of people and objects (Ames & Iyengar, 2005; Fromkin & Snyder, 1980). For example, need for uniqueness is found to be associated with consumers' preferences for novel, scarce, customized, and less popular products as well as unconventional shopping venues (Chan et al., 2012; Lynn & Harris, 1997; Tian & McKenzie, 2001; White & Argo, 2011). Studies also show that individuals with a stronger need for uniqueness indicate preferences for unusual designs of products and unique first names (Ames & Iyengar, 2005); they also demonstrate greater creativity as it is a demonstration of their uniqueness (Dollinger, 2003; Zitek & Vincent, 2015). Therefore, perceivers with a high level of need for uniqueness tend to value uniqueness such that they tend to pay attention to cues of uniqueness and interpret an individual's uniqueness with a positive lens.

Specifically, from the associative evaluation perspective, while cues of uniqueness may trigger associations with creativity relevant concepts since uniqueness and creativity share the similarity that both emphasize dissimilarity, another important aspect of creativity is that it is considered useful and valuable (Randel & Jaussi, 2017; Vincent & Kouchaki, 2016). When perceivers have a greater need for uniqueness, they are more likely to appreciate cues of uniqueness and see unique attributes as more valuable (Fromkin & Snyder, 1980; Lynn & Harris, 1997; Lynn & Snyder, 2002). In this way, cues of uniqueness share more feature similarities with creativity and can thus be

more likely to activate associations with attributes related to creativity (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006, 2011). Further, as perceivers with a high need for uniqueness have a strong desire to feel unique and tend to see unique attributes as desirable, they may have more positive associations with uniqueness constructed in their minds. More positive associations are thus prone to be activated compared to people with a low need for uniqueness (Ames & Iyengar, 2005; Dollinger, 2003). Therefore, when observing initial cues of uniqueness of an individual, more positive associations are likely to be activated, eliciting greater liking towards the individual and thus stronger creative collaboration intention.

Hypothesis 4a: Perceivers' need for uniqueness moderates the positive relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and liking such that the positive relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) when a perceiver has a higher (vs. lower) need for uniqueness.

Hypothesis 4b: Perceivers' need for uniqueness moderates the indirect relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceivers' creative collaboration intention via liking, such that the positive relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) when a perceiver has a higher (vs. lower) need for uniqueness.

From the signaling perspective, cues of uniqueness are more likely to attract the attention of observers with a higher need for uniqueness, and these cues are more likely to be interpreted as signals of desirable underlying attributes. For example, research has found that observers with a higher need for uniqueness are more likely to interpret nonconforming outfits as signals of status, competence, and autonomy (Bellezza et al., 2014). Likewise, when perceivers have high levels of need for uniqueness, I expect that

they are more inclined to see cues of uniqueness as salient and reliable signals of the individual's creative potential, because people with a higher need for uniqueness tend to see being different from other people in a social context as preferable (Lynn & Harris, 1997; Zitek & Vincent, 2015). When gleaning signals of one's creative potential, they are likely to assign more weight to individuals' cues of uniqueness and interpret these cues as meaningful and relevant signs of one's ability to think creatively (Ferguson & Bargh, 2004). However, perceivers with a lower need for uniqueness may see initial cues of uniqueness less favorably and discount their signaling value for desirable attributes such as creative potential (Bellezza et al., 2014).

Hypothesis 5a: Perceivers' need for uniqueness moderates the positive relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceived creative potential such that the positive relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) when a perceiver has a higher (vs. lower) need for uniqueness.

Hypothesis 5b: Perceivers' need for uniqueness moderates the indirect relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceivers' creative collaboration intention via perceived creative potential such that the positive relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) when a perceiver has a higher (vs. lower) need for uniqueness.

3.3 The Moderating Role of Displayer's Competence-Based Status

Status refers to "the extent to which an individual or group is respected or admired by others (Magee & Galinsky, 2008, p. 359). In particular, in task-oriented social interactions, status is primarily based on the expected competence of individuals that can make valuable contributions to the common performance goals (Joseph Berger et al.,

1972; C. Ridgeway, 1991; C. L. Ridgeway & Berger, 1986; Sheldon et al., 2006). As status serves the critical functions of providing orders and facilitating collaborations, information regarding one's competence (e.g., knowledge and skills) is essential in early social interactions as competence-based status can be developed rapidly and guide social interactions (Susan T. Fiske, 2018; Susan T. Fiske & Bai, 2020; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). According to the APE theory and signaling theory, I theorize that the displayer's competence-based status can determine what sets of associations are more likely to be triggered by cues of uniqueness as well as influence the signal strength of cues of uniqueness.

Essentially, being different from other people in a social context can lead to perceivers' negative reactions or rejections and thus comes with social costs (Bellezza et al., 2014; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). However, an individual's status may provide a buffer against the potential negative ramifications and risks of deviating from normative expectations (Bowles & Gelfand, 2010; Hollander, 1958; Ridgeway, 1981). For example, Hollander's (1958) idiosyncrasy credit theory articulates that as members of a group have greater attributes that are valuable to the common goals and thus gain higher status, they also gain credits to deviate from the common behavioral expectations before getting sanctioned. Accordingly, research shows that people of lower status face more severe punishments for workplace deviance compared to their higher status counterparts (Bowles & Gelfand, 2010). Employees tend to grant more lenience to transgressing leaders whom they perceive as more competent, inspirational, and thus valuable to their organization (Shapiro et al., 2011). When experiencing time delays from a collaborating partner in remote collaborations, people are less likely to have negative evaluations of the

partner and are more inclined to accept the partner's influence on the task if the partner is knowledgeable and experienced with the task (i.e., with a high status; Sheldon et al., 2006). In the same vein, as cues of uniqueness represent a deviation from normative and common features in a social environment (Lynn & Snyder, 2002), people with higher competence-based status are less likely to face unfavorable social reactions when displaying cues of uniqueness in initial interactions.

Therefore, according to the associative evaluation perspective, when displaying initial cues of uniqueness, displayers of higher competence-based status are more likely to activate positive associations in perceivers' minds compared to lower-status displayers. Specifically, as people with higher competence-based status have more desirable attributes valuable for the collaboration (e.g., relevant knowledge and experience), they also enjoy the latitude to be unique without eliciting social rejections (Ridgeway, 1981; Sheldon et al., 2006). Initial cues of uniqueness displayed by someone who stands at a higher status are thus less likely to be seen through a negative lens as bizarre but activate associations with positive attributes such as novelty and free-spirited. Furthermore, when the displayer of cues of uniqueness has high competence-based status, more competence-relevant information is available for perceivers. Cues of uniqueness are likely to attract more attention to the displayer's autonomy and competence, activating more associations with competence-related concepts and leading to perceivers' favorable affective gut reactions (Bellezza et al., 2014; Ridge, 1981, 1991; Sheldon et al., 2006). However, if the displayer has a lower status, there is more uncertainty about the individual's competence and value for potential collaborations. Initial cues of uniqueness that are unfamiliar and unusual to people thus may be seen as quirky and make uncertainty more salient, leading

to fewer positive associations and less liking towards the displayer. These concerns thus weaken the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceivers' intention to collaborate with the displayer for creativity (Ostrom et al., 2021; Ridgeway, 1981).

Hypothesis 6a: The displayer's competence-based status moderates the positive relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceivers' liking for the displayer such that the positive relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) when the displayer has a higher (vs. lower) competence-based status.

Hypothesis 6b: The displayer's competence-based status moderates the indirect relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceivers' creative collaboration intention via liking such that the positive relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) when the displayer has a higher (vs. lower) competence-based status.

Moreover, the displayer's competence-based status may influence the strength of initial cues of uniqueness as signals of one's creative potential (Bergh et al., 2014; Bird & Smith, 2005; Connelly et al., 2011). According to signaling theory, the effectiveness of signals depends on the extent to which the signals are costly and visible (Connelly et al., 2011; Milgrom & Roberts, 1986). The more salient and visible a signal is, the more likely perceivers can observe and infer underlying attributes from the signal. And the more costly a signal is, the more the signal is deemed credible by perceivers because falsifying a costly signal may take a toll rather than bring benefits (Bird & Smith, 2005; Connelly et al., 2011). Since people of higher social hierarchies tend to have more leeway to behave as they want and be different from anyone else (Bowles & Gelfand, 2010; Hollander, 1958; Van Kleef et al., 2011), initial cues of uniqueness displayed by an individual of higher status may be seen as less surprising or salient. Indeed, behaving in an

unconventional way or demonstrating unusual attributes is associated with people with a higher status (Bellezza et al., 2014; Van Kleef et al., 2021). Initial cues of uniqueness are thus less noteworthy to perceivers as valuable signals of creative potential for someone with higher competence-based status.

Furthermore, initial cues of uniqueness may risk being seen as bizarre and indeed carry potential social costs of being rejected, and such costs are higher for displayers with lower status as they have lower credit to behave idiosyncratically (Bellezza et al., 2014; Bowles & Gelfand, 2010; Cotton et al., 2008; Ostrom et al., 2021; Sheldon et al., 2006). In this case, the signaling effects of cues of uniqueness are stronger as they are seemed more costly for lower-status displayers (Bergh et al., 2014; Bird & Smith, 2005). When a displayer has a lower status, displaying cues of uniqueness signals greater unconventionality and thus creative potential than those who do not display cues of uniqueness. However, in terms of a higher-status displayer, cues of uniqueness are less costly and thus less likely to be interpreted as a strong signal that influences the judgment of the displayer's creative potential. The difference of perceived creative potential between displayers with cues of uniqueness or not will be less salient. Therefore, initial cues of uniqueness are more effective in eliciting inference of creative potential when the displayer has a lower competence-based status.

Hypothesis 7a: The displayer's competence-based status moderates the positive relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceived creative potential such that the positive relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) when the displayer has a lower (vs. higher) competence-based status.

Hypothesis 7b: The displayer's competence-based status moderates the indirect relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceivers' creative collaboration intention via perceived creative potential such that the positive relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) when the displayer has a lower (vs. higher) competence-based status.

3.4 The Moderating Role of Cultural Tightness-Looseness

Cultural tightness-looseness is defined as “the strength of social norms and the degree of sanctioning within societies.” (Gelfand et al., 2006). It reflects the degree to which there are prevalent and clearly defined norms in collectives and the tolerance for deviations from the norms, which can be manifested at the societal level or in organizations or teams (Gelfand, 2018; Qin et al., 2021). Social norms and culture can have a powerful influence on how individuals process information and make decisions via shaping cognitive thinking patterns and schematizing information in people's minds (DiMaggio, 1997; Kitayama & Uskul, 2011; Varnum et al., 2010). They also constitute the social environment that contextualizes the display and interpretation of signals (Bird & Smith, 2005; Connelly et al., 2011). Cultural tightness-looseness is especially pertinent to the perceptions of initial cues of uniqueness and propensity to collaborate with seemingly unique individuals for creativity. First, as cues of uniqueness represent individuals' features that are rare and different from normative manifestations, the strength of normative expectations and norm enforcement should directly influence how people receive cues of uniqueness. Second, cultural tightness-looseness is found to play an essential role in shaping people's perceptions and beliefs about creativity (Chua et al., 2015; Jackson et al., 2019). Therefore, cultural tightness-looseness may construct the

mental associations with cues of uniqueness and the interpretations of these cues as to signal creative potential (Aktas et al., 2016; Connelly et al., 2011; Gawronski & Sritharan, 2010).

Specifically, under a tighter culture, wherein there are explicit norms and a lower tolerance for deviance, negative associations with deviances from the norms are more established and accessible in people's minds (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2003; Gelfand et al., 2006; Shepherd, 2011). For example, people in tighter cultures are more inclined to favor and endorse leadership to those who abide by norms rather than challenge norms (Stamkou et al., 2019). Tight cultures feature clear normative expectations and consistent norm enforcement. People in such cultures thus have a tendency to avoid uncertainty and impose regulations on their own and others' norm-violating behaviors (Chua et al., 2015; Gelfand et al., 2006; Liu et al., 2018). As uniqueness reflects deviating from the attributes or practices adopted by the majority of people, cues of an individual's uniqueness that seem unfamiliar and different from norms may raise concerns and be seen as less desirable in a tighter culture (Jackson et al., 2019). Furthermore, implicit theories regarding attributes associated with creativity differ across cultures (Loewenstein & Mueller, 2016; Morris & Leung, 2010; Niu & Sternberg, 2002). As people in a tighter culture are primed to value consistency, efficiency, and order, as well as tend to take a prevention focus and adaptor cognitive styles, uniqueness may not be a prioritized attributes associated with creativity (Chua et al., 2015; Zhou et al., 2017). Accordingly, even in creative collaborations that require novel and different perspectives, positive associations between cues of uniqueness and creativity-relevant concepts may be suppressed in a tight culture that underscores norms. Initial cues of uniqueness thus less

readily elicit favorable reactions such as liking (Christopher, 1998; Gawronski & Sritharan, 2010; Gebauer et al., 2012). On the contrary, in a looser culture where there is a higher tolerance for deviance and more leeway for unconventionality and uniqueness (Chua et al., 2015; Gelfand et al., 2006; Jackson et al., 2019), the implicit associations between cues of uniqueness and positive concepts such as “novel” or “special” are more prone to be activated. People in a looser culture are also more likely to have a favorable attitude towards uniqueness. For example, a study demonstrates that in years when the societal culture is looser, people have a preference for unique names (Jackson et al., 2019). Therefore, in a looser culture, perceivers are more likely to like and have a stronger creative collaboration intention with people who display cues of uniqueness in initial interactions.

Hypothesis 8a: Cultural tightness-looseness in the environment moderates the positive relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and liking for the displayer such that the positive relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) in a looser (vs. tighter) culture.

Hypothesis 8b: Cultural tightness-looseness in the environment moderates the indirect relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceivers' creative collaboration intention via liking such that the positive relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) in a looser (vs. tighter) culture.

Cultural tightness-looseness also serves the milieu in which the signal strength of cues of uniqueness may vary (Connelly et al., 2011). Cues of uniqueness such as a unique appearance style or name can be interpreted as signals of one's unique identity and desire to express uniqueness, leading to inferences of the individual's creative potential (Bao et

al., 2020; Kim et al., 2013; Proudfoot et al., 2021). In a tight culture wherein there are clear norms and people may face sanctions for violating norms, the signal strength of cues of uniqueness may be augmented as such cues seem more prominent (Connelly et al., 2011; Gelfand et al., 2006). Since there are prevailing norms and constraints on behaviors in an environment featuring cultural tightness, people tend to behave in accordance with normative expectations and share homogenous experiences, leading to greater between-individual similarities in the social context (Gelfand et al., 2006). Cues of uniqueness are thus more unusual and stand out in a tighter culture, leading to greater inferences regarding one's unique identity and different perspectives, which are indicative of creative potential (Lee & Kramer, 2016). Furthermore, seeing the constraints and regulations of nonconformists in a tight culture, people may see cues of uniqueness as more costly signals of one's potential to break the norms and generate unconventional ideas (Bellezza et al., 2014; Bird & Smith, 2005). In contrast, when the environment features a looser culture with weaker norms and freedom to behave idiosyncratically, there is greater variance between individuals in terms of attributes or behaviors (Bandura, 2002; Gelfand, 2006, 2012). Since individuals may all demonstrate varieties of uniqueness, cues of uniqueness may be seen as less costly or special in such a context and be less potent in signaling the displayer's creative potential. Therefore, I propose:

Hypothesis 9a: Cultural tightness-looseness in the environment moderates the positive relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceived creative potential such that the positive relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) in a tighter (vs. looser) culture.

Hypothesis 9b: Cultural tightness-looseness in the environment moderates the indirect relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceivers' creative collaboration intention via perceived creative potential such that the positive relationship is stronger (vs. weaker) in a tighter (vs. looser) culture.

CHAPTER 4 METHODS AND RESULTS

I first focus on the micro psychological processes and examine the psychological mechanism through which initial cues of uniqueness influence perceivers' creative collaboration intention using experiments (Studies 1 to 3). Next, I examine whether the hypothesized relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and creative collaboration intention can manifest in a real-world setting by leveraging large-scale archival datasets of name uniqueness and scientists' publications and collaborations (Study 4).

4.1 Study 1: Cues of Uniqueness and Creative Collaboration Intention

4.1.1 *Procedure and Sample*

I recruited 284 full-time working adults from the online panel Prolific to participate in this study. Each participant was compensated with 2 dollars for completing this study. For online studies with little researcher-participant interactions, participants who do not pay attention to study instructions (i.e., Insufficient Effort Responding, or IER) could influence data quality and significantly jeopardize researchers' ability to interpret the data (Bowling & Huang, 2018; Huang et al., 2015). I thus used two pre-set rules to detect IER and ensure data quality in all three online experiments (Huang et al., 2015; Kung et al., 2018). First, I inserted three attention check items in the study (e.g., "If you are reading this, please select 'strongly disagree'"), and respondents who failed two or more attention checks were excluded from the analyses. Second, participants who spent less than two seconds on each question were excluded. This effort excluded three careless respondents for this study, leaving a final sample of 281 participants. The average age of the participants was 32.58 ($SD = 9.23$), and 53.4% of them were women. Among the participants, 5% had a high-school level education, 16% had some college

education but no degree, 34.2% had a Bachelor's degree, 39.9% had a Master's degree, and 5% had a Doctoral degree.

After indicating their consent, the participants were instructed to collaborate with another participant online to complete two tasks. One is a generic task that requires them to proofread a short report without changing any substantial information in it. This task does not require creativity. The other is an idea generation task, which requires them to come up with novel and useful ideas to fill in a vacancy left by a mismanaged restaurant at a university campus. This creative task has been used by prior creativity studies (e.g., Goncalo & Staw, 2006). The instructions for the two tasks were presented in a counterbalanced order. After reading the instructions for each task, participants were told that they were randomly matched with two other online participants and could choose one of them to collaborate on the task. The same collaborator could be chosen for both tasks. The two ostensible collaborators were in fact fictional and served as manipulations of initial cues of uniqueness. Among the two collaborators, one demonstrated cues of uniqueness (unique name, appearance, or knowledge domain) and the other did not (see Appendix A). Participants were randomly assigned to view two collaborators in a counterbalanced order differing on one type of cue. Participants then indicated with whom they would like to collaborate on each task. Finally, they completed a short survey on manipulation checks, their perceptions of the two individuals' creative potential, and demographic questions before they were debriefed.

4.1.2 Manipulation

Cues of Uniqueness

The detailed manipulation stimuli are presented in Appendix A. Two first names, Michael and Mican, were used to manipulate names as a cue of uniqueness. The two names have similar phonetic features but are distinctly different in their uniqueness. Specifically, the name “Michael” has ranked as the 4th most popular male name in the U.S. for the past 100 years. However, the name “Mican” never ranked among the 1000 most popular names in the U.S. For the manipulation of appearance style, headshots of two young white males were presented. An online artificial intelligence-powered face-generating tool was used to generate faces with the same age range and racial/ethnic features (e.g., skin and eye color). One of the individuals’ photos was processed such that his hair was dyed in blue (unique) while the other’ is in the original dark brown color. As for knowledge domain cues, the high uniqueness condition features a potential collaborator who has a bachelor's degree in Oceanography and Coastal Science, while the low uniqueness condition has a potential collaborator with a bachelor’s degree in Computer and Information Science. The two science majors were chosen to account for the potential influence of stereotypes related to people majoring in science. Oceanography and Coastal Science is an unusual major in college, while Computer and Information Science is among the most popular undergraduate science majors, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2020).

4.1.3 Measures

Manipulation Checks

To examine the effectiveness of the cues of uniqueness manipulation, participants reported the extent to which they think each fictional collaborator’s name/appearance style/knowledge domain is *unique*, *uncommon*, *distinctive*, and *rare* (1 = *strongly*

disagree, 5 = *strongly agree*). The Cronbach's α is .93. The manipulation check results indicate that the manipulations of cues of uniqueness were effective as participants assessed the unique cues as more rare and distinctive than those in the nonunique condition ($M_{\text{unique}} = 3.98$, $SD = .76$; $M_{\text{non-unique}} = 2.62$, $SD = .1.32$), $t_{(1, 280)} = 14.40$, $p < .001$.

Collaboration Intention

Participants indicated their collaboration intention on each task by directly choosing a collaborator as well as responding on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*Definitely Collaborator A*) to 6 (*Definitely Collaborator B*). As the two ostensible collaborators showed up in a counterbalanced order, this variable was recoded such that a higher score indicated a stronger intention to collaborate with the individual with cues of uniqueness.

Perceived Creative Potential

To measure perceived creative potential in the target individual, I used two items from Proudfoot and Fath (2021) as well as two items developed for this study: (1) "How likely is [Collaborator's name] to come up with creative ideas that no one has thought of before?" (2) "How likely is [Collaborator's name] to come up with truly innovative ideas?" (3) How likely is [Collaborator's name] to have unconventional perspectives? (4) How likely is [Collaborator's name] to have approaches different from others to solve problems? Participants assessed the creative potential of the target individual on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all likely*) to 5 (*extremely likely*). The Cronbach's α was .85.

4.1.4 Results

To examine whether people are more likely to choose a collaborator who demonstrates cues of uniqueness in a creative task than in a generic task, I first conducted a paired chi-square test (i.e., McNemar's test) to examine the differences in people's choices of collaborators in both tasks. The results show that while more participants chose the non-unique individual in a generic task ($n = 168$, 59.79%), when it comes to a creative task, more participants chose the unique individual as collaborator ($n = 146$, 51.96%; See Figure 2), and such difference is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 7.59$, $p = .006$). I then examined the collaboration intention score difference using a repeated-measure Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results also show that people are more inclined to choose an individual demonstrating cues of uniqueness as collaborator in a creative task ($M = 3.50$, $SE = .09$) than in a generic task ($M = 3.25$, $SE = .09$, $F_{(1, 278)} = 6.45$, $p = .01$). And the interaction between uniqueness and types of cues is not significant ($F_{(2, 278)} = .92$, ns), suggesting that this relationship does not change due to the types of cues. These results indicate that when the goal of the collaboration is generating novel and useful ideas, individuals are more likely to gravitate toward those who demonstrate cues of uniqueness, supporting the relationship between cues of uniqueness and creative collaboration intention. These results provide support for Hypothesis 1.

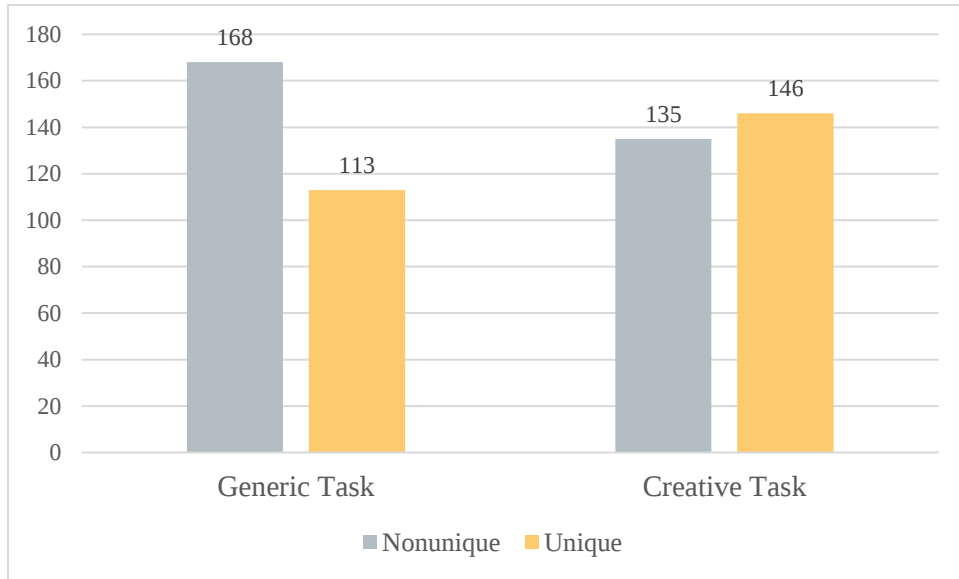


Figure 2. Choices of Collaborators in a Generic Task vs. Creative Task (Study 1)

Furthermore, repeated-measure ANOVA results also show that participants inferred the individual displaying cues of uniqueness as having greater creative potential ($M_{unique} = 3.74$, $SD = .04$) than the individual who did not display cues of uniqueness ($M_{nonunique} = 3.57$, $SD = .05$; $F_{(1, 278)} = 9.13$, $p = .003$), and such relationship is not influenced by the types of cues ($F_{(2, 278)} = 2.02$, ns).

4.1.5 Study 1 Discussion

This study examines that compared to a task that does not require creativity, whether people have a stronger intention to collaborate with an individual who displays cues of uniqueness (a unique name, appearance style, or knowledge domain). The results show that while preferences for familiarity are powerful, as people are more likely to choose a collaborator who did not display any cues of uniqueness in a generic task context, people are likely to collaborate with an individual who displayed cues of

uniqueness in a creative task, in support of Hypothesis 1. The findings of this study also rule out an alternative explanation that cues of uniqueness may attract more attention in general and thus make unique individuals more likely to be chosen, providing evidence on the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and *creative* collaboration intention, rather than collaboration intention in general. This study also provides preliminary evidence that cues of uniqueness could increase perceptions of the displayer's creative potential as participants rated higher creative potential in the individual demonstrating cues of uniqueness regardless of the types of the cues. Next, in Study 2 and Study 3, I will use the experimental vignette methodology (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014) to examine the hypothesized psychological mechanisms linking initial cues of uniqueness and creative collaboration intention, as well as the moderating effects of contextual factors of the perceiver, displayer, and environment.

4.2 Study 2: Moderating Effect of Displayer's Competence-Based Status

4.2.1 Participants and Procedure

I recruited 222 full-time working adults from the online panel Prolific to participate in this online vignette-based experiment and did not detect insufficient effort responses, so all the 222 participants were included in the analyses. The average age of the participants was 35.05 years ($SD = 10.29$), and 50.5% of them were men. Among the participants, 6.8% had a high-school or equivalent education, 24.3% had an associate degree or some college education but no degree, 45.5% had a Bachelor's degree, 17.6% had a Master's degree, and 5.9% had a Doctoral degree.

This study used a 2 (*cues of uniqueness*: unique vs. non-unique) $\times$ 2 (*competence-based status*: high vs. low) between-subjects design. In this study, participants were

required to imagine themselves as a consultant working for a management consulting company specializing in the art and culture industry. They were then randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. The detailed vignettes are described in Appendix B. Specifically, participants were told that a new member joined their work group, who either demonstrated cues of uniqueness (i.e., a unique name, appearance style, and major) or not. Participants also read a description of the new colleague's educational background and prior work experience as manipulation of their competence-based status. Participants then assessed the extent to which they liked the new colleague as well as the perceived creative potential of the colleague. The setting for creative collaboration is adapted from a team creativity task used in prior studies (e.g., Hoever et al., 2012, 2018). Participants were informed that there is a project to develop a novel and useful action plan for a theatre's marketing strategies. This project is very important as the theatre is a major client of the company and consultants are free to collaborate with any colleagues or work alone on this project. Participants indicated their willingness to collaborate with this colleague on the creative project as the measure of their creative collaboration intention. Finally, they finished a survey on manipulation checks and control variables before they were debriefed and thanked.

4.2.2 Manipulations

Cues of Uniqueness Manipulation

A written description of the new colleague was used to manipulate cues of uniqueness. In the unique condition, the colleague's name is Mican, who has a degree in an uncommon major and wears "clothes that would be considered to be business casual but with a unique twist." While in the low uniqueness condition, the colleague named

Michael, who has a degree in a popular major and wears clothes that would be considered to be typical business casual. Participants indicated the extent to which they think the new colleague's name, clothes, and knowledge domain were *uncommon*, *distinctive*, *unusual*, and *rare* (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .97$) as a manipulation check. Manipulation check results indicate that this manipulation was effective ($M_{\text{unique}} = 5.62$, $SD = .89$; $M_{\text{nonunique}} = 2.31$, $SD = 1.16$; $t_{(220)} = 23.91$, $p < .001$).

Displayer Competence-Based Status Manipulation

The displayer's competence-based status reflects the extent to which the displayer has knowledge, skills, and expertise that are potentially valuable for completing job tasks in the workplace and thus can elicit respect from others (Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Sheldon et al., 2006). The displayer's prior educational and work experiences are used as manipulation of the displayer's competence-based status, and the manipulation stimuli are adapted from previous studies on expertise and competence-based status in the workplace (e.g., Bowles & Gelfand, 2010; Sheldon et al., 2006; Whiting et al., 2012). The new colleague's age is set as 33 years old across all conditions to account for the confounding associations between experience and age. In the high status condition, the new colleague was described as having an MBA from Harvard Business School and "plentiful experience in developing business development and marketing plans" with "a strong track record of good performance." In the low status condition, the new colleague has an MBA from a less renowned private institution with limited experience in developing business development and marketing plans and "little track record of performance." Three items ($\alpha = .95$; Bellezza et al., 2014; Bowles & Gelfand, 2010) were used as manipulation check: 1) "I think [Name] has ____" (1 = *very low regard in terms of*

his expertise; 7 = very high regard in terms of his expertise); 2) How well respected is [Name] due to his competence? (1 = Not respected at all; 7 = Extremely well respected); 3) Where do you think [Name] would stand in terms of his competence and expertise? (1 = Lowest status; 7 = Highest status). Manipulation check results suggest that this manipulation was effective ($M_{\text{high}} = 5.86$, $SD = .79$; $M_{\text{low}} = 3.20$, $SD = 1.04$; $t_{(220)} = 21.51$, $p < .001$).

4.2.3 Measures

Liking

Participants liking for the displayer was measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) using the four items developed by Wayne and Ferris (1990). This scale showed good reliability in this study with a Cronbach's α of .92. A sample item was "I would likely get along well with [Name]."

Perceived Creative Potential

I used the same items as used in Study 1 to measure perceived creative potential on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all likely*) to 7 (*extremely likely*). The Cronbach's α in this study was .94.

Creative Collaboration Intention

Participants indicated their creative collaboration intention on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *to a great extent*) using the six items from Tsai et al. (2020). This scale showed satisfactory reliability in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = .96$). A sample item was "I would collaborate with [Name] on devising creative solutions."

Need for Uniqueness

Participants' need for uniqueness was measured using the four-item scale developed by Lynn and Harris (1997). On a 5-point Likert scale, participants answered four questions to report the extent to which they like to be different from other people. A sample item was "I prefer being _____ different from other people." (1 = *no*, 2 = *slightly*, 3 = *moderately*, 4 = *very*, 5 = *extremely*). The Cronbach's α is .86.

Controls

Participants' age, gender, and education were controlled for in the analyses. As participants' creative self-efficacy and agreeableness may influence the extent to which they would seek collaborations with others on creative tasks, I measured and controlled for participants' creative self-efficacy using the three-item scale developed by Tierney and Farmer (2002; Cronbach's α = .90 in this study), and also controlled for agreeableness (Cronbach's α = .91; Goldberg, 1992).

4.2.4 Results

I first tested the influence of initial cues of uniqueness and the interaction between initial cues of uniqueness and the perceiver's need of uniqueness on liking (for the displayer), perceived creative potential, and perceivers' creative collaboration intention. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) results reveal that participants indicated a stronger intention to collaborate with the new colleague on the creative project when the colleague displayed cues of uniqueness in an initial interaction ($M_{\text{unique}} = 5.93$, $SE = .10$; $M_{\text{nonunique}} = 4.83$, $SE = .11$; $F_{(1, 218)} = 55.05$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .20$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Results also show that participants in the unique cues condition like the displayer better ($M_{\text{unique}} = 5.33$, $SE = .08$) than perceivers in the nonunique cues conditions ($M_{\text{nonunique}} = 4.71$, $SE = .09$; $F_{(1, 218)} = 27.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$) and reported

higher perceived creative potential ($M_{\text{unique}} = 5.76, SE = .09; M_{\text{nonunique}} = 4.19, SE = .10; F_{(1, 218)} = 135.45, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .38$) of the displayer with cues of uniqueness. The direct effects of initial cues of uniqueness on perceivers' liking (for the displayer), perceived creative potential, and creative collaboration intention are illustrated in Figure 3.

Furthermore, both liking for the displayer ($b = .39, SE = .07, p < .001$) and perceived creative potential of the displayer ($b = .54, SE = .06, p < .001$) are positively related to perceivers' creative collaboration intention. I then tested the mediating effects of liking and perceived creative potential with the bootstrapping method using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018). The results demonstrate that the positive indirect relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceivers' creative collaboration intention via liking (indirect effect = .25, 95% CI [.12, .41]) and perceived creative potential (indirect effect = .86, 95% CI [.56, 1.18]) are both significant, providing support for Hypotheses 2 and 3.

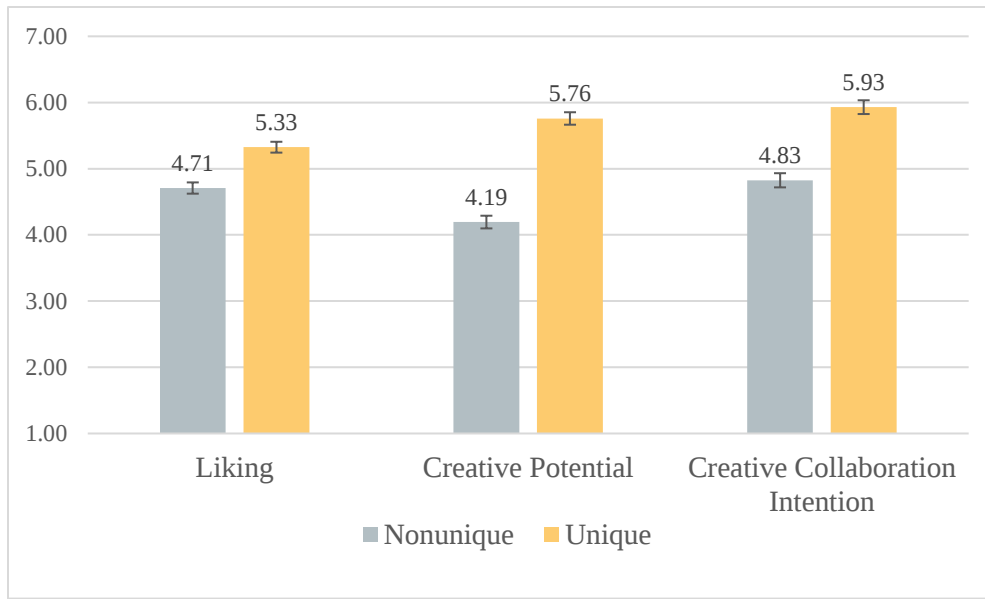


Figure 3. Effect of Initial Cues of Uniqueness on Perceivers' Liking, Creative Potential, and Creative Collaboration Intention (Study 2)
Note. Error bars indicate the standard error of the mean.

In terms of the moderating effect of perceivers' need for uniqueness, results show that the interaction between initial cues of uniqueness and perceivers' need for uniqueness is not related to liking for the displayer ($b = .21$, $SE = .12$, $p = .09$), which did not support Hypothesis 4a. But the interaction is significantly associated with perceived creative potential ($b = .32$, $SE = .14$, $p = .02$). Specifically, simple slope tests and Figure 6 show that the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceived creative potential is stronger when perceivers' need for uniqueness is higher (+1 SD ; simple slope = 3.04, $p < .001$) than lower (-1 SD ; simple slope = 2.54, $p < .001$). Hence, Hypothesis 5a is supported. I then tested the conditional indirect effect of initial cues of uniqueness on perceivers' creative collaboration intention using the bootstrapping method. The results show that, as predicted, the indirect effect via liking for the displayer is indeed stronger

when the perceivers' need for uniqueness is higher (indirect effect = .31, 95% CI [.14, .52]) than lower (indirect effect = .17, 95% CI [.04, .34]), but such difference is not statistically significant (moderated mediation index = .10, 95% CI [-.03, .27], including 0). Hypothesis 4b is not supported. In line with my prediction, the indirect effect via perceived creative potential is more positive when the perceivers' need for uniqueness is higher (+1 *SD*; indirect effect = .99, 95% CI [.62, 1.41]) than lower (-1 *SD*; indirect effect = .71, 95% CI [.44, 1.01]), and such difference is significant (moderated mediation index = .21, 95% CI [.01, .45]). Therefore, Hypothesis 5b receives support.

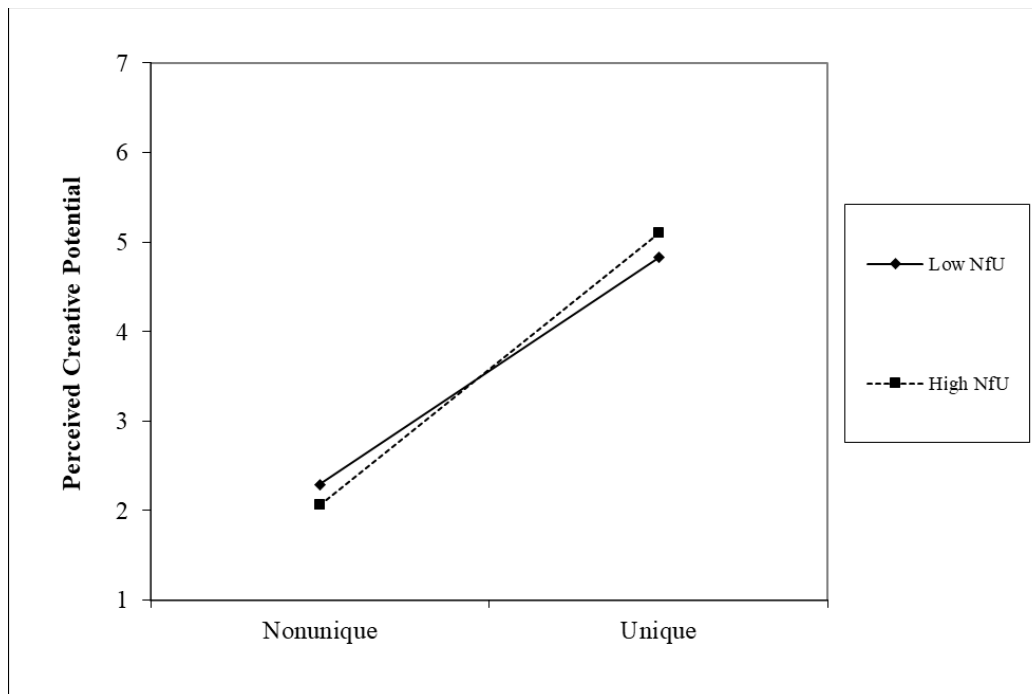


Figure 4. Moderating Effect of Perceiver Need for Uniqueness on the Relationship between Initial Cues of Uniqueness and Perceived Creative Potential (Study 2)
Note. NfU = Need for Uniqueness

Next, I examined the moderating effect of the displayer's status. The MANOVA results show that the interaction between cues of uniqueness and the displayer's status has a significant effect on perceived creative potential ($F_{(1, 218)} = 5.16, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .02$) and perceivers' creative collaboration intention ($F_{(1, 218)} = 4.10, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .02$). As visualized in Figure 5, among participants in the low displayer status condition, they perceive the displayer who demonstrates cues of uniqueness as having greater creative potential than those who did not present cues of uniqueness (mean difference = 1.87, $t_{(110)} = 9.12, p < .001, d = 1.72$), and such difference in perceived creative potential is greater than their counterparts in the high displayer status condition (mean difference = 1.26, $t_{(108)} = 7.27, p < .001, d = 1.37$), supporting Hypothesis 7a. However, the moderating effect of displayer status on the relationship between cues of uniqueness and liking of the displayer is not significant ($F_{(1, 218)} = 1.97, n.s.$). Hypothesis 6a is thus not supported.

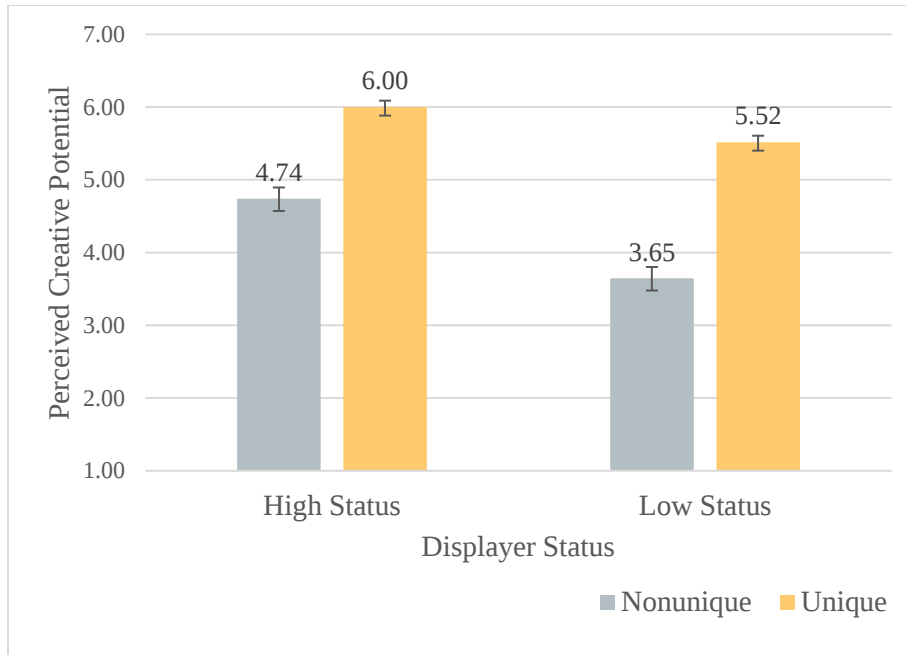


Figure 5. Effect of Initial Cues of Uniqueness and Displayer Status on Perceived Creative Potential of the Displayer (Study 2)

Note. Error bars indicate the standard error of the mean.

As presented in Figure 6, participants are more willing to collaborate with the unique colleague on the creative project, and such difference in creative collaboration intention is more pronounced when the displayer has a low status (mean difference = 1.41, $t_{(110)} = 6.22$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.18$) than when the displayer has a high status (mean difference = .80, $t_{(108)} = 4.16$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.78$). Bootstrapping results of conditional indirect effects suggest that the indirect effect of initial cues of uniqueness on creative collaboration intention via liking is stronger when the displayer has a higher status (indirect effect = .31, 95% CI [.15, .51]) than when the displayer's status is lower (indirect effect = .21, 95% CI [.06, .40]), but such difference is not statistically significant (moderated mediation index = .10, 95% CI [-.08, .30], including 0). So Hypothesis 6b did not receive strong support. However, the indirect effect via perceived creative potential is

significantly stronger when the displayer's status is lower (indirect effect = 1.12, 95% CI [.72, 1.54]) rather than higher (indirect effect = .71, 95% CI [.45, 1.00]), and the moderated mediation effect is significant (moderated mediation index = -.40, 95% CI [-.76, -.10]). The results support Hypothesis 7b.

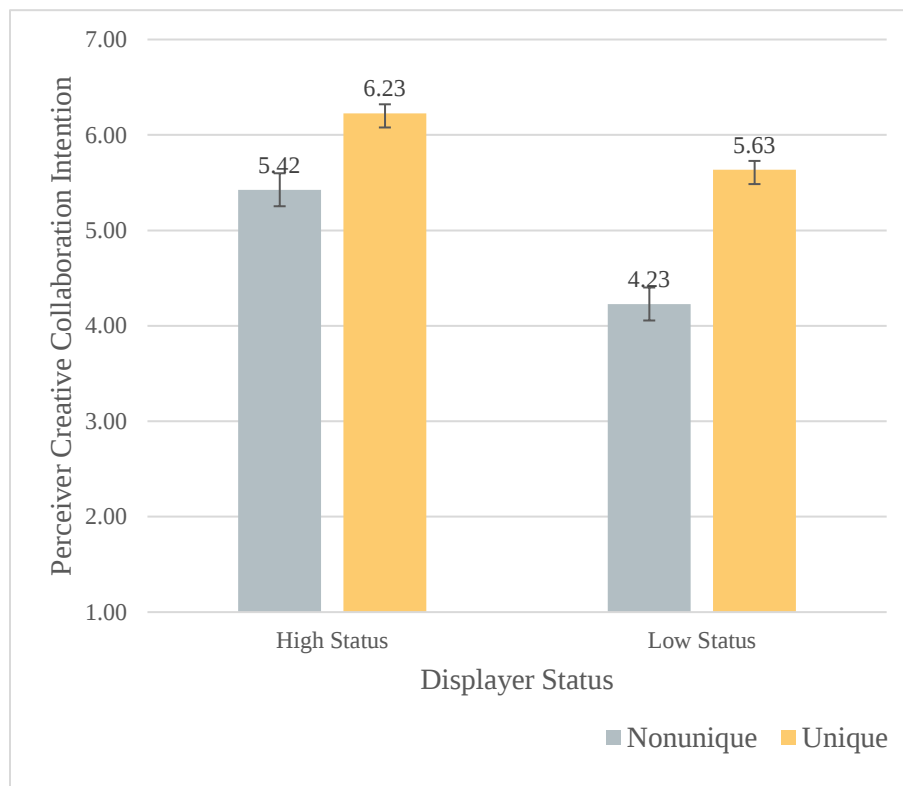


Figure 6. Effect of Initial Cues of Uniqueness and Displayer Status on Perceiver Creative Collaboration Intention (Study 2)
Note. Error bars indicate the standard error of the mean.

4.2.5 Supplementary Analyses

Since I did not find empirical evidence to support the moderating effect of the displayer's status or perceivers' need for uniqueness on the relationship between initial

cues of uniqueness and liking, I conducted supplementary analyses to explore potential explanations. The first potential explanation is the three-way interaction. Using the same control variables and controlling for both two-way interactions, I was not able to find a three-way interaction effect on liking ($b = -.23$, $SE = .15$, ns). Another potential explanation is that, since the influences of cues of uniqueness on liking and perceptions of creative potential are not totally independent, when the perception of the displayer's creative potential influences liking, the negative moderating effect of status on the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceived creative potential may neutralize the positive moderating effect of status on liking. Indeed, after accounting for the influence of perceived creative potential on liking, the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) results show that moderating effect of displayer status on the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and liking is significant ($F_{(1, 217)} = 6.10$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$). As plotted in Figure 7, the relationship is positive when the displayer has a higher status, but the relationship is negative when the displayer has a lower status. Furthermore, the indirect effect of initial cues of uniqueness on creative collaboration intention via liking (perceived creative potential serves as a covariate) is positive when the displayer has high status (indirect effect = .18, 95% CI [.04, .33]) but not significant when the displayer's status is low (indirect effect = -.02, 95% CI [-.19, .15]). The moderated mediation effect is also significant (moderated mediation index = .20, 95% CI [.01, .40]), which is aligned as predictions of Hypotheses 6a and 6b.

In terms of the moderating effect of need for uniqueness, it is possible that agreeable people tend to value and appreciate others' cues of uniqueness regardless of their own level of need for uniqueness. In the supplementary analysis, after removing the

control variable, perceivers' agreeableness, from the model, the interaction between cues of uniqueness and perceivers' need for uniqueness is significant ($b = .29$, $SE = .12$, $p = .01$), which is in line with the prediction that initial cues of uniqueness could elicit greater liking when the perceiver has a greater need for uniqueness. However, it may not demonstrate the unique effect of need for uniqueness beyond one's agreeableness.

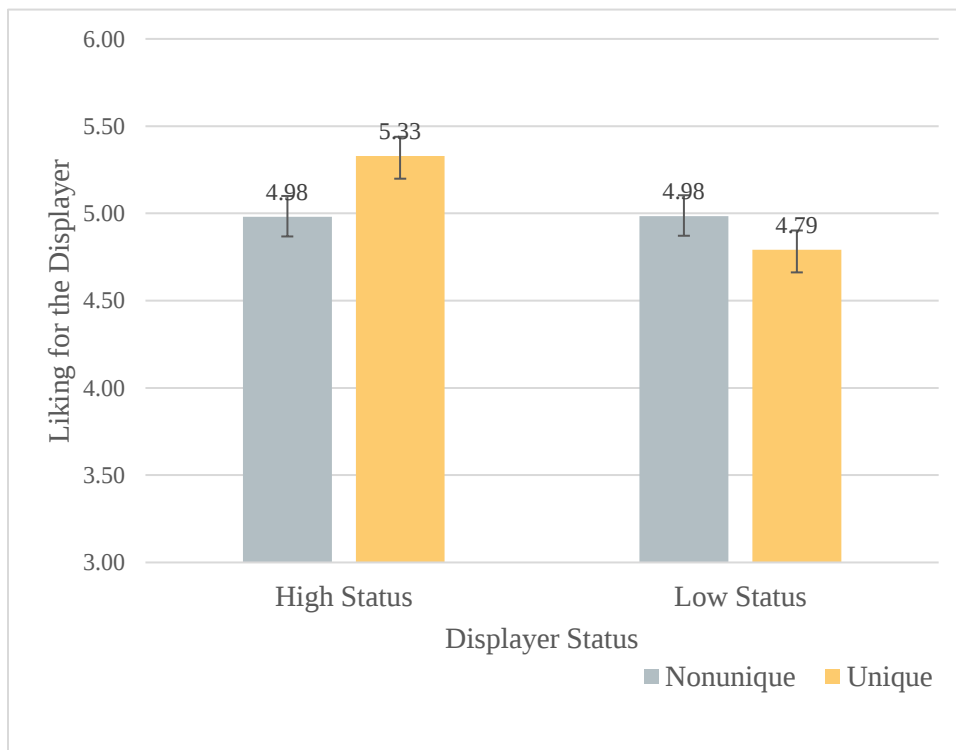


Figure 7. Effect of Initial Cues of Uniqueness and Displayer Status on Perceiver Liking for the Displayer (Study 2, Supplementary Analysis)

Note. Perceived creative potential is included as a covariate. Error bars indicate the standard error of the mean.

4.2.6 Study 2 Discussion

This study generally provides support for the hypotheses. Specifically, it demonstrates that two mechanisms, perceivers' liking (for the displayer) and perceived

creative potential, explain the influence of cues of uniqueness on perceivers' creative collaboration intention. My supplementary analyses also reveal that the two mechanisms are not independent but may interact with each other. After accounting for the influence of perceived creative potential on liking, the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and liking is contingent on the displayer's status—perceivers like an individual who displays cues of uniqueness better only when the individual also has a high competence-based status. Moreover, the signaling effect of cues of uniqueness is stronger when the displayer has a lower status. Overall, the influence of initial cues of uniqueness on perceivers' creative collaboration intention is stronger for displayers of low status. Furthermore, the perceiver's need for uniqueness also serves as a critical contingent factor. Indeed, the positive effects of cues of uniqueness on liking and perceived creative potential are augmented when the perceiver has a higher level of need for uniqueness.

4.3 Study 3: Moderating Effect of Organizational Cultural Tightness-Looseness

4.3.1 Sample and Procedure

I recruited 230 full-time working adults from the online panel Prolific. Based on the pre-set rules to identify insufficient effort responses to ensure the data quality (Huang et al., 2015), three respondents who failed two or all three attention checks were excluded from the analyses, leaving a sample of 227 participants. The average age of the participants was 36.78 ($SD = 10.46$). Among the participants, 111 (48.9%) were men, 110 (48.5%) were women, and 6 (2.6%) of them indicated a non-binary gender. In terms of educational level, 9.3% of the participants had high-school or equivalent level education;

21.1% had an associate degree or some college education without a degree; 48.9% had a Bachelor's degree; 16.3% had a Master's degree, and 4.4% had a Doctoral degree.

This study used a 2 (*organizational culture*: tight vs. loose) $\times$ 2 (*initial cues*: unique vs. non-unique) between-subjects design, and participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. The same scenario used in Study 2 was also used in this study. Specifically, participants were instructed to imagine themselves as a consultant working for a management consulting company and then read descriptions of the company as the manipulation of organizational cultural tightness-looseness. The participants then read about a new colleague who either demonstrated cues of uniqueness or not at the welcome meeting as the manipulation of initial cues of uniqueness. The same creative collaboration setting as described in Study 2 was then introduced, and participants reported the extent to which they were willing to collaborate with the new colleague on the creative project. Finally, participants responded to questions about manipulation checks and control variables before they were debriefed and thanked.

4.3.2 Manipulations and Measures

Cultural Tightness-Looseness Manipulation

The manipulation of organizational cultural tightness-looseness is constructed based on the scale of cultural tightness-looseness (Gelfand et al., 2011) as well as experimental studies manipulating cultural tightness-looseness (Chen et al., 2021; Jackson et al., 2021). In the tight culture condition, participants read a short paragraph attributing their organization's success to its strong norms and well-enforced rules of conduct. For example, employees in the company have well-defined job duties and specific benchmarks for performance. The company also has a strict dress code and

emphasizes punctuality to ensure professionalism and efficiency. There are clear expectations of appropriate behaviors in most situations, and employees who violate these norms will face punishments. In the loose culture condition, the company's success is attributed to its flexibility and freedom. In this company, employees' job duties are flexible, and their performance standards are open for discussion to ensure adaptability. The company has no dress code and provides flexible work arrangements, and employees have plenty of freedom to decide how they want to behave in most situations. The six-item cultural tightness scale (Gelfand et al., 2011) was utilized as the manipulation check (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; Cronbach's $\alpha = .96$). A sample item was: "There are many social norms that members are supposed to abide by at Artling." According to manipulation check results, the manipulation was effective as participants in the tight culture condition ($M_{tight} = 6.18$, $SD = .72$) reported significantly higher cultural tightness (mean difference = 3.95, $t_{(225)} = 35.45$, $p < .001$) than their counterparts in the loose culture condition ($M_{loose} = 2.23$, $SD = .95$).

Cues of Uniqueness Manipulation

Initial cues of uniqueness were manipulated in the same way as described in Study 2. Participants also assessed how they think the new colleague's name/clothes/knowledge domain were *uncommon*, *distinctive*, *unusual*, and *rare* (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) as a manipulation check (Cronbach's $\alpha = .97$). The manipulation was effective ($M_{unique} = 5.65$, $SD = 1.03$; $M_{nonunique} = 2.03$, $SD = .94$; mean difference = 3.62; $t_{(225)} = 27.54$, $p < .001$).

Measures

As described in Study 2, liking ($\alpha = .92$), perceived creative potential ($\alpha = .96$), creative collaboration intention ($\alpha = .97$), and need for uniqueness ($\alpha = .89$) were measured using the same scales used in Study 2 and showed satisfactory reliability. I also controlled for participants' age, gender, education, creative self-efficacy ($\alpha = .92$), and agreeableness ($\alpha = .90$) in the analyses.

4.3.3 Results

I conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to investigate the influence of initial cues of uniqueness as well as the interaction between initial cues of uniqueness and cultural tightness-looseness on liking, perceived creative potential, and perceivers' creative collaboration intention. As presented in Figure 8, the results suggest a positive relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and liking ($M_{\text{unique}} = 5.43$, $SE = .08$; $M_{\text{nonunique}} = 4.76$, $SE = .08$; $F_{(1, 223)} = 33.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .13$), perceived creative potential ($M_{\text{unique}} = 5.82$, $SE = .10$; $M_{\text{nonunique}} = 3.78$, $SE = .10$; $F_{(1, 223)} = 195.27$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .47$), and creative collaboration intention ($M_{\text{unique}} = 6.13$, $SE = .11$; $M_{\text{nonunique}} = 4.41$, $SE = .11$; $F_{(1, 223)} = 114.69$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .34$). Hypothesis 1 is supported.

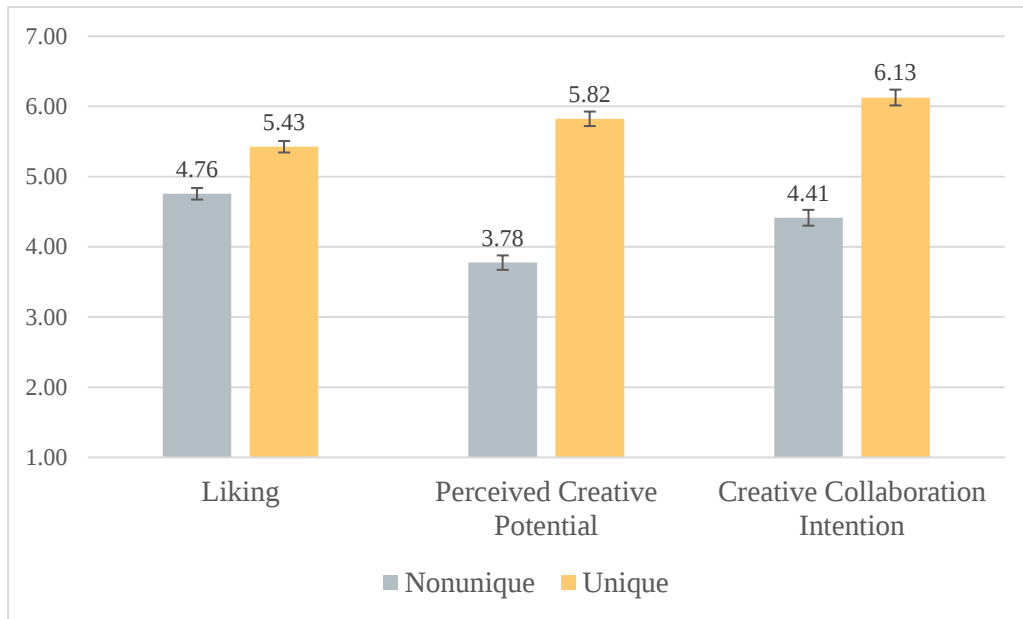


Figure 8. Effect of Initial Cues of Uniqueness on Perceivers' Liking, Perceived Creative Potential, and Creative Collaboration Intention

Furthermore, results of multiple linear regression show that cues of uniqueness is positively related to creative collaboration intention ($b = 1.61$, $SE = .16$, $p < .001$). When both liking ($b = .49$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$) and perceived creative potential ($b = .43$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$) enter the model, they both are positively associated with creative collaboration intention. I then tested the indirect effects of initial cues of uniqueness on creative collaboration intention with the bootstrapping method using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018). The results indicate that the indirect effects of initial cues of uniqueness on creative collaboration intention mediated by liking towards the displayer (indirect effect = .25, 95% CI [.13, .41]) and perceived displayer's creative potential (indirect effect = .85, 95% CI [.51, 1.23]) are both significant, supporting Hypotheses 2 and 3.

Then I examined the moderating effect of perceivers' need for uniqueness. Specifically, the moderating effect of perceivers' need for uniqueness on the relationship between cues of uniqueness and perceived creative potential is significant ($b = .34$, $SE = .15$, $p = .025$). Figure 9 and simple slope tests (Dawson, 2014) show that, consistent with results of Study 2, the positive relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and perceived creative potential is stronger when perceivers have a higher level of need for uniqueness (simple slope = 3.32, $p < .001$) than when perceivers' need for uniqueness is lower (simple slope = 2.74, $p < .001$), in support of Hypothesis 5a.

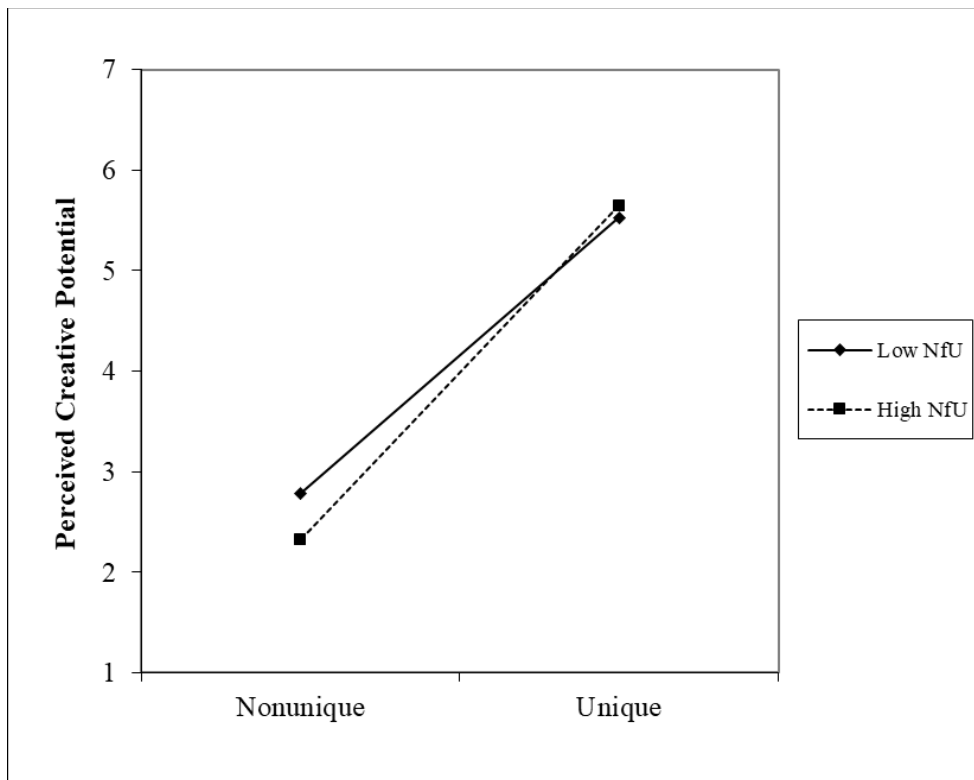


Figure 9. Moderating Effect of Perceiver Need for Uniqueness on the Relationship between Initial Cues of Uniqueness and Perceived Creative Potential (Study 2)

Bootstrapping results indicate that the indirect effect of initial cues of uniqueness on creative collaboration intention via perceived creative potential is stronger when perceivers' need for uniqueness is higher (indirect effect = 1.03, 95% CI [.59, 1.52]) than when need for uniqueness is lower (indirect effect = .72, 95% CI [.42, 1.06]). The moderated mediation effect is significant (moderated mediation index = .18, 95% CI [.02, .35]), in support of Hypothesis 5b. However, the moderating effect of perceivers' need for uniqueness on the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and liking is not statistically significant ($b = .18$, $SE = .11$, ns). While the indirect effect of initial cues of uniqueness on creative collaboration intention via liking is stronger when need for uniqueness is higher (indirect effect = .36, 95% [.16, .62]) rather than lower (indirect effect = .19, 95% [.05, .36]), the moderated mediation effect is not significant (moderated mediation index = .10, 95% CI [-.04, .25], including 0). Hence, Hypotheses 4a and 4b did not receive support.

Furthermore, the interaction between cultural tightness and initial cues of uniqueness did not have significant effects on liking ($F_{(1, 223)} = .02$, ns), perceived creative potential ($F_{(1, 223)} = .57$, ns), or creative collaboration intention ($F_{(1, 223)} = .01$, ns). Therefore, the moderating effect of cultural tightness-looseness are not significant, and Hypotheses 8a and 9a are not supported.

4.3.4 Study 3 Discussion

Study 3 first replicated the findings of Study 2. However, I did not find empirical support for the moderating effect of cultural tightness-looseness. From a theoretical perspective, it is possible that as cultural tightness-looseness has a mixed effect on the influence of initial cues of uniqueness on liking and perceived creative potential, and the

two mechanisms may interact with each other, the overall moderating effect of cultural tightness-looseness thus might be canceled out. From an empirical perspective, the influence of cultural tightness-looseness on mental associations between uniqueness and other concepts and thus perceivers' affective reactions and inferences may take time to unfold and not be able to manifest in a vignette-based experiment. Therefore, in Study 4, I used archival data to examine the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and creative collaboration intention, as well as the moderating effect of cultural tightness-looseness in real-world, wherein people's mental associations and cognitive thinking patterns are more substantially influenced by the culture in the social environment.

4.4 Study 4: Name Uniqueness and Creative Collaborations of Scientists

4.4.1 Data and Sample

Since names are among the first piece of information exchanged in almost every professional interaction, and it carries important identity meanings, it serves as an important initial informational cue that can demonstrate an individual's uniqueness (Y. Kang et al., 2021; Kulig, 2013). In this study, I examine how the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and creative collaboration intention manifests in a real-world setting by focusing on name uniqueness and scientists' likelihood of building creative collaborations. The sample consists of 46,010 American scientists who are among the most-cited 100,000 scientists worldwide. The dataset was retrieved from a publicly available database of 100,000 most-cited scientists across 21 scientific fields. This database was constructed by Ioannidis and colleagues (2019), who used the Scopus

database that covers about 7 million scientists to rank scientists across scientific fields based on a composite indicator of citation metrics (Ioannidis et al., 2016).

This dataset is suitable for examining the focal research questions for the following reasons. First, scientific research is an appropriate setting for studying creative collaborations. This is not only because collaborations are important for the generation of original knowledge, but it is also common for scientists to have a great deal of autonomy in seeking collaborators and building collaborative relationships (Leahey, 2016). The discretionary collaborations among scientists reflect their volitions and creative collaboration intention to a great extent. Second, focusing on the world's most prominent scientists, this study will be able to account for the significant impact of one's actual competence on the likelihood of building creative collaborations as all the scientists in the sample are among the most knowledgeable, competent, and influential experts in each field. Moreover, as common and uncommon names vary a lot across countries due to cultural factors, I only focus on scientists residing in the U.S. (indicated by their affiliations) and consider their name uniqueness in the U.S. society.

4.4.2 Measures

Scientists' Name Uniqueness

Following the practices of previous studies on name uniqueness (e.g., Kalist & Lee, 2009; Kang et al., 2021), I measured name uniqueness using the frequency of a scientist's forename in the U.S. population between 1919 to 2019, as recorded in the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) national database. The SSA database recorded the frequency of given names by gender in Social Security applications in the U.S. and thus comprehensively covers the population in the U.S. Literature on name uniqueness mainly

focuses on the uniqueness of individuals' given names because people from diverse cultural backgrounds consist of the U.S. population, whose family names are expected to be different. But in terms of first names, there are prevailing naming norms and general knowledge regarding common or uncommon names (Kang et al., 2021). In this study, I focus on first names used in professional settings (i.e., first names that appear in publications), which are known by colleagues and thus may influence other's willingness to collaborate with the name bearer.

I collected the gender-specific frequency of each scientist's given name as the measure of name commonness. Since the dataset does not include information regarding scientists' gender, I first inferred the gender of each scientist based on the gender distribution of their given names in the SSA database using the R package "gender" (Blevins & Mullen, 2015) and corroborated the inferred gender by examining the gender distribution of names between 1919 to 2019 in the SSA database (Jensen et al., 2018; Manjunath et al., 2021). For a given name (e.g., Lisa), if more than 95% of the time, the name bearers are of a specific gender (e.g., female), then I categorized the scientist with the name as this gender (e.g., female) and calculated the frequency of the name in the corresponding gender group (Jensen et al., 2018). If a name could not be assigned to one gender group, which means if the percentage of a name's dominant gender was below 95% or if a given name was too rare to infer its gender, I categorized it as unknown and calculated the frequency of it as the average across two gender groups. I then used logarithms to transform name frequency to alleviate the skewness issue (Cohen et al., 2013). Since the higher frequency indicates a lower uniqueness, I used the negative value

of name frequency as the measure of name uniqueness so that a higher score represents higher name uniqueness (Kang et al., 2021).

Creative Collaboration Likelihood

Other people's creative collaborations can be reflected by how likely a scientist has co-authored publications. Specifically, the more people are willing to engage in creative collaborations with a scientist, the more likely the scientists have publications that are co-authored with others. In order to account for the factor that scientists with shorter tenure in the field have less time to accumulate publications, instead of calculating the number of scientists' co-authored publications, I measure the likelihood of creative collaboration as the percentage of scientists' co-authored publications in their total publications. Specifically, as the most-cited scientists dataset provided the number of each scientist's single-authored papers as well as the total number of publications from 1960 to 2017, I calculate the creative collaboration likelihood with the following formula:

$$\text{Creative collaboration likelihood} = \left(1 - \frac{\text{Number of single-authored publications}}{\text{Total number of publications}}\right) * 100$$

A higher score thus indicates a scientist's higher likelihood of creative collaborations.

Then, to examine the robustness of the findings, I conducted supplementary analyses using different measures of others' creative collaboration intention and a subset of the dataset to conduct focused analyses. The detailed descriptions of the alternative measures are provided in the "Supplementary Analyses" section.

Displayer Competence-Based Status

Since status reflects the extent to which one is respected by others (Magee & Galinsky, 2008), a scientist's non-self-cited citations are a good indicator of the scientist's status based on his or her scholarly work. Therefore, I measured scientists'

status using the composite citation index C after excluding self-citations (Ioannidis et al., 2016). The composite citation index incorporated six major citation and publication indicators (self-citations excluded), including the total number of citations, Hirsch H Index, and Schreiber's H_m index, and citations received for solo-, first-, and last-author papers. It provides a rather comprehensive indicator of scientists' academic impact and thus status. To account for the differences in the number of citations across disciplines, I centered the composite citation index for each scientist at the mean of the field so that the indicator reflects each scientist's relative status in their corresponding fields.

Cultural Tightness

To test how the historical change in cultural tightness-looseness may influence the relationship between scientists' name uniqueness and their likelihood of building creative collaborations, I use data on cultural tightness-looseness over time in the U.S. society from the dataset published by Jackson and colleagues (2019). In their study, Jackson and colleagues (2019) measured cultural tightness-looseness by examining the appearance of certain words that indicate a tight culture (e.g., restrain, comply) or a loose culture (e.g., diverse, openness) in books published in the U.S. each year using the Google Books corpus, which includes more than 200 billion books. By calculating the standardized tightness words frequency minus looseness words frequency value, a higher score indicated a tighter culture. As the booming of e-books and self-publishing after 2000 significantly influenced the frequency of certain words in the Google Books corpus, which may confound with cultural change, cultural tightness-looseness after 2000 was estimated using autoregressive moving-average models (Jackson et al., 2019). This linguistic indicator of cultural tightness showed good convergent validity as it correlated

with other measures of cultural tightness such as religiosity in the U.S., the number of laws passed each year, and the occurrence of profanity in American TV shows and movies over time (Jackson et al., 2019). It is thus a valid and reliable indicator of the societal cultural tightness-looseness over time in the US. In this study, the average score of cultural tightness across each scientist's career (from the year of the scientist's first publication to the most recent publication) is calculated to reflect the overall cultural tightness level across a scientist's career.

Control Variables

As females are underrepresented in science, which can potentially influence their likelihood to build collaborations with others in the fields, I control for the scientists' gender (as indicated by their names). Specifically, female scientists were coded as 1, and the others (male or gender unknown according to the name) were coded as 0. Since individuals' race/ethnicity may influence their name uncommonness as well as other's reactions to their names (Kang et al., 2016; Zhao & Biernat, 2017), I controlled for scientists' race/ethnicity inferred from their surnames using a Bayesian predictor algorithm in the R package "wru" (Imai & Khanna, 2016), which has been validated and widely used (e.g., Hepburn et al., 2020; Hofstra et al., 2020; Labgold et al., 2020). This algorithm infers individuals' race/ethnicity based on the racial distribution of surnames in the U.S. Census Bureau database. The U.S. Census Bureau released the racial distributions of more than 150,000 surnames, which covered more than 90% of the U.S. population. Using this database and the Census's Spanish Surname List, the "wru" package uses Bayesian methods to provide the race/ethnicity probabilities of a surname in five categories: Asian/Pacific, Black, Hispanic/Latino, White, and Other. In this study, I

used the category with the highest probability as each scientist's inferred race/ethnicity. I then coded those who were most likely to be White as 0 and the others (i.e., Non-White) as 1. Scientists' tenure in the field (calculated by their most recent publication year minus the first publication year) is also controlled. Furthermore, the average percentage of co-authored publications for scientists in each field is also calculated and controlled for at the field level to account for the collaborative norms in each field.

4.4.3 Data Analysis Strategy

I conducted multilevel modeling using R to test the hypotheses. Specifically, scientists were nested in 21 fields (Level 2), and scientists' likelihood of creative collaborations was allowed to vary across fields. The average percentage of co-authored publications for each field is controlled for at Level 2.

4.4.4 Results

Means and standard deviations of all the individual-level variables as well as their correlations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Variables (Study 4)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Gender	0.14	0.34	--					
2 Race	0.12	0.32	-0.04	--				
3 Tenure	34.8	9.99	-0.11	-0.17	--			
4 Name Uniqueness	-11.2	4.64	-0.06	0.39	-0.10	--		
5 Creative Collaboration Likelihood	89.9	11.9	0.03	0.08	-0.11	0.05	--	
6 Status in the Field	0.00	0.31	-0.06	-0.04	0.21	-0.05	-0.02	--
7 Cultural Tightness	-4.25	0.51	-0.12	-0.16	0.74	-0.09	-0.19	0.09

Note. $N = 46010$. All correlations are significant at $p < .001$ level. Status in the field is calculated as the composite citation index centered at the mean of each field. Gender and race are dummy coded: Gender (1 = Female, 0 = Male/Unknown), Race (1 = Non-white, 0 = White).

I examined the main effect of name uniqueness as well as the moderating effects of status and cultural tightness and summarized the results in Table 2. In line with my predictions, scientists' creative collaboration likelihood is positively related to their name uniqueness ($\gamma = .03, p = .01$) after controlling for gender, race, tenure, status, and collaborative norms in the field, providing support for the Hypothesis 1. According to Model 2 in Table 2, the joint effect of name uniqueness and status on creative collaboration likelihood is not significant ($\gamma = -.05, n.s.$). Results of Model 3 in Table 2 suggest that the interaction between name uniqueness and cultural tightness is negatively associated with creative collaboration likelihood ($\gamma = -.03, p = .002$). As plotted in Figure 10, the positive relationship between name uniqueness and creative collaborations likelihood is less positive when the societal culture is tighter (+1SD) rather than looser (-1SD).

Table 2. Two-Level Mixed Effect Models Predicting Creative Collaboration Likelihood (Study 4)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	γ	SE	t	γ	SE	t	γ	SE	t
Intercept	-5.14***	1.55	-3.32	-5.15***	1.55	-3.32	-5.13***	1.55	-3.31
Control									
Individual level									
Gender	.76***	.15	5.24	.77***	.15	5.26	.78***	.15	5.37
Race	1.30***	.17	7.80	1.29***	.17	7.78	1.22***	.17	7.27
Tenure	.08***	.01	10.38	.08***	.01	10.38	.08***	.01	10.44
Status in the field	-.38*	.16	-2.35	-.93*	.43	-2.15	-.38*	.16	-2.35
Cultural Tightness	-3.32***	.07	-45.21	-3.32***	.07	-45.20	-5.36***	.20	-26.33
Field level									
Average collaboration rate	1.03***	.02	58.52	1.03***	.02	58.56	1.03***	.02	58.38
Predictor									
Name uniqueness (NU)	.03**	.01	2.58	.03*	.01	2.50	.03**	.01	2.54
Interactions									
NU $\times$ status				-.05	.04	-1.36			
NU $\times$ cultural tightness							-.03**	.01	-3.17

Note. $N = 46010$ at the individual level; $N = 21$ at the field level. For gender: 1 = female, 0 = male/unknown. For race: 1 = non-white, 0 = white. Status in the field is calculated as the composite citation index centered at the mean of each field. Cultural tightness is standardized.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

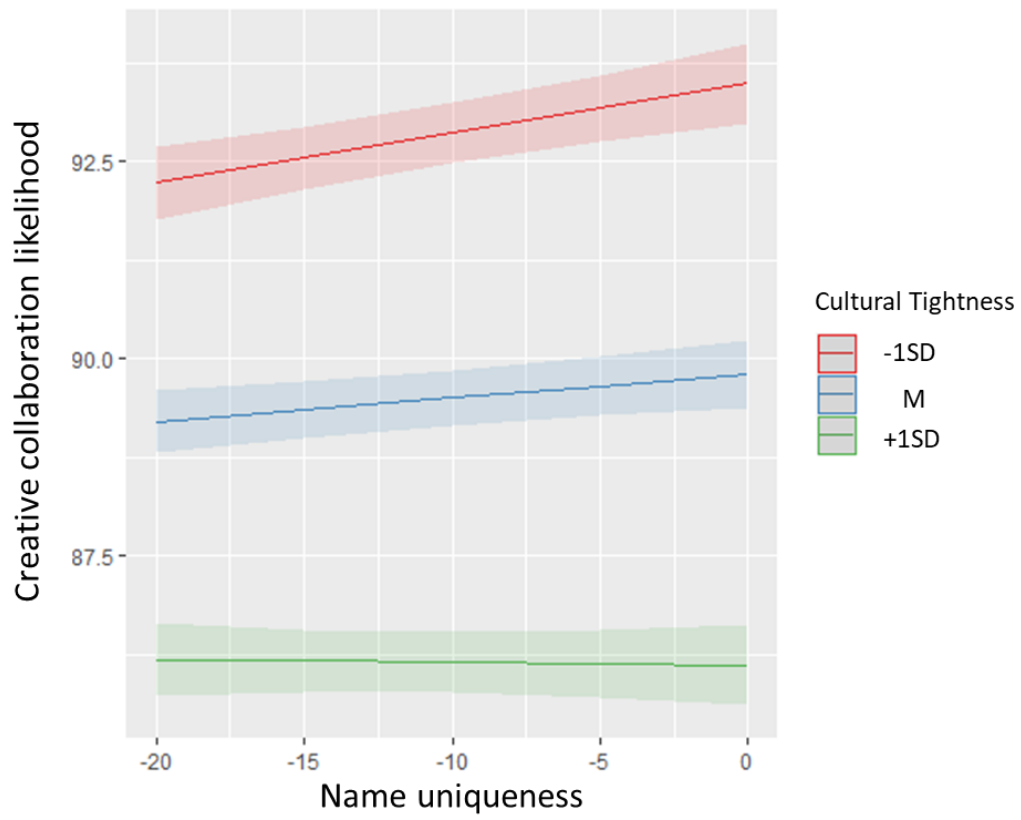


Figure 10. Effect of Name Uniqueness and Cultural Tightness on Creative Collaboration Likelihood

4.4.5 *Supplementary Analyses*

To further examine the robustness of the findings, I conducted several sets of supplementary analyses using different measures of name uniqueness and creative collaboration likelihood and conducted the analyses on a subset of the dataset focusing on scholars in arts and social sciences.

Alternative Measure of Name Uniqueness

Research suggests that people's understanding of name uniqueness may vary over time (Kang et al., 2021; Twenge et al., 2010; Zweigenhaft, 1983). So people's reactions to the name and perceptions of the name uniqueness might be influenced by the period of time in which they live. In the primary analyses, I used the data of name frequency from 1919 to 2019. In the supplementary analysis, I use a specified time range for each scientist to measure name uniqueness in the period they live. As the dataset does not include information about scientists' age, I used the year of their first publication to infer a time they might have been born and estimate a period to measure their name uniqueness since then. Specifically, a prior study that used the dissertation completing year to infer historians birth year assumed that most historians completed their degree between 25 to 45 years old (Blevins & Mullen, 2015). Data from National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (2018, 2021) suggest that since 1957, the median age at which people earn a doctoral degree has been between 31 to 34 years old. Accordingly, assuming that the age at which scientists had their first publication is likely under 45 years old, I calculated each scientist's name uniqueness within 45 years before their first publication. Using this alternative measure of name uniqueness, I found consistent results as in the primary analyses (displayed in Table 3). Specifically, name uniqueness is

positively related to creative collaboration likelihood ($\gamma = .03, p = .02$). The moderating effect of scientists' status is not significant ($\gamma = -.07, p = .06$), and the moderating effect of cultural tightness is significant ($\gamma = -.03, p = .002$).

Alternative Measure of Creative Collaboration Intention

The primary study measures the likelihood of building creative collaborations using the percentage of co-authored publications. However, this measure can also be determined by the scientist's preferences for collaborative or independent work beyond others' creative collaboration intention. Therefore, in the supplementary analyses, I used another measure, the percentage of non-first/last-author publications, to assess others' creative collaboration intention with the focal scientist. In many disciplines, being the first or the last author means one is the principal investigator of a project, thus initiating the creative collaboration (Ioannidis et al., 2016). Therefore, the percentage of non-first/last-author publications in one's coauthored publications measures the extent to which other people are willing to approach the focal scientist for creative collaborations. Supplementary analyses using this alternative measure of others' creative collaboration intention yield results opposite to the primary analyses. Results of Models 4 to 6 in Table 3 show that name uniqueness is negatively related to others' creative collaboration intention ($\gamma = -.11, p < .001$). The negative relationship is less pronounced for scientists of lower status ($\gamma = -.31, p < .001$) and when the culture in the social environment is looser ($\gamma = .07, p < .001$).

Table 3. *Mixed Effect Models of Study 4 Supplementary Analyses*

Variables	Alternative measure of name uniqueness ^a			Alternative measure of creative collaboration intention ^b		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Intercept	3.75(1.23)**	3.74(1.22)**	-5.19(1.55)***	6.40(8.46)	6.34(8.45)	-9.73(8.80)
<i>Control</i>						
Individual level						
Gender	1.19(0.15)***	1.20(0.15)***	0.78(0.15)***	1.22(0.22)***	1.25(0.22)***	0.40(0.22) [†]
Race	1.66(0.17)***	1.66(0.17)***	1.24(0.17)***	-1.05(0.25)***	-1.07(0.25)***	-1.54(0.25)***
Tenure	-0.16(0.01)***	-0.16(0.01)***	0.08(0.01)***	-0.37(0.01)***	-0.37(0.01)***	0.07(0.01)***
Status in the field	0.34(0.16)*	-0.38(0.41)	-0.38(0.16)*	-0.43(0.25) [†]	-3.93(0.66)***	-1.77(0.24)***
Cultural Tightness			-3.64(0.13)***			-5.36(0.20)***
Field level						
Average collaboration rate	1.02(0.01)***	1.02(0.01)***	1.02(0.02)***	0.44(0.10)***	0.44(0.10)***	0.45(0.11)***
<i>Predictor</i>						
Name uniqueness (NU)	0.03(0.01)*	0.03(0.01)*	0.03(0.01)*	-0.11(0.02)***	-0.12(0.02)***	-0.11(0.02)***
<i>Interactions</i>						
NU × status		-0.07(0.03) [†]			-0.31(0.05)***	
NU × cultural tightness			-0.03(0.01)**			0.07(0.02)***

Note. N = 46010 at the individual level; N = 21 at the field level. For gender: 1 = female, 0 = male/unknown. For race: 1 = non-white, 0 = white. Status in the field is calculated as the composite citation index centered at the mean of each field. Cultural tightness is standardized.

^a Predictor is time-specified name uniqueness.

^b Dependent variable is the percentage of non-first/last-author publications.

[†] $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Data of Scholars in Arts and Social Sciences

Due to the nature of research in science, technology, and engineering, it is almost necessary to have many collaborators on a research project (Leahey, 2016; Wuchty et al., 2007). Indeed, the dataset shows that, on average, more than 90% of the publications of the scientists in these fields are co-authored with others, so co-authored publication percentage in these fields may not necessarily be representative of scientists' intention to collaborate. Therefore, in supplementary analyses, I retrieved a subset of the database ($N = 4038$) focusing on scientists in arts and social sciences who may have more discretions and variances in choosing collaborators. Fields included in this supplementary analysis are Communication and Textual Studies, Economics and Business, General Arts and Humanities, Historical Studies, Philosophy and Theology, Psychology and Cognitive Sciences, and General Social Sciences.

Furthermore, a scientist's co-authored publication percentage may be largely influenced by the norms of different disciplines beyond other people's intentional choices of collaborators. To account for this limitation, I collected data on each scholar's *number of distinct collaborators* across all publications as another measure of others' willingness to collaborate with the focal scholar. Specifically, I collaborated with a computer scientist to retrieve publication profiles of the scholars in my dataset using the Application Programming Interface (API) of Scopus (<https://www.elsevier.com/solutions/scopus>), one of the world's major abstract and citation databases that covers more than 17.6 million author profiles (Scopus, 2022). Using scholars' first and last names, affiliations, and primary field of publications as keywords, I was able to identify each scholar's author profile and collected the number of their distinct coauthors across all publication

records in Scopus. However, due to name ambiguity issues (e.g., the same author's name was recorded in different formats and thus created different profiles, or different authors share the same names) as well as the inconsistency between the discipline categories in Scopus database and the scientist dataset published by Ioannidis and colleagues (2019), I was able to retrieve 3407 scholars' profiles after disambiguation, leaving a final sample size $N = 3407$ for analyses. Apart from this new measure of other people's creative collaboration intention, the same measures and control variables used in the main study were also used in the supplementary analyses. For scholars whose gender was not able to be inferred from the name, I manually searched for each scholar's personal website, Wikipedia, or department webpage and news and coded their gender based on their photos and pronouns used in online biographies. Descriptive statistics and correlations of variables of this focused dataset are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Study Variables (Study 4 Supplementary Analysis)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Gender	.24	.43	--						
2 Race	.07	.25	.02	--					
3 Tenure	32.70	10.30	-.12**	-.13**	--				
4 Name Uniqueness	-12.20	3.52	.08**	.33**	-.13**	--			
5 Creative Collaboration Likelihood	77.90	20.20	.10**	.02	-.07**	-.03	--		
6 Number of Coauthors	141.00	219.00	.02	-.04*	.01	-.06**	.28**	--	
7 Status in the Field	0.00	.28	-.08**	-.02	.20**	-.02	-.01	.16**	--
8 Cultural Tightness	-4.37	.49	-.10**	-.13**	.84**	-.10**	-.12**	-.04*	.11**

Note. $N = 3407$. Status in the field is calculated as the composite citation index centered at the mean of each field.

Gender and race are dummy coded: gender (1 = female, 0 = male/unknown), race (1 = non-white, 0 = white).

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

Since scholars are nested in only 7 different fields and these fields all belong to arts and social sciences, I used multiple linear regression for analyses. The average number of distinct coauthors and the average percentage of co-authored publications of each discipline were controlled to account for the differences in norms of collaborations among fields. As presented in Table 5, contrary to the finding in the main study, scholars' name uniqueness is negatively related to their number of collaborators ($b = -2.35, p = .03$). Furthermore, the moderating effects of neither status ($b = 5.59, ns$) nor cultural tightness ($b = -1.49, ns$) are significant. When using the percentage of co-authored publications as the outcome, the results are quite consistent. Specifically, name uniqueness is negatively related to likelihood of creative collaborations ($b = -.30, p = .001$). The interactions between name uniqueness and status ($b = .28, ns$) and cultural tightness ($b = -.09, ns$) are not significant.

4.4.6 Study 4 Discussion

In this study, I used large-scale archival data of the world's most-cited scientists to examine the relationship between an initial cue of uniqueness (i.e., name uniqueness) and people's likelihood of building creative collaborations with others. Mixed findings emerge from the study and supplementary analyses using a subset of the data. First, using the entire dataset and the percentage of co-authored publications as the measure of creative collaboration likelihood, I found support for most of the hypotheses. Specifically, scientists' name uniqueness is positively related to their likelihood of creative collaborations, and this relationship is contingent on societal cultural tightness-looseness over their careers. The positive relationship is stronger when the culture in the

social environment is looser. I did not find significant results of the moderating effect of scientists' status in the field.

However, when using the percentage of non-first or last authored papers as the indicator of other people's willingness to collaborate with the focal individual, the results demonstrate a different picture: scientists' name uniqueness is negatively related to other people's creative collaboration intention. The negative relationship is less pronounced when the scientist is of relatively lower status and the societal culture is looser. When using a subset of the dataset focusing on scientists in arts and social sciences and measuring people's creative collaboration intention as a scientist's number of distinct collaborators, I also found a negative relationship between name uniqueness and scientists' number of distinct collaborators.

The inconsistent findings might be attributed to the nature of the archival data and norms of collaborations across disciplines. First, the archival data could only capture successful creative collaborations (i.e., published work) among scientists but not aborted collaborations. As people may put different efforts into projects that they initiate and act as the principal investigator or not, it can influence the success rate of these projects, which may explain the discrepancy between the main study and supplementary analyses that use different measures of creative collaboration likelihood. Further, since there are different norms and restrictions regarding creative collaborations across fields, it could result in divergent findings using the entire dataset versus data of scholars in specific fields. Therefore, future studies that focus on one specific field and investigate a wider range of researchers, or studies using other methods such as field surveys, would be

valuable to resolve the discrepancies and further unravel the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and creative collaboration intention in real-world settings.

Table 5. Multiple Linear Regression Results of Data of Scientists in Arts and Social Sciences (Study 4, Supplementary Analysis)

Variables	DV: Number of distinct coauthors			DV: Percentage of coauthored publications		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Intercept	35.33 (18.45)*	37.78 (18.45)*	72.22(25.50)**	3.35(3.88)	3.30(3.88)	-11.10(4.15)**
<i>Control</i>						
Gender	-10.65(8.50)	-10.36(8.50)	-12.48(8.50)	2.41(0.74)**	2.42(0.75)**	2.18(0.74)**
Race	-10.17(15.13)	-8.57(15.16)	-12.54(15.13)	3.03(1.33)*	3.11(1.33)*	2.39(1.33)†
Tenure	-2.37(0.37)***	-2.37(0.37)***	0.96(0.65)	-0.31(0.03)***	-0.31(0.03)***	0.11(0.06)†
Status in the field	136.66(12.83)***	205.27(47.44)***	128.39(12.83)***	1.67(1.12)	5.13(4.16)	0.64(1.12)
Field average coauthor number	1.11(0.06)***	1.11(0.06)***	1.14(0.06)***	0.01(0.01)	0.01(0.01)	0.01(0.01)†
Field average collaboration rate				1.01(0.05)***	1.01(0.05)***	1.02(0.05)***
Cultural Tightness			-36.04(13.33)**			-6.25(1.16)***
<i>Predictor</i>						
Name uniqueness (NU)	-2.34(1.08)*	-2.31(1.08)*	-2.07(1.08)†	-0.30(0.09)**	-0.30(0.09)**	-0.29(0.09)**
<i>Interactions</i>						
NU × status		5.58(3.71)			0.28(0.33)	
NU × cultural tightness			0.42(0.98)			-0.09(0.09)
Adjusted R ²	0.11	0.11	0.12	0.19	0.19	0.21

Note. $N = 3407$. Status in the field is calculated as the composite citation index centered at the mean of each field. Gender and race are dummy coded: gender (1 = female, 0 = male/unknown), race (1 = non-white, 0 = white). Cultural tightness is standardized.

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

CHAPTER 5 GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Generating novel and useful ideas requires different perspectives but individuals generally have the tendency to connect with similar and familiar others and avoid those who seem unique (Chua & Jin, 2020; McPherson et al., 2001; Montoya et al., 2008; Reis et al., 2011). To unpack this intriguing dilemma, across four studies using experiments and archival data, this research revealed a complex picture of the relationship between initial cues of uniqueness and creative collaboration intention. Using randomized experimental designs, I first investigated whether informational cues demonstrating individuals' features that are different from other people in initial interactions could influence perceivers' tendency to approach them for creative collaborations. Specifically, I found that compared to collaborations on tasks that did not require creativity, individuals are more likely to gravitate towards those who demonstrate cues of uniqueness (e.g., names, appearance style, knowledge domain) for creative collaborations, even though these cues may not be indicative of one's actual ability to be creative. These results corroborate the classic social cognition perspectives favoring similar and familiar others but also reveal nuanced implications of cues of uniqueness for creative collaborations.

Then, the two vignette experiments (Studies 2 and 3) further show that initial cues of uniqueness increase perceivers' creative collaboration intention through liking for the displayer and facilitating inferences of the displayer's creative potential. These results provide support for the hypotheses based on the associative-propositional evaluation model and signaling theory. They suggest that initial cues of uniqueness can activate positive associations and thus give rise to favorable affective gut reactions to the

displayer. They also serve as signals, leading to inferences of the displayer's potential to think creatively. Furthermore, I found that the effects of initial cues of uniqueness are contingent on the displayer's and the perceiver's attributes—the perceiver's need for uniqueness and the displayer's status. I found that the signaling effect of cues of uniqueness is stronger when the perceiver has a higher level of need for uniqueness or when the displayer has a lower status. Furthermore, after accounting for the influence of perceived creative potential on liking, perceivers tend to like the individual displaying cues of uniqueness better if the perceiver has a greater need for uniqueness or when the displayer has a higher competence-based status.

I examined how the nuanced influence of initial cues of uniqueness on creative collaborations unfold in the real world using the archival data of scientists' name uniqueness and creative collaborations on research projects. Specifically, the primary and supplementary analyses of this study yielded mixed findings. When using co-authored publication percentage as the measure of creative collaboration likelihood, I found a positive relationship between name uniqueness and creative collaboration likelihood. The relationship is strengthened when one has a relatively lower status or lives in a time when the societal culture is looser. When using the percentage of non-first/last-author publications or the number of distinct coauthors as the measure of creative collaboration likelihood and focusing on the data of scholars in art and social sciences, I found the relationship between name uniqueness and creative collaboration likelihood to be negative. Together, these findings provide theoretical and practical implications.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study provide valuable implications for literatures on the social side of creativity and social perceptions. First, it advances the social side of creativity literature by extending its horizon to the onset of creative collaborations. Indeed, as creativity features challenging the existing procedures and current solutions to problems and may even emerge from serendipities, creative collaborations are more uncertain and less structured than typical workflow collaborations (Li et al., 2018). Employees may have more discretions regarding with whom and how they want to collaborate with others to generate novel and useful ideas. As people's choice of collaborators and the extent to which they are willing to collaborate for creativity may directly influence what kinds of perspectives are likely to be integrated and the quality of collaboration, it is essential to investigate what factors may facilitate the start of creative collaborations. Any social relationships and processes start from and can be influenced by initial interactions. Focusing on artificial cues that are constructed by individuals and their sociocultural environment and widely exchanged in almost every initial professional interaction (i.e., names, appearance styles, knowledge domains), this study reveals that initial cues demonstrating one's uniqueness influence others' intentions to collaborate with them for creativity. It thus identifies cues of uniqueness as a factor that meaningfully influence whom people are likely to approach for creative collaborations.

Furthermore, the findings unveil two mechanisms through which initial cues of uniqueness influence perceivers' creative collaboration intention: 1) Activating implicit associations with concepts that are of positive valence in creative collaborations and giving rise to favorable affective gut reactions towards the displayer (i.e., liking); and 2)

providing signals of one's unique identities, motives, or backgrounds that contribute to inferences of the displayer's creative potential. The study thus reveals that initial cues of uniqueness, even though may not necessarily be valid indicators of one's ability to be creative, can leave a unique impression and influence creative collaboration intention through both heuristic mental associations and signaling one's creative potential. It integrates theories on impressions and judgments to study creative collaborations, providing a novel social cognition perspective to study the social side of creativity.

Second, this study illuminates the potential benefits of displaying cues of uniqueness, facilitating the scholarly understanding of the outcomes of interpersonal perceptions of uniqueness. Prior research has established the general desire of individuals to be seen as unique and revealed that observable cues such as one's clothing could be used to demonstrate a sense of distinctiveness (Lynn & Snyder, 2002; Tian et al., 2001). However, the literature rarely systematically discusses the interpersonal implications of displaying cues of uniqueness. This research demonstrates that cues of uniqueness can elicit favorable affective reactions and inferences about one's creative potential, which are beneficial for building creative collaborations. Furthermore, this research also identifies contextual factors, including the perceiver's need for uniqueness and the displayer's competence-based status, that shape of influence of cues of uniqueness. Specifically, the benefits of cues of uniqueness are most salient when the perceiver has a stronger need for uniqueness, and the displayer has a lower status. While the results of the archival data analyses are mixed, they generally show that the relationship between a cue of uniqueness (i.e., name uniqueness) and creative collaboration likelihood leans towards the positive side when the culture in the social context is looser. Together, these

findings advance research on social perceptions of uniqueness by highlighting the role of cue-based impressions of uniqueness in the onset of creative collaborations and unveiling displayers' and perceivers' features that influence the perceptions and inferences based on cues of uniqueness.

Third, this study links individuals' features that are rare and different from other people in a social environment (i.e., uniqueness) and perceivers' creative collaboration intention, shedding light on the relationship between the social processes of creativity and individual uniqueness. Social psychology literature has traditionally suggested that similarity begets connections while "being different" leads to social rejections (Byrne, 1969; Montoya et al., 2008). While approaching and favoring similar others prevails in social interactions, a growing body of literature recognizes that in workplace settings, differences are not only unavoidable but sometimes are also considered desirable when seeking task-oriented collaborations (Brennecke, 2020; Jetten & Matthew, 2014; Kuwabara et al., 2022). My research found that when the goal of the collaboration is to generate creative ideas, people are more willing to collaborate with an individual who demonstrated cues of uniqueness. In creative collaborations, cues of uniqueness elicit positive gut reactions and inferences of one's creative potential, and such effects are more salient when displaying cues of uniqueness is potentially more costly to the displayer (e.g., when the displayer has a lower status). These findings suggest that the creative collaboration context may have implications for individuals' implicit and explicit attitudes towards other people's cues of uniqueness. This study focuses on artificial cues of uniqueness that can be manipulated by individuals. It would be valuable to examine the generalizability of the findings to readily observable yet immutable cues such as

gender and race and explore whether collaborations for creativity may influence individuals' openness to and appraisals of differences and uniqueness.

5.2 Practical Implications

This research provides practical guidance regarding displaying cues of uniqueness in social interactions. First, people have the desire to be seen as distinctive and may display cues of uniqueness to fulfill the desire (Tian et al., 2001). Meanwhile, displaying cues of uniqueness can be risky as it can be seen as quirky and lead to social rejection (Gebauer et al., 2012). My research suggests that it is critical to consider the goal of social interactions when considering displaying cues of uniqueness. Essentially, when seeking collaborators for creative endeavors, people tend to have a positive reaction, infer greater creative potential, and gravitate toward those who demonstrate cues of uniqueness in early interactions. Therefore, when the goals of social interactions are relevant to creativity, it would thus be beneficial for individuals to leverage readily recognizable cues to demonstrate unique individual features, which would help solicit creative collaborations. However, when the goals of interactions or collaborative procedures are irrelevant to creativity or do not require unconventional thinking, people should display cues of uniqueness with caution.

Second, the findings of this study also inform impression management strategies based on individual uniqueness. Specifically, impression management tactics mainly focus on enhancing perceivers' perception of competence and warmth (Holoien & Fiske, 2013). My research further reveals that displaying cues of uniqueness can also be beneficial, especially if the displayer wants to leave an impression with great creative potential. Leveraging cues of uniqueness in impression management is of even greater

value for individuals with lower competence-based status, as this study shows that cues of uniqueness serve as stronger signals of creative potential for individuals of lower competence-based status. Indeed, uniqueness is considered major brand equity for products, which is usually communicated to consumers through product-unrelated cues such as brand name or packaging as well as product-related cues such as ingredient or function of the product (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993; Netemeyer et al., 2004; Olson et al., 2021). Likewise, individuals should consider constructing a “personal brand” and communicate individual uniqueness via readily recognizable cues (e.g., unique aesthetic appearance style) as well as cues that communicate essential information regarding one’s unique competence (e.g., unique knowledge domains). Especially when one lacks experience in a field and thus has a lower status in professional interactions, personal branding based on uniqueness can highlight one’s creative potential and thus increase others’ creative collaboration intention. Furthermore, when utilizing cues of uniqueness, one should also be cognizant of the target audience’s preference as well as norms in the context to strive for a balance between signaling unique perspectives and abilities and not eliciting negative affective gut reactions.

Finally, this research also yields implications for individuals seeking creative collaborations. This study shows that individuals tend to be attracted by individuals’ who demonstrate cues of uniqueness when seeking collaborators for creativity. However, it should be noted that not all cues are authentic indicators of individuals’ actual unique abilities or perspectives that can contribute to creative collaborations. Therefore, while people should stay open to others’ unique attributes, as uniqueness and differences may

breed truly novel ideas, they should focus more on seeking unique expertise and perspectives rather than surface-level uniqueness.

5.3 Limitations and Future Directions

Admittedly, this research is not without limitations, and the limitations point out directions that warrant further investigations. First, a major limitation of this study is that it focuses on displayers of initial cues of uniqueness from a particular group, which may influence the generalizability of the findings. Specifically, in the two vignette-based experiments, the displayers of cues of uniqueness are all white males, and the archival data study only includes the most-cited scientists, who already have relatively higher social status and thus enjoy more discretions to behave differently than people of lower status in a social environment (Bellezza et al., 2014; Ridgeway, 1991). While the study takes displayers' status into account, it focuses on competence-based status, a type of "achieved status" rather than "ascribed status," such as status due to one's gender or race (Desmichel et al., 2020; Foladare, 1969). It would be valuable to investigate whether the desirable outcomes found in this study are "privilege to be unique." Future studies can examine the interaction between artificial cues of uniqueness and minority status in a social context, which would not only further the understanding of cues of uniqueness but also contribute to the literature on workplace diversity.

Second, this study examines cues that are relatively neutral, yet the extent to which an individual's features are rare and deviate from norms may likely trigger different gut reactions or inferences. Essentially, cues of uniqueness make the displayer leave a unique impression on perceivers. The extent to which perceivers hence recognize the individual as "stand out" and really distinct from other people leads them to have a

general attitude and inferences about the creative potential of the displayer. Therefore, future research can further examine whether the influences of cues of uniqueness are contingent on the extent to which perceivers recognize them as uncommon and different from the norms. It is possible that a moderate level of uniqueness may bring beneficial interpersonal outcomes, but cues that deviate from normative expectations too much may produce undesirable consequences.

Third, the primary analyses of Study 4 using data of scholars across 21 fields and its supplementary analyses yield divergent findings. These intriguing findings thus illuminate a future research direction that warrants more scholarly investigations: How do the target domains of creativity influence the choice of collaborators and other aspects of the social processes to pursue creativity? Indeed, my study shows that while cues of uniqueness and interpersonal perceptions can influence people's creative collaboration intention, the inception and development of creative collaborations are largely influenced by norms of collaboration in different fields. An emerging stream of creativity literature suggests that what creativity means and how to achieve creative outcomes can significantly vary across target domains or individual creators (e.g., Harvey & Berry, 2022; Lucas & Mai, 2022). Apparently, such differences would likely play a role in the choice of collaborators and creative collaboration processes. It would be fruitful to investigate whether people's responses to cues of uniqueness and creative collaboration intention differ across target domains (e.g., collaborations in a marketing department vs. a research and development department in a company). Furthermore, the influence of initial cues of uniqueness may also unfold differently when people are looking for a collaborator to generate creative solutions to an immediate and specific problem or are

seeking long-term creative collaborations towards the future (Harvey & Berry, 2022).

More fine-grained theories and studies to unpack the nuances in creative collaborations for different forms of creativity would be invaluable to advancing the scholarly understanding of the social side of creativity.

5.4 Conclusion

In Apple's iconic "Think different" commercial, the following opening lines narrated by Steve Jobs set the tone for this classic marketing campaign: "Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes." (Siltanen, 2011). While people desire to be seen as unique, the concerns of social rejection due to uniqueness also prevail. Integrating literature on the social side of creativity as well as research on social cognitions and impressions, this study reveals that initially available cues that demonstrate one's rare and distinct features could elicit positive affective reactions and inferences of creative potential, which is advantageous to increasing perceivers' creative collaboration intention. When seeking to generate novel and useful ideas, people are more willing to work with a collaborator who displays some cues of uniqueness, even though these cues may not necessarily be relevant to one's ability to think creatively. Such effect is most salient when the perceiver has a high level of need for uniqueness, and the displayer has a relatively low status. The findings suggest that the associations between uniqueness and creativity established in people's minds are projected to the choice of creative collaborators during initial interactions. This research thus shows the importance of impressions to the development of creative collaborations and the value of constructing unique initial impressions in social interactions, especially when the goal of the interaction is creativity.

APPENDIX A

Scenarios and Manipulations of Study 1

Generic Task	Creative Task
<u>Proofreading Task:</u> In this task, you will collaborate with another individual to proofread a short report without changing any essential information in it. The goal is to make the report more accurate and readable, so you do not need to add any new content.	<u>Creative Idea Generation Task:</u> This task is based upon a scenario that takes place at a major West Coast University: after years of mismanagement and poor-quality food, the University restaurant has finally gone bankrupt and is being shut down. The school administration is trying to decide what new business should go into that space. You will collaborate with your partner to come up with as many creative solutions to their problem as possible. Creative solutions need to be both novel and useful.

Cues of Uniqueness Manipulation

Type	Unique	Non-unique
Name	Mican D.	Michael B.
Appearance Style		
Knowledge Domain	[B.S. in Oceanography and Coastal Science]	[B.S. in Computer and Information Science]

APPENDIX B

Scenarios and Manipulations of Study 2

Imagine that you are a consultant working at *Artling*, a management consulting company specializing in the art and culture industry. At *Artling*, employees typically have the autonomy to collaborate with each other on job tasks.

Manipulation of Displayer Competence-Based Status

High Status	Low Status
[Name] is 33 years old. He earned his MBA from Harvard Business School with a major in marketing. He worked for a prestigious consulting company before joining Artling and has a strong track record of good performance. He has plentiful experience in developing business development and marketing plans for major companies, including the most renowned ones in the industry.	[Name] is 33 years old. He earned his bachelor's degree from Lesley University with a major in marketing. He worked for a small consulting company in the industry before joining Artling and has little track record of performance. He has limited experience in composing business development and marketing plans and has never worked with major companies in the industry.

Manipulation of Cues of Uniqueness

Unique	Non-unique
Today, your group is welcoming a new colleague, Mican.	Today, your group is welcoming a new colleague, Michael.
You notice that Mican has a quite uncommon name and wears clothes that would be considered to be business casual but with a unique twist: he wears a shirt with unusual geometric prints and shoes in vibrant colors. He also has a degree in popular culture, a field that is fairly uncommon for most college students.	You notice that Michael has a quite common name and wears clothes that would be considered to be typical business casual: he wears a blue shirt, khaki pants, and black shoes. He also has a degree in consumer psychology, a field that is very popular among college students.

APPENDIX C

Manipulation of Cultural Tightness-Looseness of Study 3

Tight Organizational Culture	Loose Organizational Culture
You have been working as a consultant at Artling for three years. Artling is a leading consulting company in the industry because it has strong norms and well-enforced rules of conduct to ensure order and efficiency. At Artling, employees have well-defined job duties and specific benchmarks for performance to ensure clarity about employees' responsibilities and performance expectations. Artling also has a strict dress code and emphasizes punctuality to facilitate professionalism and efficiency. Artling has strong norms—everyone agrees upon appropriate behaviors and knows exactly what they should do in most situations. Employees who deviate from these norms or violate the rules are considered eroding Artling's core values and face sanctions and punishments.	You have been working as a consultant at Artling for three years. Artling is a leading consulting company in the industry because it has almost no norms or any strict rules of conduct to ensure flexibility and freedom. At Artling, employees have malleable job duties and adjustable standards for performance to ensure adaptability of employees' responsibilities and performance expectations. Artling also has no dress code and provides flexible work arrangements to facilitate freedom and agility. Artling has very few norms—everyone has a lot of freedom in deciding how they want to behave in most situations. Employees are not expected to uphold any given practices and will not face sanctions of their behaviors as freedom is part of Artling's core values.

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