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CHAPTER FOR 'CULTURAL WORK AND HIGHER EDUCATION'

Chapter Nine: Negotiating a contemporary creative identity

AUTHORS: Stephanie Taylor and Karen Littleton

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CONTACT DETAILS FOR COMMUNICATIONS:

Dr Stephanie Taylor

Psychology, Social Sciences

The Open University

Email: s.j.a.taylor@open.ac.uk

Introduction

More than two decades of discussion of the cultural and creative industries by academics, educationalists and policy-makers has led, inevitably, to considerable interest in the experience and motivations of the people working in these industries. One interpretation is that such workers are drawn into a form of ‘self-exploitation’ (McRobbie, 1998) by their creative ambitions, becoming wholly subject to the requirements and interests of industries and employers. In this chapter we draw on theory from social, narrative and discursive psychology to propose a more complex form of identification or subjectification (see Wetherell, 2008) which is linked to the multiple positionings and meanings in play around creativity and creative work. Our analyses of this complexity and multiplicity offer new explanations for the choice of a creative career and for problems confronted by creative workers. In particular, we explore conflicts around the taking up of a creative identity. These conflicts are shown to be associated with and impact on certain categories of workers, reinforcing previously ascribed ‘deficit’ identities (Reynolds and Taylor, 2005). The chapter therefore challenges previous arguments concerning the motivation and experience of creative workers. In addition, it offers a new understanding of the under-representation and exclusion in the contemporary creative workforce which was noted in Kate Oakley’s opening chapter and is also discussed by other contributors to this volume¹.

The first section below sets out how we understand ‘creative’ and ‘creative industries’ and introduces the focus of the chapter on particular categories of worker who are under-represented in these industries. Later sections outline alternative theorizations of the contemporary creative worker and describe the empirical research which the chapter refers to. We then discuss conflicts which are experienced by many creative workers and

the particular difficulties encountered by certain categories of workers, with particular reference to the example of women creatives. We propose that in some cases, their response to the difficulties may further limit their participation in creative work. The conclusion of the chapter discusses possible implications of this research for educationalists, including higher education institutions (HEIs) such as art colleges.

Contemporary aspects of creative work

This chapter adopts 'creative' as a broad term embracing two relevant areas of practice. The first is the 'creative industries' as originally defined by a UK government paper in 2001 (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2001). These industries supposedly encompass the various activities and occupations associated with the production of meaning, signifiers and intellectual property (Howkins, 2001), already known as the cultural industries, together with the various specialist occupations of the creative arts and design. The original list of industries was 'advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, television and radio' (DCMS, 2001). The term 'creative industries' has subsequently been taken up internationally, with some varying references in its use by different governments (Keane, 2009; Power, 2009) but with a general emphasis on 'individual creativity, skill and talent' (emphasis added) as well as 'a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property' (DCMS, 2001).

The second, overlapping and connected reference of the term 'creative' as we use it in the chapter is to the spectrum of specializations associated with art schools or, using the British term, art colleges. The definition of the creative industries cited above gives a new

status and function to these HEIs as entry points for creative careers. Their range of courses reflects the expanded reference of supposedly creative occupations which has been noted by McRobbie (2002, p.517) and others. In addition, the colleges can be seen to function more conventionally as points of connection to the networks and communities associated with the arts and design. These creative 'worlds' (cf. Becker, 1982) are of continuing importance for creative workers and sustain their claims to a creative identity, especially under circumstances of precarious employment in the contemporary creative industries (Taylor and Littleton, 2012).

Following from the often noted under-representation of certain categories of workers in the creative industries, one point which our research has explored is exclusion (Taylor and Littleton, 2008b). It is widely accepted that women are under-represented among creative workers (see Allen, in this volume), as too are people from black and ethnic minorities (BME)² (see Saha in this volume). Our programme of empirical research, described in detail in a later section, consisted of a series of interview-based studies with participants recruited through London art colleges so our participants do not include people who are absolutely excluded, since all of them had at least begun a creative career by attending art college.). Oakley has noted that in HEIs like art colleges there is often 'a general reluctance to acknowledge problems of inequality'. Furthermore, in statistical terms under-representation in the wider creative workforce is to some extent obscured among art college students. One notable point is that women are a majority of art college students on many courses (Pollard, Connor and Hunt, 2008), even though this does not follow through into subsequent employment in the sector as a whole. Another is that art colleges, like those through which we recruited our research participants, often have a high intake of international students, from most parts of the world and therefore include people who might be categorized in the UK context as BME. In this chapter, we explore

conflicts around a creative identification and discuss reasons why they may impact unequally on different categories of people. We then outline a process by which, we suggest, some people may be diverted from a creative project towards a different focus and away from participation within the contemporary creative workforce.

Theorizations of the creative worker

Discussions of contemporary creative workers invoke different theorizations of the person or subject. Some more celebratory accounts, for example of the opportunities available through portfolio working (see Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999; Bridgstock, 2005), adopt a minimal theorization of a rational economic actor. In this view, the worker coolly appraises all the available options and chooses the one which will result in maximum personal advantage. More critical discussions of the hardships and difficulties of contemporary creative work, such as low pay and precarious employment (Gill and Pratt, 2008) have drawn on the theorizations of a contemporary subject associated with the writing of Giddens and Beck, among others (e.g. Beck, 2000; Giddens, 1991). The worker is understood to be engaged in an individual project of self-actualisation (e.g. McRobbie, 1998) which provides a motivation for tolerating the difficulties of creative work.

A somewhat different version of this argument draws on theories of subjectification, such as the work of Nikolas Rose (following Foucault), that is, of the creative worker as subject to the larger interests of neo-liberal industry (Rose, 1989, 1996). The interpretation here is that difficulties and hardship are accepted as part of a project of self-regulation and discipline by a worker in pursuit of future creative fulfilment which will never be attained. As in the previous account, the rewards of creative work are

assumed to be largely illusory. Creative working is theorized as a site of subjectification in that the worker is subject to the needs and interests of the cultural and creative industries. These industries are interpreted as a phenomenon of late capitalism, a global sector in which market fluctuations and risk are passed directly to the individual self-employed worker, without the cushioning of a meso-layer of institutional employers providing long-term contracts and some degree of insurance and benefits.

Discussions of contemporary creative workers in these terms rest tacitly or explicitly on the apparent congruence between theorizations of the contemporary subject and the classic image of the artist or variants, such as *auteur* (see McRobbie, 1998). The theorization and the image both emphasise the personal and individual, and a commitment to a project of self-actualisation. Creative making, in all its forms, can appear, therefore, to be an apposite occupation for a contemporary subject.

A somewhat different theorization of the contemporary creative worker can be derived from the work of Ian Burkitt (2008) who suggests that accounts of subjectification (such as those based on Rose's work) fail to take account of 'the relational contexts of everyday life with its various cultures and subcultures, social networks and groups, out of which emerge fully-rounded, if always unfinalized selves' (p.242). These contexts are multiple. Burkitt particularly emphasises a split between, on the one hand, the work contexts in which the power relations of neo-liberal capitalism might be seen to operate, and on the other, private life and personal relationships. Given that creative work is supposedly characterized by a merging of the two contexts, through its personalized nature, Burkitt's argument might not seem relevant to creative workers. However, his emphasis on multiple contexts accords with the complex nature of identity proposed by social and discursive psychologists (e.g. Edley, 2001; Wetherell, 1998, 2008). Following his work

and theirs, we suggest that the contemporary creative worker exemplifies a situation of incomplete subjectification. A creative identity is not a simple self-categorization and nor is it adopted 'once and for all'. Rather, there is an always incomplete project of identification as a constrained and negotiated ongoing process involving conflicts and dilemmas around the multiple sites and meanings in play.

In our view, the nature of a creative identification is therefore more complex than many other writers have allowed, at least tacitly in their accounts. Our interest in the creative person as multiply positioned, by others and in her or his own accounts, claims and projects. In the remainder of this chapter we explore some of this complexity. We look at conflicts which, we suggest, are encountered by many or most aspirant creative workers and other difficulties which are associated with particular categories of worker.

Before exploring this argument in more detail and summarising our evidence for it, in the next section we describe the empirical work through which the evidence was gathered, and we discuss in more detail the particular theorization of the person associated with our methodological approach.

Researching creative workers

The research we refer to in this chapter consisted of a series of interview-based projects conducted between 2005 and 2007 with participants recruited through London art colleges. The first two projects were with current and recent students doing postgraduate study in a range of art and design-related specializations. For the third project, we recruited participants through the student populations and alumni lists of four colleges, interviewing both current and former students. The latter included people who were

several decades beyond their main period of study for a degree, although many of them had returned to take further courses subsequently, and also to teach. This research is reported in detail in Taylor and Littleton (2008b), Taylor and Littleton (2011) and Taylor and Littleton (2012). As with other qualitative research, the sampling or choice of participants was not statistical. In addition, following the broad reference of 'creative' set out in the introduction to the chapter, participants were not selected as representing particular creative specializations³.

As noted in the introduction to the chapter, participants were recruited through art colleges but the research is not predicated specifically on educational contexts or issues. These HEIs were relevant to our research interests as entry points into careers into the contemporary creative industries. In addition, as we will discuss in more detail, art college was a site in which creative identities were aspired to and salient for participants. Various assumptions about and meanings attached to creative working circulated and were negotiated and interpreted within colleges and were given additional affective loading for students (and therefore former students) by their associations with particular people, both peers and senior figures.

Our empirical research employs a qualitative analytic approach based in narrative and discursive psychology (see Taylor and Littleton, 2006). As already noted, this entails a conceptualization of identity as complex, conflicted and processual, in the making but always incomplete or not fully resolved. In this view, who people are, and who they can become, is understood to be shaped by larger social contexts including through the ways they are positioned by others, the cultural or discursive resources available, and an ongoing project of self-making which is both active and constrained. Following this

approach, our research differs in several key respects from most other discussions of workers in the contemporary creative and cultural industries.

First, although we are interested in an insider view of workers' experience, rather than the more macro-scale discussion which accompanies writing with a focus, say, on policy, we do not analyse workers' accounts as straightforwardly expressive or descriptive of individual thoughts and feelings. We are interested in language and meanings as situated, and in talk as functional, constitutive and performative. What our participants say is, therefore, not treated straightforwardly as information, as in many qualitative research studies. Instead, the talk is analysed as a complex aggregate in which well-rehearsed accounts, for example, of early experience and memories, are re-versioned for the situated purposes of a particular telling. The talk is assumed to be functional within multiple contexts, including those of the interview, the art college and the participant's various relationships and life situations. The talk is a practice through which meanings are constituted and identity is constructed, negotiated and also performed.

A second difference concerns how we present our research findings in this chapter. In particular, we have avoided the widespread practice of presenting short illustrative quotations from pseudonymous participants. This is because such quotations can carry unintended implications. For example, 'A single quotation can be presented as if it represented the speaker's entire and unchanging world view, and one speaker can appear to stand for a wider category or categories of people' (Taylor, 2012, pp.11-12). This would not be consistent with the assumptions about the talk, and the speaker, summarised above, so in this chapter we have chosen to discuss our data without presenting direct extracts.

Thirdly, we analyse the meanings in play which are resources for our participants' talk. Although we are interested in the negotiations of identity which take place in talk, we do not assume that such meanings are purely linguistic or confined to language. Rather, we explore the cultural or discursive resources which derive from the larger society. These resources are part of the shared knowledge in circulation and the society's 'common sense' (Edley and Wetherell, 1995). Such meanings tend to be banal (cf. Billig 1995) and taken for granted. However, for individuals, these social resources can carry additional affect-laden meanings and associations from previous contexts. For example, a truism about artists never making money (part of the classic image of the artist referred to in the previous section) acquires new affective weight as advice from respected senior figures, such as tutors (Taylor and Littleton, 2008a). We suggest that this 'local' quality of resources has an additional importance in relation to continuity (Taylor, 2006). To reject or challenge a meaning becomes linked to a rejection or challenge of those from whom it is received, a potential conflict of loyalties and, in the terms of our approach, 'trouble' in the identity work or processes of negotiating a creative identification (Taylor and Littleton, 2006). An additional form of local resource is a speaker's own accounts and positionings in the contexts of previous interactions and relationships, and the talk these involved. To 'tell' oneself differently will be to risk accusations of inconsistency and even disloyalty so that, again, identity claims and positionings are troubled. Our analytic approach investigates such resources or ideas in circulation through a close analysis of participants' talk. In the following sections, we discuss recurrent images, constructions, conflicts and also absences which we detected in an analysis of multiple interviews from across the datasets of the several projects we have referred to, and we generalize on the basis of these robust patterns.

Two images of the creative maker

One such resource has already been mentioned. This is the image of the artist or creative maker as a gifted individual engaged in a personal project of exploration and making, following inspiration in search of creative fulfilment. This image is invoked not only in writing about the contemporary creative industries, as noted in a previous section, but also in the talk of our participants. In the terms of our analytic approach, set out below, it is a discursive resource which shapes their understandings of themselves and their choices and prospects.

However, there is more than one image of the artist or creative maker in play. Our research revealed a contemporary version which is different in several key respects to the Romantic vision of the artist cited by Angela McRobbie (1998), among others (Taylor and Littleton, 2012). One aspect of this different image is the value which is placed on connection. Howard S. Becker (1982) discussed connections as integral to the ‘art worlds’ or networks through which creative activities (art, crafts and others) are variously enabled, evaluated and categorized, for example, as art or not art. He was arguing against the Romantic image of the individual artist as a ‘myth’. We suggest that for the contemporary creative, doing your ‘own’ work remains an ideal but one which is recognised to depend on others, for the realisation of ambitious creative visions, as exemplars for a creative career and, in particular, as connections into the milieux which enable creative working. Such milieux are construed by creatives themselves as necessary not just in the functional ways which Becker outlines, but also as a stimulus to individual work and as a validation of both the worker and work as belonging to a larger, recognised field. This is the kind of connection, we suggest, that is associated with the cities such as New York and London which other writers have discussed as ‘global hubs’ in the creative industries (e.g. Banks, 2007). A characterization of creative workers solely

in individual terms denies or understates such vital connected aspects of their lived experience.

Conflicts around a creative identification

The image of the ‘connected creative’ would suggest that connections with other people are important for creative making and a creative career, and our research findings did support this. However, the interviews indicated that the multiple life relationships which provide both resources and audiences for a creative identification were also a source of conflict for many participants.

One source of conflict which we found to be particularly relevant to novice and aspirant creative workers, including those still at art college or recently graduating, was relationships with parents and families of upbringing. Participants benefitted from and often depended on the support offered by relatives, whether in the form of money, board or practical help assembling exhibitions. However, many families expect that art college courses will provide an entry point into secure employment whereas the colleges themselves prioritize creative practice and the importance of doing your ‘own’ work (Taylor and Littleton, 2008a)⁴.

To have someone in the family who could understand the insecurity of a creative career was said by our participants to be very helpful. However, to have a relative or partner in a related creative field was potentially problematic. Several participants had changed their specialization in order to distance themselves from the work of a creative parent. This may have been because the expectation that creative work will be your ‘own’ conflicts with the notion of a shared or inherited family project (in contrast, say, to the seeming

logic of family members being involved in the same business). In addition, the possible competition and, most of all, potential criticism from an insider position was apparently not tolerable, perhaps, again because of the difficulty of claiming success in terms recognisable to others.

One consequence of the conflict between family and college priorities, and perhaps also the different images of the individual and connected creatives, is that aspirant and novice workers, when pressed, often present composite ambitions. The aim, they say, is to work for someone else and do your own work; to work freelance and eventually have your own business or practice or studio; to earn money doing something else in order to support yourself in the creative work which is the priority⁵. This kind of ‘double life’ (Taylor and Littleton, 2008b) is not only potentially exhausting but can also have an informal, makeshift quality. A further problem which follows from the double life is therefore the need to assert the professional nature of the activity; there was great aversion to creative work being relegated to the status of a ‘hobby’, even though the amount of time allocated to it compared to other employment might seem to justify this categorization.

This situation also partly explains the need for validation. Art colleges had a further function in relation to this (Taylor and Littleton, 2008b). Of course educational qualifications are relevant to most careers but they acquired an additional status for creative workers given the prevalence of precarious employment and low pay within the contemporary creative industries; it is more difficult to present yourself as successful to others in the absence of conventional success markers of career advancement. Having the name of a ‘good’ art college on a CV conferred practical advantages and even the fact of being admitted could be presented to others as a marker of success and calibre in the

chosen creative career. Many participants referred to the importance of showing their families that what they were doing was, after all, worthwhile. This was also important because for many participants, their actual practice or field was incomprehensible to both their families of upbringing and their partners.

The importance of validation became linked to another conflict, around continuity. We have argued that a claim to a long-term creative interest or talent, going back to childhood, can function for novice workers to confirm to their families and others that their career choice is appropriate (Taylor and Littleton, 2006). By constructing a narrative of continuity from 'who I was' to 'who I am', novices validate their current situations, even, if necessary, in the face of low earnings and insecure employment which might mark it as unsuccessful to an external viewer. This kind of 'identity work' is particularly relevant for someone at a career entry point, trying to get established as it legitimates a claim to a creative identification.

However, continuity might also be problematic. The positive implication of continuity from childhood derives from the assumption that this logically carries a forward momentum into a future career. Yet such a forward projection also sets up a conflict with a creative work process and, relatedly, a creative career in which the ideal is to remain open to possibility, so not to plan, expect or in any way limit possibilities in advance. In short, carrying through a continuity from the past seems incompatible with the ideal of openness (Taylor and Littleton, 2012)⁶.

We have noted elsewhere that our participants tended to characterise a steady progression through ascending stages as a feature of other, more ordinary careers (Taylor, 2008a). However, for some of our participants, their careers had progressed to a

situation of higher status and greater security and financial reward through very similar stages to those which supposedly characterized the alternative, uncreative career pathway. This led to a tension around definition and the possibility that creativity might have taken you forward into another place and identity. We found that many of our financially successful participants had to defend their claims to be creative, to be still, say, a designer and not a manager or property developer, a painter and not a manufacturer of interior design products.

This section has indicated some of the conflicts and dilemmas confronting creative workers in general, and some solutions, living ‘the double life’ and seeking validation through continuity, which themselves raise further issues. In the next section we discuss difficulties faced by particular categories of creative workers and a response to these which, again, may contribute to their difficulties.

The project of repairing deficits

We have noted elsewhere the importance of confidence for creative workers (Taylor and Littleton, 2012; see also Pollard, this volume). They need to be confident enough to pursue interests which may appear ‘selfish’ to others, as they themselves note (Taylor, 2011). They also need to be sufficiently confident about the quality and importance of their work to persist with it through a possibly protracted period in which they may receive little conventional reward or recognition⁷. Confidence is additionally important because of the personalized nature of creative working which implies that the work and its outputs are the unique product of the worker as maker. If ‘you’ are the source, the further implication is that to claim that your work is important you need to be sure that you are appropriately talented or skilled or otherwise worthy of other people’s attention.

While noting that the nature and source of ‘confidence’ is of course a complex issue, we suggest that a lack of confidence can be equated to accepting, tacitly or explicitly, an identity as defective or incomplete or insufficiently skilled or talented, and that this is more likely in people who are already ascribed with deficit identities, because of particular negative experiences or, often relatedly, because of how they have been categorized socially. We note that the same categories of people who are under-represented in the creative industries are those who belong to lower valued social categories, that is, women (not men), Black and Minority Ethnic (not white) people, and people from working class (not middle class) families. We suggest that existing deficit identities are potentially linked to a lack of confidence⁸ which may then be reinforced as a source of disadvantage for creative workers. This reinforcement occurs because the onus to be good enough to be the source of creative work opens an alternative project, to repair the self and make good deficits.

Our research indicated a number of examples of such repair projects. Some participants described how they had begun different careers then gone to art college, sometimes beginning part-time and building up to a full-time course, in order to ‘go back’ to previously denied interests, for example, because they had been pressured to give up studying art at school. Other examples came from the many creatives who accepted and even embraced a categorization as ‘dyslexic’⁹. In itself, this need not require repair but for some participants who had had great difficulties at school, their subsequent successes in creative careers were explicitly valued and presented as important for refuting the previous criticisms or low expectations of teachers and parents. Some other participants discussed their creative work as an informal form of therapy, referring to family issues and personal problems as motivating their work and providing its focus. Of course this is

a particular complex point given the inevitably personal reference of so much creative work and this kind of reference is also an indication of how a repair project can run in parallel with creative working. We suggest, however, that for some aspiring creatives who are not confident enough to position themselves (yet) as appropriate originators and sources of creative making, the repair project can function more negatively, dominating the creative project and even replacing it. In other words, the creative aim gives way to the project to repair the self.

The processes we have outlined have several implications for understanding the motivation of creative workers. Theoretical discussions like those summarised in a previous section tend to be primarily focussed on participation in labour markets and industry. The personalized nature of creative work is usually considered as a blurring of boundaries in which work invades the conventional territory of personal life, for example, through the long hours which are worked (Gregg, 2011). However, the processes we describe above, by which deficit identities are reinforced and made a focus for repair, suggest a blurring in a different direction, with the non-work aspects prevailing. This is consistent with our earlier argument against interpreting creative work as a site of subjectification to the needs of industry. It raises the possibility that many workers may be less interested in creative work as work or a career than for its personal aspects. They may seek to avoid aspects of conventional work which they expect (or have already found) to be particularly challenging, such as tasks which involve conventional reading and writing skills or, in a different example, the competitive environment of conventional offices.

Ironically, of course, more conventional occupations may offer more protection and better employment conditions. For example, other writers have noted the informality of

creative workplaces (Nixon and Crewe, 2004). This can have positives (everyone is ‘friends’: see Taylor, 2011), but also negatives. In informal workplaces the relationships of employers and employees, or senior and junior colleagues are probably not mediated by any regulations or bureaucratic measures to promote fairness. When laws about equal opportunity are not enforced, it will be more difficult to escape conventional and clichéd assumptions about the kind of person you are and can become, or, in other words, the limitations of an ascribed identity or, in our terms, the ways that you are already positioned.

As we have already noted, however, our participants presented themselves as avoiding the unsatisfying work, routines and dreary predictable ‘age-stage’ career ladders which they suggested characterize other careers and occupations, like a caricature of modernist factory work. This kind of talk of course functioned partly to validate their own positions and choices but it also suggested a strong prejudice against work as it has been more conventionally understood. We are not implying that our participants were lazy or trying to avoid difficulties. Rather, our argument is that for many the attraction of a creative career seemed to be that it did not ‘look like’ work and would enable them to remain within the territory of personal, not professional life. These motivations appeared particularly relevant to women creatives, as we discuss in the next section.

The problems of women

We suggest that women creatives are particularly likely to be ascribed with a deficit identity, for several reasons. First, there is a general argument that deficit identities are in themselves feminized, albeit available to be taken up by men as well as women. This is referred to, for example, by Ann Weatherall who discusses the association of masculinity

with intactness and an absence of problems. Weatherall cites Simone de Beauvoir's claim that man 'represents both the positive and the neutral...whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria' (de Beauvoir, 1952/1988, cited in Weatherall 2002, p.12).

More specifically, women creatives, like other women in white collar workplaces, will have to resist the subordinate female identities often (unjustly) associated with roles such as secretaries, personal assistant or catering staff, particularly since the main presence of women will probably be in such roles. In addition, Angela McRobbie (2009) has suggested that young women workers in any field must negotiate the contradictions of a 'post feminist masquerade', that is, they must be capable, but not too capable, and successful but not too successful, so that they avoid any challenge or disruption to 'existing gender hierarchies' in workplaces like offices (2009, p.72). Allen (in this volume) discusses some of the combined pressures on young women attempting to enter the cultural and creative workforce.

A further issue which women creatives will have to contend with derives from the domestic associations of many variants of creative making. McRobbie (1998) discussed 'the painting boys' and 'the fashion girls' as differently valued professional categories. However, a gendered divide which we suggest may be more relevant to contemporary creatives is the split between men as creative professionals and women as practitioners of lesser, domestic forms of the same arts or creative activities. Conventionally, for example, women have done home dressmaking, but most name fashion designers, at least until very recently, have been men. Similarly, home cooking has conventionally been the task of women, even though most professional chefs are men. Women practise a whole range of other creative practices in a domestic context (other examples would be

designing interiors and arranging flowers) but professional authority reverts to men; the women's activities have the negative status of hobbies. For women creatives, this conventional division presents a further possibility of reversion to a deficit identity, that of someone who aspires to be a designer, for example, but is only a home sewer or amateur. Somewhat differently, it also suggests that creative work may carry associations of personal life contexts which make it attractive as 'not work', as discussed in the previous section.

We suggest that the confidence and status of women creatives is likely to be challenged and also that they are more likely to embrace the kind of repair project we have outlined¹⁰. For some, it may take over, transforming a creative project into one of long-term preparation, for example, in terms of personal therapy or further study and training. The start of the creative career is perpetually postponed. For others, more positively, the repair project may co-exist with the creative project itself, informing and sustaining it in a mutually constitutive process. This may then contribute further to the complexity of a creative identification which we have already discussed.

Conclusion

The naming of the creative industries and subsequent discussions by academics, policy-makers and others have given a new importance to art colleges as the sites where many creative careers begin. This chapter has discussed the implications of findings from research projects which recruited participants from the students and alumni of London art colleges. Located in a city which has been recognised as a 'global hub' of the creative industries (e.g. Banks 2007) and attracting a diverse, international study body, such colleges have an influence and level of reference beyond the UK, like the creative

industries themselves. Although the research is not primarily concerned with higher education, it explores the implications of meanings around creativity and creative work which were partly derived from and reinforced in the contexts of these HEIs.

We have suggested elsewhere (Taylor and Littleton 2011, 2012) that art colleges have a continuing importance for students and alumni, in any field of practice or specialization. First, they are sites where students learn the conventions of their chosen fields and develop their own practice. Second, they provide contexts in which the student can take up a new identification as creative. Third, they provide connections to the tutor and peer figures who contribute to students' understandings of creative work and careers and will also become part of their professional networks or creative 'worlds', including formally and informally as mentors. The art college itself is a continuing point of access to these worlds, given additional value through the image of the 'connected creative' which we have also discussed in this chapter.

The chapter has indicated other points relevant to art colleges and educationalists. We have suggested that for some creative workers the creative project may become implicated with a project of self-repair, or even taken over by it. A central issue here is the confidence, or lack of it, which is vital to the creative practitioner or maker's sense of being central to the creative process, with or without the support of others. Art colleges can perhaps help sustain this confidence through pastoral support, with an additional focus on categories of students who are susceptible to a deficit identification. This has already occurred for students identified as having dyslexia or similar educational difficulties and we would suggest that the support might extend to other students with unhappy educational histories and also to the more 'social' categories which have been noted as under-represented in the wider creative workforce. Their presence within art

colleges is not enough to ensure that they can successfully extend their careers beyond them, as the example of women indicates.

These points will be particularly relevant given the recognition of the importance of widening participation. In addition, although creative projects will always entail an awareness of the self as producer, it may be desirable for colleges to encourage students' awareness of making, in all its manifestations, as a process which is also outward facing, taking place within larger contexts involving others with similar interests and difficulties. This is perhaps a departure from the Romantic image of the artist or creative maker which remains so closely implicated with the creative arts and design, yet it is central to that other, connected image we have discussed, and also to creative practice as it has always been understood and undertaken, as a form of work.

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Notes

¹ See the chapters by Anamik Saha and David Lee, and also Susan Luckman.

² As examples of statistics on this, Leadbeater (2004) says 'About 4.6% of the creative industry workforce is from an ethnic minority, compared with 7% of the economy as a whole. In London the gap is even starker: ethnic minorities make up 26% of London's population but only 11% of the workforce in the creative industries.' Freeman (2007) says that 'the employment of BAME workers in the creative industries has failed to improve over the last eight years in comparison with London's workforce as a whole, and ...the employment of women in the creative industries has deteriorated absolutely' (p.44) i.e. in the creative industries between 1995/6 and 2003/4 the proportion of BAME workers rose from 11 to 15%, compared to 15 to 23% in the whole London workforce, and the proportion of women fell from 42 to 37%, compared to 44 to 43% in the whole London workforce.

³ The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society. Its purpose and the potential uses of the data were explained, both before and after the interviews, and participants were invited to ask questions. They signed a consent form but were told that they could choose not to answer questions and to withdraw from the research if they wished. Their interview material was anonymized and the full transcripts were seen only by those working on the project (researchers, research assistants and transcribers).

⁴ These priorities can themselves provide a moral or ethical imperative within creative working, and therefore a variant on the kinds of projects discussed by Banks (2007).

⁵ Similar ambitions are noted by Emma Pollard, in this volume, who comments that for many creative graduates 'career progression is often characterized by gravitation towards self employment from (or alongside) salaried careers'.

⁶ We have suggested that one way participants oriented to the valuing of openness was to emphasise the role of chance or 'serendipity' in important decision-making and changes related to their careers (Taylor and Littleton, 2008b).

⁷ We link this to the trajectory of a 'big break' which we suggest shapes creative workers' own expectations around their careers: see Taylor and Littleton 2011, 2012.

⁸ Of course the connection is not inevitable. As just one example, Henri Tajfel's work on Social Identity Theory discusses how a socially ascribed identity category which has a low status is not inevitably taken up as a low status personal identity (ref).

⁹ As we have observed elsewhere (Taylor and Littleton 2008b), our research can neither confirm or deny the condition this category refers to, but we noted the wide range of difficulties which it supposedly encompasses among different people.

¹⁰ In a contemporary context, Rosalind Gill (2007) suggests that there is an onus for repair placed on contemporary women more generally: 'In a culture saturated by individualistic self-help discourses, the self has become a project to be evaluated, advised, disciplined and improved or 'brought into recovery'...(and) it is women and not men who are addressed and required to work on and transform the self' (p.262).