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Creative Omnivores:

An Experience Sampling Study of the Variety and Diversity of Everyday Creative Activities

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Abstract

Studies of everyday creativity suggest that some people are like creative omnivores, dabbling in a broad range of creative pursuits, but others are like picky eaters, focusing on a single creative passion. A week-long experience sampling study examined the breadth vs depth of 125 university students' everyday creative activities. Several times a day, people were asked if they were doing something creative, and if they were, to describe what they were doing. Diversity statistics quantified the variety (number of distinct domains) and balance (the relative predominance of any domain) of their creative activities. The sample varied widely in both aspects of diversity, reflecting differences in whether people's creative efforts were relatively broad or focused. Notably, people who were high in openness to experience showed significantly higher variety (they did more kinds of creative activities) yet lower balance (one or two activities predominated), suggesting that they had a broad creative diet but a few favorite foods.

Keywords: creativity; experience sampling; everyday creativity; diversity; polymathy

Plain Language Summary

When people are spending time in their everyday lives working on creative activities, what are they actually doing? A small but growing literature on creativity in everyday life shows that creativity is common—many people spend much of their time on creative hobbies, passions, and pursuits—but not much is known about the kinds of things people are opting to do. In the present research, we explored the diversity and complexity of creativity activities across a typical week. Using the metaphor of omnivores vs picky eaters, we suggest that some people are like creative omnivores, dabbling in a broad range of creative pursuits, and that others are like picky eaters, focusing on a single creative passion. In a week-long study of 125 adults, several times a day people were asked if they were doing something creative, and if they were, to describe what they were doing. Using diversity statistics, we found broad differences in the variety (how many different kinds of activities people did) and balance (whether one or two activities predominated) of people's creative engagement. Overall, there's no single profile for everyday creativity: some people enjoy spending time on many different kinds of creative tasks, and others focus their creative efforts on one or two areas.

Some creatures, such as koalas and pen-tailed treeshrews, have unusually narrow diets; other creatures, such as more than a few humans we know, will eat almost anything. When it comes to everyday creativity, one sees a similar pattern. Some people are like creative treeshrews, focusing all their creative efforts on a single passion, such as writing poetry, drawing a graphic novel, or practicing the piano. Other people, however, are like creative omnivores, snacking from many creative domains as they work on their many different interests.

Research using daily life methods—such as daily diaries and within-day experience sampling—shows that people spend an appreciable amount of their time doing things that they classify as creative (Karwowski et al., 2017; Silvia et al., 2014; Zeitlen et al., 2022) and rate some days as relatively more creative than others (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Conner et al., 2018; Karwowski et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2021). Like the broader body of daily life work, the present research is grounded in models of everyday creativity (Richards, 2010; Silvia et al., 2017). For our purposes, creativity is primarily what the 4C framework calls *mini-c* and *little-c* creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009) enacted within people's typical daily environments.

To date, good progress has been made in understanding the frequency of these everyday creative actions—who is more likely to be doing something creative vs doing something else—but not much is known about what people are doing. The typical research project measures either whether people were doing something creative (usually via binary, *Yes/No* responses) or their rating of how creative their day was. Such measures are revealing, but they don't shed light on the creative activities that people were doing. Consider, for example, two hypothetical participants who report doing something creative 40% of the time. During those creative episodes, one participant might be sketching and painting at every episode—a picky eater flourishing on a narrow creative diet. The other participant might be dabbling in many domains, from sketching to music to creative writing to scrapbooking—an omnivore working their way through the creativity buffet table.

Creative Diversity

Research on creativity in everyday life shows that people vary in how often they engage in everyday creative activities, both within and between days, but we don't know much about what people are actually doing when they say they are doing something creative. Simple measures of frequency probably obscure interesting details about people's creative pursuits. In the present work, we focus on the diversity and heterogeneity of everyday creative activities. We think that this is an interesting problem for creativity research for a few reasons. For one, part of the philosophy of daily life research is that people's quirky, complicated everyday lives are interesting in their own right (Hektner et al., 2007; Silvia & Cotter, 2021). Characterizing the different ways that people engage in everyday creativity in their natural environments advances the descriptive aims of daily life methods.

More generally, the notion that people vary in the breadth or complexity of their creative pursuits is a theme found in many areas of creativity research. Root-Bernstein's (2003, 2009) concept of *polymathy*, for example, is motivated by studies showing that eminent scholars and artists often have expertise in distinct domains and diverse interests (Root-Bernstein et al., 2008). The long tradition of research on "the creative personality" has consistently found that creative people have broad interests and are open to new and diverse experiences (Mackinnon, 1965; Oleynick et al., 2017). At the same time, the other side of this theme—that focused, consistent engagement in a single domain is important to creativity—appears in many areas of research. Research on giftedness, for example, finds unusually focused interests among gifted children and adolescents (e.g., Rathunde, 1998; Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 1993; Winner & Drake, 2013), and studies of talent development show that the path toward high-level expertise often involves narrowing one's goals to focus intensely on a single creative domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Howe, 1999), often because sociocultural processes and limited resources create forks in the path to greatness. This tension between breadth and focus is central to models of creativity across domains. The Amusement Park Theory, for example, suggests that

everyday creativity is more domain-general because it requires relatively less time and investment, whereas eminent creativity tends to be more domain-specific (Baer & Kaufman, 2005).

In short, the diversity of people's everyday creative actions is an instance of an enduring theme in creativity research—a dialectic between creative breadth and creative focus. In this instance, research focuses on what people are choosing to spend time on in their ordinary lives—the mini-c and little-c world of hobbies and avocational pursuits—rather than the creative actions of eminent experts and polymaths. Nevertheless, aside from the inherently interesting issue of exploring everyday creativity's omnivores and picky eaters, we think that the concepts and tools used to illuminate this issue could be fruitful in other areas of creativity research.

Measuring the Diversity of Creative Activities

How might we frame and measure the diversity of people's creative activities?

Researchers can gain insight into the heterogeneity of creative actions by borrowing some tools from ecology, particularly the family of diversity statistics (Guevara et al., 2016; Jost, 2010). These grew out of the study of species diversity and have proven useful in psychological studies of the complexity and heterogeneity of people's experiences and actions (Benson et al., 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2021).

Diversity statistics sort into two facets: *variety* and *balance*. Figure 1 shows a series of treemaps—an intuitive way to visualize the difference between these two facets of diversity—for four hypothetical participants who varied in the variety and balance of their creative activities over the course of a week. In the context of creative behaviors, variety is simply the number of different kinds of creative activities someone engaged in. If during a week someone's creative efforts were split among two activities—perhaps creative writing and art, as in Panel A in Figure 1—then their variety score is two. But if someone spent time working on six different creative domains, such as Panel C in Figure 1, then their variety score would be six. Notice that variety captures only the number of different activity categories—creative domains, in this case—that

people spent any non-zero amount of time doing. It doesn't illuminate how someone's time was divided between the different creative domains.

Balance, the other facet of diversity, captures whether people's engagement was evenly spread across creative domains or if it was concentrated in just one or two domains. In the top row (People A and B), both people have a variety score of two—they did two activities—but person A has an even distribution of activities, perfectly balanced between art and writing, whereas person B has an imbalanced, uneven distribution of creative activities: most of their creative acts were art, with a bit of occasional writing. Likewise, the bottom row shows that a high variety of creative activities can nevertheless be even (the perfectly balanced actions shown by person C) or uneven (person D, for whom humor and art were the predominant creative activities).

Figure 1. A depiction of different combinations of variety and evenness in everyday creative behaviors.

Note. The top row (panels A and B) depicts a low variety of creativity activities; the bottom row (panels C and D) depicts a high variety. The left column (panels A and C) depicts high evenness (people's engagement is balanced across the categories); the right column (panels B and D) depicts low evenness (some activities predominate over others).

Variety, then, is easy to quantify—out of a set of possible creative domains, it is simply the number of domains people engaged in. Balance, on the other hand, can be quantified with many different metrics. We used Pielou’s (1966) evenness as our main marker of balance because it has some virtues for the current project. Some measures of balance can be highly correlated with variety, particularly when variety has a large possible range (Guevara et al., 2016). Because Pielou’s evenness is normalized for variety (i.e., scaled from 0 to 1 for each participant), it provides a measure of balance that is independent of variety (Jost, 2010).

The Present Research

In the present research, we explored the diversity of people’s creative activities with a week-long experience sampling study. Several times a day, people were asked to describe what they were doing and if it was a creative activity. The many creative activities people reported were then categorized, and diversity statistics were used to represent the heterogeneity of people’s creative diets: the variety (how many distinct categories they engaged in) and the balance (whether their creative efforts were dominated by a single category) of their creative activities.

Once each person’s diversity scores have been calculated, a natural next step is to explore predictors of variety and balance. What kinds of people have a higher variety of creative activities? Who tends to spread their creative time across many areas, and who tends to focus on one or two creative domains? The first place to look is Openness to Experience, a global personality trait that is deeply linked to interests, motives, activities, and accomplishments in creative domains (Feist, 2019, 2021; Oleynick et al., 2017). Past work implies that people high in Openness to Experience would have higher variety scores (i.e., they engage in more kinds of activities) because they report doing so on self-report scales that ask about common creative activities (Batey, 2007; Rodriguez et al., 2023; Silvia et al., 2021). It isn’t intuitively obvious, however, if Openness to Experience would predict balance, which would reflect a tendency for highly open people to concentrate on one creative domain or to spread their time evenly among

many.

Looking beyond personality traits, our sample consisted of students pursuing undergraduate degrees, so we could classify the participants' degree path as "creative" or "conventional" (Silvia & Nusbaum, 2012). College degree paths capture important information about the goals, vocational interests, and preferred activities of emerging adults (Lee et al., 2021). For many students pursuing creative fields like music performance, theatre, and studio art, the undergraduate years are a time of intense specialization in a single creative domain, often requiring setting aside other hobbies or goals, so it's possible that students pursuing these degrees would have a narrow creative diet marked by low balance.

Method

Participants

Participants were 125 undergraduate students enrolled at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) who volunteered as part of a course research option and received course credit or who responded to a flyer recruiting research participants majoring in the arts and received \$20. Participants were predominantly young ($M = 19.73$ years, $SD = 3.50$) and female (75%), and most participants identified as Black or African-American (34%) or White (52%). All participants provided informed consent, and the project was approved and monitored by the UNCG Institutional Review Board (#15-0472).

Questionnaire measures of individual differences. All individual difference measures were completed during a 1-hour lab session. Openness to Experience was measured with the O subscale of the HEXACO-100 (Lee & Ashton, 2018), which has good coverage of this broad trait (Christensen et al., 2019). The HEXACO model proposes four facets of Openness to Experience that are measured with 4 items each—aesthetic appreciation ($\alpha = .67$), inquisitiveness ($\alpha = .70$), creativity ($\alpha = .78$), and unconventionality ($\alpha = .54$)—using a 5-point response scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

Each participant's degree path in college was classified as being a "creative college

major” or an “other major” using the criteria developed in prior research using the same population (Silvia & Nusbaum, 2012). In brief, the participants were asked to list all their majors, minors, and degree concentrations, if any. People with any major or minor focused on art and design (e.g., theatre, dance, apparel design, interior architecture, and art, among many others), including educational concentrations with a performance or production component (e.g., music education), were classified as creative majors. All remaining participants received a score of 0.

Finally, the Biographical Inventory of Creative Behaviors (BICB; Batey, 2007) was used to measure self-reported retrospective engagement in creative activities. The BICB lists 34 different creative activities and simply asks people if they have done it or not (scored 1 or 0) in the past 12 months (Silvia et al., 2021). Viewed through the lens of diversity statistics, the BICB is a retrospective measure of variety—how many activities people recalled doing in the past year. Because retrospective and in-the-moment measures won’t always converge (Cotter & Silvia, 2019), we were curious to explore if self-reported creative activity recalled over a long time period covaried with people’s descriptions of their creative activities measured throughout the day.

Experience sampling items and procedure. In each ESM survey, participants were first asked to describe in their own words the activity they were currently engaged in using an open-ended text format. Next, they indicated whether they considered that activity to be a creative activity (1 = *Yes*, 0 = *No*). To encourage a broader sense of creativity that could encompass mini-c and little-c expressions of creativity, we did not specifically define creativity for the participants. Participants completed all ESM surveys on MetricWire, an application that runs on participants’ smartphones. During an in-lab session, research assistants explained how to use MetricWire and guided participants in a sample survey that contained all possible survey items. Following the lab session, people completed one week of experience sampling and were sent 10 surveys per day between 8 a.m. and midnight. Signals occurred during quasi-random

times at least 45 minutes apart. If participants did not complete a survey within five minutes, it was no longer available for completion.

Based on our extensive experience with this population, we expected response rates to be good: college students are rarely far from their own phones, and they are used to noticing and responding to phone notifications, even when the notification interrupts an ongoing event or activity. Against this backdrop, several steps were taken to encourage consistent responding and to reduce missing data (Silvia & Cotter, 2021; Silvia et al., 2013). We created a raffle for one of three \$40 cash prizes, and participants who completed at least 45 ESM surveys were entered into the raffle. To catch potential technical problems or participant disengagement early, people with a low response rate after 2 days (i.e., fewer than 10 surveys) were contacted via email. All participants were emailed after 4 days to ensure they were not experiencing any technical difficulties and to update them on their progress toward raffle entry.

Activity Coding

Studying the diversity of people's creative activities required sorting the activities into distinct categories. We started by generating an initial set of 16 activity categories based on our past experience sampling research with our local population: Arts & Crafts; Music; Dance; Design; Writing; Humor; Inventing; Science; Theatre, Drama & Film; Cooking; In Class; Studying; Eating, Drinking, & Smoking; Social Interactions; Media Consumption; Exercising. This set of 16 was then refined based on the open-ended responses collected during the study. Four categories (Dance; Design; Inventing; Writing) were removed because no participant responses matched the category. Seven new activity categories (Traveling; Resting; Getting Ready & Appearance; Working; Shopping; Arts Performance or Museum Visit; and Church) were added during the coding process to capture activities not represented in the initial set of categories.

This yielded a final set of 19 categories: Arts & Crafts; Music; Humor; Science; Theatre, Drama & Film; Cooking; In Class; Studying; Eating, Drinking & Smoking; Social Interactions;

Media Consumption; Exercising; Traveling; Resting; Getting Ready & Appearance; Working; Shopping; Arts Performance or Museum Visit; and Church. The responses were categorized by three independent coders into one of the nineteen categories, and disagreements in coding were resolved by the second author. We should emphasize that these categories were designed to optimally catch the kinds of things our sample would do in a typical mid-semester week, so they won't necessarily extend to different kinds of populations (e.g., retirees) or time scales (e.g., a month during the summer).

Results

Creative Activity Frequency

A total of 3,665 ESM surveys were returned ($M = 29.32$, $Mdn = 29$, $SD = 13.31$, $range = 6-63$). Of these surveys, 19.24% captured a self-defined creative activity. The intraclass correlation was 0.11, suggesting that the majority of variance in reporting engaging in a creativity was due to within-person fluctuations.

Data Reduction and Diversity Calculation

Variety and evenness scores were calculated in R 4.1 using the package *diverse* 0.1.5 (Guevara et al., 2016). As noted earlier, variety is simply the number of different activities people engaged in during the study; evenness was calculated as Pielou's (1966) evenness, a normalized form of Shannon's entropy that calculates evenness based on the number of categories a person actually engaged in (i.e., that person's variety score), not the entire set of possible categories observed during the study (i.e., the sample's maximum variety score). Sometimes known as "relative evenness" (Jost, 2010), Pielou's evenness ranges from 0 (uneven) to 1 (even). When variety is 0 or 1 (people did no or only one kind of creative activity), evenness is undefined or meaningless, so evenness scores are treated as missing values in those cases.

Our multivariate regression models treated variety and evenness as simultaneous, correlated outcomes. In each model, we included the number of experience-sampling surveys that people completed as a covariate (Median responses = 29, $M = 29.32$, $SD = 13.31$, range from

6 to 63). Completing more surveys can increase the probability of reporting a new creative activity, so it was worth controlling for the number of surveys in all the models. The structural equation models were estimated with Mplus 8.1 using maximum likelihood with robust standard errors.

Exploring Variety and Evenness

The sample showed a broad range of both variety and evenness. As Figure 2 illustrates, the variety of creative activities people engaged in ranged from 0 to 9, with a median and mode of 3. Evenness, too, showed a wide range of values, but most people tended to have relatively balanced and even values toward the high end of the scale. Because substantial negative skew in an outcome variable is often problematic, we transformed evenness to be more normal using ordered quantile normalization (Peterson & Cavanaugh, 2020). These transformed evenness scores were used in all analyses.

Figure 2. The variety and evenness of everyday creative activities.

Variety and evenness were only modestly correlated. Figure 3 displays the scatterplot for the correlation between variety and raw evenness scores (left panel) and transformed evenness

scores (right panel). The correlation with variety was small and negative for both the raw ($r = -.08 [-.26, .10]$) and transformed evenness scores ($r = -.10 [-.28, .08]$).

Figure 3. Correlations between variety and raw evenness (left panel) and transformed evenness (right panel) scores.

Predicting Variety and Evenness

Thus far, we have found that the sample showed broad variation in both the number of creative activities they did over the week as well as how evenly their creative behavior was spread across different categories. The natural next question is whether variation in the diversity metrics is meaningfully related to other variables. Our analyses focused on three different predictors: Openness to Experience, whether people had a creative or conventional college major, and past-year engagement in creative behaviors measured by the BICB. These three variables are closely linked elements in the broader network of creative motivation and engagement, so they were analyzed separately in distinct models.

First, we explored how Openness to Experience, measured via the four HEXACO-100 facets, predicted variety and evenness. Openness to Experience was modeled as a latent variable

with the four facets as indicators, Openness to Experience and response rates were correlated predictors, and variety and evenness were simultaneous outcomes ($\chi^2(11) = 13.68, p = .251$; CFI = .986; RMSEA = .044 [90% CI: .000, .109]; SRMR = .036).

As Figure 4 shows, Openness to Experience significantly predicted variety ($\beta = .35$ [.16, .53], $p < .001$) and evenness ($\beta = -.23$ [-.46, -.01], $p = .038$) but in opposite directions. People high in Openness to Experience engaged in a great number of different creative activities over the week. At the same time, their engagement was relatively concentrated and imbalanced. While people high in Openness to Experience were more likely to do many different things at least once, they nevertheless focused most of their creative engagement on only a few activities.

Figure 4. Effects of Openness to Experience on variety and evenness.

Note. Standardized coefficients are depicted.

Second, we explored differences between people who were identified as having a creative college major ($n = 16$) versus another kind of major ($n = 109$). In a regression model controlling

for response rates, people with creative majors showed significantly higher variety ($\beta_Y = .56$ [.01, 1.12], $p = .044$) and significantly lower evenness ($\beta_Y = -1.01$ [-1.40, -.62], $p < .001$); because major is a binary predictor, these regression coefficients are Y -standardized and can be interpreted in the Cohen's d metric (Long, 1997). People with a creative major were both significantly higher in the variety of their creative activities during the week and significantly more uneven in how their creative activities were distributed across the categories, a pattern that parallels the pattern for Openness to Experience.

Finally, the BICB showed the same general pattern. People with higher self-reported scores on the BICB (controlling for response rates) engaged in a higher variety of creative activities during the week ($\beta = .39$ [.24, .53], $p < .001$) but had marginally lower evenness scores ($\beta = -.19$ [-.39, .01], $p = .066$).

Discussion

When people are doing creative things in their everyday environments, what are they actually doing? The present research explored the diversity of people's everyday creative activities, particularly the breadth vs the depth of people's creative pursuits. A strength of applying diversity metrics is that we can disentangle different meanings of diversity, such as variety (the number of different creative activities) and balance (whether people's engagement was spread evenly across the activities they did).

Based on a seven-day experience sampling study, we found evidence for variation in the diversity of creative activities. Some people were relatively omnivorous, having spent time on a large variety of creative activities, whereas other people had relatively narrow diets, having focused their time on a smaller number of creative categories. Likewise, some people's engagement was relatively even across different activities, whereas other people's engagement was concentrated in one or two predominant activities. These findings expand past work on variation in how often people work on creative activities by illustrating that they further vary in the heterogeneity and diversity of their creative behaviors.

Variation in variety and balance, the two facets of diversity, was significantly predicted by several factors relevant to creativity, albeit in different ways. Doing a larger variety of creative activities was associated with high openness to experience, with having a creative college major, and with reporting more past-year creative activities on the BICB. This pattern is consistent with a great deal of past research on openness to experience and creative motivation (Feist, 2019; Oleynick, 2017). It also suggests some evidence for the daily-life validity of the BICB: people who reported a larger variety of creative activities over the past 12 months also reported doing more activities over the seven days of the study, suggesting that people's retrospective reports of their past creative actions are reasonably grounded (see Cotter & Silvia, 2017, 2019).

More interesting, perhaps, is the finding that people high in openness to experience and people with creative college majors had less balanced, more uneven engagement in their creative activities—they were more likely to focus on one or two predominant categories. People high in openness appeared to dabble in many different creative domains while investing heavily in a smaller subset of them. This pattern thus shows that openness to experience is associated with both greater breadth (variety) and depth (evenness). People high in openness to experience thus appear to be a particular kind of creative omnivore: they have a wide creative diet but a few favorite foods.

Connections to Domains, Dilettantes, and Polymaths

As noted earlier, the dialectic between breadth and depth is a prominent theme in creativity research. Many parallels to creative diversity in everyday activities can be found among models of professional and eminent creativity. Baer and Kaufman (2005), in their Amusement Park Theory of creativity, sought to synthesize domain-general and domain-specific models by suggesting that they vary based on the level of creativity. In their model, creativity appears more domain-specific as one moves toward more eminent forms of creativity, typically because a great deal of training, knowledge, and investment in a domain is needed to be creatively influential (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). At the smaller end, where “mini c” and “little c”

are found (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009), creativity often looks more domain general.

The present research supports past ideas about domain-general aspects of everyday creativity, at least for the kind of assessment—engagement in distinct kinds of little-c creative activities—that our experience sampling design afforded. For one, the diversity metrics found that many people did engage in many distinct domains, and the sample as a whole appeared to have relatively general engagement. Furthermore, models of domain-general creativity suggest that some factors make creativity across different domains more likely. Kaufman et al. (2010) particularly pointed to openness to experience, which was thought to foster creativity across domains because of features like having broad interests and being imaginative and flexible. The present findings suggest that people high in openness to experience are likely to be both generalists and specialists: they engage in wider variety of creative activity, but a subset of those activities occupies most of their efforts.

Notions of creative diversity across domains has parallels in the literature on *creative polymathy* (Araki, 2008; Root-Bernstein, 2013), a person-level concept referring to individual differences in creative engagement in different domains. Kaufman et al. (2010) suggested that creative polymathy is more likely to be found in smaller-c side of the 4C model: one is more likely to find people with creative interests in many different domains at the little-c end, whereas significant, Big-C creative achievements across different domains are less likely. At the same time, the classic literature on creative polymathy is rooted in the study of expertise, giftedness, and Big-C creativity (Araki, 2018), such as models of how people develop significant expertise in disparate creative domains like science and art (Root-Bernstein, 2003; Root-Bernstein et al., 2008). Indeed, some scholars in this field distinguish polymathy from dilettancy (Root-Bernstein, 2009), which involves “taking up several activities in a superficial or desultory way” (Araki, 2018, p. 68).

Our research is rooted in the smaller-c end of the 4C model of creativity and didn’t assess markers of Big-C creativity, so our findings don’t speak to the issue of polymathy among

creatively accomplished and eminent people or to whether a distinction between polymathy and dilettancy is productive. We do, however, believe that there are bridges between the diversity of everyday creative activities and notions of creative polymathy. Because diversity metrics offer a way to quantify the complex notion of heterogeneity, they could be fruitful in studying the diverse creative interests and attainments in samples of eminent creators. For example, it would be straightforward to explore the diversity of activities in samples that were recruited at different levels of eminence, such as studies that recruit hobbyists, trainees, and creative professionals (e.g., Smith et al., 2022), or to use interview data to classify, in a fine-grained way, the domains of expertise in samples of polymaths.

In the other direction, models of polymathy can offer some lessons for the study of everyday creative activities. Araki's (2018) model, for example, proposes that polymathy involves not only the obvious dimension of breadth but also dimensions of depth (focused expertise within a domain) and integration (synthesis and connection between domains). Although these dimensions were proposed within the context of bigger-C activities, they seem intuitively applicable to understanding common, everyday creative activities: a person's set of hobbies might also vary in relative depth and interconnectedness in intriguing ways that have not yet been explored. It's possible, for example, that activities that seem distinct to researchers and to many participants (like poetry writing and acting) are experienced as overlapping and functionally similar to some of the people who do them.

Implications for Everyday Creativity

We've seen that the notions of omnivores and picky eaters in the present research have parallels to models of expertise and eminent creators, but our work is nevertheless grounded in the study of everyday creativity, and it has some fruitful implications for researchers interested in these problems. The present research found variation in both the variety of creative activities and the relative evenness of people's engagement. One key direction for future work is to explore the links, if any, of these different markers of diversity to flourishing and subjective well-being.

An animating idea in models of everyday creativity is that spending time on creative pursuits is both a sign that someone is doing well and a cause of greater well-being (Richards, 2010), and the evidence from the accumulated daily life literature does show that greater engagement in everyday creativity is linked to daily experiences of positive affect and subjective well-being (Conner et al., 2018). An interesting question is whether different profiles of engagement are linked to different well-being outcomes. Do some people flourish more as dabblers, where engaging in a wider variety of creative activities fosters greater well-being? For others, would focusing on a single domain foster greater well-being, perhaps by affording the growth of competence in a specific skill? Or is it the simple matter of engaging in creative activities consistently, regardless of their heterogeneity, that fosters well-being?

A related question concerns the functions of specific patterns of creative diversity. Our study found an intriguing pattern for people majoring in the arts and people high in openness to experience: they engaged in many creative activities (high variety) but predominantly focused on some (low evenness). Digging into the meaning of this “broad diet, but a few favorite foods” pattern deserves more research. One possibility is that it reflects the interplay of both creative breadth and focus among a notable subgroup of participants who were training for creative careers. Many of our participants were majoring in a creative field (e.g., music performance), and such a path is usually intense, consuming, and stressful. An early idea in the study of “avocational interests” was that people’s leisure activities could serve as a counterweight to their work activities and thus aid in being psychologically well-rounded (e.g., Silvia, 2006; Super, 1940). In this case, the different activities would stem from different motives for creativity (Benedek et al., 2020). The “breadth within depth” pattern might suggest that some people are using secondary creative hobbies as a counterweight to the stress, intensity, and monotony of a focused creative goal, such as crocheting with friends in the evening after a long, solitary afternoon in a practice room. But this pattern might instead reflect the simple fact that people high in openness to experience are irresistibly curious and drawn to new things that afford

creative expression (Oleynick et al., 2017; Silvia, 2006), so they are naturally drawn to dabbling in different creative domains even when they have a guiding creative goal. These ideas are only speculative, of course, but they illustrate the kinds of questions that can be asked when daily life researchers go beyond the mere frequency of creative activity to explore the kinds and patterns of creative activities that people are doing in their everyday lives.

Samples and Experience Sampling

Studies of everyday creativity in real-world environments are always particular to the kinds of people and places that were sampled. In the present research, we sampled university students, a group in a period of lifespan development where exploring one's vocational interests and identity is a major concern. In addition, by design many of the participants had significant commitments to creative pursuits as captured by their years-long involvement in advanced training in creative professions. This kind of sample is probably more likely to have a greater overall engagement in creative activities as well as a greater investment in some of them.

It's worth emphasizing that the activity domains in this research are particular to the population and place. Classifying activities into psychologically meaningful domains is challenging, so our approach started with a priori expectations rooted in our past work with this population and then adapted the domain coding based on the accumulated pool of responses. The set of domains is thus apt for the kinds of things this population did during their mid-semester week, but it isn't intended to be a general classification of domains. All research on creativity in different domains grapples with how to classify domains, but for studying diversity, a wrinkle is that the number of domains constrains variety scores—creating more categories raises the ceiling of possible scores—so variety scores aren't comparable across samples with different domains. Many measures of balance, on the other hand, such as Pielou's (1966) evenness or dominance (Berger & Parker, 1970), are corrected for the number of domains and aren't similarly affected.

With these issues in mind, part of the spirit of ecological momentary assessment

methods is the recognition that people's everyday lives are complex, wide-ranging, and idiosyncratic, so researchers should also ground their interpretations in light of the kinds of people, environments, and activities that were sampled. For example, other experience sampling and diary studies have explored the creative activities of different kinds of populations, such as adults in their 50s (Karwowski et al., 2017) and groups of creative professionals, trainees, and hobbyists (Smith et al., 2022). In other cases, studies have emphasized how environments afford or constrain different creative activities, such as studies of everyday creativity early in the Covid-19 pandemic (Karwowski et al., 2021). It thus awaits future research to reveal how general these effects would be in other populations. For these future studies, we see diversity metrics as a particularly fruitful tool for understanding the wide heterogeneity in people's creative actions, interests, and accomplishments.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Variety	2.98 (2.04)	1											
2. Evenness (Raw)	.92 (.09)	-.08	1										
3. Evenness (Normal)	-.01 (.99)	-.10	.92	1									
4. Openness to Experience	3.32 (.60)	.41	-.27	-.23	1								
5. O: Aesthetic Appreciation	3.40 (.82)	.34	-.24	-.18	.88	1							
6. O: Inquisitiveness	2.95 (.85)	.29	-.18	-.13	.73	.54	1						
7. O: Creativity	3.50 (.82)	.39	-.21	-.23	.76	.58	.29	1					
8. O: Unconventionality	3.42 (.58)	.24	-.16	-.13	.74	.62	.35	.48	1				
9. BICB	.29 (.15)	.40	-.19	-.19	.50	.40	.28	.49	.39	1			
10. ESM Response Rate	29.32 (13.31)	.37	-.18	-.15	.20	.21	.11	.13	.16	.02	1		
11. Creative Major	.13 (.34)	.25	-.40	-.38	.30	.24	.17	.34	.17	.27	.19	1	
12. Creative Activity Percentage	19.24 (14.56)	.69	-.27	-.31	.46	.37	.35	.43	.27	.45	-.14	.25	1

Note. Openness to Experience is the overall score from the HEXACO-100, which provides four O facet scores. BICB = Biographical Inventory of Creative Behaviors.