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Leisure choices of the creative class

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ABSTRACT

Richard Florida's theory of the creative class has led cities to offer amenities as a way to attract the knowledge workers that he argues drive the economy. At present, scant evidence exists concerning the leisure activities different worker classes choose to engage in. Using logit analysis on data from the American Time Use Survey, I analyze the leisure preferences of the creative class and find limited support for Florida's assertions about their amenity use. Cities and policymakers should consider the evidence here before trying to create unique amenities to attract the creative class, because they may not require distinctive activities to choose a location.

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Introduction

Cities are constructing bike paths, financing public art, and encouraging diversity, all in an effort to attract knowledge workers. *The Rise of the Creative Class* by Richard Florida (2002) has become a touchstone for policymakers throughout the United States and Western Europe, and it has offered planners a new path towards prosperity. Traditionally, urban development theory stated that individuals follow jobs, making attracting employers the key to promoting economic growth. Florida (2002) and Clark (2011) flip that traditional narrative arguing that in the knowledge economy jobs follow people. Florida advises cities to build a “people climate”, because talented individuals are the new primary resource for a strong economy, meaning educated, creative people will find jobs wherever they locate (Florida, 2002, p. 283).

Florida argues that the creative class chooses locations based on high diversity and natural and cultural amenities. He speculated on the cultural amenities the creative class are most likely to enjoy, but was unable to test his hypotheses empirically lamenting that data on the subject was not available. Using data from the American Time Use Survey, released since the publication of the book, I test several of his assertions. First, I will test what leisure activities the creative class is more likely than working and service class employees to enjoy. Secondly, I will assess what other factors explain differences in leisure preferences.

Literature review

Florida's theory of the creative class centers upon their attraction to the 3 T's of technology, talent, and tolerance. That is, Florida posits that regions with a high-acceptance of diversity and alternative life-styles and the right mix of cultural amenities attract individuals with greater talent. These talented individuals, a valuable resource in the modern economy, attract high-technology industries, spurring economic growth. Therefore, rather than the traditional narrative that jobs attract workers to a region, Florida argues that workers attract jobs, placing the emphasis for cities on building a people climate in order to attract high-skilled workers.

Florida makes repeated claims about the types of lifestyle amenities that attract the creative class; he concludes from his interviews and focus groups that they enjoy participatory experiences that evolve organically and events that are not prepackaged. Because the creative class place such a high value on time, their entertainment must be continuously engaging; their “lifestyle comes down to a passionate quest for experience” (Florida, 2002, p. 166).

Thus, two of Florida's central claims are that the creative class drives economic development, and that they are a unique demographic. However, both claims have been weakened by later research. Studies have shown traditional measures are better predictors of economic health than Florida's measures of technology, tolerance and talent (Donegan, Drucker, Goldstein, Lowe, & Malizia, 2008; Hoyman & Faricy, 2009; Sands & Reese, 2008). Furthermore, the creative class is not very distinctive in their residential choice (Andersen, Bugge, Hansen, Isaksen, & Raunio, 2010;

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Asheim & Hansen, 2009; Frenkel, Bendit, & Kaplan, 2013; Lawton, Murphy, & Redmond, 2013), mobility (Hansen & Niedomysl, 2009; Martin-Brelot, Grossetti, Eckert, Gritsai, & Kovacs, 2010), or amenity use (Bille, 2010).

Bille (2010) was the first to test Florida's claims about amenity use by the creative class. He compared creative class and service class workers on the use of 35 amenities from a Danish survey. Bille finds that the creative class is more likely than the service class to attend contemporary concerts, to visit art museums and cultural landscapes, to engage regularly in fitness and play sports, and to use the internet than the service class. The creative core, a subset of the creative class, is significantly more likely than the service class to enjoy creative self-expression, to engage in non-institutional fitness activities, to read a book, and to visit historic sites, museums, and classical art forms. The creative class is neither more nor less likely to watch TV, watch films at home, listen to recorded music, play computer games, read magazines, or go to the zoo, amusement park or aquarium. Bille's findings agree with Florida in that the creative class uses the internet more, is more likely to exercise, and is less likely to attend spectator sports events. Contrary to Florida's assertions, however, Bille's results show that the creative class is more likely than the service class to attend a museum, or scheduled activities like evening class or lectures, and is as likely to watch TV or a movie.

Data

In 2002, comprehensive data was not available to test amenity use by the creative class or others. Since 2003, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has been administering the American Time Use Survey (ATUS) to collect detailed data on how Americans spend their time. The BLS randomly selects participants from the Current Population Survey (CPS) to fill out a time diary for all household members for a specific 24 h period, which it then combines with demographic information from the CPS (Abraham, Flood, Sobek, & Thorn, 2011). I combine three years of the data, (2008–2010), providing a sample size of 18,386 respondents, allowing sufficient observations for even such rare events as attending performing arts.

One limitation of the ATUS data for this study is the distinction between revealed and stated preferences. The data used here is of the revealed variety, in that it is activities actually done by respondents. Stated preferences are also important for cities, as individuals use cultural and natural amenities as signals of the type of city or community they would like to reside in, regardless of whether they actually partake in those activities. There has been work on Florida's theory of the stated preference variety (Frenkel et al., 2013; Lawton et al., 2013) but because Florida discusses amenities as activities the creative class not only uses as signals but participates in, it is appropriate to use revealed preference data.

Methodology

I am able to test five specific claims made by Richard Florida concerning amenity use by the creative class. ATUS respondents report the number of minutes they spent on each activity in the specified day; with the exception of television watching, I recode each as a dummy variable with 1 for having done that activity because I am uninterested in the duration of any given amenity but rather its use. I divide the dependent variables into four categories of arts, time wasting, exercise, and late night dining.

Using the four hypotheses and five dependent variables described below, I will test Florida's claims that the creative class is less likely to attend performing arts, and watch television and more likely to practice outdoor sports, exercise, or eat out late at night. I use the same model for all dependent variables.

H₁. The creative class is less likely to enjoy traditional performing arts.

"In many cities recently, museums and the symphony opera and ballet have fallen on hard times . . . Meanwhile, the Creative Class is drawn to more organic and indigenous street-level culture" (Florida, 2002, p. 182).

Florida argues at length that traditional forms of high-culture, such as the symphony, opera, and ballet are less attractive to members of the Creative Class than past generations. The ATUS asks how much time individuals spent at the performing arts, using examples such as the theatre, opera, or musicals. I code the variable as a 1 if respondents indicate they attended any performing arts; only .8% did so on the survey day.

H₂. The creative class is less likely to watch television.

"But if you spend your workday in front of a computer screen or an artist's canvas, you are probably not eager to spend your leisure time in front of a TV screen" (Florida, 2012, p. 139).

While some may consider an hour of the news as less of a waste of time than an hour of reality television, Florida does not differentiate, rather asserting that television itself does not appeal to the creative class. However, because watching 1 min of television is different from watching all day, I code television watching as 1 if the individual watched more than 4 h of television. 22% of the sample watched more than 4 h of television within the 24-h period used for the survey.

H₃. The creative class is more likely to exercise

"The force behind the Creative Class obsession with being in shape is more than a concern with health . . . I see it as a growing awareness of the body as an arena for creative expression" (Florida, 2002, p. 177).

"Creative Class people in my studies are into a variety of active sports, from traditional ones like bicycling, jogging and kayaking, to newer more extreme ones like trail running and snowboarding" (Florida, 2002, p. 173).

I code outdoor sports as 1 if the individual did any biking, climbing, hiking, or running; .25% of respondents reported doing these activities. I create the dummy exercise as 1 if they have done aerobics, walked, lifted weights, done yoga or used cardiovascular equipment. By this definition 10% of the sample exercised.

H₄. The creative class is more likely to eat out late at night.

"They need to have options around the clock . . . the highest-rated nightlife options were cultural attractions and late-night dining" (Florida, 2002, p. 225).

Finally, late night dining is coded to encompass anyone that ate out at a bar or restaurant from 10 p.m. until 2 a.m.; 1% of the sample reported dining out between those hours.

Independent variables

The Current Population Survey data provides major occupational code for each respondent, which allows me to test my key independent variable creative class. I was able to nearly replicate Florida's definition of the creative class, which he categorizes as containing the major occupational codes for: business and financial operations; computer and mathematical science; architecture and engineering; life, physical, and social science; community and social service; legal, education, training, and library arts; design,

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