2.3
"Know Where to Fish"

Class and Gender Precarity and Project-based Networks in Creative and Cultural Industries

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Introduction

In the sociology of work, Kalleberg (2018) describes precarity in the formal economy as "employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker" (1). It is accepted that project work is, to varying degrees, precarious work (Hodgson 2004) and to aid understanding of the complex phenomenon of precarisation across economies, we consider areas of the creative industries, where the project form is predominant (Eikhof and Warhurst 2013). Specifically, we aim at understanding *how* and *why* the facilitating process of the project form, the network, contributes to systemic patterns in project work commodification and to the generation of precarity which is grounded on a class-based understanding of gender. In so doing, we locate the understanding of 'class imaginaries' in contemporary cultural and creative industries (CCIs), and the concept of class in general, at the intersection of ideological and socio-economic dimensions. Accordingly, we use a broader sociological definition of social class which focuses on the inequality of access to resources and refers to a meaningful status characteristic that influences people's perceptions and expectations, as does gender. Grabher (2004) calls networking "the emblematic practice in project ecologies" (1502) and analyses have shown that networks in the creative industries shape organisational outcomes (Antcliff, Saundry and Stuart 2007; Grugulis and Stoyanova 2011; Sydow and Staber 2002); however, the dimensions involved in how and why are less well established. Studies report on networking as the way "to overcome information asymmetries within the project-based political economy of creative production" (Lee 2011, 550) and these asymmetries represent two, linked, aspects of networking—effective pro-

tection of insiders and effective exclusion of outsiders—that are important to understanding patterns in precarity. As we shall see, although networking practices differ across countries and sectors, there are strong similarities in how they particularly affect self-employed women's ability to acquire and trade creative and financial gains.

We argue that disadvantaging networking processes derive from commodification in project work, which must be considered as an embedded form within industrial and national contexts (i.e. socio-economic and policy structures) in assessing their effects on unequal outcomes which are naturalised through ideology and cultural normative processes eventually generating inequality. Commodification in project work refers to the employing project organisations shifting risk by "imposing the discipline of market competition on workers" (Greer 2016, 165). Therefore, our attention is directed at an under-researched dimension of precarity: how this type of project work is *organised* (Peticca-Harris, Weststar and McKenna 2015).

This chapter considers creative industry networks as mediating precarious outcomes for aspirant workers through informal, individualised cultural processes. In particular, we contend that understanding how and why networks organise project-based transactions can be achieved through a synthesis of material and non-material lenses. First, we illustrate that the project work dynamics accounting for how creative capacity is commodified in the marketplace involve the industrial logic of risk minimisation and the national regulatory contexts in which they are embedded. Second, in investigating how these dynamics affect project workers, we show the homophilous processes that generate inclusion and exclusion, through classed, gendered 'sorting.' In so doing, we can identify the conditions under which certain outcomes occur and contribute to organisation studies' theorising about project work, and specifically its facilitation of a precarity which is class-based and gendered. We ground our argument within an empirical comparative cross-national study of precarious jobs within CCIs, and use a narrative 'storytelling' approach as a heuristic tool for the analysis of precarity which makes it possible to uncover broader tendencies in the rearticulation of class experiences in relation to race and gender.

We define class in Bourdieusian terms, following Savage et al. (2015), whose work on class has been informed by 'capitals, assets, resources' (1013) and focuses first of all on the relationship between class and inequality. Central to our argument on class and gender precarity in CCI is the structural asymmetry translated into more open or more constrained access to resources. Hence, precarious class-based outcomes are identified as the unequal positioning of workers within and incomplete access to networks of sociability and recognition as detrimental to upward mobility.

Creative Industry Project Work Dynamics and Networks

The output of creative industries is uncertain before and during its 'making,' as is its outcome (Menger 2014), and high degrees of risk are therefore inherent (Caves 2000). Creative organisations utilise project work partly to achieve flexibility within an inherently volatile and unpredictable market for creative products (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). These projects are precarious because they emerge from market-based employer demands, which are intermittent, temporary and unpredictable, and work arrangements that are contingent and casual (McKinlay and Smith 2009).

Recruitment and selection via networks are outcomes of the project-based nature of creative work, which increasingly results from the wider retrenchment and downsizing creative organisations have been undergoing since the 1990s (Baumann 2002). We know that precarious work has been disproportionately done by women across sectors (Fudge and Owens 2006) and in the creative industries patterns of gendered occupational segregation remain distinct (such as higher-status cinematographers being mainly men, and lower-status makeup artists mainly women) (Taylor et al. 2017), and, as our findings clarify, risk is not shifted in gender-neutral ways.

Recruitment, training and quality control are informally fulfilled by networks, mainly consisting of production managers, heads of department and established workers trusted as having knowledge that needs to be passed on. The economic logic underpinning creative organisations influences their capacity to take on or transfer risk in order to minimise costs. This logic, combined with oversupplied labour markets, encourages and enables reliance on trust (Antcliff, Saundry and Stuart 2007) and "reproducing the familiar" (Dean 2008, 169), which entrenches gender segmentation in products, and in how and by whom those products are made.

Work in organisation and employment studies considers power relations (inherent in informal networks) as a key driver of gender inequality (Healy, Kirton and Noon 2010), and Acker's (2000) and others' work on organisations as embedding and expressing gendered differentiation is well known. The career structures within and surrounding creative organisations are similarly gendered (Tuckett 2019) and indicate use of distinctive resources by the (very largely) men dominating them. Organisation and employment studies scholars have pointed to the over-representation of white, male, middle-class gatekeepers, such as film and TV writers and casting directors (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison 2017) and the significance of gatekeepers and intermediaries in shaping disadvantage (Dean 2008; Delmestri et al. 2020; Grugulis and Stoyanova 2012). US research has evidenced women's disadvantage in US TV and film production (Lauzen

2019), and the ways in which networks operate to facilitate these discriminatory effects (Christopherson 2009). As we will show, the power relationships which underlie concentration of resources nurture "the social processes through which forms of capital can be developed and transformed" (Vincent 2016, 1166), and therefore add understanding of how class-based gendered processes of precarisation unfold.

Theoretical Synthesis

There are many different lenses through which to understand the complex phenomena of unequal access to work in the creative industries. These include: examination of multiple levels producing racist exclusion in film industry performance and production jobs (Hennekam and Syed 2018); social class origin as a barrier for performers (Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison 2017); and access to work as tied to societal positions and conceptions of 'women' (Dean 2008). Whatever their focus, most accounts mention the relevance of networks to access. Notably, Antcliff, Saundry and Stuart (2007) emphasise the importance of power relations in the valuing of social capital in UK television sector networks, as well as for trust and friendship in a fragmented, competitive landscape. In doing so, they concentrate on the significance of forms of network rather than their gendered effects. Grugulis and Stoyanova's (2012) study of UK film and TV does examine racialised, gendered effects of social capital and networks and provides valuable insights into the relationship between 'quality' of networks and 'quality' of jobs (1311). Here, we focus primarily on understanding the relation between networks and class-based gendered precarity, which necessitates integrating several conceptual elements as patterns of inequality in access are generated at country, sector and occupational/individual (network) levels.

In common with Lamont, Beljean and Clair (2014), we recognise the importance of specifying 'cultural processes' in understanding inequalities (here, in access to, and distribution within, creative industry projects). The authors define cultural processes as "ongoing classifying representations/practices that unfold in the context of structures (organizations, institutions) to produce various types of outcomes" (586) and we see the operations of networks as cultural processes fostering commodification mechanisms at industry (and country) levels. We discuss the homophilous nature of these operations linked to the sorting practices in their creation and maintenance of boundaries and hierarchies (Lamont et al. 2014, 598) within these contexts.

Meshing Different Theoretical Conceptualisations

To understand the sorting practices sustaining commodification, we consider Charles Tilly's theoretical conceptualisation of inequality as 'opportunity hoarding,' as refined by Erik Olin Wright, with a gendered reading of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital, in particular the concept of 'symbolic capital.' Their connections with industrial and country 'material' contexts is elaborated, to produce an analytical framework that enables us to account for the patterns we observe.

As indicated, creative project networks act as informal recruitment structures in mediating access to work. This informality, and dispersed knowledge, create the need to both *interpret* and *indicate* dimensions of (technical) suitability and (social) acceptability (Jewson and Mason 1986), resulting in fair/unfair discrimination, or sorting. Bourdieu's (1986) concept of symbolic capital, as misrecognition of resources ("unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence," 18), enables us to begin to account for these processes. Symbolic capital is understood as the ways in which an individual's possession of other capitals is signalled. Possession of these capitals—economic (money, property rights), cultural (embodied dispositions, in an institutionalised form like qualifications) and social (resources linked to group membership, providing credentials)—is represented to 'dominating' others indirectly through legitimised signs of 'recognition.' In our study contexts, examples might include willingness to accept an unpaid job in TV or possession of a white male body in dance. Moi (1991) argues that, despite the lack of gendered awareness in his original theorising, the concepts Bourdieu developed allow for room "to determine what kind of specific consequences" (1019) conceptual claims might have, and thus contribute to a general analysis of social power. Illustrating this point, Vincent (2016) utilises Bourdieusian concepts in his study of self-employed women HR consultants, surfacing the effects of "(patriarchal) structures of time within fields" (1179). There is a significant body of work engaging with Bourdieu's concepts in relation to women's employment. Our own focus is not women workers per se, but on how and why the creative project networks operate so as to promote a class- and gender-based understanding of precarity.

Bourdieu (1986) sees capital in the forms noted above as "what makes the games of society—not least, the economic game—something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle" (15). We see the operation of creative industry projects as a useful example of this argument. Each project (or game) offers opportunity for occupational advancement and creative fulfilment. Each is new, therefore uncertain and ostensibly open to the widest range of talent for the alchemy necessary for transformation into a successful product. Instead, we see similar patterns across industries and

countries of over-representation of predominantly white men and middle- and upper-class people in the most rewarded occupations. Moi's (1991) summary of Bourdieu's concept of the field as "a competitive system of social relations which functions according to its own specific logic or rules" (1020) maps directly on to creative project networks. Core to the field is the power to attribute or withhold 'legitimacy' (here, assign competence), through possession of symbolic capital particular to that field and recognised as such by others. This recognition forms part of the habitus (internalised norms and values) of the players in the field and therefore, pertinently for our study, the field "functions as a form of censorship" (ibid., 1022), excluding those without the requisite symbolic capital. As Bourdieu (1989) argues, "agents are distributed in the overall social space […] according to the overall volume of capital they possess" (17).

This distribution can be explained by Tilly's (1998) argument that structures can underwrite a 'hoarding' of various kinds of opportunities, as the expression of power relationships. Accordingly, 'durable inequalities' are constructed within and through organisations and they are 'social relational' in character. For instance, reputation (symbolic capital, shared recognition) is an intangible sorting mechanism mediated by dominant network figures and used by—ultimately—organisations in access to future work. As Menger (2006) puts it, "the several dimensions of inequality are magnified by the work system in the arts, which builds on networks, reputation, short term contracts, and highly individualized performance ratings" (40).

Tilly (1998) is clear that 'opportunity hoarding' does not necessarily involve exploitation, but that this complementarity can occur, as when "the effort of a favoured minority provides a resource-owning elite with the means to extract surplus from an essential but otherwise unavailable larger population" (154). Thus, in our terms, networks involving dominant gatekeepers to projects do not exploit (or acquire) economic capital from their operations. However, opportunity hoarding via these project-based creative industry networks facilitates exploitation, and thus increases precarity.

Bounding of categories in occupational networks is where the relevance of symbolic capital becomes evident. Wright (1997), conceptualising the interaction of class and gender, argues that there is "an agenda of issues that need to be considered within empirical research and theory construction" (118) and one of the five forms of class/gender interrelations he conceptualises is especially pertinent here, which is gender sorting into class locations. He discusses social science explanations of gender differences in occupational distributions, noting that forms of "inequality, domination and discrimination" can have direct effects on opportunities for access to different types of jobs, or indirect effects on access "by affecting their acquisition of relevant resources" (ibid., 122). This

recalls Tilly's opportunity hoarding, which indeed Wright compares to his own concept of "non-exploitative economic oppression" (ibid., 31), where one group is advantaged at the expense of others. However, Wright (2000) critiques Tilly's own criticism of 'individualist' explanations of inequality as misplaced in placing more emphasis on the "organizational bases for exploitation" (458) than on multi-causal explanations involving inequality culture in general. Our consideration of project networks utilises this plural lens.

Contextualising a Class- and Gender-Based Understanding of Precarity

Although the concept of opportunity hoarding is valuable in understanding how the operation of networks takes account of the gendered accrual and recognition of symbolic capitals, nevertheless economic rules of engagement bind individuals within social and industrial contexts (Sydow and Staber 2002). As we shall see in discussion of findings, these practices reflect specificities indicative of the wider economic and social relations of production. This in turn affects the functioning of project networks, whereby opportunities are increased or reduced.

Contexts can be more or less de-commodified (and therefore precarious) in the extent to which industry structures reflect marketisation and state support, and people can still obtain social protections (exposed to more or less risk) regardless of their work arrangement (Kalleberg 2018). Greer, Salamuk and Umney (2019) theorise the need to take account of embeddedness issues in a more actor-centred approach. An informed understanding of our findings requires this approach: here, the state is not a direct transaction organiser, but a 'silent actor' in that it can mitigate commodification. Meardi, Donaghey and Dean (2016) and Pulignano, Dean, Domecka and Vermeerbergen (2023) reiterate the importance of attending to the role of the state in gender relations and employment and thus "understanding […] state intercession in its nation's class system" (566).

The degree and nature of the endemic risk in creative industries is also affected by incentives emerging from differing country-based market governance regimes, central to the nature of project work (Christopherson 2002). Through exerting downward pressure on costs, they undermine institutional structures which might mitigate precarity instead. Aroles, Hassard and Hyde (2021) discuss precarity in creative institutions as a situation in which "there is almost total cessation in traditional funding," which leaves the organisation "financially powerless and forced to focus on short-term strategies and plans" (14). As Doerflinger, Pulignano and Vallas (2020) further posit, it is important to identify construction of distinct types of economic and social forms of production where commodified labour might have access to structural power if they "hold strate-

gic locations within the labor process or favorable positions in the labor market" (6). This brings us to the precise significance of networks to a class- and gender-based understanding of precarity in project work. Reliance on previously 'tested' people is seen as desirable, if not essential, in time-limited and inherently risky projects. Thus, we see dominant network actors discriminating in their recognition/assignation of competence to those in possession of relevant symbolic capital, their dominant positions enabling them to hoard opportunities. Men's (especially white, middle-class men's) occupation of Doerflinger et al.'s (2020) 'strategic locations' (6) is clear, as is the research showing that men are more likely to benefit from the 'old boys' network than women (Grugulis and Stoyanova 2012).

Recalling the significance of cultural processes (Lamont, Beljean, and Clair 2014) noted above, we argue that what animates the class-based operation of sorting practices by networks is homophily, i.e. individuals' preference for interacting with others similar to themselves in terms of social characteristics such as gender, class and 'race' (Ibarra 1992; 1995), enabled/promoted by the commodification inherent in the project form (Bushell, Hoque, and Dean 2020; Melamed et al. 2020).

Homophily is operationalised through networks' (mis)recognition of symbolic capital. However, as we contend below, the extent of the power of dominant networks to hoard opportunities through such recognition is bounded by industrial (and national) contexts.

Research Design and Methodology

We use autobiographical narrative interviews (Schütze 2008) to contextualise the subjective experiences into class background. Here, we refer to Savage, Warde and Devine's (2005) consideration of resources as both economic (income) and cultural (educational credentials and competences acquired through family which "secure and perpetuate access to economic capital" (Crompton 1998, 149)) to allocate people to a specific class category. We asked each participant to self-identify in class terms (Reay 1998) in light of types of resources possessed, as in Savage et al. (2005). These are economic (income), social (networks) and cultural (educational credentials and competences acquired through the family) resources, and they "secure and perpetuate access to economic capital" (Crompton 1998, 149). We were also able to assess some class-based resources through narrative analysis, such as family's financial support in relation to training, unpaid work and unemployment, parents' occupation and family lifestyle (place of residence, holidays and activities), as well as networks of family and friends.

We selected two industries (TV/film, dance) and four countries (Britain, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands) where we studied the industries following a two-by-two comparison (TV/film in Britain and Germany and dance in Sweden and the Netherlands). The selection-to-difference along both country and industry dimensions was motivated by our expectation of revealing the relative potency of both contexts affecting patterns and cross-cutting mechanisms. Categories were based on: the prevalence of inherently precarious project work, resulting from significant changes in industries and countries; the higher concentration of women in dance in comparison to TV/film industries; and the under-researched status of dance in comparison to TV/film.

We conducted seventy-seven interviews (fifty-one narrative with project workers and twenty-six semi-structured with experts) (Table 1 for sample description of expert interviews). Twenty-five narrative interviews were conducted in TV/film in Britain and Germany. In the Netherlands and Sweden, in dance, we collected twenty-six narrative interviews across different genres (i.e. ballet, contemporary dance and street dance). Using snowball sampling, we interviewed twenty-seven women (eleven in TV/film and sixteen in dance), twenty-three men (fourteen in TV/film and nine in dance) and one non-binary person (in dance) (Table 2 for sample description of biographical narrative interviews).

Table 1: Participant overview: expert interviews

TV/Film	**Position of interviewees and number of interviews**
United Kingdom	Academic (N=1), Trade unionist (N=2), Representative of professional association (N=1)
Germany	Academic (N=3), Trade unionist (N=1), Representative of professional association (N=2)
Europe	Trade unionist (N=2), Representative of professional association (N=1)
Dance	
Sweden	Academic (N=2), Trade unionist (N=1), Representative of professional association (N=1), Representative of funding body (N=2), Operative manager (N=1), Representative of public employment service (N=1)
The Netherlands	Academic (N=2), Trade unionist (N=1)
Europe	Trade unionist (N=2), Policy maker (N=1)
Total number of expert interviews	**27**

Table 2: Participant overview: narrative biographical interviews

No.	Code and name	Age	Gender	Majority/ minority ethnicity*	Class background	Profession	
1	DE01_Agnes	30	F	Maj	Lower middle	Junior producer	
2	UK01_Radek	44	M	Maj	Working class	Editor	
3	DE02_Dirk	41					
4	DE03_Amina	30	F	Min	Lower middle	Editor, journalist	
5	DE04_Timo	42	M	Maj	Working class	Sound engineer, camera assistant	
6	UK02_Mike	60	M	Maj	Working class		
7	DE05_Benjamin	50	M	Maj	Lower middle	Camera operator	
8	DE06_Nico	42					
9	DE07_Sandra	46	F	Maj	Middle class		
10	DE08_Hannah	40	F	Maj	Lower middle	Set decorator	
11	UK03_Jacinta	43	F	Min	Working class		
12	DE04_Penny	46	F	Maj	Working class	Makeup	TV/Film
13	UK05_Liz	35					
14	DE09_Frieder	37					
15	UK06_Sean	51	M	Maj	Lower middle	Location manager	
16	UK07_Jake	60					
17	DE10_Brianna	40	F	Min	Lower middle	Graphic designer	
18	UK08_Zoe	31	F	Maj			
19	DE11_Hanno	52	M	Maj	Middle	Director	
20	UK09_Peter	71					
21	UK10_Chris	59	M	Maj	Middle	Extra (actor)	
22	UK11_Anja	29	F	Maj	Middle class	Camera assistant	
23	UK12_Terrie	40	F	Min	Lower middle		
24	UK13_Niall	36	M	Maj	Lower middle	Location scout	
25	UK14_Sam	53	M	Maj	Working class	Sound technician	

No.	Code and name	Age	Gender	Majority/ minority ethnicity*	Class background	Profession	
26	NL01_Alba	41	F	Maj	Working class	Dancer	Dance
27	NL02_Francesco	34	M				
28	SE01_Nadja	30	F	Min	Lower middle		
29	NL03_Anis	30	M				
30	SE02_Anna	39	F	Maj			
31	SE03_Fabiano	50	M				
32	NL04_Jasmin	28	F	Min			
33	SE04_Filip	27	M				
34	SE05_Arianna	28	F	Maj	Middle		
35	SE06_Isabelle	23					
36	NL05_Leen	28					
37	NL06_Jane	38					
38	NL07_Alessandro	31					
39	SE07_Jaime	32	M				
40	SE08_Elias	29					
41	NL08_Bart	40					
42	NL09_Lisa	23	F	Maj	Upper middle		
43	NL10_Mia	32	F	Maj	Lower middle		
44	SE09_Hiroko	44	F	Min			
45	SE10_Iris	28					
46	SE11_Sandra	32	F	Maj	Middle	Dancer/ choreographer	
47	SE12_Astrid	33					
48	NL11_Dominika	32					
49	NL12_Sara	36					
50	SE13_Jon	41	M				
51	SE14_Nikola	31	NB				

* Majority (usually White) / Minority (usually non-White) ethnicity

TV/Film in Germany and the UK

Project work in TV and film means a series of temporary jobs all over the world, ranging from a day to a few months, with no 'occupational' income in between. 'Jumping from project to project,' which may significantly differ in type, is often very intensive (i.e. shifts usually up to fifteen hours or more), as several respondents indicate, and is punctuated by periods of no work, where people often suffer the limits independent self-employment status impose when accessing the social security system:

> I'm lucky I don't have a family to feed, so the money [I earn] is used to pay all the tax, pension provision, which many of my colleagues don't do, because they say yes, how am I supposed to pay for it? (DE07_Sandra, 46, F, camera operator)

> Everything shut down [due to Covid]. We were in freefall, it felt a little bit like you were jumping out of a plane, oops. No parachute. And financially already if I don't get a phone call—I don't work. I don't have any unemployment benefit rights built in the contracts that I have. Sometimes I don't even have contracts. (UK06_Sean, 51, M, supervising location manager)

The uncertainty of funding requires the industry to adjust swiftly to the changing environment, without incurring 'fixed' costs. Doing project work means "to make and to sell to be paid" (DE05_Ben), but "if there's a way to not pay you, you won't get paid" (UK13_Niall, 36, M, location scout):

> I did an internship and moved from Berlin to Hamburg. They [company] used volunteers a lot […]. Thanks to the editor, I started working as a researcher and a soundman. And then I was cameraman for very little [money]. I asked if they had more for me. They said yes and then there was no end to it. I worked from Monday to Friday in Hamburg, and on weekends I was in Berlin and then drove there again. Later they offered me volunteer work again. (DE04_Timo, 42, M, sound engineer and camera assistant)

> Last year I did a prep for a job. And I said: "Look I want money to pay for it, you can just give me a nice contract in the new year and I'm happy." And then I got the job and after three weeks they let me go because someone said that I was too expensive. (UK13_Niall, 36, M, location scout)

Workers report being easily replaced, as the number of people "creating the magic" (DE04_Timo) is always higher than the number of jobs available. Camera op-

erators in Germany report that their fees have not changed since the mid-1990s. Having a low wage and irregular hours in expensive cities like London or Berlin is difficult for those with fewer resources at their disposal. Zoe, a white working-class woman, who cannot rely on family resources, is constrained because of "working in a pub during the weekends" to enable "trying to get either work experience or […] paid work in anything to do with film and TV during the week" (UK08_Zoe). Women and men from a working-class background of all ethnicities struggle to "make ends meet" (DE02_Dirk) and to access high-quality jobs. This contrasts with white middle-class and upper-middle class women and men entering the industry, who often come from "a film family" (DE06_Nico) and therefore have resources and contacts at their disposal (UK10_Chris). Class background can also be relevant in the event of workplace conflict. We interviewed Ben (DE05), a white working-class camera operator, who was informally "blacklisted" for filing a court case against a production company paying low rates and insisting on classifying crew as self-employed, despite being dependent on the organisation for assignment of tasks and supervision. After the case (which he lost), Ben found it difficult to get hired, having been stigmatised as "a troublemaker," and he did not have any financial buffers.

Having contacts with the right directors and producers "who run the show" (UK07_Jake) is crucial, since they place people in project departments. Terrie, a working-class woman of mixed African-Caribbean heritage, identified the "inner circles" of power in the industry:

> It's like concentric rings, so in the middle you have family members and then it goes out, friends, acquaintances. A lot of people that sort of sit within those circles tend to be private or public school educated, they tend to be male, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. They tend to be out of a particular type of mould, which is quite identifiable, it's a type [laughing]. (UK12_Terrie, 41, F, camera assistant)

Terrie's narrative reflects the industry structure in Britain, where, in contrast to state-backed policy aimed at "promoting a more diverse workforce" (Ofcom 2019), representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people fell from 12% in 2009 to 5.3% in 2012 (Creative Skillset 2013) and 4.2% in 2018 (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor 2018). Moreover, high-status creative roles are mainly white, middle-class and male-dominated (ScreenSkills 2019). Between 1999 and 2003, fewer than 15% of films were credited to a female screenwriter (Sinclair, Pollard and Wolfe 2006), and only 14% of directors and screenwriters in 2012/2013 were women (Newsinger and Presence 2018). Similarly, in Germany between 2009 and 2013, women directed 22% of films, fewer than 9% were produced by women and only 14% of scripts were written solely by women (Loist and

Prommer 2019). Illustrating Wright's (1997) gender sorting into class locations, the UK film industry largely consists of "women in hair, makeup, costume and props, and men in camera, sound and directing" (UK12_Terrie), and similarly in Germany:

> In the camera department, there's one woman to ten men. Maybe even one in twenty. Because you move many kilos a day […] That's a woman's constitution, you have to be on your toes, you have to be fast and for many it is simply too much […] I have always enjoyed working with female colleagues. Well, not as camerawomen. In other areas such as equipment, props, decoration. (DE11_Hanno, 52, M, head of camera department)

'A Culture of Recommendations'

Networks decide "who works, how, where, and the pay" (UK11_Anja). Thus, project workers are recruited, tried and tested by networks, and if the (individualised, unmonitored) assessment is positive, they are recommended for new projects. Interviewees refer to it as "a culture of recommendations" (UK12_Terrie) or "referral marketing" (DE11_Hanno). This was confirmed by our expert interviewees and summarised by a white lower-middle class female camera assistant: "it's all about who you know, not really what you know. It's all about contacts" (UK11_Anja).

As lack of access to networks means less access to jobs, those different from the usual members of 'instrumental' networks (women, working-class and minority ethnic people) struggle. They usually have "a mountain to climb" (UK02_Mike). "It is important the network knows in advance who you are […] [I]t is crucial within an industry where people need to know who they can trust and rely upon" (UK07_Jake). The network bears the risk as it is "primarily responsible for the accomplishment of the project's goals, in accordance with broadcasting funders' requests" (UK07_Jake), so seeks to counterbalance the risk of "having to do a lot with not much" typical of an industry featuring fragmentation and uncertainty (UK07_Jake). Network gatekeepers are aware their reputation (symbolic capital) is at stake and that they are expected to help police quality and deadlines. Networks become like "a family and once you are part of the family, you get called [for jobs] because you're one of them" (DE09_Frieder).

The privilege of particular in-groups is reinforced and maintained over time through active (direct) and effective (indirect) discrimination. This particularly applies to access to productions where symbolic capital is the highest—feature films and high-end TV series, which can compete for industry rewards (Academy Awards, BAFTAs).

> I couldn't enter these large feature films because I wasn't in those circles. Every time I asked and they didn't directly know me, nothing would come back and one time I even got an e-mail back saying: "Thanks very much but I will be going with my tried and tested team." (UK11_Anja, 29, F, camera assistant)

"Those circles" (UK11_Anja) are virtually closed for outsiders as there are active strategies to secure the privilege of insiders. Several interviewees referred to precarious, often unpaid, positions within the industry as frequently allocated to women in 'assistant' positions. In Germany, female interviewees from a working-class and lower-middle-class background spoke about being put into the role of "*Mädchen für alles*" (a girl doing everything). In Britain, female interviewees reported unequal treatment on the job; white, middle-class, better-connected men have more opportunities to learn, while working-class and minority ethnic women are hampered by auxiliary tasks in 'service' roles:

> There were two of us but I had done three years of training so I was more experienced […] and I was tasked with looking after the DOP, the cinematographer. […] He refused to eat the catering that was provided. So, every day I had to go out and get him his lunch with his driver and sometimes even prepare it for him […] And there were several other things I had to do, like buying him socks because he forgot to put socks on one day […] I basically felt like a waitress […] And, of course, the other trainee was where I wanted to sit really, right next to the camera. (UK11_Anja, 29, F, camera assistant)

Even if women manage to reach parallel positions to those of men, their comments and requests are frequently ignored or rejected, which "makes it difficult to do well the work they are supposed to do" (DE01_Agnes). They often encounter mistrust of their capacities, which hinders their performance:

> The DOP [director of photography] was very reluctant to let me do certain types of things. And because he didn't have a lot of trust in me, I became more nervous around him. And as you perform worse, it justifies their opinion of you. (UK11_Anja, 29, F, camera assistant)

Highlighting the homophilous nature of networks, women often only discover structural inequalities when they start talking to men working in other, male-dominated, departments:

> Men hang out more with men, and women with women. […] [W]omen are quite open about their rates, so we discuss what we're earning, seeing quite similar

> amounts. And only men who are my very close friends can say: "I'm earning this." And I'm like "What? How are you earning that much money?," and they are like "Oh all the guys are," "What?!" (UK08_Zoe, 31, F, graphic designer)

However, network processes are sometimes mediated at other levels. In German public broadcasting, project workers are offered an 'employee-like freelancer' (*feste Freie Mitarbeiter*) employment status, regulated by collective bargaining. Accordingly, project workers enjoy social benefits (i.e. annual and sick leave and pension schemes) (Herkel 2019) and longer-term contracts provide more regular work and remuneration. The *feste Freie* status provides a path, from standard freelancing to more protected freelancing to permanent employment, without over-reliance on homophilous networks. This enables female workers in Germany to reduce their dependence and thus potentially change the composition of networks in core jobs. Amina, a working-class woman of Moroccan origin, has worked for several years as *feste Freie*' for a public broadcaster in Germany:

> Next year I'll have an open-ended contract. After ten years [of *feste Freie*] you are automatically a permanent employee. […] [B]y being a *feste Freie* you have social security and discretion. (DE03_Amina, 30, F, editor)

There is no comparable employment security for freelancers in the UK and no British female interviewees reported any such discretion, which may also help explain why and how the domination of white middle-class men in core positions is reproduced.

Dance in Sweden and the Netherlands

Dancers construct careers as a patchwork of projects, following their passion for "a beautiful art, which is awfully structured" (NL12_Sara). Respondents describe project work as "doing gigs here and there" (NL10_Mia), ranging from music videos, through corporate or cultural events, to working in clubs, where the work is informal and pay is difficult to negotiate. "Body work"—as Anis (NL03) describes dance—requires "a long and ongoing investment in physical capital," which is the result of "discipline, ongoing exercise and continuous diet you learn since you are a child" (NL03_Anis). Our respondents told us that working-class children normally do not enter ballet schools due to the investment needed, in fees and costs related to specialist clothing. In the exceptional cases when they do become dancers, they recognise the extent of family effort it required: "I remember my parents counting every cent to pay for the school" (NL01_Alba, 41, F, dancer). Further, after gradua-

tion, entry to the core labour market involves participating in numerous workshops, often led by well-known coaches (dominant network gatekeepers), and multiple auditions, with family covering fees and travel costs. Thus, while middle-class dancers are given many opportunities to sell 'body work,' working-class dancers may only have one chance or may be pushed away from dancing altogether: "We stayed in London, which was great, but it cost a ton of money" (NL06_Jane, 38, F, dancer).

However, there are national context mediators. Both countries have publicly funded dance organisations, offering a mix of permanent and dependent project work employment. In Sweden, "competitive commodification"—as Laermans (2015) describes it—is ameliorated on acceptance by this type of organisation as dancers get a public grant, providing regular income. Places are limited; there is fierce competition to enter the "protected dance shells" (NLEX02) and applicants cannot easily reach these desirable positions (cf. "thousand for one place only," SE12_Astrid). Unlike the Netherlands, however, in Sweden an equal number of male and female dancers are recruited annually to publicly funded dance organisations, which stems from the state's gender equality policy and the need to have enough female and male dancers to fill the roles in classical ballet. This appears equitable, yet the population of women applicants is far greater. In both countries, male dancers are "still seen as holy grails" (SE10_Iris) and a larger proportion of female dancers are cut off from potential stable employment.

Those who do not enter compete for project work, largely in private organisations. In the Netherlands, competitive commodification fosters "permanent rivalry" (NL01_Alba). Dancers constantly need to prove themselves, as "even after 20 years, when a new choreographer comes in, I still have to audition" (NL01_Alba, 41, F, dancer). Economic capital allows capacity to cope with these employment conditions: in Sweden almost 52% of those entering the industry have parents with high-level education, and family resources can make all the differences to survival and progress. It includes both the family of origin—"my parents had a lot of money saved for me, which I used" (SE09_Hiroko, 44, F, dancer/choreographer)—and partners—"I was lucky I met my husband, financially it was a huge relief" (NL06_Jane, 38, F, dancer). People who cannot rely on family or a partner's wealth must do extensive 'side' jobs, which hinders vital daily training and, longer term, prevents self-promotion in the artistic field, hindering crucial access to networking: "Dance jobs are not good for class travellers" (SEEX01).

'An Economy of Invitations'

To participate in auditions, dancers need to register by paying a fee and they also need to travel. Mitigation of precarity is available in Sweden, where the Public Employment Service (*Arbetsförmed*) offers "reimbursement for travel costs

associated to the participation of auditions" (SEEX03). There is no equivalent support from the Dutch state authorities and working-class project workers reported being pushed towards exhausting work patterns, "applying for everything there is" (NL10_Mia, 32, F, dancer/choreographer) and often unable to afford attendance at auditions. Further, dancers need to be invited to audition. Those who get invited via networks have higher chances of audition success. SEEX08 describes networks as the "economy of invitation." All parties are aware of this process, including the dancers themselves: "you can always go to auditions, but your chances are very small if you don't know anybody there" (NL03_Anis, 30, F, dancer). In the Netherlands, white middle- and upper-class male choreographers and directors occupy key positions in networks and several respondents reported that in ballet, these gatekeepers decide who to admit in accordance with the narrowly defined "ideal of the bodily beauty," that is "white female and male dancers" (NL01_Alba). Thus, minority-ethnic dancers are often excluded because they are associated with a devalued form of embodiment. In Swedish ballet, although being a white middle- and upper-class man can also be an advantage, almost 70% of choreographers in key positions in networks are women (Konstnärsnamnden 2016). Moreover, the number of lower-middle-class dancers and choreographers in Sweden has increased from 841 in 2007 to 1,032 in 2014 (Flisbäck 2014; Konstnärsnamnden 2016). Both minority-ethnic and white working-class female dancers usually rely on them for being invited to audition, which potentially implies broadening of the 'economy of invitations' to other social groups:

> We have one member whose mother works at the opera, so she helped us sew some costumes […] [M]y boyfriend's is a photographer, so we've collected favours here and there. (SE06_Isabelle, 23, F, dancer)

The dominant pattern, however, is of pressure for quick and reliable selection, meaning that invited dancers are "tried and tested" or have strong recommendations coming from "trusted" colleagues. According to dancers, networks "know where to fish" and therefore they can "make and break careers" (NL09_Lisa, 23, F, dancer). Starting from schools and dance academies, being well connected provides visibility in a large pool, and being connected to established figures offers special treatment:

> My parents come from the dance world. So I had a huge advantage and opportunity to have some private auditions […] My parents worked here in the theatre, so I had access to the physiotherapist and to the workout studio. And so many choreographers already knew me since I was a kid. (NL09_Lisa, 23, F, dancer)

> One of my friends was chosen to be a choreographer and I remember him choosing me. That was just like really manipulative but it ended up happening that I had the job. (NL06_Jane, 38, F, dancer)

Project work relies on such homophilous networks. Entering, leaving and re-entering the industry necessitates reliance on networks for access: "you get jobs because people know they can rely on you and therefore they keep recommending you" (SE13_Jon). Active networking includes participation in workshops led by renowned coaches and in international dance competitions, as well as attendance at festivals and galas, which presupposes invitation by someone already 'inside':

> You learn you always have to network, always talk to people or go to shows and always talk to your colleagues and invite them to what you do. And go to shows, talk to the choreographers, go to workshops, you need to do it all. (NL03_Anis)

The embedded transfer of risk—from ultimate employing organisation to individual worker—is evident.

Networks are homophilous because they actively rely on those they 'recognise' (symbolic capital), while actively excluding those not in possession of the right (gendered, racialised) symbolic capital. They also exclude inactively, in not being able to 'see' others whose lack of capital means they do not even make it into the orbit of the network. The result is effective discrimination through sorting practices, reinforcing gendered, racialised, classed precarity. This is because working-class women, who engage early in second jobs, are those who are primarily unrecognised by networks—partly because women comprise the majority of dancers and partly because they combine irregular dance gigs with other sources of income in their side jobs (e.g. in retail, hospitality, care work, cleaning). This leads to overwork and underpay, as 60–80 hour working weeks still barely exceed the minimum wage. More generally, male advantage was also acknowledged by middle- and upper-class men:

> If you are a good and a well-resourced male dancer you are definitely luckier than if you are a good female well-resourced dancer, being a man in the dance world is always like you're more important. (NL07_Alessandro, 31, M, dancer)

Discussion and Conclusions

We developed a theoretical approach to precarity based on the practices of project networks, which constitute the organising principles of project work within

creative industries. In doing so, we also complement current understanding of classed and gendered processes of precarity within creative industries (Dean 2008; Friedman, O'Brien and Laurison 2017) by suggesting that contemporary class perceptions which emerge through the experience of precarity rely fundamentally on the feeling of not being connected—palpable in the case of performing artists, and this may be extrapolated to representations of class in the arts. We reveal all this by examining how and under which conditions project networks can affect discriminatory dynamics in worker precarity. Our approach is distinctive and it adds to the contributions in Part 2 of this volume on "Personalising Class: Individuals and Collectives" in two ways.

First, it reveals in the capital–labour relationship the core of the tension between the more individual experiences of discrimination and the shared socioeconomic relations and interests that underpin collective class identities. It does so by pointing to commodification in project work as a key driver for the discriminatory dynamics we observe. Our findings provide further insight into how networks seek to manage the risk exerted by (de)commodification pressures within industry (and country) contexts. In so doing, our analysis also extends existing studies in the field of the sociology of work and employment (e.g. Greer, Salamuk and Umney 2019) by indicating networks, with their dominant gatekeepers, as the crucial form of 'transaction organiser' in creative industries. As we empirically show, this contributes to shaping precarity in that risks are not only transferred from employing organisations to workers, but that networks function as agents of capital in allocation of resources, and maintain the gendered, racialised inequalities that shape employing organisations. Thus, we explain how networks become precarity organisers by specifying the homophilic (mis)recognition of symbolic capital in their practices. These practices underpin commodification in project work, which homophily shapes. Hence, our results reveal the importance of commodification in project work for understanding how precarity is generated and sustained by the homophilic nature of networks' cultural processes. We argue that how, and how far, project networks contribute to enhancing or reducing *opportunities* (Tilly 1998) that people derive from 'possession' of resources ('symbolic capital': Bourdieu 1986), depends on relationships embedded into industry (and country) structures (facilitating *gendered sorting into class locations*: Wright 1997). Sydow, Lindkvist and DeFillippi (2014) pointed to embeddedness as relevant to project-based organisations and our study confirms and extends this significance in illustrating how embeddedness accounts for project networks sustaining advantages through creating opportunities for some, while reducing them for others, who will likely do more irregular, poor-quality project work and over shorter careers. In particular, we explain how commodification results from project networks pragmatically retaining control over economic and symbolic

resources (e.g. public subsidies and early bodily investment) available within the industry (and country) to enable the project. Thus responsibility and control properties are concentrated within the network operating in accordance with the requirements of powerful funding agents.

Recalling our discussion of Tilly (1998) and Wright (1997) above—and this is the second way we see distinctiveness in our work—our findings point to the practice of 'sorting' as accounting for how the operations of project networks reproduce advantage and disadvantage by opening and closing opportunities at the intersection of gender and class within different industries and countries. We identify the homophilic nature of project network practices and show they work for the networks' internal purposes, creating and maintaining these networks as effective and powerful. In particular, we contend that structures are critical to shaping the risks which in turn account for the greater or lesser importance of the homophilous networks in generating precarity. Varieties of industry- and country-based industrial funding arrangements, de-regulation and broader access to social security provision are all relevant to how risk is redistributed. As such, these arrangements reflect the role of the state as 'silent actor' contributing to or mitigating (the 'power' of) homophily. This is because disadvantage is perpetuated at the point of assessment by homophilous networks but also beforehand, in that many creative workers do not even become visible to networks: the risk shifted onto them is too great a constraint.

Our comparative analysis shows that sorting can take different forms depending on industry structure. It can channel people on entrance to the industry (primarily TV/film) or it can make or break opportunities and careers for people within the industry (primarily dance). First, within TV/film, where 'learning while doing' is prevalent: in UK TV/film, the presence of private capital as a primary source of financing within vertically disintegrated systems of production account for the powerful role of project networks; in Germany, the organising of content production within a 'dual system' distributes power to networks. In both cases, recruitment practices follow the 'culture of recommendations' to ensure projects can deliver in accordance with the artistic and economic expectations of commissioning broadcasters. Homophily in networks produces outcomes that meet these expectations and maintains them as powerful. Accordingly, women tend to be concentrated in jobs traditionally associated with expectations of their gender (Alvesson and Billing 2009), unless they resemble the same racialised attributes of class (usually white and middle- and upper-class) of those of the network. Thus, their symbolic capital reflects the male elite. However, in German public broadcasting, employment protection can mitigate the effects of homophily in networks. The stability deriving from the 'employee-like freelancer' (*feste Freie Mitarbeiter*) contract provides more regular work and remuneration, which

reduces dependency on networks for access to jobs. At the same time, under less pressure for cost-efficiency, and (de-)commodification in project work through relatively generous public resources, the capacity of networks to open or close opportunities is—slightly—reduced. The possession of economic capital, necessary to teach children how to keep the body ready to work at any time, is the condition underpinning entrance to dance and then maintaining that readiness. Findings showed that dancers construct their careers as a 'patchwork' by moving between organisations, countries and choreographers, and between dance techniques and styles. At the same time, resources are linked to personal connections. Networks organise accomplishment of the project's goals by establishing relationships with dancers who can be 'trusted' because they possess the greatest economic resources to guarantee long-term, ongoing investment in physical capital, or who are recommended by a dominant actor in the field (such as a relative who has already worked in dance). Economic capital and the trust it generates nurture an 'economy of invitation' which privileges upper- and middle-class people in audition participation in both Sweden and the Netherlands. We noted an increase in participation by non-privileged groups in Sweden, working on projects with gatekeepers from similar backgrounds, confirming that networks operate in a homophilic way, in that different network members can provide different types of access to resources. Conversely, white middle- and upper-class male choreographers and artistic directors dominate key positions in networks in the Netherlands and largely decide who to admit in accordance with possession of cultural capital: the narrowly defined bodily idea of white female and male dancers. Overall, this reveals some difference in how project networks function as a device for gendered precarity within dance organisations in both countries. As we saw, notwithstanding gender-equal numbers admitted to some Swedish dance companies, a far greater proportion of women are disadvantaged. However, for those who do enter, public grants in Sweden (dis)embed project work from the market-based relationships of production by providing less unstable social conditions within the industry. In contrast, in the Netherlands, both female and male lower-middle-class and working-class dancers report regular exclusion from auditions by project networks who do not consider them as meeting their preferences (see Figure 1).

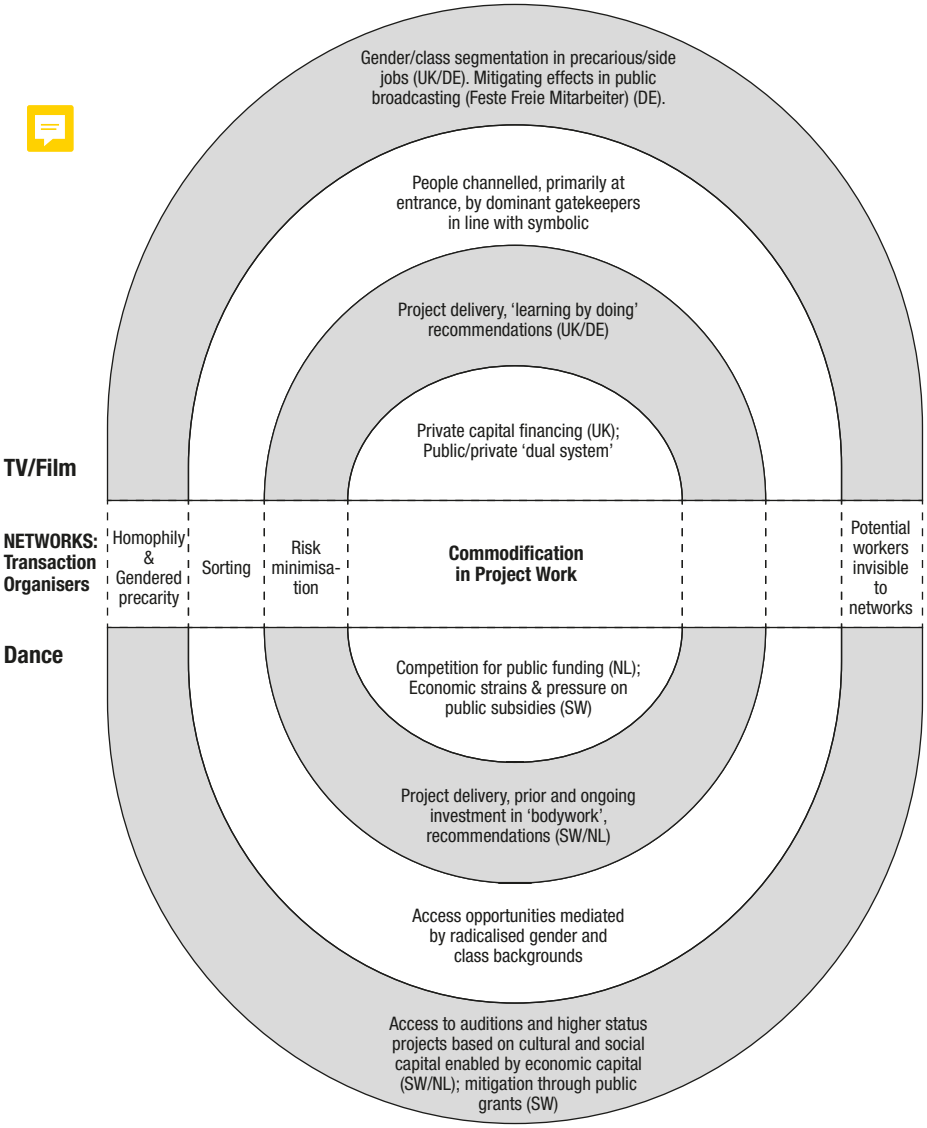


Figure 1: Commodification of project work and networks as 'transaction organisers' generating class and gender precarity

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