

Creative labour in the cultural industries

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abstract The explicit focus of this article is the study of creative work within the cultural industries. It begins by exploring the shift from ‘culture industry’ to ‘cultural industries’ to ‘creative industries’. Then, connecting cultural industries and creative work, it outlines contemporary debates within the field of creative labour studies, including significant theoretical developments that have taken place drawing on governmentality theory, autonomist Marxism and sociological perspectives. Finally, the article considers possible directions for future research, arguing for the need to balance theoretical developments with more grounded sociological work within the field.

keywords communications ♦ creative labour ♦ cultural industries ♦ neoliberalism

Introduction

The study of cultural industries has been of theoretical interest since the publication of Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique of the ‘Culture Industry’, written in 1947 (1997). Cultural industries are seen as important within society for a number of reasons. They are the primary means within society of producing symbolic goods and texts within a capitalist society (Garnham, 1987; Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 3). As Garnham argues, “cultural industries” refers to those institutions in society which employ the characteristic modes of production and organisation of industrial corporations to produce and disseminate symbols in the form of cultural goods and services, generally, although not exclusively, as commodities’ (1987: 56). Furthermore, cultural industries also play a central role in the constitution of a ‘public sphere’ (Habermas, 1989), acting as the key mediation point for the transmission (and contestation) of dominant ideological values.

Hesmondhalgh has argued that they are ‘agents of economic, social and cultural change’ (2002: 6). Cultural industries are not only increasingly important sources of wealth creation in modern economies, but in an informational age, where symbolic content

is increasingly central to social and economic life, they arguably provide a model for transformations in other industries (Lash and Urry, 1994). In public policy we can discern an instrumentalist view of cultural industries (and creativity) as increasingly central to economic growth, evident in a range of UK government policy documents, and academic work (DCMS, 2001a, 2001b; Florida, 2002; GLA, 2002). It has also been argued that cultural and creative industries foster social inclusion (Arts Council England, 2003; DCMS, 1999; Reeves, 2002); regenerate economically deprived cities and regions (Evans and Shaw, 2004; Florida, 2002; Minton, 2003); and may even help tackle physical and mental health issues (Health Education Authority, 2000).

Adorno and Horkheimer’s original thesis was a critique of the commodification of culture, far removed from the celebratory tone of the ‘creative industries’ which has its linguistic antecedents in this term. They denounced what they saw as the industrialization of culture under modernity. Influenced by Marxism, and appalled by the consumerist nature of postwar America, they argued that culture had become intensely commodified, shallow and standardized.

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Putting their theoretical approach within a historical context, it is important to remember that this was a time of industrialization, mass production and Fordism. Much as the assembly lines were producing identical cars and other standardized products, they believed that the Culture Industry was also producing standardized cultural products, marked by pseudo-individuality, but devoid of any depth or complexity. Standardization, then, provides cultural products with the veneer of difference, whilst essentially ensuring their easy duplication in a process of mass production:

The public is catered for with a hierarchical range of mass-produced products of varying quality, thus advancing the rule of complete quantification. Everybody must behave (as if spontaneously) in accordance with his previously determined and indexed level, and choose the category of mass product turned out for his type. (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997: 123)

Worse still, the Culture Industry was seen as the ideological conduit of capitalism, with the pernicious effect of transmitting the values of consumerism and capitalism to the population, thereby suppressing any radical critique of capitalism as a system. The Culture Industry, for Adorno, was a crucial ideological site of academic interest, acting as the means by which capitalism was able to reproduce itself ideologically. It turned viewers into passive consumers, and stopped them taking collective action or thinking radically. The Culture Industry was a tool of the state, and of the ruling class, functioning as a means of controlling the masses, acting as an impediment to radical social transformation. For Adorno and Horkheimer 'it seemed as though the possibility of radical social change had been smashed between the twin cudgels of concentration camps and television for the masses' (Craib, 2004: 184).

Formative study of the cultural industries has this Marxian background. Yet, Adorno's analysis was too severe for many critics, leaving no room for exploring the more positive aspects of contemporary culture. Meanwhile, the evident success of capitalism forced Marxists to provide cultural accounts of its persistence and of the potential for resistance to it. As O'Connor contends, 'In this context Adorno's Culture Industry, as cultural collapse or as total system, was subjected to increased scrutiny; on the one hand the Culture Industry had grown enormously in scope and visibility since his first writing, but on the other, it was clear that his account of it was simply not adequate' (2007: 18).

In the 1970s and 1980s a loosely connected group of academics began to re-evaluate Adorno's thesis (Garnham, 1987; Miège, 1987; Ryan, 1992).

They felt that it was economically deterministic and elitist and set about examining cultural industries as sites not just of economic and ideological determination, but of contestation, complexity and struggle. Questions emerged about the value differentiation that was implied in Adorno's work between 'high art' and 'low culture', with questions being asked about whose interests high culture served, and what funding arrangements might allow it to be produced. There was a stronger engagement with and positive evaluation of popular culture, no longer seen as the ideological conduit of state power, but recognized as a space for resistance and play (de Certeau, 1984).

Examining the specific and differentiated features of the 'cultural industries', issues were explored such as why a cultural industry would produce a text that was antithetical to capital's interests. Cultural industries were understood to primarily produce texts as profit-generating commodities, but operating within a context of great risk, and so needing to do what they can to get a 'hit' (Garnham, 1987: 56). Strategies used by cultural industries to ensure profit are numerous and include the following: maximizing the repertoire to produce product differentiation, which provides a greater assurance of a hit among the many sure misses, in order to deal with the 'uncertainty principle' (Caves, 2000; Curran, 2000: 20; Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 19); the creation of artificial scarcity through strategies such as retaining copyright on the cultural product, and vertical integration, allowing the company to control the release of cultural products and through corporate strategies such as 'concentration, internationalisation and cross-sector ownership' (Curran, 2000: 20). Such political economic analysis enabled scholars to take a more sophisticated approach to cultural industries.

Therefore, the term 'cultural industries' itself was a reaction against the 'culture industry', which had become a shorthand for discussing the shortcomings of contemporary cultural life. As O'Connor points out:

It involved a conceptual shift that by the early 1980s had given rise to a much more sophisticated and empirically based understanding of the complex structure and variable dynamics at work in the cultural industries. (O'Connor, 2007: 27)

The use of the plural term 'industries' is significant, because this school of thought rejected the use of the singular term, which implied a 'unified field', 'where all the different forms of cultural production which co-exist in modern life are assumed to obey the same logic' (Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 16). Miège (1987) also rejected Adorno and Horkheimer's nostalgic attachment to pre-industrial forms of cultural production.

For Miège, whilst cultural production had brought about a greater commodification of cultural goods, it also offered the possibilities for culture to develop in new, innovative directions. The commodification of culture was also seen by these writers as incomplete, as *contested*, rather than the always already complete process suggested by Adorno and Horkheimer. The ‘cultural industries’ approach seeks to research the experiential terrain of labour for cultural producers and examines the distinctive features of cultural commodities. This approach is more successful, because it acknowledges the complex, contested nature of the cultural industries, one that allows for both structure *and* agency. As Garnham argues, ‘the cultural market ... cannot be read as a destruction of high culture by vulgar commercialism or as a suppression of authentic working-class culture, but should be read as a complex hegemonic dialectic of liberation and control’ (1987: 61).

Simultaneously, there was an increasing interest in creative labour, an issue ignored by Adorno. Sociologists such as Miège (1987) and Ryan (1992) explored the features of creative work. Ryan was able to show how cultural industries have to give artists relative freedom and autonomy, as opposed to other workers within capitalism, because this was needed for the artist to produce a successful product. In this sense capital seeks ways to control other aspects of the production process but is forced to grant (limited) autonomy to cultural producers (Ryan, 1992: 44). Miège showed that as a result of the autonomy given to creative workers, there was a massive oversupply of labour for creative jobs, explaining why artists tend to suffer from underemployment and insecurity (1987: 82–3). During the 1970s and 1980s, a number of key studies of cultural production emerged which, whilst guided by a diversity of analytical and empirical approaches, were formative in terms of placing cultural production under scholarly scrutiny, focusing on issues such as ideology in news production (Schlesinger, 1987), production processes (Elliot, 1972) and cultural sociology (Hirsch, 1978)

The cultural industries approach is crucial to studies of creative labour in that it is concerned with studying cultural producers who are almost entirely absent from much media political economy research from Adorno onwards. Yet, in a period of media conglomeration, deregulation and concentration ‘the cultural industries approach has emphasised the conditions facing cultural workers as a result of these processes’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 34). This approach is at pains to stress the link between the conditions of labour on the ground for cultural workers and the cultural texts that are produced within those working conditions.

It is also important to consider the policy shift from ‘cultural industries’ to ‘creative industries’ that took place in the 1990s. The publication of the Australian Creative Nation report in 1994 was the first time that the term ‘creative industries’ was used, and it was quickly picked up enthusiastically by the incoming New Labour government in the UK in 1997 and developed substantially. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) was pivotal to the promotion and circulation of this new term, which found early expression in the two Creative Industries Task Force Mapping Documents (1998, 2001b). The creative industries are defined in the 2001 Creative Industries Mapping Document as ‘those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of economic property’. They include: advertising; architecture; art and antiques; crafts; design; designer fashion; film and video; interactive leisure software; music; the performing arts; publishing; software and computer services; television and radio.

Since publication, however, this has widely been seen by critics as an overly broad definition which has caused considerable controversy since its emergence (for a full account, see Hesmondhalgh, 2008: 559–60). Suffice to say that the shift to the creative industries was primarily an economic move by government, who ‘suddenly’ discovered that the long-neglected cultural industries were in fact a ‘national success story’ which could be promoted internationally, and which had a whole range of direct and indirect economic and social impacts (Belfiore, 2002).

The ‘creativity script’ (Peck, 2005: 749) involves an aggressive positioning of the cultural and ‘content’ industries at the heart of the new networked knowledge economies of post-industrial society, with ‘creativity’ (the definition of which is left deliberately vague) as a precondition for economic success. The policy shift to the concept of creative industries was radical in that it heralded a move from seeing culture and the arts as sectors to be supported through state subsidies, to seeing them as critical components within a globalized knowledge economy (O’Connor, 2007). According to the creative industries script as developed since 1997, and which has since spread globally (Wang, 2004), culture, creativity and the cultural industries have been reconfigured as engines of economic growth and social transformation, offering the hope of generating capital accumulation through the development of creative clusters, with the promise of making the UK the ‘world’s creative hub’ (Purnell, 2005). As the discourse of the creative industries increasingly went global, scholarship in this area has proliferated, as

academics from across disciplines began to undertake a renewed and often critical analysis of cultural production. In the section which follows, a broad outline of the differentiated dimensions of this discussion is provided.

A renewed analysis of cultural industries: flexible accumulation and the reorganization of cultural production

Acknowledging macro-scale material, ideological and sociological transformations, recent studies of cultural industries have approached the field with fresh theoretical insights. This literature has examined the rise of networking, new socialities in the workplace, emotional labour and the emergence of particular forms of selfhood and subjectivity amongst cultural workers, which it is argued are aligned to a 'technology of the self' encouraged by neoliberal late capitalism. This work is disparate, encompassing a broad range of concerns and creative occupations, often polemical, and indicative of potential new research routes and methodologies.

Cultural production researchers on a global level have examined the implications of flexible accumulation on the structure, evolution and management of the cultural industries. Influential work has emerged from the field of human geography and economic sociology, investigating issues such as 'clustering' (Pratt, 2004), co-location (Pratt, 2005, 2006), cultural regeneration and gentrification (Zukin, 1982) and globalization (Scott, 2000, 2004, 2005). This work has been closely linked to questions of urban geography and culturally led regeneration, and has used empirical methodologies in order to investigate the material features of creative environments. Other work has explored the impact of flexible accumulation on cultural production from the perspective of the media or cultural organization itself, exploring the changing economic and organizational structures of cultural production (e.g. Blair and Rainnie, 2000; Randle et al., 2003).

Flexible accumulation within media production has meant that there has been a process of decentralization and a rise in casualization: increasingly key creative functions are carried out by networks of companies, who employ people largely on a contract freelance project basis. As Curran argues: 'post-Fordist production methods have, among other things, introduced decentralised networks of companies and highly skilled, flexible and professional workforces' (2000: 27). Crucially, flexible accumulation has meant that media organizations outsource more of the creative work of cultural production and

concentrate on the core functions of financial operations, distribution and commissioning.

Significant research has examined cultural production under conditions of flexible accumulation. Scott (2005) has focused on Hollywood, exploring the distributed geography of cultural production, and has made useful links to the organization of cultural industries generally. Miller et al. (2005) has analysed the outsourcing of Hollywood production processes, in what he calls that 'New International Division of Labor' (NICL). From a human geography perspective Pratt (1997, 2002, 2006) has explored the creative ecology in a number of spheres including advertising and new media, in places such as San Francisco and Soho, London. This research has pointed out the densely interrelated and highly mobile spatial and human geographies of creative labour markets. Networks are the ubiquitous organizing dynamic of these industries, in terms of recruiting, finding work, sharing knowledge and support (Pratt, 1997, 2002, 2004; Scott, 2000, 2005). In the highly casualized, flexible labour markets of the cultural industries, this networked organizational dynamic enables individuals to negotiate risk, develop social capital and gain crucial industry knowledge which act as a means of competitive advantage. This work shows us the crucial importance of *place* as a way of understanding the dynamics of cultural production. Despite the so-called 'death of distance' (Cairncross, 1998), this research has shown that in fact the opposite largely holds true in creative industries: proximity to colleagues and competitors is crucial as 'clusters' of production are the dominant model for successful and high-growth creative ecologies.

Network society and network sociality

In such an environment, interaction between firms and between individuals often takes place within networks. Here, we are dealing with two separate issues. First, the economic structure of production and of organization has become increasingly decentralized and networked (Castells, 1996). Second, research has pointed to the appearance of forms of 'network sociality' within late capitalist labour markets, particularly amongst individuals working in the cultural industries (Wittel, 2001). Clearly, these two issues are connected, but it is important to think through the nature of the connection. The 'network society' does not necessarily automatically produce 'network sociality', but rather that network sociality emerges as a response to (a) information communications technology transformations which facilitate networked modes of communication (i.e.

email, texts, mobile phones, instant messaging and social networking websites); (b) precarious labour markets, where individuals need to find new ways of finding work and making contacts; and (c) as a vastly technologically intensified form of the networking that has actually always occurred within creative labour markets. While there is an obvious link between the network society and 'network sociality', it is important to recognize that network sociality is not purely a determined feature of the network society, but reflects both macro-changes, and also internal specificities within particular creative labour markets.

Exploring the consequences of the shift to a network society, Wittel (2001) has argued that network sociality functions within the cultural industries as a new means of sociality, one that is fleeting, ephemeral, intense, but ultimately shallow and individualized. This is useful for thinking through the implications of the organization of work, and the potential for exclusion that occurs in the 'guest list' mentality. As McRobbie has noted, work in the creative economy 'requires endurance and stamina', where networking, and attending the right parties, with no guarantee of financial return, is par for the course (2004: 195).

Empirical work confirms that networking is indeed a vital feature of seeking competitive advantage in the creative workplace. Under these new conditions, networking becomes central to finding work, as Ursell (1997) and Spence (1999) have examined in relation to the television industry. People are employed on the basis of 'reputation and familiarity, conveyed in a mix of personal acquaintance, kinship, past working connections, and past achievements' (Ursell, 2000: 811). Indeed, as Ursell points out, in this creative environment 'networking as a considered effort of self-enterprise is the norm. Those who do not or cannot network are substantially disadvantaged' (2000: 813). The ability to join the networks is seen as a decisive factor in ensuring optimum access to work opportunities in an uncertain industry; as Paterson writes, 'many producers use a limited pool of known colleagues for productions and entering one of these networks can be difficult' (2001: 515). Similarly McRobbie points to the pre-eminence of networking as the dominant paradigm for finding work, which she suggests has a relationship to the 'club culture sociality' which is prevalent for contemporary young people (McRobbie, 2002a: 521). But as she points out, this creates new forms of opacity and discrimination in cultural labour markets where one's ability to find work is predicated on one's ability to network after hours:

[T]he club culture question of 'are you on the guest list?' is extended to recruitment and personnel, so that getting an interview for contract creative work depends on informal knowledge and contacts, often friendships. (2002a: 523)

Casualization and precarious labour

A key focus in much recent cultural production research is the growth of casualized, 'precarious' labour in the 'middle layers' of society, which is particularly noticeable in creative labour markets. Studies have pointed out the impact of flexible accumulation on working lives in cultural industries: in fashion (McRobbie, 1998), film (Blair and Rainnie, 2000), television (Paterson, 2001; Ursell, 2000), music (Hesmondhalgh, 1998; Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010; Toynbee, 2000) and other areas of creative labour. Considering the impact of flexible accumulation on television specifically in the UK, Ursell argues that 'the size of permanent staffs with terrestrial producer-broadcasters has diminished, casualisation of the labour force has increased, entry to the industry is more difficult and less well rewarded or supported, average earnings have dropped, and working terms and conditions have deteriorated' (2000: 805). Paterson also points to the transformed labour market in British television: 'freelance employment on short-term contracts became normative in the early 1990s with inevitable consequences for career patterns and with a major effect on the creative environment within which television production work was carried out' (2001: 496). Born echoes this in her research on the BBC, arguing that 'One of the most striking developments in the broadcasting industry in the eighties and nineties was the casualisation of employment, evident in the drift away from permanent staff jobs and towards a reliance on short term contracts and freelancing' (2004: 180). Furthermore, Sparks (1994) shows how, in the face of massive pressures to cut costs, independent production companies in the 1990s operated by maintaining a skeleton staff, and contracting in freelancers when commissions were won. The longitudinal research project for the BFI (British Film Institute) on the working lives of people employed in television showed how workers were forced to cope with far greater levels of uncertainty, and increasingly needed to rely on networks of friends and colleagues to find work (BFI, 1999). They were increasingly responsible for maintaining their own training, developing creative ideas on their own time, and sustaining good relationships with powerful figures such as commissioning editors. As

Paterson argues, 'these requirements had to be fulfilled with no certainty of work beyond the present commission or project as structures evolved and changed' (2001: 497).

The modalities of work in the cultural industries, which are largely freelance, flexible and entrepreneurial, have been seen by some researchers as indicative of how we are all increasingly having to negotiate our working lives in a state that is 'permanently transitional' (McRobbie, 2004). If early cultural production research took place in relatively stable environments where nearly all staff held permanent jobs (e.g. Burns, 1977; Schlesinger, 1987; Silverstone, 1985), then new research in this area has explored the impact of flexible accumulation and casualization in cultural production (e.g. Paterson, 2001; Ursell, 1997, 2003).

Therefore, for some writers, creative labour acts as a template for new modes of work within late capitalism (e.g. Lazzarato, 1996; McRobbie, 2004; Ross, 2004). Certainly, the shift in creative labour echoes wider transformations in the nature of work in late capitalism. Flexible accumulation, coupled with the dismantling of unionized labour, has also caused a huge rise in far more precarious labour relations. This process has occurred partly as a result of the flexible employment structures created under conditions of flexible accumulation. While this has led writers to talk enthusiastically of 'portfolio workers' (Handy, 1995: 26–7), in fact for many people 'portfolio work' has merely meant a series of insecure and low-status service jobs (see Thompson et al., 2000). Moreover, the argument that creative workers are 'pioneers of the new economy' has been critiqued for over-privileging the figure of the artist, and ignoring the fact that precarious and unpaid work has always been a feature of capitalism for those without power (such as migrant workers, domestic labour, 'grey economy' labour) (Vishmidt, 2005). Such critics argue that it is only because creative labour is more visible, as a result of the class of people undertaking it, that it has been noticed in this way.

'Immaterial labour' and Autonomist Marxism

The cultural industries and creative labour have also been analysed through the lens of Autonomist Marxist theory, in particular the work of Hardt and Negri (2000), Virno (2003) and Lazzarato (1996). This work seeks to explain changes to work through the concept of 'immaterial labour' and 'precarity' as a means of gaining a purchase on shifts within the mode of production in late capitalism. Immaterial

labour describes the transformed nature of work, where labour is increasingly affective and knowledge based (Lazzarato, 1996). Paradoxically echoing the management theorists of the 'new economy' (Knell, 2000; Leadbeater, 1999), the three key aspects of this new production paradigm are described as: 'the communicative labour of industrial production that has newly become linked in informational networks, the interactive labour of symbolic analysis and problem solving, and the labour of the production and manipulation of effects' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 30). It is described as 'labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 290). This concept, which places the production of knowledge, communication and culture at the centre of changes to capitalism, has acted as a theoretical catalyst for researchers attempting to mount a critical analysis of the nature of work in the cultural and creative industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2008: 565).

According to these theorists, immaterial labour has emerged under the conditions of flexible accumulation, as a direct result of capital's dynamic of constant growth. Hardt and Negri's (2000) analysis of contemporary capitalism argues that work has been transformed by the widespread use of computers, and that it increasingly involves the manipulation of symbolic information. Yet, in opposition to the notion of the economy becoming more 'informational', they see labour practices as becoming more homogenized, as workers modify their actions through use, through a process of constant interactivity, 'along the model of computer operation'. Furthermore, they contend that as labour becomes increasingly affective, and emotional, then contact and interaction also become more important. On the one hand, this has negative consequences in that late capitalism seeks to link knowledge, creativity, thought to management – imprisoning the capitalist worker through the workings of desire, emotion, knowledge and sociality (Seymour, 2005: 13). Yet on the other hand, as a result of these changes Hardt and Negri (2000) argue that labour has become more cooperative, involving networks and new types of sociality.

From this analysis, the Marxian leap is made which claims that 'immaterial labor thus seems to provide the potential for a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 294). Immaterial labour, whilst ostensibly a key part of capital's dominance over the individual, holds within it the embryonic potential for a contestation of the capital's power. Foti has even announced that 'the precariat is to postindustrialism as the proletariat was to industrialism' (Foti, cited in Seymour,

2005: 8). Moreover, Neilson and Rossiter have argued that immaterial labour contains ‘potentialities that spring from workers’ own refusal of labour and subjective demands for flexibility – demands that in many ways precipitate capital’s own accession to interminable restructuring and rescaling’ (2005: 1).

As Hesmondhalgh has argued, ‘It is this combination of rampantly optimistic Marxism, combined with a poststructuralist concern with questions of subjectivity and affect that has helped to make Hardt and Negri’s work so popular amongst contemporary left intellectuals’ (2008: 565). Certainly, there has been an explosion in the popularity of the concept of ‘immaterial labour’, particularly amongst those who have found it useful as a way of understanding the contemporary policy focus on creative industries, and the apparent injunction towards particular modes of working. Following on from this work, a number of writers have made use of the phrase ‘precarity’ to describe the new relation between work and capital which has occurred under the conditions of immaterial labour (Iles, 2005; Neilson and Rossiter, 2005; Tsianos and Papadopoulos, 2006). As Iles argues ‘“Precariousness” and “precarious work” have rapidly become terms for thinking through the collapse of the distinction between labour and non-labour and the expansion of capitalist forms of valorisation over all aspects of life’ (2005: 34). However, the term has become a rather ‘catch-all’ phrase, used to describe a wide variety of different forms of flexible labour, which are seen as exploitative and include temporary, seasonal, illegal work, as well as other ‘precarious’ aspects of life such as housing, debt, relationships and the decline of welfare provision, and as such has lost much of its explanatory or theoretical power.

Useful as this work is in terms of drawing attention to these issues, and to the politics of ‘precarity’, the work that has been carried out in its name has been highly speculative and lacking in empirical evidence (Hesmondhalgh, 2008: 565). It fails to ground its assumptions in research on the cultural industries, and moreover, the claim that immaterial labour holds within it the seeds for a radical transformation of capitalism seems rather fanciful in the current historical moment, to say the least. Indeed, the very concept of ‘immaterial labour’ has been roundly critiqued by commentators who argue that it represents a naïve celebration of the power of labour against capital, and that it overlooks the fact that labour continues to be, for the majority of people in the world, all too ‘material’ (Thompson, 2005). Indeed, knowledge workers who identify and solve problems and manipulate symbols and ideas, constitute only 10–15% of the working population in both the UK and the USA (Thompson et al., 2000).

Most actual growth has actually occurred in low-skill, low-wage jobs such as serving, waiting, guarding, cleaning and catering (Crouch et al., 1999).

Despite these criticisms, this work has opened up an important debate around the political and social implications of the appropriation of culture by capital. For example, Neilson and Rossiter (2005), along with other writers, have shown how ‘creative industries’ policy neglects the precarity of creative work in two key ways: first by refusing to acknowledge the insecure and precarious conditions facing cultural workers; and second, by ignoring the fragile ecology of cultural production by reducing all analysis to the empirical determinism of mapping documents, feasibility studies and value chains. This work also opens up the possibility of a post-individualistic politics, where the idea is explored of individualization giving way to ‘new productive singularities’ (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 395). As McRobbie has argued, this allows us to consider how ‘Work (and here creative work) can become a site for re-socialization at the heart of everyday life’ (2004: 199).

Cultural economy: subjectivity, affect and emotional labour

Two issues can be seen to arise in particular strands of the work outlined above. The work emerging from human geography and management studies is rich in empirical detail, but arguably fails to analyse the sociological, political and cultural consequences of the new configuration of creative labour. Conversely, the ‘precarity’ work, which examines the rise of immaterial labour and focuses on creative labour as both a site of precarity, and also a utopian space for resistance, exhibits a failure to provide empirical evidence, thereby addressing the political question, but failing to address the sociological dynamics of production. However, it does draw our attention to the issues of subjectivity and affect which are increasingly central to creative labour.

In this final section I explore the work that examines these micro-issues of subjectivity, autonomy and emotional labour, at a sociological level, through empirical research within a cultural industry. Usefully, much of this work is grounded in sociological analyses of specific cultural industries, and it moves the debate forward providing exciting new theoretical insights into creative labour as a whole. This work suggests that questions of identity, subjectivity and affect are vital in understanding the macro-structures of creative labour, moving us beyond a deterministic approach, but one that is still attentive to structural questions. Despite the clear differences within the fields of study, and the varied

mode of analysis, a critical survey of this literature shows that there are also striking similarities within the creative labour markets that are studied by these authors. Here I shall examine the key themes that have emerged from this sociological analysis, and consider their implications for this study of creative labour.

Pleasure at work: the affective demands of creative labour

What emerges consistently from creative labour research is the pleasure which cultural workers derive from their work, and the enthusiasm with which they launch themselves into their chosen careers. This suggests that creative work is a clear site of 'emotional labour', which Hochschild identifies as a key element of labour in an increasingly service economy (1983). Emotional labour involves 'deep acting', where workers employ their emotional lives as part of the labour process. It is a process that signifies increasing management control over the personal, traditionally 'non-work' elements of our lives, for as Hochschild contends, 'All companies, but especially paternalistic, non-union ones, try as a matter of policy to fuse a sense of personal satisfaction with a sense of company well-being and identity' (1983: 132). Indeed, for emotional workers, 'emotion work, feeling rules, and social exchange have been removed from the private domain and placed in a public one, where they are processed, standardized, and subjected to hierarchical control' (1983: 153).

Of course, creative labour has always been a 'labour of love', but this signifies something new. The available research shows that many people's experience of cultural production is one of (self-)exploitation, inequality and exclusion. A striking feature of recent research is the re-emergence of gender, ethnic and class inequalities, particularly around issues of access and employment practices. Gill (2002) and McRobbie (2002b) have pointed to the exclusionary nature of network culture, where to find work you have to be part of the 'club culture', and hang out with contacts in trendy bars. Yet this mode of human capital is only available for those with the stamina and ability to let work into all areas of their life. It precludes single parents, and those who have lost the stamina of youth (McRobbie, 2002b: 100). Moreover, (self-)exploitation is rampant. McRobbie (1998) has shown how in the fashion industry, people will offer free labour in order to gain credibility and to make contacts, which will hopefully lead to a paid commission. Ursell has also shown how many entrant level graduates will work for nothing in the television industry in the hope of

securing paid work in the future (2000: 814). However, despite the difficulties of finding work and making a living, ever greater numbers of people are attempting to find their way into the cultural and creative industries, seeking autonomy, self-fulfilment, and perhaps more than just a touch of glamour. As McRobbie points out, this issue of 'glamour' as a central incentive of working in creative labour has been mistakenly ignored, for in her analysis it forms a crucial legitimating function for the perceived cultural value of creative work (McRobbie, 2002b).

This would seem to be a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, there are the many attendant pressures of insecurity, exploitation and low pay which mark the experiences of many cultural producers. Yet, on the other hand, these workers appear to be at pains to stress the pleasure that they derive from their labour. Work for these cultural producers has become a site of self-fulfilment, autonomy, independence and even of intense 'pleasure in work' (Donzelot, 1991). How can we understand this? Clearly, labour markets in the modern (post-)industrialized economy, particularly those in the 'creative industries', have come to be seen as being spaces for achieving these goals. For example, Florida describes how the 'no-collar workplace' 'replaces traditional hierarchical systems of control with new forms of self-management, peer-recognition and pressure and intrinsic forms of motivation, which I call *soft control*' (2002: 13). Here, the search for self-actualization and autonomy is central to the restructuring of labour:

We trade job security for autonomy. In addition to being fairly compensated for the work we do and the skills we bring, we want the ability to learn and grow, shape the content of our work, control our own schedules and express our identities through work. (Florida, 2002: 13)

Here, we can connect this mode of self-actualizing work as part of the logic of individualization. As Heelas argues, 'people have been thrown back on *themselves* as the key *source of significance*' (2002: 92). There is a power dynamic to this, in which workers are offered the 'reward' of autonomy as part of the package of benefits which a 'creative' job provides. The discourse of creativity, entrepreneurialism and the 'talent led economy' works as a form of *governmentality* (Foucault, 1991), regulating the subjectivities of creative workers so that they embrace the stringent demands of work in casualized, deregulated cultural labour markets.

For Foucault government is a general technical form which encompasses everything from self-

control to the control of populations. Governmentality is the process of regulation of individuals from the inside, and describes how social power is assured and reproduced through discourses and processes that encourage individuals to fashion themselves in ways that suit the demands of the dominant social group. The promotion of cultural values in the workplace works in the interest of neoliberal laissez-faire capitalism. As du Gay writes:

‘Culture’ is accorded a privileged position ... because it is seen to structure the way people think, feel and act in organizations. The aim is to produce the sort of meanings that will enable people to make the right and necessary contribution to the success of the organization for which they work. (1996: 41)

As such the ‘freedom’ of creative labour becomes a highly effective technology of the self. As Miller and Rose show, creation of meaning at work is a regulatory practice: ‘Organizations are to get the most out of their employees ... by releasing the psychological strivings of individuals for autonomy and creativity and channelling them into the search of the firm for excellence and success’ (1997: 330).

Creative workers embrace a deregulated working sphere because it is promoted in social discourse as a place for fashioning an identity, perhaps even attaining an aspect of celebrity. Work in this new creative environment becomes a site of intense personal satisfaction, of reflexive self-organizing, of affective pleasure; yet it is simultaneously sometimes exploitative, certainly precarious and prone to ethnic, gender and class inequalities. Failure is individualized. What is striking about the available research on work histories in cultural production is the high level of attrition as cultural workers get older and disillusioned. As McRobbie has asked: ‘How many times can people re-invent themselves? In a winner-takes-all market, risk taking takes its toll’ (2002b: 103).

Self-commodification and emotional labour

Approaching the issue of cultural production from a perspective that emphasizes identity, subjectivity and affect as key features of creative labour, writers such as McRobbie (2002b), Ursell (2000), Ross (2004) and Gill (2002), amongst others, have done crucial work to explore how workers, by embracing the difficulties of work in creative sectors, are actively involved in the reproduction of that system of commodification and exploitation. Their work shows how creative labour places very particular demands

on workers by utilizing the self-realization dynamic at the heart of individualization. For these critics, creative labour is organized through particular practices and discourses which encourage the investment of emotion and affect as a central facet of the labour process. Their approach, which is concerned with creative labour as a site of affective labour, and which encourages particular ‘technologies of the self’, allows us to understand why cultural workers not only put up with often highly precarious, poorly paid and exploitative working conditions, but indeed embrace them. This work also shows the new forms of discrimination, hierarchy and exploitation which emerge under the deregulated conditions of what Ross (2004) has called ‘the humane workplace’.

Ross, writing about new media workers in New York’s ‘Silicon Alley’ during the dot.com crash in the late 1990s, describes the significance of ‘the industrialization of bohemia’ that has taken place since the 1960s, where capitalism absorbs a counterculture and then profits from it (Ross, 2004). He describes the emergence of what he calls ‘the humane workplace’ (Ross, 2004), where young new media workers are able to wear the clothes they want to, are encouraged to express themselves individually and creatively, and where work and play are interconnected. On the surface, all would seem well – happy, seemingly autonomous workers, room for self-expression, and high levels of productivity and economic growth. Yet he also shows that despite this, these workers are also highly de-unionized, working incredibly long hours, often with no health insurance and other social security benefits. Here, the hidden power function of the humane workplace emerges, which is ‘to extract value from any waking moment of an employee’s day’ (Ross, 2004: 146). Yet this is achieved through supposed autonomy, for as Ross argues, no-collar work is able to ‘enlist employees’ freest thoughts and impulses in the service of salaried time’ (2004: 19).

Similarly, Gill has shown how new media work is able to present itself as ‘cool, creative and egalitarian’, therefore using cultural values to promote a very particular mode of flexible labour, with all the attendant pains described above. Yet significant hierarchies and insecurities exist, and gender discrimination is rife. Paradoxically, it is the very features of new media work that are valorized (informality, autonomy and flexibility), which facilitate the emergence of what she calls ‘new forms of gender inequality’ (Gill, 2002: 71). The ‘wired’ portfolio workers that she studies, much beloved of future-gazers, politicians and policy-writers, imbued with the values of entrepreneurial individualism and who are said to ‘prize freedom, autonomy and choice’ (Leadbeater and

Oakley, 1999: 15), in fact find that the individualization of risk which accompanies project-based careers provokes deep anxiety (Gill, 2002: 81).

Conclusion

What emerges clearly from this review of cultural industries and creative labour research is that there is a pressing need for grounded empirical sociological research that examines the new economic, structural and material reconfigurations of the cultural industries, yet also is alert to the processes that are particularly noticeable in creative labour markets, around subjectivity, identity, individualization and affect.

From a political point of view, the work of the 'precarity' writers offers up political openings, particularly in terms of how we might think through the long-term implications of a transformation in capital accumulation, new modes of working, and the valorization of 'creativity' within contemporary policy discourse. Yet, as argued earlier, much of this research is speculative, unempirical, generalizing and unsubstantiated. The theoretical rush to detect new forms of collectivism within modes of immaterial labour looks rather hopeful in the present individualized context, particularly without sociological evidence to back up these claims.

On the other hand, the 'governmentality' strand of work outlined above, crucial as it has been to creating new critical openings in the study of creative work, arguably creates a mode of powerlessness, leaving little room for a more equal, social configuration of creative work. As Banks (2007) has debated, there is little space for a transformative politics within this theoretical mode. Subsequently, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010: 30–5) have engaged further with this issue in their book-length treatment of creative work, drawing on moral philosophy (Keats, 2000) and social theory (Sayer, 2011) to develop a significant and strongly normative differentiation between 'good' and 'bad' work, addressing a significant gap in the research. As Banks has argued, 'certain forms of empirical engagement can help qualify – and thereby ultimately strengthen – arguments concerning the nature of creative labour in the cultural industries in modern societies' (2007: 7).

Annotated further reading

Those interested in exploring the issues raised in this article are advised to read Hesmondhalgh's chapter, 'Cultural and creative industries', in *The Sage Handbook of Cultural Analysis* (2008), for a much fuller discussion of the cultural industries academic tradition, and the

differences between fields of study. Banks's book-length treatment of creative labour, *The Politics of Cultural Work* (2007), also demands close attention for critically evaluating different ways in which creative workers have been conceptualized throughout history, and developing an exploratory, yet realistic politics of hope in relation to creative work.

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résumé L'objectif explicite de cet article est l'étude du travail créatif dans les industries culturelles. Il commence par explorer le passage du 'industrie de la culture' à 'industries culturelles' à 'industries créatives'. Puis, reliant les industries culturelles et le travail créatif, il décrit les débats contemporains dans le domaine de la créativité des études du travail, y compris d'importants développements théoriques qui ont eu lieu sur la théorie de dessin gouvernementalité, marxisme autonomiste et perspectives sociologiques. Enfin, l'article examine les directions possibles pour de futures recherches, arguant de la nécessité d'équilibrer les développements théoriques avec le travail sociologique plus à la terre dans le champ.

mots-clés les communications ♦ industries culturelles ♦ néolibéralisme ♦ du travail créatif

resumen El objetivo explícito de este artículo es el estudio de la obra creativa dentro de las industrias culturales. Se inicia mediante la exploración de la transición de la 'industria cultural' a la 'industria cultural' a 'industrias creativas'. Entonces, la conexión de las industrias culturales y el trabajo creativo, se exponen los debates contemporáneos en el campo de los estudios del trabajo creativo, incluyendo importantes desarrollos teóricos que han tenido lugar en la teoría del dibujo gubernamentalidad, el marxismo autonomista y perspectivas sociológicas. Por último, el artículo considera las posibles direcciones para la investigación futura, con el argumento de la necesidad de equilibrar el trabajo con los desarrollos teóricos más arraigado en el campo sociológico.

palabras clave comunicaciones ♦ industrias culturales ♦ neoliberalismo ♦ del trabajo creativo